

CURRENT NEWS

EARLY BIRD

July 1, 2012

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Item numbers indicate order of appearance only.

MIDEAST

1. **U.S. Bets New Oil Sanctions Will Change Iran's Tune**
(*New York Times*)....Annie Lowrey and David E. Sanger
After three and a half years of attempting to halt Iran's nuclear program with diplomacy, sanctions and sabotage, the Obama administration and its allies are imposing sweeping new sanctions that are meant to cut the country off from the global oil market. Many experts regard it as the best hope for forcing Iran to change its course.
2. **Talks About Syrian Crisis Fail To Specify One Issue: Whether Assad Stays Or Goes**
(*Washington Post*)....Karen DeYoung
World leaders agreed Saturday to push the Syrian government and opposition forces to begin negotiations toward a transitional government but failed to specify whether President Bashar al-Assad must be excluded.
3. **Talks Come Up With Plan For Syria, But Not For Assad's Exit**
(*New York Times*)....Nick Cumming-Bruce and Rod Nordland
...The meeting of nine nations in Geneva to try to end the bloodshed in Syria ended in a now-familiar division, with Russia and China blocking the rest from calling for Mr. Assad's ouster.
4. **In Syria, At Least 85 Killed By Car Bombing At Funeral**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Times staff
At least 85 people were killed when a car bomb exploded during a funeral procession Saturday evening in the Syrian town of Zamalka, activists and human rights groups said.
5. **'Russia's Finger On Button' That Destroyed Turkish Jet**
(*London Sunday Times*)....Uzi Mahnaimi and Gareth Jenkins
...According to diplomatic sources in the Middle East who were briefed on the incident, destroying the F-4E Phantom II was a split-second decision intended as a warning to Nato to stay out of Syria's civil war.
6. **Tears For The Sons Of Syria**
(*London Sunday Telegraph*)....Ian Pannell
...This was my fourth undercover journey into Syria with award-winning BBC cameraman Darren Conway in a year, and the change over those 12 months has been striking.
7. **Surge In Violence Spurs New Fears In Iraq**
(*Atlanta Journal-Constitution (ajc.com)*)....Lara Jakes, Associated Press
A half year after the U.S. military left Iraq, dire predictions seem to be coming true: The country is mired in violence and the government is on the verge of collapsing. With no relief in sight, there's growing talk of Iraq as a failed state as al-Qaida's local wing staged near daily attacks that killed at least 234 people in June.

8. **Oil Wealth Returning, Iraq Sees Malls Rise**
(*New York Times*)....Tim Arango
One has a designated prayer room. Another frisks patrons at the entrance, requiring them to check their pistols, like coats in a fancy restaurant. They are good places to escape the desert heat, and in a conservative Islamic culture, they are one of the few places where young couples openly flirt or women smoke cigarettes in public.
9. **Entire Mideast Watches As Morsi Takes Charge In Egypt**
(*Washington Post*)....Liz Sly
It has been 18 months since the streets of Arab cities erupted with rage against their rulers, launching the Middle East on a roller-coaster ride of hope and despair, victories and defeats.

AFGHANISTAN

10. **Wounded Troops At Walter Reed Discuss Afghan War**
(*CBS*)....David Martin
...President Obama met for three hours with 52 wounded service members at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Maryland. The last American combat troops are expected to be out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014, but David Martin says Walter Reed reminds us it's not over, over there.
11. **Rare Meeting Between Afghan Government, Taliban**
(*Atlanta Journal-Constitution (ajc.com)*)....Kathy Gannon, Associated Press
A Taliban emissary sat face-to-face this week with a senior Afghan government official responsible for peace talks in a rare high-level gathering between the bitter adversaries, an official said Saturday.
12. **Bus Strikes Roadside Bomb In Afghanistan, 5 Civilians Killed**
(*Yahoo.com*)....Rahim Faiez, Associated Press
...Deputy provincial police chief Maj. Mohammad Hussain says a bus full of people struck the explosives Sunday morning while driving near Ghazni city, capital of the province of the same name.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

13. **Pentagon Reprograms \$8B, Pakistan Closure Costs \$2.1B**
(*Defense News*)....Marcus Weisgerber
Pakistan's refusal to let NATO access its ports and roads into Afghanistan has cost the U.S. Defense Department more than \$2.1 billion in extra transportation costs to move supplies and equipment in and out of the country.
14. **Pentagon Asks Cut Of \$334.6M In Taunton**
(*Boston Globe*)....Dan Adams
A Pentagon submission to Congress Friday confirmed the Department of Defense is seeking a significant cut in funding from a military communications network developed by General Dynamics C4 Systems in Taunton. The company has said the cut could endanger hundreds of jobs at the plant.

ARMY

15. **Fort Bragg Soldier Who Shot Commander Dies**
(*Fayetteville (NC) Observer*)....Greg Barnes
The soldier who fatally shot his superior officer during a safety briefing on Fort Bragg and then turned the gun on himself has died.
16. **Aviation Unit Trains To Fight Possible Wildfires**
(*Clarksville (TN) Leaf-Chronicle*)....Philip Grey
While other 101st Airborne Division units are training and deploying for combat, parts of the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade are training for another type of real-world mission – fighting wildfires in the U.S.

MARINE CORPS

17. **Report: More Sexual Assaults At Camp Lejeune**
(*Jacksonville (NC) Daily News (jdnews.com)*)....Amanda Wilcox
Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune -- the largest Marine Corps base on the East coast -- reported more instances of sexual assaults for fiscal year 2011 than any other Marine Corps installation worldwide, according to a recent report.
18. **Some Marine Families May Have To Pay Electric Bills**
(*Jacksonville (NC) Daily News (jdnews.com)*)....Amanda Wilcox
...On-base housing residents will now be held responsible for their energy consumption and will be receiving electric bills within the next year as part of a new residential energy conservation program being implemented by Headquarters Marine Corps and Marine Corps Installation Command at all Marine installations.

NAVY

19. **U.S. Navy Boosting LCS Core Crew Up To 50%**
(*Defense News*)....Christopher P. Cavas
Years after sailors and planners realized the crew size of littoral combat ships was too small, the U.S. Navy has decided to increase the number of sailors on the ships.

AIR FORCE

20. **Instructors' Power At Issue In Lackland Scandal**
(*San Antonio Express-News*)....Karisa King and Sig Christenson
...Six instructors have been charged so far. Testimony last week provided an indication that the cases will hinge on the question of how much power the instructors wielded over their trainees or whether the young women consented — or were even capable of doing so under the circumstance.

NATIONAL GUARD/RESERVE

21. **Va. Calls Up 300 Guardsmen To Deal With Storm**
(*ArmyTimes.com*)....Larry O'Dell, Associated Press
...The governor's emergency declaration activated 300 National Guard troops to help the state recover from straight-line winds of up to 80 miles an hour that felled trees and power lines and closed about 250 secondary roads.

COLORADO FIRES

22. **In Colorado, A Nerve Center For Firefighting Efforts**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Tony Barboza
...More than 150 National Guard troops would be deployed to patrol neighborhoods and work at roadblocks around evacuated areas, authorities said Saturday, freeing up local law enforcement for normal duties.

CONGRESS

23. **Senate Passes Legislation To Strengthen US-Israeli Security Ties**
(*Jerusalem Post*)....Hilary Leila Krieger
The US Senate passed legislation Friday to enhance security cooperation between Israel and the United States. The measure, which passed by unanimous consent with 69 senators as co-sponsors, calls for the strengthening of the countries' bilateral relationship by increasing coordination in the fields of missile defense, homeland security, energy, intelligence and cyber-security.

PAKISTAN

24. **Pakistan: US Drone Strike Kills 8 Militants**

(*NYTimes.com*)....Associated Press

Pakistani intelligence officials say a U.S. drone strike has killed eight suspected militants in the North Waziristan tribal region near the Afghan border.

ASIA/PACIFIC

25. China Hires Tens Of Thousands Of North Korea Guest Workers

(*Los Angeles Times*)....Barbara Demick

China is quietly inviting tens of thousands of North Korean guest workers into the country in a deal that will provide a cash infusion to help prop up a teetering regime with little more to export than the drudgery of a desperately poor population.

26. Briefings Eased Osprey Fears: Panetta

(*Japan Times*)....Kyodo

U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has said he believes Pentagon explanations about two crashes involving Osprey aircraft this year have eased safety fears about their planned deployment to Japan.

27. Ginowan Mayor Asks Defense Minister To Stop Osprey Deployment To Futenma Base

(*Japan Times*)....Kyodo

The mayor of Ginowan called Saturday on Defense Minister Satoshi Morimoto to stop the deployment of MV-22 Osprey aircraft at the U.S. Futenma air station in Okinawa due to safety fears.

EUROPE

28. Britain's Top Female Soldier Quits

(*London Sunday Telegraph*)....Patrick Hennessy and Sean Rayment

THE ARMY'S most senior woman officer has resigned days before the announcement of a restructuring programme that will lead to drastic cuts in the size of the service, with some historic battalions disappearing.

AMERICAS

29. Will Dirty Tricks Have Role In Mexico's Presidential Election?

(*Los Angeles Times*)....Tracy Wilkinson and Ken Ellingwood

Sunday's presidential election represents a difficult test for Mexico's wobbly democracy: Can it hold a fraud-free national vote in the midst of a raging drug war?

TERRORISM

30. Al-Qaeda 'To Bomb US Plane'

(*London Sunday Times*)....David Leppard

AL-QAEDA is plotting a terrorist attack on an American airliner in the run-up to the Olympics, according to intelligence sources.

31. Mumbai Terror Attack Group Lashkar E Tayyiba Now More Dangerous Than Al Qaeda

(*TheDailyBeast.com*)....Bruce Reidel

The arrest of Sayeed Zabiuddin Ansari, alias Abu Jindal, at New Delhi airport late last month is a major breakthrough in the investigation of the deadliest terror attack in the world since 9/11. Abu Jindal was one of the masterminds of the November 2008 attack on the city of Mumbai in which 166 people were killed, including six Americans.

MILITARY

32. Sorrow's Best Friend

(*Boston Globe*)....Katie Johnston

Service dogs named for fallen soldiers are giving help and solace to veterans beset by war trauma.

BUSINESS

33. **Drone Makers Urge U.S. To Let Them Sell More Overseas**
(*Los Angeles Times*)...W.J. Hennigan
Despite concerns about U.S.-made drones ending up in enemy hands, American military contractors are lobbying the government to loosen export restrictions and open up foreign markets to the unmanned aircraft that have reshaped modern warfare.
34. **Airbus Is Coming: Agreement Approved For \$600 Million, 1,000-Worker Plant In Mobile**
(*Mobile Press-Register (al.com)*)...George Talbot
...Airbus has approved plans to construct an aircraft assembly plant in Mobile and will announce the landmark project at a news conference Monday along the city's downtown waterfront.
35. **Military Contractor Cited For Treatment Of Goats**
(*Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*)...Joanne Kimberlin
...The video, which blurs the faces of the human participants, shows lopping shears and scalpels being used to inflict wounds and amputate the legs of anesthetized goats so trainees can practice war zone emergency techniques. In one scene, a goat is heard moaning. In another, a prone goat kicks, prompting a man attending to the animal to call for "another bump" of anesthesia.

COMMENTARY

36. **When Rapists Wear Uniforms**
(*Washington Post*)...Garry Trudeau and Loree Sutton
...If the Pentagon really means to fix the problem of military assault, it must begin by restoring trust in the system. The many victims who have looked in vain to majors and lieutenant commanders for justice can be forgiven for a little eye-rolling at the suggestion that they will receive it from colonels and captains in the future. There is deep cynicism about any solution that keeps the decision-making within the military installation or unit structure, where old-boy networks still rule and where careers are hardly advanced by reporting and documenting rape within the ranks.
37. **Bombing Or The Bomb?**
(*Washington Post*)...David Ignatius
A popular new slogan making the rounds among government ministers here is that in dealing with Iran, Israel faces a decision between "bombing or the bomb." In other words, if Israel doesn't attack, Iran will eventually obtain nuclear weapons.
38. **No Danger In A Nuclear Iran? Really?**
(*Boston Globe*)...Jeff Jacoby
...Let a regime that hungers for apocalypse and genocide get the bomb? Welcome it? Even Dr. Strangelove wouldn't go that far.
39. **Dangerous Naivete**
(*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*)...Jack Kelly
Obama's policies allow radicals to rise in the Middle East.
40. **What Might Have Been In Afghanistan**
(*Philadelphia Inquirer*)...Trudy Rubin
The what-might-have-beens about Afghanistan are already starting, even though there are still about 90,000 U.S. troops there.
41. **The Islamist Threat**
(*Jerusalem Post*)...Editorial

Speaking at a seminar of the Africa Center for Strategic studies in Washington last week, US Army Gen. Carter Ham warned that Islamic movements in Africa were linking up and threatening regional stability.

42. **How Free Is Speech?**

(Pittsburgh Post-Gazette)...Editorial

A phony hero is saved by the First Amendment.

New York Times
July 1, 2012
Pg. 6

News Analysis

1. U.S. Bets New Oil Sanctions Will Change Iran's Tune

By Annie Lowrey and David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON — After three and a half years of attempting to halt Iran's nuclear program with diplomacy, sanctions and sabotage, the Obama administration and its allies are imposing sweeping new sanctions that are meant to cut the country off from the global oil market. Many experts regard it as the best hope for forcing Iran to change its course.

On Sunday, the European Union is putting in place a complete embargo of oil imports from Iran, which was the Continent's sixth-biggest supplier of crude in 2011.

Three days ago, the United States imposed a new round of sanctions that could punish any foreign country that buys Iranian oil. However, it has issued six-month exemptions to 20 importers of Iranian oil who have significantly cut their purchases, including China, which has openly opposed the pressure on Iran.

Even before these steps, Iran conceded last week that its oil exports were down 20 to 30 percent. Its currency has plunged more than 40 percent against the dollar since last year. But so far the escalating sanctions, which the Bush administration started and the Obama administration has intensified, have failed in their central goal of forcing Iran's mullahs to stop enriching uranium. Negotiations have stalled, though it is unclear whether this is a tactical move by Iran or a collapse of the latest diplomatic effort.

On Friday, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations indicated that the harsh new measures might not sway Tehran, saying negotiations were at a "critical point." The sanctions indicate "that they are not willing to engage with us in a meaningful dialogue," the envoy, Mohammad Khazaei, told reporters.

Still, President Obama and his European allies — with little help from the Chinese, who actually increased their purchases of Iranian crude in May — are placing a bet that another big turn of the economic screws may change Iran's attitude.

"It is our assessment that the Iranians have not experienced deep enough sanctions, long enough to fully understand what their isolation means," a senior administration official closely involved in strategy said Friday in an interview.

"The supreme leader," the official said, referring to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, "has not made the decision to deal," even though the administration argues that it was the imminence of the newest round of sanctions that brought Iran to three rounds of negotiations in recent months.

David S. Cohen, Treasury under secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, described the measures as particularly potent because they focus on the "lifeblood of Iran's economy."

"We're going directly at their revenue, and making it increasingly difficult for them to access that revenue" by isolating their financial system, Mr. Cohen said.

Already Iran's exports have declined to about 1.5 million barrels a day from about 2.5 million barrels a day last year.

The round of penalties that come into full effect on

Sunday, some historians say, represent one of the boldest uses of oil sanctions as a tool of coercion since the United States cut off oil exports to Japan in 1940. That experiment did not end well: The Japanese decided to strike before they were weakened.

The measures, of course, are not the only tool in use. Mr. Obama has tried open appeals to the Iranian people and private letters to the supreme leader. And he accelerated the most sustained cyberattack on a sovereign state in American history, a covert program known as Olympic Games that sought to exploit vulnerabilities in Iran's nuclear program.

Even though the covert program has set Iran back and sanctions have made it difficult for the country to obtain high-technology goods, the Iranians have nonetheless added to their stockpile of enriched uranium. Iran now has enough to produce roughly five weapons, if it enriched the fuel to higher levels and could build a weapon. The Israelis are again asserting that Iran's progress is about to tip it into a "zone of immunity," where its program could not be stopped.

Mr. Obama keeps repeating that there is "time and space" to force a diplomatic solution, though he has been deliberately vague about how much time.

Mitt Romney has complained that the president has been "weak" on Iran, noting that as negotiations grind on, Iran is continuing to enrich uranium. But he has not been specific about what kind of additional pressure he would impose.

R. Nicholas Burns, who helped design the Bush administration's sanctions strategy, said Friday that the combination of the new American and European

sanctions "are the toughest sanctions imposed to date."

He continued, "We should give them a few months to have the kind of impact for which they are designed — to force Iran to negotiate more seriously."

So far the administration has been successful with at least one element of its strategy: It has managed to cut purchases from Iran without raising the price of oil, a feat many doubted would be possible. It has helped that suppliers, including Saudi Arabia, Libya and Iraq, have increased their production. Another factor has been weakening global demand.

For the past six months, Washington has engaged in an intense diplomatic campaign to get big purchasers of Iranian oil, including India, South Korea, China and Japan, to reduce their volume of imports so that they do not find themselves facing sanctions.

Many countries grumbled but complied, particularly after Saudi Arabia and other countries made it clear they could replace the lost supply. Washington has thus far granted "waivers" from sanctions to 20 countries that the administration determines have cut their purchases significantly. The waivers must be renewed every six months.

The biggest holdout was China, which has strongly opposed the sanctions. "China is always against one country's unilateral sanctions," Hong Lei, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, said in a news conference in June. "Even less will it accept such unilateral sanctions to be imposed on a third country."

On Thursday, Washington granted China and Singapore waivers, avoiding what could have been a tense standoff as the administration faced penalizing its biggest sovereign creditor.

The Chinese, for their part, did not want to appear to be bending to American pressure.

Oil experts said that markets had already priced in the impact of losing Iran's supply, and that there appeared to be plenty of production to meet expected demand through the summer.

The big question now is whether the new measures will change Iran's attitude at the negotiating table. There was initial hope for an agreement when Iran met with the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and Germany this spring. But subsequent rounds of talks have gone nowhere.

The senior administration official said that Iran had given a "detailed response" to an American proposal for a cutoff in the production of uranium enriched to 20 percent purity, which can be converted fairly quickly to bomb-grade, and for a step-by-step dismantlement of its enrichment plants. But there remains "a wide gap," the official said.

A meeting of technical experts is scheduled for Tuesday.

Washington Post
July 1, 2012
Pg. 13

2. Talks About Syrian Crisis Fail To Specify One Issue: Whether Assad Stays Or Goes

By Karen DeYoung

World leaders agreed Saturday to push the Syrian government and opposition forces to begin negotiations toward a transitional government but failed to specify whether President Bashar al-Assad must be excluded.

Instead, participants at a conference in Geneva vowed to "apply joint and sustained

pressure on the parties in Syria," including "members of the present government and the opposition and other groups," to designate representatives for the talks.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and her Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, offered somewhat different interpretations of that mandate.

In comments to reporters, Lavrov noted that the group's final communique includes no demand for Assad to step down. A call to exclude anyone who would undermine negotiations or a new government, contained in a draft proposal from Kofi Annan, envoy for the United Nations, did not appear in the communique.

Clinton acknowledged what she called "minor textual changes" in Annan's proposal but said they did not affect the substance of what was decided at the meeting. "We read the results to be the same," Clinton said. "Assad will still have to go."

"We and our partners made absolutely clear to Russia and China that it is now incumbent upon them to show Assad the writing on the wall," she said.

In the communique, participants also pledged their opposition "to any further militarization of the conflict," an agreement that would seem to preclude provision of arms to either Assad or the opposition. They also agreed to additional U.N. mandates "if requested," and demanded an immediate cease-fire from all parties and safe access for humanitarian organizations, journalists and an existing group of U.N. monitors.

Annan convened the meeting of the five permanent members of the Security Council — Britain, France and China, in addition to the United States and Russia

— and Arab League leaders after acknowledging that his U.N.-backed cease-fire plan was not working. Saturday's proposal incorporates that plan but specifies new negotiations among mutually agreed government, opposition and minority representatives and the formation of an interim government including all of them, followed by a new constitution and democratic elections.

Asked about a timetable for implementation, Annan said he would "immediately engage the government and opposition, and consult widely with Syrian society" and that he expected to visit Damascus, the Syrian capital.

In a stern statement opening the conference, Annan told the delegations that "we should never have even reached this point. Security Council resolutions have been passed, joint statements of determination issued, a peace plan agreed and commitments made. The great and the powerful in the international community have repeatedly expressed their firm backing and resolve to do what is needed."

"Action should surely have been taken" to implement his original plan, he said, "but none has been forthcoming." That failure, and the deteriorating situation in Syria, Annan said, "leaves you with a clear choice: either unite to secure your common interests; or divide, and surely fail each in your own individual way."

While Clinton focused her comments on Russia's responsibility to push Assad out of the way, the opposition's response to the Geneva statements indicated that the United States and its allies also have their work cut out for them in convincing the opposition to drop its insistence that Assad's

guaranteed departure precede any negotiations.

"The regime is not going to cooperate on anything," said Bassma Kodmani, head of foreign relations for the opposition Syrian National Council. "There is no successful formulation without the departure of Assad. This is a condition that is non-negotiable."

Coverage of the conference by Sana, the Syrian government news agency, emphasized the communique's call for Syrians to decide their own future, and Lavrov's assurance that there was no specific call for Assad's departure.

As diplomats met in Geneva, the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 81 civilians were killed Saturday in Syria, most of them from government shelling and sniper fire in cities around the country, at least 30 of them in an explosion at a funeral procession in Zamalka, a Damascus suburb. About 20 government soldiers were also killed in clashes with opposition fighters, according to an observatory spokesman.

New York Times
July 1, 2012
Pg. 12

3. Talks Come Up With Plan For Syria, But Not For Assad's Exit

By Nick Cumming-Bruce and Rod Nordland

GENEVA — Major world powers on Saturday failed to reach a consensus on calling for the removal of President Bashar al-Assad of Syria from power, agreeing instead on a plan for a political transition that seemed to have little chance of implementation.

The meeting of nine nations in Geneva to try to end the bloodshed in Syria ended in a now-familiar division, with

Russia and China blocking the rest from calling for Mr. Assad's ouster.

Kofi Annan, the United Nations and Arab League mediator who convened the so-called Action Group, tried to put the best possible spin on the agreement, which calls for the formation of a national unity government that would oversee the drafting of a new constitution and elections.

The agreement, he said, provided "a perspective for the future that can be shared by all in Syria, a genuinely democratic and pluralistic state."

But the plan appeared to lack support from either side in the conflict.

"The Action Group on Syria just gave Assad license to kill for another year," said Rafif Jouejati, a spokesman for the Local Coordination Committees, a Syrian opposition group.

A pro-government Baathist Party analyst in the Syrian capital, Damascus, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the Assad government had its own plan for political transition: the previously scheduled presidential elections in 2014. "This is the only way to solve the country's crisis," he said. Syria is a one-party state and its elections are widely viewed as neither free nor fair.

The diplomatic developments were punctuated by a particularly bloody day in Syria, as more than 100 people were killed, by one estimate, most of them civilians caught in shelling, and opposition activists posted videos of mass deaths online.

The worst took place at a funeral for an opposition activist, Abdul Hadi al-Halabi, in the Damascus suburb of Zamalka. A car bomb exploded, killing 20 to 50 people, according to various activists.

An amateur video posted on You Tube caught the moment of the explosion as the body was being carried aloft, and other activists posted videos of mangled victims and body parts scattered in the street. Mr. Halabi had been killed by a government sniper on Friday, according to an activist near Zamalka reached via Skype. The activist said the final death toll might be more than 50, and he accused government forces of surrounding the scene of the bombing and firing on people trying to offer medical assistance.

The plan agreed to in Geneva essentially repeated Mr. Annan's earlier six-point peace plan, which had collapsed after both sides ignored it, leading to the suspension of a United Nations monitoring mission on June 16.

The new plan demanded that all parties prepare for a democratic transition that could include opposition figures as well as current government officials chosen by "mutual agreement." It is unclear what the new agreement can offer any of the parties to persuade them to stop fighting, and it included no suggested enforcement measures.

The Action Group, which included the five permanent Security Council members and four Middle Eastern countries, had considered excluding from the proposed unity government those "whose participation would jeopardize stability and reconciliation," understood to be a reference to President Assad. That language was dropped from the final agreement after Russia, Mr. Assad's strongest ally, objected.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the omission would make no difference in practice. "Assad will still have to go," she said. "He will never pass the mutual-

consent test given the blood on his hands."

In return for these semantic concessions, she said, the United States and its allies had "made clear to Russia and China that it is absolutely incumbent on them to make clear to Assad that the writing is on the wall."

"What we have done here is to strip away the fiction that he and those with blood on their hands can stay in power," she added.

Russia, however, did not seem to see it that way. Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov said there was no requirement that Mr. Assad step down.

"There is no attempt to impose any kind of a transition process," he said at a news conference here. "There are no prior conditions to the transfer process and no attempt to exclude any group from the process."

Andrew J. Tabler, a Syria expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said the United States had made a "major compromise" in dropping the demand for Mr. Assad's ouster. He said he thought the United States capitulated because the situation in Syria was "rapidly deteriorating, so they had to get a framework in place," adding that he expected "a long, bloody summer."

That framework was overshadowed by the group's division, analysts said, which mirrored that of previous efforts by the Security Council to end the fighting in Syria,

"This was the coalition of the uncooperative, the disabled and the unwilling," said Aaron David Miller, a Wilson Center scholar and a former Mideast negotiator for the American government. "There simply is no willingness and no capacity among the so-called great powers to intercede in the Syrian conflict."

"The revised Kofi Annan plan is doomed," he added. "The situation is going to proceed depending on what happens on the ground."

In Damascus, thick black smoke billowed downtown after the bombing of a police complex, according to witnesses. It was the fourth time in a week that insurgents had struck in the capital. And the Syrian Army continued for at least the fourth day its intensive shelling of Douma, a restive Sunni Muslim suburb six miles northeast of downtown Damascus.

"Massacres have become like breakfast to us," said Imad Hosary, an activist with the Local Coordination Committees, which tracks casualties and put the death toll on Saturday at 100. A second opposition group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, recorded 81 deaths.

Opposition activists posted videos on YouTube showing what it said were a series of new massacres, in Souran, near Hama; in Idlib; in Dara'a; and in other places. "Syria awakens to one massacre after another since the U.N. observer mission's absence, and Arab and international silence regarding the criminal regime's violations," the Local Coordination Committees said in a statement.

Details on Saturday's explosion, which occurred around 7 a.m., were scant, but witnesses said it appeared to be in the area of the Police Academy and other heavily secured facilities in the Qaboun neighborhood. Activists said the target had been the police special forces unit, but there was no way to immediately confirm that.

SANA, the Syrian state news agency, made no mention of the attack, but did say there had been a bombing of the

Finance Ministry building in the northern city of Aleppo, Syria's largest.

The news agency also confirmed the heavy fighting in Douma, saying a government operation there had uncovered what it said were torture chambers and field hospitals used by the rebels, which it refers to as terrorists.

"The authorities continued cracking down on armed terrorist groups and raiding the hide-outs of terrorists in Douma, killing scores of terrorists and injuring and arresting big numbers," SANA said.

Activists in Douma said all but 100,000 of the 500,000 residents had fled the area because of heavy government shelling, followed by repeated forays into the neighborhood by the Syrian Army, which they accused of carrying out a series of massacres there in the past few days.

Nick Cumming-Bruce reported from Geneva, and Rod Nordland from Beirut, Lebanon. Hwaida Saad contributed reporting from Beirut; an employee of The New York Times from Damascus, Syria; and Marc Santora from New York.

Los Angeles Times

July 1, 2012

4. In Syria, At Least 85 Killed By Car Bombing At Funeral

At least 85 people were killed when a car bomb exploded during a funeral procession Saturday evening in the Syrian town of Zamalka, activists and human rights groups said.

People had gathered to honor a resident of the town near Damascus who had been killed earlier in the day, said Abu Omar, an activist in Zamalka who attended the

funeral. The resident, Abdul Hadi Halabi, had been killed by gunfire when government forces briefly entered the town from their checkpoints, said Abu Omar, who requested to be identified by a nickname for his safety.

Men, women and children had gathered for the funeral for the town's 30th victim since the uprising began 16 months ago, a low number compared with some of the bloodshed nearby towns have experienced.

The car bomb went off as the procession passed a mosque. Hazy video clouded by dust in the first moments after the explosion showed dozens of mangled bodies lying on the road and the stretcher carrying Halabi's body on the ground nearby.

"I can't describe my feelings, because I am still numb right now given what I saw today," said Abu Omar, whose cousin was killed and father and uncle injured. "No one can withstand what we saw today."

The antigovernment Local Coordination Committees put the number of dead at 85. The toll and the accounts of the bombing could not be independently verified because the Syrian government has restricted outside journalists' access to the conflict zones.

Abu Omar said the death toll continued to rise late Saturday, with a large number of people critically injured.

The wounded were taken to field hospitals in nearby towns and a plea went out for people to donate blood. One doctor who was on his way to help was shot and killed by snipers, Abu Omar said.

Though protests and funeral processions have been attacked with gunfire and shelling, activists said it was the first time they could

recall a bomb targeting such a gathering.

No one claimed immediate responsibility for the attack, but Abu Omar laid the blame on government forces.

"This is an attempt by the regime so that people will fear gathering because there could be another explosion," he said, noting that there probably would be a funeral procession Sunday for the dozens killed. "If we were going to fear, we wouldn't have gone out in the beginning of the revolution."

The state-run Syrian Arab News Agency had no information on the explosion but reported a car bomb in the commercial hub of Aleppo's business and financial district.

--Times staff in Los Angeles

London Sunday Times

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5. 'Russia's Finger On Button' That Destroyed Turkish Jet

By Uzi Mahnaimi and Gareth Jenkins

RUSSIAN technicians played a key part in the interception and shooting down of a Turkish warplane by Syria's anti-aircraft defences 10 days ago, a revelation that will raise the strategic stakes in the Syrian conflict.

According to diplomatic sources in the Middle East who were briefed on the incident, destroying the F-4E Phantom II was a split-second decision intended as a warning to Nato to stay out of Syria's civil war.

The loss of the US-made plane sent tremors from Ankara to Washington as Turkish leaders came under political pressure to respond and the Turkish military sent reinforcements to its troubled border with Syria.

Damascus responded by sending two tank brigades to the border. A long-standing client of the old Soviet Union, Syria has acquired sophisticated air defences from Moscow over the past four decades and is seen as President Vladimir Putin's last friend in the Arab world, opposition sources say.

"It definitely has Russian fingerprints on it," said a diplomat, who summarised the Russian message: "Syria is not Libya and any attempt to impose a 'no fly zone' over Syria will face one of the most formidable air defences on Earth and will cost any attacker dearly."

Three years ago Russia supplied Syria with the advanced Pantsir-S1 (SA 22 Greyhound), with 36 launchers. Russian specialists are believed to have trained the Syrians and diplomats say some are still stationed at the missile battery control centres.

"We would not be surprised if these Russian experts, if they didn't push the button, at least were beside the Syrian officers who did it," an Israeli air force source said.

The aerial drama involved a Turkish F-4E Phantom II, part of the Turkish 7th Main Jet Base Group Command stationed at the Erhac airbase just outside the southeastern city of Malatya.

The official account said it took off on June 22 at 10.30am local time on a routine training mission to test Turkey's "national air defences" in the eastern Mediterranean.

The Phantom was flying alone and was unarmed. Ahmet Davutoglu, the Turkish foreign minister, said the plane followed all the internationally accepted practices for making its identity clear.

The Phantom's planned route was to take it out over the Mediterranean before turning

back towards the Turkish coast to test Turkey's radar systems.

It had a two-man crew. The pilot was Air Force Captain Gokhan Ertan, 30, who was married with a five-year-old son. His wife is pregnant with their second child. The second member of the crew was Lieutenant Hasan Huseyin Aksoy, the navigator who also operated the plane's electronic systems.

Aksoy, a bachelor, was 23.

This was not a combat sortie.

The main strike force of the Turkish air force consists of modern F-16s. Its Phantoms — a vintage design from the Vietnam war era — are equipped with surveillance and photographic pods for low-level reconnaissance missions but were upgraded in recent years by Israel.

By 11.06am the Phantom was flying at 21,400ft when it turned over the sea midway between northern Cyprus and the southern Turkish coast and began flying towards the Turkish province of Hatay, which borders Syria.

Just 31 minutes later it had descended to 3,000ft over the Mediterranean. It had turned and was heading north, parallel to the Syrian coast.

At 11.42am local time the plane was skimming the waves at 200ft when it made an "unintended" violation of Syrian air space. It made no attempt to change course and continued flying north, parallel to the Syrian coast.

Two minutes later Turkish radar controllers informed the crew that they had violated Syrian airspace.

Climbing away to safety, the pilot informed radar control that he was going to repeat the manoeuvre and asked them to ensure that he did not repeat the violation of Syrian airspace, the Turkish military claims.

At 11.58am the Phantom disappeared from Turkish radar. Turkey says its last identified location was 13 nautical miles off the Syrian coast. Syrian airspace extends 12 miles from the coast.

At the moment it was struck the plane was flying south parallel to the Syrian coast. It was hit by a missile from the land which sent it into the sea eight nautical miles offshore.

Hurriyet, a Turkish newspaper, quoted military sources as saying that Turkish intelligence was listening to Syrian air defence communications and heard them identifying the Phantom as Turkish.

The Russian media subsequently said the plane was testing Syrian airspace on Nato's behalf, adding that Turkey was monitoring Syrian radio traffic and other electronic activity and passing the information to other Nato members. Both claims are plausible.

On the other side of the media cold war, however, Masum Turker, leader of the tiny Democratic Left party, told a local television channel that the Russians had shot down the plane. Turker noted that the Russian navy did not join the search for the crew.

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6. Tears For The Sons Of Syria

By Ian Pannell, in Idlib Province

MISHU IS not a man to cross. He is a tough, ruthless fighter, the type of man who sleeps with a loaded pistol by his side. The former mechanic now fights with the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in Idlib province.

Dressed in a camouflage T-shirt, his weapon of choice is

a heavy belt-fed machine gun. It is supposed to be used with a two-legged stand or bipod on the ground. But Mishu prefers to fire from the hip, always at the very front of operations and invariably in bare feet.

With a bushy black beard and voluminous eyebrows, he is not given to small talk or emotion. But this is a very personal battle and, in a rare moment of reflection, he speaks of the family he has left behind and what drives him. "The regime is killing our women and children," he says. "It's affected our household and others as well."

He is, he says, "fighting now so that later I can sleep in safety again with my wife and children".

Many of the men of the self-styled Idlib Martyrs Brigade have similar stories. They talk of homes destroyed, friends imprisoned and tortured and family members wounded or killed.

Above all, it is the deaths of women and children that offend their traditional values. Widely reported massacres such as that at al-Houla in which more than 100 were killed, including nearly 50 children, spur them on. "For every child killed our motivation grows to fight against the regime," Mishu says.

Not that the rebels are blameless. In the eyes of President Bashar al-Assad and some Syrians, they are terrorists who kill in cold blood, bringing death and division to a previously stable country. And as the violence escalates, so the bloodier and dirtier this conflict becomes.

Last week the United Nations-backed Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria reported that "gross violations of human rights are occurring regularly", perpetrated primarily by pro-

government forces but also by the armed opposition.

This was my fourth undercover journey into Syria with award-winning BBC cameraman Darren Conway in a year, and the change over those 12 months has been striking.

Last July, we filmed refugees fleeing government attacks on largely peaceful protests and interviewed army defectors living in makeshift camps on the Syrian side of the Turkish border who revealed that they had been ordered to shoot at protesters. By the end of that month, the opposition Free Syrian Army was formed: a weak and disparate group, with neither the men nor munitions to represent a physical threat to the government. Mr Assad dismissed them as a few "terrorists" funded by his foreign enemies.

In spring this year, the rebels offered only token resistance to government attacks before retreating to "avoid civilian casualties". Theirs was still a flimsy grouping, arranged along family or tribal affiliations and lacking any real experience. We watched in the town of Binnish as a group awaited a rumoured government attack. "We have a plan," said their leader. But as the first shell crashed into the town next morning, it became clear that there was no plan, no organisation and very little defence.

But since then the Free Syrian Army has become more battle hardened.

Another key difference is that significant quantities of weapons have begun entering Syria from Turkey. We were told that two shipments, paid for by what one commander called "friends in the Gulf", with a senior Lebanese middleman acting as a broker, had been delivered to groups affiliated

with the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

Three months ago, we were told emphatically by a local commander that the "mafia" - the Turkish underworld - had been instructed not to sell weapons. Now, a senior commander in Idlib Province said, rebels were obtaining rocket-propelled grenades and other arms from those very same sources. "We think a green light has been given by the West," he said.

Even rebels with the Idlib Martyrs Brigade, who have not been sent arms from abroad, were better armed than we had seen before - partly because they are now churning out their own ordnance in secret workshops: improvised explosive devices (IEDs), crude but effective pipe and nail bombs, and home-made grenades.

The fighters are afraid that their tactics mean they may be seen as terrorist. But they argue that, faced with the government's tanks and artillery, they have little choice but to take extreme action.

Omar, a large man with tight curly hair and an easy smile, used to be a chef - and drew an admiring crowd of fighters one lunchtime as he effortlessly sculpted a tomato into a decorative rose. He uses the same dexterity to prepare and plant IEDs, carefully attaching the wires and priming the bombs.

"We are building IEDs because we lack resources, because there is no foreign support," he said. "People are being slaughtered and no one is helping [us]."

In one operation we were invited to film, the plan was to lure government troops into a trap by setting up a rebel checkpoint near their base, taunting them to attack. The IED, a metal tube about

18 inches long, packed with explosives and weighing nearly 50lb, was driven by motorcycle along a potholed track. Omar hid the bomb by the edge of a road leading from the base and the rebels hoisted their flag and began stopping traffic, confident that someone would tip off the military.

When the army came at them, however, it was from the opposite direction, nowhere near the IED. Under heavy automatic gunfire from two government tanks, the rebels were pinned down, able only to offer light resistance - their greatest weapon rendered useless by being in the wrong place.

But the tanks fired for only a few minutes and eventually rolled back to base. The device was dug up to use elsewhere.

It was a brief skirmish that showed the fighters still have much to learn but it also demonstrated the army's limited capacity to respond.

The opposition now has effective control over large swaths of contiguous land in parts of the north. Faced with having to fight fires across the country, government forces seem unable to hold significant amounts of territory. The insurgency is better equipped, experienced and motivated than ever before.

We glimpsed the full potential of the rebel forces not far from Ibeen, a village that government units had shelled heavily the previous evening. A tear ran down the face of eight-year-old Rayyan as he told us what had happened. "I was sleeping next to my younger brother when the last shell hit us," he said.

Lying on a thin mattress on the floor, his arm and torso wrapped in a dirty bandage, he wept. "The Syrian army did this to me," he said.

His three-year-old brother lay next to him, sedated, with shrapnel injuries to his chest, legs and arm. Blood continued to seep through the bandages wrapped around the legs of another brother.

And a fourth, Sami, aged 15, sat still in the corner, staring into the distance. Pale and in shock, his face was still powdered with the dust from the blast. "Our home has been destroyed," he said, cursing the Syrian president. "May God exact his revenge upon this state and Bashar the bastard."

At first there were just a handful of rebel fighters at a secret meeting point nearby, a dusty olive grove off a small country lane.

But over the next half hour, dozens of fighters became scores and eventually hundreds. In a year of travelling under cover inside Syria, this was by far the largest single group of Free Syrian Army troops we had witnessed.

They were armed with rifles, bombs and bullets, with pistols and knives tied to their belts or stuffed into their pockets. They had gathered to launch one of their biggest attacks, on an army checkpoint and military base in the town of Armanaz.

Bassel Abu Abdu, their commander, has the magnetism needed to unite disparate groups of fighters into a cohesive organisation - bringing together some 1,600 men in the Idlib Martyrs Brigade.

As 400 or so of them assembled for the Armanaz operation, Bassel moved among them, giving instructions, ensuring weapons were distributed evenly and organising the fighters into ground assault teams, fire support groups and defensive units.

As the sun slipped down behind the Jabel al-Wastani

mountains, the men moved in. They still hope the international community will help but they are no longer waiting for it to do so.

But after just a few minutes, one team opened fire prematurely, alerting the Syrian army to its presence. The high-pitched scream of bullets whizzing overhead rapidly grew in intensity as rebels swarmed through an olive grove, down streets and along alleyways towards the base, fuelled by anger and adrenalin.

One older fighter placed one knee on the ground, raised his RPG and fired. He emerged from a cloud of dust and smoke crying "Allah uh Akbar, Allah uh Akbar" - God is great.

The army responded by sending tanks rolling out of the base, the sound of shells being fired echoing through the streets, bringing a sickening fear about where they would land. Armoured vehicles with heavy machine guns joined in and rebels ran for cover.

After an hour, the element of surprise lost, the rebels were forced to retreat.

But it had been a hugely revealing moment that showed how the mood inside northern Syria has changed. The fighters are upbeat, confident and assertive. While still ill-disciplined and poorly equipped, they now believe they are winning.

What this means is more fighting and ever more death. The United Nations estimates that more than 10,000 people have been killed during the uprising. It is hard not to conclude that increasing numbers will die as the violence spirals out of control. It is hard to see what pressure the international community can bring to bear to reverse this.

Last week, as bombs erupted in Damascus, Mr Assad said for the first time that Syria

was now in "a real state of war". On that point, at least, the rebels and the Syrian president agree.

Ian Pannell is World Affairs Correspondent for BBC News.

Atlanta Journal-Constitution
(ajc.com)

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7. Surge In Violence Spurs New Fears In Iraq

By Lara Jakes, Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A half year after the U.S. military left Iraq, dire predictions seem to be coming true: The country is mired in violence and the government is on the verge of collapsing. With no relief in sight, there's growing talk of Iraq as a failed state as al-Qaida's local wing staged near daily attacks that killed at least 234 people in June.

Iraq no longer suffers widespread retaliatory killings between Sunni and Shiite extremists that brought the country to the brink of civil war. But the spike in violence heightens fears that Iraq could limp along for years as an unstable and dangerous country.

June was the second-deadliest month since U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq in mid-December as insurgents exploited the political struggles between the country's ethnic and sectarian factions. More significant than the numbers was the fact that insurgents appeared able to sustain the level of violence over a longer period than usual. There was a major deadly bombing or shooting rampage almost every three days, many targeting Shiite pilgrims.

The violence has brought the weakness of Iraq's security apparatus into sharp focus even as deepening political divisions

dim the prospects that the country will emerge as a stable democracy after decades of war and dictatorship.

"The state is almost paralyzed and dysfunctional due to political feuds. In such circumstances, the security forces also will be paralyzed and the insurgents groups are making use of this chaos," Haider al-Saadi, the Shiite owner of internet cafe in eastern Baghdad, said Saturday. "I do not think that al-Qaida is getting any stronger — it is the state that is getting weaker."

The situation deteriorated shortly after American troops left Iraq on Dec. 18, following failed negotiations to stay beyond a year-end withdrawal deadline that was cemented in a 2008 security agreement.

The next day Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government issued terror charges against Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, one of Iraq's highest-ranking Sunnis, who fled Baghdad and remains on the lam. Sunni lawmakers briefly boycotted parliament and al-Maliki's cabinet in protest. By spring, leaders of the self-ruled Kurdish northern region joined the Sunni-dominated Iraqiya political coalition against al-Maliki, whom they accused of refusing to share power.

And last week, in the first major defection by an influential Shiite leader, anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr said he would direct his followers to join efforts to oust al-Maliki if a power-sharing agreement is not reached.

Al-Maliki, who won a second term in 2010, followed with a threat to call for early elections that would dissolve parliament if government infighting does not stop.

In calling for an early election, al-Maliki is betting he would win with enough

widespread support to gain undisputed power. His political coalition fell short of winning the most seats in parliament in 2010 elections and back-room dealing among political parties delayed a new government from taking over for nine months.

Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh agreed Saturday that the political crisis has fueled June's violent surge.

"The insurgents are making use of the political differences in the country, and the recent attacks are the result of this political strife," al-Dabbagh said.

Violence has been steady across Iraq so far this year, but the levels of attacks in June soared beyond the occasional, if spectacular, wave of bombings that is al-Qaida's usual pattern. Victims mostly have been Shiite pilgrims, government officials and security forces — three of al-Qaida's favorite targets.

Al-Qaida front group the Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility for a June 13 wave of nearly two dozen bombings nationwide that killed 72 Iraqis. The coordination, sophistication and targets of several other attacks also bore the hallmarks of the terror network.

Iraqi and U.S. intelligence officials long have said that al-Qaida's resources in Iraq — including money, weapons and a stable of suicide bombers — have dwindled to the point where the insurgent group can only carry off a few attacks each month.

Many experts believe the turmoil in neighboring Syria is stoking the violence, saying the success of the Sunni-led opposition against President Bashar Assad's regime is emboldening Iraqi Sunnis to attack government targets.

"As the edifice in Syria weakens, the more space for violence is going spill over to

the Sunni areas in Iraq," said Kamran Bokhari, a Canadian-based expert on Mideast issues for the global intelligence company Statfor.

Some analysts believe Iraq is turning into a failed state. This month, the U.S.-based Fund for Peace ranked Iraq No. 9 on its annual Top Ten list of failed states worldwide. The nonpartisan research group ranked 178 nations and blamed the persistent security problems in Iraq on the inability to overcome long-standing ethnic and sectarian tensions.

Despite the continued bombings and other attacks, Iraqis have not returned to the sectarian warfare that killed tens of thousands of people as violence peaked in 2006-2007. Shiite militias have shown restraint even as a spate of bombings targeted Shiite pilgrims, shrines and government leaders.

And as al-Sadr, an anti-U.S. cleric whose militias were responsible for some of the bloodiest attacks of the war, seeks to secure his status as a major political player in Iraq, it's doubtful he will unleash his followers in widespread violence that would undermine his credibility across the mostly-Sunni Arab world.

Even al-Maliki's opponents speak only of ousting him in a parliamentary vote, not by force.

"People now know that violence will breed violence and sectarian killings will lead to more counter-sectarian killings," said Omar al-Jubouri, a Sunni lawmaker from the Iraqiya bloc.

Underscoring the continued dangers, however, the month ended with a pair of bombings Saturday in the northern, Sunni-dominated Nivevah province, killing two soldiers on separate security patrols, local officials said.

Many Iraqis lament the withdrawal of U.S. forces, saying it was premature.

"The U.S. pullout was a mistake because the country is still in need for their intelligence and military capabilities," said Mohammed Salam, a Sunni government employee in Baghdad. "The Iraqi government should have kept some several thousands of U.S. troops in order to help Iraq forces maintain a reasonable level of security."

The international community spent billions of dollars to stabilize Iraq since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein. Nearly 4,500 U.S. troops were killed during the war.

But the U.S. currently has limited influence in Baghdad: A June 14 statement by the top national security adviser to Vice President Joe Biden that urged Iraqi officials to "alleviate current tensions in order to refocus energy on critical state-building challenges" produced few, if any, signs of progress.

Nor do most Iraqis expect any.

"I think Iraq will see worse days in the future if the politicians continue their destructive feuds and keep following their personal ambitions," Salam said.

Associated Press writers Sameer N. Yacoub and Qassim Abdul-Zahra contributed to this report.

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8. Oil Wealth Returning, Iraq Sees Malls Rise

By Tim Arango

BAGHDAD — One has a designated prayer room. Another frisks patrons at the entrance, requiring them to check their pistols, like coats

in a fancy restaurant. They are good places to escape the desert heat, and in a conservative Islamic culture, they are one of the few places where young couples openly flirt or women smoke cigarettes in public.

American-style malls, fixtures in most of Iraq's wealthy Persian Gulf neighbors, have come late to war-torn Baghdad, but Iraqis are taking to them now like Valley Girls, as a consumer society fueled by the country's booming oil profits begins to flourish here.

Big malls are being built across the capital. The largest will include a five-star hotel and a hospital, and at one already in operation, a truck arrives each week carrying frozen Big Macs from a McDonald's in Amman, Jordan.

The construction boom is generally hailed as proof of Iraq's progress and return to normalcy, more than nine years after the American invasion and six months after the last combat troops departed. But economists and other experts see a dark side. They say the emerging consumer culture masks fundamental flaws in an economy that, like those of other energy-rich countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, stifles productive enterprise by relying almost solely on oil profits and the millions of government salaries those profits finance as part of the country's vast patronage system.

"Basically, Iraq is trying to build a consumer society, not on state capitalism like in China, but on socialism," said Marie-Hélène Bricknell, the World Bank's representative in Iraq.

One of Washington's principal aims was to develop a free-market economy here. Yet with so much oil wealth at hand, Iraq's leaders have taken few steps to develop a private sector. More than 90 percent of Iraq's government revenues

derive from oil, and with oil production rapidly expanding, the country's annual revenues could triple over the next five years, to more than \$300 billion. With that kind of wealth rolling in, one of the greatest questions the country faces is what it will do with all that cash.

Given the statist mentality of most top Iraqi officials and widespread corruption, diplomats are generally pessimistic that the expected boom in government revenues will be used either to help develop a private sector or to pay for an ambitious public works program — something the country, where 40 percent of the population still lacks access to safe drinking water, desperately needs. Instead, experts worry it will finance more of what Iraq already has: corruption and a huge government work force.

Most of the major industries remain in the hands of the state, and the greatest ambition of many Iraqis is to secure a government job. According to statistics from the Iraqi Ministry of Planning, almost a third of the labor force works for the government. That is more than five million people, and the number is rising, as political parties that run government ministries use paychecks to expand their constituencies.

"The state's payrolls have massively expanded, not with technocrats but with party functionaries, because the state has become a way of funding party loyalty," said Toby Dodge, a professor at the London School of Economics, at a recent panel discussion in London about Iraq. "That's directly undermined and hindered the state's ability. So we have a huge state."

Because government salaries are much higher than

those in the private sector, independent businesses operate at a disadvantage because, among other disincentives, would-be entrepreneurs cannot afford to hire the most skilled workers. The World Bank ranks Iraq 153rd out of 183 countries on the ease of doing business.

"Building a consumer society on top of nothing is like building a bubble that will burst in the future," Ms. Bricknell said. With the shopping malls, she said, "you are putting a veneer over a rotting core, basically."

For now, though, that veneer looks pretty good in a place that has suffered so much.

Ali Aboud, an Iraqi real estate developer who left for the Netherlands in 2006, recently returned to open a four-story mall with his brother. The first floor is a supermarket; the second floor is stocked with clothing; the third features furniture and home goods, while the top floor has a food court and a play area for children. As Mr. Aboud walked through the market, he pointed out cheese from Denmark, huge frozen prawns from the Persian Gulf, frozen burgers and fried chicken.

"People come here and ask me for McDonald's or K.F.C. products," he said. "There's a lot of Iraqis who've lived outside the country." Neither chain has a franchise here yet.

At the mall with the security check, Ali Saady, the manager and son of the owner, said: "Iraq is still not a place where you can let people in without searching them. The security situation is the biggest challenge. It is still not stable."

Lamiya al-Rifaae, 40, a mother and a businesswoman, was shopping here recently and complained that the mall was not as big or as fancy as the ones she had visited in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, or Turkey. But

for Iraq, she said, it is a good start, and one of the few places where she will let her children out of her sight, frequently depositing them in the top-floor play area. Here, she said, "I can watch my kids playing safely and get whatever I need in the stores."

She added, "Iraqi women really have the shopping disease."

The fifth-floor gym and beauty salon are off-limits to men. "We have a gym for fat women who want to lose weight," said Huda Abdul Allah, the owner. She explained: "We wanted to make something fancy, like in Dubai. We live in a society that doesn't allow women to go to such places without privacy."

A huge mall under construction on the edge of the upper-class neighborhood of Mansour will eclipse any of the existing malls, and it is aiming to be a place for Iraqis to indulge in American-style consumerism. Boutiques will sell Western brands like Ecco shoes, Zara suits and Timberland outdoor apparel, and there are plans for a video-game arcade, several cinemas, more than a dozen restaurants and a bowling alley. It is billed not only as a shopping mall but also a "full entertainment resort."

"People have to have fun," said Maythem Shakir, the chief engineer of the \$25 million project, which is being underwritten by a group of wealthy Iraqis and built by a Turkish company. "People have to have the same things as everyone else in the world."

The oil-financed consumerism on display in Baghdad comes with historical precedent. In "The Modern History of Iraq," the American historian Phebe Marr described a similar trajectory in the 1970s when, she wrote, "the era of

prosperity rapidly created a consumer society dependent on government employment."

Today, some experts see the accumulation of power in the hands of Iraq's leader, Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, coupled with expanding oil revenues, and worry that history will repeat itself. The brief period of prosperity decades ago created a populace dependent on the government for its livelihood and acquiescent to the brutal rise of Saddam Hussein, who used oil profits to build up his stocks of weapons and pursue a disastrous war with Iran.

"Oil was a source of curse for the people, because its revenues were used to build armies, attack Iraq's neighbors or the Iraqi people themselves, and it was not invested in the infrastructure and development of the various economic sectors of the country," said Hussain al-Shahristani, the deputy prime minister who oversees energy policy, in a recent interview with the Iraq Oil Report.

For now, though, oil wealth translates into malls and Western brands, which are sought after by many Iraqis.

"This is a kind of freedom," said Mahdi al-Saadi, one of the owners of the Mansour mall. "Iraqis will spend money right away. They have been deprived of choice, of big brands."

Yasir Ghazi and Omar al-Jawoshy contributed reporting.

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9. Entire Mideast

Watches As Morsi

Takes Charge In Egypt

Muslim Brotherhood's rise seen as cause for concern, celebration

By Liz Sly

BEIRUT — It has been 18 months since the streets of

Arab cities erupted with rage against their rulers, launching the Middle East on a roller-coaster ride of hope and despair, victories and defeats.

Perhaps none of the many turning points has been quite as profound as the understated ceremony in Cairo on Saturday at which a bearded and bespectacled former political prisoner was sworn in as the first democratically elected president of the Arab world's most populous country.

Mohamed Morsi's ascent was the culmination of a far longer journey, the 84-year quest for power by the once-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. And whatever the constraints on his authority or the challenges that lie ahead, the significance of the moment for a Middle East still struggling to find its way amid the tumult unleashed by the Arab Spring was lost on few.

"This is a watershed, not only in Egyptian politics but for the politics of the entire region," said Hilal Khashan, professor of political science at the American University of Beirut. "Egypt is the trendsetter, the base of the Arab world, and developments in Egypt are likely to affect the whole Arab world."

For some, it was a cause for celebration, for others, deep unease.

The euphoria that accompanied the toppling of autocratic leaders in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya last year has long since been tempered by the harsh realities of repression in Bahrain and bloodshed in Syria, where the 15-month-old rebellion against President Bashar al-Assad's rule appears to be descending into a full-blown civil war.

From the countries of the Persian Gulf to Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon, many secularists and religious minorities are also watching with dismay the wave

of religiosity washing across North Africa, with Islamists poised to do well in Libya's first democratic elections this month and already running the government in Tunisia.

Though Morsi has resigned from the Brotherhood in a gesture of national unity, the installation in Egypt of a president who ran on a Brotherhood ticket seemed only to project the trend deeper into the heart of the Arab world, in ways that both inspired and alarmed.

"There is a high level of worry, suspicion and euphoria," said Labib Kamhawi, a political analyst in the Jordanian capital, Amman. "It all depends on where you stand on the political spectrum."

The effect in Syria

Nowhere is the impact likely to be more deeply felt than in Syria, where the Syrian branch of the Brotherhood is emerging as a key player in the political opposition to Assad and as a source of contention, illustrating the complex divide playing out across the region between Islamists and secularists, the rulers and the ruled.

At a school outside the Syrian city of Hama now used by activists as a media center, half a dozen Free Syrian Army fighters watched Morsi's inaugural speech broadcast live on TV from Cairo University. When he pledged to "spare no effort" to support the Syrian revolutionaries in their struggle against Assad, they burst into applause and cries of "God be with you!" said Musab al-Hamadee, an activist who was present and relayed the fighters' reactions to the speech over Skype.

"This convinces us that all revolutions will succeed," he said. "We are more optimistic now."

The comment was an unusually direct foray into foreign policy for Morsi, and it pointed to the ways in which the Brotherhood's ascent in Egypt may help empower its affiliates elsewhere in the region.

Members of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood are planning to meet with Morsi in Cairo soon to explore how Egypt can help the Syrian effort to overthrow Assad, said Molham al-Drobi, a senior figure in the Syrian movement. A key request will be for Egypt to prevent passage through the Suez Canal for Russian and Iranian ships supplying weapons to the Syrian government, a move with potentially significant geopolitical implications.

"It makes me feel proud, and I am also feeling the challenge the Muslim Brotherhood is facing to prove to the world that the Muslim Brotherhood is capable of running countries," Drobi said of Morsi's victory. "This will prove not only to Arabs, but the whole globe, that the Muslim Brotherhood is a threat to nobody."

Yet some Syrian activists expressed misgivings.

"The secular forces in the revolution, of which there are many, see that the Brotherhood is trying to push its agenda on the backs of the revolutionaries, so there is this negative reaction," said Shakeeb al-Jabri, who is based in Beirut.

Concerns of critics

Members of Syrian minorities, including Christians, Alawites and Kurds, share similar concerns, said Emile Hokayem of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, who is based in Bahrain. So, too, do the region's monarchs, who have successfully held off secularist demands for reform with their appeals to traditional values.

"Now we have the emergence of an Islamic movement that knows how to merge Islamic ideals with a republican system, and this could be a competing model," Hokayem said. "There are particular concerns about what a Muslim Brotherhood foreign policy might look like. Will it be a movement that tries to export its model? That would be very disruptive."

Morsi seemed to address those concerns directly Saturday, telling the audience at Cairo University that "Egyptians do not export revolutions."

Egypt is still a long way from being in a position to regain its long-squandered role as the region's dominant power, analysts say.

With the country consumed by domestic politics and the challenges of its faltering economy, "Cairo will continue to be the non-player ... that it has been for quite some time," Robert Satloff of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy wrote last week.

"But the potent imagery of Brotherhood victory is likely to transcend that gritty reality," he added. "The shockwaves will be felt across the Middle East."

CBS

June 28, 2012

10. Wounded Troops At Walter Reed Discuss Afghan War

CBS Evening News, 6:30 PM

SCOTT PELLEY: After the Supreme Court rulings today, President Obama met for three hours with 52 wounded service members at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Maryland. The last American combat troops are expected to be out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014, but David Martin says Walter

Reed reminds us it's not over, over there.

DAVID MARTIN: Don't tell the troops at Walter Reed the war in Afghanistan is winding down. Amputations, many of them multiple, have gone up to more than 20 a month.

What was the damage?

ERIC MEYERS: Both legs amputated.

MARTIN: Staff Sergeant Eric Meyers was on his way on his third tour in Afghanistan when he stepped on a booby trap, the so-called improvised explosive device made from fertilizer smuggled in from Pakistan.

Is the fighting still pretty intense over there?

MEYERS: It's starting to pick up, you know, all the fighters from Pakistan are starting to show back up for fighting season, so it's starting to pick up pretty intense.

MARTIN: You know, most people back here think the war is winding down.

MEYERS: Over there on the ground, it's not winding down. It's still just as intense as it was.

MARTIN: Lance Corporal Chad Ohmer was also hit by an IED.

CHAD OHMER: They're bad. They're bad. There's a lot of them out there and that's what's getting most of the people out there.

MARTIN: Ohmer, whose wife is expecting, was on his second tour in Afghanistan.

MARTIN: Did it become less intense the second time you were there?

OHMER: No, no, not really. They're still fighting. Just seems like the more we push, the more they bring in more and keep on fighting.

MARTIN: Ohmer did not lose any limbs, but the physical therapy room is filled with soldiers and Marines who have.

Lance Corporal Timothy Donley lost both his legs and very nearly his right arm as well.

MARTIN: How bad is this arm, it's a pretty nasty scar.

TIMOTHY DONLEY: Yes, I lost this whole piece of my arm, so my arm was just holding on by this little piece here, and I thought I was going to lose it but the doctors managed to save it.

MARTIN: Afghanistan has left an indelible mark on these young men. One of them, Lance Corporal Garret Carnes, has made it even more indelible with a tattoo.

GARRET CARNES: This is supposed to represent me and my two buddies who wound up getting hurt.

MARTIN: So a moment is going to be with you in more ways than one for the rest of your life.

CARNES: That's right. The moment changed my life so might I as well embrace it – don't resent it, just embrace it.

MARTIN: As troops head into another summer of fighting, the hard truth here at Walter Reed is that Afghanistan changed them more than they changed Afghanistan.

David Martin, CBS News, Walter Reed.

Atlanta Journal-Constitution (ajc.com)

July 1, 2012

11. Rare Meeting Between Afghan Government, Taliban

By Kathy Gannon, Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — A Taliban emissary sat face-to-face this week with a senior Afghan government official responsible for peace talks in a rare high-level gathering between the bitter adversaries, an official said Saturday.

The encounter at a peace and reconciliation conference in Kyoto, Japan, was a rare positive sign in faltering attempts to find a peaceful end to the protracted conflict in Afghanistan. It also provided an unusual opportunity for Afghan President Hamid Karzai's government to sit down with its enemies — the Taliban and the Hezb-e-Islami insurgent group.

Siddiq Mansour Ansari, a peace activist who was invited to attend the meeting this week at Kyoto's Doshisha University, said it was the third peace and reconciliation conference organized by the school but the first time the Taliban had sent an emissary.

The Taliban's former planning minister, Qari Din Mohammed Hanif, took part in the conference "to explain the policies of the Islamic Emirate," Taliban spokesman Zabilullah Mujahed told The Associated Press by telephone.

Taliban officials rarely travel abroad for public meetings, and Mujahed didn't say how Hanif, an ethnic Tajik from Afghanistan's northeastern Badakhshan province, made the trip to Japan. Although a senior member of the Taliban and a member of the movement's political committee, Hanif is not on any wanted list.

The Afghan government was represented by Mohammed Masoon Stanikzai, a senior member of the government's High Peace Council, which is responsible for talks with the insurgency.

Ansari said the conference was not intended to find a peace settlement but to air ideas and differences.

"In this third Doshisha conference all the parties presented their ideas and agendas but there were no concrete agreements," he said.

Karzai and U.S. officials are trying to draw the Taliban

back to negotiations toward a peace deal between the Afghan government and the Pashtun-based insurgency that would end a war that American commanders have said cannot be won with military power alone.

The Taliban have refused to negotiate with the Karzai government, saying the U.S. holds effective control in Afghanistan. The Obama administration has set a 2014 deadline to withdraw forces, and is trying to frame talks among the Afghans beforehand.

Hanif said peace talks with the United States in Qatar were suspended earlier this year after the U.S. reneged on a promise to release Afghans from the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and allow them to go where they pleased, according to Ansari.

In an attempt to restart the stalled peace talks, the Obama administration is considering sending several Taliban detainees from Guantanamo Bay to a prison in Afghanistan, U.S. and Afghan officials told The Associated Press.

Under the proposal, some Taliban fighters or affiliates captured in the early days of the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and later sent to Guantanamo under the label of enemy combatants would be transferred out of full U.S. control but not released. It is meant to show more moderate elements of the Taliban insurgency that the U.S. is still interested in cutting a deal for peace.

But Mujahed said the White House's proposal won't coax the Taliban back to the negotiating table.

"We want the prisoners to be freed and allowed to go anywhere," he told the AP Saturday. "But we do not want that they be released from one prison and shifted to

another prison, which means from Guantanamo to Bagram. The Americans are not sincere in talks and they are responsible for the stalemate."

Under the new proposal, Guantanamo prisoners would go to a detention facility adjacent to Bagram Air Field, the largest U.S. military base in Afghanistan, officials of both governments said. The prison is inside the security perimeter established by the U.S. military, and is effectively under American control for now. It is scheduled to be transferred to full Afghan control in September.

Meanwhile, the Taliban and Hezb-e-Islami, despite reports of infighting in Afghanistan, found common ground at the Kyoto conference in their demand that all foreign troops, including trainers, leave Afghanistan after 2014.

"The Taliban insisted on complete withdrawal of foreign troops from the country after 2014 and called the Karzai government a puppet saying they would not negotiate with Karzai or his government," Ansari said.

Hezb-e-Islami is a radical Islamist militia that has thousands of fighters and followers across the north and east. Its leader, powerful warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, is a former Afghan prime minister and one-time U.S. ally who is now listed as a terrorist by Washington.

Hekmatyar, who has widespread support in parts of Afghanistan and within the Afghan government, wants transitional talks as well as a broad-based government to replace the existing one in Kabul.

His party representative, Dr. Ghairat Baheer, has previously held talks with U.S. officials in Kabul, including U.S. Marine Gen.

John Allen, the top commander of American and NATO forces in Afghanistan, and U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker.

Ansari said the conference will seek to set up an international commission that could act as a peace broker between the Afghan government and insurgents. There was no agreement on this commission at the conference, he said.

"We are proposing an international commission for this because no one trusts each other," he said. "They didn't trust the High Peace Council of Afghanistan and now we hope they will agree to an impartial international commission," made up of Islamic scholars, academics and civil society representatives.

"It's been 11 years and billions of dollars have been spent and there has been no change and good brought to Afghans," said Ansari. "We need to stop this war because it is affecting not only Afghanistan but it is a big headache to the international community as well."

AP writers Anne Gearan contributed to this report from Washington and Deb Riechmann from Kabul.

Yahoo.com

July 1, 2012

12. Bus Strikes Roadside Bomb In Afghanistan, 5 Civilians Killed

By Rahim Faiez, Associated Press

KABUL - Police say a roadside bomb has killed five Afghan civilians in an eastern province.

Deputy provincial police chief Maj. Mohammad Hussain says a bus full of people struck the explosives Sunday morning while driving near Ghazni city, capital of the province of the

same name. He says another 11 people were wounded, and the dead include women and children. The bus was travelling from Kabul to the southern city of Kandahar.

Defense News

July 2, 2012

Pg. 1

13. Pentagon Reprograms \$8B, Pakistan Closure Costs \$2.1B

By Marcus Weisgerber

Pakistan's refusal to let NATO access its ports and roads into Afghanistan has cost the U.S. Defense Department more than \$2.1 billion in extra transportation costs to move supplies and equipment in and out of the country.

The stunning revelation of the exorbitant cost comes as the Pentagon continues to negotiate with Islamabad to regain access to the supply routes.

"The good news is that there continue to be those discussions," Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said during a June 29 briefing at the Pentagon. "There still are some tough issues to try to resolve but, you know, I think the important thing right now is that both sides in good faith keep working to see if we can resolve this."

Pakistan closed the ground route to NATO supplies after a U.S. airstrike mistakenly killed 24 of its soldiers last November. The only other access to land-locked Afghanistan is through the Northern Distribution Network, a series of roads through Russia and Central Asia.

Panetta told the Senate Appropriations Committee in mid-June that the closure of the Pakistani routes was costing the U.S. military about an extra \$100 million per month. These new costs were disclosed in a Pentagon budget

document — called the omnibus reprogramming request — sent to Congress on June 29. In the document, which is traditionally sent to lawmakers at the end of each June, DoD asks for permission to shift already appropriated money within its own accounts.

The Army asked Congress to shift \$1.7 billion due to "shortfalls that resulted from increased fuel costs and continued closure of the Pakistan Ground Lines of Communication," the document states.

The other, most expensive, transport option is to airlift supplies and equipment into Afghanistan.

Air Force

The Air Force has requested the transfer of \$369.2 million of airlift, "partially due to the closure of the Pakistan Ground Lines of Communication and the need for additional theater express support," the document states.

This increased airlift requirement in Afghanistan has taken its toll on the Boeing C-17. The Pentagon has asked Congress to shift \$136.9 million to repair 21 C-17 engines, "due to increased wear and accelerated parts damage," the document states.

The funding transfer request for supply transport is only part of the \$7.9 billion reprogramming action.

The Air Force also requested:

- *\$1.5 billion to cover the cost of increased fuel.

- *\$29.7 million to begin standing up Air National Guard UAV squadrons in Iowa, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Arkansas and Michigan.

Other funds eyed for transfer were garnered from converting existing contracts to fixed-price and getting better deals from should-cost analysis. The Air Force also requested the

removal of \$109.7 million from the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter effort due to the Pentagon's restructure of the program earlier this year.

Army

The Army's \$1.7 billion in additional funding requests reflect operations in Africa, logistics in Afghanistan, and the highly touted Capability Set 13, which is being deployed to three brigade combat teams (BCTs) in October. Until now, there were no dollar figures available associated with the capability sets, which are part of the Army's No. 1 priority to develop and field its new Warfighter Information Network-Tactical (WIN-T) battlefield network.

The document also included:

- *\$18.2 million for USSOCOM logistical support in its mission "to disarm the Lord's Resistance Army" in Central Africa.

- *\$140 million to field Capability Set 13 to three BCTs.

- *\$59.4 million to install structural upgrades to Humvees to integrate Capability Set 13 to the first three brigade combat teams scheduled for fielding in fiscal 2013. The Army had repeatedly said that Humvees would not be part of the networking plan.

- *\$28.7 million "to procure command and control components within the Tactical Operations Centers" for Capability Set 13.

- *\$51.3 million for Capability Set 13 integration onto five variants of MRAPs, Humvees and Strykers.

Conversely, the backbone of Capability Set 13, the WIN-T communications network, is losing \$334.6 million due to efficiencies gained by including it in the Army's Network Integration Evaluation program. The Army says that the reduction in funding will

not affect its planned fielding of eight BCTs in fiscal 2013, and six more in 2014.

There is also \$48.4 million available after changes were made to the Humvee Competitive RECAP Expanded Capacity Vehicles program. "After reevaluating Army requirements, the Army intends to use the \$20.0 million associated with the Armored HMMWV survivability enhancements for automotive enhancements on the HMMWVs. The remaining \$28.4 million is excess to the program."

*\$40.7 million is being taken from the Stryker program "due to contract savings ... resulting from the Army combining related vehicles buys."

Navy

The requests for an overall increase of \$790 million for the Department of the Navy include:

- *\$220 million to repair the fire-damaged submarine Miami, even though the investigation is nowhere near complete and cost estimates are still being generated. No public announcement has been made about a final decision to repair the ship, put it to another use or scrap it.

- *An additional \$90.6 million for the DDG 1000 destroyer program due to increased labor and overhead costs on contracts from 2007 and '08.

- *A \$30 million reduction for positive labor rates and material performance on the submarine Mississippi, and a \$25 million reduction for positive labor rate and material performance trends on the submarine Minnesota.

- *\$16 million for a new-start effort to buy Griffin missiles and launchers to be installed on five Navy patrol boats in Bahrain. This U.S.

Central Command "fast lane" requirement will need another \$30 million over the next two years.

*\$8 million for 215 all-up-round glide weapons for a weaponized RQ-7B Shadow UAV. It is needed by Marines in Afghanistan, since "no unmanned system provides the time-sensitive targeting combination of persistence, sensor and weapon necessary to rapidly engage fleeting targets in order to prevent enemy activity such as IED emplacement."

*A decrease of \$2.1 million based on a reduction in the number of EA-18G Growler aircraft being purchased and contract savings on the F/A-18 E/F Super Hornet program.

*A reduction of \$25 million based on lower-cost negotiations for V-22 Osprey tilt rotor aircraft.

Kate Brannen, Zachary Fryer-Biggs, Christopher P. Cavas and Paul McLeary contributed to this report.

Boston Globe
June 30, 2012
Pg. B5

14. Pentagon Asks Cut Of \$334.6M In Taunton

By Dan Adams, Globe
Correspondent

A Pentagon submission to Congress Friday confirmed the Department of Defense is seeking a significant cut in funding from a military communications network developed by General Dynamics C4 Systems in Taunton. The company has said the cut could endanger hundreds of jobs at the plant.

The proposed cut is part of a broader request by the Pentagon Friday to redirect a total of nearly \$7.9 billion in funds from existing contracts to pay for cost overruns elsewhere in its budget. The

requests must be approved by committees in the House and Senate, and already there has been opposition from local politicians to the proposed hit on the Taunton facility, including from Massachusetts Republican Senator Scott Brown. According to a copy of the Pentagon's submission, Defense is asking Congress for permission to take \$334.6 million from the General Dynamics contract. General Dynamics officials said a further \$80 million was cut earlier this year by a House subcommittee, bringing the proposed total cut to \$414 million.

General Dynamics officials said it was too early to know how many jobs might be lost if the cut is approved. The company has previously warned it may have to lay off hundreds.

The huge shift in proposed spending is driven by increased costs in numerous other operations run by the Pentagon. For example, closure of ground resupply routes through Pakistan is forcing military officials to use longer, more expensive routes that have added at least \$772.6 million in transportation costs; moreover, military planners underestimated the price of oil by nearly \$12 a barrel, or 9 percent, according to the Pentagon's submission.

Some of the programs that would receive funds under the request are so-called new starts, programs that were previously not funded. John McCain, the ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, vowed earlier this year to block any such requests not urgently needed to protect combat troops.

Fayetteville (NC) Observer
July 1, 2012

15. Fort Bragg Soldier Who Shot Commander Dies

By Greg Barnes, Staff writer

The soldier who fatally shot his superior officer during a safety briefing on Fort Bragg and then turned the gun on himself has died.

Col. Kevin Arata, a Fort Bragg spokesman, identified the soldier as Spc. Ricky G. Elder, 27, of Hutchinson, Kan. Elder died Saturday at Cape Fear Valley Medical Center, a nursing supervisor said.

Elder is accused of fatally shooting his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Roy L. Tisdale, during a safety briefing Thursday.

A third soldier, 22-year-old Spc. Michael E. Latham, was treated for minor wounds at Womack Army Medical Center and released.

All three soldiers are members of the 525th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 525th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade.

Elder recently had been charged with larceny of a \$1,700 toolkit on Fort Bragg and was facing a court-martial, officials said.

He also had a pending court case in Kansas.

Elder was supposed to have been in a Reno County, Kan., court Friday, being sentenced for punching a woman in the face at a bar, his lawyer said Saturday.

Lawyer Les Hulnick of Wichita, Kan., said Elder accepted a plea agreement and pleaded guilty to a felony charge of aggravated battery. He was to be released on probation and ordered to pay restitution, Hulnick said.

Hulnick confirmed a story in the Hutchinson News that said Elder was accused of punching Deborah M. Keough-Douglas, 29, in the face on April 4, 2010, at the Grand

Slam sports bar in Hutchinson. The newspaper reported that Keough-Douglas was left with \$60,000 in medical bills.

Hulnick said Elder was originally charged with intentional and reckless aggravated battery.

He confirmed the newspaper's account that Elder in September 2010 pleaded innocent and waived his right to a speedy trial so he could deploy to Afghanistan. Elder pleaded guilty to the reckless aggravated battery charge in November.

Hulnick said he had no knowledge of the larceny charge at Fort Bragg and was shocked by the news of the shootings.

"All my dealings with (Elder) were extremely pleasant, and it's just a heartbreak," he said. "As far as I could see, he was just a hell of a good soldier, and he made a wrong move in a bar here."

The shootings at Fort Bragg happened in a field near the Bastogne Gables neighborhood while soldiers were being briefed on safety before heading out for a four-day holiday weekend.

Records from Fort Bragg show that Elder enlisted in the Army in 2004 - the year he graduated from high school in Hutchinson - and was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, Fort Richardson, Alaska. He also spent time with the 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry Regiment, Fort Benning, Ga., before being assigned to the 525th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade in June 2010.

Elder deployed to Iraq from October 2006 to November 2007 and to Afghanistan from September 2010 to July 2011.

Tisdale, 42, of Alvin, Texas, was a highly decorated commander.

His awards and decorations include:

The Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Joint Military Unit Award, National Defense Service Medal, Meritorious Unit Citation, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, Air Assault, Combat Infantryman Badge, Expert Infantryman Badge and Senior Parachutist Badge.

Tisdale graduated from Texas A&M University in 1993 and was commissioned as an infantry officer. He joined the 525th in April 2009 and deployed to Afghanistan in command of his battalion from July 2010 to March 2011.

Clarksville (TN) Leaf-Chronicle
June 30, 2012
Pg. 1

16. Aviation Unit Trains To Fight Possible Wildfires

Chance for deployment is currently high

By Philip Grey, Leaf-Chronicle
FORT CAMPBELL, KY. — While other 101st Airborne Division units are training and deploying for combat, parts of the 159th Combat Aviation Brigade are training for another type of real-world mission – fighting wildfires in the U.S.

With hotter and drier-than-usual weather predicted for much of the nation this summer, there is a good chance they will be using their training in an actual deployment, as aviation support to other agencies. Thus, even before the brigade was given their mission in writing, training began three weeks prior, and has been ongoing for nearly two months.

On Friday, CH-47 Chinook crews and Army air traffic controllers of 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, were out at Lake Kyle on Fort Campbell in over 100 degree heat to conduct “Bambi Bucket” training.

Bambi Bucket is the actual name of a product used to scoop up water from a water source, such as a lake, to deliver on target for establishing firebreaks. The version used by the Chinooks was the 2,000 gallon version (that actually holds 1,800 gallons after spillage), which weighs about 18,000 pounds (nine tons) when full.

The pilots and crews each made several runs practicing scooping and delivering the water and the temporary relief of rotor wash and water spray were more than welcome to those working near the edge of the lake.

The ATC crews were honing their communications skills from an unarmored Humvee about 200 feet from the lake shore. The crew, normally four people, has the ability to do its own pathfinder operations in setting up landing zones and can run the air traffic control operation from within the vehicle or at a distance in a hidden or dug-in location. The crew also has its own weather sensor unit, which looks like an olive-drab beer can stuck on a pole. It isn’t as good as what the Air Force weathermen can provide, but it serves in a pinch.

The 159th, which redeployed from Afghanistan just a few short months ago, currently has two aviation companies tasked for the mission to augment civilian firefighting assets. Besides the Chinooks of 7/101, there is also a Blackhawk helicopter company from the 4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment.

Aviation units on post are often tasked to prepare for the firefighting mission as part of the National Interagency Firefighting Center, and all the equipment used is organic to post and distributed to whatever unit pulls the duty.

Public Affairs representative Sgt. 1st Class Stephanie Carl said the units have been watching developments in Colorado closely, prepared to deploy if needed.

Jacksonville (NC) Daily News
(jdnews.com)
June 30, 2012

17. Report: More Sexual Assaults At Camp Lejeune

By Amanda Wilcox, Daily News Staff

Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune -- the largest Marine Corps base on the East coast -- reported more instances of sexual assaults for fiscal year 2011 than any other Marine Corps installation worldwide, according to a recent report.

There was a total of 346 reported cases of sexual assault Marine Corps-wide last year, a 10-percent increase from the previous year. Seventy of them took place at Camp Lejeune, according to a recent report from the Department of the Navy and Headquarters Marine Corps titled “Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Campaign Plan 2012.”

Marie Brodie, manager for the Marine Corps Community Services Lejeune Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program, said an increase in the number of reported instances is not necessarily a cause for alarm.

“Sexual assault happens both in and out of the military,” Brodie said. “But what our program aims to do is ... create an environment where

a Marine or sailor feels safe and comfortable enough in their environment to come forward and report the sexual assault. So it could be there’s an increase in the amount of people who feel safe enough to come forward.”

Although Camp Lejeune had the most reported sexual assaults last year, Marine Corps bases in Okinawa, Japan, were not far behind with 67 reported cases, and Camp Pendleton in San Diego had 64 total reported cases.

But the numbers are not necessarily an accurate representation of the number of sexual assaults throughout the Marine Corps because “research shows that sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes in the United States,” Brodie said. It is estimated that roughly 80 percent of sexual assaults in the Marine Corps go unreported, according to the report.

Brodie said the focus of the SAPR on Lejeune is on prevention, and the program is consistently educating Marines and sailors about how they can prevent a sexual assault from occurring, because it is easier to prevent the crime than to stop it once it’s started.

“The majority of people do not commit this crime,” Brodie said. “It’s a small percentage of people who (do); the majority of us are bystanders ... So it’s about learning what you can do to intervene and stop a sexual assault before it happens.”

Brodie said the program has multiple classes and workshops in place for fiscal year 2012 to ensure Marine Corps leadership is doing its part to prevent sexual assault.

This summer marks the start a 3-hour course for non-commissioned officers called “Take A Stand” in which Marines and sailors will learn about the basics of sexual assault and what the reporting

options are within the Marine Corps.

Brodie said victims of sexual assault in the Corps have the choice to report the crime as “restricted” or “unrestricted.”

Restricted cases are not reported to the victim’s chain of command, and no military police action is taken against the perpetrator. Unrestricted cases, on the other hand, get both the command and the police involved; and a service member who committed the crime is prosecuted under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Regardless if the incident is reported as restricted or unrestricted, victims will be given a victim advocate who will stay by their side as long as the victims deem necessary. Victims will also be given the opportunity to attend counseling and get professional medical attention from a nurse who specializes in sexual assault examinations and can collect evidence in case victims later changes their mind and decide to involve law enforcement, Brodie said.

This fall, all commanding officers will also be going through team training in a course similar to this summer’s NCO class.

“In order to prevent sexual assault we need to tackle this from the leadership,” Brodie said. “It’s about demonstrating that the behavior is wrong.”

Also in the fall, all Marines, regardless of if they’ve previously attended a sexual assault prevention course, will be attending a day-long course on sexual assault and the importance of creating a climate that is not conducive to the crime.

Brodie said Marine Corps data is consistent with civilian sexual assault cases in that the crime usually occurs among the younger age groups, or the enlisted ranks of private, private

first class, lance corporal and, occasionally, corporal.

Jacksonville (NC) Daily News
(jdnews.com)

June 30, 2012

18. Some Marine Families May Have To Pay Electric Bills

By Amanda Wilcox, Daily News Staff

Thursday’s town hall meeting on Camp Lejeune left some military families worried about utility bills for the first time in their adult lives.

On-base housing residents will now be held responsible for their energy consumption and will be receiving electric bills within the next year as part of a new residential energy conservation program being implemented by Headquarters Marine Corps and Marine Corps Installation Command at all Marine installations.

“A lot of families have never had to pay electricity bills,” said Dixie Johnson, marketing manager with Atlantic Marine Corps Community Housing. “If they’ve always lived on a military installation they’ve never had to worry about that ... and it’s a concern for them.”

Navy Capt. Craig Fulton came to the town hall meeting from Headquarters Marine Corps to talk to Lejeune residents about the new changes. He said the Department of Defense is implementing the conservation program because research has found that military families on base use far more electricity than their civilian counterparts.

As a result, the DoD will start sending out bills in October to families who use more energy on average than their neighbors and reward those who use less.

“You could, the word is could, be charged for the utilities that you use,” Camp

Lejeune Base Sgt. Maj. Ernest Hoopii said. “If you’re below the average usage of a house of a particular size, then you’ll make money... but if you go over that threshold, you’re going to be charged.”

Every on-base home will be assigned to a category that will group homes based on neighborhood, number of bedrooms, square footage and year built, to calculate the monthly average usage. Residents’ electricity meters will be tracked and compared to the average usage of the houses in their category.

Families whose monthly usage is below 90 percent of the average electricity consumed in their like category will be credited with money toward their account, while families whose usage exceeds the average by 10 percent or more will be billed.

The bills sent out from October to December will serve as a “mock” billing practice period to allow residents time to become familiar with the program and assess their energy consumption. Actual billing will begin in the early spring.

Current residents will need to sign new leases agreeing to the energy conservation program before the actual billing begins.

“We need to green,” Hoopii said. “We need to use less energy so we can get ourselves out of this deficit ... Everybody has a responsibility, even those in uniform.”

Wounded warriors and residents with exceptional family members can opt out of the program by requesting a waiver through the military housing office, but those families will not be eligible for rebates.

There will be more town hall meetings scheduled through March. When meeting dates become official, the times

and locations will be posted on the Camp Lejeune website at lejeune.marines.mil.

Defense News

July 2, 2012

Pg. 8

19. U.S. Navy Boosting LCS Core Crew Up To 50%

By Christopher P. Cavas

Years after sailors and planners realized the crew size of littoral combat ships was too small, the U.S. Navy has decided to increase the number of sailors on the ships.

The changes will be made on the first LCS, the Freedom, starting in July — in time to beef up the crews for next year’s 10-month deployment to Singapore.

Twenty additional berths will be permanently installed onboard Freedom — two for officers, two for chief petty officers and 16 for other enlisted — but the final manning plan has yet to be decided, Rear Adm. Thomas Rowden, the director of surface warfare, said during a June 26 interview at the Pentagon. The ship right now has a core crew of 40, but because there is no manning plan, it’s still unclear how many sailors will be added to the crews.

The added billets “will run the gamut, from support to engineering to operations to boatswain’s mates,” Rowden said. “We’ve got to get the right skill set and the right seniority.”

Among the known manning deficiencies is the need for more junior sailors, Rowden said. LCS crews tend to be more senior, reflecting the need for sailors with multiple qualifications in a small ship.

Sailors also could be added to the mine warfare mission module, he said, in addition to the core crew.

Separate from the new manning plan is a recently begun pilot program that added three fresh-cut ensigns to each crew “to start expanding our experience base,” Rowden said. “That started with the graduation of the most recent classes.”

A final decision by Rowden on Freedom’s revised manning plan is expected before October, when the ship is to wrap up a maintenance period and begin preparing for the Singapore mission.

LCSs were intended to operate with a core crew of 40 sailors, plus a mission module detachment of 15 and an aviation detachment of 25. Each LCS class — the Freedom (LCS 1) class from Lockheed Martin, and the Independence (LCS 2) class from General Dynamics/ Austal USA — was designed with a total of 75 or 76 berths, or racks in Navy parlance. The absence of overflow space means the ships frequently embark containers fitted out with racks, known as berthing modules and carried on the ships’ mission decks.

Accommodations on Freedom are particularly spacious, and all racks in the ships were originally limited to two-high arrangements. Designers of both LCS classes, however, anticipated an increase in berthing, and the racks were built to be convertible to three-highs.

No decision has yet been made about Independence, said Chris Johnson, a spokesman for Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA).

The manning plan for the LCS is relatively complex. Initially, each ship will have two 40-person crews — dubbed blue and gold — alternating about every four months. As the number of ships increases, a shift will be made to rotational crews, three for every two ships.

In addition to increased berthing arrangements on Freedom, Johnson said, the three-month work package beginning July 9 will include upgrades to the Aqueous Film-Forming Foam system, improvements to stern ramp fender stanchions, and additional fire suppression sprinklers, tank level indicators and pipe hangers. The ship’s retractable bitts will be removed to reduce weight.

In May, Freedom completed a “special trial” assessment by the Board of Inspection and Survey, or INSURV, and now is engaging in a brief period of trials and operations to certify and qualify systems and the crews’ ability to operate them.

The first stage of developmental testing for the ship’s surface warfare mission package was completed June 24, according to NAVSEA. Among the systems tested were the Mark 46 30mm gun system and smaller .50-caliber and 7.62mm machine guns, an MH-60R helicopter and an 11-meter rigid hull inflatable boat.

“Although data collected during testing remains under analysis, the systems accomplished each of the challenging test scenarios,” Capt. John Ailes, program manager for LCS Mission Module Integration, said in a statement.

A second phase of surface warfare package testing is scheduled to begin in August of next year, with operational test and evaluation to begin in January 2014. The system is to be fielded later in 2014.

Freedom will be pierside at the 32nd Street Naval Station in San Diego beginning July 9 for the second and last part of its post-shakedown availability (PSA). No further significant maintenance periods are scheduled after the PSA’s

scheduled completion Oct. 19, when the ship’s blue and gold crews and the mission detachments will need to begin concentrated work-ups prior to heading for Singapore in the spring.

San Antonio Express-News
July 1, 2012

20. Instructors' Power At Issue In Lackland Scandal

By Karisa King and Sig Christenson

In the dark morning hours before they shipped out from basic training, the two young women talked nervously about what they might encounter in a supply room where their instructors had told them to meet.

They knew something was off.

They had spent the previous 8 1/2 weeks obeying tightly scripted rules and taking orders under threat of discipline from instructors. A misstep could mean pushups, reprimands, a repeat of boot camp or even a career-ending discharge. Now, the trainers were telling them to violate a basic rule against leaving their dormitory at night.

The women, both 18, made a pact not to separate, and they joked uncomfortably that no matter what was about to happen, the instructors were not going to kill them or have sex with them.

The trainees descended a stairway and entered a supply room that had been partly turned into an office. When they walked into the room, the lights were out. Waiting in the darkness and sitting on two plush chairs were Staff Sgts. Kwinton Estacio and Craig LeBlanc.

“I felt the air automatically get thicker. I just kind of froze,” one of the women testified last

week at a preliminary hearing for LeBlanc. “As soon as I was in that situation, I knew I didn’t want to be there.”

As the recruits stood shoulder to shoulder, the woman said LeBlanc patted his knee and told her to come sit in his lap. He was eating a lollipop, and he asked her to try it.

She did. And when he kissed her and then had sex with her, she complied because she felt she had no choice, she said.

“What else was I supposed to do in that situation?” she asked.

Her testimony came as part of a widening sex scandal at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland involving 31 women recruits who have accused a dozen instructors of sexual misconduct at one of the nation’s largest military training grounds. The charges have roiled the Air Force and raised alarms about how pervasive the misconduct might be.

Six instructors have been charged so far. Testimony last week provided an indication that the cases will hinge on the question of how much power the instructors wielded over their trainees or whether the young women consented — or were even capable of doing so under the circumstance.

The Air Education and Training Command has ordered an investigation of basic and technical training, and it has tapped a two-star general to lead it. The inquiry will look at issues within training units that might have played a role in the scandal, and it not only will scrutinize Lackland, but organizations throughout the training command.

The accusations in each case span a broad range, from unprofessional relationships through social media to aggravated sexual assault and rape.

All of the accused instructors were basic or technical military trainers at Lackland, and nine of them were assigned to the 331st Training Squadron.

Culture of silence

One big question is how so many trainers on one base could have violated the rules without being reported. But the Air Force has said that none of the women revealed their assaults despite having opportunities to meet with leaders in the command or to drop notes into comment boxes that dot the sprawling training base on the Southwest Side.

Lackland is the gateway for all Air Force trainees, producing more than 35,000 graduates a year, 22 percent of them women.

In the cases of LeBlanc and Estacio, both women initially lied about the incidents to investigators. The women testified that the trainers had instructed them to do so. They feared retaliation and worried that making any accusation could ruin their careers.

The cases emerged last summer only after a lone airman who was preparing to transfer told authorities of her suspicions about Staff Sgt. Luis A. Walker, who is facing life in a stockade on charges of sexual misconduct with 10 women in basic and technical training. Months later, in the weeks before Thanksgiving, Staff Sgt. Christopher Beck reported conversations he'd had with LeBlanc, who bragged about having sex with a woman recruit.

"At first, I didn't do anything," Beck testified at LeBlanc's hearing. "Loyalty. I didn't process it at all."

About two weeks later, Beck said LeBlanc boasted again about a tryst with another woman who had just graduated.

Beck continued to hold his silence, but the disclosures were shocking and weighed on him. He lost sleep, struggled to concentrate at work and sought advice from a family member, who urged him to speak out. About a month after learning of the first incident in the supply room, Beck reported what he knew. The reaction from fellow instructors was swift.

"I was ostracized," he said. "There were a couple of people I was speaking to and they pretended not to hear me."

Breakdown in command?

Experts and former military leaders said the cultural dynamics that fostered the alleged abuse aren't limited to Lackland or the 331st Training Squadron.

"These trainees are being taught that their success in the military is absolutely dependent on these instructors and they're to follow their leadership without question," said Nancy Parrish, founder of Protect Our Defenders, a group that supports sexual trauma victims in the military.

Retired Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jennifer Norris, who said she was sexually assaulted by an instructor while training at Keesler AFB in Biloxi, Miss., in 1997, pointed to the immense power that trainers hold over students as a key reason for women remaining silent. And, she noted, when a simple order doesn't prompt trainees to conform, making examples of them will.

"When you go through the initial training and basic training and in technical school, nothing's open for debate. It's, 'You do what I say or else you're going to have hell to pay. We will beat you down until you conform to the way we want you to be in the military,'" she said.

Both women who testified last week were unable to articulate the difference

between a lawful and unlawful order, despite taking a required class on the topic.

Former Marine Corps Capt. Anu Bhagwati, executive director of Service Women's Action Network, said one of the negative side effects of military indoctrination is that it can be so effective that recruits forget to trust their human instincts.

"And moral character, moral decision-making, is not something that I believe the military teaches well when it comes to taking care of personnel," she said.

It is unclear whether the reluctance of Beck and possibly other instructors to report sexual misconduct is evidence of a command climate in the 331st squadron that turned a blind eye to sexual misconduct or actually enabled or supported it.

In Washington last week, Gen. Edward Rice Jr., who heads the Air Education and Training Command, said the problem was mostly isolated to the squadron and that an "intensive investigation" is under way "to find out what exactly happened and why."

Little is known about the squadron's activities other than what has come out in preliminary hearings for LeBlanc and Estacio. The testimony from the two women who met the trainers in the supply room offered a picture of the immense power that instructors use as a tool to shape enlistees into airmen.

Life in the squadron

Life in the 331st squadron, as the women told it, meant submitting to control over every aspect of their lives.

More than other instructors, Estacio ran a sharply regimented program. At inspections, he personally viewed every item in the lockers of every recruit, one woman testified.

Both women, who were leaders in Estacio's unit, described the fear that he and other instructors drilled into them with threats of physical exercise or written reprimands. The smallest infraction could lead to being forced to repeat boot camp, a black mark that could hobble a career.

Estacio, whose evidentiary hearing was June 1, won awards for producing exemplary graduates. He was married with two children, a "go-to guy" who was admired by his peers and viewed by some of the young women as a father figure.

"We wanted to be just like him," one woman said.

LeBlanc was less of a superstar, but no slacker. His alleged victim said he first approached her on graduation weekend and later engaged her in conversation near what's known as "the snake pit" — an area in the cafeteria where non-commissioned officers scrutinize and intimidate recruits. But instead of the pointed questions that trainees often face, LeBlanc had made small talk while she remained at attention.

But the discipline and rigid interaction with the trainers took a turn on the night before they boarded buses to their new assignments.

In an unusually personal gesture, Estacio and LeBlanc took turns speaking to the women over an intercom in their dormitory. Estacio told his alleged victim that he was attracted to her.

"I was really, really shocked. I didn't know what to think and say," she said.

Estacio then asked for her phone number and she refused. He cajoled her, and then he came to the dormitory door, where he again asked for her phone number. And after some cajoling, she relented.

After that, the texts began. And soon, both LeBlanc and Estacio were flirting with the women in texts.

Then the instructors arranged for the secret meeting in the supply room and told them to bring baggage along as a cover story for leaving the dorm in case they were spotted.

Both trainees acknowledged that they had flirted back, and they had a gut instinct about what the men wanted. Still, they said the late-night summons was bewildering and that they were scared.

The dark encounter

By the time the women showed up at the supply room, they had both been up for at least 24 hours, and they both described feeling frozen when they saw the men seated in the darkness in front of them.

After LeBlanc motioned for one of the trainees to sit on his lap, Estacio did the same.

"As much as I wanted to get up, I couldn't," Estacio's alleged victim said. "And then he took my hand and walked to the other side of the room. He picked me up and put me on top of a cabinet."

Testimony showed that Estacio performed oral sex on one woman while LeBlanc had intercourse with the other. Afterward, the women separately gathered their bags and left.

"Keep it to yourself," Estacio reportedly told his alleged victim on her way out.

Defense attorneys have emphasized that the men did not threaten the women that night. The women never told them no and never told them to stop.

But the trainees said that saying no was not an option. The consequences seemed unfathomable.

"I really truly don't know what they would've done," one of the women said. "And that's

more terrifying than knowing what someone is going to do."

ArmyTimes.com
June 30, 2012

21. Va. Calls Up 300 Guardsmen To Deal With Storm

By Larry O'Dell, Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Gov. Bob McDonnell declared a state of emergency Saturday after a powerful storm killed six people in the state and knocked out power for hundreds of thousands, leaving them without air-conditioning in the middle of a blistering heat wave.

"This is a very dangerous situation for Virginia," McDonnell said at a news conference at the state's Emergency Operations Center. He said the threat of more storms, continued extreme heat and the largest non-hurricane power outage in state history — and fifth largest ever — could mean a few more days of misery.

McDonnell urged Virginians to look out for their neighbors, especially elderly people who are more vulnerable to heat-related illnesses.

"Be your neighbor's keeper," he said.

The governor's emergency declaration activated 300 National Guard troops to help the state recover from straight-line winds of up to 80 miles an hour that felled trees and power lines and closed about 250 secondary roads. McDonnell said the fatalities — two each in Fairfax, Albemarle and Bedford counties — were caused by fallen trees.

About 848,000 customers of Appalachian Power and Dominion remained without service Saturday afternoon. That was down from a peak of

more than 1.2 million earlier in the day.

Rodney Blevins of utility giant Dominion said it was unclear how long it will take to get power fully restored but added that Virginians should "anticipate long outages."

Tracey Phalen of Richmond could relate to that advice. After enduring six days without electricity because of Hurricane Irene last summer, she was bracing for another uncomfortable stretch because of the latest storm-related outage.

"I think it's going to get bad," she said as she and her teenage son relaxed under the shade of a coffee-house umbrella. "But I always tend to think there are a lot of people who have it worse."

She said her family would find someplace cool to get through the day.

"We'll probably go to a movie theater at the top of the day," she said.

Brett Shiflett of Richmond said she would be staying with various family members in the area after the storm sent a tree crashing into the apartment above hers.

"I'm going to be house-hopping for a while," she said.

The huge tree wiped out the rear portion of the upstairs apartment. A bed with a broken headboard was covered with debris was a tangled mess of bricks and lumber from what used to be a deck.

Had the storm hit later, David Fetchko's girlfriend might have been sleeping in that bed.

"She probably would have been killed," said Fetchko, who relayed a message from his girlfriend that she was still too shaken to talk about the ordeal.

Shiflett was home when the tree fell.

"It sounded like an earthquake and like someone

upstairs fell really hard," she said. Then it started raining in her kitchen, which is directly below her neighbor's demolished bedroom.

"It's a little traumatizing," she said.

Others in the city also were cleaning up after the storm and contemplating how they were going to cope with the relentless heat.

"I'm heading to the river to sit in the water with the dog," Tricia Pearsall said as she swept up fallen tree branches in front of her 170-year-old home downtown. "We're lucky to have air-conditioning, but I'd rather be in the river."

Ramel Lloyd was waiting for a friend to come over with a nail gun to reattach four sections of privacy fencing that were flattened at the home he just bought three weeks ago. The storm also ripped off a small section of siding, and a power surge apparently caused a ceiling fan to catch fire.

"Luckily, everyone is safe," he said. "It was an eventful 12 hours, to say the least."

Around the corner from Lloyd's house, a large tree crushed two cars, including Greg Hough's compact wagon.

"It's totaled," Hough said. "The golf clubs are OK though."

Elsewhere Ohio

CINCINNATI — Ohio's governor says he is calling out the National Guard and asking President Obama for federal help as much of Ohio faces a heat wave without power.

Gov. John Kasich says he hopes for federal help in getting ice, water, fuel and generators. National Guard troops will be helping the elderly and others most in need, he said.

22. In Colorado, A Nerve Center For Firefighting Efforts

The Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center may be an office far from the front lines, but its dispatchers, meteorologists and intelligence gatherers are busy like never before during this wildfire season.

By Tony Barboza, Los Angeles Times

LAKESWOOD, Colo. — Miles from any flames, on the fourth floor of an office building in the Denver suburbs, the central nervous system in the fight against the West's wildfires hums along.

The Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center is the invisible hand in the firefight — its tidy cubicles of ringing phones, computer screens, dry-erase boards and fire maps the logistical hub that is dedicated to quickly deploying thousands of firefighters, engines, aircraft and supplies around a five-state region plagued by destructive blazes.

With more than a dozen major fires burning in the area during a hot, dry summer, the staff dispatchers, meteorologists and fire intelligence gatherers are busy like never before, working around the clock to anticipate where the next big blaze might break out.

"We haven't been at this demand in a long time, if ever," said center manager Jim Fletcher of the U.S. Forest Service. The staff has nearly tripled this summer, to more than 30 people. And though they work far from the fire lines, "it's through our processes and systems that we get the boots to the field," he said.

Fletcher, wearing a polo shirt, with a baseball cap low on his head, spoke slowly and deliberately, worn out from a 14-day streak of long hours.

Foremost on his mind are the spate of fires continuing to burn across Colorado. More than 25% of the nation's firefighting resources are deployed in the state, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

Containment of the Waldo Canyon fire in Colorado Springs, which has destroyed an estimated 346 homes and killed two people, has inched up in recent days and stood at 45% on Saturday evening.

The blaze, which erupted June 23 to become the most destructive in state history, continued to burn in a 26-square-mile expanse of mountains near Colorado's second-largest city, but was not growing, authorities said.

Still, hotter, drier conditions on Saturday were expected to test the fire lines that residents here have watched anxiously.

"We're cautiously optimistic but more worried about areas where we could have mistakes," Incident Commander Rich Harvey said at a news conference.

Two-thirds of the 32,000 people forced to evacuate had been allowed to return to their homes. City officials said they would allow homeowners in the fire-leveled Mountain Shadow neighborhood to drive in to check on their homes on Sunday, but they did not say when the remaining evacuees would be allowed to return.

More than 150 National Guard troops would be deployed to patrol neighborhoods and work at roadblocks around evacuated areas, authorities said Saturday, freeing up local law enforcement for normal duties.

Investigators haven't been able to access the area where the fire broke out to determine the cause.

Until this week, the High Park fire west of Fort Collins

ranked as the most destructive in Colorado history, having destroyed 259 homes. That fire was 97% contained on Saturday.

As weather patterns shift in the coming weeks, forecasters at the logistics center in Lakewood expect additional fires farther north as the mountains and grasslands of Wyoming and western Colorado dry out and heat up.

Already, a poster of a forest inferno that commemorates Colorado's horrific 2002 wildfire season has been updated with a sticky note that reads "2012."

"Hot and dry and an ignition equals fire, I guess," Fletcher said. "The fuels have been dry for long enough that they've burned at an extreme rate."

Predictions made here, which pinpoint dry conditions or lightning strikes, have in some instances allowed dispatchers to move firefighters to problem areas to attack fires before they've had a chance to spread.

In recent days, glimpses of moisture have raised hopes here that the worst of the fires could be over for areas including Colorado's heavily populated urban corridor along the Front Range. But Fletcher isn't declaring victory just yet.

"Until it rains here and the conditions have subsided, I just always go with the assumption it's going to get worse," he said. "We want to believe and have faith in our predictive services, but until it's over it's not quite over."

Jerusalem Post

July 1, 2012

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23. Senate Passes Legislation To Strengthen US-Israeli Security Ties

By Hilary Leila Krieger, Jerusalem Post correspondent

WASHINGTON — The US Senate passed legislation Friday to enhance security cooperation between Israel and the United States.

The measure, which passed by unanimous consent with 69 senators as co-sponsors, calls for the strengthening of the countries' bilateral relationship by increasing coordination in the fields of missile defense, homeland security, energy, intelligence and cyber-security. It also seeks to improve Israel's qualitative military edge, a long-time stated goal of American foreign policy.

A similar measure has already passed the US House of Representatives and now the two versions have to be reconciled before being sent to the White House for the signature of President Barack Obama.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee strongly welcomed the Senate action Friday.

"As the United States faces an increasingly dangerous environment in the Middle East — the mounting threat posed by Iran, instability in Syria and the strengthening of the Iranian-backed terrorist group Hezbollah, whose reach stretches into the Western hemisphere — now is the time to enhance our strategic cooperation with our stable, democratic ally Israel," AIPAC said. "AIPAC calls on Congress to reconcile expeditiously these two bills to bolster the ties between the United States and Israel."

In the US House on Friday, several members criticized the decision of UNESCO to put the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on the World Heritage List.

"We all know that this vote today was not about the

Church of the Nativity, as the resolution was opposed by the church's religious caretakers," House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Howard Berman said. "Rather, this was just another attempt by the Palestinians to make an end run around direct peace negotiations with Israel. The Palestinian strategy of pursuing unilateral UN actions is flawed and dangerous and only moves the parties further away from peace."

He added, "I'm particularly disappointed with the actions of France, the only European country to vote in favor of this resolution."

On Thursday, Foreign Affairs Committee Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen criticized the Obama administration for letting China out of new sanctions penalties for buying oil from Iran.

The sanctions were legislated by Congress but give the administration the option to exempt countries it considers to have made serious efforts to curb dealings with the Islamic Republic.

"The administration likes to pat itself on the back for supposedly being strong on Iran sanctions. But actions speak louder than words, and today the administration has granted a free pass to Iran's biggest enabler, China, which purchases more Iranian crude than any other country," Ros-Lehtinen charged.

And she pledged, "Congress will once again fill the leadership vacuum created by the administration, and work to strengthen sanctions against the regime in Tehran."

An administration official, briefing reporters on the sanctions and exemptions for China, pointed to a 25-percent reduction in imports between January and May of this year,

when China was involved with a pricing dispute with Iran.

The official, speaking under groundrules of anonymity, also noted a posting on a Chinese energy website indicating a more fundamental change in policy.

"What we have now also is what we believe to be an authoritative statement on this China energy website, where the Chinese are indicating that a structural change in their crude oil imports will allow for these types of reductions," he said.

NYTimes.com

July 1, 2012

24. Pakistan: US Drone Strike Kills 8 Militants

DERA ISMAIL KHAN, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistani intelligence officials say a U.S. drone strike has killed eight suspected militants in the North Waziristan tribal region near the Afghan border.

They say missiles fired from an unmanned drone struck a house in Dre Nishter village early Sunday. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media.

The officials said the house was being used by militants loyal to commander Hafiz Gul Bahadur, and some foreigners were also among the dead.

The U.S. has criticized Pakistan for failing to crack down on fighters who stage attacks in Afghanistan and has stepped up drone attacks in the tribal region to combat them.

Los Angeles Times

July 1, 2012

25. China Hires Tens Of Thousands Of North Korea Guest Workers

Because of sanctions, North Korea is unable to export weapons. So it is using its people to raise money. Most of

their earnings will go directly to the North Korean regime.

By Barbara Demick, Los Angeles Times

SEOUL--China is quietly inviting tens of thousands of North Korean guest workers into the country in a deal that will provide a cash infusion to help prop up a teetering regime with little more to export than the drudgery of a desperately poor population.

The deal, which has not been publicly announced by either Beijing or Pyongyang, would allow about 40,000 seamstresses, technicians, mechanics, construction workers and miners to work in China on industrial training visas, businesspeople and Korea analysts say. Most of the workers' earnings will go directly to the communist North Korean regime.

"The North Koreans can't export weapons anymore because of [international] sanctions, so they are using their people to raise cash," said Sohn Kyang-ju, a former South Korean intelligence official who now heads the Seoul-based NK Daily Unification Strategy Institute.

Although migrants from North Korea, as well as Vietnam, Myanmar and the Philippines, have worked illegally in China for years, it is unprecedented for Beijing to issue visas for unskilled and semi-skilled workers, several labor experts in China said. The deal, which provides workers for a region where China suffers no labor shortages, underscores how far Beijing is willing to go to support its potentially unstable protegee.

Longtime leader Kim Jong Il died last year and was replaced by his son Kim Jong Un, who is in his late 20s.

"My gut feeling is that this is the beginning of a larger wave of North Korean workers

coming in. It could be quite significant," said John Park, an academic who has written widely on North Korean-Chinese relations. "It will allow the North Koreans to piggyback on China's economic success to jump-start the economy under the new leadership."

Over the years, North Korea has exported smaller numbers of workers to far eastern Russia, where they work in logging and mining, as well as to Libya, Bulgaria, Saudi Arabia and Angola. Hundreds of young North Korean women used to work in garment and shoe factories in the Czech Republic, but their contracts were canceled because of European human rights activists' concern that they were virtually slave laborers.

The first North Korean workers under China's new program arrived a few months ago in Tumen, a sleepy town hugging the North Korean border.

"They are already here," said a Tumen-based businessman, who asked not to be quoted by name. He said he knew of 140 North Koreans who were working in an underwear factory in town.

Other workers were reported to be arriving in Dandong, a larger border city on the Yalu River, famed as the crossing point for Chinese Communist troops during the Korean War, and in Hunchun, a border town on a new road leading to the North Korean shipping port of Rason, where China is also developing port facilities.

Under the new arrangement, each North Korean worker should bring Pyongyang cash remittances of about \$2,000 per year. Out of salaries of \$200 to \$300 per month, workers are likely to keep less than \$50.

Nevertheless, the jobs are considered a privilege because wages at home are well under \$10 per month and food is scarce for many families, experts say.

The North Korean government "will make a very meticulous selection process. They will pick mostly people who are very loyal, with relatives in the Workers' Party, so they can be sure they will not run away, and they will be very tightly controlled while in China," said Kim So-yeol, a reporter with NK Daily, a specialty news service in Seoul. Workers also must be married.

Kim believes that the workers already agreed to are only the first wave and that as many as 120,000 will arrive this year.

North Korea already has a small number of workers in China at North Korean-government run restaurants where young women in traditional Korean gowns sing karaoke and grilled beef and nengmyon, a cold noodle specialty, are served. But most North Korean workers in China are illegal border crossers who do hard labor for \$1 a day and bowls of rice.

The remittances from the sanctioned workers should help to make up for some of the cash flow Pyongyang has lost with the collapse of several South Korean-run projects, which had netted the regime hundreds of millions.

"Right now, the North Korean economy is practically bankrupt. In order to expand employment, they need to reform, but the leadership is unwilling. So they look overseas to earn money," said Park Hyeong-jung, a senior research fellow at the Korea Institute for National Unification.

As for the Chinese employers, Park said, "There

are no better employees than North Koreans: They are obedient, efficient and cheap."

The labor deal has not been publicized by either government, both preternaturally secretive, especially when it comes to deals struck by their respective ruling parties. Another sensitivity is that the arrangement could be seen as violating the spirit, if not the letter, of U.N. sanctions against North Korea for its continued pursuit of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles.

The hiring of North Korean workers is not likely to be popular in China. A recent incident in which North Korean sailors hijacked three Chinese fishing boats infuriated many Chinese who believe their government is too indulgent of Pyongyang. And although many parts of China have labor shortages, the northeastern provinces don't.

The North Koreans "will be competing directly with local youths for job opportunities," said Zhang Lianggui, a North Korea expert at the Central Party School in Beijing.

Special correspondent Jung-yoon Choi in Seoul and Tommy Yang of The Times' Beijing bureau contributed to this report.

Japan Times
July 1, 2012

26. Briefings Eased Osprey Fears: Panetta

By Kyodo

WASHINGTON — U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has said he believes Pentagon explanations about two crashes involving Osprey aircraft this year have eased safety fears about their planned deployment to Japan.

"I think we've been able to relieve concerns with what we presented" at a recent Pentagon

briefing of Japanese officials about the accidents, Panetta said Friday in Washington. "We have assured them (over) the safety of the Ospreys."

His remarks came after the U.S. formally notified Japan on Friday of its plan to deploy 24 MV-22 Ospreys to replace aging CH-46 helicopters at U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa.

Japan Times
July 1, 2012

27. Ginowan Mayor Asks Defense Minister To Stop Osprey Deployment To Futenma Base

By Kyodo

NAHA, Okinawa Pref. — The mayor of Ginowan called Saturday on Defense Minister Satoshi Morimoto to stop the deployment of MV-22 Osprey aircraft at the U.S. Futenma air station in Okinawa due to safety fears.

The planned dispatch of tilt-rotor MV-22s to the base, situated in a crowded residential district of Ginowan, is "very regrettable and unacceptable," Mayor Atsushi Sakima said during a meeting with Morimoto on Okinawa Island.

"It's an undeniable fact that Ospreys have crashed twice in as many months," Sakima pointed out, demanding the central government pay heed to local concerns about the aircraft's safety.

Morimoto, visiting Okinawa for the first time as defense chief, replied that he will "convey local opinions (to Tokyo) and take them into account while considering the central government's response."

The United States officially notified Japan on Friday that it will commence full-scale Osprey flight operations at

U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in early October.

Washington plans to first send the aircraft to U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi Prefecture for safety checks and trial flights in July, before deploying them to the Futenma base next month.

During the meeting, Morimoto explained Washington's plan and tried to obtain local consent over the deployment, saying the it is aimed at boosting the strength of American forces stationed in Japan.

But local opposition to the plan remains strong in both Okinawa and Yamaguchi, given two recent crashes involving Ospreys in Morocco and Florida. Washington is expected to present the findings of its investigations into the accidents' causes to Tokyo in August.

On relocating the Futenma base, Morimoto expressed his intention of proceeding with a highly contentious plan to move the facility to the less populated Henoko coastal district of Nago, farther north on Okinawa Island. Okinawans want the facility transferred outside the prefecture altogether.

"I'll try to achieve the relocation as early as possible, as agreed between the Japanese and U.S. governments," he said.

On Sunday, Morimoto is scheduled to discuss the Osprey dispatch with Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima, as well as with Yamaguchi Gov. Sekinari Nii and Iwakuni Mayor Yoshihiko Fukuda.

London Sunday Telegraph
July 1, 2012

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Exclusive

28. Britain's Top Female Soldier Quits

By Patrick Hennessy and Sean Rayment

THE ARMY'S most senior woman officer has resigned days before the announcement of a restructuring programme that will lead to drastic cuts in the size of the service, with some historic battalions disappearing.

Brig Nicky Moffat, who six months ago declared that there was "no better time" for women to join the Army, is understood to have become despondent at the depth and severity of the Government's cuts.

On Thursday, ministers will announce changes that will reduce the Army's strength from around 100,000 soldiers to 82,000 by 2020, its smallest size in a century.

Brig Moffat, 50, has told her bosses that she wants to take voluntary redundancy after 26 years' service.

The brigadier, who is the Armed Forces head of pay and strategic manning at the Ministry of Defence, joined the now defunct Women's Royal Army Corps after leaving the University of Liverpool.

Her roles have included a spell as military private secretary to Geoff Hoon, the former defence secretary.

She was widely expected to become Britain's first female general and her departure is said to have left many colleagues stunned. Her resignation has been followed by that of another high-ranking officer, Brig Justin Maciejewski, the director of combat, who has also taken voluntary redundancy.

He is also understood to have become disillusioned by the extent of the cuts.

Brig Maciejewski, who was awarded the Distinguished Service Order after leading The Rifles in Basra in 2007, is regarded as one of the best officers of his generation and was earmarked as a future Chief of the General Staff.

He has also been in the Army for the past 26 years.

Both officers will leave in the next six months with redundancy packages worth around £190,000.

The high-profile resignations underline the growing resentment in all ranks of the military after months of cuts and redundancies.

Presentations are being given to soldiers by Maj Gen James Everard, the Assistant Chief of the General Staff, in which they are warned of the "great challenges" that still lie ahead as part of the restructuring, which includes a reduction in manpower of 6,000 next year and a further 5,000 in 2014.

One senior officer last night told The Sunday Telegraph: "I have never seen morale as low as this in 26 years of service. There has been a complete breakdown down of trust and faith between the Army and the Government."

As part of the restructuring - known as Future Force 2020 - the number of infantry battalions is expected to reduce from 36 to 25. Full details of the cuts were due to be made several weeks ago but, much to the frustration of Army chiefs, Downing Street has delayed the announcement.

The Government is seeking an agreement which, according to one senior official, will "give the Army something they can live with and will be presentationally acceptable".

However, The Sunday Telegraph understands that while some infantry battalions will be scrapped, such as those suffering from historically poor recruitment or those with a high proportion of foreign or Commonwealth troops, others have been earmarked as "untouchables".

These are thought to include the entire Household

Division, which is composed of the five Foot Guards battalions - the Grenadier, Coldstream, Scots, Irish and Welsh Guards - as well as the Household Cavalry, composed of the Blues and Royals and the Life Guards. The Parachute Regiment, which supplies more than half the troops for the SAS and most soldiers for the Special Forces Support Group, will remain as a three-battalion regiment. The Royal Irish Regiment, the last single-battalion regiment in the Army, will also escape.

Beyond the infantry, the Royal Logistic Corps is facing a cut of 25 per cent, down to 12,000 soldiers, although its bomb disposal section, which has grown in recent years to deal with the improvised explosive device threat in Afghanistan, will remain untouched.

The Corps of Royal Engineers will be reduced by 30 per cent to 5,500 troops, with a similar cut for the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

The 15 Royal Artillery regiments will be reduced by a third to 5,000 troops, with almost its entire fleet of AS90 self-propelled guns being mothballed or held at "readiness" by Territorial Army units.

The five tank and five reconnaissance regiments of the Royal Armoured Corps are facing a similar reduction, with many of their vehicles being passed to the TA so they can be brought into action when needed.

The Army Air Corps will see some of its older helicopters, such as the Lynx, being scrapped, but its fleet of Apaches, the type flown by Prince Harry, will not face any reductions.

The infantry units at greatest risk of cuts are those of the Royal Regiment of Scotland, which will lose one

or possibly two of its five battalions. The regiment has struggled to recruit for many years.

The Yorkshire Regiment, the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and The Rifles are also thought to be vulnerable.

There is a growing view within the Army that the Gurkhas should be scrapped before "any British regiments go to the wall". After 2020, the regular Army's 82,000 soldiers will be supported by 30,000 territorial troops. A further 8,000 will be in training. There will be five multi-role brigades with 16 Air Assault Brigade, the Army's high-readiness rapid-response unit. Under the new structure, commanders will move away from "enduring operations" such as Iraq or Afghanistan, and focus instead on shortterm "contingency operations" such as in Libya, where Special Forces supported the rebels against Muammar Gaddafi.

The Army will remain committed to "homeland resilience", such as supplying assistance to the Government during strikes or times of national crisis, such as the foot and mouth epidemic.

A special cadre will also be created to provide what has been called "upstream engagement", where military trainers deploy abroad in an attempt to prevent conflicts.

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said: "The Army is reducing in size to become an integrated regular and reserve force of 120,000 by 2020, which was necessary to tackle the defence deficit. Any change of this size is bound to create uncertainty; however, the resilience of our soldiers should not be underestimated.

"The last decade of campaigning has been tough but the Army has emerged stronger and remains focused

on doing their job, whether it is in Afghanistan or at home in the UK for the Olympics. While we cannot comment on the individual circumstances of those leaving under redundancy terms, we do not accept that it is a reflection of morale of the Army."

Los Angeles Times
July 1, 2012

29. Will Dirty Tricks Have Role In Mexico's Presidential Election?

A drug war is raging, a party once known for brazen vote-rigging has a telegenic front-runner, and all parties now offer voters perks--but election officials say they are 'armored against fraud.'

By Tracy Wilkinson and Ken Ellingwood, Los Angeles Times

MEXICO CITY--Sunday's presidential election represents a difficult test for Mexico's wobbly democracy: Can it hold a fraud-free national vote in the midst of a raging drug war?

The country's top election official conceded recently that violence in parts of the country prevented election officials from completing some preparations.

But the official, Leonardo Valdes, insisted that safeguards are firmly in place to prevent the kind of brazen electoral fraud once notorious in Mexico. And, he said, most of the strong-arming, threats and payoffs by drug traffickers remain limited to local politics and less influential in the national race.

"Mexican presidential elections today are armored against fraud," Valdes said. More than 1 million trained poll workers will be deployed in 143,151 voting stations, nearly all of which will also have monitors from at least three political parties.

The specter of fraud looms especially large this year because the party that perfected the buying of votes and rigging of elections, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), is favored to return to the presidency with its telegenic candidate Enrique Peña Nieto. The PRI held on to power for seven decades through repression, coercion and co-opting opponents, until it was ousted in 2000. It is staging a hard-fought comeback.

Despite tighter oversight and strengthened laws to ensure clean elections, analysts say Mexico remains vulnerable to many of the dirty tricks that flourished during PRI rule.

Voter credentials make it easier to confirm a person's identity, for example, but candidates and parties have turned to handing out discount cards to win influence with voters.

Taking a page from the PRI's old playbook, all three parties now bus voters to the polls on election day, giving them meals or other perks along the way. Another reported ploy is for voters to take a picture of their marked ballot with a cellphone and later show it to party operatives in return for cash.

"We continue to have elections that have serious problems in terms of legality, equality of access," said John M. Ackerman, a law professor in Mexico City who has written about the country's election laws.

Even before the first ballot was cast, leftist candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, Peña Nieto's closest rival, warned of a fraud that would rob him "once again," as he puts it, of the presidency.

To see how bad political posturing can get, rewind to 2006, when Lopez Obrador lost to Felipe Calderon by less than

1% of the vote. Lopez Obrador refused to recognize Calderon's victory, unleashing a wave of paralyzing street protests.

The following year, Congress passed electoral reforms that regulate air time by parties, prohibit attack ads and shorten to 90 days the amount of time presidential candidates may campaign.

A big concern among Lopez Obrador supporters is the PRI's strong grass-roots presence across most of Mexico's 31 states and long history of vote-tampering during its rule. Leftists worry that the same well-oiled machinery could be used to inflate the vote on Peña Nieto's behalf.

But the odds for post-election controversy could hinge on the vote tally. A large margin would weaken potential charges of fraud, one reason why the Peña Nieto campaign hopes polls suggesting a blowout prove accurate.

Despite a drug war that has claimed more than 50,000 lives in almost six years, and traffickers' penetration of many levels of Mexican life, most experts agree that the fertile field for narco-influence in politics remains at the local level.

Traffickers are keen to control local police forces and city halls so that they can produce, sell and transport their drugs unimpeded. In elections in the state of Michoacan late last year, for example, cartels published ads in newspapers and made phone calls to regional officials with instructions on how to vote. In 2010, the ultra-violent city of Ciudad Juarez elected a mayor alleged to have had ties to a cartel, while in the state of Sinaloa, historic heartland of Mexican drug-trafficking, the compadre of one of the

country's top drug lords only narrowly lost the race for governor.

"We have had to recognize, especially locally, the presence and actions of criminal groups in the realm of elections," Interior Minister Alejandro Poire said last week. "We are acting to prevent it ... to guarantee that citizens be able to go out and vote in peace... We cannot call this an election of fear."

The election has forced Mexicans to ponder the progress of democracy in their nation. Most celebrated the defeat of the authoritarian PRI in 2000 and welcomed a new party, Calderon's National Action Party (PAN).

But 12 years later, many feel, rightly or wrongly, that the experiment failed. Fundamental reforms of the educational system or of the monopolies that dominate and strangle the economy were not undertaken. Instead, Mexicans are saddled with a bloody war, a gnawing sense of terror and insecurity, and, now, the return of the very party they ousted.

"Millions of Mexican people thought that, almost magically, alternation [one party handing off to another] would bring about profound changes in Mexico," said Alfonso Zarate, a political analyst in Mexico City. But a PRI victory, he said, "would mean the censure and disapproval of the PAN governments. It means disillusionment."

At the same time, the flow of power to the state governors since the centralized PRI regime was ousted has created powerful fiefdoms where governors can rule without the checks and balances of a healthy democracy.

"On the state level, we have gone backward," Zarate said.

As even more mature democracies have shown, an open multi-party system does not necessarily produce stellar candidates. Numerous Mexicans have expressed near-existential dismay over the choices they have in this election; they chafe at the prospect of the PRI's return, can't stomach more of the current, discredited government, and see Lopez Obrador as an unreformed erratic.

"This is a democratic process," Mexican historian Enrique Krauze said. But "the democratic voter — the voter who in Mexico believes deeply in democracy — has a difficult choice to make."

London Sunday Times
July 1, 2012
Pg. 1

30. Al-Qaeda 'To Bomb US Plane'

'Clean skin' Norwegian primed for terror attack on West
By David Leppard

AL-QAEDA is plotting a terrorist attack on an American airliner in the run-up to the Olympics, according to intelligence sources.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has recruited a Norwegian convert at a training camp in Yemen. The group is understood to have selected a target, believed to be a US passenger jet. News of the plot confirms fears among American and British intelligence agencies that Al-Qaeda is seeking to recruit radicalised westerners in an attempt to evade airport security.

The plot is the group's fourth to be detected since 2009, when AQAP sent a Nigerian-born British student on a plane with an underpants bomb. The bomb failed to detonate over Detroit and the

man was arrested and jailed. In 2010, it sent two bombs hidden in printer cartridges on cargo planes destined for Chicago. They were intercepted and defused in Dubai and Britain.

A third plot was averted two months ago when a British undercover agent, who had infiltrated AQAP, volunteered to be a suicide bomber. He smuggled out the latest version of the underpants bomb to US authorities.

The intelligence officials said the latest plot was not specifically targeted at the Olympics and should be seen in the context of Al-Qaeda's continuing ambitions to blow up US planes.

"There is terrorist plotting going on irrespective of the Olympics. The only thing that connects this to the Olympics is the fact that they are about to happen," said a Whitehall official.

AQAP has no history of targeting Britain. However, that did not mean British citizens were not at risk. "If you are blowing up aeroplanes you are likely to be killing Brits or having a big impact on the European or British economy. [So it] would in effect be an attack against Britain," the official said.

Another official added: "AQAP have traditionally done America, and that hasn't changed. But as we saw with the [printer] bomb, we could easily be collateral."

The Norwegian recruit goes under the Islamic name of Muslim Abu Abdurrahman. He is understood to be in his thirties and a "clean skin", with no previous criminal record. He converted in 2008 and quickly became radicalised. He later travelled to Yemen, where he has spent several months, to complete his training.

The man was believed to have been in the southeastern town of Azzan, the longtime home of AQAP, until last month. He then moved to Dammaj, a town in the north. It was reported last week that two British Muslim men from a mosque in west London had been killed fighting alongside Islamists in the area.

Officials said the intelligence accords with a rare speech last week by Jonathan Evans, the head of MI5. He highlighted concerns over the pipeline of home-grown, radicalised Muslims travelling to terrorist training camps in Yemen, Somalia and the African Sahel.

Evans said the destination of such recruits had shifted in recent years from Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the West has succeeded in disrupting Al-Qaeda's core command.

British intelligence officials last week declined to disclose further details of the plot, its timing, target or indeed how they had come to discover it. Neither would they comment on what measures they were taking to try to avert it.

Additional reporting: Iona Craig, Yemen

TheDailyBeast.com
July 1, 2012

31. Mumbai Terror Attack Group Lashkar E Tayyiba Now More Dangerous Than Al Qaeda

With the 9/11 terrorist group on the ropes, the organization that masterminded the 2008 Mumbai attacks has become the world's most dangerous, says Bruce Reidel.

The arrest of Sayeed Zabiuddin Ansari, alias Abu Jindal, at New Delhi airport late last month is a major breakthrough in the investigation of the deadliest

terror attack in the world since 9/11. Abu Jindal was one of the masterminds of the November 2008 attack on the city of Mumbai in which 166 people were killed, including six Americans. He is already confessing to his role and implicating Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate directly in controlling the attack as it went down.

The November 2008 attack by ten Lashkar e Tayyiba (LeT) terrorists on multiple targets in Mumbai, India was the most significant and innovative terrorist attack since 9/11. It marked the maturation of LeT from a Punjabi-based Pakistani terror group targeting India exclusively to a member of the global Islamic jihad targeting the enemies of al Qaeda: the Crusader West, Zionist Israel, and Hindu India. LeT used cell phones and GPS technology to terrorize an entire city and grab global attention for three days. LeT's masterminds ran the operation in real time from a headquarters in Pakistan, even issuing death sentences to innocents.

Abu Jindal, an Indian citizen traveling with a Pakistani passport, was in the control room in Karachi in 2008 talking on the phone to the ten terrorists. He gave them advice on where to look for more victims in the Taj Hotel, for example, and instructed them when to murder their hostages. His voice was recorded by the Indian authorities listening in on the phone calls and has since been replayed in chilling detail by the Indian police for all to hear.

According to press reports from India, Jindal was arrested on June 21 after being deported from Saudi Arabia to India. The arrest operation was a joint counter-terrorism effort by India, Saudi Arabia, and

the U.S. Abu Jindal was in the Kingdom recruiting and training new LeT volunteers from the enormous Pakistani diaspora in the Gulf countries. He was allegedly in the final stages of a "massive" new terror plot. Abu Jindal has also been linked to other attacks in India including the bombing of the Mumbai metro and train system in 2006 that killed over 180.

Abu Jindal has told the Indians that two members of the ISI were also in the control room, both allegedly majors in the Pakistani army. This confirms the longstanding accusation that the 2008 plot was orchestrated and conducted with the assistance of the ISI. An American, David Headley, who worked for LeT and did the reconnaissance for the attack has said the same thing. So has the only survivor of the attack force, Amir Kasab, who has been convicted of mass murder in India.

But because Abu Jindal was actually in the control room in Karachi his accusation is even more powerful. If the press reports about Abu Jindal's accusations are confirmed then the ISI was involved directly in the decision to murder Americans. So far the Indian government has publicly confirmed only that his testimony points to state sponsorship of the attack without providing details of his confessions.

The Saudi role in capturing Abu Jindal is also significant. Riyadh is Islamabad's closest ally and the ISI has very strong links with its Saudi counterparts. The Pakistani community in the Kingdom and the Gulf states has long been a major source of the LeT's finances. If the Kingdom is now ready to act against LeT then the group will face some financial trouble.

But not yet trouble at home. More than three years after the attack LeT has been sanctioned by the United Nations and the United States but has paid no serious price for its attack in Mumbai. It operates freely in Pakistan and has continuing connections with the Pakistani intelligence service and army. Its founder and leader Hafeez Saeed has a \$10 million bounty on his head from the U.S., but regularly appears on Pakistani television and routinely addresses large anti-American rallies organized with the help of the ISI. LeT has a global presence, with cells throughout South Asia, the Persian Gulf, and into Europe, Australia and North America. With al Qaeda on the ropes, LeT, with the help of its Pakistani backers, is now probably the most dangerous terror group in the world.

Bruce Riedel, a former longtime CIA officer, is a senior fellow in the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution. At President Obama's request, he chaired the strategic review of policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2009. He is author of the book Deadly Embrace: Pakistan, America and the Future of the Global Jihad and The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology and Future.

Boston Globe
July 1, 2012
Pg. 1

32. Sorrow's Best Friend
Service dogs named for fallen soldiers are giving help and solace to veterans beset by war trauma

By Katie Johnston, Globe Staff
LEXINGTON, N.C. -- Two years after returning to Massachusetts from Iraq, the worst memories of her combat experience began to resurface for Natasha Young-Alicea: Five dead Marines, killed while

dismantling unexploded bombs; the bloody gear she collected for disposal; the personal belongings that she sorted, packed, and returned to grieving families.

Nightmares, migraines, and anxiety attacks followed. The 31-year-old became increasingly isolated and depressed. She withdrew from family and friends. "I went from this bubbly, flowery woman to this lukewarm ...," the retired staff sergeant began, her voice trailing off. "I felt like a visitor in my own life."

Eight hundred miles away, in this central North Carolina community, Samuel and Evelyn Harris faced their own dark memories of a beautiful, late summer afternoon in 2008 when a chaplain and four Navy SEALs drove up to their home and told them their youngest son, Joshua, a 36-year old SEAL, had drowned during an operation in Afghanistan.

"There are days," said Evelyn Harris, "I don't think I'm going to make it."

Like thousands of Americans during more than a decade of war, the Harrises and Young-Alicea lived separately in their sorrow. They sought comfort from family and friends, advice from counselors, and solace in their community. They fought despair, and prayed for strength. They hoped to find some sort of peace.

And eventually they would, with the help of an unexpected friend -- a two-year-old golden retriever -- and, ultimately, each other.

Nobody ever expected much from Young-Alicea. She grew up poor in Lawrence, raised by her mother, who couldn't work due to a disabling back condition and depended on government assistance. Her father, who struggled with drugs, was beaten to death in a bar fight when she was 19.

After graduating from a technical high school in Hathorne in 1999, Young-Alicea joined the Marines, where she earned honors and was quickly promoted up the ranks. "It was the first time that anybody in my young adult life believed in me that I could be more," she said.

She was deployed to Iraq twice. By the second time, in 2007, she was a sergeant in a company that dismantled and disposed of unexploded bombs, grenades, and other ordnance.

It was part of Young-Alicea's job to deal with the deaths and casualties that resulted from this dangerous assignment, including helping to craft letters of condolence to families. In addition to the five Marines killed during her eight-month tour, about a dozen more were wounded. "The ones that didn't pass away were pretty messed up," she said.

When she came back to Massachusetts, she worked 70 hours a week as a Marine recruiter in Plymouth and pushed the memories deep down inside her. "I didn't feel," she said. But three years ago, she had a baby, and then a series of serious health setbacks that eventually forced her to retire from the Marines. She fell into a black hole of despair.

"Things started surfacing," she said.

A star who looked to help

Josh Harris grew up a world apart from Young-Alicea. His father is a gynecological surgeon and retired obstetrician; his mother, an actress who started a children's theater in Lexington.

Josh went to Davidson College to play football and study art, and his darkly beautiful abstract paintings cover the walls of his parents' home on a 300-acre former dairy farm.

He was always helping people, friends and family say. A star high school linebacker who defended a girl being bullied in the hall, the protective brother who slept on his twin sister's couch when she moved to New York because he didn't want her to be alone. He was also the boy who always brought home stray dogs.

Josh had wanted to be a Navy SEAL since he was in high school, his mother said, and after studying art in Prague, pursuing a graduate degree in architecture, and working as a carpenter, he became one at the age of 28.

He was deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan five times and received numerous medals, including a purple heart and two bronze stars with valor.

His mother worried, but she had a feeling that nothing could happen to the son who could do so much so well, and who could always tell when she was upset. Every time he left, he told his parents: "No matter what happens to me, just know that I am living my dream."

On the day the Navy chaplain came to their door, his father recalled, "I just sort of fell to the ground like a bolt of lightning hit me."

Jumping to top of the list

Sam and Evelyn Harris buried their son in Arlington National Cemetery, escorted there by the Patriot Guard Riders, a national motorcycle organization that accompanies grieving military families to funerals. One of the riders in attendance was David Cantara, a 48-year-old Army veteran from High Point, N.C., who rescues golden retriever puppies and trains them as psychiatric service dogs for veterans.

With the families' blessing, he names them for fallen soldiers.

Two and a half years after the funeral, he called the

Harrises and asked if he could dedicate one of his dogs to Josh. Evelyn felt comforted by the thought of having another connection to her son, who was, she said, "insane over animals."

"We are basically providing a living memorial for their son or daughter so their stories can be told, so their memories can be kept alive," said Cantara, whose oldest daughter died as an infant. "It is a healing mission of course for the dogs and the soldiers, but also for the soldiers' families."

Cantara, who grew up in Biddeford, Maine, has placed 37 dogs with veterans free of charge and has nine more "recruits" in training through his two-year-old nonprofit organization, Patriot Rovers.

The dogs support veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and brain injuries, doing everything from alleviating anxiety with a gentle nudge to interrupting nightmares, turning on lights, and searching the house for intruders.

Each dog wears a sign that says "Ask to pet me," providing a way for withdrawn veterans to interact with people and tell the story of a fallen soldier.

Cantara has 40 veterans waiting for dogs, but when he saw Young-Alicea's application, with details of her service in an explosive ordnance disposal unit, she jumped to the top of the list.

At first, Young-Alicea was leery about getting a service dog. Her two-year-old golden retriever wears a picture of his namesake -- bearded and wearing fatigues -- attached to his red service dog vest.

"It shines a light on your issues," she said.

But in the three months since she's had Josh, she said, she's been calmer. She and her son play with the dog in the yard, running and laughing

together in ways they hadn't before.

Everywhere Young-Alicea goes, Josh is with her -- at the veteran center in Haverhill where she volunteers during the day, at Northern Essex Community College where she takes classes at night.

Once, when a professor's remark made her leap to her feet in a rage, Josh stood up and licked her hand, nudging her gently back from the brink.

When she goes to the grocery store, Josh sits behind her in the checkout line, keeping people from coming up too close behind her, which makes her anxious. Each night, he sits in front of the closet where her medication is stored to remind her to take it.

"He loves me without judgment," Young-Alicea said, tears glistening in her eyes. "He's always got my back."

For the Harrises, knowing there is a living symbol of their son, one that is helping another veteran cope with emotional battle scars, has been healing.

"We're just keeping Josh's good going," Evelyn Harris said.

Coming together in memory

Last month, Cantara maxed out his credit card to fly Young-Alicea, her husband, Robert, and Josh down to North Carolina to meet the Harrises.

Cantara has run through his life savings to keep his operation afloat and is seeking more grants to cover the \$6,300 cost to train and care for each dog.

The two families came together at the county fairgrounds during a festival held each summer in Josh Harris's honor. The money raised at the annual festival goes toward military support organizations and scholarships for local students.

After standing silently while a bugler played taps, the Harrises walked over to Young-Alicea, who was waiting nervously under a tree, and wrapped their arms around her.

In the middle of it all, panting quietly, was Josh.

Evelyn Harris knelt down and stroked his head. "Josh," she repeated softly as she looked at her son's picture on the dog's vest. "Josh."

"You take good care of Josh?" asked Harris.

"I love Joshua," Young-Alicea said.

"Does he take good care of you?" Harris asked.

"More than you could ever imagine," Young-Alicea replied.

That evening, Young-Alicea sat on the Harrises' sofa and flipped through a photo album from his funeral.

Tears streamed down her face as she thought about the comrades she had lost in Iraq and the man she never knew who is now so much a part of her life.

Just after sunset, the Harrises took her to a memorial they had created for their son on top of a small hill -- a bench flanked by two poles flying an American flag and a Navy SEALs trident.

Together, with Josh, they looked out over a field of young pines as the sky slowly darkened.

For more information about Patriot Rovers, go to patriotrovers.org.

Los Angeles Times
July 1, 2012

33. Drone Makers Urge U.S. To Let Them Sell More Overseas

U.S. firms such as Northrop are eager to tap foreign countries' growing appetite for drones, which some nations

already sell. Arms control advocates fear the weapons could fall into enemy hands.

By W.J. Hennigan, Los Angeles Times

Despite concerns about U.S.-made drones ending up in enemy hands, American military contractors are lobbying the government to loosen export restrictions and open up foreign markets to the unmanned aircraft that have reshaped modern warfare.

Companies such as Northrop Grumman Corp. and other arms makers are eager to tap a growing foreign appetite for high-tech — and relatively cheap — drones, already being sold on the world market by countries such as Israel and China.

"Export restrictions are hurting this industry in America without making us any safer," Wesley G. Bush, Northrop's chief executive, said at a defense conference this year. "The U.S. is struggling to sell unmanned aircraft to our allies while other nations prepare to jump into the marketplace with both feet."

The defense industry may want to sell more drones overseas, but arms control advocates are alarmed. The potential for these weapons to fall into enemy hands is great, they say, and easing restrictions could result in remote-controlled killing machines being used in some of the most volatile regions of the world.

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Assn., said that drone sales are problematic because the unmanned vehicles are more affordable than other military aircraft. And with no human pilot at risk, drones could make it easier to decide to go to war, he said.

"The proliferation of this technology will mark a major

shift in the way wars are waged," he said. "We're talking about very sophisticated war machines here. We need to be very careful about who gets this technology. It could come back to hurt us."

As the U.S. war effort draws down and the Pentagon budget shrinks, defense companies say they need Congress to ease restrictions so they can tap lucrative foreign markets for their wares.

More important, they say, the current export restrictions may cause the U.S. to lose potential customers to nations eager to elbow their way into the market. Already, Israel is making drones and selling them to several countries, including Azerbaijan, India and Ecuador. China has more than a dozen drones in development.

The world appetite for drones will be vividly on display next week at the Farnborough International Airshow in England, one of the largest aerospace showcases.

While American aerospace firms are expected to brag about their usual big sales of commercial jets, attack helicopters and fighter planes, they will have to sit idly by and watch as foreign countries work to land lucrative deals for fresh batches of drones.

The Congressional Research Service warned this year that foreign competitors are getting a jump on U.S. firms.

"Much new business is likely to be generated in the market, and if U.S. companies fail to capture this market share, European, Russian, Israeli, Chinese or South African companies will," the research service wrote in its January report. "As part of its defense and foreign policy oversight, Congress may examine whether a balance must be struck between supporting legitimate

U.S. exports and curbing the spread of [drone] technologies to dangerous groups or countries."

The U.S. already sells fighter jets, bunker-busting bombs and high-powered ship-mounted guns to a wide variety of countries.

But drone sales have been largely prohibited since a 1987 agreement reached by a group called the Missile Technology Control Regime. This group, which initially consisted of the U.S., Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Britain, has grown to include 34 countries.

There have been a few exceptions for sales over the years, but the agreement put restrictions on the export of any larger pilotless flying aircraft — blimps, helicopters, jets — that can carry 1,102 pounds for more than 186 miles at a time. Drones smaller than these are allowed to be sold.

The primary focus of the agreement was to control the spread of ballistic missiles and other weapons capable of mass destruction.

It was signed during the Cold War — the days when drone aircraft were still largely the stuff of science fiction, said Peter W. Singer, a fellow at the Brookings Institution and author of "Wired for War," a book about robotic warfare.

"What we face now is a matter of catching up 20th century ideas and laws to 21st century realities," he said.

Rep. Howard L. Berman (D-Los Angeles), ranking Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said the Obama administration has begun an initiative to change export rules that will roll back many of the restrictions on the way technology is sold to foreign countries.

He expects drone sales to be addressed before his committee this year.

"It's crazy for us to shut off sales in this area while other countries push ahead," Berman said. "A very significant part of this economic recovery depends on exports. We need to take advantage of where our strengths lie."

But, he said, any change to U.S. export controls should be done cautiously and not at the risk of compromising national security.

Meanwhile, drone makers are starting to deal with the current restrictions by designing smaller, unarmed models that are lighter in weight to meet the agreement specifications.

General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc., which builds the MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper hunter-killer drones used by the Air Force and CIA, has designed a new drone that is subject to looser export restrictions: an unarmed version of the Predator.

The drone, called the Predator XP, could be used for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions, among other functions.

The San Diego-area company expects to sell the drone to the United Arab Emirates this year. General Atomics would not comment on the details of the potential deal, but it acknowledged growing overseas demand.

In its latest assessment of the industry, aerospace research firm Teal Group Corp. estimated that worldwide drone spending will almost double over the next decade, to \$11.4 billion in 2022 from \$6.6 billion next year.

Phil Finnegan, a Teal Group analyst who helped put together the study, said the growth in overseas spending makes sense because the Pentagon has spent the last

decade building up its drone fleet to nearly 7,500 aircraft. Many foreign countries are just beginning to build their fleets.

"Defense contractors know that demand in the U.S. is expected to flatten out," he said. "The real growth will be in international markets."

In particular, he said, Asia and Latin America will be strong markets.

That's precisely where government-owned Israel Aerospace Industries is operating: It has offices in India, Colombia and Ecuador, among other countries.

Israel is not a partner in the Missile Technology Control Regime. Israel Aerospace Industries, better known as IAI, has been making drones since the late 1970s and has sold them to several countries. The company, which also makes missile and electronic systems, disclosed in its financial statements that 78% of its \$3.4 billion in sales came from exports.

"There's no doubt about it," said Doron Suslik, the company's vice president of corporate communications. Drones "are one of the core business areas. IAI has expanded our sales to many other countries to make deals."

These are not new concerns for the aerospace industry. In a recent report, the Aerospace Industries Assn. pointed out that the industry saw a drop in satellite sales after the U.S. put tight restrictions on the export of satellite technology.

The trade group concluded that from 1999 to 2009, the restrictions cost the U.S. 9,000 jobs and up to \$21 billion in lost revenue. Its report said the U.S. held 73% of the worldwide share of satellite exports in 1995. But 10 years later, after export controls took effect, the U.S. market share fell to 25%.

"There's a risk of following down the same road" with drones, said Remy Nathan, the group's vice president of international affairs. "The export restrictions were put into place for good reasons, but it requires some tweaks to include the technology advancements of today."

Mobile Press-Register (al.com)
June 30, 2012

34. Airbus Is Coming: Agreement Approved For \$600 Million, 1,000-Worker Plant In Mobile

By George Talbot, Press-Register

The decision is final.

Airbus has approved plans to construct an aircraft assembly plant in Mobile and will announce the landmark project at a news conference Monday along the city's downtown waterfront.

The details are astounding: A sprawling, \$600 million factory at the Brookley Aeroplex that will assemble A319, A320 and A321 aircraft and employ 1,000 full-time workers at full capacity, according to an internal briefing document obtained by the Press-Register.

More than half of that capital investment is slated for construction, which will commence in 2013 and create an estimated 2,500 jobs over a two-year construction phase. The balance of the money is budgeted for tools, machinery, infrastructure and training.

Aircraft assembly is scheduled to begin in 2015, with first deliveries from the Mobile plant in 2016. Airbus anticipates the plant will produce 40 to 50 aircraft per year by 2017.

Reached for comment Saturday, a spokesman for Airbus Americas said he could

not confirm any of the project's details.

"Airbus has nothing to announce at this time," said Clay McConnell, vice president of communications for the company's U.S. subsidiary.

The massive project will establish Mobile as one of a handful of cities around the world that produce large aircraft and give Airbus, a subsidiary of the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Co., a long-sought foothold on American soil.

It also marks a bold offensive by Airbus against Chicago-based Boeing Co., its arch rival in the commercial marketplace and a U.S. industrial icon.

The Wall Street Journal reported Saturday that the move by Airbus onto Boeing's home turf "could transform the domestic aerospace industry in the same way that Toyota Motor Corp. transformed the auto industry."

The Japanese automaker led a wave of foreign "transplants" who started building cars in the U.S. in the 1980s, tilting the industry's axis away from unionized plants in Detroit and toward the right-to-work South.

Alabama turned out its first automobile in 1997 at a Mercedes-Benz plant near Tuscaloosa. The state has since added production plants from Honda and Hyundai, putting it on pace to become the nation's No. 3 automotive manufacturer within the next few years.

Boeing, which builds its planes in Everett, Wash., and more recently in Charleston, S.C., has fought hard to block Airbus from breaking its monopoly on domestic aircraft production.

Boeing, the nation's top exporter, waged a bare-knuckle battle with EADS over a lucrative contract to build

refueling tankers for the U.S. Air Force. The politically charged, five-year-long fight ended in 2011 when the Pentagon picked Boeing for the deal, killing plans by EADS to establish a \$600 million assembly plant at Brookley.

EADS wanted the 1,400-worker project to produce KC-45 tankers and Airbus A330 freighter jets, and Mobile invested heavily in a campaign to win the prize. The loss became the latest painful footnote in a city that has known more than its share of heartbreak.

Mobile, founded by the French in 1702, has been whipped by hurricanes, yellow fever and the Union army over the course of three centuries. The city was devastated in 1969 when the Pentagon closed Brookley, a former Air Force base that drove the local economy.

Airbus on Monday will tout the community as the world's next great center of aerospace excellence, according to talking points distributed to local officials ahead of Monday's news conference.

Airbus described the investment as "great for America" because it will expand the U.S. industrial base, create high-paying, high-tech manufacturing jobs and support thousands more jobs across a broad network of suppliers.

The project will be unveiled by Fabrice Bregier, a French executive who was named president of Airbus on May 31. Alabama officials scheduled to participate in the announcement include Gov. Robert Bentley, U.S. Sens. Richard Shelby and Jeff Sessions, U.S. Rep. Jo Bonner and Mobile Mayor Sam Jones, according to a copy of the event itinerary obtained by the Press-Register.

The offices of Bentley and Shelby confirmed that the elected officials were traveling to Mobile to attend a news conference on Monday, and the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce distributed invitations to an "exciting economic development announcement" to be held at 10 a.m. at the Arthur R. Outlaw Mobile Convention Center.

The ceremony will be capped with the formal signing of an agreement between Airbus and Alabama. After putting pen to paper, Bregier, 50, and Bentley, 69, will be asked to shake hands in front of a model of the A320neo to "applause from audience and festive music."

Additional events are planned later Monday and Tuesday in Mobile, highlighted by the arrival of an A320 jet at Brookley.

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot
July 1, 2012

35. Military Contractor Cited For Treatment Of Goats

By Joanne Kimberlin

VIRGINIA BEACH--The video is tough to stomach: Live goats being used for Coast Guard trauma training at an old airfield in Pungo.

The undercover footage, shot by an anonymous whistleblower and delivered to the Norfolk headquarters of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, is firing up both sides of a debate that impacts a military town like nowhere else: Should animals be sacrificed in order to save lives on the battlefield?

The military, which calls the practice "live-tissue training," says yes.

In an email from the Department of Defense, Lt. Col. Melinda Morgan said

the exercises are "vitaly important because the medic is the first responder who provides treatment to an injured soldier, sailor, airman, Marine or civilian. Comprehensive combat medic training is absolutely necessary to prevent significant loss of life of our nation's sons and daughters."

Animal rights groups say no.

"It's simply not necessary," said Ingrid Newkirk, PETA's founder. "Not only are there more humane ways, but more effective. Our soldiers deserve more than some goats and a pair of tree trimmers."

The video, which blurs the faces of the human participants, shows lopping shears and scalpels being used to inflict wounds and amputate the legs of anesthetized goats so trainees can practice war zone emergency techniques.

In one scene, a goat is heard moaning. In another, a prone goat kicks, prompting a man attending to the animal to call for "another bump" of anesthesia.

PETA turned to its bench of celebrity supporters - legendary director Oliver Stone, a Vietnam vet, made his own video condemning the goat exercise - and filed a flurry of complaints, which prompted a number of investigations.

Last month, the U.S. Department of Agriculture cited Tier 1 Group, the private military contractor that orchestrates the training, for inadequately anesthetizing and monitoring the goats.

It's the Arkansas-based outfit's second such violation. In 2011, the USDA warned Tier 1 that its procedures violated Animal Welfare Act protocols that cover research animals and were "to be corrected immediately."

The city of Virginia Beach isn't pleased either. After

hearing from PETA, Chris Langaster, an assistant zoning administrator, sent a warning letter to the airfield's owner.

"The animal-abuse component of the situation - that's not my field," Langaster said. "My part is the use of the property."

Langaster's letter, addressed to Pungo Airfield LLC, points out that the land is zoned AG - for agriculture - with conditional use permits that allow a mulching facility and recreational paintball and car racing. Trauma training isn't part of the deal.

"We weren't aware at all that this was going on there," Langaster said.

The Coast Guard has launched its own inquiry to ensure the Pungo exercises adhered to its policies. In an email from a Coast Guard office in Portsmouth, Lt. Cmdr. Jamie Frederick said the service has hundreds of members stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that combat trauma training has been conducted in Hampton Roads since 2008, with 514 personnel taking part.

PETA says human-like simulators and inner-city emergency rooms would offer more realistic training.

"Go to Chicago," Newkirk said. "Or Detroit. We've got over 800 ER doctors who've told the military, 'We can show you all the gunshot wounds you need.'"

But the Defense Department isn't convinced.

"We're actively working to refine, reduce, and appropriately replace the use of live animals in medical education and training whenever possible," Morgan wrote in her email. "However, until there are validated alternatives, the experience and confidence gained by the use of live animals in teaching life-

saving procedures must remain a viable training method."

Since PETA lodged its complaint with the Department of Defense, the Navy has awarded a \$1.7 million contract to Tier 1 to conduct trauma training exercises for 360 service members in Virginia Beach and San Diego using live pigs.

Washington Post

July 1, 2012

Pg. 19

36. When Rapists Wear Uniforms

By Garry Trudeau and Loree Sutton

"The officer bragged to his fellow officer friends that he had 'bagged' me. I got called up to a major's office, and he charged me with fraternization and adultery."

--An active-duty Marine, speaking of her rape, in "The Invisible War"

If there is a defining theme in all of the testimony in "The Invisible War," the searing documentary film released this week about military sexual assault, it's betrayal. An estimated 19,000 rapes and sexual assaults took place in the military last year. Every one of them represents a monstrous crime made much worse by the sense of betrayal that accompanied it. That so few victims — just one in seven — report these crimes underscores the utter lack of trust that pervades military culture.

This should be deeply alarming to the armed services, which have professed a "zero-tolerance" policy for years — but have little to show for it. Trust is critical to any team endeavor, but in the military it can be the difference between life and death. The idea of "having someone's back" is borrowed from the warrior's real-life lexicon. Without trust,

nothing works in the military. And because it is experience that forms trust, if a soldier's experience tells her that she will not receive support and justice if she is attacked from within her ranks, she ceases to be an effective team member and suffers overwhelming personal consequences. You have lost that soldier forever. Multiply her by 19,000, and the impact on overall readiness is profound.

The military is about big, bold values, stitched into mottos, drilled into heads. Respect, trust, duty, honor, patriotism — these unambiguous values are evoked without irony. They allow down-range warriors the confidence to roll out of their cots and plunge into the horrific daily demands of their profession. They know that their brothers and sisters have their backs — and that they will take heroic measures to protect them.

Consider, then, what it does to the psyche of a soldier when he or she is stalked and attacked by that trusted teammate. The average rapist is a lifetime offender and adept at developing protective coloration. His peers often cannot believe he is capable of such crimes, so the victim is, at best, ignored — especially if the perpetrator is a friend of the superior to whom the victim must report. According to one Defense Department study, 33 percent of victims who don't report say they don't proceed for this reason alone. Twenty-five percent say they don't report because the commander they must report to *is* the rapist. And when the rapist is a superior — the very person our service members have been *trained* to trust and obey — it's easy to see why so many victims develop a level of post-traumatic stress disorder far

exceeding the impact of war-zone combat.

For all these reasons, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's plan to transfer responsibility from unit commanders to an officer further up the chain of command is only a promising first step. If the Pentagon really means to fix the problem of military assault, it must begin by restoring trust in the system. The many victims who have looked in vain to majors and lieutenant commanders for justice can be forgiven for a little eye-rolling at the suggestion that they will receive it from colonels and captains in the future. There is deep cynicism about any solution that keeps the decision-making within the military installation or unit structure, where old-boy networks still rule and where careers are hardly advanced by reporting and documenting rape within the ranks.

In our view, the only credible solution is to create an independent special victims unit completely outside the unit chain of command, under civilian oversight. It should be led by a flag-rank officer who has no stake in the reputation of individual commands but a huge stake in doing the only thing that matters — driving down the rate of sexual assault in the military. Any such office would need to ensure leader accountability for the "gateway behaviors" — bullying, humiliation, scapegoating — that set the conditions for violent assault. Another Defense Department study found that the incidence of rape triples in units that tolerate sexual harassment.

This will not be easy, even for an independent authority. The military is both a closed system and a target-rich environment, and a career offender currently

has little reason to believe he will be apprehended and punished. Several Navy studies administered anonymously reveal that as many as 15 percent of men have attempted rape or have raped someone before they enlisted — twice the percentage of their age-matched peers. Compounding this reality, men and women who enter the military are more likely to have been abused or sexually assaulted before they enlist, a traumatic experience that places them at greater risk for repeated assault. The military population is thus more likely to assault as well as to be assaulted. Isolated duty stations and its closed system for reporting, investigating and prosecuting crimes have made the military, this country's most trusted government institution, a predator's paradise.

To be clear, the vast majority of rape and sexual assault crimes are committed by a small minority of service members who relentlessly select, stalk and assault their prey. Most service members would never commit such a crime. But until basic trust can be restored to the culture, there is no reason to believe the Pentagon will ever end the sexual violence that has wreaked such havoc within the ranks.

Garry Trudeau is the creator of the comic strip "Doonesbury." Loree Sutton, a retired Army brigadier general, is a psychiatrist and founding director of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury. She appears briefly in the film "The Invisible War."

Washington Post

July 1, 2012

Pg. 21

37. Bombing Or The Bomb?

By David Ignatius

JERUSALEM--A popular new slogan making the rounds among government ministers here is that in dealing with Iran, Israel faces a decision between "bombing or the bomb." In other words, if Israel doesn't attack, Iran will eventually obtain nuclear weapons.

This stark choice sums up the mood among top officials of the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: It's clear that Israel's military option is still very much on the table, despite the success of economic sanctions in forcing Iran into negotiations.

"It's not a bluff, they're serious about it," says Efraim Halevy, a former head of the Mossad, Israel's intelligence service. A half-dozen other experts and officials made the same point in interviews last week: The world shouldn't relax and assume that a showdown with Iran has been postponed until next year. Here, the alarm light is still flashing red.

Israeli leaders have been warning the Obama administration that the heat isn't off for 2012. When a senior Israeli politician visited Washington recently and was advised that the mood was calmer than in the spring, the Israeli cautioned that the Netanyahu government hadn't changed its position "one iota."

The negotiations with Iran by the group of leading nations known as the "P5+1," rather than easing Israel's anxieties, may actually have deepened them. That's not just because Netanyahu thinks the Iranians are stalling. He fears that even if negotiators won their demand that Iran stop enriching uranium to 20 percent and export its stockpile of fuel already enriched to that level, this would still leave more than 6,000 kilograms

of low-enriched uranium that, within a year or less, could be augmented to bomb-grade material.

Netanyahu wants to turn back the Iranian nuclear clock, by shipping out all the enriched uranium. And if negotiations can't achieve this, he may be ready to try by military means.

The numbers game on enrichment reveals a deeper difference: For President Obama, the trigger for military action would be a "breakout" decision by Iran's supreme leader to go for a bomb, something he hasn't yet done. For Netanyahu, the red line is preventing Iran from ever reaching "threshold" capability where it could contemplate a breakout. He isn't comfortable with letting Tehran have the enrichment capability that could be used to make a bomb, even under a nominally peaceful program.

Netanyahu sees his country's very existence at stake, and he's prepared for Israel to go it alone because he's unwilling to entrust the survival of the Jewish state to others. But some Israeli experts, including several key supporters of his government, don't like this "existential" rhetoric warning of another Holocaust, arguing that it nullifies Israel's defense capabilities and deterrence.

Though most members of Netanyahu's government would probably support him, there are some subtle nuances of opinion. U.S. officials say Defense Minister Ehud Barak's focus is stopping Iran before it enters a "zone of immunity" when it begins full operation of centrifuges buried under a mountain near Qom. Iran probably will enter this zone sometime later this year. As Israeli officials have put it, the deadline for action "is not a matter of weeks, but it's not a matter of years, either."

American officials think Barak may also be more willing than Netanyahu to accept a deal in which Iran retains some modest enrichment capability — and can save face by saying it hasn't compromised its rights as a signatory of the non-proliferation treaty — but can't accumulate enough material to make a bomb.

Some Israeli experts are skeptical about the "zone of immunity" timeline. They believe that no facility, even the hardened site at Qom, is invulnerable to a clever attack: Iran will have immunity only with an actual nuclear-weapons umbrella.

While I understand Netanyahu's concerns, I think an Israeli attack could be counterproductive. It would shatter the international coalition against Iran, collapse the sanctions program when it is starting to bite and trigger consequences that cannot be predicted, especially during a time of sweeping change in the Middle East.

Before he rolls the dice, Netanyahu should recall the shattering experience of Menachem Begin, a prime minister no less devoted to Israel, who was haunted in his final days in office by the sense that his invasion of Lebanon in 1982, intended to protect Israel's security, had been a mistake. The potential costs and benefits of an attack on Iran are unknowable, but for better or worse, it would be, as Halevy says, "an event that would affect the course of this century."

Boston Globe
July 1, 2012

38. No Danger In A Nuclear Iran? Really?

By Jeff Jacoby

ARE YOU concerned about Tehran's drive for nuclear weapons? Political scientist

Kenneth Waltz isn't. A senior research scholar at Columbia University and former president of American Political Science Association, Waltz writes in the new issue of *Foreign Affairs* that it's time we learned to stop worrying and love the Iranian bomb.

Waltz's piece is headlined "Why Iran Should Get the Bomb." The US government and its allies in Europe, Israel, and the Arab world may regard the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran as the gravest security threat the world faces. But Waltz urges all of them to take a chill pill. Nukes in the hands of the mullahs would not be the worst outcome of the present crisis, he argues. "In fact, it would probably be the best possible result: the one most likely to restore stability to the Middle East."

In a nutshell, Waltz's view is that what makes the Middle East dangerously unstable is that while Israel has nuclear weapons, its most fanatical enemies don't. "It is Israel's nuclear arsenal, not Iran's desire for one, that has contributed most to the current crisis," he writes. "Power, after all, begs to be balanced."

But wouldn't a violent and extremist regime like Iran's -- a key patron of international terrorism, a brutal suppressor of human rights, an exporter of jihad, and an open exponent of wiping Israel "off the map" -- be even more dangerous if its ballistic missiles were topped with nuclear warheads? On the contrary, Waltz insists: "History shows that when countries acquire the bomb, they feel increasingly vulnerable and become acutely aware that their nuclear weapons make them a potential target in the eyes of major powers. This awareness discourages nuclear states from bold and aggressive action."

Nor does Waltz worry about a nuclear proliferation spiral should Tehran get the bomb. "Once Iran crosses the nuclear threshold, deterrence will apply," he assures his readers. "No other country in the region will have an incentive to acquire its own nuclear capability, and the current crisis will finally dissipate."

If Waltz's breezy nonchalance strikes you as outlandish, you aren't alone. Daniel Pipes of the Middle East Forum calls it "the single most preposterous analysis by an allegedly serious strategist of the Iranian quest for a nuclear weapon." To the American Enterprise Institute's Gary Schmitt, a former staff director of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, it recalls Alfred E. Neuman's mantra: "What, me worry?" The notion that Israel's nuclear capability destabilizes the Middle East is almost self-refuting: Would a non-nuclear Israel be more or less vulnerable to attack?

As for the calming effect of an Iranian bomb, that's hard to square with the Arab world's alarm at the prospect: "If Iran develops a nuclear weapon," Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal has warned, "we will have to follow suit."

Yet the appeal of Waltz's view should not be underestimated, especially as the West approaches the ultimate red line -- the moment when Iran's nuclear facilities will be too far advanced to be taken out in a pre-emptive strike. Faced with the prospect of military action to stop an evil regime, there will always be those eager for reassurance that everything will work out as long as we do nothing.

Waltz has been preaching his more-nukes-are-safer-nukes sermon for quite some time. "It's been proven without exception," he insisted in 2007,

"that whoever gets nuclear weapons behaves with caution and moderation."

But Iran is not like Russia, India, China, or the other existing members of the nuclear club. Time and again Tehran has called explicitly for the extermination of Israel, making clear that it sees nuclear weapons as a means to that end. "The use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything," Iranian president Hashemi Rafsanjani baldly explained in 2001. "However, it will only harm the Islamic world. It is not irrational to contemplate such an eventuality." Tehran still contemplates it. Just weeks ago, a news release from Iran's Fars News Agency was headlined: "Top Commander Reiterates Iran's Commitment to Full Annihilation of Israel."

Let a regime that hungers for apocalypse and genocide get the bomb? Welcome it? Even Dr. Strangelove wouldn't go that far.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
July 1, 2012

39. Dangerous Naivete *Obama's policies allow radicals to rise in the Middle East*

By Jack Kelly

His election would spread democracy and respect for the United States throughout the Middle East, President Barack Obama believed.

It hasn't worked out that way. Since 2009, the percentages of Middle Easterners who have a favorable opinion of America, and of President Obama, have declined by 40 percent and 37 percent, respectively, according to Pew's annual poll.

The "Arab Spring" has produced new breeding grounds for terrorists, said the head of MI5, Britain's counterintelligence service.

*Last Sunday, the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood won in what was the first -- and may be the last -- democratic presidential election in Egyptian history. The Muslim Brotherhood are Islamists, many of whom advocate the worldwide imposition of Islamic law.

"Amid the euphoria of the Tahrir Square revolution last year," there were two sets of pessimists, wrote Richard Spencer, a Cairo-based correspondent for the London Telegraph. "The first said the Muslim world was unsuited to democracy, and some form of dictatorship would reassert itself. The second said that democracy would sweep in the Islamists. I don't suppose even the worst pessimists thought Egypt would end up with both, but that, on the face of it, is what we have now," Mr. Spencer wrote.

*NATO waged war last year in Libya to oust dictator Moammar Gadhafi. The result, according to StrategyPage, is chaos.

"The situation in the country gets worse by the day," wrote Con Coughlin, foreign editor of the London Telegraph. "A return to democracy and the return of law [is] nothing but a distant dream."

*Nearly 15,000 have been killed in a brutal civil war in Syria that pits forces loyal to dictator Bashar Assad against at least 20 rebel groups.

The war is going badly for Mr. Assad. There have been mass defections from the Syrian army -- including at least one general -- the London Daily Mail reported last Sunday.

Since Syria is Iran's foremost ally, this should be good news for the United States. But Islamists dominate among the rebels, who can be as cruel as Mr. Assad.

Often, the only choices we have in the Muslim world are between bad and worse. Gadhafi was, and Mr. Assad is, a supporter of terrorism. But they're secular dictators who accepted limits ignored by ardent jihadists.

The Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was a reformer whose "entourage of close advisers is composed of moderate, progressive individuals," Princeton Prof. Richard Falk wrote in *The New York Times* in 1979. President Jimmy Carter believed that, too, so he helped push the Shah of Iran off the Peacock Throne.

Once he consolidated power, Khomeini took off his mask. Mohammed Morsi, Egypt's president-elect, is still wearing his. He will protect the rights of Christians, he promised. That was prudent, because he hasn't assumed office yet. But it almost certainly isn't true. During the campaign, Mr. Morsi told supporters: "Jihad is our path, and death for the sake of Allah is our most lofty aspiration."

The Muslim Brotherhood was mentored by Adolf Hitler, who knew it was easier to mount a coup from inside. The Nazis got inside the German government via the ballot box. But Hitler believed in one man, one vote -- one time.

"The Muslim Brotherhood has not changed; only Western opinion of it has," Middle East expert Raymond Ibrahim believes.

President Carter learned the hard way that Islamists lie to nonbelievers. There is, alas, little indication that Mr. Obama has learned anything from the events of the last three years. The utter failure to date of his outreach efforts hasn't shaken Mr. Obama's confidence that the force of his personality will convert Islamists into democrats.

"The time has come for the United States to give up on the notion of democracy in the Middle East," wrote Robert Merry in the *National Interest*. "The country is starting to look silly with so many of its intellectuals clinging to a notion that has no basis in reality."

If our feckless leaders keep facilitating the spread of radical Islam, "looking silly" will be the least of the consequences.

"If trends continue, we may see an arc of Islamic 'republics' from Turkey all the way through the Middle East to the Atlantic Ocean, all brought to power through the toppling of corrupt authoritarians, followed by 'free elections,' followed by subversion of the revolution, Iranian-style," worries historian Victor Davis Hanson.

Jack Kelly is a columnist for the Post-Gazette and The Blade of Toledo, Ohio.

Philadelphia Inquirer
July 1, 2012

40. What Might Have Been In Afghanistan

By Trudy Rubin, Inquirer
Opinion Columnist

The what-might-have-beens about Afghanistan are already starting, even though there are still about 90,000 U.S. troops there.

U.S. forces will draw down to 68,000 by September and will shift from a combat to an advisory role in 2013; most American troops are due to return home by the end of 2014. Yet, despite the loss of almost 2,000 U.S. soldiers in an effort to stabilize the country, the Afghan future remains murky. A Taliban comeback is quite possible.

So it's worth reading a new book, out last week, by senior Washington Post correspondent Rajiv Chandrasekaran, called *Little America: The War Within the War for Afghanistan*, to get

a sobering look at what went wrong.

Chandrasekaran, who made many trips to Afghanistan, focuses on the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, which were the Taliban heartland, and on Kandahar city, which was Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar's home base in the 1990s. I traveled to Helmand and Kandahar in 2010 and 2011 and saw many of the same problems the author details.

This was the area into which President Obama "surged" 30,000 troops at the military's request (all will have been withdrawn by the end of this summer). The goal of the surge was to break the Taliban's momentum, turn locals against it, and push insurgents toward reconciliation.

For reasons largely having to do with rivalries within NATO and between the Marine Corps and Army, the bulk of the surge troops went to sparsely populated Helmand — rather than to the critical area around Kandahar city or to troubled eastern provinces. But even had the surge troops been better directed — and even after they calmed Helmand and much of Kandahar province — their work was undermined.

One factor was key: No matter how many insurgent networks were destroyed, they could still regroup across the border in friendly Pakistan, where they could recruit more manpower in religious madrassas, and purchase ammonium nitrate for roadside bombs. I'll always recall a U.S. colonel cursing in Helmand: "If we could only shut down that ratline from ... Pakistan, we could win this." Or, if the Taliban no longer had a safe haven in Pakistan, the Afghans could sort things out themselves.

But much of Chandrasekaran's book is taken up with tales of incompetent U.S. civilian aid efforts, which were meant to complement the military efforts and persuade the Afghans to reject the Taliban. U.S. civilians were also supposed to combat the corruption of the regime of President Hamid Karzai, which drove many locals toward the Taliban. Not surprisingly, they failed.

The title of his book, *Little America*, refers to the self-contained American compound U.S. aid workers built in the 1950s and 1960s when they were working in Helmand province on never-completed agricultural projects.

Ironically, Afghans still remember those Americans fondly, and were expectant that these new Americans might deliver this time.

Instead, as happened in Iraq, the U.S. rush to produce a "civilian surge" of diplomats and aid workers led to a flood of underqualified applicants, many out for the bonus pay, who were mainly clustered in Kabul and rarely ventured out to meet Afghans. It also produced a surge of lucrative contracts for Beltway-bandit firms, which dispersed floods of cash for short-lasting projects.

But the likely knee-jerk reaction in Congress — to slash foreign aid — misses a deeper point. We do have people who know how to do development right, as shown by some of Chandrasekaran's heroes, such as State Department advisers Kael Weston and Carter Malkasian. They learned the local language, spent years in Iraq and Afghanistan, and defied draconian U.S. security restrictions in order to mix with Iraqis and Afghans, rather than remaining on base.

The problem is that our bureaucracy, under both

Democrats and Republicans, is unwilling to require such tough standards — or look honestly at what happens when we don't.

One might conclude that we should never try this again — at least until we can produce a qualified corps of civilians. But, unfortunately, we are still stuck with the Afghan problem. And, as Chandrasekaran also details, bitter conflicts within the administration over Afghan strategy have led to a point where it's hard to foresee a positive outcome.

When the late, abrasive, special Afghan envoy Richard Holbrooke sought to talk with the Taliban, the military was hostile; now such diplomacy is belatedly considered vital, yet it looks unlikely to flower. Meantime, Washington is relying on the Afghan troops we trained to take over, even though few believe they are capable of doing so.

Many Americans won't care: Two-thirds of Americans no longer believe this war is worth fighting. But a failed Afghanistan will continue to haunt us, especially with nuclear-armed Pakistan next door. And our mistakes there raise real questions about future U.S. military strategy.

Chandrasekaran's book should make any politician who seeks to involve us in another Mideast war think twice.

Jerusalem Post

July 1, 2012

Pg. 13

41. The Islamist Threat

Speaking at a seminar of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies in Washington last week, US Army Gen. Carter Ham warned that Islamic movements in Africa were linking up and threatening regional stability.

"What really concerns me is the indications that the three organizations are seeking

to coordinate and synchronize their efforts.... That is a real problem for us and for African security in general."

These movements are al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Shabab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Beginning with the establishment of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies in 1994 and the activation of an American military command that focuses on the 53 states in Africa in 2008, the US has taken a leading role in efforts to train, equip and advise African countries that face threats to their stability.

Increasingly, the threat has come from Islamist terrorist movements. The oldest of the groups, AQIM, has its origins in the Algerian civil war of the 1990s that cost the lives of some 200,000 people. After the Islamists failed to take over Algeria, some of the fighters formed AQIM, which sought to spread terrorism throughout the countries bordering the Sahara. Like al-Qaida operations elsewhere, it tried to be a shadow umbrella group for allied movements while its main actions involved the kidnapping of Westerners. For instance, it allied with Ansar Dine, an Islamist group in Mali that allied itself with the Tuareg rebellion there.

In recent months that rebellion has carved out a separate state in northeast Mali. When the Malian Islamist fighters captured Timbuktu they desecrated a 16th-century tomb that is a UNESCO world heritage site.

Al-Shabab in Somalia also has its origins in an earlier period. In the 1990s, during the civil war that engulfed Somalia, an Islamist organization known as the Islamic Courts Union emerged as one of the most powerful players in the country.

Unwisely, it sought out conflict with Ethiopia by encouraging Islamic rebels across the border, and it was eventually brought to the brink of defeat. In its place al Shabab emerged in 2006. It has launched terrorist attacks in other African states, such as twin bombings in Uganda in 2010, has imposed strict Islamic law and been responsible for the public execution of teenage girls as "spies."

Most worrying is its global influence. In testimony to Congress, National Counterterrorism Center director Michael Leiter noted that at least 20 US citizens had traveled to Somalia since 2006 to aid the organization.

On June 20, Pakistan arrested a Frenchman of Algerian descent named Naaman Meziche. Meziche, who had lived in Europe and known 9/11 hijacker Muhammad Atta, moved to Pakistan where he linked up exiled fighters from the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan. The Pakistanis believed that he was set to move on to Yemen and then Somalia when he was caught.

The recent explosion of violence in Nigeria at the hands of the Boko Haram movement is also troubling.

Founded in 2001, Boko Haram aims to enforce Shari'a law throughout Nigeria and has been responsible for weekly bombings and attacks on churches throughout the country. According to recent reports in Nigeria there are allegations that Boko Haram is receiving funding from foreign sources and Gen. Ham has asserted that it is now working with networks that lead back to AQIM and Shabaab. But there are skeptics.

In a January op-ed in The New York Times, Jean Herskovits, a professor at the

State University of New York, Purchase, argued that "there is no proof that a well-organized, ideologically coherent terrorist group called Boko Haram even exists today."

Yet her claims are belied by recent actions of the group that forced Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan to sack his defense minister and national security adviser on June 23.

Gen. Ham's recent warnings in Washington about the influence and cooperation of Islamist movements in Africa should not fall on deaf ears. In February and April he made similar statements about the very "real danger" that these groups pose. Recent attacks throughout countries bordering the Sahara, combined with the weakening of state power in Tunisia, Libya and parts of Egypt, mean this combined threat harms innocent Africans and has the potential to spread terrorism to the Middle East, Europe and America.

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42. How Free Is Speech?

A phony hero is saved by the First Amendment

On the same day that the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its health care decision, it also delivered an opinion in another difficult case. For this, Associate Justice Anthony M. Kennedy announced the judgment of the court in a style reminiscent of a newspaper feature writer or a novelist:

"Lying was his habit. Xavier Alvarez, the respondent here, lied when he said that he played hockey for the Detroit Red Wings and that he once married a starlet from Mexico. But when he lied in announcing he held the Congressional Medal of Honor, respondent ventured onto new ground; for that lie violates

a federal criminal statute, the Stolen Valor Act of 2005."

This act, designed to keep honor for the brave restricted to the brave, makes it a crime for someone to falsely claim to have been awarded military decorations or medals, with an enhanced penalty if the Medal of Honor is involved.

Mr. Alvarez pleaded guilty after being charged over his Medal of Honor whopper made in 2007 at a public meeting of the local water board in Claremont, Calif., but he reserved the right to appeal.

What made this a difficult case was that habitual liars are not sympathetic characters but decorated veterans are very sympathetic. And while the First Amendment's protection of free speech covers "the speech we detest as well as the speech we embrace" (as Justice Kennedy wrote) does it give cover to pathetic liars? After all, in some other contexts liars do not have that protection (for example, somebody can't falsely claim to be a police officer).

In the end, a divided court decided that the First Amendment did cover Mr. Alvarez because the statute was too broad and the "remedy for speech that is false is speech that is true."

Justice Kennedy saw an Orwellian future for America if Mr. Alvarez's conviction were not overturned. "Permitting the government to decree this speech to be a criminal offense, whether shouted from the rooftops or made in a barely audible whisper, would endorse government authority to compile a list of subjects about which false statements are punishable. That governmental power has no clear limiting principle. Our constitutional tradition stands against the idea that we need Oceania's Ministry of Truth."

So it does, but those still stung by the opinion are offered hope. Justice Kennedy acknowledged that the law sought to enhance a legitimate government objective and that a more finely tailored law might pass constitutional muster -- for example, a statute that required a showing that a false statement caused specific harm.