

CURRENT NEWS

EARLY BIRD

May 18, 2012

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WHITE HOUSE

1. **Obama Aims To Gain Consensus From NATO, G-8 Summits**
(*Washington Post*)....David Nakamura
...The Group of Eight leaders also are expected to discuss a series of security issues, including political unrest in Syria, the suspected nuclear weapons programs in Iran and North Korea, and the Afghan war. During two days of NATO meetings, which begin Sunday in Chicago, the chief topic will be the timeline for NATO's hand-over of security responsibility to Afghanistan's forces.
2. **U.S. Rethinks Secrecy On Drone Program**
(*Wall Street Journal*)....Julian E. Barnes
The Obama administration is weighing policy changes that would lift a tattered veil of secrecy from its controversial campaign of drone strikes, a recognition that the expanding program has become a regular part of U.S. global counterterrorism operations.

PAKISTAN

3. **U.S. Agonizes Over Apology To Pakistan**
(*Wall Street Journal*)....Adam Entous, Siobhan Gorman and Julian E. Barnes
For nearly six months after U.S.-led forces accidentally killed two dozen Pakistani troops at the Afghanistan border, officials at the highest reaches of the Obama administration have been locked in a heated debate over what might appear to be a small step--apologizing for the loss.

MIDEAST

4. **US Will Give Israel \$70M. To Buy More Iron Dome Batteries, Panetta Tells Barak**
(*Jerusalem Post*)....Yaakov Katz and Oren Kessler
The United States will provide Israel with \$70 million in immediate aid for the purchase of additional Iron Dome rocket-defense batteries, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced on Thursday.
5. **U.S. Envoy To Israel Says Nation Is Ready On Iran**
(*New York Times*)....Jodi Rudoren
...While American leaders, including President Obama and his defense secretary and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have frequently said all options are on the table regarding Iran, the notion of specific plans being made is not something they typically talk about.
6. **Turkey Aims To Damp Drone-Report Furor**
(*Wall Street Journal*)....Joe Parkinson and Adam Entous

Turkish drones were responsible for the initial intelligence footage that prompted a deadly strike against civilian smugglers, Turkey's armed forces said Thursday, seeking to damp a furor sparked by a Wall Street Journal article that described the role played by a U.S. drone.

7. **Yemen Ratchets Up Its Fight Against Al-Qaeda**

(USA Today)....Iona Craig

U.S.-backed war targets key base for terrorism.

AFGHANISTAN

8. **U.S. Redefines Afghan Success Before Conference**

(New York Times)....Helene Cooper and Thom Shanker

Leaders of the NATO nations will meet in Chicago on Sunday to set in motion the massive machinery necessary to wind down the war in Afghanistan.

9. **US Urges Allies To Make Afghanistan Pledges**

(Financial Times)....Geoff Dyer and Kiran Stacey

The Obama administration is engaged in last-minute arm-twisting to secure pledges of financial support for Afghanistan from other Nato members ahead of an important weekend summit of the military alliance.

10. **US Stresses Future France Role In Afghanistan**

(Yahoo.com)....Agence France-Presse

The United States stressed Thursday that France would still contribute to the NATO operation in Afghanistan, despite new President Francois Hollande's promise to withdraw combat troops this year.

11. **US Wants \$1 Billion A Year For Afghanistan, Poland Says**

(Yahoo.com)....Agence France-Presse

The US wants allies to contribute \$1 billion each year to help fund Afghanistan's security forces after the planned exit of foreign troops by the end of 2014, Poland's foreign minister said Thursday.

12. **Taliban Strike Leader's Office**

(NYTimes.com)....Rod Nordland

At least 11 people died Thursday after Taliban insurgents attacked a provincial governor's office, but were beaten back by security forces, Afghan officials said.

13. **Afghan Massacre Survivors Recall Horror**

(Miami Herald)....Jon Stephenson, McClatchy News Service

Survivors of the March 11 event -- in which a U.S. soldier is accused of killing 17 people -- give their first public account.

14. **Cell Doors 'Incapable Of Locking' At Giant Afghan Jail**

(Danger Room (Wired.com))....Spencer Ackerman

The detention facility that the U.S. built in Afghanistan is state-of-the-art. Except for all of the faulty hinges on the cell doors. Or the locks that are, in the words of a new report from the Defense Department's inspector general, "incapable of locking either manually or electronically." Or the construction that's deemed "not up to the standard suitable for a detention facility."

15. **Bring Our Son Home**

(Time)....Aryn Baker and Nate Rawlings

The parents of America's only missing soldier in Afghanistan almost got him back from the Taliban. What went wrong?

CONGRESS

16. **House To Vote On \$554 Billion Defense Bill, Defying Obama**

(*Bloomberg.com*)....Roxana Tiron, Bloomberg News

The Republican-controlled U.S. House is set to vote as soon as today on a \$554 billion defense bill that President Barack Obama has threatened to veto if it impedes the Pentagon's new defense strategy.

17. **U.S. Defense Budget Debate Touches On Afghanistan, NASCAR**

(*Reuters.com*)....David Alexander, Reuters

War-weary U.S. lawmakers clashed over Afghanistan policy and vented their frustration with Pakistan's border closings on Thursday as they debated an annual defense policy bill that seeks \$642.5 billion in military spending for the 2013 fiscal year.

18. **House Panel Calls For Serious Cuts To Propaganda Spending**

(*USAToday.com*)....Tom Vanden Brook

A powerful House committee voted Thursday to cut by nearly one-third the Pentagon's budget for "military information support operations."

19. **Panel Advances Military Pay Raise**

(*GovExec.com*)....Kellie Lunney

A House panel Thursday approved legislation that gives military personnel a 1.7 percent pay raise in fiscal 2013 and provides more money for health and wellness programs for service members and their families.

20. **Senate GOP Blocks Bill On Iran Economic Sanctions**

(*Washington Post*)....Joby Warrick

..."It would be preferable to resolve this diplomatically and through the use of pressure than to use military force," Shapiro was quoted as saying. "But that doesn't mean that option is not fully available. And not just available, but it's ready." On Thursday, State Department officials defended Shapiro's remarks as in line with previous statements by Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta and other senior administration officials.

21. **U.S. House Backs Continuing War In Afghanistan**

(*Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*)....Donna Cassata, Associated Press

The House endorsed the continued war in Afghanistan on Thursday despite acknowledgment from Republicans and Democrats that Americans are war-weary after more than a decade of conflict.

22. **House To Consider Proposal To Bar Indefinite Detention After Arrests On U.S. Soil**

(*New York Times*)....Charlie Savage

The House is preparing to vote again on an unresolved legal controversy: whether the military may imprison terrorism suspects captured on United States soil without trial. The renewed debate comes as a federal judge has enjoined the government from enforcing a statute codifying the government's powers of indefinite detention.

23. **Congressman Hunter Asks For Peralta Amendment**

(*UTSanDiego.com*)....Gretel C. Kovach

Rep. Duncan Hunter asked Congress Thursday for a complete report from the Navy on Sgt. Rafael Peralta's posthumous Medal of Honor nomination, including a description of all evidence, findings and actions in the case.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

24. **Dempsey: It's The Mission, Not The Money, That Counts**

(*Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*)....Kate Wiltout

Joint Chiefs chairman calls for a smarter, more innovative soldier.

25. **Tribute To Vietnam Veterans Sputtering**

(*Boston Globe*)....Bryan Bender

...Now, veterans' advocates fear the country will again miss an opportunity to recognize the toil and torment of the 3 million service members sent to fight the Vietnam War. The Pentagon's plans to celebrate the veterans - five years in the making - are sputtering.

ARMY

26. **Cataloging Wounds Of War To Help Heal Them**
(New York Times)....C. J. Chivers
 ...Col. Jeffrey A. Bailey, a surgeon who directs the Joint Trauma System at the Institute of Surgical Research at Fort Sam Houston, confirmed what several military doctors noted: There as yet is no standardized medical database that enables researchers to look back comprehensively on the experiences of Afghanistan and Iraq.
27. **Army Replaces Woman Head Of Drill Sergeant School**
(Columbia (SC) State)....Susanne M. Schafer, Associated Press
 The first woman commandant of the Army's elite drill sergeant school, who had been suspended for six months by the Army and later reinstated, bid a tearful farewell Thursday to her supporters, students and fellow soldiers as she bowed to Army pressure to leave her historic position.

MARINE CORPS

28. **Deadly Helicopter Crash Caused By Bird**
(UTSanDiego.com)....Gretel C. Kovach
 A bird strike caused a helicopter crash at Camp Pendleton in September that killed two Marines, a Marine Corps investigation concluded.

NAVY

29. **Navy Ship Arrives At Calif. Port After Collision**
(Yahoo.com)....Julie Watson, Associated Press
 Sporting crumpled catwalks and smashed lifeboats, the U.S. Navy vessel USS Essex managed to glide into San Diego Bay on Thursday, 24 hours after colliding with a tanker when the aging warship's steering apparently failed.

AIR FORCE

30. **F-22 Backup Oxygen System Upgrade Not Complete Until Mid-2014**
(Newport News Daily Press)....Hugh Lessig
 It will take more than two years to upgrade the F-22 Raptor fleet with an automatic backup oxygen supply ordered by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta as a hedge against pilots feeling dizzy or disoriented, the Air Force said Thursday.

ASIA/PACIFIC

31. **North Korea Said To Resume Work On Nuclear Reactor**
(New York Times)....Choe Sang-Hun
 North Korea has resumed construction of a nuclear reactor that can be used to expand the country's nuclear weapons program, an American-based institute said Thursday, citing the latest satellite imagery of the building site.

RUSSIA

32. **Russia Says Action On Syria, Iran May Go Nuclear**
(Reuters.com)....Gleb Bryanski, Reuters
 Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev warned on Thursday that military action against sovereign states could lead to a regional nuclear war, starkly voicing Moscow's opposition to Western intervention ahead of a G8 summit at which Syria and Iran will be discussed.
33. **US, Russian Soldiers Train Together In Colorado**
(Yahoo.com)....Dan Elliott, Associated Press

...Twenty-two Russian army paratroopers are in Colorado for two weeks of training with the 10th Special Forces Group at Fort Carson, a post outside Colorado Springs. The two nations' militaries have been conducting joint exercises for years, but this is believed to be the first time Russian soldiers have trained on U.S. soil, Lt. Col. Steven Osterholzer said.

AMERICAS

34. Anger Rises After Killings In U.S.-Honduras Drug Sweep

(New York Times)....Damien Cave

Residents of the isolated Mosquito Coast of Honduras have burned down government buildings and are demanding that American drug agents leave the area immediately, intensifying a dispute over whether an antidrug operation there last week left four innocent people dead, including two pregnant women.

MILITARY HEALTH CARE

35. Mental Illness Is The Leading Cause Of Hospitalization For Active-Duty Troops

(NextGov.com)....Bob Brewin

The Defense and Veterans Affairs departments have spent almost \$2 billion since 2001 to buy drugs to treat mental illness and post-traumatic stress disorder despite growing evidence some of those drugs exacerbate PTSD symptoms, a Nextgov investigation shows. In addition, military research released this week highlighted that Defense faces what one Army clinician called an epidemic of mental illness.

BUSINESS

36. Defense Contractors Eye Cuts To Jobs, Plants

(Washington Times)....Shaun Waterman

Defense contractors already are preparing for the layoffs and plant closures that will occur if Congress fails to reach a deal on the federal deficit this year, triggering \$600 billion in automatic Pentagon spending cuts.

37. Air Force Keeping Close Watch On Boeing Tanker

(Reuters.com)....Andrea Shalal-Esa, Reuters

Boeing Co's program to develop a new refueling tanker is proceeding well, but an aggressive test schedule and Boeing's plan to close the Wichita, Kansas, plant still pose some risks, said the Air Force general in charge of the program.

38. Lockheed Used Internal Marine Documents

(National Journal Daily)....Kevin Baron

Hoping to fight off cancellation of the Marine Corps version of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, lobbyists for Lockheed Martin distributed to congressional offices a set of pro-fighter documents that included private letters from Gen. James Amos, commandant of the Marine Corps, and "talking points" that appear to be authored by a top Marine official.

39. Another 34 Companies Pledge To Hire More Military Spouses

(GovExec.com)....Andrew Lapin

More private sector companies have pledged to hire military spouses through a year-old government program.

COMMENTARY

40. To Keep The West Safe, We Must Join Forces

(London Times)....Anders Fogh Rasmussen

We live in a time of increasing security challenges but decreasing defence budgets. This is the reality faced by many of our allies. And that is the circle Nato leaders must square as we meet for our summit in Chicago this weekend. I am convinced we can do it.

41. NATO's Undue Optimism

(*Washington Post*)...Ronald E. Neumann and Michael O'Hanlon
Reducing Afghanistan's security force would threaten its viability.

42. **An Afghan Governor's Campaign To Win Over The Citizens Of His Province**
(*New York Times*)...Carol Giacomo
...Ahead of this weekend's NATO summit meeting, NATO invited a group of journalists to travel to Afghanistan where we met with Mr. Akbarzada and saw some of his efforts to make Ghazni's government more responsive and lessen the Taliban's appeal and power.
43. **The Taliban Are Desperate To Kill Off Any Peace Talks With Karzai**
(*London Daily Telegraph*)...Con Coughlin
...If all the hard work and sacrifice of the past decade is not to be thrown away the minute Nato forces head for home, then it is essential that the Afghans are fully involved in the decisions that will decide their future wellbeing.
44. **NATO In A Time Of Austerity**
(*International Herald Tribune*)...Stephane Abrial
In his valedictory speech last year, then-U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates argued that the partnership between the North American and European sides of the NATO alliance needed a new impulse. At the Chicago summit meeting on Sunday and Monday, leaders of the 28 NATO members will tackle that precise challenge and set the alliance on a new course to acquire the capabilities it will need to deal with an increasingly complex security environment.
45. **Missile Defense Cuts: A Perilous Mistake**
(*Politico.com*)...Don Young
North Korea, under its new leader Kim Jong Un, made international news recently when its long-range missiles disintegrated just seconds after a test launch.
46. **The Arab Spring And American Ideals**
(*Wall Street Journal*)...George W. Bush
These are extraordinary times in the history of freedom. In the Arab Spring, we have seen the broadest challenge to authoritarian rule since the collapse of Soviet communism. The idea that Arab peoples are somehow content with oppression has been discredited forever.
47. **Congress Must OK Military Intervention**
(*TheDailyBeast.com*)...Sen. Jim Webb
The Obama administration exploited a constitutional loophole by taking action on its own during Libya's uprising. New legislation must end this defiance of the balance of power.
48. **Time Has Come To Ground The F-22**
(*Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*)...Editorial
...As taxpayers, we have a right to expect that the aircraft meet its function. Rather than risk losing one, rather than risk losing a life, the Air Force needs to ground the F-22 until it's fixed.
49. **Detained And Confused**
(*Wall Street Journal*)...Editorial
A bad legal ruling abets a bad anti-antiterror amendment.

CORRECTIONS

50. **Corrections**
(*New York Times*)...The New York Times
An article on Thursday about Europeans' gloomy view of Afghanistan's future misstated the financial condition of Greece, the only country exempted from a list of NATO partners the United States expects to contribute aid for Afghan security forces. Greece's government has rescheduled much of its debt; it has not defaulted.

Washington Post
May 18, 2012
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1. Obama Aims To Gain Consensus From NATO, G-8 Summits

More certainty on euro crisis and Afghan withdrawal sought
By David Nakamura

Eager to avoid any setbacks that would distract the president's attention from the U.S. economy in an election year, the Obama administration hopes to use a pair of summits with foreign leaders this weekend to develop some consensus around an international response to both the European debt crisis and the war in Afghanistan.

The back-to-back gatherings bring together the leaders of eight of the world's richest economies at the Group of Eight summit at the presidential country retreat at Camp David, followed by a larger meeting of 61 NATO members and other allies in his home town of Chicago.

The twin summits offer a test of President Obama's leadership at a time of great uncertainty in several of his administration's core foreign policy challenges.

White House officials said Thursday that Obama, at Camp David, will share his vision of a comprehensive approach to containing the fallout from Greece's ongoing financial meltdown, which gained urgency amid renewed fears this week that the country would pull out of the euro currency zone.

The administration has offered advice and technical assistance as European leaders tried to respond to the crisis with hefty infusions of bailout funds and inexpensive loans to struggling banks. But fresh political turmoil in Greece, along with the election of a new French president, Francois

Hollande, has reignited the debate over whether Europe should pursue a different course — and put pressure on the White House to consider a more aggressive U.S. intervention.

Before heading to Camp David late Friday, Obama will meet at the White House with Hollande, whose campaign for economic stimulus to help contain the financial fallout by sparking growth has contrasted sharply with the views of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has led the push for stricter austerity measures.

Although Hollande's message has echoed the economic argument Obama has advanced in the United States, White House advisers said the president does not intend to exploit the differences between Hollande and Merkel, both of whom will participate at the Camp David summit.

Obama intends to lead a discussion about "specific steps" to move forward, national security adviser Thomas E. Donilon said in a briefing for reporters Thursday. "But I don't think that the nature of these conversations are going to be anything like taking one side or the other and trying to exploit. The nature of these conversations will be about a coherent and common goal of having ... the current crisis managed well and getting on a path towards sustainable recovery."

Administration officials touted the Camp David summit as the largest gathering of world leaders ever at the presidential retreat. Only twice before have foreign leaders been invited there — Jimmy Carter played host to Menachem Begin of Israel and Anwar Sadat of Egypt in 1978, and Bill Clinton met with Israel's Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in 2000.

But the absence of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who sent Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in his place, has put a damper on this weekend's event, complicating the Obama administration's effort to achieve a "reset" in relations with the Russian leadership.

The Group of Eight leaders also are expected to discuss a series of security issues, including political unrest in Syria, the suspected nuclear weapons programs in Iran and North Korea, and the Afghan war.

During two days of NATO meetings, which begin Sunday in Chicago, the chief topic will be the timeline for NATO's hand-over of security responsibility to Afghanistan's forces. NATO agreed at its November 2010 summit in Lisbon that the Afghans would assume control at the end of 2014, the exit deadline for coalition combat forces.

Since then, as public disapproval of the war has risen and the coalition has become increasingly anxious to test Afghan force capabilities, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta and others have indicated that the "transition" outlined in Lisbon would be accelerated, and that all of Afghanistan will be under Afghan security control by the end of 2013, while the coalition continues to provide assistance and backup for another year until the withdrawal of NATO troops.

One administration official said the hope was that the NATO meetings would produce "a comprehensible statement that doesn't confuse everybody" on the gradual transition to Afghan security force responsibility.

Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, said that "NATO is

going to want to signal that it's being a little bit more patient than it tends to get credit for, in terms of how it executes the drawdown path. And that there will be no radical change to this, despite what any one member, like France, may decide in the next few months, [and] despite the electoral and political pressures Obama's feeling in the United States."

On his way home from Chicago on Monday evening, Obama will return to domestic matters, stopping in Joplin, Mo., to deliver a high school commencement address in a community ravaged by a tornado in the spring of 2011.

Staff writer Karen DeYoung contributed to this report.

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May 18, 2012
Pg. 7

2. U.S. Rethinks Secrecy On Drone Program

By Julian E. Barnes

WASHINGTON—The Obama administration is weighing policy changes that would lift a tattered veil of secrecy from its controversial campaign of drone strikes, a recognition that the expanding program has become a regular part of U.S. global counterterrorism operations.

U.S. drone strikes are hardly a secret. Officials have spoken openly about them, even discussing the operations in formal speeches. But they are still classified, and unauthorized disclosures about details of individual missions could constitute a felony.

The policy changes under consideration could include specifying which extremist groups associated with al Qaeda can be targeted by the Pentagon under the 2001 congressional authorization for

the use of military force against perpetrators of the Sept. 11 attacks, according to U.S. officials.

The debate has been given urgency by lawsuits seeking information on drone strikes; the government must formally respond with motions stating its position and why it will deny the requests, or fill them.

But many officials also believe that it is time to re-evaluate U.S. policies on secrecy about the targeted-killing program, saying that greater openness could defuse criticism of the practice.

Unmanned aerial strikes on terrorist suspects began after the Sept. 11 attacks, at first as a rare occurrence. Under the Obama administration, drone strikes by the Central Intelligence Agency and the military have become increasingly common as a primary tool in U.S. national-security strategy.

The Pentagon has a policy of disclosing traditional military operations once they are complete. But rules for counterterrorism strikes haven't kept up with their expanded use. Pentagon officials still routinely decline to discuss details of operations in Yemen or Somalia at news conferences as a matter of policy, while more freely discussing counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan.

The changes considered most likely to win adoption would bring about greater openness regarding the military drone program, while keeping most or all details of CIA strikes classified, U.S. officials said. CIA officials are opposed to publicly acknowledging the details of drone programs under its control, for fear of setting precedents that could affect other covert programs.

Two lawsuits by the American Civil Liberties Union, in March 2010 and

February 2011, sought CIA records on its program of targeted killing with drones. Separately, the New York Times sued for access to the administration's legal justifications for the 2011 CIA drone strike that killed Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S. citizen and top leader of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

The Obama administration is due to answer the lawsuits in New York and Washington on Monday, after winning a series of extensions. In an extension request in April, the Justice Department said the government's response "is being deliberated at the highest level of the executive branch."

Some U.S. officials believe they will prevail in the courts if they choose to keep the drone program secret and refuse to provide any documents sought in the lawsuits.

But others think the government should voluntarily provide at least some information in response to the case. In the administration debate, some of those who advocate greater openness say it would help counter accusations that civilians are routinely killed.

Others, with one eye on the history books, believe it is important to show that strikes are carried out within the law. "If stories could be told, Americans and others would be persuaded these strikes are done in a careful way," a U.S. official said.

Instead, information about strikes is inconsistent. Government officials speaking privately in many cases release more information about covert CIA drone strikes in Pakistan than defense officials are allowed to discuss about military drone strikes in Yemen.

Administration officials considered revealing more

about U.S. military operations in Yemen and Somalia as part of a speech last month by John Brennan, the top White House counterterrorism adviser. The speech formally acknowledged that the U.S. uses drones to target terrorists, but officials couldn't agree on how much more to say, administration officials said.

Since that speech, Pentagon public-affairs officials have continued to refuse to provide any details of strikes in Yemen.

Complicating the debate, the military and CIA conduct similar counterterrorism strikes against al Qaeda's Yemen affiliate. Intelligence officials worry that if the Pentagon begins describing their operations more fully, details of the CIA's concurrent strikes could be revealed.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta already has publicly acknowledged U.S. operations in Yemen. Mr. Panetta said recently that the military has been "very successful at going after the leadership" of al Qaeda in Yemen.

Some officials are also pressing the U.S. to more fully describe the terrorist groups the U.S. is at war with under Congress's 2001 authorization for the use of military force, also called the AUMF.

While Mr. Brennan in his speech last month offered a list of al Qaeda affiliates that pose a danger, U.S. officials have never publicly listed which terrorist groups are considered associated forces of al Qaeda that can be targeted by the military.

Some legal scholars have asked for a fuller accounting of what terrorist groups the administration believes can be targeted under the congressional authorization. Robert Chesney, a professor at the University of Texas Law

School, said it would be helpful for the administration to clarify which groups or individuals can be targeted under its definition of the congressional authorization.

"At the end of the day, the core concern some have with the 'associated forces' idea is that they don't know where it stops," said Prof. Chesney. "Explaining what the necessary or sufficient conditions for identifying such groups would do much to show that the government recognizes meaningful limits to its authority under the AUMF."

--Siobhan Gorman and Evan Perez contributed to this article.

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May 18, 2012
Pg. 1

3. U.S. Agonizes Over Apology To Pakistan

By Adam Entous, Siobhan Gorman and Julian E. Barnes

For nearly six months after U.S.-led forces accidentally killed two dozen Pakistani troops at the Afghanistan border, officials at the highest reaches of the Obama administration have been locked in a heated debate over what might appear to be a small step--apologizing for the loss.

The U.S. had expressed "regret" for the Nov. 26 deaths. But whether to publicly apologize, at the risk of appearing weak to Pakistan or American voters, was argued in dozens of video conference calls, nearly 20 high-level White House meetings and hundreds of confidential emails.

The administration came to the brink of saying sorry several times. One mission to deliver an apology by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was aborted midflight.

Pakistan kept closed an important supply route for

U.S. forces in Afghanistan while waiting, with the delay extracting a steep price that U.S. officials say will only go up. Islamabad this week indicated that it would reopen the supply route in return for up to a 30-fold increase in the passage fees, officials said. The U.S. last year moved 35,000 shipping containers through Pakistan, paying the country nearly \$200 in fees for each, congressional officials said.

The decision to reopen the supply route came as Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari announced he would attend a two-day summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization that begins Sunday in Chicago. U.S. officials said privately that Pakistan's proposed fee increase was unreasonable. A Pentagon spokesman said negotiations were continuing. Officials expect a compromise as early as the NATO meeting.

The drawn-out debate shows how the U.S. remains confounded by efforts to repair relations with Pakistan. It was complicated by election year politics. And it revealed tensions within the Obama administration's national-security team, which on issues involving Afghanistan and Pakistan has struggled to reach consensus and deliver a coordinated message.

Advocates of apology, in particular among U.S. diplomats, said it was the best way to mend relations. Opponents said it would be interpreted as U.S. weakness just as Washington wanted to pressure Pakistan to root out militant havens along its border, including those launching attacks on U.S. troops.

This account of the diplomatic tug of war is based on interviews with nearly a dozen current and former officials of the Obama

administration, as well as Pakistani officials.

The debate began almost immediately after Nov. 26 last year. On that day, a 150-man U.S.-Afghan commando team near the Pakistan border came under attack and called in air support, according to U.S. officials. U.S. helicopters fired on two Pakistani border posts. The Pentagon said Pakistani troops at the posts opened fire first, which Pakistan has denied. Pakistan has accused the U.S. of deliberately firing at its troops.

For Pakistanis, the killings were another U.S. affront to national pride. Only seven months earlier, the U.S. sneaked elite special forces into the country to kill Osama bin Laden. An immediate apology, Pakistani officials argued in November, would ease tensions and ward off protests.

The U.S. military believed an immediate apology amounted to an admission of fault. Even so, the Pentagon privately told Pakistan it was prepared to pay restitution to the families of those killed. Pakistan rejected the cash without an apology.

Vali Nasr, a former top adviser on Pakistan in the Obama administration, said people in Pakistan interpreted the U.S. refusal to apologize to mean "it intended to kill the 24 people."

At the White House, officials rejected the first of several apology proposals, including one that called for President Barack Obama to personally deliver a condolence message to the Pakistani people.

In late December, the Pentagon released its investigation. The U.S. concluded both American and Pakistan troops erred. Islamabad rejected the finding.

On Dec. 21, the night before the Pentagon's investigation was released,

top U.S. policy makers convened for a 5 p.m. secure video teleconference and agreed to apologize. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta wasn't enthusiastic but didn't object, Jeremy Bash, Mr. Panetta's chief of staff, told the group, according to officials.

Though divided about apologizing, defense officials wanted border supply crossings to reopen as soon as possible. The U.S. and NATO allies had to route shipments through a northern route through Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus, which cost 2½ times more per container than going through Pakistan, according to Pentagon estimates.

Under the Dec. 21 plan, Pentagon press secretary George Little would issue an apology the next morning. "We mourn the loss of life and apologize for the weaknesses in our border coordination processes which contributed to this tragic accident," one early draft read.

At 10 p.m., Mr. Bash reported that top policy makers at the White House and the Pentagon had reversed course. White House National Security Adviser Tom Donilon was among the officials who asked that the word "apologize" be replaced by "deepest regret" and "sincere condolences." Mr. Panetta helped draft the changes, officials said.

In the hours that followed, State Department and some Pentagon officials urged the White House to reconsider the decision, arguing that "apology" would make a critical difference with Pakistan and wasn't much different from "regret."

U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Cameron Munter told the group an apology would increase the chances of persuading Pakistan to reopen the border crossings.

Mrs. Clinton's chief policy aide, Jake Sullivan, told colleagues the U.S. should acknowledge its mistakes. He argued that an apology would strengthen Washington's hand in pressing Pakistan to step up its fight against militants, according to officials in the debate.

Michele Flournoy, then the undersecretary of defense for policy, suggested language that apologized for the "unintentional and tragic" deaths but didn't accept full responsibility, officials said. Ms. Flournoy, who has since left the administration, told the group the U.S. risked the issue festering.

On Dec. 22, Mr. Little, the Pentagon spokesman, read the revised expression of "regret" but without an apology.

Pakistan wouldn't reopen the supply routes, prompting administration officials to rehash the debate in high-level meetings at the White House chaired by Mr. Donilon and his deputy, Denis McDonough, officials said.

One senior administration official said the potential for presumed Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney to use an apology as a political attack didn't come up in these meetings. Other officials said concerns about giving the Romney campaign ammunition weighed on the minds of Mr. Obama's political advisers.

After first pressing for an immediate apology, some Pakistani officials in January and February said they wanted the U.S. to wait until Pakistan's parliament completed a review, according to U.S. officials. These Pakistani officials preferred any U.S. apology to come in response to recommendations from parliament.

The mixed messages added to the confusion. Some

U.S. officials argued for an immediate apology to show Pakistan it couldn't dictate the timetable, according to U.S. officials. It "muddied the whole process," a U.S. official said.

The Pentagon had prepared for a lengthy border closure by building stocks of fuel and ammunition in Afghanistan. The winter fighting lull eased demand for supplies, blunting the supply route closure.

But as spring approached, war planners wanted assurances the crossings would reopen ahead of the thaw, when the fighting would increase.

Officials debated having Central Command chief, Gen. James Mattis, deliver an apology to Pakistan's Army chief, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, during a proposed trip to Islamabad in February. White House officials told reporters the trip would be the first step toward thawing relations. It never materialized.

On Feb. 21, the White House approved a new plan. Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would apologize by phone to Gen. Kayani the next day. Mrs. Clinton was scheduled to meet with Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar in London.

As Mrs. Clinton prepared to leave Washington on Feb. 22, a draft statement was prepared for her, officials said: "As Chairman Dempsey conveyed to Gen. Kayani, we apologize for our part in the accidental tragedy."

Mrs. Clinton took off from Andrews Air Force Base and while over the Atlantic, she received word: the apologies were off. Violent protests had broken out in Afghanistan after U.S. military personnel burned Islamic books, including Qurans, drawing an apology from Mr. Obama to Afghan

President Hamid Karzai in a personal letter.

Apologizing to Afghanistan and Pakistan on the same day was too much for the Obama administration, officials said. "Two apologies at once would make it look like everything's unraveling," said a senior U.S. official. The White House worried it would "look weak," another official said.

During their meeting in London, Ms. Khar told Mrs. Clinton it was up to the U.S. to determine the nature and the timing of the apology, according to U.S. and Pakistani officials.

In March and early April, the White House discussed having the U.S. special envoy to the region, Marc Grossman, or Deputy Secretary of State Thomas Nides deliver the message. Those plans went nowhere.

Officials then agreed to wait for Pakistan's parliamentary review. Released on April 12, the parliamentary report called for Islamabad to seek an "unconditional apology," among other demands, for the 24 deaths.

Ms. Khar argued an apology would smooth the path to resolve other contentious issues, according to U.S. and Pakistani officials. The countries, for example, are at odds over the U.S. use of drones to attack militants in Pakistan.

Her message to U.S. officials during recent meetings was that the Pakistani public "noticed that you apologized for the Quran burning within 24 hours and here we are with 24 people killed and there's been no apology for five months," U.S. officials recalled.

On April 15, militants launched coordinated attacks in Kabul. U.S. and Afghan intelligence agencies blamed the Haqqani network, which is based in Pakistan and has

ties to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency.

"How can you apologize to a country that is providing through some parts of its government tacit support to the Haqqani network, which is actively attacking our guys," the senior administration official said. "This isn't about politics. This is about the message that would send to our troops and that's what no one in the military or the White House could contenance."

U.S. officials told the Pakistanis the April 15 attack effectively "killed" any chances of an apology for now, said officials on both sides.

"This goes to the fact that we don't know how to deal with the Pakistanis," one senior U.S. official said. An official close to the Pakistan government likewise lamented: "If the apology would have occurred in the first or the second day, as it should have, we could have moved on."

Jerusalem Post
May 18, 2012
Pg. 2

4. US Will Give Israel \$70M. To Buy More Iron Dome Batteries, Panetta Tells Barak

By Yaakov Katz and Oren Kessler

The United States will provide Israel with \$70 million in immediate aid for the purchase of additional Iron Dome rocket-defense batteries, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced on Thursday.

Panetta made the announcement following a meeting with Defense Minister Ehud Barak at the Pentagon. Barak was in Washington for talks aimed at coordinating strategy with the US ahead of the second round of talks between Western powers and

Iran scheduled to open next week in Baghdad.

Panetta said that President Barack Obama had directed him to provide Israel with the \$70m., which Barak had told him was needed for Israel to meet its 2012 fiscal requirements.

In addition, he said the US was in talks with Israeli officials about the possibility of establishing a multi-year budget plan to assist Israel in purchasing additional batteries.

Since its deployment last year, Iron Dome batteries have intercepted over 90 Katyusha and Kassam rockets fired into Israel from the Gaza Strip. The new aid package comes after the Obama administration gave Israel \$205m. in 2011 and comes on top of the \$3 billion Israel receives in annual foreign aid from the US.

Barak thanked the US for its support and said that Israeli-American defense ties had never been as strong as they are today under the Obama administration.

"The US decision to support further enhancing Israel's security is an important demonstration of the unbreakable bonds between the United States and Israel," Barak said.

Rep. Howard Berman (D-California), lead sponsor of the Iron Dome Support Act, welcomed Panetta's announcement and said that both Republicans and Democrats equally supported the additional aid to Israel.

In an interview late Wednesday, Barak told CNN that the US and Israel are essentially "on the same page" about the Iranian nuclear program.

"We say loud and clear, the Americans say the same, the president says the same – a nuclear military Iran is unacceptable," he said. "We are determined to prevent

them from turning nuclear. And that no option except for containment... should be removed off the table in order to achieve this objective.”

Barak said he believes embattled Syrian President Bashar Assad, a close Iranian ally, will eventually be deposed by a popular insurgency now in its 14th month.

“I’m quite frustrated for the slowness of its collapse. I believe that he [Assad] is doomed anyway. I believe that there is a need to raise our voices both for moral reasons and practical... much more loudly,” he said.

The defense minister said it was important “that every possible step is taken by the world community, by NATO, by the United States, by the Russians – Turkey could have a special role in it – to accelerate the whole thing.”

Barak said he could envision a situation in Syria similar to that of Yemen, where in February then-president Ali Abdullah Saleh handed over power to his deputy after protests nationwide. Such a solution, he said, would see Assad and his associates step down, but keep his Ba’ath party, intelligence and armed forces intact.

From Jerusalem’s perspective, Barak said, Assad’s fall would deal a major blow to Israel’s main strategic foe Iran.

“It will be a major blow to Iran when Assad falls, they are now supporting him very actively,” he said. “It will be a weakening blow to Hezbollah and probably Islamic Jihad.”

Meanwhile, AIPAC released a statement on Thursday applauding Panetta’s decision on behalf of the Obama administration to request additional funding for the Iron Dome rocket defense system

and joint U.S.-Israeli missile defense ventures.

“This funding will enable the Jewish state to better protect its citizens, thus preventing a wider conflict,” AIPAC said in a statement. “Missile defense programs are a cornerstone of U.S.-Israel cooperative programs. The two allies work together to develop innovative technologies that advance the security of both nations.”

Jerusalem Post staff contributed to this report.

New York Times

May 18, 2012

Pg. 5

5. U.S. Envoy To Israel Says Nation Is Ready On Iran

By Jodi Rudoren

JERUSALEM — The American ambassador to Israel said this week that not only was America willing to use military force to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons, but that preparations had already been made for a possible attack.

“It would be preferable to resolve this diplomatically and through the use of pressure than to use military force,” the ambassador, Dan Shapiro, said Tuesday at a meeting of the Israeli bar association. “But that doesn’t mean that option is not fully available. And not just available, but it’s ready. The necessary planning has been done to ensure that it’s ready.”

While American leaders, including President Obama and his defense secretary and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have frequently said all options are on the table regarding Iran, the notion of specific plans being made is not something they typically talk about.

In fact, at a March speech to the American Israel

Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby, Mr. Obama warned that “loose talk of war” could actually speed Tehran’s move toward weaponization, saying “now is not the time for bluster.”

Some analysts here said Thursday that Mr. Shapiro’s remarks might have been aimed at reassuring an Israeli administration — and an Israeli public — worried that the United States was softening its stance ahead of the talks with Iran and other world powers scheduled for next week in Baghdad.

Israeli officials, who describe a nuclear Iran as an existential threat, constantly talk about the possibility of a military strike if diplomacy fails, and some have tired of Jerusalem always playing the bad cop to Washington’s good cop.

“Any expression that all options are on the table can only strengthen the negotiations,” said Dore Gold, a former adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and now president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

“There’s an irony in the situation, because a hawkish position on Iran probably makes a peaceful diplomatic outcome more likely, and that could be what he was trying to do,” he said.

Amos Yadlin, a former head of Israeli military intelligence who now runs the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, said that “what’s important is to make the military option credible” and that Mr. Shapiro’s remarks did so.

“If you’re saying that the military option is on the table and at the same time you transmit that a military option will be a doomsday and will be a World War III and the Middle East will be in

flames, then nobody will take you seriously,” Mr. Yadlin noted. “A serious military, even if it’s not on the plan for next week or next month, but strategically thinking that this is an option, they have to prepare a contingency plan, that makes sense.”

In Iran, officials reacted coolly to the ambassador’s remarks. “These are words to calm down the extremists and radicals in Israel,” said Hamid Reza Taraghi, a political analyst who is close to Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

He said that if Iranians reacted to the remarks they would “without a doubt” have a negative effect on the coming talks.

Mr. Taraghi, who has inside knowledge of the negotiations, emphasized that threats had never changed Iran’s position, and added, “Nor will such remarks be of any influence now.”

He added, “When Americans understand there will be no Iranian nuclear weapon and our technology is not against their interest, there will be no need for threats.”

While Iran insists its nuclear program is for civilian purposes, Israel and the United States suspect it aims for weaponization, something both governments see as unacceptable. The Obama administration has increasingly focused on diplomacy and sanctions as the crucial tools, while the Netanyahu government has emphasized the possibility of a strike on the nuclear facilities and a ticking clock for its effectiveness.

“We do believe there is time — some time, not an unlimited amount of time,” Mr. Shapiro said, according to The Associated Press, which said it obtained a tape of the remarks. “But at a certain point, we may

have to make a judgment that the diplomacy will not work.”

Ambassador Shapiro, who spoke about Iran during a question-and-answer session with about 150 lawyers that was first reported by the Israeli newspaper Makor Rishon, declined to discuss the issue on Thursday. Spokesmen for the prime minister and the defense minister — both of whom were traveling abroad — also had no response.

But one top official in the Netanyahu administration, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to do so publicly, called Mr. Shapiro’s comments “a significant contribution to making the American military threat credible,” though he noted that they were made in a low-profile forum.

“Quite clearly he didn’t mean this to be public,” the official said. “For the Iranians to understand that they really mean it, they have to hear it publicly and clearly.”

Meir Javedanfar, a lecturer on Iranian politics at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzilya, said that Ambassador Shapiro’s statement was not just “a warning to Khamenei’s government in Tehran to take the upcoming negotiations seriously.”

A second audience, he said, was “Republicans in the U.S. who have tried to hurt Obama’s credibility on Iran by saying that the president has been too soft on Iran and that Iran’s leadership don’t take his warnings regarding the existence of a possibly military option seriously.”

Mr. Javedanfar’s colleague Shmuel Bar, director of studies at the Institute for Policy and Strategy in Herzilya, was unmoved by Mr. Shapiro’s statement.

“Saying it is not enough,” Mr. Bar said. What would

have more significant effect, he said, is to show actual preparations for a military option by, for example, increasing deployment in the Persian Gulf.

“What actually the U.S. administration is doing is blowing hot and cold,” said Mr. Bar, who previously worked as an intelligence officer in the Israel Defense Force and in the prime minister’s bureau. “Actions do speak louder than words. The actions say the U.S. has a very strong aversion to any kind of military action.”

Mr. Bar pointed to a recent post on the Web site of the Iranian supreme leader that he described as “an analysis of why the U.S. cannot and will not go to war.”

“That is their candid evaluation of the situation,” he said. “When the Iranians see this, they say the Americans are doing everything they can to prevent Israel from attacking.”

Thomas Erdbrink contributed reporting from Tehran.

Wall Street Journal
May 18, 2012
Pg. 7

6. Turkey Aims To Damp Drone-Report Furor

By Joe Parkinson and Adam Entous

ISTANBUL—Turkish drones were responsible for the initial intelligence footage that prompted a deadly strike against civilian smugglers, Turkey’s armed forces said Thursday, seeking to damp a furor sparked by a Wall Street Journal article that described the role played by a U.S. drone.

Turkey’s General Staff said in a written statement that Turkish-language reports, which cited a Wednesday article in the Journal, were “not based on the truth.”

Quoting a Pentagon after-action report, the Journal said a U.S. Predator drone spotted a group of men and pack animals and passed the footage to Turkey’s military. The Turks identified the convoy as Kurdish militant fighters and took the decision to strike using jets from its air force.

The Pentagon assessment describes only the role of the Predator and doesn’t address the issue of whether Turkey may also have been tracking the convoy.

The Turkish military statement said: “The first detected visual image of the group in the incident was made by the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle belonging to the Turkish Armed Forces,” adding that details have been passed to officials investigating the matter.

The statement didn’t make any mention of a U.S. role. Turkey’s military and defense ministry have previously said intelligence leading to the strike came exclusively from domestic sources. Turkey’s military and three government departments declined to comment for that article.

In Washington on Thursday, U.S. military officials reiterated the contents of their after-action report, noting that it focused on the role of the Predator. The Journal article also quoted witnesses who recalled hearing Turkey’s Heron drones just before the strike.

The issue is sensitive for Washington and Ankara. Turkey doesn’t want to be seen as reliant on the U.S. Selling drones to Turkey faces opposition from key members of Congress, who worry about spreading the technology, as well as Turkey’s standards for deciding when to launch a strike.

The Dec. 28 strike, which killed 34 civilians who turned out to be gasoline smugglers, represented the biggest civilian death toll in Turkey’s three-decade conflict with Kurdish separatists. The deaths sparked protests across the country and prompted investigations that have yet to conclude. The Journal report reignited a national debate about the bombing raid, with opposition politicians calling on the government to clarify what happened.

“We had suspicion about Turkey’s ability to gather this intelligence over its borders by itself. The reason why the government is keeping quiet now is that it wants to avoid political responsibility,” said Deputy Chairman of Turkey’s main opposition party, the CHP, Sezgin Tanrikulu.

Pentagon press secretary George Little on Thursday declined to discuss the December incident. He called Turkey an important ally and said “we will continue to work with Turkey” in its efforts against Kurdish militants.

According to U.S. military officials, two reports were prepared in response to the Dec. 28 incident. The initial report said the Predator “identified a small caravan of pack animals and persons who merged with another group of pack animals and persons in a region of northern Iraq close to the Turkish border.”

The after-action assessment offered more detail. It said the Predator was on an eight-hour patrol along the Iraqi-Turkish border when its American controllers spotted the convoy walking toward the Turkish border. The report doesn’t say at what time that sighting occurred or how long the Predator conducted surveillance.

American officers flagged the "activity" to their Turkish counterparts in the Combined Intelligence Fusion Cell in Ankara, where U.S. and Turkish officers watch Predator drone feeds real time.

Then the Turkish officers directed the Americans to fly the drone to another "sector," clearing the airspace over the convoy. U.S. officials said the U.S. drone wasn't in the area when the Turks launched their strike.

--Ayla Albayrak
contributed to this article.

USA Today
May 18, 2012
Pg. 2

7. Yemen Ratchets Up Its Fight Against Al-Qaeda

U.S.-backed war targets key base for terrorism

By Iona Craig, Special for USA Today

ADEN, Yemen – Samir al-Mushari pushed his wheeled walking frame down the hospital corridor. Bandages bound around his head hid the burns to his neck, face and right ear.

Al-Mushari, 31, got caught in an airstrike in Yemen's U.S.-backed war against al-Qaeda, which has created what the Pentagon considers one of the most threatening terrorist bases in the Middle East in the country's south.

The bombing that Samir experienced in the city of Jaar may have been from a U.S. drone, several of which are being used to fire missiles at al-Qaeda locales in a joint operation with Yemen's military — but he does not lash out at the United States.

"We have to get rid of al-Qaeda, and yes, we need help from anyone, from outside, including America," he says.

His friend, Ali Asrali, 20, who fled Jaar six months ago, nods in agreement.

"They gave us electricity, free water and food," he says of al-Qaeda, "but they have brought the army. They have brought war. Civilians are dying now because of them."

Tribal fighters in the city of Lawder, Yemen, celebrated victory over al-Qaeda-linked militants Thursday as government soldiers continued the battle farther south to regain control of two cities in the latest offensive against the insurgents.

The campaign by Yemen's army, air force and tribal militias against al-Qaeda's most notorious offshoot, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, is taking place with direct help from the U.S. military. Operating from al-Anad Air Base in neighboring Lahij province, the U.S. military is assisting using surveillance technology to coordinate assaults and airstrikes for the Yemeni forces.

Missiles fired from U.S. drones are also been used, villagers say. Locals here say they have seen missiles fired from the sea into the coastal city of Zinjibar, which has been under the control of Islamist militants, Ansar al-Sharia, or Partisans of Sharia Law.

Mahadi Mansour Hadi, 33, an imam from the town Lawder, was part of the militia group taking on Ansar al-Sharia in recent days until he was injured by shrapnel. In his role as a religious leader, Hadi is encouraging people to take up arms against the al-Qaeda-linked insurgents.

"I was telling people it was their religious duty to fight them," said Hadi from a school in the port-city of Aden, where residents have fled to get away from fighting in Abyan. "Al-Qaeda goes against Islam. It's not in our religion to kill people,

and they have killed many people in Abyan."

Casualties from the operation are mounting, with at least 150 people killed in six days, the Yemeni military said. Two suspected drone strikes killed 26 civilians in the city of Jaar on Tuesday, al-Mushari said.

Southern Yemen had been neglected by central government for years following a 1994 civil war. Political unrest in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, forced out longtime ruler Ali Abdullah Saleh, and al-Qaeda militants in the south took over several towns during the chaos. The militants set out to govern the state of Abyan by promising food, electricity and a justice system bound by Islamic law, or *sharia*.

"Ansar al-Sharia have solved many problems for us that the government hadn't managed to do for 20 years," al-Mushari said.

Yemen's military had made several failed attempts to reassert control in the region.

This latest operation comes with renewed help from the U.S. military, which in addition to command and control assistance is helping to train Yemeni armed forces. U.S. counterterrorism adviser John Brennan visited Yemen last week to further the efforts days after it was disclosed that Saudi Arabia and the CIA had foiled a plot by al-Qaeda in Yemen to blow up a U.S.-bound airliner.

Presumed No. 1 al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri called on Yemen's people to rise up against the country's new president, in a video posted on jihadist forums.

Al-Zawahri called President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi, who took office in February, a "stooge" of the United States and depicted him in an Uncle Sam suit, SITE Intelligence Group, which

monitors Islamist extremism, said Thursday.

Hadi recently pledged that the military operation will continue to attack al-Qaeda "until we have eradicated their presence in every district, village and position."

New York Times
May 18, 2012
Pg. 3

8. U.S. Redefines Afghan Success Before Conference

By Helene Cooper and Thom Shanker

WASHINGTON — Leaders of the NATO nations will meet in Chicago on Sunday to set in motion the massive machinery necessary to wind down the war in Afghanistan.

But even as American officials prepare a list of benchmarks they can cite as achieved in the war effort — expect to hear much about strategic partnership agreements and assurances that the Afghan people have not been abandoned — they acknowledge privately that the bar has been significantly lowered on how success in Afghanistan is defined after 11 years of combat.

"Look, this is Afghanistan," one administration official said in an interview. "Is it going to be Switzerland? No. But is good enough for Afghanistan? That's where we need to get to."

In fact, the phrase "Afghan good enough" has been making the rounds at the White House, State Department, the Pentagon and inside the many research organizations scattered around Washington. Gone is the much greater expectation that NATO will leave behind a cohesive central government with real influence beyond Kabul and a handful of other population centers. Gone is

the assumption that Helmand Province, Kandahar and the rest of the heavily contested south — where the bulk of the 2010 influx of troops was sent — will remain entirely in the control of the central government once that area is transferred to Afghanistan's fledgling national security forces.

In previewing the meeting for reporters on Thursday, President Obama's national security adviser, Thomas E. Donilon, described a hoped-for outcome in Afghanistan that was far less ambitious than what American officials once envisioned.

"The goal is to have an Afghanistan again that has a degree of stability such that forces like Al Qaeda and associated groups cannot have safe haven unimpeded, which could threaten the region and threaten U.S. and other interests in the world," Mr. Donilon said.

With Afghan forces assuming the lead role in 2013 for protecting the country and its government, Mr. Donilon said the NATO allies hoped to leave behind "a set of security assets that allow it to provide for that modicum of stability" that will allow Afghanistan to protect itself against Al Qaeda and ensure that the United States' core goal — making sure that Al Qaeda cannot again use Afghanistan as a base from which to target the West — is met.

While Kandahar and other population centers in the south have seen a decrease in Taliban attacks since the surge forces arrived, insurgent attacks have increased in less populated southern areas, military officials report. The heads of the Senate and House intelligence committees, appearing on CNN's "State of the Union" program two weeks ago, and reporting on

a recent trip to Afghanistan, said the Taliban were gaining ground, something that is bound to accelerate once the NATO troops give way to Afghan-led forces.

"I think we'd both say that what we found is that the Taliban is stronger," Senator Dianne Feinstein, Democrat of California, said, seated next to Representative Mike Rogers, Republican of Michigan.

Anthony H. Cordesman, a longtime military analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, wrote a paper three weeks ago called "Time to Focus on 'Afghan Good Enough.'"

"Is progress sustainable?" Mr. Cordesman wrote. "Almost certainly no."

"The real question for everybody now is, can you hold this thing together to the point where, yes, the Pakistanis will have some influence, and Iran will have major influence in the northwest, and we'll lose influence in the south and the east but we might be able to hold onto Kandahar."

Mr. Cordesman added: "That would be Afghan good enough."

Senior NATO military commanders in Afghanistan say they are well aware of the narrowing goals for their effort in Afghanistan. "We trained for a number of lines of operation in addition to the security line, whether education, civil society, economic development, you know, the whole government-in-a-box thing," said one NATO military commander in Afghanistan. "Now, it's only security. How much security can we bring before we go home? And how quickly we can train up Afghan forces to take over the security mission?"

And, for their part, senior Afghan government officials are aware that the ambitions of

the Obama administration — and, in fact, the agenda for the NATO summit — are narrowly focused on security.

Eklil Hakimi, Afghanistan's ambassador to the United States, said in an interview that President Hamid Karzai and the presidents and prime ministers of NATO countries will arrive in Chicago not to discuss nation-building in Afghanistan, but only securing the nation of Afghanistan.

"This particular summit, the Chicago summit, within the context of NATO, is focusing on the Afghan security forces and their support for the years to come," Mr. Hakimi said.

In his official remarks to the summit leaders, Mr. Karzai will describe the increasing competence of Afghan security forces and the need for the international community to provide long-term support, both with personnel for training and advising, but also with money for equipping and logistical needs, the ambassador said.

There will be little if any discussion in Chicago of governance or financial development, he said. Those themes of development and economic strategy will await an international conference in Tokyo in July.

Pressed to describe the view of Afghan officials of the American phrase "Afghan good enough," Mr. Hakimi cited advances made in women's rights and education in the decade since American forces and Afghan fighters toppled the Taliban government and drove Al Qaeda from the country. Afghan women have leading roles in Parliament, in business and in medicine. Before the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, only 900,000 Afghan boys were in school. Today, the number is eight million, and 40 percent of the students are female.

Asked whether that was sustainable with the lowered expectations of the United States and NATO for Afghanistan, the ambassador spoke forcefully.

"I leave that question to our partners," Mr. Hakimi said. "That much we have achieved up to now — with you, together."

"So it's up to you," he added. "Do you want to leave all this behind, or do you want to continue with us the journey that we have started together? With the support of our own people and also with the support of our international partners, we have laid a strong foundation for Afghanistan's future. So, politically, we are moving in the right direction. In order to further strengthen that, we need support from our international partners for years to come."

Financial Times
May 18, 2012

9. US Urges Allies To Make Afghanistan Pledges

By Geoff Dyer and Kiran Stacey

The Obama administration is engaged in last-minute arm-twisting to secure pledges of financial support for Afghanistan from other Nato members ahead of an important weekend summit of the military alliance.

Amid fears that outside help for Afghanistan will vanish once the current Nato mission ends in 2014, the US is hoping to use the summit to secure firm pledges from Nato members to help fund the Afghan security forces.

The likely size of the Afghan forces, which will have principal responsibility after 2014 for preventing a new civil war or major Taliban advances, has already been scaled back in part because of the budget

pressures being faced by most Nato governments.

Afghanistan will be the lead item on the agenda at the summit in Chicago, which will also discuss the long-term strategy for the military alliance, its growing network of partnerships and missile defence.

The Afghan security forces currently have about 350,000 members. However, under the plan to be presented at the Chicago summit, that figure will fall to about 230,000. Although this reduction was initially described as being the result of an investigation into the country's security needs, officials have since admitted that funding difficulties played a large part in the decision.

The current planned budget for post-2014 security spending is \$4.1bn a year, with the Afghan government providing \$500m. Nato allies are being pressed to offer €1bn a year, and the US is expected to meet the rest of the amount.

After initial criticism that the plan would leave the country too vulnerable once Nato operations end, the rate at which the Afghan force will be reduced in size has now been slowed, with the US expected to meet the additional spending.

"It is very important that at Chicago we demonstrate to the Afghan government and to all the other groups in the country that we are not abandoning Afghanistan after 2014," a senior Pentagon official said.

Thomas Donilon, the US national security advisor, said the administration had been talking to 30 different countries about commitments to the budget.

"We have made substantial progress towards burden-sharing, with the US not having to bear the whole load," he said.

Washington is being helped in its effort to raise funds by

the UK government, which has already committed £70m a year. According to one Downing Street adviser: "We have put our money on the table, now it is time for others to do the same."

The other main commitments so far are from Germany, which has offered €150m a year, and Australia, which said it would pay A \$100m a year.

"A lot of what happens in Chicago will be about saying that support for Afghanistan will not fall off a cliff after 2014," a senior western diplomat said.

The UK has pledged to increase aid spending in the region as it seeks to rebuild some of the country's devastated infrastructure and the £700m figure for Afghanistan represents a 40 per cent increase. Much of that funding will go into building up the Afghan security forces, including the establishment of an officer training camp, nicknamed "Sandhurst in the Sand", after the British military academy on which it is based.

"We understand why some countries couldn't commit the same kind of troop levels, but they need to play their part in helping to pay for the reconstruction effort," the Downing Street adviser said.

Yahoo.com

May 18, 2012

10. US Stresses Future France Role In Afghanistan

By Agence France-Presse

The United States stressed Thursday that France would still contribute to the NATO operation in Afghanistan, despite new President Francois Hollande's promise to withdraw combat troops this year.

A day before Obama welcomes Hollande to the Oval Office for their first meeting,

the White House stressed that the overall NATO combat mission would not end in Afghanistan until 2014.

"We would look to allies to make their national decisions in the context of the overall alliance approach," said Obama's National Security Advisor Tom Donilon.

"You can make all kinds of contributions. You can make combat troop contributions, you can make train and assist kinds of contributions, you can make other kinds of contributions."

Donilon's remarks appeared to leave latitude for Hollande to meet his campaign commitment while still avoiding leaving an impression that NATO member countries were rushing for the exits from the Afghan war.

"Despite the national decisions you might make about pace of withdrawal or timing of withdrawal ... you're a member of the alliance, and all in together and all out together, as an alliance in a general fashion," Donilon said.

"I'm sure that (Hollande) intends to keep his campaign commitments, but also France is a member of an alliance, a member of ISAF (International Security Assistance Force for Afghanistan) an ally of the US, so I think it's fully appropriate for us to have a discussion about this."

Donilon also said that he expected that Obama and Hollande would be able to build the kind of relationship that the US leader enjoyed with former French president Nicolas Sarkozy, who left office this week.

Hollande will travel to the US leader's presidential retreat at Camp David later Friday to join Obama and other leaders at the G8 summit which is set to be dominated by the euro zone debt crisis.

He will then travel on to Chicago where Obama will on Sunday convene a NATO summit, at which the Afghan war will be the key issue.

Yahoo.com

May 17, 2012

11. US Wants \$1 Billion A Year For Afghanistan, Poland Says

By Agence France-Presse

The US wants allies to contribute \$1 billion each year to help fund Afghanistan's security forces after the planned exit of foreign troops by the end of 2014, Poland's foreign minister said Thursday.

Speaking in Warsaw, Radoslaw Sikorski said Poland could be asked to contribute up to \$20 million (25 million euros) each year.

"Our government is currently verifying our capacities," he said.

The US expects countries participating in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to help fund Afghan security forces.

Sikorski said the total cost of funding security operations could rise to about \$4 billion (five billion euros) in the coming years.

An ex-communist country that joined NATO in 1999, Poland currently has around 2,500 troops deployed in the ISAF force.

Afghan forces are gradually taking over the country's security, with a goal of letting most of the 130,000 foreign troops leave by the end of 2014.

Officials from Kabul will attend NATO's upcoming summit in Chicago in the hope of securing funding.

NYTimes.com

May 17, 2012

12. Taliban Strike Leader's Office

By Rod Nordland

KABUL, Afghanistan — At least 11 people died Thursday after Taliban insurgents attacked a provincial governor's office, but were beaten back by security forces, Afghan officials said.

The attack was apparently an attempt to assassinate the governor of western Farah Province, Mohammad Akram Khapalwak, who was in his office at the time, and the insurgents once again resorted to the ruse of disguising themselves as Afghan police officers, according to the police security chief for the province, Mohammad Ghaus Malyaar.

Mr. Malyaar said the four attackers wore lightweight explosive vests and carried rocket-propelled grenade launchers and small weapons. "The target was clearly the governor and his staff," he said. "Six police officers have been martyred, and an employee of the governor's house was also killed."

All four of the attackers were shot to death by police officers defending the compound, Mr. Malyaar said, and none were apparently able to detonate an explosive vest.

The attack came less than three weeks after a similar attempt to assassinate the governor of Kandahar Province.

Thursday's attack in remote Farah Province began when the attackers shot to death two guards at the entrance to the governor's compound in the city of Farah, and raced inside, initially confusing defenders who thought they were policemen.

Naqibullah Farahi, the spokesman for the governor, put the number of attackers at five and said one of them

did manage to detonate his explosive vest.

Taimoor Shah contributed reporting from Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Miami Herald
May 18, 2012
Pg. 1

13. Afghan Massacre Survivors Recall Horror

Survivors of the March 11 event -- in which a U.S. soldier is accused of killing 17 people -- give their first public account.

By Jon Stephenson, McClatchy News Service

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — It was early in the morning, perhaps 2 a.m., when gunfire awoke 14-year-old Rafiullah.

He looked outside the house he'd been sleeping in with his grandmother, an aunt, two cousins and his sister, and he saw a man with a weapon walk to a shed that housed the family cow and open fire, shooting the animal dead.

"I told the women inside our room: 'Let's run! Let's get out of here,' " recalled Rafiullah, who like many Afghans goes by one name.

In the next compound, a short distance from the house where Rafiullah had been sleeping, Haji Mohammad Naim awoke to the sound of dogs barking wildly in the street.

"Then there was shooting, and the dogs stopped barking," said Naim, who is in his 50s. Shortly afterward, there was pandemonium at Naim's front door as Rafiullah and a handful of terrified women and children poured into his yard, seeking shelter. Minutes later, another woman and a young girl emerged from the darkness. "She was screaming and crying," Naim said of the woman. "She said, 'My

husband has been martyred,' "meaning that he'd been killed.

Suddenly a silhouette appeared, moving rapidly behind a bright light. Naim thought that U.S. forces were raiding his village, and he expected a squad of soldiers to arrive. Instead, he saw just one man. "He got closer, and then he started shooting at me," Naim said.

The story that Rafiullah and Naim recently told a McClatchy News Service reporter is the first public account by survivors in their village of the events of March 11, when a man whom U.S. officials have identified as Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales allegedly shot and killed 17 people in two Afghan villages.

American officials, who say Bales returned to his base nearby after the shootings and surrendered without a fight, quickly spirited him out of Afghanistan to the United States, where he's awaiting trial on murder and other charges at the Army's maximum-security prison at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

U.S. officials have offered no motive for the shootings and have divulged scant details of what investigators think took place in the villages of Alkozai, where Rafiullah and Naim live, and Najiban, which also lies near Bales' base at Belambai in the Panjway district of Kandahar province.

The accounts by Rafiullah and Naim, both of whom were wounded in the rampage, offer new details of Bales' alleged actions. A third survivor, Naim's 11-year-old son, Sadiqullah, also was interviewed. But he said he had remained hidden behind a curtain throughout the violence, and it was uncertain what he'd seen.

How valuable Naim's and Rafiullah's testimony would be in a U.S. military court

is unclear. Both said they didn't see the shooter's face clearly enough to identify him, and both are uncertain about the exact time, noting that no one in the houses had a watch. Officials haven't divulged which village they think was attacked first.

But the survivors' accounts lend an urgency that has been lacking in the official version of events, and they convey the brutality and the seeming randomness of what took place in those early morning hours.

Before the shooting ended in Alkozai, Rafiullah's grandmother was dead, his sister was critically wounded, three other people had been killed and five others were wounded in three adjacent houses. Most of the victims were related by blood or marriage.

Naim said he felt rooted to the ground as the shooter bore down on him. Bullets whizzed through the night. The gunfire seemed to come at him in bursts, perhaps as many as 10 shots altogether, Naim recalled, some fired from just feet away. Two struck him in the upper left side of his chest and one ripped skin from the left side of his jaw. Then everything went black.

The shooter stepped past Naim's unconscious body and entered his home, confronting Rafiullah and his relatives who'd taken refuge in the main room. With them were around a dozen of Naim's family members, roused by the gunfire but still half-asleep.

Terror unfolded in the crowded space, the frightened faces of women and children illuminated only by a light that Rafiullah said appeared to be affixed to an assault rifle. The shooter drove everyone before him, herding and hunting his victims like animals.

Spotting Rafiullah, he seized one of the boy's arms.

Rafiullah said his grandmother seized his other arm, to try to stop the soldier from dragging him away. The soldier turned on her. "He shot my grandmother, he wounded my sister Zardana and wounded me," Rafiullah said. "He opened fire on Naim's son, Sadiqullah, and also opened fire on Naim's daughter. Then the soldier left."

Help for the wounded eventually arrived, although Rafiullah — like Naim — had fallen unconscious, and was unable later to say how long it took to get there. The survivors were rushed, by a relative who'd borrowed a car, to a nearby U.S.-Afghan base, then flown by helicopter to a U.S. military hospital at Kandahar airfield.

Rafiullah, who had a gunshot wound to each leg, found himself in a bed next to Naim's son, Sadiqullah, who had received a bullet wound to his right earlobe.

Rafiullah told McClatchy that Afghanistan's president, Hamid Karzai, phoned him in the aftermath of the attack and U.S. authorities later interviewed him while he was in the hospital. "Two times they talked to me," he said.

A day or two after the massacre, he also spoke to the man Karzai had appointed as his chief investigator into the killings, Gen. Sher Mohammad Karimi, the Afghan army chief. "To all of them I said the same thing," Rafiullah said. "I saw only one shooter."

Curiously, Karimi later backed the "multiple attacker" theory, which was also advanced by Karzai, although Karimi subsequently acknowledged in an interview with McClatchy that Rafiullah and Sadiqullah had told him otherwise.

Naim, who said he regained consciousness four days after the attack, also told McClatchy

that U.S. investigators had interviewed him in the hospital. But he said their Afghan counterparts hadn't interviewed him, despite him being one of a handful of adults to survive the shootings. A tall man with a graying beard and gnarled face, who gave his age as "between 50 and 60," Naim said he felt abandoned by the Afghan government after the massacre. No government official had been to see him or to ask about his welfare.

"They care only about themselves," he said.

The only official contact he'd had since his discharge from the hospital was when he was summoned, still wounded, to Kandahar city and interrogated by an officer from Afghanistan's much-feared intelligence service, the National Directorate of Security.

"That man was a bastard," Naim said. "He accused me of having laid IEDs" — improvised explosive devices, or homemade bombs — "before the massacre to target the American forces."

Naim said he had previously seen Taliban members placing such devices near his home in Alkozai, but that he'd told them not to, as he and his family might be targeted in response. Like many civilians in southern Afghanistan, he felt he was caught in a struggle between the insurgents and U.S.-led forces.

Sadiqullah had been wounded earlier by shrapnel from an American mortar round that had landed near his home. He underwent surgery at the U.S. military hospital in Kandahar after that attack, too, and his wound had barely healed by the night of the massacre.

Rafiullah has largely recovered from the physical wounds. Naim said he needed

ongoing medical treatment for his own wounds. He walks with difficulty and has lost strength in his hands. "I can hardly pick up this plastic bag," he said.

Zardana, Rafiullah's sister, is the victim most in need of specialized care. Shot in the head, she remains partially paralyzed in the U.S. base hospital. Her uncle, Juma Khan, said U.S. officials had yet to follow through on a pledge to get her more sophisticated care in the United States. "If the Americans can't organize these simple things, they should return Zardana to us so the world can see her condition," he said. "If America can't help us, we will ask the international community for help."

Stephenson is a McClatchy special correspondent.

Danger Room (Wired.com)
May 17, 2012

14. Cell Doors 'Incapable Of Locking' At Giant Afghan Jail

By Spencer Ackerman

The detention facility that the U.S. built in Afghanistan is state-of-the-art. Except for all of the faulty hinges on the cell doors. Or the locks that are, in the words of a new report from the Defense Department's inspector general, "incapable of locking either manually or electronically." Or the construction that's deemed "not up to the standard suitable for a detention facility."

The worst part? U.S. military commanders have known about these flaws since the prison opened its doors.

Built in 2009, the Detention Facility in Parwan is a sprawling campus of 14 buildings, capable of housing — once a planned expansion is completed — some 2,000 detainees. The U.S. spent \$60 million to construct it, to demonstrate

the professionalization of detention operations after years of scandals in Iraq and Afghanistan. What the U.S. military didn't reveal was that it has known from the start that the building has serious engineering flaws—flaws that lead to security liabilities. And all of this was the result of lackadaisical oversight of contractors hired by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The magnetic sensors and electronic locks on the "access doors" that prevent detainees from traveling between cell blocks, are "defective" and had to be removed, according to a report the Defense Department's inspector general released on Thursday. That removal caused the electronic systems integrating and remotely controlling the doors to be "ineffective."

"The integration system was supposed to monitor the status of all doors with electronic locks and magnetic sensors, thereby electronically monitoring the status of all detainees entering and exiting the secured areas," the inspector general found. "The lack of a final functional test on the building integration system was considered a deficiency when the building was accepted. However, [Pentagon inspector general] engineers noted during their inspection in July 2010 that the integration system was still not functioning. Instead of ensuring that the doors had magnetic sensors and locks so that the Integration System would work properly, a soldier was required to stand and guard the door, as a means of securing the rooms."

The doors themselves are shoddily built, too. The hinges on them were "incorrect," according to the inspector general. "The poorly constructed cell doors allowed detainees to damage the doors

easily by repeated kicking," the report states. There are also problems with the fire-prevention and sewage systems that the inspector general says pose a "health and safety risk" to detainees.

The damage was not limited to minor areas of the prison, either. "The construction quality was not up to the standard suitable for a detention facility," the report concludes, "and ... the quality of construction of greatest interest was the areas where the detainees spent most of their time such as detention cells and the recreation yard."

No detainee appears to have escaped as a result of the construction woes. But that may be a matter of time. Afghan detainees have been able to literally tunnel out of another prison in the country — twice. And while the leadership of the prison reports that it doesn't have problems with the cells anymore, other construction problems with the prison persist: "The access doors are still in disrepair and will be replaced as soon as new prison grade doors arrive in theater from the United States."

Except that the U.S. won't run the Parwan prison for much longer. The Afghans signed a deal with NATO in March to take control of it by September. That means Afghan troops, less capable on average than their U.S. counterparts, will soon be in charge of hundreds of detainees in a giant prison with chronic security vulnerabilities.

That prison isn't in an isolated area. It's on the outskirts of Bagram airfield, one of the U.S.' major bases, housing over 10,000 U.S. troops. Bagram is about an hour's drive from the capital city of Kabul.

The Army basically pled *nolo contendere* to the Pentagon inspector general. While

picking at nits, a senior Army Corps of Engineers official wrote to the inspector general on April 2 that his department "concur[s] with all but one" of the recommendations in the report — some of which are as simple as urging "continuous oversight" on the facility.

These days, Parwan is infamous for being the site where U.S. troops accidentally burned Korans, a February debacle that caused days of countrywide rioting. Needless to say, it wasn't supposed to be this way. I took a tour of the detention facility in August 2010, and officials boasted of the sophisticated security systems that would allow guards to humanely and firmly monitor and control detainee activity.

But this is the legacy that a decade's worth of U.S. detention operations will leave in Afghanistan: locks that don't lock. And across Afghanistan, even as U.S. troops withdraw from the country, the U.S. is still building jails.

Time
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Pg. 38

15. Bring Our Son Home

The parents of America's only missing soldier in Afghanistan almost got him back from the Taliban. What went wrong?

Bob Bergdahl was halfway through his UPS delivery route on the evening of June 30, 2009, when he received an urgent message from his dispatcher, requesting that he return immediately to headquarters. Bergdahl had spent the afternoon the same way he spent most afternoons, delivering packages to the far-flung mountain settlements outside Hailey, Idaho, where he lives with his wife Jani and where they had brought

up their two children Sky and Bowe. By the time Bergdahl turned in to the graveled parking lot of the UPS hub, it was 7 p.m. Standing there, next to his wife, were two American soldiers in dress uniform. Alongside them was an Army chaplain. For the father of an American infantryman serving in Afghanistan, that could mean only one thing: his beloved son was dead. "How is Jani going to take this?" he wondered. But the two soldiers had something else to tell him. Twenty-three-year-old Private First Class Bowe Bergdahl had gone missing from his base in eastern Afghanistan, near the Pakistani border. He was, they explained, DUSTWUN-- a military acronym that means "Duty Status Whereabouts Unknown." Bob and Jani stood in the parking lot, and together with the chaplain, they prayed.

They did not yet know it, but their son was a prisoner of the Taliban, the only American soldier ever to be taken alive and held by the militant group that the U.S. has been fighting since the war began in October 2001.

Some families would have gone public with the news immediately, telling the world that their son must be brought home--now. The Bergdahls, though, are quiet people. The close-knit family--Jani had homeschooled Bowe and his older sister--retreated into silence. They preferred to work behind the scenes, lobbying the State Department and the Department of Defense to pursue Bowe's release. They worried that too much exposure might make things worse. Other than some carefully scripted official statements and a single self-made YouTube video, in which Bob Bergdahl addressed Bowe's captors and asked for his only son's safe return home,

Bob and Jani had never spoken in public about their son.

But on May 9, just weeks after Bowe's 26th birthday, the Bergdahls emerged from their self-imposed silence with an unexpected interview in a local newspaper, saying they believed the U.S. should negotiate a prisoner exchange for their son with the Taliban and that "everybody is frustrated with how slowly the process has evolved." After a flurry of interviews with the national media, in which they revealed that Bowe had in fact been the subject of a failed deal involving the transfer of five Taliban prisoners from the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo, they retreated to the sanctuary of their family home, located in the shadow of Idaho's Smoky Mountains, a range of peaks so wild and raw they wouldn't look out of place on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. But in an interview at a local coffee shop after most of the reporters had left town, Bob Bergdahl, 52, described the agonizing journey his family has undertaken, how the pressure has built with the passing years and why he felt he could stay silent no longer. Pained but reflective, Bergdahl spoke for more than two hours, never becoming truly emotional and deflecting any question about his inner life to focus on what he could do, must do, to get his son back. "We do not want to pressure the White House. We do not want to pressure Congress," Bergdahl said. "They're going to have to come to terms the way they always do, through hardcore politics, especially in an election year. But at the same time, we have a window of opportunity in Afghanistan, and that window is not going to wait for a national election to come to an end. I don't think we can count on the dynamics on the ground in Afghanistan to be

the same in November as they necessarily are now. This is a war, and war doesn't wait on politics."

TIME has learned that the urgency the Bergdahls feel is rooted in a recent split in the Taliban movement that, in a cruel twist, was precipitated by the very negotiations that were meant to secure the release of their son. People close to the Taliban and the particular faction that is holding Bergdahl say the once secret talks with the Americans sparked a furor among hard-line Taliban fighters who felt they were being sold out by some of their leaders. Those hard-line Taliban are now--according to Taliban, other Afghan and American sources--in no mood to restart talks over Bergdahl, or anything else for that matter.

But Bowe Bergdahl remains a unique and valuable bargaining chip for the Taliban, and that gives his parents hope. To the U.S. government, he also presents an opportunity for much broader political gains. His release might push the fitful peace talks with the Taliban further along. "The onus is on the Taliban to come back to the negotiations if they want to move this process forward," says an Obama Administration official.

These three disparate entities--the Bergdahls and their Hailey community, the U.S. government, and the Taliban--have mobilized assets at hand to achieve the oddly shared goal of bringing the crisis over the young U.S. soldier to a close, even as they pursue very different endgames. At the heart of it all is a young captive who has declared in one of the five hostage videos released by the Taliban, "I am a prisoner. I want to go home. The Afghanistan men who are in our prisons, they want to go home too."

In Custody of the Taliban

At the beginning, Bowe Bergdahl refused to make life easy for his captors. "He was not cooperating," one Taliban commander tells a TIME special correspondent based in Peshawar, Pakistan. Initially, Bergdahl refused to eat as he was moved rapidly around the border region of Pakistan and Afghanistan. After his capture, he was taken first to the Pakistani town of Angoor Adda, which borders the Afghan province of Paktika, where Bergdahl's Army unit was based. Soon after, he was shifted to the thickly forested mountains of North Waziristan's Shawal Valley, where the network of the Taliban-aligned militant leader Sirajuddin Haqqani is headquartered. North Waziristan is a forbidding, xenophobic land of suspicious clans where no stranger goes unnoticed and where perilous terrain makes infiltration by even the most dedicated intelligence agencies extremely difficult. Another militant who, like the others, requested not to be identified, in deference to Taliban rules against speaking to the media, said that once Bergdahl was in Pakistan he was almost entirely beyond the reach of the U.S. military. "We had been waiting for years and years to hunt down such an important bird. Once one fell into our hands, then we knew how to keep it safe and sound."

How Bergdahl fell into the hands of the Haqqani network remains unclear. Within days of his disappearance on June 30, a Taliban commander crowed to the media that his group had captured a drunken American soldier outside his base. Two and a half weeks later, they released a video. Bergdahl, dressed in local garb and showing the beginnings of a wispy beard, said he had been captured after falling behind on

a routine foot patrol. Unnamed soldiers from his base, however, told international media outlets that he had wandered into the scrub-covered mountains on his own with his journal and a supply of water, leaving his weapons and armor behind. An unidentified U.S. official told the Associated Press at the time that he had "just walked off" after his guard shift was over.

Whatever the truth, Bergdahl was in the custody of one of the most violent factions of the Taliban. After his initial rebelliousness, Bergdahl started cooperating a little more, militants say. At times he was looked after by a group of English-speaking fighters, "so he does not feel bored," says the commander. He drank mineral water and boxed juices and was eventually allowed the foods of his choice, within reason. "Under the rules of melmastia, 'Pashtun hospitality,' he will eat the same foods his captors eat," says Jere Van Dyk, a CBS news consultant who was captured and held for 45 days in 2008 by the same group. "There will be dal, rice, and meat when they can afford it." In the right season, they might offer spinach or eggplant cooked in oil. "They will provide him with soap and toothpaste, all the amenities they can to show that they are taking care of him. He will have a cot and a quilt."

Even though Bergdahl is the only American service member the Taliban have successfully captured, kidnapping and hostage taking have long been tactics of the militant group. Since 2001, fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan have seized hundreds of aid workers, journalists, wealthy Pakistanis and other people the Taliban considers worthy of ransom or negotiation.

The cultural code of hospitality extended to

captives appears--deliberately--evident in the first video, which became public in July 2009. While the off-camera interrogator asks questions of Bergdahl in accented but fairly fluent English, the shaved-headed soldier mops up a plate of stew with pieces of bread. He finishes his meal with a glass mug of the pale yellow tea popular among the Pashtun population.

The worst part of being a captive, say Van Dyk and British journalist Sean Langan, who was held hostage by the Haqqanis for four months in 2008, is the state of perpetual fear. "No matter how nice they are--and usually they are--you know that they could kill you at any minute," says Langan. "That can break a person over time."

In a third video, released in April 2010, Bergdahl sports a thick beard and wears an army sweatshirt that looks fresh out of the package. Bergdahl says he is being treated well and is allowed to exercise. His captors tell TIME that by that stage he had started learning basic Pashtu, "words such as bread, water, How are you?, I am fine, Who are you?" Bergdahl, who was raised a devout Presbyterian, even started thinking about converting to Islam, says one commander. Suspicious at first, they asked if it was out of fear or frustration that he wanted to convert. "He told us, 'Your way of life has impressed me, and I want to live like you.'"

And then, last fall, Bowe Bergdahl escaped.

Learning Pashtu in Idaho

Back in Hailey, Bob Bergdahl was also learning Pashtu. He scoured websites and militant chat rooms looking for information. He kept delivering packages for UPS, as familiar and warm a face around Hailey as ever, but

getting Bowe back had become his mission in life. He read up on the border region's history and politics and culture, information that he then used in his own video directed at Bowe's captors.

"Idaho is so much like Afghanistan," Bob Bergdahl says, speaking of the wild mountainous environment that both places share and that Bowe loved. "The similarities will help him. We hope that will be what sustains him."

Friends and neighbors in Hailey say the videos of Bowe have been both comforting and torturous to the Bergdahl family. They prove that Bowe is alive, but they are also a visceral reminder of just how far away he is. Sherry Horton, one of Bowe's closest friends, says she takes comfort in seeing Bowe's beard grow. "It's nice to look and to be able to see in the different videos the beard growth that tells you the passage of time." Bob Bergdahl has started growing his own beard in solidarity. "His faith seems to be intact," says Bergdahl of his son. "In his videos, he's mentioned his faith in God, and that means a lot to us. We think the Taliban and these Pashtun people can identify with that. And I hope they can respect him for that. I hope they continue to treat him humanely."

Hailey's support for Bowe Bergdahl has never wavered during his nearly three years in captivity. Zaney's River Street Coffee House, where he once worked as a barista, has become ground zero for the campaign to get him back. The cheerful, flower-bedecked clapboard building boasts signs in the window that read **STANDING WITH BOWE AND GET BOWE BACK**. That solidarity and respect for the Bergdahls' decision to stay quiet until now partly explains why their story has remained

largely out of the public eye. The Departments of State and Defense lobbied news outlets not to report that Bergdahl was the subject of negotiations with the Taliban, arguing that news stories about him might hurt his chances of being released or even imperil his life.

Behind the scenes, the Bergdahls and the government worked in tandem. "We've been in very close contact with the Bergdahls," says a senior Administration official. "I visited with them quite a lot. They're very aware of what we have been doing, and I very much have appreciated their support."

The Pentagon has been working to locate Bergdahl since he went missing. "I can assure you that we are doing everything in our power, using our intelligence resources across the government, to try to locate him," General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters on May 10. "If you go to the Centcom command center, there's about a 4-by-6-ft. poster of Bowe Bergdahl sitting in front of the podium to remind them, and therefore us, every day that he remains missing in action," he said. But in a region as vast and unforgiving as North Waziristan, looking for one American soldier held hostage by a group that has long experience with captives is a humbling reminder of the limits of even the world's most powerful military.

Art Keller, a former CIA officer who took part in the agency's hunt for terrorists in Pakistan, says the few CIA agents who worked in the tribal regions when he was there in 2006 could not even leave the Pakistani army bases that hosted them. "I had a local person who worked in that area who I could only communicate with

via computer," he says. "So I couldn't even meet with them."

The Haqqanis "are so conscious of the use to which we put drones that if they're going to move anyone, they'll do it in a way that we don't pick up visual traces," Keller says. "Are they going to move [Bergdahl] with a bag over his head? Even that would raise suspicion."

Another former CIA case officer in Afghanistan and Iraq, Patrick Skinner, also doubts that either local intelligence or technology is of much help in finding Bergdahl. And if he were located, sending in a SEAL team or Special Forces to rescue him in such an environment--and in Pakistani territory--would be both practically and politically hazardous. "Outside of an incredible intelligence break, or luck," says Skinner, "the way it's going to happen is that it's going to be done through back channels where everybody involved will get something."

Talking with the Enemy

Three days after his escape, the Haqqanis recaptured Bergdahl in the mountains. "It was a brief escape, and he was easily recovered from the same area. He was not familiar with the area and route, and then the whole area was controlled by Taliban, and therefore escaping was not possible," one of the network's commanders says. The Haqqanis were angry. Bergdahl had exploited the honesty, poverty and illiteracy of the men assigned to guard him, promising them that he would take them to the U.S. if they helped him escape, the militant leader says. Bergdahl was physically punished for misguiding the fighters who had tried to escape with him, says the commander, adding that the fighters had been "paralyzed," his grim euphemism for execution.

Since his recapture, says the commander, Bergdahl no longer has the freedom to walk around and exercise that he once enjoyed. He is still properly looked after, he says, but "we don't trust him anymore and keep him in lockup most of the time."

Late last fall, the U.S. government initiated talks with the Taliban in the Persian Gulf state of Qatar in the hope of bringing an end to the war. In the course of the discussions, the Taliban told the Americans that they wanted five senior Taliban officials released from Guantamo, a senior Administration official says. The U.S. then raised the possibility of including Bergdahl in the process. Soon the two sides had a tentative agreement.

American officials insist it was never a direct exchange. "This wasn't negotiating with terrorists," says the senior Administration official. "This wasn't a swap." Instead, they describe each step as a confidence-building measure designed to keep everyone at the negotiating table at an office in Qatar, where both sides had agreed that Taliban envoys could safely set up residence. The offer to the Taliban from the Americans, with Qatar's approval, was this: The Guantamo detainees would be given jobs, reunited with their families and permitted to move around Qatar with some monitoring. They would not, however, be allowed to go back to Afghanistan, and they would have to complete a deradicalization program. The Americans hoped the agreement would lead to more-comprehensive talks about the role of the insurgent group in Afghanistan after most foreign troops pull out in 2014.

In January, a delegation from the Afghan Taliban

approached the Haqqani network with the proposal, members of both groups say, and asked that it hand over its prisoner. The Haqqanis agreed, pledging loyalty to the mainstream Taliban group, and Bergdahl was moved across the border, back into Afghanistan. In order to prove that they were serious, the Taliban produced another, yet unseen and previously unreported video of Bergdahl, says Hekmat Karzai, director of the Afghanistan-based Centre for Conflict & Peace Studies, who has stayed abreast of the negotiations through his extensive contacts with current and former Taliban members. "It was given to the Americans to say, 'Look, this guy is alive. He is in our custody, and we are willing to talk. We are willing to potentially swap Bergdahl for those detainees.'" Administration officials refused to confirm or deny the existence of a proof-of-life video.

In early January, the Taliban for the first time publicly revealed to individual journalists that they were interested in negotiating with Washington. It was a significant departure for a group that has consistently refused to negotiate as long as foreign troops remained in Afghanistan.

But there was a problem. As the talks in Qatar proceeded, discussions inside the Taliban movement got heated at times, says Karzai, particularly between the older, more experienced members who were part of the Taliban government toppled in 2001 and the younger recruits who know nothing but battle. One senior commander says leaks about the talks had undermined morale. "Most of our fighters had stopped fighting, and the battlefields became a standstill due to talks with the Americans."

But by early March, it looked as though everything was set to go. Many members of the detainees' families were already in Qatar, preparing for long-anticipated reunions with fathers and husbands they hadn't seen in a decade.

And then it all fell apart.

On March 15, the Taliban suspended the talks, citing the Americans' "unacceptable" conditions. Taliban members say the U.S. tacked on a last-minute stipulation that the Taliban announce a cease-fire and lay down arms first. "We told them we are willing to announce a cease-fire, but you should start pulling out all foreign forces and tell the world that invading Afghanistan and removing the Taliban from power was your mistake, but they did not agree," a Taliban leader says. "Thus the talks failed." Not surprisingly, the U.S. sees it differently. "The Taliban refused to agree to the terms we require for a transfer, so they walked away," the Obama Administration official says. "This proposal ... is still very much on the table."

But Taliban members say the time for talking may be over. They are contending with a split in their ranks that threatens the whole idea of a peace deal with the American and Afghan governments. "Had we continued talks for a few more weeks with the U.S. in Qatar, our movement would have died a natural death," says a senior Taliban commander operating in Kandahar. "Infighting had started among various factions." While an imploding Taliban might appear to be a good thing for the American and Afghan governments, a fragmented and more radical Taliban would not be. The commander tells TIME that since the talks fell apart, there has been a purge in the Taliban leadership. Younger and more

violent field commanders have been promoted over the more peace-ready old guard, and a strict warning has been delivered that any Taliban caught freelance negotiating with the Afghan government or the Americans will be killed. On May 12, a Taliban splinter group assassinated Maulvi Arsala Rahmani, a former Taliban minister and a member of the government's High Peace Council, in Kabul. In a subsequent phone call, the group's spokesman, Qari Hamza, took responsibility for the attack and declared that its ranks were swelling with Taliban opposed to "the so-called peace talks with the U.S. We formed a separate group that comprises all those genuine Taliban fighters who shed their blood in jihad against the U.S.-led foreign forces for the liberation of Afghanistan." Just a few weeks before he died, Rahmani told TIME he was confident that the talks would resume shortly. "We are tired of war. The Taliban are tired of war, and the Americans are tired too. Talks are the only solution."

In spite of the hardening of the Taliban's position, the Bergdahls and the Obama Administration have not given up hope of negotiating the young Idahoan's release. Although the U.S. government believed that going public about the talks over Bergdahl would be a mistake, "You have to have great sympathy for the Bergdahls," says the senior Administration official, "and they've made their decision here."

For the Bergdahls and the Hailey community, Bowe's return would mark the end of a long journey. But for Bowe, who has been criticized by many for the circumstances surrounding his capture and his appearance in propaganda videos, it would be just the start.

"He will always be separate from everyone else--not an outcast, but isolated," says Van Dyk, who is still haunted by his own experience. "And it won't be right, but he will be called a traitor. He has a long road ahead."

Back in Hailey, where yellow ribbons symbolizing solidarity with Bowe still flutter in the cool mountain breezes, Bob and Jani Bergdahl have committed now to pressing their son's case in public and will appear at a veterans' rally in Washington on May 27. That event may spark a new round of interest in the U.S.'s only missing soldier in Afghanistan, but it is unlikely that it will create enough pressure on any of the key players to bring Bowe home. The White House waits for a signal from the Taliban that talks can begin again, and the town of Hailey for news of a miraculous release. And somewhere in the mountains near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, a young man waits to go home to his family.

Bloomberg.com

May 18, 2012

16. House To Vote On \$554 Billion Defense Bill, Defying Obama

By Roxana Tiron, Bloomberg News

The Republican-controlled U.S. House is set to vote as soon as today on a \$554 billion defense bill that President Barack Obama has threatened to veto if it impedes the Pentagon's new defense strategy.

The defense authorization measure is about \$4 billion more than the Democratic Obama administration said could be spent for fiscal 2013 to stay within deficit-reduction targets.

The House Armed Services Committee last week rejected Pentagon proposals to curtail or

slow weapons programs. They include Northrop Grumman Corp.'s Global Hawk drone and General Dynamics Corp.'s Abrams battle tanks as well as Virginia-class submarines built by Huntington Ingalls Industries Inc. and the Electric Boat unit of General Dynamics.

"It's Congress's constitutional obligation to ensure this new force posture is not a hollow one," Representative Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, the California Republican who is chairman of the armed services panel, said on the House floor as he kicked off debate on the 2013 defense authorization bill this week. "To that end, we provide modest increases in combat capabilities with particular emphasis on our Navy fleet and critical intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms."

Obama in January presented a revamped U.S. military strategy for an era of budget cuts that pledges to emphasize the Asia-Pacific region and space and cyber capabilities while preserving missions such as defeating al-Qaeda. The Obama administration, as part of the strategy, is seeking a reduction in the number of military personnel as it tries to cut \$487 billion from the defense budget over the next decade.

The 2013 defense authorization bill, which sets spending targets and policy for the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1, seeks to slow the pace of personnel reductions in the military and would block new rounds of military base closings in the U.S.

The legislation also would block same-sex marriages and "marriage-like" ceremonies on military bases. The panel agreed on the provision last week within hours of Obama saying that he supports same-sex marriage. Last year, Obama

ended the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that barred openly gay men and lesbians from serving in the military.

En route to final passage, the House will have debated more than 100 amendments, including failed calls for an end to the war in Afghanistan and blocking assistance funds to Pakistan. The debate on the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan's role in the stability of its neighbor preceded the North Atlantic Treaty Organization summit this weekend in Chicago where the U.S. will press allies to stick to a plan of withdrawing combat troops by the end of 2014.

The House yesterday backed a provision that would prohibit the Defense Department from awarding a contract to supply helicopters to the Afghan security forces to any entity "controlled, directed or influenced" by a state that has supplied weapons to Syria or a state-sponsor of terrorism.

The Pentagon has said it's in a bind, with nowhere to turn for helicopters needed by Afghanistan's air force except Russia, a top arms supplier to Syria's President Bashar al-Assad.

The U.S. Army has a \$375 million contract to buy 21 Russian-made MI-17 helicopters for the Afghans from Rosoboronexport, Russia's state-run arms trader, Pentagon Undersecretary for Policy James Miller said in a March 30 letter to lawmakers. The UN estimates that Assad's regime has killed more than 9,000 people since an uprising against his rule began, two months before the Pentagon contracted for the Russian-made helicopters.

The House provision was sponsored by Rosa DeLauro, a Connecticut Democrat. United Technologies Corp., which

builds several of the U.S. military's helicopters including the Black Hawk, is based in DeLauro's state.

The House armed services panel approved \$88.5 billion -- the amount requested -- for war operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere. The war funds are in addition to the \$554 billion base bill that includes budget authority for military construction and Energy Department defense programs.

The House will also will consider indefinite detention of and due process for suspected terrorists, including U.S. citizens seized on American soil. The House voted yesterday in favor of a provision that calls for foreign nationals suspected of terrorism to be tried by military commissions.

Lawmakers such as Representative John Conyers, a Michigan Democrat, unsuccessfully targeted Lockheed Martin Corp.'s F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, seeking the elimination of the vertical-take-off-and-landing variant of the aircraft. At a total cost of \$382 billion, the F-35 program was designed to produce multiple aircraft variants and is the Pentagon's most expensive weapons program. The House rejected Conyers's amendment yesterday by a voice vote.

While the armed services panel endorsed the Pentagon's request to buy 29 F-35 stealth jets made by Bethesda, Maryland-based Lockheed Martin, it is pressing the Defense Department to disclose by Dec. 31 the date by which it expects the three versions of the fighter planes to become operational. The Pentagon requested \$9.1 billion for the F-35 in the 2013 budget.

The panel backed the full budget request of \$292 million for research and development of a new long-range strike bomber,

attaching a provision pressing the Air Force to ensure that the plane can carry nuclear weapons as soon as it is operational.

The Air Force plans to spend \$6.3 billion through 2017 on developing the bomber, the first since Northrop Grumman was awarded the contract for the B-2 in 1981.

The defense panel overrode Army plans to suspend production of upgraded Abrams tanks built by Falls Church, Virginia-based General Dynamics. The committee added \$181 million to the Army's budget, for a total of \$255.4 million, to keep building the tanks and converting them into the latest M1A2 model at the plant in Lima, Ohio.

The committee's measure would block the Pentagon's plan to retire one version of the Global Hawk drone by Northrop Grumman, based in Falls Church, Virginia, and require that the secretary of the Air Force take "all actions necessary" to keep the so-called Global Hawk Block 30 operating through 2014.

The Pentagon proposed truncating purchases of the Global Hawk variant and putting the drones it had bought into storage. Air Force officials said those drones are more expensive to operate and have less sensing capacity than Lockheed Martin's older U-2 spy planes. The Defense Department has projected savings of \$2.5 billion over five years from cutting short the Block 30 version.

The House panel would authorize an additional \$263 million, for a total of \$338.3 million, to fund continued operations of the Block 30 drones. The Air Force spent \$3.4 billion on the development and procurement of the 18 aircraft, according to Air Force spokeswoman Jennifer Cassidy.

The Armed Services Committee backed the production of two Virginia-class submarines in 2014 that the Navy struck from fiscal 2014 plans. The panel recommended adding a down payment, or "advance procurement," of materials and added \$778 million for that purpose.

The Navy had planned to buy two Virginia-class submarines a year, with the work split between Huntington Ingalls, based in Newport News, Virginia, and Groton, Connecticut-based Electric Boat. Instead, the Pentagon proposes buying one in fiscal 2014 and delaying another until fiscal 2018.

Israel's Iron Dome missile-defense system also stands to gain as much as \$680 million in U.S. aid through 2015 under the committee's legislation for the system built by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd.

Some provisions added by the House committee may become items for negotiation with the Senate. The Senate Armed Services Committee is scheduled to start considering its version of the defense authorization bill on May 22.

The bill is H.R. 4310.

Reuters.com
May 17, 2012

17. U.S. Defense Budget Debate Touches On Afghanistan, NASCAR

By David Alexander, Reuters

WASHINGTON -- War-weary U.S. lawmakers clashed over Afghanistan policy and vented their frustration with Pakistan's border closings on Thursday as they debated an annual defense policy bill that seeks \$642.5 billion in military spending for the 2013 fiscal year.

Democrats in the House of Representatives nudged President Barack Obama to speed up the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the war zone, but Republicans blocked a debate on the issue ahead of a weekend NATO summit to chart a way forward in the decade-long conflict.

House lawmakers debating the National Defense Authorization Act voted 412-1 for an amendment that could block up to \$650 million in proposed payments to Pakistan unless Islamabad lets coalition forces resume shipment of war supplies across its territory.

The moves came as lawmakers debated more than 140 amendments to the policy bill, which seeks \$554 billion in base defense spending for the 2013 fiscal year beginning in October and \$88.5 billion for the Afghan war and other overseas operations.

The measure has drawn a veto threat from the White House because it would overturn many cuts sought by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta in order to achieve congressional budget targets set last year with the goal of cutting \$478 billion in projected military spending in the next decade.

While the authorization act sets spending limits, it does not actually appropriate funds for defense. The panel that controls the purse strings passed a bill on Thursday that added about \$3 billion to the Pentagon's spending request and also provided funds for programs the Defense Department tried to cut.

The House Appropriations Committee voted, however, to eliminate one high-profile expenditure. It cut Pentagon sponsorship of motor sports, fishing and wrestling events.

The department spent about \$96 million last year to sponsor

sporting events, including \$20 million on a single NASCAR auto race, as part of its marketing effort to recruit volunteers, one official said.

"Twenty million for one NASCAR race? Have we lost our minds?" said Representative Jack Kingston, a leader in the effort to cut the funds.

The pressure for an accelerated withdrawal from Afghanistan came ahead of a two-day NATO summit in Chicago starting on Sunday where leaders will discuss the final transition to Afghan security control and the withdrawal of international forces by the end of 2014.

Democratic lawmakers tried to add language to the bill urging Obama to complete an accelerated handover of security to Afghan forces by the end of 2013 and to remove U.S. troops by the end of 2014 - aims consistent with administration planning.

But Republican leaders, who last year narrowly defeated an effort to force Obama to begin planning for withdrawal from Afghanistan, blocked discussion of the Democratic amendment. Instead, they allowed debate on one that called for immediate withdrawal. The measure had little chance of passing and was ultimately defeated.

"They denied us the right to debate that amendment and vote on it, (the) single most important issue facing our armed forces right now," said Representative Adam Smith, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee.

"I understand why. Close to 70 percent of the country wants us out of Afghanistan quicker," he said. "Our position is clearly where the country is. The majority didn't want to have to vote on that, didn't want to have to have that debate. So they froze out our amendment."

Lawmakers nearly unanimously endorsed an amendment that would block payment of some \$650 million in proposed Coalition Support Funds for Pakistan as long as that country's borders remain closed to shipments of supplies for international forces.

Islamabad closed the frontier to NATO supply convoys after an air strike in November killed 24 Pakistani soldiers. A U.S. official said on Wednesday the two sides were on the verge of clinching a deal to reopen the supply lines.

The Republican-led House also rejected efforts to delay development of several weapons programs, including a new nuclear-capable, long-range bomber expected to cost \$291.7 million in 2013.

Lawmakers were headed toward a confrontation over efforts to revoke broad powers of detention granted to the president in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks. A bipartisan coalition that includes Tea Party conservatives and liberal Democrats has lined up behind an amendment to change the law.

Critics say current law enables the U.S. president to lock up terrorism suspects detained in the United States indefinitely or transfer them to military control. Supporters of the current law say foreign terrorism suspects arrested in the United States should be treated like enemy combatants, not like criminals.

"One of the key problems that many of us have with the ... amendment is that it would bestow upon illegal aliens who come to this country to carry out terrorist attacks ... full constitutional rights," said Representative Mac Thornberry, noting the measure would give them the

right to remain silent and have an attorney hired for them.

Smith said those rights already were guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, which does not make a distinction between how foreigners and U.S. citizens are to be treated when arrested.

"Let's stop the ridiculous argument about rewarding terrorists and have some respect for the Constitution and due process," he said.

But several senators issued a statement on Thursday sharply criticizing the amendment, which goes to a vote on Friday.

"We reject any attempts to reward foreign terrorists clever enough to get inside our borders with the same legal rights and protections as American citizens - the very people these terrorists seek to kill and injure," said Senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham, John Kyl and Kelly Ayotte.

Additional reporting by Susan Cornwell.

USAToday.com

May 17, 2012

18. House Panel Calls For Serious Cuts To Propaganda Spending

By Tom Vanden Brook, USA Today

WASHINGTON -- A powerful House committee voted Thursday to cut by nearly one-third the Pentagon's budget for "military information support operations."

The House Defense Appropriations Committee also called on Defense Secretary Leon Panetta to submit a report within 30 days of the law's enactment that, among other requirements, would have the Pentagon detail the effectiveness of so-called MISO programs, previously known as psychological operations.

In February, a USA TODAY investigation found

that hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent in recent years on information operations. These are essentially marketing efforts aimed at persuading foreign audiences to support U.S. interests, though Pentagon officials acknowledge that little proof exists about their effectiveness.

Much of the spending has been funneled to poorly tracked programs, the newspaper found. Also, U.S. sponsorship of the messages is often hidden because the United States lacks credibility among the target audiences, Rear Adm. Hal Pittman, who recently completed a tour running information operations in Afghanistan, told USA TODAY in February.

The committee voted to cut \$81.5 million from the Pentagon's \$251.6 million request for military information support operations from its 2013 budget. The Pentagon did earn praise from the committee for better oversight of the program than in previous years.

Rep. Norm Dicks, the ranking Democrat on the committee, supported the cut because he has been "very skeptical about the lack of detail justifying the program activities and their benefits," said George Behan, his spokesman.

A Pentagon spokesman did not respond to a request for comment.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon's inspector general's criminal investigative unit launched an inquiry in March into the conduct of Leonie Industries, the Pentagon's top contractor in Afghanistan for information operations. The issues included more than \$4 million in unpaid taxes by the company's owners and treatment of its employees, according to a letter from the inspector general. Since the

letter was sent, Leonie officials said the tax bills have been paid.

Last week, Rep. Hank Johnson, a Georgia Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, threatened an amendment to block funding for Pentagon propaganda efforts, citing USA TODAY reports questioning their efficacy and management.

Johnson called the information operations program a "fiasco" and said contracts with Leonie Industries, should be immediately suspended. Johnson also said the Pentagon needs to investigate reprisals against the USA TODAY journalists who have reported on the program, whom he said were "targeted in a possibly criminal disinformation and reputation attack."

Jennifer Plozai, a spokeswoman for the inspector general's office, said Thursday that its policy is not to confirm the existence of investigations.

GovExec.com

May 17, 2012

19. Panel Advances Military Pay Raise

By Kellie Lunney

A House panel Thursday approved legislation that gives military personnel a 1.7 percent pay raise in fiscal 2013 and provides more money for health and wellness programs for service members and their families.

The Appropriations Committee advanced by voice vote a bill funding the Defense Department in fiscal 2013. It provides \$519.2 billion in non-war funding, which is about \$1 billion more than current spending levels, and more than \$3 billion above President Obama's budget request, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

The 1.7 percent pay raise for service members is in

line with pending Defense authorization legislation that the House plans to vote on Friday. Obama also requested a 1.7 percent boost in his fiscal 2013 budget proposal.

The appropriations bill includes \$128.5 billion for more than 1 million active-duty troops and more than 800,000 reservists. The funding is \$2.6 billion less than fiscal 2012 levels because of the reduction in troop totals, according to a press release from the committee's majority staff.

In addition, lawmakers appropriated \$35.1 billion for Defense health and family programs, \$334 million more than fiscal 2012 and \$348 million above the administration's request. That total includes \$245 million for medical facility and equipment upgrades, \$125 million for traumatic brain injury and psychological health research and \$20 million for suicide prevention outreach programs. The bill also provides \$2.3 billion for family support and advocacy programs.

Washington Post

May 18, 2012

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20. Senate GOP Blocks Bill On Iran Economic Sanctions

Republicans want legislation to include threat of military strike

By Joby Warrick

A Senate bill intended to tighten economic sanctions against Iran was blocked Thursday by Senate Republicans, who said they were holding out for an even tougher measure that included an explicit threat of a U.S. military strike if Iran refuses to curb its nuclear ambitions.

The surprise opposition to the sanctions bill - which was endorsed by a Senate committee two months ago with bipartisan

support - left in doubt the fate of Democrat-backed legislation that sought to close loopholes and crack down on international banks that help Iran sell its oil to overseas customers.

Republican resistance to the measure visibly irked Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.), who accused GOP leaders of trying to score political points by raising last-minute objections to a bill that has been in the works since March. Republicans said they had not had enough time to study the bill.

"This has been a classic example of rope-a-dope," Reid complained in remarks to the Senate chamber after the measure was put on hold. "Two months ago, I came to the Senate floor and said we need to pass the sanctions immediately... I have been working the last two months trying to get this done."

Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.), a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, told the Senate that the bill did not go far enough in warning Iran of the consequences of its alleged march toward nuclear-weapons capability. Iran has consistently said its program is entirely peaceful. Nuclear talks between Iran and six world powers are set to begin Wednesday in Baghdad.

"I don't want to create a document before negotiations ... that doesn't include something beyond sanctions to change the Iranian behavior we all want to avoid," Graham said.

The senator said he wanted to add wording to "send an appropriate signal" to Iran that a U.S. military strike would be seriously considered if Iran failed to change its behavior.

President Obama has repeatedly warned Iran that "all options are on the table" - including military action - to

block its efforts to make nuclear weapons. But the White House has endorsed a strategy of political and economic pressure as the preferred means of forcing Iran to halt its pursuit of weapons-sensitive technology.

The Senate legislation would have built on economic sanctions approved by Congress last year to punish banks and businesses that help Iran sell its oil abroad. The proposed measure, known as the Johnson-Shelby bill, would have imposed penalties on companies or governments that help Iran block Western radio and Internet transmissions or provide it with tear gas and other weapons used against opposition groups.

The congressional debate came amid disclosures of new U.S. assurances to Israel that Washington was prepared to use force against Iran if diplomacy failed. U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro gave the assurances to Israeli leaders Tuesday in what was billed as a private meeting with Israeli bar association members. A copy of his remarks was shared with news organizations Thursday.

"It would be preferable to resolve this diplomatically and through the use of pressure than to use military force," Shapiro was quoted as saying. "But that doesn't mean that option is not fully available. And not just available, but it's ready."

On Thursday, State Department officials defended Shapiro's remarks as in line with previous statements by Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta and other senior administration officials.

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot
May 18, 2012

21. U.S. House Backs Continuing War In Afghanistan

By Donna Cassata, Associated Press

WASHINGTON--The

House endorsed the continued war in Afghanistan on Thursday despite acknowledgment from Republicans and Democrats that Americans are war-weary after more than a decade of conflict.

By a vote of 303-113, lawmakers rejected an amendment that would have swiftly ended combat operations in Afghanistan by limiting funding only to the "safe and orderly withdrawal of U.S. troops and military contractors from Afghanistan."

More than 10 years after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, American public support for the overseas conflict has deteriorated. An Associated Press-GfK poll released last week showed that support for the war has hit a new low and is on par with support for the Vietnam War in the early 1970s. Only 27 percent of Americans say they support the war effort, and 66 percent oppose it, according to the survey.

"The American people are far ahead of Congress," said Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif., sponsor of the amendment, who called on Congress to stand with the American people. "It's past time to end the war and bring the troops home."

Opponents of the amendment conceded that the public has grown tired of war, but they argued against a precipitous withdrawal.

"If we leave too early and the Taliban and al-Qaida return, more Americans will suffer," Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, said.

The vote came as the House considered a \$642 billion defense budget for next year, debating more than 140 amendments to the far-reaching

legislation. Final passage is expected today.

New York Times
May 18, 2012
Pg. 21

22. House To Consider Proposal To Bar Indefinite Detention After Arrests On U.S. Soil

By Charlie Savage

WASHINGTON — The House is preparing to vote again on an unresolved legal controversy: whether the military may imprison terrorism suspects captured on United States soil without trial. The renewed debate comes as a federal judge has enjoined the government from enforcing a statute codifying the government's powers of indefinite detention.

Lawmakers are considering amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act. One of them, sponsored by Representative Adam Smith of Washington, a Democrat, and Representative Justin Amash of Michigan, a Republican, would scale back a highly contested provision about indefinite detention created in last year's version of the law, by saying it does not apply to domestic arrests.

The provision created last year expressed Congressional approval for the idea that the executive branch was implicitly given the power to detain, without trial, suspected members of Al Qaeda, its allies and their supporters when Congress in 2001 authorized the use of military force against the perpetrators of the Sept. 11 attacks.

That provision was hotly contested because it made no exception for United States citizens or for people arrested on American soil. Lawmakers could not agree on whether

that authority already existed or should exist. Ultimately, they decided to leave the matter unclear, adding a line saying that the provision did not change the scope of detention authority granted in 2001 — whatever that was.

It is uncertain whether there is enough support to enact the Smith-Amash amendment, which would also have to clear the Senate. The debate last year prompted an ideologically diverse outcry against the possibility of using indefinite detention on American soil, fueled in part by Tea Party conservatives. And this week a court ruling called the indefinite detention provision into question.

When President Obama signed last year's National Defense Authorization Act, he said his administration would use only the criminal justice system to handle terrorism cases that arose on United States soil. A group of writers and activists later sued the government, saying they were afraid that their activities would make them subject to indefinite detention.

On Wednesday, Judge Katherine B. Forrest of the Southern District of New York issued a preliminary injunction blocking the government from enforcing the provision. She said the vagueness of the statute — including what counts as the kind of “support” that could lead someone to be detained — probably violated First and Fifth Amendment rights.

The plaintiffs included Chris Hedges, a journalist who writes extensively about terrorism issues and interacts with terrorists as part of his reporting. Other plaintiffs included the dissident thinker Noam Chomsky and several supporters of WikiLeaks.

Judge Forrest, whom Mr. Obama appointed last year,

noted that Justice Department lawyers repeatedly declined to say that the plaintiffs' conduct would not make them subject to being detained. Her ruling was celebrated by civil liberties advocates as an unexpected victory for individual rights in an era in which courts have largely acquiesced to sweeping claims of national security powers by the government.

But it also drew a puzzled reaction from some legal specialists, who argued that the practical effect of the injunction was uncertain. They said it was not clear what it meant to enjoin the enforcement of a statute in which Congress offered its interpretation of another statute, the 2001 use-of-force authorization.

Judge Forrest also said her preliminary injunction was “pending further proceedings in this court or remedial action by Congress mooting the need for such further proceedings.” The timing of her decision aligned closely with a renewed push in the House to impose explicit limits on the government's power to use indefinite detention in cases that arise on domestic soil.

The amendment offered by Mr. Smith and Mr. Amash, which might come up for a vote on Friday amid a large number of other proposals, would say that people arrested in the United States, citizens or otherwise, cannot be put in indefinite military detention. Mr. Smith and Mr. Amash have argued that the Constitution requires that anyone arrested on United States soil get a full and regular trial.

Other lawmakers have argued that people who join Al Qaeda — even United States citizens — can be held as wartime prisoners, regardless of where they were captured. In early jostling ahead of the full debate, some critics of

the amendment — including Representative Tom Rooney, Republican of Florida — contended that terrorists should not be given extra rights “if they manage to sneak into our country.”

The Bush administration held two people arrested on domestic soil as “enemy combatants” — one a citizen — but both were transferred back to the civilian criminal justice system before the Supreme Court ruled on the issue. In a separate case, the court approved holding another American citizen as a wartime detainee after he was captured on the Afghan battlefield.

UTSanDiego.com
May 17, 2012

23. Congressman Hunter Asks For Peralta Amendment

Seeks Navy report on Medal of Honor nomination

By Gretel C. Kovach

Rep. Duncan Hunter asked Congress Thursday for a complete report from the Navy on Sgt. Rafael Peralta's posthumous Medal of Honor nomination, including a description of all evidence, findings and actions in the case.

A Navy board has been reviewing video clips, a forensic report, photos and other evidence submitted by Hunter and his staff in March to determine whether Peralta's nomination for the highest combat award should be reopened.

The Navy Department's review is ongoing, Capt. Pamela Kunze, a Navy spokeswoman, said Thursday.

Peralta, 25, of San Diego, was killed in Fallujah, Iraq on Nov. 25, 2004. The Marine Corps and Navy Department concluded that he died while smothering a grenade to protect his fellow Marines. His

nomination for the Medal of Honor was overruled, however, by a Pentagon panel convened in 2008 by then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

After the panel questioned whether Peralta acted intentionally despite serious wounds, he was issued the Navy Cross, the second-highest award for valor in combat. His family refused to accept it.

If the Board of Decorations and Medals recommends reopening Peralta's nomination for the Medal of Honor, Navy Secretary Ray Mabus will likely forward the case to the Defense Department for consideration.

In Hunter's prepared remarks Thursday evening supporting the amendment, he commended the Navy for naming a destroyer ship after Peralta recently and evaluating “new evidence” supporting the fallen Marine's Medal of Honor nomination.

Joe Kasper, a spokesman for Hunter, said they expected to have an answer by now about the evidence but “as long as the Navy continues looking at this, that's progress. The hope is that the Navy is going to come to a decision soon.”

The amendment offered Thursday to the House version of the defense spending bill would require the Navy to submit the report within 30 days after enactment. It was expected to pass without opposition Thursday night or early Friday morning. The National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 2013 will likely be signed into law in the autumn.

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot
May 17, 2012
Pg. 1

24. Dempsey: It's The Mission, Not The Money, That Counts

Joint Chiefs chairman calls for a smarter, more innovative soldier

By Kate Wiltrout, The Virginian-Pilot

VIRGINIA BEACH -- Despite shrinking Pentagon budgets and political wrangling over defense-spending priorities, the nation's top military officer didn't mention money in a speech Wednesday in Virginia Beach.

Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said it's more important to discuss missions and capabilities than to bicker over how big the military should be.

"We're not ordering coffee at Starbucks. This isn't a matter of getting a tall, grande or venti. It's what will be different that will most matter," Dempsey told an audience of about 550 military officers, civilians and defense contractors at a joint war-fighting conference.

During his hour on the stage at the Virginia Beach Convention Center, Dempsey made references to topics as varied as the Civil War battle for Vicksburg; Facebook and Twitter (he uses both); and the war between Athens and Sparta in the 5th century B.C.

He spoke of the importance of cyberwarfare and a robust effort to deter potential enemies from crippling communications networks. But he also said today's military must train to operate in degraded environments where networked technology isn't accessible.

"GPS is terrific when it's working, but if it gets jammed, we have to be ready to continue the mission," Dempsey said, adding that "it could be that the worst-case scenario is actually the most likely scenario."

Dempsey's address marked his first return to Hampton Roads since March 2011, when he left Fort Monroe, where he

headed the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, to become chief of staff of the Army. He had been in that role for just a few months when President Barack Obama tapped him to replace Adm. Mike Mullen as his top military adviser.

Dempsey didn't mention the \$33 billion in proposed defense cuts in next year's budget or the \$487 billion the administration has pledged to slice from Pentagon programs over the next decade. Instead, he urged conferencegoers to challenge their own assumptions and beliefs and to think critically about military vulnerabilities.

As an example, he cited a young Marine captain, Wayne Sinclair. In 1996, Sinclair wrote an article about new trends in explosives that made previously impenetrable military vehicles vulnerable to attacks and pointed out innovations South Africa had used in response.

The military didn't grasp the full import of Sinclair's work until 10 years later in Iraq, Dempsey said, when "simple homemade bombs nearly brought the world's most technically advanced fighting force to a halt." In response, the U.S. military developed mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles, or MRAPs, based on technology from South Africa, as Sinclair had suggested.

"There is no substitute for taking a clear-eyed look at the threats we face and asking how our force must change to meet them. So when you finish this conference, go find the Wayne Sinclairs of the world and get comfortable with the arguments that make you the most uncomfortable," Dempsey said. "That's the kind of intuition that will help us build the best possible joint force."

Boston Globe

May 18, 2012

Pg. 1

25. Tribute To Vietnam Veterans Sputtering

50th anniversary has few events set

By Bryan Bender, Globe Staff

WASHINGTON -- They returned home to a politically traumatized nation that treated them with indifference and scorn.

Now, veterans' advocates fear the country will again miss an opportunity to recognize the toil and torment of the 3 million service members sent to fight the Vietnam War. The Pentagon's plans to celebrate the veterans - five years in the making - are sputtering.

This Memorial Day is supposed to be the curtain-raiser for a series of gatherings to mark the 50th anniversary of the beginning of US involvement in the decade-plus war and to honor those who served. Yet few events are planned and crucial corporate sponsorship is nonexistent. Most veterans have not even heard about the effort.

"It has to be some issue of leadership and motivation," Phillip Jennings, a veteran Marine Corps captain who served in Southwest Asia and has written several books about the war, said of what he considers to be a flagging effort. "There is no real direction. There is no champion of it at the Pentagon or the White House."

Pentagon officials acknowledge the criticism but insist the commemoration events will, in the end, be numerous, appropriate, and timely. They point out that the events will be scheduled to coincide with key moments in the war 50 years after they occurred, giving them time to plan.

"I'm optimistic we will get it right," retired Army Lieutenant General Claude "Mick" Kicklighter, who was

appointed to oversee the effort last July, told Vietnam Magazine last month. "I believe that the country wants to do this right and will do it right."

Yet doing it right means raising money, and one Pentagon official said that has been a major stumbling block. The commemoration office has been given scant funds to organize, and officials have not designed a mechanism for corporations to contribute, according to the official, who was not authorized to speak publicly.

Kicklighter's office said he was unavailable for an interview, and officials would not say how much funding the Pentagon has designated.

The exact dates of American involvement have been disputed. The United States first sent military advisers in 1959; massive escalation came when Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin resolution in 1964. This year was chosen by the Pentagon to kick off the 50th commemoration because in 1962 the Pentagon first authorized a Vietnam service ribbon for troops sent to Southeast Asia. It was also the year President Kennedy increased military advisers from a few hundred to several thousand.

Another dispute is over the best ways to honor the veterans, many of whom are still suffering and dying from the effects of the war. And on this issue, the specter of the war and the political battles it spawned back home still haunt.

One group of veterans believes that the successes of the war were not appreciated and that the commemoration events should set the record straight. To them, the service members won the battles but the news media, antiwar protesters, and liberal politicians lost

the war by undercutting their efforts.

"Now is the time to say we are sorry about that," said retired Air Force Lieutenant General Robert E. Pursley in an interview from his home in Stamford, Conn. "The troops did the job they were given to do. All the rest of us back in this country failed on our end."

Pursley served as the military assistant to three secretaries of defense from 1966 to 1972.

Other veterans, including members of the Vietnam Veterans of America, insist the war was a military debacle, entered into falsely, conducted poorly, and ended much too late.

"I am afraid they are going to glorify the war," said Stanley Karnow, a journalist and author who served in the Army Air Corps in World War II and covered the Vietnam War from 1959 to 1974. "You can call them heroes or victims. They are heroes and victims of a war we should have never waged."

Yet there is agreement even among the most vociferous antiwar voices and battle commanders of the 1960s: This is the time to put aside such worn political blame-games and honor those who served.

"I hope it can be done without recycling the old debates," said Tom Hayden, a leader of the antiwar movement who now teaches and writes in Southern California.

Retired Army General Wesley K. Clark concurs. His 1966 class at West Point lost 30 officers in Vietnam and split over the war. The sacrifice of those who returned is still underappreciated, Clark said.

"I recall the looks on their faces, the sadness, the lingering feelings that there was a certain resentment," Clark recalled of the troops who attended the opening of the

Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington in 1982, when he was a lieutenant colonel. "In some faces there was some degree of alienation. But they still came. They believed. They were part of something larger than themselves and they gave to their country when their country asked them to do so."

Many are still suffering and their needs are not being fully met, said Senator Richard Burr, a Republican of North Carolina who recently sponsored legislation to create a "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day."

"The Vietnam generation was cheated from the day their feet hit American soil," said Burr.

It was only last year that the Department of Veterans Affairs approved disability benefits for a particular heart ailment affecting an estimated 200,000 Vietnam vets exposed to jungle defoliants.

Earlier this month, the names of four veterans who died recently were added to the memorial on the National Mall after their deaths were deemed a direct result of their wartime injuries.

The first commemorative event will take place at that touchstone for American grief and acceptance. The wall with the etched names of those 58,000 who died will be rededicated on Memorial Day.

For those who served and returned, the time is overdue to try to make it right, said President Obama.

Speaking at a White House ceremony on Wednesday in which he posthumously bestowed the Medal of Honor to Army Specialist Leslie Sabo Jr., who was killed in Cambodia in 1970, Obama said the 50th anniversary will be a chance "for America to say to our Vietnam veterans what should have been said when you first

came home: You did your job. You served with honor. You made us proud."

"They were the most underappreciated people in many ways during that period," Melvin R. Laird, who served as secretary of defense from 1969 to 1973, said in an interview. "It was not easy for any of them."

New York Times
May 18, 2012
Pg. 1

26. Cataloging Wounds Of War To Help Heal Them

By C. J. Chivers

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. — To those unfamiliar with a battlefield's bleak routine, Col. Michael D. Wirt's database could be read like a catalog of horrors. In it, more than 500 American soldiers are subjected to characteristic forms of violence of the Afghan war.

Faces are smacked with shrapnel, legs are blasted away near knees, bullets pass through young men's abdomens. Vehicles roll over, crushing bones. Eardrums rupture. Digits are severed.

Dozens of soldiers die. Hundreds more begin journeys home, sometimes to treatment that will last the rest of their lives.

Each was listed in a small but meticulous computer entry by Colonel Wirt, a doctor intent on documenting how soldiers were wounded or sickened, how they were treated and how they fared. For those seeking to understand war and how best to survive it, the doctor on his own initiative created an evidence-based tool and a possible model.

His database is one part of a vast store of information recorded about the experiences of American combatants. But there are concerns that the potential lessons from such data could be lost, because no one

has yet brought the information together and made it fully cohere.

Colonel Wirt was a brigade surgeon from the 101st Airborne Division during the American-led effort in 2010 and 2011 to dislodge the Taliban from their rural stronghold along the Arghandab River. His database was part official record, part personal research project.

His commander required him to keep tabs on ailing and wounded soldiers, and to inform him of their prognosis and whereabouts in the medical system.

To this, Colonel Wirt added layers of information. He documented which weapons caused which wounds. He tried to record increased or decreased risk factors — whether the victim was wearing larger or smaller body armor, whether a bomb-sniffing dog was present, when a tourniquet was applied.

He recorded which accidents and diseases took which soldiers off duty, and for how long. He mapped where on a human body bullets most often struck.

A year after he returned to the states, Colonel Wirt and his database point to the promise and obstacles related to studying more than a decade of American war.

The amassed information on combatants over 10 years amounts to the most detailed data ever assembled on battlefield trauma and its care, American military officers say. But the records are scattered.

The Defense Department's trauma registry has information on roughly 66,000 patients who were admitted to modern military hospitals, including American and coalition troops, Afghans and Iraqis, contractors, and the odd journalist, diplomat or aid worker. It is a record, largely, of those who survived.

The Armed Forces Medical Examiner's Office maintains separate sets of records, including full-body CT scans, for service members killed in action. And each patient's medical records, often with narrative details of wounds and a thorough chronicle of treatments, are available in electronic form, but only to those involved in each person's care.

Supporting documents for Purple Heart awards can also include medical and tactical data.

In certain contexts, some of the data is merged, as at quarterly meetings of a special committee that has been seeking ways to improve prehospital care.

So far these disparate storehouses of information have not been joined in a permanent place, much less made widely available for cross-disciplinary study.

Col. Jeffrey A. Bailey, a surgeon who directs the Joint Trauma System at the Institute of Surgical Research at Fort Sam Houston, confirmed what several military doctors noted: There as yet is no standardized medical database that enables researchers to look back comprehensively on the experiences of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Colonel Bailey said his institute, a research arm to promote improvement in medical care, eventually hopes to combine a "K.I.A. module" from the medical examiner with the registry of patients treated in hospitals.

He added, however, that discussion of merging the data is in its early phases, and that while "I think we will get there, I can't tell you when it will happen."

Against this background, Colonel Wirt, a neuroradiologist who

volunteered for duty in an infantry brigade, set out in 2010 to make his own record of one brief but bloody chapter of the Afghan war. "This was a way to take something away," he said, "so that all of the casualties mean something."

His commander wanted a high level of detail, he said. Curiosity drove him further.

"If you don't take data and analyze it and try to find ways to improve, then what are you doing?" Colonel Wirt asked in an interview at Fort Campbell, where he is a deputy commander at Blanchfield Army Community Hospital. "In my humble opinion, a consolidated database with standardized input consisting of mechanism of injury and resulting wounds, classified by battle and nonbattle injuries, would be something you could actually use."

Other officers agreed. Maj. Kirk W. Webb, formerly responsible for compiling casualty data for the 101st Airborne Division, said each unit tracked its casualties, although not to the detail that Colonel Wirt pursued. Most of the information has probably vanished, he added.

"It's kind of sad, actually, because there is a lot of information out there that gets lost," Major Webb said.

Dr. Dave Edmond Lounsbury is a retired colonel and medical doctor who was co-author of "War Surgery in Afghanistan and Iraq," a textbook from the Office of the Army Surgeon General that, over considerable internal dissent, published case studies of combat wounds.

He said that data like that compiled by Colonel Wirt would also be valuable for those who study workplace safety, for historians and for officers who hope to rise above collecting anecdotes

to examine how insurgent and counterinsurgency forces fought each other and evolved.

But he and other officers noted a potential obstacle: Many people in the military have opposed sharing detailed medical data. The reasons, Dr. Lounsbury said, include concerns about patient privacy and a desire to present an airbrushed picture of war for public consumption.

One military official also said restricting access to the data could prevent potential enemies from studying it.

(The Office of the Surgeon General forbade Dr. Wirt to share with The New York Times his data on how American soldiers were wounded, even though the newspaper asked for the data in the format in which the data is released and updated monthly by the Office of the Secretary of Defense for the entire Iraq and Afghan wars.)

The data can be politically charged. Records from the Arghandab offensive, for example, show that 530 Americans from Dr. Wirt's former unit were wounded in a roughly one-year period, compared with 150 Afghan soldiers and police officers. The contrast belies the official insistence that Afghan forces led the campaign, or even participated equally in it.

Dr. Lounsbury suggested that whatever the political content or concerns, compiling data and circulating it broadly was important for the practice of wartime medicine, and for the American military and public to understand better a long period of war.

"I can't think of a higher lesson learned than to put all of that data together and find out what weapons were used and who got killed and who lived and with what therapy and treatment," he said. Dr. Wirt, he

added, "should be applauded for what he has done."

Columbia (SC) State
May 18, 2012

27. Army Replaces Woman Head Of Drill Sergeant School

By Susanne M. Schafer,
Associated Press

FORT JACKSON, S.C. — The first woman commandant of the Army's elite drill sergeant school, who had been suspended for six months by the Army and later reinstated, bid a tearful farewell Thursday to her supporters, students and fellow soldiers as she bowed to Army pressure to leave her historic position.

In a solemn ceremony, Command Sgt. Maj. Teresa King passed the ceremonial flag of responsibility for the Army Drill Sergeant School to Command Sgt. Maj. Michael McCoy.

Wiping away tears and her voice quaking, King told the gathering of several hundred soldiers she wasn't sure she'd survive the past six months. She was barred from the school and not allowed to speak or contact colleagues during the investigation. Last week, she was put back in her job after the Army said her suspension was unwarranted, but offered no details or explanation, except to say it involved her conduct.

King was reinstated five days after her attorney filed a complaint about several of her superiors. The black 50-year-old woman contended they had abused their authority and she was a victim of sexism and racism. Although returned to her job, the Army then declined her request to stay on for the six months she'd been away.

King said her faith in God and friendships allowed her to endure.

"I went through some very trying times the last few months," King told several hundred Army soldiers gathered for the ceremony. "Some days I didn't think I was going to live."

King argues she was unfairly targeted by those who resented her promotion and the national attention it attracted.

She said she still believes "the Army is a great place to serve."

King said she was proud that during her two years as commandant, the Army's three drill sergeant schools had merged into one, the school had moved into a new building and new barracks, and about 1,800 drill sergeants were trained at the school.

The assembled soldiers gave King a standing ovation at the end of her remarks. Earlier, a cluster of drill instructors and staff presented her with a ceremonial saber and a photo of the school's training platoons. Dozens lingered to offer her hugs, handshakes and pats on the back.

"It was a very touching ceremony," said the deputy commandant at the school, Sgt. Maj. Blaine Huston.

King said afterward she has been asked to stay at Fort Jackson and report to the new commander, Brig. Gen. Bryan Roberts, who took over last month.

"I'm very thankful," she said.

King's attorney James Smith said they will continue to press the complaint.

"Someone has to take responsibility," said Smith, who is also a member of the South Carolina Army National Guard and trained under King at Fort Jackson.

An Army spokesman said the service is still looking into her complaint.

King's role as commandant of the school drew nationwide

attention when she was tapped in 2009, and was featured in national television reports and news articles.

As the Army has come to rely on more women in the ranks amid the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, it has struggled to keep senior enlisted women as order-barking drill sergeants.

The trainers are on call nearly round the clock, seven days a week as they attempt to mold civilians into soldiers in the 10 weeks of basic training.

About 60,000 soldiers are trained annually at the Fort Jackson. That includes half the Army's male soldiers and more than 60 percent of its female soldiers, increasing the need for the female trainers.

UTSanDiego.com
May 17, 2012

28. Deadly Helicopter Crash Caused By Bird

Investigators: Cobra broke in three after colliding with a small hawk

By Gretel C. Kovach

A bird strike caused a helicopter crash at Camp Pendleton in September that killed two Marines, a Marine Corps investigation concluded.

The AH-1W Cobra attack helicopter collided about 1 p.m. on Sept. 19 with a female red-tailed hawk, according to the report for the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. It was released to U-T San Diego Thursday through a federal records request.

The hawk, which probably weighed about 3 pounds and had a wingspan of about 4 feet, hit the top of the helicopter and damaged the pitch change link. Within one second of impact with the bird, vibrations in the main rotor caused the rotor and top of the transmission to separate from the aircraft, the report states.

The tail boom fractured and the helicopter fell in three pieces to the ground. Wreckage from the crash ignited a brush fire that burned more than 120 acres.

Both pilots onboard, Capt. Jeffrey Bland and 1st Lt. Thomas Heitmann of Marine Light Attack Helicopter Training Squadron 303, were killed instantly, investigators concluded.

"The bird-aircraft strike event was likely unavoidable," because drastic maneuvers to avoid the bird also could have caused a crash, investigators concluded. Once the helicopter collided with the hawk, "the bird-aircraft strike was not recoverable."

Bland, 37, of Champaign, Ill., was an instructor pilot with the squadron who was subsequently promoted to the rank of major. He was survived by his wife Heather and baby daughter Aliana, now 15 months old, among other relatives.

"We were very shocked that something like that could happen," his mother Janet Bland said. "We know it happens to jets, with birds getting into the engines. But we never thought about a bird bringing down a helicopter."

Bland always wanted to be a pilot and particularly enjoyed training other pilots. "From the time he was a little boy he was just a gentle person. He cared about everyone," she said.

Heitmann, 27, from Mendota, Ill., was promoted to captain. He earned his wings in April 2011 and was in the midst of final training before transferring to his first operational squadron.

When Heitmann was a boy his father took him to the local air show almost every year. "This was a childhood dream for him, to fly. And he got to do that through the Marines. He always told me, 'Dad, I

don't care what I fly as long as I'm flying,'" Thomas Frank Heitmann said shortly after his son's death.

Investigators recommended that the Marine aircraft group work with Naval Air Systems Command to study the feasibility of redesigning the AH-1W transmission fairings and the pitch change links, to make the aircraft less vulnerable to bird strikes.

The commanding officer of Marine Aircraft Group-39 took exception to an opinion in the report that its tracking of emergency procedures and simulations may have contributed to the crash. The investigation report also concluded that "no aircrew of any experience level would have been able to survive an event of this type," the commanding officer noted in January.

The commanding general of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing later approved all findings of the report.

The FAA calculated that there were 9,474 bird-to-aircraft strikes in 2009, according to the most recent available data. Over a 20-year period ending in 2009, the FAA received reports of almost 100,000 bird strikes and 24 related human fatalities.

The most recent bird strike causing death or major damage to Navy Department aircraft was in 2008, the report states.

Yahoo.com
May 17, 2012

29. Navy Ship Arrives At Calif. Port After Collision

By Julie Watson, Associated Press

SAN DIEGO -- Sporting crumpled catwalks and smashed lifeboats, the U.S. Navy vessel USS Essex managed to glide into San Diego Bay on Thursday, 24 hours after

colliding with a tanker when the aging warship's steering apparently failed.

Families of the crew aboard the "Iron Gator" waved homemade flags in celebration as the 21-year-old amphibious assault ship — which officials say needs to be overhauled — came into view through the morning's thick marine layer.

Wednesday's midmorning crash 120 miles off the coast of Southern California resulted in no injuries or fuel spills. The 844-foot-long Essex, which looks like a small aircraft carrier, was carrying 982 crew members. The tanker, the 677-foot USNS Yukon, was carrying 82.

"To me, it felt like a minor earthquake," said Navy photographer Duke Richardson from Jersey City, N.J., who was in a photo lab on the Essex when it struck the Yukon.

He said some of the "newbies" on board were in a "state of shock" and let out some interesting "four-letter words" when the boat jolted and the collision alarms sounded.

Someone yelled "Man Down! Man Down!" the standard call to get emergency responders in place. No one was struck or fell. It was all over in less than a minute.

Andi Farquhar, the wife of a 36-year-old sailor, said her husband called her from the ship and said something bad had happened. She said he told her there was a collision but gave no details.

"I'm pretty sure it was scary," Farquhar said.

Navy officials say they were still assessing the damage and did not have a damage estimate yet.

Officials showed reporters Thursday where the Yukon bumped into the Essex.

The warship looked like it had been in a super-sized fender bender at sea: Its starboard

aircraft elevator was scraped and dented, and its railing bowed back the wrong way. A small section of catwalks were crumpled, and capsules holding lifeboats were smashed. Some of the guardrails were split open.

Joe Derie, a retired Coast Guard officer who specializes in marine accident investigations, said the costliest repair could be to the aircraft elevator, depending on the damage.

"That's where the big bucks could be," he said.

The Yukon arrived Wednesday afternoon at the Navy base in Coronado, Calif. Lt. Beth Teach said it suffered structural damage to its flight deck, lifeboats and davits, the arm-like structures that raise and lower small boats out of the water.

Officials were investigating what caused the steering to malfunction as the Essex lined up next to the Yukon to position itself to be refueled. They said they couldn't say how fast the ships were moving at the time of the crash because the investigation was under way.

The standard speed for ships lining up to refuel at sea is about 13 knots, or 15 mph. No lines or hoses had been connected because the two vessels were just approaching each other.

Navy officials said it was the Essex's first collision.

The vessel was returning from a 12-year stint in Japan to its homeport of San Diego and was scheduled for maintenance.

The Essex is in definite need of maintenance after being stationed so long in Sasebo, Japan, as command ship for the Navy's Expeditionary Strike Group 7, officials said. It will be in the shipyard for a year to get needed upgrades and repairs.

"This ship's overdue," said ship spokesman Joe Kane. "It's

like any machine or your car, you got to bring it in."

Last year, a piece of equipment aboard the Essex failed due to general wear and tear, and the ship was unable to participate in an exercise called Cobra Gold, said Cmdr. Ron Steiner, spokesman for the 7th Fleet.

Steiner said the Navy's Pacific ships adhere to rigorous maintenance standards but scheduled maintenance periods have been interrupted by events. Last year, Amphibious Force 7th Fleet ships participated in 17 scheduled bilateral exercises and also helped with the recovery efforts in the aftermath of the Japan earthquake.

The Essex was traveling with a new crew that came aboard for the 17-day trip to California. The ship recently underwent a crew swap with another amphibious assault ship, the Bonhomme Richard, as part of a standard procedure in the Navy to keep its ships operating.

The Yukon, which was launched in 1993, has been involved in at least two previous collisions, including on Feb. 27, 2000, when it collided with a 135-foot civilian cargo ship while trying to enter Dubai's Jebel Ali port in the United Arab Emirates. The Yukon sustained minor damage.

Less than five months later, it was hit by the USS Denver during refueling off the coast of Hawaii. Both ships sustained heavy damage.

Associated Press writers Eric Talmadge in Tokyo, and Andrew Dalton and John Antczak in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Newport News Daily Press
May 18, 2012

30. F-22 Backup Oxygen System Upgrade

Not Complete Until Mid-2014

By Hugh Lessig

It will take more than two years to upgrade the F-22 Raptor fleet with an automatic backup oxygen supply ordered by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta as a hedge against pilots feeling dizzy or disoriented, the Air Force said Thursday.

Panetta said this week he wanted to expedite installation of a backup oxygen supply to counter incidents of hypoxia in the world's most advanced fighter jet, which flies out of Langley Air Force Base in Hampton and elsewhere around the country.

The Air Force has logged 11 instances of hypoxia since September that have no discernible cause. Investigators at the head of a broad task force say it likely stems from either a lack of oxygen in the cockpit or tainted air emanating from an advanced oxygen-generating system. But they're also looking into other areas of the aircraft, plus the pilots involved in the incidents.

The problem has been ongoing — it forced a temporary grounding of the fleet last year — but became a national story earlier this month when two Virginia Air National Guard pilots from Langley took their concerns to "60 Minutes." Maj. Jeremy Gordon and Capt. Josh Wilson said they were uncomfortable flying the Raptor, and both men said they had experienced in-flight hypoxia scares.

Since then, several more pilots have communicated their concerns to Sen. Mark R. Warner, who has launched his own investigation into the matter.

Installation schedule

Before the Air Force begins installing a backup oxygen system, the system will have to be qualified and flight-

tested. That is expected to wrap up in November, according to a statement issued Thursday. The first Raptor will be retrofitted with the new system in December.

Starting in January 2013, the Air Force expects to retrofit 10 Raptors per month, using a combination of military and civilian contractors. The fleet upgrade will be completed in June 2014 at an approximate cost of \$44 million.

There will be a second phase to the upgrade, but the Air Force is still working out those details, the statement said.

The new system, known in military parlance as an A-BOS, or Auto Back-Up Oxygen System, will automatically activate in the event of rapid decompression or a shutdown of the environmental control system. It can be manually activated at any time.

Flight restrictions

Panetta also ordered flight restrictions for the F-22. He says the Raptor should fly closer to landing fields so pilots can land quickly and safely if they experience a problem.

But Hampton residents should not see significant changes in how or where the F-22s are flying, the Air Force said. More details on flight restrictions are expected over the next few days, but as of now, there appears to be no hard and fast rules. Mission commanders will take into account the nature of the training flight, the terrain and other factors when it comes to restrictions.

"I don't believe there's a nautical-mile limit here," said Navy Capt. John Kirby, a Pentagon spokesman, during a briefing Tuesday. "It's just about an appropriate level of proximity to strips so that if they needed to get down in an emergency, they could in a relatively quick, easy fashion."

There are 46 Raptors based at Langley. Besides Virginia, the planes are also based at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska; Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii; Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.; Holloman Air Force Base, N.M.; and Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

In all, the Air Force has about 180 Raptors and about 200 Raptor pilots. The aircraft has never seen combat.

In November 2010, Capt. Jeff Haney was killed when his Raptor crashed in the Alaskan wilderness. A malfunction caused his oxygen system to shut off completely, and he experienced "a sense similar to suffocation," according to the Air Force's investigative report.

His widow has sued the F-22 manufacturer, Lockheed Martin, and other defense contractors for wrongful death, negligence and fraud.

The Air Force pegs the cost of the Raptor at \$143 million. The Government Accountability Office says the cost per copy is about \$412 million when the cost of research, development and upgrades is included.

New York Times

May 18, 2012

Pg. 13

31. North Korea Said To Resume Work On Nuclear Reactor

By Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea has resumed construction of a nuclear reactor that can be used to expand the country's nuclear weapons program, an American-based institute said Thursday, citing the latest satellite imagery of the building site.

In November, North Korea reported brisk progress in the building of a small light water reactor in its main nuclear

complex in Yongbyon, north of Pyongyang, its capital. If completed and operational, the plant would give North Korea a new source of spent nuclear fuel from which plutonium, a fuel for nuclear weapons, can be extracted.

North Korea also unveiled a uranium enrichment plant in Yongbyon in November 2010, saying that it was enriching uranium for fuel for the reactors it planned to build to resolve its electricity shortages. But international nuclear experts believed that the North's enrichment program was also intended to produce highly enriched uranium, another type of fuel for nuclear bombs.

Recent commercial satellite imagery, including photography taken on April 30, shows that North Korea has resumed building work in Yongbyon after months of inactivity and that the country is close to completing the reactor containment building, according to an analysis posted on Thursday at 38 North, a Web site run by the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University.

"Over all, it may take another one to two years before the new facility becomes operational," the organization said in a statement.

North Korea had already reprocessed spent fuel from its old graphite-moderated five-megawatt reactor in Yongbyon to extract plutonium and has test-detonated two nuclear devices. The five-megawatt reactor, built in 1986 and already decrepit, was partly dismantled in 2008 under a short-lived nuclear disarmament deal with Washington and remained nonoperational, compelling the North to find a new way to produce bomb fuel.

When North Korea announced in 2009 that it would

build light water reactors and start enriching uranium for their fuel, it was the beginning of what experts called a major transition in the North's nuclear weapons program from relying solely on the production of plutonium to adding enriched uranium as a new source of bomb fuel to augment its limited plutonium stockpile.

North Korea's effort to put a satellite into orbit failed on April 13, when its rocket disintegrated. Analysts have since warned that North Korea may conduct another nuclear test or ramp up its uranium enrichment to try to regain its leverage in talks with Washington.

Reuters.com

May 17, 2012

32. Russia Says Action On Syria, Iran May Go Nuclear

By Gleb Bryanski, Reuters

MOSCOW -- Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev warned on Thursday that military action against sovereign states could lead to a regional nuclear war, starkly voicing Moscow's opposition to Western intervention ahead of a G8 summit at which Syria and Iran will be discussed.

"Hasty military operations in foreign states usually bring radicals to power," Medvedev, president for four years until Vladimir Putin's inauguration on May 7, told a conference in St. Petersburg in remarks posted on the government's website.

"At some point such actions which undermine state sovereignty may lead to a full-scale regional war, even, although I do not want to frighten anyone, with the use of nuclear weapons," Medvedev said. "Everyone should bear this in mind."

Medvedev gave no further explanation. Nuclear-armed

Russia has said publicly that it is under no obligation to protect Syria if it is attacked, and analysts and diplomats say Russia would not get involved in military action if Iran were attacked.

Russia has adamantly urged Western nations not to attack Iran to neutralise its nuclear programme or intervene against the Syrian government over bloodshed in which the United Nations says its forces have killed more than 9,000 people.

Medvedev will represent Russia at the Group of Eight summit in place of Putin, whose decision to stay away from the meeting in the United States was seen as muscle-flexing in the face of the West.

Putin said previously that threats will only encourage Iran to develop nuclear weapons. Analysts have said that Medvedev also meant that regional nuclear powers such as Israel, Pakistan and India could get involved into a conflict.

As president, Medvedev instructed Russia to abstain in a U.N. Security Council vote on a resolution that authorised NATO intervention in Libya, a decision Putin implicitly criticised when he likened the resolution to "medieval calls for crusades".

Medvedev rebuked Putin for the remark, and some Kremlin insiders have said the confrontation over Libya was a factor in Putin's decision to return to the presidency this year instead of letting his junior partner seek a second term.

Russia has since accused NATO of overstepping its mandate under the resolution to help rebels oust long-time leader Muammar Gaddafi, and has warned it will not let anything similar happen in Syria.

Since Putin announced plans last September to

seek a third presidential term and make Medvedev prime minister, Russia has vetoed two Security Council resolutions condemning Assad's government, one of which would have called on him to cede power.

Russia's G8 liaison Arkady Dvorkovich said Russia will try to influence the final version of the G8 statement at a summit in Camp David this weekend to avoid a "one-sided" approach that would favour the Syrian opposition.

"In the G8 final statement we would like to avoid the recommendations similar to those which were forced upon during the preparations of the U.N. Security Council resolutions," Dvorkovich said. "A one-sided signal is not acceptable for us."

Russia successfully managed to water down the part of the statement on Syria at a G8 summit in France in May 2011, removing the calls for action against the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

"We believe that the United Nations is the main venue to discussing such issues," Dvorkovich said.

The G8 summit is likely to be the last appearance among all the leaders of industrialised nations for Medvedev, who embraced U.S. President Barack Obama's "reset", improving strained ties between the nations.

Dvorkovich said Putin's absence from the summit, the first time a Russian president has skipped one, would not affect the outcome: "All the leaders, I saw their reaction, are ready to comprehensively work with the chairman of the government (Medvedev)."

Dvorkovich said that at a bilateral meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama, Medvedev will raise opposition to attempts by some

U.S. lawmakers to introduce legislation which will address human rights violations in Russia.

Such legislation could take a form of the so-called Sergei Magnitsky bill, named after the Russian lawyer who died in prison in 2009. The Kremlin human rights council says he was probably beaten to death.

The bill would require the United States to deny visas and freeze the assets of Russians or others with links to his detention and death as well as those who commit other human rights violations.

"New legislation which will address new political issues as imagined by some U.S. congressmen or senators is unacceptable," Dvorkovich said, promising a retaliation.

Yahoo.com
May 17, 2012

33. US, Russian Soldiers Train Together In Colorado

By Dan Elliott, Associated Press

DENVER -- The Russians are coming -- in fact, they're already here -- but it may not be what you think.

Twenty-two Russian army paratroopers are in Colorado for two weeks of training with the 10th Special Forces Group at Fort Carson, a post outside Colorado Springs.

The two nations' militaries have been conducting joint exercises for years, but this is believed to be the first time Russian soldiers have trained on U.S. soil, Lt. Col. Steven Osterholzer said.

The Russians and Americans are training together on basic soldier skills ranging from firing weapons to making parachute drops, said Osterholzer, a public affairs officer for the 10th Special Forces Group.

It's the first step toward joint exercises in more complicated anti-terrorism operations such as helicopter drops, he said.

"This is the shake-hands, get-to-know-you kind of thing," Osterholzer said. "What this is not is a massive counterterrorism exercise."

Some people have seen sinister motives behind the appearance of troops from America's longtime Cold War enemy at a U.S. Army post, he said.

"Conspiracy theorists are alive and well," he said. Some people who've called Osterholzer have said President Barack Obama is a communist, or that the Russians plan to kidnap Americans and take them back to Russia, or that the training is a step toward universal world government.

"It's been an interesting two weeks at the public affairs office," he said.

The training is the result of a U.S.-Russian agreement signed a year ago. The objectives are to create a basic relationship between the two nations' militaries and to build an understanding about how each other's military works, including communications, Osterholzer said.

That knowledge is vital in joint military and humanitarian operations such as anti-terrorism measures and disaster relief, he said.

At Fort Carson, the training involves only unclassified weapons, and the Russians have U.S. escorts around the clock to make sure "they stay where they're supposed to be," Osterholzer said.

"These soldiers are not running around amok on their own," he said.

The Russians are staying in a military hotel on Fort Carson but otherwise spend their on-

duty and off-duty time with their American counterparts. They'll also take in a baseball game, watching the Colorado Springs Sky Sox, a minor-league affiliate of the Colorado Rockies.

"The visit has gone amazingly well and smooth," Osterholzer said. "They're excited to be here. They're motivated, they're professional. And our soldiers are the same."

The Russian contingent includes a colonel but most are enlisted soldiers. They arrived Sunday by commercial aircraft and will leave June 1, again flying commercially.

Next year, an equal number of U.S. soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group are expected to go to Russia for similar exercises, Osterholzer said.

New York Times

May 18, 2012

Pg. 5

34. Anger Rises After Killings In U.S.-Honduras Drug Sweep

By Damien Cave

MEXICO CITY —

Residents of the isolated Mosquito Coast of Honduras have burned down government buildings and are demanding that American drug agents leave the area immediately, intensifying a dispute over whether an antidrug operation there last week left four innocent people dead, including two pregnant women.

Lucio Baquedano, the mayor of Ahuas, the town where the operation occurred, said Thursday in an interview that residents rioted in the streets after learning that he and others had accused the Honduran police and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration of killing four people who had been fishing.

American and Honduran security officials dispute that account, saying that two traffickers were killed during an operation that yielded 1,000 pounds of cocaine. And on Thursday, American officials also asserted that, in a gun battle that took place during the seizure operation in the early morning of May 11, no Americans had fired weapons, only the Honduran police on the ground and a Honduran door gunner in a helicopter.

But with the details still murky — and in a region where American power has been viewed with skepticism since the cold war — Honduran officials and human rights organizations have begun calling for an investigation that could redefine, or limit, what has become an increasingly active American role in fighting drug smuggling through the region.

"It is critical that both Honduran and U.S. authorities ensure that the killings are thoroughly investigated to determine whether the use of lethal force was justified," said José Miguel Vivanco, Americas director at Human Rights Watch. "If evidence demonstrates that security forces violated international standards, they must be held accountable."

Some Honduran analysts have said they are not surprised by the dispute, taking it as a reflection of the challenge Honduras faces in fighting organized crime.

"The struggle against drug trafficking and organized crime is complicated, especially when it involves responsibilities shared between two countries," said Victor Meza, the interior minister under Manuel Zelaya, the president ousted in a 2009 coup. "Mexico is a notorious example."

For Honduras, a small, poor country with one of the world's highest murder rates, the challenge is intensified by the local terrain. The area where the shooting occurred is a known trafficking route accessible from nearby cities only by plane or boat. It is an area dominated by indigenous tribes and airstrips in sections of cleared jungle — airstrips seen by American surveillance as being used as a transfer point for cocaine moving from Venezuela or Colombia to Mexico, and then to the United States.

By one American government estimate, 79 percent of all cocaine shipped to the United States passes through Honduras.

Mr. Baquedano did not deny the presence of drug smugglers, but said that the May 11 operation was a case of mistaken identity. There were two canoes in a river, he said, one carrying drug traffickers, the other innocent residents, and the gunfire from a helicopter overhead tore into the latter. The error, he said, occurred because the traffickers' boat was unlighted, while the fishing canoe had a light on.

"These innocent residents were not involved in the drug problem," Mr. Baquedano said.

Leaders of local indigenous groups also issued a statement saying, "For centuries we have been a peaceful people who live in harmony with nature, but today we declared these Americans to be persona non grata in our territory."

While acknowledging that the circumstances of a middle-of-the-night firefight are murky, an American official briefed on the matter cast doubt on the local account. The official said that the operation began with a report from Colombian intelligence of an inbound plane. An American

surveillance plane captured video of the plane landing in a small field at 1:46 a.m. last Friday and about 30 men unloading cocaine bales and putting them on a truck, which drove to a nearby river.

Four helicopters, owned by the State Department but flown by Guatemalans, carried a strike force of Honduran counternarcotics police officers from an American-built base to the river, where they landed and seized a boat on which the cocaine — which weighed more than 1,000 pounds — had been loaded. They also seized an M-4 assault rifle and ammunition. As the helicopters approached, men who were loading the boat fled, the official said.

At 2:40 a.m., as the government forces were still on the ground, a second boat approached and began to fire, the official said. The Honduran police unit returned fire and was supported by the door gunner of at least one of the helicopters. After a brief firefight, the shooting stopped and the second boat is said to have withdrawn.

The official also expressed doubts that villagers would be out fishing in the middle of the night, near where helicopters had landed an hour or so earlier. The official added that the large number of people seen in surveillance video unloading the plane showed that many members of the impoverished community of Ahuas were involved in drug trafficking.

"There is nothing in the local village that was unknown, a surprise or a mystery about this," the official said. "What happened was that, for the first time in the history of Ahuas, Honduran law enforcement interfered with narcotics smuggling."

Thom Shanker and Charlie Savage contributed reporting from Washington.

NextGov.com
May 17, 2012

35. Mental Illness Is The Leading Cause Of Hospitalization For Active-Duty Troops

By Bob Brewin

The Defense and Veterans Affairs departments have spent almost \$2 billion since 2001 to buy drugs to treat mental illness and post-traumatic stress disorder despite growing evidence some of those drugs exacerbate PTSD symptoms, a *Nextgov* investigation shows. In addition, military research released this week highlighted that Defense faces what one Army clinician called an epidemic of mental illness.

Despite this vast expenditure on psychotropic drugs since the beginning of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, mental illness ranks as the leading cause of hospitalization for active-duty troops, according to a report published by the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center in the April issue of its *Medical Surveillance Monthly Report*, released May 14. Mental health disorders stood out as the leading cause of hospitalization of active-duty service members in 2007, 2009 and 2011, the report noted.

AFHSC also reported that troops seeking help for mental health problems ranked third in outpatient visits in all treatment categories, behind unspecified "other" conditions -- which included routine physicals, immunizations and predeployment assessments -- and musculoskeletal injuries during the same time period.

According to the report, the military hospitalized 21,735 active-duty personnel for mental disorders in 2011, a more than 30 percent increase from 2009, when 15,339 troops needed hospital treatment for mental health

problems. Hospitalizations in 2009 jumped 8 percent from the 14,112 troops hospitalized for mental health reasons in 2007.

"The crude hospitalization rate for mental disorders in the Army was approximately 70 percent higher than in the Marine Corps and more than twice as high than in the other services" in 2011, AFHSC said, noting that 13,003 soldiers were admitted to hospitals for mental health treatment that year.

The surveillance center identified 1,890,111 outpatient visits for mental disorders in 2011, or more visits than the number of troop on active duty that year -- 1,425,113 -- indicating multiple visits by individual troops. Outpatient treatment for mental health care in 2011 marked a 21 percent increase over 1,506,671 visits in 2009 and a 37 percent increase over the 946,187 mental disorder outpatient visits in 2007.

An active-duty Army doctor who declined to be identified for publication said the outpatient statistics that AFHSC compiled may be somewhat misleading because many relatively mild mental health conditions increasingly are subject to screening and identification.

But, the "stunning growth in numbers and rates of mental health hospitalizations ... is undeniable evidence of an unprecedented and arguably unmanageable epidemic that is now threatening the viability of the force," he wrote in an email.

Treatment Challenges

Top military leaders recently have acknowledged that some of the prescription drugs used to treat mental illness, including second-generation antipsychotic drugs, also known as atypical antipsychotics such as Seroquel and Risperidone, may be exacerbating the problem.

Dr. Jonathan Woodson, assistant secretary of Defense for health affairs, in a Feb. 22 memo on drug use, said, "articles in popular media and the concern of several national and military leaders in recent months have raised the question of whether certain psychoactive medications are inappropriately prescribed for post-traumatic stress disorder."

In the memo, first reported by *Army Times* May 3, he noted that 1.4 percent of soldiers and 0.7 percent of Marines on active duty in 2010 -- about 11,000 troops -- received prescriptions for Seroquel. Woodson told military clinicians to use caution when prescribing atypical antipsychotics as sleep aids or to manage irritability and anger. He said military health care providers should prescribe the lowest drug dose possible and recommend "non-medication therapy options" to treat PTSD.

In April, the Army Medical Command warned that the use of benzodiazepine tranquilizers such as Xanax and Valium to treat PTSD could intensify combat stress symptoms and lead to addiction.

Seven months earlier, in September 2011, the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury emphatically warned against their use. In its Co-Occurring Conditions Toolkit, the center said in boldface, "There is evidence against the use of benzodiazepines in PTSD management as it may cause HARM. Strongly recommend against the use of benzodiazepines for treatment of PTSD."

The Defense center also recommended against the use of Seroquel and another atypical antipsychotic to treat PTSD saying, in boldface, "evidence does NOT support the use

of atypical antipsychotics as a monotherapy for PTSD."

Data provided to *Nextgov* by the Defense Logistics Agency shows the Defense Department spent \$44.1 million on benzodiazepines from October 2001 to March 2012. The Veterans Affairs Department said it spent \$72.1 million on benzodiazepines during the same period.

VA told *Nextgov* in April that it spent \$846 million on Seroquel since 2001 and \$717 million on Risperidone, another atypical antipsychotic, during the same period.

Defense has spent \$14.1 million on Seroquel and \$74 million on Risperidone since 2001.

A paper published by VA researchers in August 2011 said Risperidone was no more effective than a placebo in treating PTSD. The Army acknowledged VA's research in its April 10 policy memo, but the February 2012 Woodson memo made no mention of Risperidone.

The Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, which provides health care for Navy and Marine Corps personnel, told *Nextgov* in an email that the bureau "concurs with the Army's policy that benzodiazepines are relatively contraindicated and should be avoided in the treatment of PTSD."

But Shoshona Pilip-Florea, a bureau spokeswoman, said, "there are many scenarios where the judicious prescription of benzodiazepines may be appropriate, [including] when the clinician's assessment and clinical judgment warrant treatment with this class of medications." She added, "Navy Medicine has not explicitly warned clinicians not to use benzodiazepines to treat patients with PTSD because some of these patients may

benefit from treatment with a benzodiazepine based on the clinician's assessment and clinical judgment."

Jonathan Stock, a spokesman for the Air Force Surgeon General, said the Air Force has not prohibited providers from using benzodiazepines in cases of PTSD. "It is important to note that every medication has associated cautions and contraindications. Prescribing providers are required to understand the contraindications and precautions of the medications they prescribe," he said.

VA and DLA did not provide details on how many individual doses of benzodiazepines they have purchased since 2001, but they receive substantial bulk discounts. The active-duty Army doctor said this could be as low as \$1 dollar per pill, or a total of 116 million doses since 2001, which work out to more than 100 benzodiazepine pills per person on active duty today.

Besides a mental health epidemic, the Army clinician said the Pentagon also faces the epidemic consequences of widespread psychotropic drug use, which military researchers warned about in a 2008 report. It showed that one of 14 members of a 701-man Army infantry battalion had been prescribed anti-anxiety drugs before deployment.

Washington Times
May 18, 2012
Pg. 1

36. Defense Contractors Eye Cuts To Jobs, Plants

Sequestration could cost Pentagon \$600B

By Shaun Waterman, The Washington Times

Defense contractors already are preparing for the

layoffs and plant closures that will occur if Congress fails to reach a deal on the federal deficit this year, triggering \$600 billion in automatic Pentagon spending cuts.

"We are running towards a cliff, all telling each other like lemmings that somehow this isn't going to happen," said Marion C. Blakey, president and CEO of the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA). "But the cliff is coming up."

The looming threat of the automatic cuts is causing defense and aerospace companies to make legally required stock market disclosures about possible lost earnings and to consider notifications to workers and suppliers about layoffs and contract cancelations, said AIA Vice President Fred Downey.

An AIA-commissioned study found that, if the automatic cuts occur, about 1 million jobs will be lost directly by contractors and indirectly by subcontractors and others companies in the cascade of consequences resulting from plant closures and mass layoffs.

The jobs that would be lost in the aerospace and defense sector are "good, high-paying, high-tech jobs" that pay up to twice the national average wage, said Mrs. Blakey.

Sequestration - the process for the \$1.2 trillion automatic, across-the-board federal spending cuts - is "fundamentally flawed an abysmal public policy," and its consequences would be "almost unthinkable," she said.

The automatic cuts require almost \$600 billion in defense cuts over the next 10 years, and a bit less than that in non-defense spending.

By law, the cuts have to be across the board, with agencies and departments prohibited from protecting their most effective or efficient programs,

as they would do in a normal round of budget cuts.

Lame-duck hope for deal

Sequestration was intended to ensure that Congress' so-called supercommittee could reach a deal last year to get the federal deficit under control and start reducing the ballooning national debt.

It was designed to be "so draconian to make it certain people would come up with a solution," said Mrs. Blakey.

But the supercommittee was unable to reach a compromise, and the automatic cuts will go into effect Jan. 2 unless Congress acts - either by finding ways to reduce the deficit, or by repealing the law that implements the cuts.

"It's stupid, and it shouldn't happen, but no one knows how to stop it," said Mr. Downey.

The impasse has resulted from the parties failing to compromise sufficiently on a deficit-reduction plan: Republicans insist on deep cuts in entitlement spending without increasing taxes, while Democrats demand higher taxes and more moderate cuts to entitlements.

What is needed, Mrs. Blakey said, is some "good, old bipartisan, pull-to-the-middle, get in a room and exercise some leadership."

"They have an obligation to maintain the nation's defense," she said.

But most observers agree that, with the atmosphere on Capitol Hill mired in election-year politics, it will be impossible to reach a deal before Election Day. A lame-duck congressional session after the election appears to offer the best opportunity for a compromise.

But companies, especially technology firms, have to make decisions about investment months ahead, and they already are being affected

by uncertainty over future revenues from government contracts, Mrs. Blakey said.

"We think that [avoiding the automatic cuts] after the election will be too late," she said.

To push Congress to make a deal, Mrs. Blakey said, the defense and aerospace sectors are "for the first time ever mounting a very aggressive public campaign."

Election-time warning

Management and unions are marching shoulder to shoulder for a change, she added. "This is strange bedfellows," she said. "It tells you something about how serious this problem is."

The defense and aerospace sectors are not the only ones affected, say industry executives.

Alan Chvotkin, vice president of the Professional Services Council, which represents firms that rely on federal service contracts, said that if there is no action by the fall on the automatic cuts, "at some point, every publicly traded company with significant U.S. government contracts will have to issue a warning to its shareholders" about possible lost revenue.

"Even if the government wants to pretend this isn't happening, publicly traded companies don't have that luxury. They have legal obligations," Mr. Chvotkin said.

In addition to shareholder disclosures mandated by the Securities and Exchange Commission, companies also have an obligation under a federal law called the WARN Act to notify workers of possible mass layoffs, Mr. Chvotkin noted.

Because of the involuntary nature of the automatic cuts and other factors, "there's an open question in the government contracting world"

about whether the WARN Act applies, said Mr. Chvotkin.

Nevertheless, many companies have union contracts that require notification, and the penalties for violating the act are severe enough that companies would likely err on the side of caution, he said.

The required notice is 60 days, which means letters triggered by the Jan. 2 automatic cuts would have to go out Nov. 2, four days before the election.

"Sequestration is the sword on a string hanging over our heads," said Mr. Downey.

Reuters.com
May 17, 2012

37. Air Force Keeping Close Watch On Boeing Tanker

By Andrea Shalal-Esa, Reuters
WASHINGTON -- Boeing Co's program to develop a new refueling tanker is proceeding well, but an aggressive test schedule and Boeing's plan to close the Wichita, Kansas, plant still pose some risks, said the Air Force general in charge of the program.

Major General Christopher Bogdan, who runs the \$51.7 billion program for the Air Force, said on Thursday he was cautiously optimistic after the program passed a first critical milestone earlier this month, but that there is more hard work ahead.

"The program is on a good path, but we still have lots of work to do and there are still risks in the program that we have to work to mitigate," Bogdan told Reuters in a telephone interview. "The onus is truly on Boeing to continue to perform as well as they have so far."

U.S. defense officials and lawmakers are watching developments on the tanker program carefully after two

earlier bungled attempts over the last decade to start replacing the Air Force's aging fleet of tankers, which refuel fighter jets and other warplanes in mid-flight.

Boeing beat out Europe's EADS to win the contract in February 2011, capping a decade of failed Air Force attempts to start replacing its aging fleet of KC-135 refueling planes, which are now 49 years old, on average.

Bogdan said the program got passing grades on all 89 entrance criteria to get to the preliminary design review, 17 mini-reviews conducted as part of the broader review; and a larger integrated review of the overall airplane program.

He said Boeing had done "an excellent job" with designing and building the new 767-based airplane's core capabilities, including the refueling boom and re-designed fuel-carrying wing pods, which was not unexpected given the fact that the plane is based on a commercial product.

But he said the company needed to rework its designs for some secondary items, including a screen between passengers and cargo, and the crew rest areas, by next summer.

"There are a few things ... that we are going to refine in terms of the design as we move to the (critical design review)," Bogdan said. Those issues, however, were "nothing earth-shattering" and not significant enough to jeopardize approval of the preliminary design review, he added.

Newly redesigned wing refueling pods promise to avoid the issues that plagued the tankers Boeing built for Italy, but the Air Force would be fully convinced only when it saw the actual pods, Bogdan said.

Bogdan, who will swap jobs this summer with the

deputy program executive officer of Lockheed Martin Corp's F-35 warplane, said top Air Force officials were surprised by Boeing's decision to move some manufacturing and finishing work on the tanker from Kansas to its Everett, Washington plant.

He said he learned about Boeing's plan to close its Wichita facility, eliminating over 2,100 jobs, the day before it was announced publicly, and had warned Boeing not to let the move affect the program or drive up costs.

He said there was no indication during the source selection process that Boeing planned to close the plant, and Air Force leaders were monitoring the move closely since there are other Pentagon contracts that the company works on there.

"The minute they told us they were going to do that, I got on the phone with the senior leaders of Boeing and ... I told them - you have now injected significant risk into my program and I expect Boeing to deal with that risk and never have it affect me or the taxpayer," he said.

Bogdan said Boeing had agreed, and was taking "very aggressive" steps to ensure the transition did not slow down work on the tanker program or increase its cost.

He said the Air Force was protected due to its fixed-price contract, which meant that any additional cost resulting from the move would have to be absorbed by the company.

Bogdan said the Air Force had learned from past attempts to replace the tanker fleet, and problems on other acquisition programs, including Lockheed's F-22 and F-35 fighter programs, in setting up its contract with Boeing.

He said the testing schedule was aggressive to get to a milestone decision in August

2015 that would allow the start of production, but unlike other programs -- about 60 percent of the testing would have been completed by that point.

The program also had a special clause that required Boeing to develop fixes for any problems that arose during testing, and retrofit any planes already built at that point.

He said the Government Accountability Office, a congressional watchdog agency, would visit the Boeing facility with him next week, and planned to keep close tabs on the program. GAO recently reported that the program faced "significant schedule risks" and technical challenges, and was already \$900 million over budget.

National Journal Daily
May 18, 2012

38. Lockheed Used Internal Marine Documents

By Kevin Baron

Hoping to fight off cancellation of the Marine Corps version of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, lobbyists for Lockheed Martin distributed to congressional offices a set of pro-fighter documents that included private letters from Gen. James Amos, commandant of the Marine Corps, and "talking points" that appear to be authored by a top Marine official.

"For the contractor of the F-35B program to circulate military talking points and correspondence on the Hill the day before a vote on their program gives the appearance that the military is working for them," said Taxpayers for Common Sense's Laura Peterson. "And that is unseemly, to say the least."

The documents, obtained by Taxpayers for Common Sense and provided to *National*

Journal Daily, relate to an amendment cosponsored by Reps. John Conyers, D-Mich., and Keith Ellison, D-Minn., to the House defense authorization bill. The amendment, which was voted down on Thursday, would have cancelled funding for the development of the F-35B, the short-takeoff and vertical-landing, or STOVL, version of the fighter that the Marines covet.

It's the latest in a series of watchdog allegations that the Marine Corps is too cozy with contractors. Earlier this month, Winslow Wheeler, of the Center for Defense Information and the Project on Government Oversight, questioned the Marine Corps' role in an eight-page *Washington Post* advertising supplement paid for by Boeing and Lockheed Martin which touted their products, the V-22 Osprey and the F-35B. The supplement included writings by senior officers, prompting Wheeler to complain: "I don't suspect there is anything illegal about it, nor any violation of DOD rules and regulations. But it does make me squeamish."

An e-mail sent on Wednesday to congressional aides with the subject line "WHY STOVL / WHY F-35B?" by Kristine Fauser, Lockheed's director of legislative affairs, and copied to two colleagues, Greg Walters and Jack Overstreet, urged members to block the amendment. One attachment was a two-page document, marked "unclassified" and titled "talking points." The original file author is identified as Randy Siders, the Marine Corps' F-35B program manager.

The talking points included phrases such as "There are no viable alternatives to F-35B" and "The F-35B is far superior to any aircraft flying in the [Navy Department's]

inventory today. It is a total package of capabilities that will revolutionize our expeditionary Marine Air-Ground combat power."

A Marine Corps spokesman said Siders could not be reached for comment.

The four-page document also answered hypothetical questions about the necessity of the STOVL version, and gave two examples of when STOVL air power was vital in battles, once in Numaniyah, Iraq, and in the Marines' Afghanistan campaign in Marjah, at the heart of surge fighting against the Taliban.

Two other attachments were letters dated May 16 from Gen. Amos to House Armed Services Committee Chairman Buck McKeon, R-Calif., and ranking member Adam Smith, D-Wash., defending the F-35B.

Letters from Pentagon officials to committee leaders are not publicly available. Amos's spokesman insisted the commandant's office does not share "personal correspondence" with anyone other than the intended recipients.

"The commandant's correspondence between himself and members of Congress is point-to-point," said Lt. Col. Joseph Plenzler. "We don't share those with anyone else."

Plenzler said he was aware of the memo, claiming it was "pretty widely circulated around the Marine Corps." He was unable to confirm its author, nor how Lockheed may have obtained it or Amos's letters.

Fauser, a former Senate aide, did not respond to requests for comment.

In an e-mail responding on Fauser's behalf, Lockheed Martin spokeswoman Jen Allen stated: "We routinely communicate with, and receive

information from, members of Congress and our customers who provide oversight to our programs and issues of interest to our business, as well as leaders of congressional districts where Lockheed Martin has a significant business presence."

Ellison, during debate of his amendment, waved a copy of the memo and said: "I notice my colleagues on the other side of the aisle were making some very good points and they sound very similar to some points I read today from someone from Lockheed Martin.

"Lockheed Martin is a private contractor, who is making the program, and the talking points that they sent out are very—they're essentially arguing so they can ensure a commercial success of their particular project which they have a financial interest in."

GovExec.com

May 17, 2012

39. Another 34 Companies Pledge To Hire More Military Spouses

By Andrew Lapin

More private sector companies have pledged to hire military spouses through a year-old government program.

The Defense Department's Military Spouse Employment Partnership will add 34 private sector companies to the 96 current employment partners that have pledged to hire more military spouses.

The partnership began in June 2011 as part of Michelle Obama and Jill Biden's military family service initiative Joining Forces, and 22,000 military spouses have been hired at participating companies since the partnership began, according to a press release.

In a conference call Thursday, Rob Gordon, deputy

assistant secretary of Defense for military community and family policy, said the additional companies will be looking to hire for positions that "are quite career-focused" and they will have personnel dedicated to making sure spouses will be hired and reported.

"We see day in and day out an expanded number of companies that are specifically looking to hire spouses and veterans," Brad Cooper, executive director of Joining Forces, said during the conference call. "Now it's just a more deliberate, focused effort."

Cooper said, "a really small portion" of the companies joining the pledge are in the defense domain. According to the descriptions of the companies provided in the press release, 10 of the 34 companies either base their business around service to military and military families (such as military health care provider Triwest) or are comprised primarily of spouses or veterans (such as The Major Group).

Applicants with a military spouse identification card are eligible to participate in the partnership by checking a box on the application indicating their status. Same-sex domestic partners of military personnel, because they are not recognized as military spouses by the federal government, are not eligible for the partnership.

"As far as the military is concerned anything issued by the military to spouses does not apply to you," said Jonathan Hopkins, director of Washington operations for LGBT military network OutServe.

Gordon said during the conference call the program was intended for "spouses who are ID cardholders."

The response to the partnership expansion was positive elsewhere in the military community. "Any attention that we can get on the issue of military spouse employment is a good thing," said AnnaMaria White, spokeswoman for military family-focused nonprofit Blue Star Families. She praised the partnership's efforts to reach out to a range of experience levels.

London Times
May 17, 2012

40. To Keep The West Safe, We Must Join Forces

In this age of austerity, Nato states will have to be smarter in pooling their resources

By Anders Fogh Rasmussen

We live in a time of increasing security challenges but decreasing defence budgets. This is the reality faced by many of our allies. And that is the circle Nato leaders must square as we meet for our summit in Chicago this weekend. I am convinced we can do it. By adopting a new mindset and working even more closely together, we can successfully deal with those economic challenges while still preparing for the security threats we will face.

At our summit, we will set a goal: the creation of Nato Forces 2020—modern, mobile, military forces that are equipped and trained to operate together in any environment and that can deal with the full range of security threats. We will make a long-term political commitment to pursue this goal through new, innovative ways.

At the heart of this new approach lies the concept of Smart Defence. This is about multinational projects, prioritising and specialising. By creating an even stronger

culture of co-operation, allies will be able to provide a level of military capability that would be too expensive for any of them to deliver alone.

Nato's fast and effective action to protect the people of Libya last year highlighted the type of forces we need if we are to remain successful. European and Canadian allies, together with partners, undertook most of the operations. But the ultimate success of the mission depended on critical American assets, especially drones, surveillance and intelligence, precision-guided munitions and air-to-air refuelling.

More allies, especially in Europe, should be willing and able to obtain those key capabilities. Smart Defence is already helping them to do so. We are developing an Alliance Ground Surveillance system: 13 allies are acquiring 5 drones and the associated command-and-control base stations, which Nato will then operate and maintain on behalf of all 28 member states. These "eyes in the sky" will provide our commanders with a continuous up-to-date picture of what is happening on the ground. Another lesson learnt from Libya was the need for common ammunition storage, which will help to ensure that allies do not run out of precision-guided missiles when they need them.

Smart Defence can take many forms. It can be based on bilateral efforts such as the UK-France agreement to develop an advanced surveillance drone, or on regional efforts such as the acquisition of new artillery pieces by some Nordic countries. It can focus on operational deployments, on developing new capabilities, or on maintenance and training. The key is to invest in what works best. For example, Nato nations are jointly policing the airspace of several allies,

allowing them to focus their resources on areas where they can make a difference, such as flexible forces for our mission in Afghanistan. At Chicago, we will endorse at least 20 more multinational projects.

The ultimate example of transatlantic teamwork is missile defence, which will bring national systems together into an integrated Nato-wide system to protect our European territory and populations.

Smart Defence is not about making smart cuts. It is about making clever choices and investments to keep our alliance fit for purpose and fit for the future. But acquiring the right abilities is not enough. We must also maintain the capacity to work together. This is what makes the sum greater than the individual parts: different nations' weapons and forces operating beside each other, with a common purpose under Nato command and control.

We see this every day in Afghanistan, where Nato's 28 allies are operating shoulder to shoulder with 22 partners—from Armenia to Australia, Sweden to Singapore. Our ability to work together and, when necessary, fight together is vital for our security and the security of the world. We cannot afford to lose it as we draw down our troops.

The Connected Forces Initiative, part of the wider set of measures we will adopt in Chicago, exemplifies this effort. It aims to expand education and training, step up our joint exercises, especially within the Nato Response Force, and strengthen the bonds between Nato headquarters and national headquarters.

Nato has an impressive record of success that stretches back more than six decades. At this summit we will take the necessary decisions to ensure that success continues. In this

age of austerity, the choice is stark: Smart Defence or less defence.

Anders Fogh Rasmussen is Secretary General of Nato.

Washington Post

May 18, 2012

Pg. 19

41. NATO's Undue Optimism

Reducing Afghanistan's security force would threaten its viability

By Ronald E. Neumann and Michael O'Hanlon

KABUL--

Underappreciated amid all the frustrations, losses and tragedies of the United States' longest war is some good news: Afghanistan's army and police are improving substantially. To be sure, they still suffer from politicization at senior levels, and they have a long way to go on the battlefield. But their progress has been real. Their numbers are growing; ethnic balance is reasonably good; and they are leading some 40 percent of operations on the ground (albeit mostly the simpler ones).

Yet as NATO leaders prepare to gather in Chicago, where the war in Afghanistan will be Topic A, there is a growing presumption that, shortly after NATO finishes building up the Afghan security forces, we should start dismantling them. Allegedly because of binding budgetary constraints, a force that will soon reach its combined goal of 352,000 uniformed personnel (not counting intelligence services or community-watch organizations known as Afghan Local Police) may be quickly cut back to the suspiciously precise number of 228,500, starting around 2015.

This plan has not been formally proposed by the Afghan government nor by

NATO, yet it is a presumption that's growing among leaders in Europe and the United States about where we are headed. It would save about \$2.5 billion a year, bringing the expected costs of sustaining the Afghan army and police down from \$6.6 billion to \$4.1 billion annually. In fairness, having a specific target such as \$4.1 billion would help the United States elicit pledges from other allies for supporting the Afghan state in future years and would help the Afghans to concentrate on responsibilities they must shoulder. But it should not be viewed as a firm ceiling on what is likely to be required in the future. In fact, it is more like a floor.

The savings of \$2.5 billion a year from this downsizing pales next to the roughly \$100 billion annually that the United States alone has been devoting to the Afghan mission during the Obama presidency. It would be a false economy in the extreme to risk losing a war — and risk needing to keep more U.S. forces in Afghanistan from 2015 on than might otherwise be required — just to reach an artificially defined goal on an arbitrary timetable for Afghanistan's own security forces.

That goal, 228,500, came from NATO command here in Kabul. But it was one of several postures on a notional future force that was introduced a few months ago for planning purposes. It correlates with one specific threat environment — namely, the assumption of a much-weakened insurgency. Enemy-initiated attacks in Afghanistan are down some 20 percent nationwide, according to the International Security Assistance Force here, relative to peak levels of a year or two ago — a decline led by major progress in the south and a leveling-off of violence

in the country's center, north and west. Yet, the Taliban and related groups hardly seem to be on the ropes. They remain particularly vigorous in eastern Afghanistan, where the infamous Haqqani network operates; even in the south they will surely try to mount a comeback over the next couple of years.

NATO's exit plan for its main combat forces over the next 30 months is focused on further weakening the insurgency without any presumption that we can defeat it in that time. Even after 2014, it is only prudent to assume that the insurgency will continue, especially in certain rural areas in the south and east.

Against such a resilient enemy, an Afghan security force totaling fewer than a quarter-million soldiers and police would be quite modest. Even if aided by 10,000 to 20,000 NATO troops after 2014, as seems likely under the recently signed Strategic Partnership Agreement between the United States and Afghanistan, it would be hard-pressed to hold off a dedicated Taliban. Consider:

*In Iraq, a country of similar population size, Iraqi army and police forces total 670,000.

*In Afghanistan today, combined NATO and Afghan forces exceed 400,000 troops.

*Counterinsurgency doctrine, based on experience from many previous cases, suggests that in a country of 30 million, like Afghanistan, as many as 600,000 soldiers and police officers could be required.

It is possible that a much smaller Afghan force will indeed suffice within a few years. But it is also possible that will not be the case. It makes no sense to guarantee the enemy a

date certain for downsizing our ally.

NATO officials understand this, but their public messaging risks making many lawmakers and others in Europe and the United States feel that the major downsizing can already be counted upon. And many Afghans are worried about yet another sign that a war-weary NATO will not do what it takes to bring this difficult mission to a reasonably successful conclusion. If Afghans lose heart in their future, the chances of civil war and mission failure will grow.

In Chicago this weekend, while recommitting their forces to a gradual, careful withdrawal, NATO officials also need to make clear that reducing Afghan forces in the coming years is a hope — and not a binding plan.

Ronald E. Neumann was the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan from 2005 through 2007 and is the author of "The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan." Michael O'Hanlon is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and is most recently the co-author of "Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy."

New York Times
May 18, 2012

Pg. 30

Editorial Observer

42. An Afghan Governor's Campaign To Win Over The Citizens Of His Province

By Carol Giacomo

Zana Khan, Afghanistan--Stability in Afghanistan will depend in part on the success of Musa Khan Akbarzada, the governor of Ghazni Province, near the border with Pakistan. Ahead of this weekend's NATO summit meeting, NATO invited a group of journalists to travel to Afghanistan where we met with

Mr. Akbarzada and saw some of his efforts to make Ghazni's government more responsive and lessen the Taliban's appeal and power.

Mr. Akbarzada seems to get what is needed. But even with an enlightened governor, success is far from guaranteed. Some Americans say he is a weak administrator. And Kabul's largely corrupt and incompetent central government still controls the money and most of the levers of power.

A color-coded United States government map shows moderate to heavy Taliban activity in Ghazni, although Mr. Akbarzada insists "we are moving to the good side." His program for winning people over includes delivering justice and challenging the Taliban's nihilistic interpretation of Islam.

Earlier this month, he ordered the provincial court to hold an unusual public trial for six men accused of kidnapping and killing a teenage boy. The case shocked the community and some 2,000 people attended. The chief judge said that the intent was to demonstrate that Ghazni could implement the rule of law, even when facing Taliban threats.

This goes to the heart of Afghanistan's turmoil. Many people have turned to the Taliban for swift and brutal justice because government courts are nonexistent or unresponsive. In this case, two of the defendants were sentenced to death; four received up to 20 years in jail. Afterward, the governor and the chief judge said people seemed encouraged, but it's not clear whether the experiment will be repeated.

That same week, Mr. Akbarzada appeared at a community meeting, or shura, in the remote Zana Khan

area. He spoke to several hundred men and boys about the importance of education for both girls and boys — citing the Prophet Muhammad's "order that learning is necessary for women and men." He urged them to reject the Taliban and warned the militants that preventing children from attending school violated Islamic tenets. The audience listened quietly, and, at the end, soldiers distributed blankets, shoes and books.

In the past year, the Taliban have forced the closure of 100 schools in Ghazni, largely because they admitted girls. One school in sight of the shura, built with international aid, never opened because of Taliban threats. While the governor's rhetoric was strong, he might have had more impact if he had negotiated a plan beforehand with local leaders to open the school and to deploy security forces to guarantee students' safety. The fact that women and girls were not included in the shura also shows the challenges of making his words reality.

In an interview one day earlier, the governor played down the security problems in Ghazni. But the shura only took place because 250 members of the Afghan Army and police, with backup from 100 Polish soldiers, had just completed an operation that routed the Taliban from Zana Khan and three other villages. Polish and American commanders said the fighting was heavy and praised the Afghans' performance.

Even then, the meeting looked like an armed camp, guarded by scores of Afghan, Polish and American troops and heavy vehicles. And as the event broke up and the governor, a Polish general and others headed for their helicopters, the insurgents landed four mortar rounds

nearby. Afghan and Polish forces fired back with machine guns and artillery until the Taliban positions were silenced. But coalition forces had already cleared the village several times before and local residents predicted the insurgents would soon return.

London Daily Telegraph
May 18, 2012
Pg. 24

Commentary

43. The Taliban Are Desperate To Kill Off Any Peace Talks With Karzai

Nato is making no progress on withdrawing from Afghanistan with honour

By Con Coughlin

The murder of two British servicemen this week shows just how seriously the Taliban is taking the prospect of peace talks to end Afghanistan's decade-long civil war. A Royal Air Force airman and a soldier from the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards died when militants dressed as Afghan policemen shot them while they were providing protection for British officers holding a meeting with local Afghans at their patrol base at Lashkar Gar.

Meetings such as this are part and parcel of the painstaking process of building trust between tribal chiefs and Nato in the run-up to the end of its combat mission in 2014. If all the hard work and sacrifice of the past decade is not to be thrown away the minute Nato forces head for home, then it is essential that the Afghans are fully involved in the decisions that will decide their future wellbeing.

Another crucial feature of the Nato strategy for bringing stability is the training of Afghan army and police recruits to a level where they can take control of their country's

security. While the United States and its allies have spent billions of dollars on training programmes, it appears the Taliban have found a way to turn the schemes to their advantage by getting their fighters to sign up and infiltrate the fledgling security forces.

Nato officials insist that all recruits undergo thorough vetting before enrolment. But the recent sharp increase in "green-on-blue" killings (in Nato-speak the Afghans are "green", and Western soldiers "blue") suggests otherwise. In 2011, 35 Nato soldiers were killed in 21 such incidents: this year the total has reached 22 dead in 16 separate attacks, and the Taliban's annual spring offensive has only just got underway.

Quite apart from the damage "green-on-blue" attacks do to the trust between Afghan recruits and their mentors, the Taliban's increasing reliance on the tactic suggests that they have little interest in complying with another key element of Nato's strategic objective - political reconciliation.

This weekend's summit of world leaders in Chicago is supposed to secure a deal to continue supporting the Afghan government after the combat mission ends. Rather than British and American soldiers risking their lives against the Taliban, by next summer the plan is for the Afghans to be doing all the front-line fighting, with the West simply providing financial support. And, assuming the plan is agreed this weekend, the savings will be enormous. Instead of spending in excess of \$100 billion a year, the current cost of the Nato mission, the Chicago plan will see the West contributing just \$4 billion a year post-2014.

The fact that the donor nations (Britain will commit

around £60 million a year) are having difficulty raising even this modest sum is a reflection of the deepening disillusion within the alliance over Afghanistan's future. The corruption of the Karzai regime, whose officials have diverted billions of dollars of aid for their own ends, is one reason Nato leaders are disinclined to sign any more blank cheques. Of more concern, though, is the sense of defeatism that seems to have overcome all those governments - including Britain - that enthusiastically backed the Nato mission when it first deployed in the summer of 2006, but now want to bring their troops home as soon as possible.

The Taliban's determination to maintain the momentum of attacks against Nato forces in Afghanistan contrasts sharply with attempts at the Chicago summit to find the most dignified formula for withdrawing troops. Even though political reconciliation between the Taliban and the government of President Hamid Karzai is supposed to be the centrepiece of Nato's strategy, the issue hardly features on the agenda, for the simple reason that, as matters stand, there is little prospect of it taking place.

The suite of offices in Qatar that was set up at the start of the year to facilitate talks between Hamid Karzai's delegates and the more moderate elements of the Taliban movement stands empty and unused. Instead, hardline Taliban commanders have launched a murderous campaign to silence those who have expressed an interest in exploring the possibility of doing a deal.

After six years of sustaining heavy casualties at the hands of American and British special forces, many middle-ranking Taliban fighters are weary of continuing a

war in which they find themselves heavily out-gunned and outnumbered by Nato's better-equipped forces. But the more hardline Taliban leaders, who have set themselves the goal of regaining total control of Afghanistan by 2020, believe all they have to do is wait for Nato to complete its withdrawal. As the old Taliban fighting refrain goes, the West might have all the watches, but we have all the time.

The murder this month of the Taliban's former military chief, Mullah Mohammed Ismail, suggests that the "irreconcilable" Taliban leaders, as Nato calls them, currently have the upper hand, and will continue fighting until the last foreign soldier is gone. The big question then is whether the newly formed Afghan security forces will be able to hold their own against a determined and resourceful foe like the Taliban. Certainly, after the recent surge in attacks on Nato soldiers, we have no guarantee that all Afghan forces will be fighting in defence of the West's long-term interests.

International Herald Tribune
May 18, 2012
Pg. 8

44. NATO In A Time Of Austerity

The goal in Chicago is to fundamentally change the way allies think about developing our future capabilities.

By Stephane Abrial

In his valedictory speech last year, then-U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates argued that the partnership between the North American and European sides of the NATO alliance needed a new impulse.

At the Chicago summit meeting on Sunday and Monday, leaders of the 28 NATO members will tackle that precise challenge and set

the alliance on a new course to acquire the capabilities it will need to deal with an increasingly complex security environment.

It will do so by endorsing a defense package that sets forth a vision for the future NATO forces and identifies the means to achieve this objective in a time of austerity: the Smart Defense and the Connected Forces initiatives.

As NATO'S strategic commander responsible for transformation, I am confident that the decisions taken at Chicago will enable the alliance to acquire and maintain the capabilities needed to confront an uncertain future.

My command is entrusted with learning from past operations to provide effective solutions for the future. How do we prepare for the unexpected? How can we protect ourselves from increasingly complex threats?

The tumultuous events that unfolded last year in the Arab world demonstrated just how unpredictable the global environment remains. Operation Unified Protector in Libya also reaffirmed that American and European interests remain convergent and that military action by NATO in response to a crisis, backed up by a United Nations mandate and regional support, is not only possible but effective.

Although NATO's action in Libya was a success, it highlighted a number of structural issues. Chief among these was the disproportionate reliance on the United States to provide the enablers — for example, air-to-air refueling and persistent surveillance — critical for a swift conclusion of the operation.

The Libya engagement once again raised concerns that the Europeans were counting too heavily on the United States

for their security at a time when Americans were increasingly preoccupied with advancing their strategic interests in Asia and the Pacific. In short, the perception grew that the trans-atlantic link was weakening. This assessment is neither an accurate description of current reality nor an inevitable trend.

First, the American strategic interests in the Asia-pacific are shared by European nations that have equal stake in the region's peace, prosperity and stability. East Asia accounts for more than a quarter of the European Union's global trade, while China is now its second trading partner — after the United States.

Second, while short-term pressure on defense budgets on both sides of the Atlantic may contribute to deepening the capabilities' gap, promising steps are being taken to mitigate the effects of fiscal austerity on defense budgets.

Within the European Union, the Pooling and Sharing initiative seeks to build European capabilities through multinational cooperation. This is a complementary approach to what we are doing at NATO. The Smart Defense initiative involves aligning NATO'd capability priorities with those of states; emphasizing multinational cooperation in the development, acquisition and deployment of military capabilities across the full range; and, proposing paths for specialization by design in areas where nations have comparative strengths.

The Connected Forces Initiative aims to preserve the interoperability and enhance shared abilities that have resulted from years of operations in the field. It reinforces Smart Defense through greater collaboration in military education, training and

exercises, and application of new technologies.

Multinational harmonization of this scale is undoubtedly a challenge, since defense is tightly bound with national sovereignty. Nonetheless, it is incumbent on my command and all NATO structures to implement the political commitments that will be taken at Chicago and put the alliance firmly on this new path. The result will be a more cohesive and stronger trans-atlantic alliance, adapted to the 21st century.

Ultimately, the goal our leaders will set in Chicago is to fundamentally change the way allied nations think about developing our capabilities in the long run. This objective must be sustained by strong political commitments to deepen cooperation necessary for the alliance to be prepared for current and future challenges.

NATO's operations in Afghanistan, Libya, Kosovo and in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean all demonstrate that, more than 60 years after its ratification, the Washington Treaty remains relevant — an essential guarantor of peace and security.

Chicago, a city whose diverse population embodies the bond between North America and Europe, will provide the ideal venue to demonstrate the continued strength and relevance of the trans-atlantic partnership as an indispensable forum for political consultation and for action.

STÉPHANE ABRIAL, a general in the French Air Force, is the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.

Opinion Contributor
45. Missile Defense
Cuts: A Perilous
Mistake

By Don Young

North Korea, under its new leader Kim Jong Un, made international news recently when its long-range missiles disintegrated just seconds after a test launch.

While many breathed a collective sigh of relief, the rogue nation's latest embarrassment may only strengthen its resolve to prove its nuclear capabilities.

Our military leaders have said that North Korea is developing a road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missile, and engineers in Iran and North Korea may well be sharing information that could expedite their long-range missile capabilities.

"We're within an inch of war almost every day in that part of the world," Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said about North Korea in a recent CNN interview, "and we just have to be very careful about what we say and what we do."

The message is clear: Now is not the time for the U.S. to let its guard down.

Yet one look at President Barack Obama's 2013 budget shows that the administration may be doing just that. The current budget proposal before Congress slashes \$810 million from missile defense programs in 2013 and calls for a whopping \$3.6 billion in cuts over the next five years.

Most worrisome is that the president puts a key element of our missile defense system, the Ground-based Midcourse Defense, on the chopping block. This system has been designed to take down enemy missiles — like those being developed by North Korea — in outer space long before they get anywhere near U.S. targets.

Cuts to this critical program include six Ground-Based Interceptor silos at Fort Greely, which are manned by the Alaska National Guard assigned to the 49th Missile Defense Battalion.

In addition, the president's budget would eliminate money for the deployment of additional GBIs in Alaska or at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California — or even to maintain all of the silos in both locations.

Underfunding missile defense at Fort Greely could prove to be a perilous mistake, one that we successfully defeated in 2009. These interceptors provide the first line of defense for the U.S. Not only attacks on Alaska and Hawaii but along much of the western part of the U.S. These areas cover California, the world's ninth-largest economy, and nearly 50 million people.

Equally troubling, Obama's cancellation of the third GBI site in Poland leaves portions of the U.S.'s East Coast also vulnerable to attack.

To address this national security gap, the Obama administration has been singularly focused on an entirely new missile, known as the Standard Missile-3 Block IIB. The problem is that that interceptor won't be ready to protect the U.S. for another decade.

In a recent letter to Panetta, Chairman Mike Turner (R-Ohio) of the House Strategic Forces Subcommittee stated that the IIB missile "is a brand-new concept, still entirely on the drawing board. Fundamental technical issues like its speed and acceleration, size, cost and even basing modes (i.e., land-based or sea-based) are not yet known or understood."

We need a better solution much sooner — something congressional leaders have

called a "hedge." I have every confidence that the best minds in the missile defense business could figure out a way to defend the U.S. from ICBM attacks in the next three to five years using both GBIs and SM-3s. The key will be maximizing missiles that are already in development.

Yet again, the president's budget falls short by axing funding to near-term SM-3 interceptors that are being tested and built right now. Instead, he directs those funds to the futuristic program that is a decade away. That is unacceptable.

Now is the time for Congress to step up and do what the president's budget does not — fund a missile-defense system to protect the U.S.

Fiscal responsibility must mean more than just measuring which political party has the bigger budget ax — especially on issues of national defense. After all, perhaps the federal government's most solemn responsibility is to protect its citizens and "provide for the common defense."

Republican Don Young is Alaska's sole congressman and represents Fort Greely, home to one of the U.S.'s two missile defense interceptor sites.

Wall Street Journal
 May 18, 2012
 Pg. 13

46. The Arab Spring
And American Ideals

We do not get to choose if a freedom revolution should begin or end in the Middle East or elsewhere. We only get to choose what side we are on.

By George W. Bush

These are extraordinary times in the history of freedom. In the Arab Spring, we have seen the broadest challenge to authoritarian rule since the collapse of Soviet communism.

The idea that Arab peoples are somehow content with oppression has been discredited forever.

Yet we have also seen instability, uncertainty and the revenge of brutal rulers. The collapse of an old order can unleash resentments and power struggles that a new order is not yet prepared to handle.

Some in both parties in Washington look at the risks inherent in democratic change — particularly in the Middle East and North Africa—and find the dangers too great. America, they argue, should be content with supporting the flawed leaders they know in the name of stability.

But in the long run, this foreign policy approach is not realistic. It is not within the power of America to indefinitely preserve the old order, which is inherently unstable. Oppressive governments distrust the diffusion of choice and power, choking off the best source of national prosperity and success.

This is the inbuilt crisis of tyranny. It fears and fights the very human attributes that make a nation great: creativity, enterprise and responsibility. Dictators can maintain power for a time by feeding resentments toward enemies — internal or external, real or imagined. But eventually, in societies of scarcity and mediocrity, their failure becomes evident.

America does not get to choose if a freedom revolution should begin or end in the Middle East or elsewhere. It only gets to choose what side it is on.

The day when a dictator falls or yields to a democratic movement is glorious. The years of transition that follow can be difficult. People forget that this was true in Central Europe, where

democratic institutions and attitudes did not spring up overnight. From time to time, there has been corruption, backsliding and nostalgia for the communist past. Essential economic reforms have sometimes proved painful and unpopular.

It takes courage to ignite a freedom revolution. But it also takes courage to secure a freedom revolution through structural reform. And both types of bravery deserve our support.

This is now the challenge in parts of North Africa and the Middle East. After the euphoria, nations must deal with questions of tremendous complexity: What effect will majority rule have on the rights of women and religious minorities? How can militias be incorporated into a national army? What should be the relationship between a central government and regional authorities?

Problems once kept submerged by force must now be resolved by politics and consensus. But political institutions and traditions are often weak.

We know the problems. But there is a source of hope. The people of North Africa and the Middle East now realize that their leaders are not invincible. Citizens of the region have developed habits of dissent and expectations of economic performance. Future rulers who ignore those expectations—who try returning to oppression and blame shifting—may find an accountability of their own.

As Americans, our goal should be to help reformers turn the end of tyranny into durable, accountable civic structures. Emerging democracies need strong constitutions, political parties committed to pluralism, and free elections. Free societies depend upon the rule

of law and property rights, and they require hopeful economies, drawn into open world markets.

This work will require patience, creativity and active American leadership. It will involve the strengthening of civil society—with a particular emphasis on the role of women. It will require a consistent defense of religious liberty. It will mean the encouragement of development, education and health, as well as trade and foreign investment. There will certainly be setbacks. But if America does not support the advance of democratic institutions and values, who will?

In promoting freedom, our methods should be flexible. Change comes at different paces in different places. Yet flexibility does not mean ambiguity. The same principles must apply to all nations. As a country embraces freedom, it finds economic and social progress. Only when a government treats its people with dignity does a nation fulfill its greatness. And when a government violates the rights of a citizen, it dishonors an entire nation.

There is nothing easy about the achievement of freedom. In America, we know something about the difficulty of protecting minorities, of building a national army, of defining the relationship between the central government and regional authorities—because we faced all of those challenges on the day of our independence. And they nearly tore us apart. It took many decades of struggle to live up to our own ideals. But we never ceased believing in the power of those ideals—and we should not today.

Mr. Bush, the 43rd president of the United States, is the founder of the Bush Institute at Southern Methodist

University in Dallas, Texas. This op-ed is adapted from a speech he delivered May 15 at the Bush Institute's Celebration of Human Freedom.

TheDailyBeast.com
May 18, 2012

47. Congress Must OK Military Intervention

The Obama administration exploited a constitutional loophole by taking action on its own during Libya's uprising. New legislation must end this defiance of the balance of power.

By Sen. Jim Webb

The most important constitutional challenge regarding the balance of power between the president and Congress in modern times comes down to a simple question: When should the president have the unilateral authority to decide to use military force, and what is the place of the Congress in that process?

In the decades following the height of the Vietnam War, our constitutional process fell apart. Year by year, skirmish by skirmish, the role of the Congress in determining where the U.S. military would operate, and when the awesome power of our weapon systems would be unleashed has diminished. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, especially with the advent of Special Operations forces and remote bombing capabilities, the Congress seems to have faded into operational irrelevance.

We have now reached the point that the unprecedented—and quite frankly contorted—constitutional logic used by this administration to intervene in Libya on the basis of what can most kindly be called a United Nations standard of “humanitarian intervention,” was not even subject to full

debate or a vote on the Senate floor. Such an omission, and the precedent it has set, now requires us to accept one of two uncomfortable alternatives. Either Congress must reject this passivity and live up to the standards and the expectations regarding presidential power that were laid down so carefully by our Founding Fathers, or it must accept a redefinition of the very precepts upon which this government was founded.

The conflict in the balance of power between the president and the Congress has always been an intrinsic part of our constitutional makeup. Article One, Section 8, of the Constitution provides that the Congress alone has the power to declare war. Article Two, Section 2, of the Constitution provides that the president shall serve as commander in chief. In the early days of our republic, these distinctions were clear. We retained no large standing army during peace time. Article One, Section 8 also gives the Congress the power to “raise and support armies.” This phrase expressed the clear intent of the framers that large ground forces were not to be kept during peace time, but instead were to be raised at the direction of Congress during a time of war.

Only after World War 2 did this change. Our rather reluctant position as the world's greatest guarantor of international stability required that we maintain a large standing military force, much of it in Europe and in Asia, ready to respond to crises whose immediacy could not otherwise allow us to go through the lengthy process of mobilization in order to raise an army. That reality made the time-honored process of asking the Congress for a declaration of war in most cases obsolete.

But any logical proposition can be carried to a ridiculous extreme. The fact that some military situations have required our presidents to act immediately, before reporting to the Congress, does not give a president blanket authority to use military force whenever and wherever he decides. This is not a political issue. We would be facing the exact same constitutional challenges no matter the party of the president. In fact, unless we resolve this matter, there is no doubt that we someday will.

This administration's argument that it has the authority to decide when and where to use military force without the consent of the Congress, using the fragile logic of "humanitarian intervention" to ostensibly redress domestic tensions inside countries where American interests are not directly threatened, is gravely dangerous. It does not fit our history.

The historically acceptable conditions under which a president can unilaterally order the military into action are clear. If our country or our military forces are attacked; if an attack, including one by international terrorists, is imminent and must be preempted; if treaty commitments specifically compel us to respond to attacks on our allies; if American citizens are detained or threatened; if our sea lanes are interrupted, then—and only then—should the president order the use of military force without first gaining the approval of the Congress.

The recent actions by this administration, beginning with the months-long intervention in Libya, should give us all grounds for alarm about the potential harm to our constitutional system itself. We are in no sense compelled—

or justified—in taking action based on a vote in the United Nations, or as the result of a decision made by a collective security agreement such as NATO when none of its members have been attacked.

I cannot conclusively define the boundaries of a "humanitarian intervention" and neither can anybody else. Where should it apply? Where should it not? Rwanda? Libya? Syria? Venezuela? Some of these endeavors may be justified, some may not. But the most important point to be made is that in our system, no single person should have the power to inject the United States military, and the prestige of our nation, into such circumstances.

I make this point from the perspective of someone who grew up in the military, and whose family has participated as citizen soldiers in most of our country's wars, beginning with the American Revolution. I was proud to serve as a Marine in Vietnam. I am equally proud of my son's service as a Marine infantryman in Iraq. I am also grateful for having had the opportunity to serve five years in the Pentagon, one as a Marine, and four as assistant secretary of defense and as secretary of the Navy. I am one of the strongest proponents of the refocusing of our national involvement in East Asia, and sponsored a Senate resolution condemning China's use of force with respect to sovereignty issues in the South China Sea. I am not advocating a retreat from anywhere.

Modern circumstances require an adroit approach to the manner in which our foreign policy is being implemented. Legislation I introduced this week requires that the president obtain formal approval by the Congress through an expedited process before

introducing military force for "humanitarian interventions," where the historically acceptable conditions for unilateral action are absent.

Despite repeated calls from other senators and myself, the Congress—both Democrat and Republican—could not bring itself to have a formal debate on whether the use of military force was appropriate in Libya. Meanwhile, the administration conducted month after month of combat operations in Libya, with no American interests directly threatened and no clear treaty provisions in play. The administration—which spent well over \$1 billion of taxpayer funds, dropped thousands of bombs on the country, and operated our military offshore for months—claimed that "combat" was not occurring, and rejected the notion that the War Powers Act applied to the situation.

My legislation addresses this loophole in the interpretation of our Constitution. It will serve as a necessary safety net to protect the integrity and the intent of the Constitution itself. It will ensure that Congress lives up not only to its prerogatives, which were so carefully laid out by our Founding Fathers, but also to its responsibilities.

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot
May 18, 2012

48. Time Has Come To Ground The F-22

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta ordered flight restrictions this week for the Air Force's stealth fighter, the F-22 Raptor, an unusual intervention from the Cabinet level.

He's requiring the aircraft to remain close to potential landing strips in case of mid-air emergencies. U.S. Sen. Mark Warner called the restrictions "an appropriate first step" in

ensuring the safety of pilots and civilians.

It's not enough.

At least 11 pilots and flight surgeons have complained about oxygen deprivation while flying the F-22. Some are refusing to pilot it because of safety concerns. An ABC News investigation found that possible problems with the plane's oxygen system have made pilots dizzy and caused other symptoms in mid-air at least 25 times since 2008.

The Air Force should ground the planes — again — and work with the aircraft's manufacturer to identify the problems and fix them.

The F-22 was grounded for four months last year. After an Air Force advisory panel studied the oxygen system for seven months, it said it couldn't pinpoint a cause.

Rather than continue to ground the plane, which has been used in training, not combat, the panel endorsed a plan to keep the F-22 in the air — with special safety precautions. According to multiple reports, though, those safety precautions created additional problems for pilots.

The issue bubbled up again because CBS' "60 Minutes" reported last week that two F-22 pilots from Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Hampton had experienced disorientation and other problems. They said they worried about the potential for long-term health issues.

One of the pilots, Warner said, was issued a letter of reprimand. That's despite being granted whistleblower status, which is supposed to provide him protection from retaliation. The letter is also an indication of a military culture that encourages silence about unsafe equipment and can lead to fatal and expensive crashes.

Warner, along with Rep. Adam Kinzinger, an Illinois

Republican and a pilot in the Air Force reserves, called for a confidential survey of F-22 pilots and flight surgeons and said they must be allowed to come forward without fear of retribution.

Restricting flights to shorter distances and ordering the backup oxygen system to be installed by December still is a gamble. The plane, as Warner noted in understatement, "isn't at 100 percent." That's a problem, since the Government Accountability Office has estimated that each plane cost American taxpayers more than \$400 million.

As taxpayers, we have a right to expect that the aircraft meet its function. Rather than risk losing one, rather than risk losing a life, the Air Force needs to ground the F-22 until it's fixed.

Wall Street Journal
May 18, 2012
Pg. 12

49. Detained And Confused

A bad legal ruling abets a bad anti-antiterror amendment.

Hours before Congress reopened a contentious debate on terrorist detention policy, a judge in Manhattan on Wednesday night weighed in with her own politically explosive opinion. The decision will be overturned on appeal, but its reasoning needs to be deconstructed so it doesn't do more harm in the meantime.

Ruling in *Hedges v. Obama*, federal Judge Katherine Forrest struck down a provision of last year's defense authorization act on the arrest, imprisonment and interrogation of terrorists. Noam Chomsky, Daniel Ellsberg and several left-wing journalists filed the suit in January, charging that the detention law violates their First Amendment rights. Christopher

Hedges, a former New York Times reporter, argued that his contacts with known terrorists overseas could land him in a military brig and thus harm his right to report and publish.

It's almost worth the price of admission to hear the Obama Administration respond that these claims by its journalistic allies are "fanciful, paranoid, or otherwise unreasonable." But that didn't impress Judge Forrest—appointed by President Obama last year—who ruled the law would have a "chilling impact on First Amendment rights."

The case should have been thrown out on lack of standing alone. The detention law is an organizational statute, in which Congress codifies certain powers for the executive branch. Judge Forrest insisted on treating it as a common criminal statute, yet it doesn't proscribe any individual behavior and the journalists haven't been harmed. A journalist has no more standing to block the law than he would have to block Congress from financing the Federal Reserve.

To be named an enemy combatant under the detention statute, you have to be engaged in illegal warfare against the United States. More precisely, under the law you have to be "A person who was a part of or substantially supported al-Qaeda, the Taliban or associated forces that are engaged in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners, including any person who has committed a belligerent act or has directly supported such hostilities in aid of such enemy forces."

Mr. Hedges may loathe America, but he can't be arrested for that unless he joins or abets the other side.

Judge Forrest claimed the law didn't "define precisely

what 'direct' or 'substantial' support means." But as a legal and practical matter, the definition has been established by successive post-9/11 Presidents and the courts, particularly at the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, which has repeatedly approved indefinite terrorist detentions.

The legal claim also collapses on grounds of what lawyers call "redressability"—whether the plaintiffs can get relief. Even if the detention statute were tossed out, a genuine enemy combatant can still be detained under either the post-9/11 authorization to use military force or the President's war powers. Judge Forrest says the law violates due process, but even after the various challenges during the Bush years, the Supreme Court has only granted to enemy combatants the right to habeas corpus—a legal hearing.

This ruling would be ignorable as an especially obtuse exercise in judicial activism if not for its timing. The House of Representatives is debating an amendment to the 2013 defense bill that would bar any enemy combatant captured on U.S. soil—even the next Osama bin Laden—from military detention. And its tea party and left-wing proponents seized on Judge Forrest's decision as an argument for their amendment. Let's hope that one bad ruling doesn't lead to bad law that damages U.S. national security.

New York Times
May 18, 2012
Pg. 2

50. Corrections

An article on Thursday about Europeans' gloomy view of Afghanistan's future misstated the financial condition of Greece, the only country exempted from a list of NATO partners the United

States expects to contribute aid for Afghan security forces. Greece's government has rescheduled much of its debt; it has not defaulted.

Editor's Note: The article referred to by Alissa J. Rubin appeared in the *Current News Early Bird*, May 17, 2012.