OVERVIEW

Iraqi forces took ISIL's last positions in the city of Fallujah, establishing full control over one of the jihadists' most emblematic bastions after five weeks of fighting, according to the commander of the operation. In Jordan, the *New York Times* reported that weapons shipped into the country by the Central Intelligence Agency and Saudi Arabia intended for Syrian rebels have been systematically stolen by Jordanian intelligence operatives and sold to arms merchants on the black market. Also of note, heavy fighting between Afghan forces and ISIL militants has killed dozens of people, officials said, raising fears that the extremist group is staging a comeback months after Kabul said they had been defeated.

NEWS HEADLINES AT 0430

- British politics in disarray; Scotland hopes to block Brexit
- Panama celebrates expanded canal's successful first passage
- Pope says Christians should apologize to gay people
- Trump falls further behind Clinton in new polls
- Ten people stabbed, beaten at white nationalist rally in California
- Chile wins Copa América; Messi misses penalty kick, says he's quitting Argentina
- Naval Academy grad Hurley wins Quicken Loans National

OVERSEAS HEADLINES OF NOTE

- *Baltic Times*: U.S. commander has not said that NATO is unable to defend Baltics – U.S. Army Europe
- *BBC*: Islamic State claims responsibility for Jordan border attack last week
- *Kyodo*: Three Chinese Coast Guard ships enter Japanese waters around Senkakus

THIS DAY IN MILITARY HISTORY

- 1864 – Confederate forces repel a frontal assault by Union troops at the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain in Georgia

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Reuters, June 26 | Josh Smith

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New York Times, June 27, Pg. A1 | David E. Sanger

American officials struggling to reimagine their strategy after Britain's decision to divorce the European Union say the most urgent challenge will be to find a way to replace their most reliable, sympathetic partner in the hallways of European capitals. It will not be easy.

5. Vote Complicates Terror, Sanctions Stance

Wall Street Journal, June 27, Pg. A6 | Julian E. Barnes

The British vote to leave the European Union could have a profound impact on global security, weakening Europe's most powerful military and altering the West's approach to the challenges facing the Continent.

6. New Defense Plan for Europe

Wall Street Journal, June 27, Pg. A6 | Laurence Norman and Julian E. Barnes

Days after the U.K. voted to exit the European Union, the bloc's foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, is set to present on Tuesday a plan to broaden European defense and security cooperation, in a bid to bolster Europe's ability to act independently.

7. Brexit is Good News for Russia, but a Headache for NATO

ForeignPolicy.com (Report), June 26 | Dan De Luce and Paul McLeary

The Kremlin has spent years trying to create fissures within the NATO alliance and the European Union, but with little success. Now Britain's vote to leave the EU fulfills Putin's wish for a more divided Europe, one potentially preoccupied with its own disagreements while London's influence recedes.

8. Warsaw Summit Preview: NATO Weighs Deterrence Choices

Defense News, June 27, Pg. 7 | Aaron Mehta

When NATO leaders converge on Warsaw, Poland, July 8 and 9 for the alliance's biennial summit, they will have plenty to discuss. The summit, held at the city's National Stadium, will serve as both a coming-out party for Poland's ambitions to be a key NATO member and an opportunity for the member nations to ratify their goals and strategies two years after Russia's invasion of Ukrainian territory.

9. German minister says will visit Turkey base after snub

Agence France-Presse, June 26 | Deborah Cole

Germany's defence minister said Sunday that she would personally visit an air base in Turkey after Ankara barred a German political delegation from making the trip next month. Ursula von der Leyen told Bild am

Sonntag newspaper that she would go to the Incirlik air base in southern Turkey used to launch coalition air raids against Islamic State (IS) jihadists in Syria.

ASIA/PACIFIC

10. Russia, China won't accept North Korea's nuclear, missile strategy

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), June 27 | Not Attributed

The leaders of Russia and China have agreed that they will not accept North Korea's nuclear and missile strategy, but they reaffirmed their opposition to a possible deployment of an advanced U.S. missile defense system in South Korea, according to their joint statement Monday.

11. Top Chinese envoy in Vietnam as tension looms before court ruling

Reuters, June 27 | Martin Petty and Mai Nguyen

China's top diplomat arrived in Vietnam on Monday for a scheduled meeting to strengthen historically close relations, at a time when ties are strained by squabbles over the South China Sea.

12. Malaysian plane intercepted by Indonesian fighter jets – official

Agence France-Presse, June 26 | M. Jegathesan

A Malaysian military transport plane was intercepted by two Indonesian jet fighters while flying a regular route over Indonesia's Natuna Islands, defence officials said Sunday.

13. Japan eyes de facto revision to SOFA on U.S. base workers

Jiji Press (Japan), June 26 | Not Attributed

The Japanese government is looking at concluding a new accord with the United States on the definition of civilian base workers covered by the bilateral Status of Forces Agreement, following the murder of a woman in Okinawa Prefecture by such a worker, it was learned Sunday.

14. India to get access to almost 99% of US defence technologies, says Obama administration official

Press Trust of India, June 26 | Not Attributed

India will be the only country outside the US' formal treaty allies that will gain access to almost 99 per cent of the latest American defence technologies after being recognised as a "Major Defence Partner", a senior Obama administration official has said.

MIDEAST

15. Iraqi special forces share treasured possessions

Associated Press, June 27 | Susannah George

Sgt. Ahmed Abdelaziz, with Iraq's special forces, has been almost continually deployed fighting the Islamic State group ever since the militants overran nearly a third of Iraq in the summer of 2014. Now he's on the front lines of Fallujah, a city that was declared "fully liberated" on Sunday by the commander leading the fight against IS. Abdelaziz has with him what he always brings into battle: a photo of his brother. It's not a smiling family portrait. It is a picture on his mobile phone of his brother Saad's body among hundreds killed in a massacre carried out by the jihadis after they captured the military's Camp Speicher base in 2014.

16. Multiple suicide bombings kill five in eastern Lebanon

Agence France-Presse, June 27 | Layal Abou Rahal

A string of suicide bombings early Monday killed at least five people in a Lebanese village near the volatile border with war-ravaged Syria.

17. Israel and Turkey Agree to Resume Full Diplomatic Ties

New York Times, June 27, Pg. A8 | Isabel Kershner

Israel and Turkey agreed on Sunday to resume full diplomatic relations, ending a bitter, six-year rift between the once-close regional allies, according to Israeli and Turkish officials.

18. Yemen clashes intensify as Ban pushes peace

Agence France-Presse, June 26 | Fawaz al-Haidari

Fighting between Yemeni government forces and Shiite rebels killed 41 people on several fronts Sunday, as UN chief Ban Ki-moon urged the rival factions in Kuwait to accept a peace plan.

AFRICA

19. Libya PM says only united military can defeat Islamic State

Agence France-Presse, June 26 | Mohamad Ali Harissi

The head of Libya's unity government said Sunday that only a united military bringing together all the country's armed factions would be able to defeat the Islamic State group.

20. Nigerian army says it freed over 5,000 people held by Boko Haram

Reuters, June 26 | Alexis Akwagyiram

Nigeria's army on Sunday said it had freed more than 5,000 people held by the Islamist militant group Boko Haram during an operation over the weekend in the northeast of the country.

AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN

21. The Theorist in the Palace

New Yorker (Print Edition), July 4 | George Packer

Ashraf Ghani, the President of Afghanistan, wakes up before five every morning and reads for two or three hours. He makes his way daily through an inch-thick stack of official documents. He reads proposals by applicants competing for the job of mayor of Herat and chooses the winner. He reads presentations by forty-four city engineers for improvements to Greater Kabul. He has been known to write his own talking points and do his own research on upcoming visitors. Before meeting the Australian foreign minister, he read the Australian government's white paper on foreign aid. He read four hundred pages of the Senate Intelligence Committee's torture report on the day of its release, and the next day he apologized to General John Campbell, the American commander in Afghanistan, for having not quite finished it.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

22. Uncharted Territory: Silent Service

The Capital (Annapolis, MD), June 27, Pg. A1 | Christina Jedra

Alexandra Marberry, 23, is one of at least 17 Naval Academy graduates who have come out as transgender, but she may be one of the first to serve her entire career openly. These are the stories of the Naval Academy graduates who came before her.

23. DoD to Issue Revamped Spouse Transition Program

Military.com, June 26 | Amy Bushatz

A program being overhauled by the Defense Department aims to arm military spouses with tools to help their families' transitions out of the military and back into civilian life.

AIR FORCE

24. Interview: Gen. Mark Welsh, Outgoing US Air Force Chief of Staff

Defense News, June 27, Pg. 18 | Aaron Mehta

Gen. Mark Welsh took over as the 20th US Air Force chief of staff in August of 2012. As he prepared to retire after 40 years of service, he sat down with Aaron Mehta to discuss the future of the Air Force.

25. Air Force rock band's contributions shouldn't be underestimated, airmen say

AirForceTimes.com, June 26 | Oriana Pawlyk

When Congresswoman Martha McSally told Air Force leaders in March that she would rather see members of service bands on the flightline than the stage — where, she said, they're needed more — reactions were mixed. Military bands have been part of service tradition for more than 70 years, Air Force Times readers noted, while acknowledging that budget cuts are affecting all areas of the Defense Department. Last week, the Arizona Republican pushed forward, introducing a plan that would limit all military ensemble performances at social functions outside official military duties.

ARMY

26. Final deployment is underway for Army's Kiowa helicopters

ArmyTimes.com, June 26 | Luke Carberry Mogan

The final countdown has begun for the Army's Kiowa Warriors. Members of 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, arrived in South Korea earlier this month to complete the Kiowa's final deployment. Upon the unit's return to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in nine months, the unit's OH-58Ds helicopters are slated to be replaced with the more modern AH-64D Apaches.

NOTABLE COMMENTARY

27. A New American Deal for Europe

Wall Street Journal, June 27, Pg. A12 | Editorial

Britain's decision to leave the European Union opens an era of political disruption, but along with it comes opportunity. The U.S. can seize this moment of uncertainty to reassert its leadership of a Western alliance of free nations.

28. Relax! Brexit isn't the end of new world order

USA Today, June 27, Pg. A7 | Michael O'Hanlon

There's no denying it: the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union is big news. It reveals huge frustration among British voters with economic globalization, immigration and national self-identity. There will be costs. Trade between Britain and continental Europe could be notched back as tariffs return; London's role as a world financial capital may be scaled back. But after acknowledging such concerns, we should relax. Overblown fears of an end to the post-World War II order are wrong.

29. Putin's effortless win

Washington Post, June 27, Pg. A15 | Michael McFaul

When Vladimir Putin worked in Dresden, he watched helplessly as Soviet-ally East Germany slipped out of Moscow's orbit, united with West Germany and joined the democratic side of Europe. Soviet-dominated multilateral institutions in Europe - the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance - also disappeared. Putin then witnessed the dissolution of the Soviet Union, an event he later described as one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century. Former Soviet allies and parts of the Soviet empire peeled away and eventually became members of NATO and the European Union. For nearly three decades, the West was consolidating as the East was disintegrating. The momentum toward a Europe whole and free was so powerful that earlier Russian leaders even flirted with joining. That trend has now reversed.

30. How Will China React to the Gavel Coming Down in the South China Sea?

WarOnTheRocks.com, June 26 | Patrick Cronin and Harry Krejsa

Rising tensions in the South China Sea have cast a pall over many actors and issues, but not international law. Indeed, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its mandatory dispute settlement mechanisms are arguably at the zenith of their popularity. Some believe that the U.S. Senate may soon finally ratify a treaty that has been adhered to by both Democratic and Republican administrations. Perversely, the Obama administration's focus on international law — with the arbitration ruling likely to be handed down shortly — may be badly undercut depending on how China reacts and behaves. Ideally, China would find in the ruling a diplomatic off ramp to avoid a clash at sea and promote new joint development of maritime resources.

TOP STORIES

1. Fallujah fully liberated from Islamic State group, Iraqi commander says

Associated Press, June 26 | Sinan Salaheddin and Susannah George

BAGHDAD — Five weeks after a military operation began, a senior Iraqi commander declared Sunday that the city of Fallujah was "fully liberated" from the Islamic State group, giving a major boost to the country's security and political leadership in its fight against the extremists.

Recapturing Fallujah, the first city to fall to the Islamic State group more than two years ago, means that authorities can now set their sights on militant-held Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, visiting central Fallujah with the celebrating troops, vowed that the Iraqi flag would next be raised above Mosul. But that campaign has been progressing in fits and starts, revealing the deep divisions among the different groups that make up the security forces.

Iraqi troops entered Fallujah's northwestern neighborhood of al-Julan, the last part of the city under IS control, said Lt. Gen. Abdul-Wahab al-Saadi, head of the counterterrorism forces in the operation.

The operation, which began May 22, "is done, and the city is fully liberated," al-Saadi told The Associated Press.

Al-Abadi, dressed in the black fatigues of the counterterrorism forces and carrying an Iraqi flag, visited Fallujah's central hospital Sunday evening and called for residents of the city 40 miles (65 kilometers) west of Baghdad to celebrate the military advance.

But tens of thousands of people from Fallujah who were forced to flee their homes during the operation are still at overcrowded camps for the displaced with limited shelter in the Anbar desert. The U.S.-led coalition said it was still conducting airstrikes in the area, and aid groups warned it was too early to say when residents could return to their homes in the city, citing the presence of makeshift bombs left behind by the militants.

The Fallujah operation was carried out by Iraq's elite counterterrorism troops, Iraqi federal police, Anbar provincial police and an umbrella group of government- sanctioned militia fighters — mostly Shiites — who are known as the Popular Mobilization Forces.

Fallujah, a predominantly Sunni city, was a stronghold of insurgents following the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. More than 100 American soldiers died and hundreds more were wounded in intense, house-by-house fighting there in 2004. Many residents of the city welcomed the Islamic State group when it overran the city in 2014, complicating the fight by government troops to retake it.

The IS militants who had held out for more than a week on the northern and western edges of Fallujah largely collapsed early Sunday under a barrage from coalition warplanes, including a single airstrike that killed 47 fighters in the Jolan neighborhood, said Brig. Haider al-Obeidi of Iraq's special forces.

"From the center of al-Julan neighborhood, we congratulate the Iraqi people and the commander in chief ... and declare that the Fallujah fight is over," al-Saadi told Iraqi state TV, flanked by troops.

Some of the soldiers shot their weapons into the air, sang and waved Iraqi flags.

"The coalition continues to provide support through strikes, intelligence, and advice and assistance to the Iraqi Security Forces operating in Fallujah and will continue to do so through deliberate clearing operations," said U.S. Army Col. Christopher Garver, the spokesman for the coalition.

Al-Abadi initially declared victory in Fallujah over a week ago, after Iraqi forces advanced into the city center and took control of a government complex. He pledged that remaining pockets of IS fighters would be cleared out within hours, but fierce clashes on the city's northern and western edges persisted for days.

Iraq's defense minister tweeted that 90 percent of the city is "safe and inhabitable," but aid groups are advising the government to exercise more caution.

The U.N. refugee agency said more than 85,000 people have fled Fallujah and the surrounding area since the offensive began. The UNHCR and others have warned of dire conditions in the camps, where temperatures are well

over 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) and shelter is limited. Officials have called for more funds to meet mounting needs.

"It is still too early to speak of (civilians returning to Fallujah)," said Karl Schembri of the Norwegian Refugee Council, an international humanitarian organization that does extensive work in Anbar province. UNHCR's representative in Iraq, Bruno Geddo, also said that families are expected to remain in camps "for some time as (Fallujah) is reported to be littered with IEDs" — makeshift bombs and booby traps.

Schembri said clearing away the bombs could take anywhere from days to months.

"We need a thorough de-mining of civilian areas and safety assessments before civilians are given the option to go back," he said. "The situation in the camps is extremely dire, but we are also not in a position to ensure that people will get supplies and services inside Fallujah either."

When civilians initially returned to Ramadi after it was declared fully liberated from the militants in February, about 100 people were killed by booby-trapped explosives. The time-consuming de-mining process there is still continuing.

Besides Mosul, IS extremists still control significant areas in northern and western Iraq. The group, which swept across Syria and Iraq in the summer of 2014, declared an Islamic caliphate on that territory. At the height of its power, it was estimated to hold nearly a third of each country.

The campaign for Mosul, which lies some 225 miles (360 kilometers) northwest of Baghdad, has been bogged down by logistics problems as Iraq's political leadership jockeys over the planning of the operation.

Those divisions in the military at times stalled the Fallujah offensive. A similar scenario is expected to play out in the Mosul campaign, because the various groups that make up Iraq's security forces — including Kurdish forces known as the peshmerga — have all vowed to participate in the complex operation.

More than 3.3 million Iraqis have fled their homes since the IS advance, according to U.N. figures. More than 40 percent are from Anbar province, where Fallujah is located.

--Associated Press writer Qassim Abdul-Zahra contributed to this report

RETURN TO TOP

2. Thefts Redirect Arms From C.I.A.

Guns for Syrian Rebels Hit Black Market

New York Times, June 27, Pg. A1 | Mark Mazzetti and Ali Younes

AMMAN, Jordan -- Weapons shipped into Jordan by the Central Intelligence Agency and Saudi Arabia intended for Syrian rebels have been systematically stolen by Jordanian intelligence operatives and sold to arms merchants on the black market, according to American and Jordanian officials.

Some of the stolen weapons were used in a shooting in November that killed two Americans and three others at a police training facility in Amman, F.B.I. officials believe after months of investigating the attack, according to people familiar with the investigation.

The existence of the weapons theft, which ended only months ago after complaints by the American and Saudi governments, is being reported for the first time after a joint investigation by The New York Times and Al Jazeera. The theft, involving millions of dollars of weapons, highlights the messy, unplanned consequences of programs to arm and train rebels -- the kind of program the C.I.A. and Pentagon have conducted for decades -- even after the Obama administration had hoped to keep the training program in Jordan under tight control.

The Jordanian officers who were part of the scheme reaped a windfall from the weapons sales, using the money to buy expensive SUVs, iPhones and other luxury items, Jordanian officials said.

The theft and resale of the arms -- including Kalashnikov assault rifles, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades -- have led to a flood of new weapons available on the black arms market. Investigators do not know what became of most of them, but a disparate collection of groups, including criminal networks and rural Jordanian tribes, use the arms bazaars to build their arsenals. Weapons smugglers also buy weapons in the arms bazaars to ship outside the country.

The F.B.I. investigation into the Amman shooting, run by the bureau's Washington field office, is continuing. But American and Jordanian officials said the investigators believed that the weapons a Jordanian police captain, Anwar Abu Zaid, used to gun down two American contractors, two Jordanians and one South African had originally arrived in Jordan intended for the Syrian rebel-training program.

The officials said this finding had come from tracing the serial numbers of the weapons.

Mohammad H. al-Momani, Jordan's minister of state for media affairs, said allegations that Jordanian intelligence officers had been involved in any weapons thefts were "absolutely incorrect."

"Weapons of our security institutions are concretely tracked, with the highest discipline," he said. He called the powerful Jordanian intelligence service, known as the General Intelligence Directorate, or G.I.D., "a world-class, reputable institution known for its professional conduct and high degree of cooperation among security agencies." In Jordan, the head of the G.I.D. is considered the second most important man after the king.

Representatives of the C.I.A. and F.B.I. declined to comment.

The State Department did not address the allegations directly, but a spokesman said America's relationship with Jordan remained solid.

"The United States deeply values the long history of cooperation and friendship with Jordan," said John Kirby, the spokesman. "We are committed to the security of Jordan and to partnering closely with Jordan to meet common security challenges."

The training program, which in 2013 began directly arming the rebels under the code name Timber Sycamore, is run by the C.I.A. and several Arab intelligence services and aimed at building up forces opposing President Bashar al-Assad of Syria. The United States and Saudi Arabia are the biggest contributors, with the Saudis contributing both weapons and large sums of money, and with C.I.A. paramilitary operatives taking the lead in training the rebels to use Kalashnikovs, mortars, antitank guided missiles and other weapons.

The existence of the program is classified, as are all details about its budget. American officials say that the C.I.A. has trained thousands of rebels in the past three years, and that the fighters made substantial advances on the battlefield against Syrian government forces until Russian military forces -- launched last year in support of Mr. Assad -- compelled them to retreat.

The training program is based in Jordan because of the country's proximity to the Syrian battlefields. From the beginning, the C.I.A. and the Arab intelligence agencies relied on Jordanian security services to transport the weapons, many bought in bulk in the Balkans and elsewhere around Eastern Europe.

The program is separate from one that the Pentagon set up to train rebels to combat Islamic State fighters, rather than the Syrian military. That program was shut down after it managed to train only a handful of Syrian rebels.

Jordanian and American officials described the weapons theft and subsequent investigation on the condition of anonymity because the Syrian rebel training is classified in the United States and is a government secret in Jordan.

News of the weapons theft and eventual crackdown has been circulating inside Jordan's government for several months. Husam Abdallat, a senior aide to several past Jordanian prime ministers, said he had heard about the scheme from current Jordanian officials. The G.I.D. has some corrupt officers in its ranks, Mr. Abdallat said, but added that the institution as a whole is not corrupt. "The majority of its officers are patriotic and proud Jordanians who are the country's first line of defense," he said.

Jordanian officials who described the operation said it had been run by a group of G.I.D. logistics officers with direct access to the weapons once they reached Jordan. The officers regularly siphoned truckloads of the weapons from the stocks, before delivering the rest of the weapons to designated drop-off points.

Then the officers sold the weapons at several large arms markets in Jordan. The main arms bazaars in Jordan are in Ma'an, in the southern part of the country; in Sahab, outside Amman; and in the Jordan Valley.

It is unclear whether the current head of the G.I.D., Gen. Faisal al-Shoubaki, had knowledge of the theft of the C.I.A. and Saudi weapons. But several Jordanian intelligence officials said senior officers inside the service had knowledge of the weapons scheme and provided cover for the lower-ranking officers.

Word that the weapons intended for the rebels were being bought and sold on the black market leaked into Jordan government circles last year, when arms dealers began bragging to their customers that they had large stocks of American- and Saudi-provided weapons.

Jordanian intelligence operatives monitoring the arms market -- operatives not involved in the weapons-diversion scheme -- began sending reports to headquarters about a proliferation of weapons in the market and of the boasts of the arms dealers.

After the Americans and Saudis complained about the theft, investigators at the G.I.D. arrested several dozen officers involved in the scheme, among them a lieutenant colonel running the operation. They were ultimately released from detention and fired from the service, but were allowed to keep their pensions and money they gained from the scheme, according to Jordanian officials.

Jordan's decision to host the C.I.A.-led training program is the latest episode in a long partnership.

Beginning in the Eisenhower administration, the C.I.A. made large payments to King Hussein, who ruled Jordan from 1952 until his death in 1999, in exchange for permission to run numerous intelligence operations on Jordanian soil.

C.I.A. money and expertise also helped the king establish the G.I.D. and put down internal and external threats to his government. Since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the United States has flooded Jordan with money for various counterterrorism programs. American and Jordanian spies have run a joint counterterrorism center outside Amman, and a secret prison in Jordan housed prisoners the C.I.A. captured in the region.

In his 2006 book, "State of Denial," the journalist Bob Woodward recounted a 2003 conversation in which George J. Tenet, then the director of central intelligence, told Condoleezza Rice, then the national security adviser, "We created the Jordanian intelligence service, and now we own it."

It is a relationship of mutual dependence, but Jordan has particular leverage because of its location in the heart of the Middle East and its general tolerance to be used as a base of American military and intelligence operations. Jordan's security services also have a long history of trying to infiltrate Islamic militant groups, efforts that have yielded both success and failure.

In 2009, a Jordanian doctor -- brought to the C.I.A. by a G.I.D. officer after the doctor said he had penetrated Al Qaeda's leadership -- turned out to be a double agent and blew himself up at a remote base in Afghanistan. Seven C.I.A. employees, as well as the G.I.D. officer, were killed in the attack.

Two recent heads of the service, also known as the Mukhabarat, have been sent to prison on charges including embezzlement, money laundering and bank fraud. One of them, Gen. Samih Battikhi, ran the G.I.D. from 1995 to 2000 and was convicted of being part of a scheme to obtain bank loans of around $600 million for fake government contracts and pocketing about $25 million. He was sentenced to eight years in prison, but the sentence was eventually reduced to four years that were served in his villa in the seaside town of Aqaba.

Gen. Mohammad al-Dahabi, who ran the service from 2005 to 2008, was later convicted of stealing millions of dollars that G.I.D. officers had seized from Iraqi citizens crossing into Jordan in the years after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. His trial showed that he had also arranged for money to be smuggled in private cars from Iraq into Jordan and had been involved in sellingJordanian citizenship to Iraqi businessmen. He was sentenced to 13 years in prison and fined tens of millions of dollars.

President Obama authorized the covert arming program in April 2013, after more than a year of debate inside the administration about the wisdom of using the C.I.A. to train rebels trying to oust Mr. Assad.

The decision was made in part to try to gain control of a chaotic situation in which Arab countries were funneling arms into Syria for various rebel groups with little coordination. The Qataris had paid to smuggle shipments of Chinese-made FN-6 shoulder-fired weapons over the border from Turkey, and Saudi Arabia sent thousands of Kalashnikovs and millions of rounds of ammunition it had bought, sometimes with the C.I.A.'s help.

By late 2013, the C.I.A. was working directly with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other nations to arm and train small groups of rebels and send them across the border into Syria.

The specific motives behind the November shooting at the Amman police training facility remain uncertain, and it is unclear when the F.B.I. will officially conclude its investigation.

This year, the widows of the Americans killed in the attack sued Twitter, alleging that it knowingly permitted the Islamic State to use its social media platform to spread the militant group's violent message, recruiting and raising funds.

Captain Abu Zaid, the gunman, was killed almost immediately. His brother, Fadi Abu Zaid, said in an interview that he still believed his brother was innocent and that he had given no indications he was planning to carry out the shooting.

The Jordanian government, he said, has denied him any answers about the shooting, and has refused to release his brother's autopsy report.

--Mark Mazzetti reported from Amman and Washington, and Ali Younes from Amman, Washington and Doha, Qatar

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3. Islamic State militants launch new attacks in eastern Afghanistan
Reuters, June 26 | Josh Smith

KABUL -- Heavy fighting between Islamic State militants and government security forces has claimed dozens of lives in eastern Afghanistan, officials said on Sunday.

In recent months insurgents claiming allegiance to Islamic State had largely appeared to be bottled up in a mountainous area along the border with Pakistan under threat of U.S. air strikes.

The latest attacks indicate the group remains a potent threat to a government already battling an insurgency dominated by the rival Taliban.

At least a dozen Afghan security forces and civilians had been killed, with another 18 wounded, Nangarhar province governor Saleem Khan Kunduzi said in a statement.

Local officials claimed more than 100 Islamic State fighters had been killed in fighting in Nangarhar over the past three days, although exact figures varied and could not be independently verified.

"There is no doubt that Daesh do not respect anyone," Kunduzi said, using a common term for Islamic State. "They kill people, regardless of whether they're a child or a woman. They burn down madrasas, mosques and schools."

As many as 25 homes had been burned down in Kowt district, and five civilians were reported kidnapped, Nangarhar officials said.

Hundreds of police and soldiers are engaged in the area with reinforcements on the way, provincial police chief Zarawar Zahid said.

At a small event on Sunday in Kabul, the head of Afghanistan's civil society federation, Sediq Ansari, blamed local leaders for being negligent in the face of Islamic State threats and called on them to be suspended.

"They should be accountable for every drop of blood that has been shed in Nangarhar so it becomes a lesson to other officials," he told gathered reporters.

Militants linked to Islamic State have not made as much progress in Afghanistan as in Syria and Iraq, where the group seized major cities and wide swaths of territory and attracted thousands of recruits.

In Afghanistan, the group is thought to consist mostly of disaffected members of other insurgent movements, including the Taliban, who have often battled Islamic State for control of areas in Nangarhar.

In January, U.S. President Barack Obama gave U.S. forces in Afghanistan more freedom to attack Islamic State targets, leading to a spike in air strikes and other operations, especially in Nangarhar.

No coalition forces have been involved in the latest fighting, spokesman Commander Ron Flesvig said.

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EUROPE

4. Washington's Direct Line to Continent Suddenly Frays

New York Times, June 27, Pg. A1 | David E. Sanger

American officials struggling to reimagine their strategy after Britain's decision to divorce the European Union say the most urgent challenge will be to find a way to replace their most reliable, sympathetic partner in the hallways of European capitals. It will not be easy.

No country shares Washington's worldview quite the way Britain does, they say; it has long been the United States' most willing security ally, most effective intelligence partner and greatest enthusiast of the free-trade mantras that have been a keystone of America's internationalist approach. And few nations were as willing to put a thumb as firmly on the scales of European debates in ways that benefit the United States.

Now that quiet diplomatic leverage -- including moderating European trade demands and strong-arming nations to contribute more to NATO military missions -- is suddenly diminished.

Even if Britain eventually regains its influence on the Continent, a big if, it will be deeply distracted for years. Moreover, the loss of Britain's strong voice in Europe comes at a particularly bad moment: just as the United States and its allies are debating how to handle a revanchist Russia and reinvigorate NATO, hurry along an American-European trade pact that has been languishing, and work through a diplomatic settlement in Syria that could relieve the migrant crisis in Europe.

"When Vladimir Putin is cheering," David Miliband, the former British foreign minister, said on "Meet the Press" Sunday, "then you know you have got a problem in the international system."

And then, of course, there is the threat of the Islamic State, which has found in Europe a new battlefield, one in which the development and sharing of intelligence, seamlessly, is critical.

Addressing those challenges was daunting enough, American officials say, in the face of the tenor of the American presidential campaign, particularly Donald J. Trump's questioning of whether alliances are worth it if allies are not willing to pay more for American protection.

But now, with Britain's exit, called Brexit, whatever passed for long-term plans -- a Europe that gradually takes a greater role in its region and the Middle East as America devotes more attention to Asia -- are imperiled.

Like the Arab Spring, the result of Britain's referendum took Washington by surprise. As late as early last week there was something between a hope and an assumption that the vote would "go the other way," as Secretary of State John Kerry said in Rome on Sunday. As a result, there was no serious planning for the all-consuming work of reimagining the European relationship, a task that will face President Obama for the next six months, and his successor for years to come.

Mr. Kerry, usually the optimist, sounded almost downbeat as he arrived in Italy. He did not make any references to a "shriveled Europe," as one of his top aides did in a conversation over the weekend. But he made clear that European allies are also going to have to rethink their relationships with the United States.

"Twenty-two of the nations in the E.U. are members of NATO," he said less than a minute into his meeting with his Italian counterpart, Paolo Gentiloni. He warned that the most critical step was to "work together to provide as much continuity, as much stability, as much certainty as possible" to "protect the values and interests that we share in common."

The problem is that no one shares those values and interests quite the way the British do, a belief that no American diplomat would utter in public for fear of offending other members of the European Union. But British officials who have been at the center of that daily interaction say the concern goes both ways.

"I worry that we will have less clout on our own: In the future we won't have as much influence on Europe's response to Putin's transgressions, Iran's nuclear ambitions, or the E.U.'s foreign and security policy," said Peter Westmacott, one of Britain's most experienced diplomats and, until January, ambassador to the United States. "And we will be less able to ensure it is U.S.-friendly."

He added that without Britain's direct involvement, Europe was likely to be less enthusiastic about free trade.

Still, Mr. Westmacott noted that "we should be able to cooperate much as in the past on counterterrorism, on intelligence, on cyber and on military issues," assuming that "our economy does not shrink too much as markets, investors and the Scots take stock of Thursday's outcome."

All of which raises the question: If Britain can no longer play that indispensable role for Washington, surely there is another country that can? Perhaps, but it is hard to think of who.

It is not a role Germany has shown a real willingness to step into. Its post-World War II ethos still holds it back from committing combat forces, and it is not a member of the inner circle of intelligence sharing called the "Five Eyes," a club made up of the Anglo victors of World War II. (The other three are Canada, Australia and New Zealand.) A lengthy negotiation to improve the intelligence relationship last year ended with only modest changes.

For all of its cooperation with the United States on a variety of issues, Germany still harbors deep suspicions of the United States that were fueled by the revelations from Edward J. Snowden, the former National Security Agency contractor, including the American surveillance of Chancellor Angela Merkel's cellphone conversations.

And American officials were shocked recently when Germany's foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, warned that recent NATO exercises to deter Russia from thinking about destabilizing Poland and the Baltic members of the military alliance amounted to "saber-rattling and warmongering."

France has also not been as natural a fit with the United States as Britain. While relations have changed drastically since the George W. Bush administration, Paris often goes its own way, including its recent strategy for restarting Israeli-Palestinian talks. The Italians, for their part, are too broke, the Netherlands is too small, and Poland does not yet have the clout of older NATO members.

Moreover, there is a question of leadership.

British leaders were the Europeans most closely aligned with the American negotiating position in the major trade and investment deal being hashed out between the United States and some of its largest trading partners.

When Mr. Obama visited London in April, he warned voters that Britain would be excluded from the deal if it left the bloc and would "go to the end of the queue" for its own bilateral trade agreement. But the United States would also lose Britain's voice in moderating Europe's trade demands.

The intelligence challenges created by Brexit are more subtle. Bilateral cooperation will continue as tightly or more tightly than ever to try to prevent terrorism. But the hope that Britain could improve intelligence sharing among the major European powers -- something that is sorely needed -- is most likely dashed even as terrorism threats have risen.

Over a lunch near the White House a few weeks ago, a senior intelligence official said the obvious solution to intelligence gaps was a far more powerful, Pan-European intelligence service.

It is hard to imagine a new intelligence institution, however, without MI-6 and GCHQ -- the British equivalents of the C.I.A. and the N.S.A. -- playing a lead role. And given Britain's likely preoccupation with the Brexit fallout, it is far from clear how high a priority a new intelligence organization, or a rethinking of NATO strategy, would be for Britain.

There is a counterargument that Britain could emerge as a stronger security partner for the United States, that it will value its role in NATO and other institutions all the more.

Adm. James Stavridis, who served as the 16th supreme allied commander in Europe and is the dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, presented that view in an article in Foreign Policy. He said that a "new British government will presumably be a very motivated NATO partner."

"Now that it has chosen to become a relatively marginal economic player on the international stage," he continued, "it will have to look for new ways to demonstrate value in its partnership with the United States if it hopes to maintain anything like the 'special relationship' it has become accustomed to (and dependent on)."

But even if Britain seeks a more active role in NATO, it may not be accepted as one by its other members; Britain has often been referred to as an American puppet -- with other states noting that former Prime Minister Tony Blair followed Mr. Bush into Iraq with few questions.

There is nothing permanent about political unions and alliances, of course, and some argue that Britain's departure from the European Union is not necessarily a calamity for Washington.

As James F. Jeffrey, a former American diplomat in the Middle East, and Simon Henderson of the Washington Institute wrote last week, "The U.S. and U.K. were bosom allies for 30 years before Britain joined the E.U."

But part of what made the special relationship special in an era of global diplomacy was Britain's ability to act for Washington with the Europeans, to bridge the gap. Now, as one White House official put it, the bridge has been wiped out by a surge that few predicted.

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5. Vote Complicates Terror, Sanctions Stance

Decision to leave bloc will fuel uncertainty over security, but may lead to new NATO role

Wall Street Journal, June 27, Pg. A6 | Julian E. Barnes

The British vote to leave the European Union could have a profound impact on global security, weakening Europe's most powerful military and altering the West's approach to the challenges facing the Continent.

The prospect of Britain's exit from Europe's top political and economic forum is likely to erode consensus on sanctions against Russia meant to deter further military action by Moscow, and complicate the U.S. drive for European countries to better share intelligence on terror threats, current and former European and U.S. officials said.

Long term, the officials said, the vote to quit the EU -- known as "Brexit" -- could leave Britain's armed forces diminished, either by a breakup of the U.K. or by reduced military spending driven by economic woes.

"I worry one of the consequences of Brexit will be a reduced Britain, a less effective Britain militarily," said Nicholas Burns, a former U.S. ambassador who has written on Europe's security challenges.

Still, the implications of the vote to leave are hardly clear.

A renewed role for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, one which strengthens Britain's position as the most important European defender of the peace of the Continent, could be a silver lining, some officials said. Further, if the loss of a quarter of the EU's combat power prompts new military spending by Germany and others, Europe could end up more secure, other current and former officials said.

But officials acknowledged that the vote created more uncertainty. "What Britain does matters, Britain is the biggest provider of security in Europe," said Jens Stoltenberg, NATO secretary-general. "It is a more unpredictable situation now than before."

The EU, long blocked by Britain from pursuing a larger defense role, is likely to renew a debate over creating a military headquarters or deploying its standing battle groups.

NATO officials are pushing for more cooperation with the EU, but warning against a "duplication of capabilities" such as the creation of a military headquarters. The EU, minus Britain, could be tempted to go its own way on security policy and move toward creation of a European Army.

The most immediate security challenge for Europe remains the threat of terrorism. The drive by the U.S. to get European powers to share more information on terrorist networks has involved a key role for the U.K., by far the most capable and well-funded intelligence service in Europe, officials said.

U.S. officials have pushed the importance of Europol, the European police agency, and its new counterterrorism center. They have leaned on the U.K. to have its intelligence services put more of their material on European terror threats into the database. The drive is now in doubt as EU and British officials will need to begin negotiating over Britain's access to Europol.

The British vote also threatens to overshadow two European summits, by the EU and NATO. "It doesn't look good for the West when one of the big players says 'we are done with this,' " said Ben Nimmo, a fellow with the Atlantic Council.

British officials made a flurry of calls after the vote to assure Europeans that the U.K. wouldn't back off its security obligations -- including serving as NATO's rapid-reaction force and providing a battle group to defend Eastern Europe.

U.K. Defense Secretary Michael Fallon called Mr. Stoltenberg, U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter and other allies.

While EU sanctions against Russia are set to be renewed for another six months, some nations, including Italy, Spain and Greece, are anxious to open a discussion of altering them. The U.K., according to current and former officials, has been the biggest supporter of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's hard line on sanctions, along with Poland and the Baltic states.

"The biggest blow is on the Russian sanctions," said Fabrice Pothier, a former NATO official and senior associate at the Rasmussen Global consultancy. "Sanctions policy is going to be weakened, because the U.K.'s voice will not be as big as we hoped."

--*Benoit Faucon, Paul Sonne and Laurence Norman contributed to this article*

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6. New Defense Plan for Europe

Wall Street Journal, June 27, Pg. A6 | Laurence Norman and Julian E. Barnes

BRUSSELS -- Days after the U.K. voted to exit the European Union, the bloc's foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, is set to present on Tuesday a plan to broaden European defense and security cooperation, in a bid to bolster Europe's ability to act independently.

Ms. Mogherini will present her proposals, the first Brussels effort to lay out Europe's global strategy in more than a decade, to EU leaders at a summit. Tuesday's Brussels meeting is the first since the U.K. on Thursday voted to exit the bloc, a process likely to take over two years.

The U.K. has long approached EU defense and security initiatives with ambivalence. While it has played a key role in crafting the bloc's foreign policy and is a critical provider of security and military assets for specific operations, the U.K. has resisted efforts to craft a unified EU military structure. It has pushed hard for European defense resources to be channeled through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which maintains a large network of command and control headquarters.

Ms. Mogherini's proposal, which she played a central role in crafting, seeks to strike a balance. While she underscores the importance of the EU working closely with NATO and of the EU's close diplomatic partnership with the U.S., she sets out the building blocks for an accumulation of European “hard power" that would allow the bloc to achieve what she calls strategic autonomy.

There is no direct push for an EU army or military headquarters -- both British bête noirs. However, there are ambitious calls for a buildup of shared military resources and planning and for increased spending on joint research and equipment produced by Europe's defense industry.

“In this fragile world, soft power is not enough: We must enhance our credibility in security and defense," reads a draft proposal viewed by The Wall Street Journal.

The proposal says the EU should be able to mobilize resources rapidly to assist a member state threatened or hit by a terror attack. Security and defense operations should be able to work alongside EU border guard units and other agencies to boost border protection and maritime security and to disrupt smuggling networks.

The plan calls for additional pooling of resources and more coordinated defense investment planning and EU-wide action to bolster the bloc's defense industry. The proposal says enhanced EU intelligence and surveillance is needed, including investments in drones and satellite communications.

NATO, the proposal says, “remains the primary framework for most member states." However, European “security and defense efforts should enable the EU to act autonomously while also contributing to and undertaking actions in cooperation with NATO."

The proposal says all the bloc's instruments, including security and defense operations should be able to deploy more quickly and flexibly. That also includes the EU's battlegroups, rapid response units which that were supposed to allow the EU to rapidly intervene in a crisis; British opposition means they have yet to be used.

The proposal also targets stronger planning and command structures. While there is no mention of an EU headquarters, the proposal does float the idea that a cluster of member states could craft more ambitious joint structures under the EU's so-called enhanced cooperation process.

Many of these plans build on existing capabilities. The EU already has 17 military and civilian missions outside its borders, including a year-old naval operation fighting people-smuggling in the Mediterranean and other missions for building up military, police and border management resources in Africa and Europe's east.

The bloc launched a successful maritime naval operation in 2008 that significantly reduced piracy off the Somali coast.

It has hastened the process for creating new operations during crises, and the bloc has long set goals to better coordinate its defense industry. However, the bloc has frequently fallen short of its security goals.

Ms. Mogherini's proposal also sets out thoughts on energy, environmental and security challenges further afield.

In one section that was closely debated by member states, the proposal says ties with Russia -- once considered a "strategic partner" -- now represent a "key strategic challenge." It also says a return to good ties depends on Russia respecting international law and ending its destabilization of Ukraine. But the proposal also seeks broader discussions on issues like climate change and maritime security, recognizing that the EU and its eastern neighbor are "interdependent."

The proposal also points to emerging challenges in Asia. In reference to the dispute between China and its neighbors over islands in the South China Sea, the paper says the EU is ready to help secure freedom of navigation and will stand firm with respect to international law.

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7. Brexit is Good News for Russia, but a Headache for NATO

Britain's exit from the EU will undercut its role as America's key ally in Europe, leaving the continent more divided and distracted -- just the way Putin likes it

ForeignPolicy.com (Report), June 26 | Dan De Luce and Paul McLeary

The Kremlin has spent years trying to create fissures within the NATO alliance and the European Union, but with little success. Now Britain's vote to leave the EU fulfills Putin's wish for a more divided Europe, one potentially preoccupied with its own disagreements while London's influence recedes.

"They are drinking copious amounts of vodka in the Kremlin today," Derek Chollet, a former senior advisor at the Pentagon, told Foreign Policy.

"What makes it depressing is that this was an unforced error," said Chollet, now at the German Marshall Fund. "Putin has been trying to force divisions in the West, but he actually hasn't been succeeding that well. This is a benefit to him without him having to do anything."

Russian politicians celebrated the vote, hoping it would sabotage the continent's resolve when it comes to enforcing the sanctions levied against Russia over its military intervention in Ukraine.

"Without Britain, there won't be anybody in the EU to defend sanctions against us so zealously," Sergey Sobyanin, the mayor of Moscow, wrote on Twitter.

Andrei Klimov, deputy chairman of the international affairs committee of the upper house of the Russian Parliament, told the New York Times on Friday that he doesn't "think the European Union will now have time to think about Ukraine or about sanctions."

Michael McFaul, a former U.S. ambassador to Russia, agreed. He tweeted Friday that "Putin benefits from a weaker Europe. UK vote makes EU weaker. It's just that simple."

The advocates of Britain's departure from the EU argued that the country would be able to reassert itself on the world stage without being weighed down by the European Union's bureaucracy or the need to send large amounts of money to Brussels each year.

But former senior U.S. officials and analysts say Britain will be weaker and more isolated as a result of the move.

The vote came just two weeks before a major NATO summit kicks off in Warsaw, Poland, that is supposed to refocus the alliance's attention on the growing threat posed by Russia. But Britain's departure from the European Union — and the specter of fraying unity across the continent — will hang over the meeting, and NATO leaders are already trying to steady nerves within the alliance over Thursday's referendum.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg issued a statement Friday insisting that the vote would not alter Britain's status in the alliance. As London "defines the next chapter in its relationship with the EU, I know that the United Kingdom's position in NATO will remain unchanged," Stoltenberg said.

Britain's importance as a strategic ally for the United States, as a power that could "punch above its weight," is partly based on its ability to exert influence over Europe's approach to national security and persuade other EU members to back Washington's tougher line from the war in Afghanistan to challenging Russia. That status will be undercut by the British electorate's decision to bail out of the EU, experts said.

The vote also could have a potentially significant knock-on effect, possibly stripping Britain of its nuclear arsenal and changing the strategic nuclear landscape of Europe.

A clear majority of voters in Scotland opposed leaving the EU, and Scottish leaders say they will hold a new referendum on whether Scotland should secede from the United Kingdom. If Scotland bolts, however, Britain would be forced to confront another problem with serious implications for European security: It would have no place to dock its nuclear-armed submarines.

Since the 1960s, the Royal Navy has parked its four Vanguard nuclear-armed submarines at Faslane in Scotland. There is no other facility in the United Kingdom capable of housing the vessels, so Scottish independence would force a stark choice: Lose the capability altogether, or spend at least a decade — and millions of pounds — building new port facilities for the vessels. If Britain were to lose its undersea atomic arsenal, the United States could be forced to rewrite its own nuclear strategy.

London's ambitious plans to expand its military spending over the next decade after years of deep cuts could be another casualty of the Brexit. If outside forecasts prove correct, Britain's economy could shrink by up to 6 percent, draining away funds that could have otherwise been devoted to the defense budget, which has fallen significantly in recent years. Military spending declined 8 percent between 2010 and 2015, with 31,000 service members cut from the force amid major spending cutbacks across the government.

"The U.K. has been one of this country's most important partners. It will be less willing and able to play that role," former U.S. diplomat Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, told reporters during a teleconference. "The net result is the special relationship will be that much less special."

Even before the referendum, Britain's status as a staunch and crucial military ally of Washington had faded in recent years. London pulled its combat troops out of Afghanistan in 2014, and the British Parliament rejected possible U.S.-led military strikes against the Syrian regime in August 2013.

Those changes were happening just as France — which for decades had been regarded as a high-maintenance partner for Washington — has taken on a more muscular role, showing a greater willingness to deploy its troops alongside American forces or to launch its own counterterrorism missions in Africa's Sahel region.

"When it comes to working on urgent policy crises, France has become the more activist, more engaged partner," Chollet said.

But London hasn't completely pulled back. British warplanes fly daily missions over Iraq, and the government has committed to supply one of four NATO battalions to be stationed in the Baltics next year. Analysts expect Britain to honor those commitments, but questions remain over what kind of foreign deployments a potentially more inward-looking British government may undertake in the future.

British and EU leaders now face the daunting task of hammering out the details of London's disentanglement, a time-consuming job that will probably crowd out other priorities, experts said.

Field Marshal Lord Bramall, a former head of the British Army, issued an appeal before the Brexit vote to stay in the EU, saying London's voice was needed to ensure a stable balance of power in the West. He argued that "a broken and demoralized Europe just across the Channel, lacking the practical influence of this country, would constitute a far greater threat to our future, indeed to the whole balance of power and equilibrium of the Western world, than having to continue to endure some irritating and unnecessary meddling from Brussels."

Britain's absence will be felt acutely in the European Union's burgeoning military force, designed to fill gaps in missions in areas of Africa and Eastern Europe where an overstretched NATO doesn't have a presence. While the U.K. plays only a small role in the program, planning in Brussels has "always been based on the idea that Britain would become an important contributor," said Christopher Chivvis, associate director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at RAND Corp.

Without the U.K.'s backing, the project "is for all intents and purposes no longer possible."

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8. Warsaw Summit Preview: NATO Weighs Deterrence Choices

Many Nations Have Their Own Agendas for the Summit

Defense News, June 27, Pg. 7 | Aaron Mehta

WASHINGTON — When NATO leaders converge on Warsaw, Poland, July 8 and 9 for the alliance's biennial summit, they will have plenty to discuss.

The summit, held at the city's National Stadium, will serve as both a coming-out party for Poland's ambitions to be a key NATO member and an opportunity for the member nations to ratify their goals and strategies two years after Russia's invasion of Ukrainian territory.

So what are countries looking for from Warsaw? Unsurprisingly, many nations are going in with their own agendas, driven primarily by regional focuses.

Norway, for example, is looking for a focus on the High North region that could be imperiled by Russian naval forces. While not a NATO member, Sweden's interests line up similarly. The US, meanwhile, wants to see a greater commitment to burden sharing, as previewed by Secretary of Defense Ash Carter in a June 20 speech.

"We're encouraging our fellow allies to do more as well," Carter said. "We've seen some progress from NATO allies on spending — since the 2-percent pledge made at the 2014 Wales Summit, the vast majority of allies have stopped making cuts, and most allies have also committed to at least small increases in defense budgets – but there's still more to do. And that will certainly be discussed in Warsaw as well."

But while local concerns will drive each country, there are some overarching themes that NATO observers are watching carefully.

The first is the need to project a strong, united NATO in the face of Russian military moves along its eastern border, an objective that Philip Breedlove, the recently retired four-star Army general who served as the top uniformed official in NATO, highlighted in June 8 comments at the Atlantic Council in Washington. The nations must "very demonstrably" talk about the unity of the alliance, in part by following through on commitments made at the 2014 Wales summit, Breedlove said. "We have almost completely, structurally, finished the work that Wales gave us," Breedlove said. "But we need to show sustainment in what we started" and not lose track of that progress.

For Adam Thomson, UK Permanent Representative to NATO since 2014, that means a focus on "modern deterrence," making it clear to Russia that invading NATO territory would be unwise without relying on a Cold Warstyle military buildup.

NATO "needs to be really clear that it is capable of meeting its treaty requirement to defend all its allies, and that requires Warsaw to set out both a model for modern deterrence and clear commitment to doing it," Thomson said in a May interview. "And I think NATO will do that at Warsaw."

While "modern deterrence" may be the buzzword, there is still room for more traditional measures. Perhaps the most solid deliverable expected at Warsaw is the announcement of which countries will be stationing troops as part of four new battalions deployed to Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. While NATO leaders agreed to the creation of those four units during a June meeting, details have been scarce.

For host nation Poland, the presence of NATO troops inside its border is the largest must-have coming out of the summit, said Witold Waszczykowski, Polish minister of foreign affairs, during a June 1 meeting with reporters in Warsaw. (Defense News, among other outlets, accepted travel and accommodations from the Polish government.) "We do not ask for privileges. We ask for equality. That's why, equality we can gain only by deployment of NATO troops on the territory of eastern flank," Waszczykowski said.

Another deliverable is likely to come in the form of greater NATO support for the "southern flank," in the form of aid to handle the flow of refugees flooding from the civil war in Syria. That appears likely to include NATO agreeing to use its fleet of E-3A AWACS surveillance planes to assist in that mission.

Evelyn Farkas, a former US deputy assistant secretary of defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia, said it is important to signal solidarity with non-NATO partners, including any aspirants for NATO membership.

In May, NATO foreign ministers signed off on the ascension protocol for Montenegro, clearing the path for it to become the 29th full partner of the alliance if the partner nations, as expected, ratify the agreement. (When that ratification, which has to happen within each nation's governing body, will happen is unclear, but no major roadblocks are expected.) Both Georgia and Ukraine have expressed an interest in NATO, despite their borders being in flux due to Russian activities. While stable borders are generally a requirement for NATO membership, Farkas believes the alliance should still move to include those nations in the future.

"Russia has de facto exercised a veto by occupying parts of those countries, it's now put a block on our efforts to integrate them with NATO. So we may need to get creative and come up with some other solutions," she said. "During the Cold War, Berlin was occupied even though we had Article 5 for Germany. So we clearly had some kind of carve-out for that."

However, Farkas does not anticipate movement in that direction to come at Warsaw.

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9. German minister says will visit Turkey base after snub
Agence France-Presse, June 26 | Deborah Cole

BERLIN -- Germany's defence minister said Sunday that she would personally visit an air base in Turkey after Ankara barred a German political delegation from making the trip next month.

Ursula von der Leyen told Bild am Sonntag newspaper that she would go to the Incirlik air base in southern Turkey used to launch coalition air raids against Islamic State (IS) jihadists in Syria.

She blasted a decision announced earlier this month by Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu that Germany's state secretary for defence Ralf Brauksiepe and other lawmakers would not be welcome at Incirlik for a scheduled July visit because it would be "inappropriate".

"I have never experienced anything like this. It goes without saying that the leadership of the defence ministry should be able to visit German soldiers in the field," she said.

"That is why I will be travelling to Incirlik in the coming days to discuss the situation on the ground with our soldiers."

A German defence ministry spokesman declined to provide further details on von der Leyen's travel plans.

The minister said she would also use her visit "to explain to Turkey what it means to have a military under parliamentary control".

"These are the same members of parliament who raised their hands for the Patriot mission of the German military to protect Turkey from Syrian missiles," she said, referring to a three-year deployment of NATO anti-missile systems in southern Turkey that ended last year.

Germany last December agreed to send Tornado surveillance jets and tanker aircraft to Incirlik to aid the multinational coalition fighting the IS group in Syria.

However Berlin angered NATO ally Turkey when its parliament passed a resolution this month calling the World War I killings of Armenians by Ottoman forces a "genocide."

Cavusoglu refrained from linking the government's denial of the visit with the genocide resolution, although German media reported that Turkey had said it blocked the visit because of the Armenia vote.

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ASIA/PACIFIC

10. Russia, China won't accept North Korea's nuclear, missile strategy

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), June 27 | Not Attributed

BEIJING -- The leaders of Russia and China have agreed that they will not accept North Korea's nuclear and missile strategy, but they reaffirmed their opposition to a possible deployment of an advanced U.S. missile defense system in South Korea, according to their joint statement Monday.

The statement was issued after Russian President Vladimir Putin held a summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping last Saturday in Beijing.

Last week, North Korea claimed it successfully test-launched an intermediate-range ballistic missile.

Separately, a North Korean nuclear envoy who visited Beijing last week said Pyongyang wouldn't return to the negotiating table on the country's nuclear weapons program.

In the joint statement, Putin and Xi said they agreed that the long-stalled six-party talks are the best way to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

"Both sides remain committed to achieving the goal of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and not accepting North Korea's nuclear and missile strategy," the Chinese-language statement said.

Putin and Xi also agreed that they would fully implement U.N. sanctions against North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.

However, both sides "strongly oppose" the possible deployment of a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery to South Korea.

In the wake of North Korea's fourth nuclear test and the launch of a long-range rocket earlier this year, South Korea and the United States started formal talks on deploying a THAAD battery to South Korea to better defend Seoul from Pyongyang's growing threats.

For South Korea, the decision to adopt the U.S. missile system was based on its national security interests to enhance its defense posture against North Korea's advances in nuclear and missile programs.

Russia and China have long voiced opposition to the deployment of a THAAD battery to South Korea, claiming that the U.S. missile shield may undermine the strategic balance in the region.

South Korea and the U.S. have dismissed the concerns, saying the THAAD system is defensive in nature and would only target North Korea.

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11. Top Chinese envoy in Vietnam as tension looms before court ruling
Reuters, June 27 | Martin Petty and Mai Nguyen

HANOI -- China's top diplomat arrived in Vietnam on Monday for a scheduled meeting to strengthen historically close relations, at a time when ties are strained by squabbles over the South China Sea.

The trip by State Councilor Yang Jiechi, who outranks the foreign minister, comes amid a Chinese public relations blitz to try to discredit a looming verdict by an international tribunal that could aggravate tensions if it undermines Beijing's vast claims to waters extending far into Southeast Asia.

Yang was due to co-chair a "steering committee" that aims to strengthen ties and ward-off disputes. He will make courtesy calls on the Vietnamese leadership later on Monday.

"We're glad to realize that the two nations' relationship over the time continues its positive development, despite some existing problems that need to be solved," Vietnam's Foreign Minister and deputy premier Pham Binh Minh said after greeting Yang.

China has said at least 47 countries have offered support for its refusal to recognize a high-profile case brought by the Philippines in 2013 to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague. A senior U.S. official last week voiced skepticism about that claim.

Chinese diplomats have written editorials in regional newspapers denouncing the Philippine case, which seeks clarification of parts of United Nations maritime law and is seen as a bold challenge, with scope for repercussions.

Experts say it is unlikely Yang would seek a sympathetic ear from Vietnam, which has trust issues with China and has recently grown closer to the Philippines.

Though Vietnam is not part of the Hague case, it stands to benefit from a positive ruling for Manila and has echoed its opposition to China's fortification of artificial islands, the conduct of its coastguard and perceived intrusions into Vietnam's exclusive economic zone.

Ha Hoang Hop, a Vietnamese academic who has advised the government, said there was "no hidden agenda" behind Yang's visit and there were no compromises to be made over the South China Sea.

The Hague ruling is expected in the coming months and there are concerns in the United States about how China could react should the verdict not work in its favor.

China and the United States have accused each other of trying to militarize a shipping route vital to the stability of the global economy.

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12. Malaysian plane intercepted by Indonesian fighter jets – official
Agence France-Presse, June 26 | M. Jegathesan

KUALA LUMPUR -- A Malaysian military transport plane was intercepted by two Indonesian jet fighters while flying a regular route over Indonesia's Natuna Islands, defence officials said Sunday.

The C-130 aircraft was flying from west Malaysia on Saturday towards the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah, a senior official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"That (flying over the Natuna Islands) is a regular route," the official said, adding that the C-130 continued its journey to Sabah despite the interception.

Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein confirmed the incident.

"Yes... the aircraft was intercepted by two Indonesian jets," he was quoted as saying by the Star online news portal.

The incident came two days after Indonesian President Joko Widodo visited the islands on a warship in an apparent show of force after clashes with Chinese fishing vessels in the area.

Unlike some of its Southeast Asian neighbours, Indonesia has no maritime disputes with China over reefs or islets in the South China Sea.

But Beijing's claims overlap Indonesia's exclusive economic zone -- waters where a state has the right to exploit resources -- around the Natunas.

Hishammuddin played down the incident, saying Malaysia and Indonesia enjoy close relations.

"I'm not worried as this is normal and it happens everywhere in the world. If there were any incidents between us, we can deal with each other diplomatically. We will not let any incident ruin our ties," he added.

The Natuna Islands are located in the middle of the South China Sea separating peninsular Malaysia and the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak on Borneo island.

In 2002 Indonesia lost a case against Malaysia at the International Court of Justice over Sipadan and Ligitan, two small islands in the Celebes Sea off Sabah state.

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13. Japan eyes de facto revision to SOFA on U.S. base workers
Jiji Press (Japan), June 26 | Not Attributed

TOKYO -- The Japanese government is looking at concluding a new accord with the United States on the definition of civilian base workers covered by the bilateral Status of Forces Agreement, following the murder of a woman in Okinawa Prefecture by such a worker, it was learned Sunday.

Japan hopes to highlight the envisaged accord as a de facto revision to SOFA, a step further than improving the implementation of SOFA.

With SOFA to be kept in place, however, it is uncertain whether the accord would satisfy government officials and residents in Okinawa who have called for a drastic revision to SOFA.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe suggested Wednesday that he sees the need to define more strictly the scope of civilian workers at U.S. military bases in Japan covered by SOFA. "It is ridiculous that a person like the suspect is protected by SOFA," Abe told reporters in Itoman, Okinawa.

A civilian worker at a U.S. military base in Okinawa was arrested in May for allegedly abandoning the body of a Japanese woman in Okinawa. The suspect, a former Marine, this month faced additional charges of murder and attempted rape.

Under Japan-U.S. SOFA, which governs the U.S. military presence in Japan, the civilian component of the U.S. armed forces in Japan is defined as those with U.S. citizenship who are employed by or work for U.S. bases and their dependents.

The suspect in the murder case had no direct employment relationship with the U.S. military, with a U.S. official saying he should not have been given special status under SOFA.

At their meeting in Singapore on June 4, Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani and U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter agreed to review the range of civilian base workers under SOFA.

In 2014, Japan and the United States agreed to conclude a SOFA-related supplementary agreement to enable Japanese environmental investigations on the premises of U.S. military bases in Japan. Abe regards the accord as an effective revision to SOFA.

Reducing the scope of civilian base workers under SOFA by striking the envisaged supplementary agreement would give Japan greater judicial jurisdiction over incidents involving Americans in Japan. "If the United States agrees to the proposed accord, it would be very meaningful," a government official said.

Still, prefectural government officials in Okinawa, which hosts the bulk of U.S. military installations in Japan, are pushing for a drastic revision to SOFA. "The understanding of U.S. servicemen that they are protected by SOFA can cause crimes," a senior official said.

According to the Defense Ministry, civilian workers at U.S. military bases and their dependents totaled 5,203 across Japan as of March 2013.

Under SOFA, the United States has the primary right to exercise jurisdiction over offenses by American servicemen and civilian workers arising from any act in the performance of official duty.

Even in off-duty offenses, the United States does not need to transfer U.S. suspects to Japanese custody before Japan indict them. But based on an accord for the improved implementation of SOFA, the United States is supposed to give sympathetic consideration to Japanese requests for pre-indictment handovers of suspects when serious crimes, such as murder, have been committed.

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14. India to get access to almost 99% of US defence technologies, says Obama administration official
Press Trust of India, June 26 | Not Attributed

WASHINGTON -- India will be the only country outside the US' formal treaty allies that will gain access to almost 99 per cent of the latest American defence technologies after being recognised as a "Major Defence Partner", a senior Obama administration official has said.

"India (now) enjoys access to (defence) technologies that is on par with our treaty allies. That is a very unique status. India is the only other country that enjoys that status outside our formal treaty allies," the official told PTI explaining what "Major Defence Partner" status means for India.

Earlier this month, after a meeting between US President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House, the US, in a joint statement, recognised India as a "Major Defence Partner".

"We were looking for something unique. This language you would not find in any arms transfer legislation or any of our existing policies. This is new guidance and new language that is intended to reflect the unique things that we have done with India under our defence partnership," the senior administration official said.

"This is intended to solidify the India-specific forward-leaning policies for approval that the (US) President and (Defense) Secretary (Ashton) Carter...and our export control system have implemented in the last eight years," the official said.

Under this recognition India would receive license-free access to a wide range of dual-use technologies in conjunction with steps that New Delhi has committed to take to advance its export control objectives.

Acknowledging that the impression in New Delhi is that India is not getting access to the kind of technology it needs from the US, the official said it is a constant source of discussion.

"(In reality), less than one per cent of all exports (requests) are denied (to India). They are not denied because of India. They are denied because of global US licensing policies. We do not share certain technologies with anybody in the world," the official asserted.

The perception in India that the denial of such technologies is reflective of the India-US relationship is far from the truth, the official said.

According to the official, India being recognised as a "Major Defence Partner" is something that "puts it on par with our treaty allies".

Inside the American bureaucratic system, such a recognition removes a number of major export control hurdles for India.

The category of "Major Defence Partner" was created specifically for India, observed Ashley Tellis, of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a top American think-tank.

"It was meant to recognise that although India will not be an alliance partner of the United States, the administration seeks to treat it as such for purposes of giving it access to advanced technologies of the kind that are reserved for close US allies," Tellis told PTI.

"The US expects that bilateral defence ties will only grow in the years ahead, that India and the United States will continue to work together especially regarding maritime security, that India will eventually be admitted to global nonproliferation regimes, and that it will sign the foundational agreements," he said in response to a question.

"As these developments materialise, India's access to US technology will also increase, and the 'Major Defence Partner' moniker is intended to signal to both the outside world and to the US bureaucracy that oversees licensing that India is viewed as a unique collaborator and will be treated as such where access to advanced technologies are concerned," Tellis said.

Calling India a "Major Defence Partner" is "more a term of art than a technical designation", noted Richard M Rossow, Wadhwani Chair in US India Policy Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, another top American think-tank.

"It certainly captures what is emerging as a unique relationship, exhibited by programs such as the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) and the establishment of a dedicated 'India Rapid Reaction Cell' inside the Pentagon. Neither exists for a country other than India," he said.

"But the term 'Major Defence Partner' does not automatically trigger a specific process or program in the US system. Our two countries are feeling their way around the contours of our defence relationship," Rossow told PTI.

"India desires advanced US technology today, while the US would like more clarity on the specific operations India may be willing to undertake in the future to contribute to regional security. It is a process that has seen great progress, which we hope will carry over into the next US administration," Rossow said in response to a question.

Over the last decade the defence trade between India and the US has increased from being almost non-existent to more than USD 14 billion. This is expected to increase manifold as India embarks on a major defence modernisation drive.

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MIDEAST

15. Iraqi special forces share treasured possessions

Associated Press, June 27 | Susannah George

FALLUJAH, Iraq — Sgt. Ahmed Abdelaziz, with Iraq's special forces, has been almost continually deployed fighting the Islamic State group ever since the militants overran nearly a third of Iraq in the summer of 2014. Now he's on the front lines of Fallujah, a city that was declared "fully liberated" on Sunday by the commander leading the fight against IS.

Abdelaziz has with him what he always brings into battle: a photo of his brother.

It's not a smiling family portrait. It is a picture on his mobile phone of his brother Saad's body among hundreds killed in a massacre carried out by the jihadis after they captured the military's Camp Speicher base in 2014. At the time, IS fighters killed more than 1,000 captured soldiers at the base, outside the city of Tikrit, north of Baghdad.

At first, Abdelaziz hadn't been sure of his brother's fate, but his worst fears were confirmed when IS released a video of the massacre and he recognized Saad in it. On his phone, he flipped through a series of stills from the video, saying the grisly images are reminders of his purpose in the fight.

Adding to a string of territorial victories against IS over the past year, Iraqi fighters on Sunday entered the last IS-held neighborhood of Fallujah and declared the city "fully liberated."

"The fight in Fallujah is over," the head of the counterterrorism forces leading the operation, Lt. Gen. Abdul-Wahab al-Saadi, said on Iraqi state TV, surrounded by flag-waving soldiers. The victory marked a new stage in a grueling, more than monthlong operation. Al-Saadi said his troops would now start clearing the bombs planted on Fallujah's streets and in houses by the retreating militants.

As the fight against IS in Iraq enters its third year, the long back-to-back deployments are wearing many units in the country's fractured military thin. The mounting casualties among Iraqi forces have made the fight increasingly personal for those who remain.

In a unit stationed nearby in southern Fallujah, Sgt. Ahmed Kamel, 26, said he also brings the memory of lost loved ones to the fight with him.

On his right arm is the name of his brother Saadi tattooed in English cursive script. Kamel's brother was killed by the Mahdi army, a Shiite militia run by powerful cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, in 2008. Kamel's right arm bears the name of a fallen comrade: Namar. He died fighting the Islamic State group.

At positions on the operation's front lines, Iraqi troops carry a variety religious objects and good luck charms into battle.

"Most people in Iraq, they just have faith in God and they don't feel like they need things like this," said 1st Sgt. Muayd Saad, explaining why some of his friends who aren't in the military don't understand why his considers the watch his wife gave him on their anniversary to be good luck.

"In the whole fight against IS, I have never taken it off, not even to sleep," he said.

Stationed at the nearby Camp Tariq, Pvt. Mustafa Muhammed Saadoun, 21, wears a wolf's tooth on a necklace. He says the charm makes him stronger and less fearful.

First Sgt. Malik Jaber keeps a strip of green fabric from the revered Imam Abbas shrine in Karbala tied to the shoulder of his body armor. He says he credits the holy object with saving his life when the Special Forces were fighting IS in Beiji, the central Iraqi town that is also home to a key oil refinery.

"I touched this cloth and I prayed and that's when the airstrike hit," Jaber says. The airstrike by the U.S.-led coalition took out the small IS unit that that had him and a dozen other Iraqi troops pinned down inside a house.

"This time it will keep me safe again," Jaber said, "God willing."

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16. Multiple suicide bombings kill five in eastern Lebanon
Agence France-Presse, June 27 | Layal Abou Rahal

BEIRUT -- A string of suicide bombings early Monday killed at least five people in a Lebanese village near the volatile border with war-ravaged Syria.

The attack came just hours after the Islamic State group on Sunday claimed responsibility for a suicide attack that killed seven soldiers on Jordan's border with Syria.

Monday's deadly attack struck Al-Qaa, a predominantly Christian village nestled in a hilly border area shaken by violence since Syria's conflict erupted in 2011.

At least four suicide blasts hit the village before dawn, a military source told AFP.

"The first attacker knocked on one of the homes in the village, but after the resident became suspicious, he blew himself up," the source said.

He said three other suicide attackers detonated their own explosives as people began gathering to treat the wounded.

An AFP correspondent in the village said security forces had cordoned off the site of the blasts, which lies on a main road linking the Syrian town of Al-Qusayr across the border to Lebanon's eastern Bekaa valley.

The road cuts through a residential area in the centre of Al-Qaa, and the explosions took place less than 100 meters (yards) from the village church.

"Al-Qaa is the gateway to the rest of Lebanon, and here we stopped a plan for a much bigger explosion," said Al-Qaa mayor Bashir Matar.

He confirmed that the second and third suicide attackers detonated their explosives "as people gathered to treat the wounded."

"We chased the fourth attacker and shot at him, and he blew himself up," Matar said, adding that five villagers had been killed in the attack.

George Kettaneh of the Lebanese Red Cross told AFP the blast had left "at least eight killed including three suicide bombers."

He said 15 other people were wounded, including some in critical condition.

A statement from Lebanon's army said at least four soldiers were wounded in the string of attacks, which the country's national news agency reported took place at 10 minute intervals.

Al-Qaa is one of several border posts separating Lebanon and war-torn Syria.

Al-Qaa's residents are mostly Christian, but one district called Masharia Al-Qaa is home to Sunni Muslims.

And displaced Syrians fleeing the war next door have set up an informal camp adjacent to the village.

The border area has been rocked by clashes, shelling, and suicide attacks since Syria's conflict erupted in March 2011.

Suicide blasts in the area have typically targeted checkpoints or military installations and rarely include more than one attacker.

But blasts in densely-populated areas in Beirut throughout 2013 and most recently in November have been much deadlier.

On November 12, more than 40 people were killed in twin suicide bombings claimed by the Islamic State group in a southern Beirut neighbourhood.

IS late Sunday claimed responsibility for a blast earlier this week that left seven Jordanian soldiers dead and 13 others wounded, according to the jihadist-linked news agency Amaq.

Quoting an unnamed source, the Amaq statement said Tuesday's attack "was carried out by an Islamic State fighter."

Lebanon's army has fought off jihadist factions along the frontier and has sought to clamp down on local cells operating in the area.

In August 2014, the army clashed with the IS and Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, in the border town of Arsal.

As they withdrew, IS and Al-Nusra kidnapped 30 Lebanese soldiers and policemen, 16 of whom were released after nearly 18 months of negotiations.

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17. Israel and Turkey Agree to Resume Full Diplomatic Ties
New York Times, June 27, Pg. A8 | Isabel Kershner

JERUSALEM -- Israel and Turkey agreed on Sunday to resume full diplomatic relations, ending a bitter, six-year rift between the once-close regional allies, according to Israeli and Turkish officials.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel was scheduled to announce the deal in Rome on Monday, according to the Israeli official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity from Rome because the accord had not yet been formally made public. The Turkish government planned to make a parallel announcement in Ankara.

The two countries fell out after a deadly confrontation in 2010 between Israeli commandos and Turkish activists on a passenger vessel that tried to breach Israel's naval blockade of the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian coastal territory that is under the control of Hamas, the Islamic militant group.

The ship, the Mavi Marmara, was part of a flotilla carrying aid to Gaza when Israeli naval commandos rappelled onto the ship's deck and killed nine activists after being met with violent resistance. A 10th activist later died of his wounds.

Negotiating teams for the two countries met in Rome over the weekend.

Mr. Netanyahu left for Rome on Sunday, and was also scheduled to meet there with Secretary of State John Kerry and Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy. Mr. Netanyahu said those meetings would focus on regional matters, including relations with the Palestinians, as well as security and other concerns.

Reconciliation between Israel and Turkey, two important allies of the United States, has long been an American interest as Washington confronts civil war in Syria and broader instability in the region.

Turkey was once Israel's closest friend in the Muslim world, and the two countries still share many strategic interests, including containing Iran.

Before leaving for Rome, Mr. Netanyahu responded to criticism from the families of two Israeli soldiers whose remains are being held by Hamas in Gaza, as well as relatives of one of two Israeli civilians being held captive by Hamas.

Turkey maintains close political ties with Hamas, and over the weekend President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Khaled Meshal, the exiled political chief of Hamas, in Istanbul, according to the official Anadolu Agency, which quoted presidential sources.

The families have demanded that any agreement with Turkey include the return of the captives as well as the remains of the soldiers.

Speaking at the start of his weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem on Sunday morning, Mr. Netanyahu said, "We are continuing our constant efforts, both open and in secret, to bring back to Israel Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin, may their memories be blessed, and also the two Israelis being held in Gaza."

He was referring to two soldiers who were killed in the 2014 war in Gaza by name, and to Avera Mengistu, an Israeli Jew of Ethiopian descent, and another Israeli citizen from a Bedouin town in the Negev desert, who has not been officially named. Both civilians crossed into Gaza of their own accord, without authorization.

The Israeli official in Rome said Mr. Erdogan had agreed to a document separate from the main accord that would instruct the relevant Turkish agencies to help resolve the issue of the Israelis missing in Gaza.

Many of the terms of the deal between Israel and Turkey are similar to those announced in December, when officials said a preliminary understanding had been reached. Israel is to pay about $20 million into a compensation fund for the families of those killed on the Mavi Marmara. Turkey, in turn, is to drop criminal charges it had filed against Israeli officers.

Israel also expects the Turkish authorities to prevent Hamas operatives in Turkey from orchestrating attacks against Israel. According to the Turkish official, Turkey will be allowed to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza and invest in infrastructure projects in Gaza and the West Bank.

Israel and Turkey will return ambassadors to each other's capitals and will discuss building a pipeline to bring natural gas from Israel to Turkey.

Yuval Steinitz, Israel's minister of national infrastructure, energy and water, said that Israel and Turkey had "an interest in preventing Syria from turning into an Iranian military base" and that Israel was not easing up on Hamas by reaching an agreement with Turkey.

"Certainly we are not conceding anything that is vital to our defense or security," Mr. Steinitz told Israel Radio.

It has been more than three years since President Obama pressed Mr. Netanyahu to call Mr. Erdogan, then the prime minister of Turkey, to apologize for the Marmara episode. That telephone call, at the end of a 2013 visit by Mr. Obama to Israel, was supposed to clear the way for reconciliation, but there were many false starts as Israel and Turkey failed to agree on terms.

--*Ceylan Yeginsu contributed reporting from Istanbul*

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18. Yemen clashes intensify as Ban pushes peace
Agence France-Presse, June 26 | Fawaz al-Haidari

ADEN -- Fighting between Yemeni government forces and Shiite rebels killed 41 people on several fronts Sunday, as UN chief Ban Ki-moon urged the rival factions in Kuwait to accept a peace plan.

UN sponsored talks between the Iran-backed Huthi rebels and the government of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi have failed to achieve a breakthrough since starting in the Gulf emirate on April 21.

The Huthis and allied forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh have seized control of large parts of the impoverished country since 2014 and still control swathes of territory including the capital Sanaa.

UN special envoy Ould Cheikh Ahmed has repeatedly urged both sides to make concessions to end the conflict, which has cost more than 6,400 lives since March 2015 and displaced 2.8 million people.

But the clashes raged on Sunday, with the rebels pressing ahead with attempts to advance towards the strategic Al-Anad airbase, in the southern province of Lahj, a military official said.

The rebels and their allies captured the area of Qubaita, on the frontier between Lahj and Taez province.

Warplanes from the Saudi-led coalition that backs Hadi's government killed 11 rebels in Qubaita and Kirsh, the official said.

Also along the frontier between Lahj and Taez, five rebels and three government soldiers died in clashes triggered by a rebel attempt to advance in the Waziya area, said a loyalist militia source.

Six other soldiers were killed in clashes in the flashpoint city of Taez, where rebels attacked an army base, a military official said.

Meanwhile, nine rebels and seven soldiers were killed in the past 24 hours in clashes in northern Yemen, after rebels attacked loyalists in Nahm, northeast of the Sanaa, a military official said.

Clashes have continued despite a UN-brokered ceasefire that entered into effect on April 11 and paved the way for the peace talks in Kuwait.

In the Gulf emirate on Sunday, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon appealed to the warring parties to accept a roadmap for peace and quickly reach a comprehensive settlement to the 15-month-old conflict.

The peace roadmap proposed by Ould Cheikh Ahmed calls for the formation of a unity government and the withdrawal and disarmament of the rebels.

"I ask both delegations to work seriously with my special envoy to agree to a roadmap of principles... and quickly reach a comprehensive agreement," Ban told a joint meeting of the negotiators.

Ban also urged "the delegations to prevent any further deterioration of the situation, and to show the responsibility and flexibility required to arrive at a comprehensive agreement ending the conflict."

The Yemeni government insists the rebels withdraw from all territory they have seized since 2014 and hand back control of state institutions ahead of any political settlement.

The Huthis for their part are demanding an agreement on a consensus president and unity government before signing any deal on military and security issues.

Ban said the international community wants the conflict to end and Yemen return to the transitional process before the war.

The UN chief also warned the humanitarian situation in Yemen is alarming with scarcity of basic food and the economic conditions have deteriorated.

Ahead of the meeting, Ban held talks with Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, as well as the Gulf country's prime minister and foreign minister.

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AFRICA

19. Libya PM says only united military can defeat Islamic State
Agence France-Presse, June 26 | Mohamad Ali Harissi

TRIPOLI -- The head of Libya's unity government said Sunday that only a united military bringing together all the country's armed factions would be able to defeat the Islamic State group.

"We are convinced that the only way to end this organisation (IS) is through a united military command that brings together all Libyans from every region of the country," prime minister-designate Fayez al-Sarraj told AFP in a written response to questions.

He also for the first time said his forces were receiving "limited assistance" from foreign countries, but did not name them.

Forces loyal to Sarraj's UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) have been fighting since mid-May to oust IS from Sirte, 450 kilometres (280 miles) east of the capital Tripoli.

Backed by the international community, the GNA set up base in Tripoli at the end of March but has struggled to assert its control over all of Libya.

It has support from some military units and armed groups mainly from western Libya.

But forces based in eastern Libya, including local militias and units of the national army loyal to a controversial general, Khalifa Haftar, have not joined with pro-GNA fighters in the battle against IS.

Loyalist fighters made significant early advances in the battle to take Sirte, but the offensive has slowed in the face of a fierce IS counter-attack.

Sarraj said a key reason was care that pro-GNA forces were taking for some 30,000 civilians estimated to still be inside the city.

"The slowdown in the advance of pro-government forces is due to our concern for the security of civilians who IS has not hesitated to use as human shields," he said.

"Victory is only a matter of time. We hope it will come very soon," Sarraj said.

Libya descended into chaos after the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that ousted and killed strongman Moamer Kadhafi, with the country awash in weapons and rival factions vying for power.

IS took advantage of the chaos to seize control of Sirte, Kadhafi's hometown, in June last year.

Sarraj said IS was able to gain a foothold in Libya due to "a succession of errors these last five years, particularly the international community's refusal to complete its assistance to Libya in the face of its post-conflict challenges".

Despite widespread public opposition to a foreign military intervention, Sarraj said he would be willing to accept more help from abroad in battling IS.

"There is limited assistance -- expertise and logistics -- and we have said in the past that we are ready to accept the help and support of brotherly and friendly countries," he said.

But he added that any assistance would need to be provided "in the framework of a request by the GNA and in coordination with it, in order to preserve national sovereignty."

As well as battling IS, the GNA is struggling to revive an economy devastated by years of conflict and the collapse of Libya's oil industry.

"All we can do is work, by all means possible, to bring our country out of these crises. But there is no magic wand, all we can do is try," Sarraj said.

"I am confident that we can overcome this challenge but if one day I lose that faith, I will not stay one more minute," he said.

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20. Nigerian army says it freed over 5,000 people held by Boko Haram
Reuters, June 26 | Alexis Akwagyiram

LAGOS -- Nigeria's army on Sunday said it had freed more than 5,000 people held by the Islamist militant group Boko Haram during an operation over the weekend in the northeast of the country.

Nigeria's army has over the last year, sometimes aided by troops from neighboring countries, recaptured most of the territory that was lost to the group, which has waged a seven-year insurgency aimed at creating an Islamic state in the remote northeast.

The army said troops, supported by members of a grassroots security force, conducted raids in 15 villages on Sunday, during which they "killed six Boko Haram terrorists and wounded several others".

"The troops also liberated over 5,000 persons held hostage by Boko Haram terrorists," it said in an emailed statement. Reuters could not immediately independently verify the freeing of the hostages, in part due to the remoteness of the area in which the military operation took place.

More than 15,000 people have been killed and 2 million displaced in Nigeria and neighboring Chad, Niger and Cameroon during Boko Haram's insurgency.

However, the jihadist group, which last year pledged loyalty to Islamic State, still regularly stages suicide bombings, mainly in crowded areas such as markets and places of worship.

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AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN

21. The Theorist in the Palace
President Ashraf Ghani is an expert on failed states. Can he save his country from collapse?
New Yorker (Print Edition), July 4 | George Packer

Ashraf Ghani, the President of Afghanistan, wakes up before five every morning and reads for two or three hours. He makes his way daily through an inch-thick stack of official documents. He reads proposals by applicants competing for the job of mayor of Herat and chooses the winner. He reads presentations by forty-four city

engineers for improvements to Greater Kabul. He has been known to write his own talking points and do his own research on upcoming visitors. Before meeting the Australian foreign minister, he read the Australian government's white paper on foreign aid. He read four hundred pages of the Senate Intelligence Committee's torture report on the day of its release, and the next day he apologized to General John Campbell, the American commander in Afghanistan, for having not quite finished it. He reads books on the transition from socialism to capitalism in Eastern Europe, on the Central Asian enlightenment of a thousand years ago, on modern warfare, on the history of Afghanistan's rivers. He lives and works in the Arg—a complex of palaces inside a nineteenth-century fortress in central Kabul—where books, marked up in pencil, lie open on desks and tables.

Two decades ago, Ghani lost most of his stomach to cancer. He has to eat small portions of food, such as packets of dates, half a dozen times a day. He sometimes takes digestive breaks, resting—and reading—on a narrow bed in an alcove behind his office in Gul Khana Palace. Or he sits with a book in his favorite spot, under a chinar tree in the garden of Haram Sarai Palace, where the library of the late King Zahir is preserved. During the Presidency of Ghani's predecessor, Hamid Karzai, the library was a dusty pile of antique volumes. After Ghani took office, in September, 2014, he organized the royal collection. Whereas Karzai filled the palace with visitors and received petitioners during meals, Ghani often eats alone. After twelve years in power, Karzai and his family walked away with hundreds of millions of dollars from Afghan and international coffers. Ghani's net worth, according to his declaration of assets, is about four million dollars. It consists largely of his house, on four acres in western Kabul, and his collection of seven thousand books.

A trained anthropologist who spent years doing field work for the World Bank, Ghani has been in and out of the Afghan government ever since the overthrow of the Taliban, in 2001. His abiding concern has been how to create viable institutions in poor countries overrun with violence, focussing on states that can't enforce laws, create fair markets, collect taxes, provide services, or keep citizens safe. In 2006, Ghani and his longtime collaborator, a British human-rights lawyer named Clare Lockhart, started a consultancy, the Institute for State Effectiveness, in Washington, D.C. Two years later, they published "Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World." It describes the core functions of a state and suggests such measures as tapping the expertise of citizens in building institutions. By then, the theme was no longer a technical subject. The chaos in Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan threatened global security.

Theorists are rarely given such a dramatic chance to put their ideas into practice. Afghanistan has been at war ever since the Soviet invasion of 1979, when Ghani was a thirty-year-old doctoral candidate at Columbia University. Most of the country, including several provincial capitals, is threatened by the Taliban, even as the insurgency devolves into a network of narco-criminal enterprises. In sixty per cent of Afghanistan's three hundred and ninety-eight districts, state control doesn't exist beyond a lonely government building and a market. Al Qaeda and the Islamic State have established a presence in the east. Afghanistan can't police its borders, and its neighbors give sanctuary and assistance to insurgents. (In May, Mullah Mansour, the Taliban leader, was killed by an American drone strike while driving from Zahedan, Iran, where he reportedly consulted with Iranian officials, to his base, in Quetta, Pakistan, with a fraudulent Pakistani passport.) Afghanistan's finances depend on foreign aid and opium. Corruption is endemic. After the departure of a hundred and twenty-seven thousand foreign troops, in 2014, the economy collapsed, unemployment soared, and hundreds of thousands of Afghans abandoned the country. Ghani is the elected President of a failed state.

A slight man with a short gray beard and deep-set eyes under a bald dome, Ghani bears a resemblance to Gandhi, except that he does not seem like a man at peace. He hunches over and winces, head tilted, and when he gestures he keeps his elbows pinned to his sides. He laughs at odd moments, and he can't control his temper. Young loyalists

surround him, but he has alienated powerful allies. Isolated in the Arg, Ghani works killingly long hours and buries himself in projects that should be left to subordinates. “Because he’s been an academic for a very long time, he just can’t help a mode of working that requires him to study and analyze every problem,” a senior Afghan official said. “If he asked for a file on garbage collection in Kabul, and he received a binder of five hundred pages, he would finish it that night—and then take copious notes.”

Whereas Karzai talked warmly with guests for hours, leaving everyone happy, Ghani disdains small talk, and visitors come away feeling intimidated or slighted. Once, in Kabul, the President scheduled fifteen minutes for Ismail Khan, a powerful warlord from western Afghanistan. Jelani Popal, one of Ghani’s closest advisers, told him, “See him for as long as he wants or don’t see him at all—but you can’t spend just fifteen minutes.” Ghani stood firm: the corrupt and brutal emir of Herat was worth exactly a quarter of an hour.

Ghani is a visionary technocrat who thinks twenty years ahead, with a deep understanding of what has destroyed his country and what might yet save it. “He’s incorruptible,” the senior official said. “He wants to transform the country. And he can do it. But it seems as if everything is arrayed against him.” Ghani is the kind of reformer that the American government desperately needed as a partner during the erratic later years of Karzai’s rule. Yet he has few admirers in the State Department, and in Kabul the élite don’t hide their contempt. They call Ghani an arrogant micromanager and say that he has no close friends, no feel for politics—that he is the leader of a country that exists only in his own mind. Ghani is Afghanistan’s Jimmy Carter.

Many observers don’t expect Ghani to complete his term, which ends in 2019, and 2016 is described as a year of national survival. “This is the year of living dangerously,” Scott Guggenheim, an American economic adviser to Ghani, said. “He’ll either make it or he won’t.”

The stone walls of the Arg are fortified with concrete blast walls and checkpoints manned by armed guards. Outside, barricades and razor wire divide Kabul’s streets into the private armed encampments where Afghan élites and foreign diplomats live. The public must steer clear, and the city is choked with traffic. When it rains, the rutted streets flood; when fighting in the north cuts power lines, the streets go dark. Periodically, a suicide bomber detonates a murderous payload. American officials no longer risk driving—from dawn to dark, helicopters clatter over the U.S. Embassy compound. Smelling weakness, Afghan politicians scheme in lavish compounds built with stolen money, each convinced that he should be inside the Arg. In the mountains around Kabul, the Taliban are just a few miles away.

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“My father’s mother really had a profound influence on me,” Ghani said. “She literally began her day with an hour of reading. But the most fundamental impact was education.” We were seated in facing chairs, in a ceremonial room on the second floor of Gul Khana Palace. The soaring walls and pillars were of green onyx, the doors of inlaid walnut. Ghani, by contrast, looked like a well-off shopkeeper, in a traditional dark-gray shalwar kameez and a black coat, conveying that he is a native son and drawing a firm line between his current life and the decades he spent in American universities and with global institutions.

In 2011, Ghani and his daughter, Mariam—an artist who lives in Brooklyn—published a pamphlet titled “Afghanistan: A Lexicon,” a mini-encyclopedia that chronicles cycles of reform, reaction, and chaos that have recurred in the country. The opening entry is on Amanullah, Afghanistan’s king from 1919 to 1929. Amanullah was the first great modernizer: he oversaw the writing of a constitution, improved education, encouraged freedoms for

women, and planned an expansion of the capital. He also fought to make Afghanistan's foreign policy independent of Britain. But Amanullah offended key elements of society, including the mullahs, and he was overthrown by tribal leaders. Although Amanullah "accomplished a remarkable amount," Ashraf and Mariam Ghani wrote, he "did not succeed in permanently changing Afghanistan, since his ultimate failure to forge a broad political consensus for his reforms left him vulnerable to rural rebellion." Rapid modernization undone by conservative revolt became both template and warning for Afghan progressives, "who have returned again and again to his unfinished project, only to succumb to their own blind spots."

Ghani comes from a prominent Pashtun family. His paternal grandfather, a military commander, helped install King Nadir, who assumed power shortly after Amanullah's overthrow, in 1929. Ghani's father was a senior transport official under Nadir's son, King Zahir, who reigned for forty years. Ghani was born in 1949. He grew up in Kabul's old city, spending weekends and vacations riding horses and hunting on the ancestral farm, forty miles south. He was teased at school—he was undersized, and sometimes bent over like an old man—but he impressed classmates with his seriousness. In 1966, his junior year of high school, he travelled to America as an exchange student. At his new school, in Oregon, Ghani won a student-council seat reserved for a foreigner. "The first council meeting, we made some simple decisions," he said. "Lo and behold, the next week they were implemented, because the council had access to money." The experience shaped his thinking about development: "You can get together, you can talk as much as you want, but if there's not a decision-making process—that's where democracy really matters."

In 1973, Ghani received a political-science degree from the American University of Beirut, where he fell in love with Rula Saade, a Lebanese Christian. They got engaged, and in 1974, after Ghani returned to Kabul to teach, his prospective father-in-law paid him a visit. "You're going to end up in politics and you're going to ruin my daughter's life," Rula's father said. Ghani replied, not quite truthfully, "I'm totally committed to being an academic." (The couple married in 1975, and, in addition to Mariam, they have a son, Tarek.)

In July, 1973, the monarchy was overthrown by the King's cousin Daoud, who became Afghanistan's first President. Daoud initially aligned himself with the Communists and, according to the Ghani "Lexicon," he "reiterated the flawed model of modernization imposed from above." In 1978, Communist troops shot Daoud to death as he tried to hide behind a pillar in Gul Khana Palace. Assassination followed assassination until the end of 1979, when the Soviets invaded and the jihad began. The Arg is haunted by its murdered occupants.

In 1977, Ghani and his family left Afghanistan, and he didn't live there again for a quarter century. At Columbia, he completed a dissertation in cultural anthropology. "Production and Domination: Afghanistan, 1747-1901" analyzes the nation's difficulty in building a centralized state in terms of its economic backwardness. The writing is almost impenetrable: "By focusing on movements of concomitant structures, I have attempted to isolate the systemic relations among the changing or non-changing elements that combine to form a structure." The author moves between clouds of abstraction and mounds of data—nineteenth-century irrigation methods in Herat, kinship networks in Pashtun financial systems—without readily discernible priorities.

In the eighties, Ghani taught at Berkeley and at Johns Hopkins, and in 1991 he became an anthropologist for the World Bank, based in Washington, D.C. Travelling half the year, he became an expert on finance in Russia, China, and India. "He really had a moral purpose—solving poverty for real people," Clare Lockhart said. "When he arrived in capital cities, he'd go to the markets to see what people were buying and selling, then he'd go out to the provinces and villages. He'd interview groups of miners." Such field work was unusual for a World Bank official. James Wolfensohn, who became president of the bank in 1995, shifted its emphasis from simply lending money to poor countries to attempting to reduce poverty. He wanted to know why African and Latin American countries that

followed the bank's liberalization policies remained poor. The answer had to do with corruption, weak institutions, and ill-conceived practices by donors. Wolfensohn ordered a review of the bank's programs, and Ghani submitted many blistering critiques, which made him unpopular with his colleagues.

Meanwhile, he was preparing for a future in Afghanistan. In 1997, with the Taliban controlling most of the country, a Columbia graduate student interviewed Ghani at the World Bank. "When we get peace in Afghanistan, we'll go to New Zealand to learn best practices for raising sheep," Ghani said. "We'll go to Switzerland and study hydroelectric projects." Afghanistan—mountains, deserts, ungoverned spaces—has always seemed to offer a blank slate for utopian dreamers: British imperialists, hippie travellers, Communists, Islamists, international do-gooders. Alex Thier, who worked for the U.N. in Afghanistan in the nineties and, later, with Ghani in Kabul, described him as an "N.G.O.-style revolutionary, as if he grew up in a cadre of the World Bank rather than in the Communist Party." To be a visionary is, in some ways, to be depersonalized, to refuse to see what's in front of one's face.

On September 11, 2001, Ghani was at his desk in Washington, and he knew immediately that everything was about to change for Afghanistan. He drafted a five-step plan for a political transition to a broad-based Afghan government that could be held accountable for rebuilding the country; he warned against funding and arming the warlords who had brought Afghanistan to ruin and the Taliban to power. During the American-led war against the Taliban, a small group of experts—including Lockhart, the Afghanistan scholar Barnett Rubin, and the Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi, then the U.N. special envoy for Afghanistan—met at Ghani's house outside Washington. That December, the group's work influenced the Bonn Agreement, which mapped steps toward representative rule, while leaving unresolved the conflict between Ghani's vision of a modern state and the interests of regional power brokers.

Six months later, Karzai became Afghanistan's leader. Ghani's first job in the new administration was to coördinate and track foreign aid. He believed that Afghans needed to set their own priorities for development rather than be at the mercy of the conflicting agendas of foreign countries and international agencies. Some Afghans and Westerners saw Ghani, after decades in the U.S., as a foreigner in his own land. But he is a prickly nationalist who would have been an egghead anywhere. He had a particular animus toward Western aid officials who had plenty of money and power but scant knowledge or humility. He once dressed down a contingent from the U.S. Agency for International Development for their incompetence. Ghani was among the first to foresee that a flood of foreign aid could enrich foreign contractors and turn officials corrupt while doing little for ordinary Afghans.

With Hanif Atmar, the Minister of Rural Development, Ghani created the National Solidarity Program—grants in amounts of twenty thousand to sixty thousand dollars for twenty-three thousand Afghan villages, largely funded by the World Bank. (The idea came from similar World Bank programs that Ghani had studied in Indonesia and India.) Afghan villagers were required to elect a council of men and women, devise their own goals—such as clean water or a new school—and make public their accounting figures. In one case, thirty-seven villages pooled their money to build a maternity hospital. Clare Lockhart met families just returned from exile in Iran, living in animal-skin shelters. One woman, describing the importance of the grant, told her, "It's not about the money."

"Don't tell her that," another villager said. "She'll take the money away."

"I don't have that authority," Lockhart explained.

The first woman finished her thought: "It's that we're trusted to do this."

The N.S.P. was one of Afghanistan's most successful and least corrupt programs. A new school cost a sixth of one built with a U.S.A.I.D. contract. Paul O'Brien, an Irishman who served as an adviser to Ghani, said Ghani understood that "the key to development is strong domestic institutions that can regulate all the actors around them, including international do-gooders." When Ghani challenged foreigners to tell him what accountability measures they wanted in return for giving Afghan institutions control of the money and the agenda, "they wouldn't do it," O'Brien said. Donors had brought their "development army in all its glory, and that meant outputs and contracts and boxes checked."

Instead of sending money to local communities through Afghan channels, donors like U.S.A.I.D. bid out contracts to large international companies, which in turn hired subcontractors and private security companies, none of which had a long-term stake in Afghanistan. In a 2005 ted talk on failed states, Ghani called such programs "the ugly face of the developed world to the developing countries," adding, "Tens of billions of dollars are supposedly spent on building capacity with people who are paid up to fifteen hundred dollars a day, who are incapable of thinking creatively or organically."

The National Solidarity Program didn't get to write Afghanistan's future. Some estimate that during the peak years of foreign spending on Afghanistan only ten to twenty cents of every aid dollar reached the intended beneficiaries. Waste on a scale of several hundred billion dollars is the work of many authors, but the U.S. government was among the chief ones.

In the summer of 2002, Karzai named Ghani Minister of Finance. The Ministries of Interior, Defense, and Foreign Affairs were more obvious bases for building personal power, but Ghani put in twenty-hour days, holding staff meetings at 7 a.m., in a building with shattered windows and no heat. He introduced anti-corruption measures, established a centralized revenue system, and created a new currency, supporting it with the traditional hawala network of money trading. He urged his staff to take on the drug and land mafias that were infiltrating the state, saying, "We need to hit them everywhere, so they won't have the space to establish networks." This was the blank-slate phase of post-Taliban Afghanistan, and Ghani became the most effective figure in the new government. "The golden period of the Karzai rule was when Ashraf Ghani was Finance Minister," Jelani Popal, a deputy in the Finance Ministry, said. "Karzai was a people person and kept the integrity of the state and society, but Ghani was the de-facto Prime Minister and the main engine of reform."

Ghani's temper, perhaps inflamed by the effects of his stomach cancer, became notorious. He shouted at Afghan staff and Western advisers alike. Zalmay Khalilzad, then the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, had known him for decades—they were in college together in Beirut—and he challenged Ghani: "Why do you have such a bad temper?" Ghani denied it, Khalilzad repeated stories he'd heard, and they went back and forth until Ghani slammed his fist on a table and exploded: "I don't have a temper!"

Ghani's combination of probity and arrogance antagonized the entire Karzai cabinet. When he discovered that the Minister of Defense, the Tajik warlord Mohammed Fahim, was padding his payroll with tens of thousands of "ghost" troops, Ghani slashed Fahim's budget. Ghani later heard that Fahim went to the Arg and told Karzai that he wanted to murder Ghani—to which Karzai replied, "There's a very long line for killing Ashraf."

In 2004, after being elected President, Karzai made noises about dismissing Ghani. Lakhdar Brahimi asked Karzai, "Do you have anybody better than him?" Karzai said no. Brahimi encouraged him to try to work with Ghani, even though he knew that nobody in the cabinet supported Ghani, either. Brahimi asked Ghani, "You've been here three years and you don't have a friend in this country?" Ali Jalali, then the Minister of Interior, said that Ghani had

clashed with cabinet members from the Northern Alliance, such as Fahim, in his campaign to take power away from the warlords. Several people also told me that Khalilzad had been competing with Ghani since their university days and leveraged American influence over Karzai to undermine Ghani. (Khalilzad said that he had tried to get Karzai to change his mind, but failed.) By 2005, Ghani was gone. He later insisted that he had resigned because the government was descending into narco-corruption.

The government lost its brightest light. "If he had stayed, Afghanistan would be completely different today," Popal said. Karzai, a master at keeping his various constituencies in the tent, had no interest in the ideas that consumed Ghani. With the American troop presence too small to secure the country, Karzai used foreign largesse to empower local strongmen, whose behavior led to the return of the Taliban.

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Ghani briefly became chancellor of Kabul University. A former student there remembers that he was always either yelling at groups of undergraduates or promising things that he couldn't deliver—a state-of-the-art library, for example. Karzai tried repeatedly to bring Ghani back. Once, in 2008, he summoned Ghani and Popal to the Arg. "I made a mistake," Karzai said. "I'll give you more power than before." He offered Ghani the Ministry of Interior. Ghani refused, saying, "You are a very suspicious man. You listened to people and fired me." Privately, Ghani confided to Popal that he planned to run for President against Karzai the next year. By then, Popal was in charge of the powerful department of local governance. "I know all the districts," he told Ghani. "You don't have a chance." Ghani insisted that he could give speeches that would mobilize millions of Afghans. "It doesn't work that way," Popal told him. "You need to establish relationships."

I met Ghani in Kabul in the spring of 2009, as the campaign was about to begin. He had given up his American citizenship in order to run. He described a "double failure" in Afghanistan: a failure of imagination by the international community and a failure by Afghan élites "to be the founding fathers—and mothers, because there are some—of a new state." He received a group of university students in his home, a beautiful post-and-beam structure in traditional Nuristani style. Ghani listened to the students complain about nato firepower killing civilians, about Afghan corruption, about American manipulation of the election in Karzai's favor. They didn't know that American officials, disillusioned with Karzai, had encouraged Ghani to run against him. Before I left, Ghani gave me a chapan, the intricately woven coat of northern Afghanistan, and a copy of "Fixing Failed States." I saw no sign of a volatile character—he was confident of his prospects.

But Popal was right: Ghani had no following, and he received a humiliating three per cent of the vote. Karzai was reëlected amid charges of rampant voter fraud that embittered his closest challenger, Abdullah Abdullah, and fatally damaged his relationship with the United States. Karzai, who could not run for a third term, withdrew into the Arg and steeped himself in conspiracy theories about the West. A billion-dollar Ponzi scheme was exposed at the country's largest bank. Karzai's final years in office were a political death agony.

During this period, Ghani was in charge of preparing Afghanistan for the withdrawal of nato forces and the handover of military authority to the Afghan Army by the end of 2014. The job, which was pro bono, allowed him to travel around the country, visiting provincial governors, corps commanders, and district police chiefs. It was a kind of listening tour, convincing him of the people's desire for reform.

In 2014, he ran again for President. He published a three-hundred-page campaign manifesto, "Continuity and Change." It was a classic Ghani production. "It is very smart in diagnosing all these problems," Alex Thier said.

"He's an idea factory with all these proposals—but you don't read it with a sense that they will all be accomplished." When you cut through the language, the manifesto is a call for the empowerment of the Afghan people against corrupt élites: "Outstanding individuals, intellectuals, women, young people, producers of culture, workers, and other parts of society wish for change, and we want to respond to this wish."

Ghani stopped wearing Western suits and started using his tribal name, Ahmadzai. He hired young campaign aides who were savvy about social media, and he gave rousing speeches declaring that "every Afghan is equal" and that "our masters will be the people of Afghanistan." There were rumors that he was taking anger-management classes.

During the campaign, Farkhunda Naderi, a female member of parliament, suggested in a TV debate that the next President should name a woman—the first—to Afghanistan's high court, which has the power to nullify laws deemed contrary to Islamic law. "Unless you get a woman on the Supreme Court, all the rights women get are on the surface and symbolic," she told me. Naderi had suggested the idea to Karzai, only to be told that no woman was qualified. Karzai's wife, a doctor, was rarely seen in public during his years in the Arg, but Rula Ghani was a prominent surrogate for her husband during the campaign, to the delight of some Afghans and to the chagrin of others. During a campaign speech at a Kabul high school, Ghani announced his intention to select a woman for the Supreme Court. Naderi, who was in attendance, listened in disbelief. "I was like, 'Wow!' He was brave to do that."

In a naked attempt to win the votes of minority Uzbeks, Ghani selected Abdul Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek warlord, as a candidate for Vice-President. Dostum is accused of so many killings that he's barred from entering the United States. Ghani once called him "a known killer." Naderi was forced to defend Ghani to friends who supported human rights. "It means he's a politician," she told them. "If you're going to do something in Afghanistan, you can't import other people. You have to do something with the people who are here." This had been the dilemma for Afghan reformers ever since King Amanullah: how, when, and whether to compromise. Ghani was showing that he, too, could play politics the old, dirty way.

In the first round of voting, on April 5th, Ghani came in second among eight candidates, with thirty-one per cent. Abdullah Abdullah, who had lost to Karzai in 2009, led, with forty-five per cent. Elegant and diplomatic, Abdullah was a familiar figure in Afghan politics. Of Pashtun and Tajik parentage, he was identified politically with the Tajiks. Abdullah and Ghani had served together in the first Karzai cabinet, with Abdullah as Foreign Minister, and they shared pro-Western, pro-reform, anti-corruption views. "I've known Abdullah since 1995 and Ghani since 2002," Thier said. "These guys really care. They are not cynical, they're not trying to turn the affairs of state to their own benefit." Three-quarters of the nearly seven million voters chose one of these two candidates—evidence that, despite years of war, foreign interference, and disappointed hopes, Afghans still wanted a modern country.

Inevitably, the runoff between Ghani and Abdullah, in June, played out along ethnic lines, with Pashtuns—the country's largest group—consolidating around Ghani. When early official results showed Ghani leading, Abdullah claimed a fraud on the scale of the 2009 election. An adviser to Abdullah blamed Karzai and his handpicked election commissioners, saying that they wanted power to revert to agreements among élites, with Karzai as kingmaker, if not king.

Fifteen thousand Abdullah supporters marched on the Arg to protest the election. Ghani's circle was equally adamant. His campaign coördinator at the time, Hamdullah Mohib, recalls a meeting in which Ghani advisers discussed bringing a hundred thousand people into the streets. Ghani told them, in his didactic way, "A civil war lasts on average ten or fifteen years, and even then they're very hard to end—ours is still going on. I can guarantee

that tomorrow, if you march on Kabul, the first bullet will be fired. If anyone can guarantee when the last bullet will be fired, then I'll allow the march."

The U.N. mission in Kabul supervised an audit. James Cunningham, the American Ambassador at the time, recalls, "The U.N. and E.U. people really worked their asses off, being accused every day of malfeasance by one side or the other. There were fistfights inside hot warehouses, and lots of yelling." The audit showed fraud on both sides, more of it favoring Ghani than Abdullah. American officials feared that the dispute could cause Afghanistan to fracture along ethnic lines. In July, 2014, a document circulated in the State Department:

We should be modest about the audit mechanism—given the apparent closeness of the election and the involvement of the chief electoral officer in fraud, it is almost impossible that we will ever know who won . . . with sufficient clarity to persuade his disappointed opponent. The audits are a way to buy time for political accommodations and eventually to certify and add some credibility to a result.

American officials spent the summer negotiating a deal between Ghani and Abdullah. The loser would have to accept the other as President, without conceding the final vote, and in return would be named Chief Executive Officer—a Prime Ministerial position that doesn't exist in the Afghan constitution. (The suggestion came from Ghani.) The results of the audit would not be released, to spare the defeated candidate a loss of face. Both Ghani's and Abdullah's camps resisted the arrangement, each certain that it had won outright. According to a U.S. intelligence assessment that September, there was a strong chance that, for lack of an agreement, Karzai would stay in office or that Abdullah and the Northern Alliance would declare a parallel government. Daniel Feldman, the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, who was involved in the negotiations, said, "If Karzai had stayed in, or if there had been a parallel government, that would have been the end of our presence in Afghanistan, and probably the end of Afghanistan—civil war on top of the Taliban."

By mid-September, the audit had been finished: Ghani was judged the winner. But Abdullah wasn't ready to concede. Secretary of State John Kerry called Ghani from Paris; citing the audit, he said that if fraudulent votes were discounted the gap closed significantly in Abdullah's favor. Ghani took this to mean that the U.S. believed he had lost an election he'd tried to steal. If he was taking anger-management classes, they didn't work. He summoned Feldman to his house for a chewing-out that lasted several hours. Grudgingly, Ghani and Abdullah accepted a compromise. On September 21st, they signed a document creating a National Unity Government. On the crucial issue of the distribution of political appointments, Abdullah had wanted the language to read "equal" and Ghani "fair." They compromised on "equitable." Since there was no word for it in Dari, one had to be invented: bara barguna, or "equalish." The N.U.G. was an act of statesmanship on both sides, but no one was happy with it. To the public, it suggested that Afghan democracy was a back-room deal brokered by élites and foreigners.

Ghani was inaugurated on September 29, 2014. It was the first peaceful transfer of power in Afghanistan since 1901, but Ghani and his aides felt that he had been forced to become something less than Afghanistan's legitimate President.

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When Ghani took office, his approval rating was above eighty per cent. Eighteen months later, in March, when I met him in Kabul, it was twenty-three per cent.

In our interview, I asked how "Fixing Failed States" had guided him as President. "It's a road map for where do you begin, when you arrive, and what you do as a leader," Ghani answered. "One of the first things I did was to ask my colleagues in the cabinet to prepare hundred-day action plans." He went on, "Organizations are accumulations of historical debris. They are not consciously thought. So when you ask the Education Ministry 'What's your core function and who's your client?' they laugh at you. When I say that the client is the Afghan child—and the Ministry is an instrument, not the goal—it's greeted with shock. It's a new idea."

This thought led Ghani to expound on Mountstuart Elphinstone, a nineteenth-century Scottish envoy and the author of "An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul," which described the egalitarian nature of Afghan society. From there, Ghani's mind jumped to the Iron Emir, Abdur Rahman, Amanullah's grandfather, who imported the authoritarian idea of hierarchy from his years in exile in Russia. Then, as an example of the "inherited élitism" that distorts Afghan politics, Ghani told the story of a young man he had named Deputy Interior Minister, who had ordered a policeman beaten for stopping his vehicle because of a violation, and was then made to apologize on national television. Finally, Ghani arrived at the reign of Amanullah: "I call it the unfinished reform. A section of the élite was reformist, and then they met popular resistance. Today, the public is unbelievably aware of the constitution, of the world, and of its aspirations. The public is reformist."

Seated across from Ghani, I found it hard to follow this two-hundred-year history of Afghan élitism. In retrospect, I can see its brilliance. But it still doesn't seem like a road map for governing.

It was as if, after decades of thinking and reading and writing, he had to solve all Afghanistan's problems at once. He assumed that he had a mandate from "society." The élites were finished—"they're out of touch," he said. He began to impose his vision on every corner of government. He retired more than a hundred generals who had been skimming money from troop contracts. He demanded the resignations of all governors and cabinet ministers, and announced that nobody who had served in those capacities could do so again, thereby alienating fifty or so political veterans in one blow. He fired forty high-level prosecutors who had falsified their résumés. From an American-built command center in the basement of one of his palaces, Ghani held regular videoconference calls with his military commanders. He reviewed the portfolios of every international donor agency. Every Saturday, he sat at a long table in a wood-panelled room in Gul Khana Palace and chaired a committee on procurements, spending several hours reviewing contracts to make sure that they represented clean government. Ghani believed that doing such chores was the only way to solve Afghanistan's core problems.

He trusted so few people that he could find nobody to hire as his spokesman, nobody to be mayor of Kabul. During cabinet meetings, some ministers felt so intimidated by Ghani that they busied themselves taking notes to impress him. Amrullah Saleh, a respected former intelligence chief, who was left out of the administration, said, "There is a silence in his cabinet, and it's a treacherous silence. Ghani is not physically alone—he is intellectually alone."

The public began hearing about ambitious projects. Ghani had become an authority on Afghanistan's water resources, and he announced plans for twenty-nine dams, leaving the impression that they would be finished in two years. After a conversation with Narendra Modi, the Indian Prime Minister, Ghani told aides that India's private sector would soon be investing twenty billion dollars in Afghanistan—a figure that seemed to come out of nowhere. Daniel Feldman, the American Special Representative, found Ghani's ideas equally inspiring and implausible: "We'd walk out of meetings and say, 'I'm not sure what country he's talking about. It's not Afghanistan. It sounds like a canton in Switzerland.' "

One morning in Char Chenar Palace, Ghani met with forty-four civil servants—forty men and four women—in charge of planning a new municipality northeast of Kabul, a variation on a project that has enticed Afghan reformers since Amanullah. As the engineers stated their pedigrees and their areas of expertise, Ghani jotted down notes while snacking on nuts, taking particular pleasure in introducing aides who had gone to Harvard or who had been named Silicon Valley's engineer of the year. "I've read all the documents of the proposals you've submitted," he said. "Let's have a discussion of them." One by one, the engineers and city planners presented slide shows about recycling, parking garages, solar-powered buses, electronic databases for title deeds. Ghani seemed perfectly happy spending a morning hearing ideas from young technocrats. Outside the Arg, mayorless Kabul was inundated with rainwater and uncollected garbage.

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In "Fixing Failed States," the chapter on politics is titled "Failed Politics"—Ghani's book supposes that politics is destructive. He doesn't think in terms of interests and bargains. He believes that people will act correctly once the reasonable course is shown to them (or imposed on them). After becoming President, Ghani all but ignored the traditional politics of Afghanistan—tribal networks, patronage systems, strongmen.

Under Karzai, politicians came to the palace with requests for money or for favors, and he heard them out. By one estimate, members of parliament stole a billion to a billion and a half dollars a year. During Ghani's first year in office, he refused to meet with favor seekers. His chief of staff, Abdul Salam Rahimi, made himself so inaccessible that the joke around Kabul was that you had to call the President to see the chief of staff. Karzai used to pay the family of a power broker named Pir Sayed Ahmed Gailani more than a hundred thousand dollars a month in "expense money" to keep its support. (Karzai denies this.) Ghani cut off the family, and Gailani's sons became Ghani's enemies. Something similar happened with Abdul Rassul Sayyaf, a former mujahid and one of the most powerful men in Afghanistan. "His initial request was for key ministries and provinces, so he could give them away," one of Ghani's advisers told me. "He didn't get them. He was upset. What was more upsetting was he was no longer seen as close to power—he could no longer buy people's loyalty."

In Afghanistan, politics is the only path to status and power, which is why the scramble for government jobs is so fierce. Anwar ul-Haq Ahady, a banker and former Finance Minister, supported Ghani during the election. According to Ahady, Ghani promised him the Foreign Ministry, but when the time came Ghani hedged. Ahady became an opponent as well. "I've not promised any portfolio to anyone," Ghani told me. "Mr. Ahady, if his sense of commitment to this nation is by portfolio, then he should judge himself."

Last year, the notorious police commander of Uruzgan Province, Matiullah Khan, was killed, and tribal elders came to Kabul to discuss his replacement. Ghani initially wouldn't see them, but his advisers insisted. The elders wanted the job to go to Matiullah Khan's brother. Ghani said that he would seek the best candidate, and later rejected their choice. In the following months, nearly two hundred security posts in the province fell to the Taliban as policemen changed their flags and switched sides.

Ghani was capable of giving in to political reality. He allowed two strongmen to stay on—Atta Mohamed Noor, the governor of Balkh Province, in the north, and Abdul Razziq, the police chief of Kandahar—even though they were known for corruption and human-rights violations. They were essential partners in the fight against the Taliban, and under American pressure Ghani yielded.

One of Ghani's young aides told him, "People say you're not doing politics."

“What kind of politics?” Ghani asked.

“You’re not meeting leaders, members of parliament, mujahideen.”

“It’s by choice that I don’t.”

“Why?” the aide asked. “These political élites are attacking you, and you’re losing political capital you need for reforms.”

“If I meet them, they will be all over me,” Ghani replied. “First, they’ll ask for my fingers, then my hands, then my legs. We will engage only if the discourse changes. When the time comes, you will see me meeting with them.”

Ghani’s intransigence aroused so much resentment that he couldn’t get parliament to approve some of his key appointments. Until recent weeks, he had no intelligence chief and no confirmed Defense Minister. When he named a candidate to be the first female Supreme Court justice, parliament narrowly voted her down. Predictably, the National Unity Government failed to work. The signed agreement included no specifics on the distribution of appointments, and Abdullah and Ghani vetoed each other’s choices, or one of them held the process hostage until the other gave in. Ghani’s candidate for Attorney General was blocked while Abdullah’s camp tried to get one of its own hired for Minister of Interior. One of Abdullah’s top aides, a diplomat named Omar Samad, was appointed Ambassador to Belgium, the E.U., and nato. In April, Samad was about to travel to Brussels when the President’s office sent him a letter withdrawing nato from the portfolio. Samad rejected the deal and left Kabul to be with his family in Washington. “Tiny power struggles are going on,” Samad told me. “It’s a game of domination.”

The paralysis in Kabul so concerned Washington that President Barack Obama chided both leaders in a videoconference call in March, telling Abdullah, “The political agreement that you signed with President Ghani, as far as we know, did not give you veto power.” The Attorney General–Interior Minister swap finally went through. But Ghani’s advisers remained frustrated, blaming the N.U.G. for their inability to carry out their agenda. It’s a view that commands little sympathy in Washington.

Ghani retains the loyalty of a few protégés, among them a man in his early thirties named Hamdullah Mohib. His parents had sent him to Britain in 2000, at the age of sixteen, in order to avoid conscription by the Taliban. Arriving at Heathrow without papers or money, he was taken on by a social-services agency as an unaccompanied minor. Alone in London, Mohib worked his way through college and graduate school, studying computer engineering. In 2008, he heard about a lecture at the London School of Economics by an Afghan politician who had written a book called “Fixing Failed States.” Mohib arranged to have the author speak to an Afghan student association in London. As Mohib and his friends waited for their guest to arrive, they went outside to hold parking places for the twenty-five-car entourage they expected. “I saw a man carrying his laptop bag, walking up the sidewalk,” Mohib recalls. “I was impressed. And then when he started talking—I’d never heard an Afghan politician talk like this. The others—it was all a show. And here was a man, it was all substance. He didn’t talk about himself. It was about Afghanistan and what we could do to fix it.”

Mohib worked on Ghani’s unsuccessful 2009 campaign, and in 2014 he became a top adviser. After the election, Ghani made Mohib his deputy chief of staff, then named him Afghanistan’s Ambassador to the United States. The appointment rankled senior politicians, as if Ghani had given the post to an errand boy. Ghani was signalling the eclipse of the generation of Afghans who had made their names fighting the Soviets and one another.

"This is the critical time in our country's history—my generation understands that," Mohib said. "We either build systems and institutions that will protect my family and other people's families, and good people will rise to the top—or we will lose, and the corrupt mafia win. If they win, it will be fiefdoms and the same families passing power from one generation to the next."

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One night, I had dinner in Kot-e-Baghcha Palace with Scott Guggenheim, the American economic adviser to Ghani. He worked with Ghani at the World Bank and, in 2002, helped create the National Solidarity Program. Guggenheim, a gregarious sixty-year-old who favors Indonesian shirts, was now living virtually alone, amid servants, in the palace. Heads of state had been invited to use it as a guest house, but almost none of them would stay overnight in Kabul. Guggenheim was given the room where, in 1979, a Communist leader was said to have been smothered in his bed.

Over dinner, Guggenheim said, "Ashraf's biggest problem is not that he's a bad politician but that he has a twenty-five-year vision and everyone thinks it means next year. He throws out completely unrealistic dates as placeholders." Guggenheim described the terrible hand that had been dealt to Ghani, who took office amid the withdrawal of nearly all foreign troops. Afghanistan's legal economy depended on U.S. bases and contracts, and after the withdrawal unemployment reached forty per cent—a disaster that the World Bank underestimated so drastically that donors hadn't earmarked money for an emergency jobs program. American spending in Afghanistan went from about a hundred billion dollars in 2012 to half that last year. At the same time, the Afghan Army had to assume full responsibility for fighting a resurgent Taliban, with fewer weapons. Guggenheim compared the start of Ghani's Presidency with Obama's in 2009—"but with John Boehner as his Vice-President." Hopelessness returned among Afghans, and a hundred and fifty-four thousand of them emigrated to Germany last year. Ghani chastised citizens for fleeing their country.

The Americans, Guggenheim went on, wanted Ghani to pursue incompatible paths: to fight corruption while keeping the corrupt Old Guard in the fold. Few people in Kabul could say what America's policy in Afghanistan was. "Ask any senior U.S. statesman: Is there any strategy at all, besides withdrawal?" Guggenheim said. "They were so focussed on that unity government, getting it to hold together, they forgot about having an effective government."

Around Kabul, people were waiting to see if the government would fall. Peace talks that Ghani had initiated with Pakistan were going nowhere. Afghanistan's double-dealing neighbor had been unable, or unwilling, to bring the Taliban to the table. Why would Pakistan negotiate an end to the war when it was close to securing its goal—an Afghanistan so weakened by the Taliban that it would become a client state? The fighting season was expected to be worse than ever. A Western diplomat took out a map and showed me Taliban positions north of Kabul, along a strategic highway in Baghlan Province. "If Baghlan falls to the Taliban, they're very quickly on their way to Kabul," the diplomat said. The Afghan Army would concentrate its forces on defending provincial capitals while ceding rural areas, but this meant that the government would keep losing ground. At the American Embassy, officials were said to be reading cables sent from the Embassy in Saigon in 1975, just before the American evacuation of South Vietnam.

The Afghan Army is constantly on the defensive, suffering heavy casualties. Without the continued presence of American troops in the country, it would very likely collapse. In a return to "the Great Game" of the nineteenth

century, Afghanistan would be exploited by its neighbors—Russia, Iran, Pakistan, China, and India. "We need what's called a 'hurting stalemate,' " another Western official told me. "Because there are élites in Kabul and Islamabad and Rawalpindi who shop in the same malls in Dubai and are happy for the war to grind on." He added, "Over ten years, we've gone from trying to bring good governance and security and development and rule of law to survival. . . . There's still a lot of ways the government could fall." He mentioned the possibility of widespread public unrest. Last November, after the Islamic State decapitated seven Hazara civilians in southern Afghanistan, thousands of citizens nearly overran the Arg, and some palace officials imagined themselves going the way of their predecessors.

The other path for Ghani's fall is political. Recently, he has been more willing to play by the old rules—for example, he named Gailani to the sinecure position of chairman of the High Peace Council. But the powerful men Ghani has angered are plotting their way back into power. The agreement signed nearly two years ago by Ghani and Abdullah called for electoral reforms, local elections, and a constitutional assembly to be completed by September of this year, in order to enshrine Abdullah's job in the constitution. None of this has happened, or will anytime soon, because of political infighting and the war—giving Ghani's enemies an opening to denounce the government's legitimacy. Karzai, who meets regularly with the opposition, is said to advocate the convening of a loya jirga, a traditional assembly, which could lead to Ghani's ouster and the naming of a new President. Umer Daudzai, Karzai's former chief of staff—who had been the point man for handling cash from the Iranian regime, with a bill-counting machine in his office—told me, "Ghani has made everybody around him an enemy. There's nobody left. One day, I was watching his wife on TV, and my wife said, 'Why are you watching her so closely?' I said, 'I'm waiting for her to explode—Rescue me!' " Daudzai has formed a political coalition to take over the Arg when the chance comes. "If there is going to be change, there is only one way," he said. "Ghani resigns." A Western official with long experience in Afghanistan told me that the notion of a junta installed by a military coup was not far-fetched.

In Kabul, there is strikingly little evidence of the long and costly American effort. I asked Amrullah Saleh, the former head of intelligence, what had been achieved in Afghanistan in the past fifteen years. "From the American point of view, very little," he said. "From the Afghan point of view, very much. I may have a lot of personal grievances, but, if you look at the picture from a bird's eye, things have changed enormously." Saleh didn't mean roads or dams. He meant the transformation of Afghan society, of public discourse, among activists and intellectuals, women and youth. "Prior to 9/11, the biggest theme of our discussion was: How do you form a state? Today, it's not that. The biggest discourse today is how the state can deliver, how the state can survive, how Afghanistan's diversity can remain intact, and how it can be a partner with the world community."

Those themes have engaged Ghani throughout his life. Although Saleh is one of his critics, he believed that Ghani could still do important things, and he did not want to see him go the way of other reformers in Afghan history. "For me, the pain is that as people see very little being delivered by this government, by this President, it will not only mean the failure of Ashraf Ghani," Saleh said. "It will also mean the failure of technocracy in Afghan politics."

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DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

22. Uncharted Territory: Silent Service
Two Naval Academy graduates hid their identities for years
The Capital (Annapolis, MD), June 27, Pg. A1 | Christina Jedra

Alexandra Marberry, 23, is one of at least 17 Naval Academy graduates who have come out as transgender, but she may be one of the first to serve her entire career openly.

Over a year ago, her position as a naval officer and her identity as a trans woman could not co-exist.

The Department of Defense still prohibits transgender military service in its physical and psychological standards. But since last July military separations related to trangenderism have been effectively halted as the department considers the policy implications of open trans service. Now, department officials said they plan to announce repeal of the ban Friday.

Marberry is now among an estimated 15,500 transgender soldiers, airmen, Marines and sailors in the U.S. military who are waiting for permission to serve openly.

For now, this spares Marberry the choice many before her have faced: to hide their gender identity or walk away from their military career.

These are the stories of the Naval Academy graduates who came before her.

SACRIFICING A CALLING

Marberry may get to pursue the career Paula Neira had to give up.

Like Marberry, the 53-year-old Naval Academy graduate was an aspiring naval aviator and always struggled with her gender identity. Born male, she said she felt female.

But she hid her feelings for decades because of her love for the Navy, she said.

"The minute I said something, I'd be discharged," said Neira, who was a lieutenant.

When she graduated from the academy in 1985, Neira's eyesight didn't meet requirements for aviation, so she became a surface warfare officer for five years.

By the time she was a lieutenant, her eyesight had improved and she qualified for flight school. She went to Pensacola, Florida, to pursue her dream, but the disconnect with her gender remained.

"I realized flying F14s and being Maverick (from the movie "Top Gun") was not going to solve this issue," Neira said. "I didn't know if I was going to be able to not address this another 14 years to get to a 20-year career (to be eligible for retirement)."

She told her superiors she had a kidney stone, a "face-saving way of not continuing on with my flight training."

Neira entered the reserves to finish her obligated service with hopes of soon addressing her gender identity.

Ninety days later, Kuwait was invaded. Her identity again had to wait as she left for Operation Desert Storm in 1991.

"I'm a Naval Academy grad. There's a real world situation going on. I have this training that is directly applicable. My place is with the fleet. So I put my personal stuff, again, on hold."

After serving the Persian Gulf, Neira returned home and actively pursued her gender transition.

"I couldn't run away anymore," the Bowie resident said.

Two months later, she said the military called and asked her to return to active duty. She cried for a week. Then she said no.

"My heart was breaking because I was put in the position of choosing between being who I was, being able to live authentically, and serving my country," she said. "In the United States we should never ask people who volunteer to sacrifice for our well-being to make a decision like that."

Neira became a trauma nurse, an attorney and an LGBT advocate.

She said that if a policy on transgender service is put in place, there is a slim chance she could become an Air Force nurse.

But she said that if she were able to stay, she would never have left the Navy.

"The clock ran out for me."

DENYING IDENTITY

Robyn Walters is likely the oldest living transgender Naval Academy graduate.

But the 79-year-old retired commander didn't pursue a male-to-female gender transition until she was in her 60s, just a few years after she admitted to herself that she was transgender.

Walters said she knew she was different since age 9, when she went into her mother's closet and tried on a dress. She was surprised by how much she enjoyed it, but the shock of nearly being caught was enough reason for her to repress the feeling.

"My 9-year-old-self panicked," she said. "That just buried it so far down that that kind of thought didn't come back for quite a while."

While at the all-male Naval Academy in the late 1950s, Walters felt awkward.

"I tried to be as macho as I could. It didn't work very well," she said. "I never felt comfortable as a man."

Walters maintained a lingerie stash for decades, starting in her teens. But she didn't dare bring delicates to the academy's Yard.

"If I had been caught with something like that, I would've been standing outside the gate with a train ticket home, no question about it," she said.

On holiday breaks, she returned to her female side.

Sometimes when she tried on an item from her stash, she felt shame. She said there were times when she asked herself: "What the hell is wrong with you, Walters? Why do you do this?"

"And you feel like that until the next time," she said.

Walters didn't admit to herself that she wanted to be a woman until she was 57, when her four children were grown. That was after graduating third in the Class of 1960, two marriages and an over-20-year career with the Navy that included work with the "Father of the Nuclear Navy," Adm. Hyman Rickover.

She told her second wife about her feelings after her youngest daughter left for college, and it ended the marriage.

"There may have been something in my subconscious saying 'Keep it down, buster. Keep it down until your girls are out of the house," she said.

Walters sometimes wonders what could have been if she had been able to serve openly.

"I've asked myself, 'Wouldn't it have been wonderful if I'd transitioned back then? And the answer I come up with is yeah, it would have been wonderful. But there are four children, 10 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren who never would've been born. So what can I say?"

Walters said that after hormone therapy and gender confirmation surgery in her mid-60s, she feels right in her body. She said she no longer worries how people perceive her in a women's restroom.

"One of the most wonderful feelings was the first day I woke up and didn't have to shave (my face)," she said.

Her third marriage, to transgender author Emery Walters, is her last, she said. Sixteen years ago, they visited Maui for their honeymoon and have been there since.

She said that after so many years of burying her feelings, acknowledging her truth hit her "like a two-by-four."

"And I never looked back."

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23. DoD to Issue Revamped Spouse Transition Program
Military.com, June 26 | Amy Bushatz

A program being overhauled by the Defense Department aims to arm military spouses with tools to help their families' transitions out of the military and back into civilian life.

Existing transition programs focus almost entirely on the service member, with spouses allowed to attend those classes on a "space available" basis. But because the classes are held during the work day, child care is rarely provided and the ability to sit in can be unpredictable, most spouses do not attempt to attend.

Officials said that situation leaves spouses in the dark on important topics such as finding health care if they no longer qualify for Tricare after transition, the VA disability and rating process, and final military move benefits.

"The Department of Defense recognizes the integral role that the military spouse plays in the overall functioning of the family. We also know that the spouse plays a vital role before, during and after the service member transitions from the military and returns to civilian life," said Eddy Mentzer, associate director of DoD's office of military and family policy, who is leading the project. "Our goal is to provide easy-to-access resources and information that is relevant to military spouses."

Mentzer said the actual information to help spouses transition is already available. But the way it is currently delivered has made it hard for spouses to access it in a way that fits their lifestyles -- and their time and child-care constraints.

"This isn't a new program, but more a means of timely information delivery to the spouse community at a time when they most need it," he said.

The program's content, which will be available both for in-person training and online, focuses on three military spouse life stages: new spouses, spouses with mid-career service members and those already in transition, Mentzer said.

The first part, focusing on new spouses, will be ready this fall, he said.

The team chose to give rollout priority to new spouses, in an attempt to give families a head start on keys to being successful outside the military, such as financial readiness and a stable career. The concept mimics the individual services' approach to transition, such as the Army's Soldier for Life system.

"This is a lesson learned from the changes of the military services' approach to educating their youngest service members -- and that it is important to start planning from the beginning of their career," Mentzer said. "Even new spouses can begin using resources related to financial readiness, education, employment and more, to make the eventual transition a smoother experience for the whole family."

All of the material, covering about 35 topics, will be available online through Military OneSource, he said. The focus will be on presenting the material in short, easy-to-consume videos, officials said.

"We don't want to take up all their time, so we are looking at how we can disseminate the information they want in as useful amount of time as possible," Mentzer said. "So we are thinking along the lines of two- to three-minute video vignettes, in easily understood language, that provides the 'why,' the 'what,' and the 'how.' "

Rather than waiting to release the content when everything is completely ready, officials said, the release will be "rolling," with videos going live as they become available.

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AIR FORCE

24. Interview: Gen. Mark Welsh, Outgoing US Air Force Chief of Staff

Defense News, June 27, Pg. 18 | Aaron Mehta

Gen. Mark Welsh took over as the 20th US Air Force chief of staff in August of 2012. As he prepared to retire after 40 years of service, he sat down with Aaron Mehta to discuss the future of the Air Force.

Congress wants to give the service chiefs a greater hand in acquisition. You've done some acquisition service time and have raised concerns over that idea.

I think that if we truly want to reform acquisition and make it more streamlined, everybody has to accept a little more risk. My caution is that seeing the amount of effort that goes into [acquisition] – there is a lot of day-to-day activity that goes on with great professionals who are well-qualified, well-trained and very experienced who are grinding away at this day after day after day.

Just as a small example, most people have no idea that 95 percent of Air Force acquisition programs are on cost and schedule, and they always have been. All you hear about is the ones that are a problem.

And so building your program just to focus on where there have been failures or disconnects kind of tends to ignore the phenomenal work that goes on behind the scenes in all those other areas.

Service chiefs don't need to get deeply involved in all those things because they're going to have to take the time from somewhere, and there isn't a lot of spare time. This is really important work, but you need to prioritize it, focus it, and then balance it with the other work you're doing and trust those acquisition professionals to build the process that you can oversee and be informed about, just like the [service] secretaries are.

And I think we have a pretty good process in the Air Force.

It sounds like you're worried about overloading the chiefs by adding this requirement.

I've been through the courses at the Defense Acquisition University. I spent two and a half years going to that and program reviews and seeing how much detail is involved, how much time and energy is involved just prepping for every meeting. I cannot imagine doing what I did in that job, which was just for one portfolio of Air Force acquisition – I had fighter bombers and weapon programs in my portfolio – spanned across the entire portfolio. I can't even imagine being able to put the time required to do that level of detail involvement and do all the other things a service chief's expected to do. I just don't think it's humanly possible. Actually, every general officer in Air Force Acquisition's assignment runs through me. So that's never been a disconnect in the Air Force. I made the recommendations to the secretary who makes the selection but I'm involved in every general officer [and] acquisition officer selection in the Air Force. So I don't know how the other services are doing it, but that is not something we need to fix.

One of the major fights of your tenure was over the retirement of the A-10. Do you think it was handled correctly?

I mean, the A-10 started to be retired before I ever came into the job. In the '13 budget, which I had nothing to do with, there were a 102 A-10s taken out of the fleet. So we don't have enough A-10s to conduct full CAS [close air

support] operations in a theater today. And the issue really is when the Budget Control Act hit in ’13 and we looked at the budget of the Air Force starting in the ’14 budget, Air Combat Command came in and said, “We don’t have enough money to modernize the fourth-generation fleet we have now and to continue the recapitalization on the F-35, etc., in our portfolio. We just don’t have the money. We can’t keep everything because we’ve got to cut ten to twelve billion dollars out of our budget this year for the Air Force.”

So we racked and stacked everything. We didn’t start with the A-10. We looked at everything we could possibly cut out of our five mission areas.

And we went to every combatant commander and every other service chief and we showed them what the options were that we looked at. And then we got a lot of operational analysis on the different alternatives.

The criticism we’ve got is, “Well, you’re just not understanding the politics.” That’s a fair criticism if you want to be giving political answers as a military service. If you start getting your military service involved in political answers to issues, you’re starting down a slippery slope.

But the Hill pushback was huge. Do you wish you had presented the information differently?

Oh, I think all the right information was presented to the right people.

There’s lots of reasons decisions are made in Congress that have nothing to do with an officer capability. It’s the system we have. I’ll just say this.

There is nobody — nobody — from any angle of this problem who has presented operational analysis that would outweigh what we had presented from the beginning — nobody. You can’t argue with the analysis. It’s very, very good. And the emotional arguments, when people start to get emotional about things, it’s because they have an agenda, not because they’re looking at the logical, fact-based, operational analysis supported [argument].

The statements like, “Well, we’re going to lose thousands of lives on the battlefield if the A-10 goes away.” Well, we’ve flown well over a hundred thousand CAS missions over the last seven or eight years on the battlefield with airplanes other than the A-10, and we have not lost thousands of lives on the battlefield. It’s simply not true. It’s an emotional discussion [and] people use that to their benefit, making their argument. I don’t care who the people are, wherever they’re from. They could be from inside the Air Force.

But we can’t operate that way when we’re doing planning for the future of our service. The reality is the Budget Control Act took that option off the table. So I hope all the people who are concerned about this issue are also out there lobbying vocally to reverse the Budget Control Act. I haven’t heard that.

Is the F-35 the last manned fighter for the Air Force?

No. Personally, I do not believe it.

Given that, what does air superiority look like in 2030?

One of the things that has happened as we’ve gotten smaller and smaller is our ability to provide [capabilities] on a larger and larger scale has gone away. And so if it’s air superiority for a limited time and space, we’ll be able to do

it. If it's air superiority in contested air space, it's a very different problem than air superiority over Afghanistan; therefore, the need to modernize. The way we've been fighting has been in a very limited environment, threat-wise, for the last fifteen years – very limited. And so we have to make sure that as we look to the capabilities of the future, those things that operate very well in that environment that will be completely unable to operate in a future integrated defense environment are not part of our plan.

We have airplanes that people are fighting hard to defend right now that will not operate in that environment.

And so we've got to be very dispassionate about looking at that threat.

Now, do we need capabilities that operate in the low end of the threat spectrum? Absolutely. This is, for example, where a replacement for the A-10 would come in. We need a low- to medium-threat CAS platform that isn't fifty years old. We need an airplane that has much more loiterability, not because of gas but because of firepower. How do we expand that tremendously with a new weapons set for multiple platforms with new types of weapons, with a new platform that's designed, optimized for the low to medium threat environment as opposed to something that was designed to go kill armor on the planes of Western Europe? I believe that the mission is imminently valid. We just don't have the resources to replace everything right now so we've been forced into a position where we have to decide which ones to replace in what order.

And we don't have the manpower to keep the old while you add the new, just don't have it.

What's the weak spot in US Air Force capabilities?

Well, relative to the [current] threat, we don't have a weak spot. A lot of people say this and it's true. We are still the strongest military on earth, there's no question about that. The key for the services as we look to the future is, nobody else is worrying about modernizing and preparing our services for the fight fifteen, twenty, thirty, fifty years from now. That's our job. And so when we talk about modernization, that's the threat we're worried about, not today's threat.

But the thing that we have got to keep doing is modernizing capability, not all at the same time but over time in each of these areas. We finished upgrading the mobility fleet a while back when we built the C-130J, when we built the C-17. We worked hard on satellite architectures and infrastructure [organization] from 2012 or '13.

It's time now to look at the fighter fleet, and that's why we've been looking at the F-35. The F-22 was truncated, now the F-35 needs to fill in. We need to look at is there a future for a CAS aircraft. I hope that resources allow us to do it, because we need one. This kind of low-threat counterinsurgency fight, it's not going away anytime soon. And so we have got to keep modernizing or realize it will affect our ability to succeed on some future battle space. If we're willing to accept that risk, great. I don't think we should be.

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25. Air Force rock band's contributions shouldn't be underestimated, airmen say
AirForceTimes.com, June 26 | Oriana Pawlyk

When Congresswoman Martha McSally told Air Force leaders in March that she would rather see members of service bands on the flightline than the stage — where, she said, they're needed more — reactions were mixed.

Military bands have been part of service tradition for more than 70 years, Air Force Times readers noted, while acknowledging that budget cuts are affecting all areas of the Defense Department. Last week, the Arizona Republican pushed forward, introducing a plan that would limit all military ensemble performances at social functions outside official military duties.

“For every dollar that is spent on our bands to entertain at social functions, that's a dollar we're not spending on national security and our troops and families,” said McSally, a retired Air Force colonel.

“This is not an attack on the arts,” she continued. “I'm a vocalist myself. I care deeply about the arts. ... While our communities certainly do enjoy being entertained by our military bands, they would prefer to be protected by our military.”

But members of the Air Force rock-band Max Impact say they perform an important function, as the music they bring to the stage is helping service members break through barriers, boost morale and look out for one another.

“The military loves mottos and slogans and motivational words to pump you up, and you can’t go anywhere without seeing 'People first, mission always,' ” said Senior Master Sgt. Ryan Carson, lead vocalist and NCO in charge of Max Impact. “And that’s a hard pill for some to swallow because the mission’s hard, but we’re the people piece of that. Without the people, the mission wouldn’t get done,” he said.

For Max Impact, formed in 2005, it’s about the connection they make with their audience. The band members say they have created relationships at every embassy, school and concert venue at which they've played during their tours. More importantly, other cultures around the world have been able to experience the U.S. military's values.

“The AFCENT band plays a critical role in developing relationships and building connections between our airmen, our mission, the United States, and the regional population,” Lt. Gen. Charles Brown, U.S. Air Forces Central commander, who is overseeing the air war against the Islamic State, told Air Force Times.

“Through the common language of music, the band helps to solidify with our regional partners an impression of our military and the U.S. beyond just the kinetic," he said in a statement.

Now touring the region on a 90-day deployment, Max Impact has visited troops and embassies in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar and Afghanistan. They'll soon be in the United Arab Emirates.

“The band is integrated, whether it’s Department of State-level functions or what [the generals] are doing out here, it’s amazing,” said Lt. Col. Chris Karns, spokesman for U.S. Air Forces Central Command. “When you look at what the band provides in terms of value, you’ve heard people say it’s really pennies on the dollar. And when you consider the impact … the band has the capacity to bridge cultures, reduce barriers and create unifying effects.”

Senior Master Sergeant Matthew Ascione, guitarist and co-writer on many original songs for the band, said joining Max Impact gave him the opportunity to “serve my country and use that power and influence of music to further the goals of the Air Force. ... I make sure it gives me that emotional movement, because I know that if it moves me, it may move other people.”

Undoubtedly, they can also put on a pretty loud, technically advanced rock show if they want, with their monitors, microphones, LED lights, a full drum set, two full keyboards and the ability to lay in tracks from iTunes. Ascione

can play hard-bodied Fender Stratocasters and has a carbon-fiber acoustic guitar, given the hot locations they play (their Middle East tours tend to be more light and lean).

All the service branches have bands and rock bands. But the members of Max Impact want to focus on “further[ing] the goals of the Air Force, and we do that through the power of music. We’re not just musicians, we are airmen,” Ascione said.

The band, stationed at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling in Washington, D.C., practices at least twice a day for 2.5 hours per session when they are not on a mission. In a deployed environment, they work six days a week, sometimes seven, Karns said.

“They joined the Air Force to be airmen first,” he added, “and to help tell the Air Force story and share the values that bonds us together.”

Tech.Sgt. Nalani Quintello, a vocalist who is the newest and youngest member of Max Impact, withdrew from the televised reality competition "American Idol" to join the Air Force in 2015.

"This is much more rewarding than anything I've been able to experience," said the 21-year-old Quintello. "I've met so many people that I never would have been able to meet ... it's much more than a normal, civilian gig."

Max Impact's favorite original song is "American Airman" because it speaks to the Air Force culture and who they are as airmen. Carson, in the Air Force bands program for 13 years, hopes the impact from their songs and their stories reinforces the culture.

On a 2009 tour, the band visited a forward operating base in Afghanistan. No fog machines, or lights. Nothing that screamed “rock band.”

Carson, accompanied by acoustic guitar, was singing “Home” by Daughtry. After the song wrapped, he saw a soldier wearing Army Special Forces insignia coming toward him. "Somehow, I offended this Green Beret with my performance," he thought. Instead, the Army operator said, “You saved my life.” The soldier told Carson that after 15 months of deployment, and with an extension on the way, he couldn’t do it anymore. Suicide, to him, had become an option. “But then you made me think of my wife and kids at home,” he told Carson. “It made me think, this has an end, and we can make it through it.”

Carson was shocked. “Here’s the quintessential badass, and he’s completely human,” he said.

“I didn’t save his life, but because of the music, the memory, it took him off of that FOB, took him back home back with his family and encouraged him to know that’s what life is back there.”

Carson, who kept in touch with the soldier for a while, said the soldier gave him his insignia patch as a thank you. It sits on his desk as a reminder that the band may be obsolete to some, but to others, it’s a lifeline.

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ARMY

26. Final deployment is underway for Army's Kiowa helicopters

ArmyTimes.com, June 26 | Luke Carberry Mogan

The final countdown has begun for the Army's Kiowa Warriors.

Members of 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, arrived in South Korea earlier this month to complete the Kiowa's final deployment.

Upon the unit's return to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in nine months, the unit's OH-58Ds helicopters are slated to be replaced with the more modern AH-64D Apaches.

The National Guard's Apaches will be redistributed to the Army in exchange for UH-60 Black Hawks. This transition is a product of the Army's Aviation Restructuring Initiative, a controversial five-year plan to retire "legacy systems" like the 50-year-old Kiowa, and to make use of newer technologies while maximizing the number of active aircrafts.

The soldiers of Task Force Saber are actually the last squadron in the Army to make the conversion to Apaches.

Manufactured by Bell Helicopters, the Kiowa's first flight was in 1966 during the Vietnam War. It has been in service ever since then, most recently in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. It first appeared in Fort Bragg's inventory in 1990.

"The Kiowa Warrior is a really great aircraft, one that every Air Cavalry trooper holds near and dear to their heart," said Capt. Adan Cazarez, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade public affairs officer. "Although it is sad to see the aircraft be retired, it is also exciting to see the 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade modernize to meet the realities of an evolving mission."

The transition is not exclusive to the aircraft.

"Kiowa officers have the opportunity to transition to another airframe or pursue a career in another branch or functional area, as will their enlisted counterparts," Cazarez said.

Kiowa engineers and mechanics with MOSs 15J and 15S will have to reclassify to their corresponding Apache specialties, 15Y and 15R.

According to the Army Careers website, 15Y requires 10 weeks of Basic Combat Training (BCT) and 24 weeks of Advanced Individual Training; 15R is 10 weeks BCT and 17 weeks AIT. The Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery test scores required for these positions are almost identical to their Kiowa specialty counterparts.

While stationed in South Korea, the 82nd Airborne Division will work with ground forces to continue its surveillance and reconnaissance duties, Cazarez said.

Though the Kiowa easily fills the traditional role of a reconnaissance and scouting helicopter needed for these deployments, the Apache holds greater potential. And the Apache is not coming alone either.

"There is a need for experienced aviators with a cavalry mindset with the expansion of the AH-64 Apache and unmanned aerial vehicle fleet," Cazarez said.

With modifications, the single-engine Kiowa Warrior can carry four Hellfire missiles, 14 Stinger missiles, or dual 0.50-caliber machine guns. The Apache has a similar arsenal, wielding all three possible weapons systems at once: 16 laser-guided Hellfires, 76 Stingers, and a front-mounted 30mm chain gun.

Combat capabilities aside, the Apache holds a tactical advantage over the Kiowa in speed and durability. The sides of the helicopter and its rotor are reinforced to withstand enemy fire, made from a mix of aluminum, titanium, and carbon fibers like Kevlar.

The two-engine Apache can reach maximum speeds of nearly 170 mph, beating the Kiowa's 140 mph combat speed.

The addition of unmanned aerial vehicles multiplies these advantages.

"The combination of the Apaches' lethal weapons and their ability to be teamed with unmanned aerial vehicles enables helicopter crews to find and go after dynamic or fast-moving targets from farther distances," Cazarez said.

The pairing of the Apache, essentially an assault helicopter, with the RQ-7 Shadow UAV creates the opportunity for the Apache to play a supporting part. Seeing through the eye of the Shadow's real-time video feed, an Apache crewman operating the UAV can survey enemy movements and relay information back to ground forces. The Shadow is capable of moving at speeds of up 135 mph.

Though the Kiowa will be missed, the Army holds the Apaches and their UAV partners in high regard.

"The additional capability of teaming Apaches and unmanned aerial vehicles essentially changes the face of the battlefield," Cazarez said.

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NOTABLE COMMENTARY

27. A New American Deal for Europe

The next President can revive the commitment Obama abandoned

Wall Street Journal, June 27, Pg. A12 | Editorial

Britain's decision to leave the European Union opens an era of political disruption, but along with it comes opportunity. The U.S. can seize this moment of uncertainty to reassert its leadership of a Western alliance of free nations.

Britain and Europe are masters of their own fate, but the Continent has always benefited when a confident America points in the right direction. The Obama era has been marked by U.S. indifference and de facto default to the EU, the kind of supranational body President Obama thinks should rule the world.

But the EU has proved unequal to the urgent tasks of reviving economic growth and resisting security threats on its eastern and southern borders. It's time for the U.S. to get back in the game because America needs a confident, prosperous Europe as a partner to defend the West against the rise of authoritarian regimes and global disorder.

An important first signal would be for the U.S. to invite the U.K. to begin bilateral free-trade talks that run alongside current talks with the EU. Mr. Obama may not be able to rise above his pre-Brexit taunt that Britain will move to "the back of the queue" on trade. But this would not be his first strategic mistake.

A trade deal with the world's fifth-largest economy -- and one of Europe's healthiest -- is in America's interests for its own sake. A two-track trade negotiation would also help the British in their negotiation over new terms of trade with the European Union by giving Britain the leverage of a U.S. alternative. U.S.-British talks could also prod Brussels to move faster and rebuff the French protectionism that is infecting the EU-U.S. talks.

Whether or not Mr. Obama leads, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump should. Republicans in particular have a great opportunity to shore up a crucial alliance. Mr. Trump and House Speaker Paul Ryan can take the advice of our friends at the New York Sun and hold a joint press conference saying they'd welcome British trade talks. This would show statesmanship by Mr. Trump, allay some of the concerns about his protectionism, and offer a welcome opportunity for the two men to agree about something.

Mr. Trump says he's not against trade, only against bad trade deals. Here is a moment to show he means it. He could also say he will meet with the new British Prime Minister as soon as possible if he is elected, and that America's relationship with the U.K. is as important as any in the world.

Brexit also creates an opening to reinvigorate NATO. The transatlantic defense alliance has always been broader and sturdier than the European Union in providing European security, and now it will be the main vehicle for British influence in Europe. This can be a healthy development, especially if it frees Europe from a distracting and generally quixotic attempt to create an EU security structure that overlaps with NATO.

A stronger NATO is essential as Vladimir Putin accelerates his divide-and-conquer strategy in the wake of Brexit. NATO's decision this month to deploy four new battalions to Poland and the Baltics is a start, but the Russians will continue to press for weaknesses and to persuade Germany to cede Ukraine as part of Russia's political and economic orbit. The next U.S. President should shore up Western unity by committing more U.S. resources and sending lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine.

Better security for a realigning Europe also requires a more coherent energy policy. After too many years of debate, Washington has finally allowed exports of natural gas that can help break Russia's stranglehold on Europe's energy markets. The next President should make it easier to develop and export U.S. energy to Europe.

The Brexit vote has produced a weekend of handwringing, especially from progressives who find democratic uprisings too messy for their tastes. But now that it has happened, the goal should be to seize this moment for reform and rejuvenation. The U.S. can help by reasserting the commitment to Europe it has too often abandoned during the last eight years.

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28. Relax! Brexit isn't the end of new world order
USA Today, June 27, Pg. A7 | Michael O'Hanlon

There's no denying it: the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union is big news. It reveals huge frustration among British voters with economic globalization, immigration and national self-identity. There will be

costs. Trade between Britain and continental Europe could be notched back as tariffs return; London's role as a world financial capital may be scaled back.

But after acknowledging such concerns, we should relax. Overblown fears of an end to the post-World War II order are wrong.

Start with that order. The United States and United Kingdom worked together to win World War II without the UK being part of any European Union. Indeed, we collectively won the Cold War without the European Union, which was not created until 1993.

Western Europe had already re-established itself as a modern economic powerhouse before the creation of the EU, recovering spectacularly from the unbelievable wartime devastation that occurred in the 1940s. The United States helped a great deal with that process without any EU bureaucracies or open borders.

Look at it another way. The UK is an important country. But with 1% of world population and 3% of world GDP, it does not drive the global economy. The tanking of shocked stock markets right after the Brexit vote doesn't change economic fundamentals. The UK and the European Union's remaining 27 members will have powerful incentives to keep trade free and financial markets integrated. Think of Norway and Switzerland -- not EU members, but important and interlocking parts of the continent's economy.

Some worry about whether Brexit will weaken the EU's ability to stand up to Vladimir Putin as he causes unrest in Eastern Europe. That is doubtful. The EU just last week renewed sanctions, with Germany leading the way.

What about the U.S.-UK "special relationship?" It is called a special relationship for a reason. We have been close allies for more than a century.

The UK will remain in the trans-Atlantic military alliance. NATO is, by far, the more important organization for global security, because it includes the United States. It is NATO, for example, that intervened in the Balkans wars in the 1990s and NATO that leads the Afghanistan mission even today. It is NATO that is sending battalions into Eastern Europe today to stand up militarily to Putin.

One can always find some hypothetical scenario in which having the UK outside of the European Union causes trouble. For instance, even if Scotland secedes from the UK in order to rejoin the EU, that will cost the United Kingdom only 8% of its population. And, to be sure, pulling out will make life tough for British and European diplomats and bureaucrats as they fashion a revised European order.

What is required is to take seriously the skepticism about globalization that voters have just emphatically voiced. But the postwar global order is hardly falling apart.

--Michael O'Hanlon is director of research in the Brookings Institution's foreign policy program

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29. Putin's effortless win
Washington Post, June 27, Pg. A15 | Michael McFaul

When Vladimir Putin worked in Dresden, he watched helplessly as Soviet-ally East Germany slipped out of Moscow's orbit, united with West Germany and joined the democratic side of Europe. Soviet-dominated multilateral institutions in Europe - the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance - also disappeared. Putin then witnessed the dissolution of the Soviet Union, an event he later described as one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century. Former Soviet allies and parts of the Soviet empire peeled away and eventually became members of NATO and the European Union. For nearly three decades, the West was consolidating as the East was disintegrating. The momentum toward a Europe whole and free was so powerful that earlier Russian leaders even flirted with joining.

That trend has now reversed. The decision by a majority of British voters to exit the European Union was not the first event in this reversal but may be the most dramatic. Europe is weakening as Russia, its allies and its multilateral organizations are consolidating, even adding new members. Putin, of course, did not cause the Brexit vote, but he and his foreign policy objectives stand to gain enormously from it.

Most important, one of the European Union's most principled critics of Russian aggression in Europe will no longer have a vote in Brussels. That's good for Putin's interests and bad for U.S. national interests. Boris Titov, Russia's commissioner for entrepreneurs' rights, who is hardly a militant nationalist by Russian standards, made the argument most clearly when he cheered on Facebook, "UK out!!! In my opinion, the most important long-term consequence of all this is that the exit will take Europe away from the Anglo-Saxons, that is, from the USA. This is not the independence of Britain from Europe, but the independence of Europe from the USA." London also helped advance our common interests inside the E.U. on non-European security issues from Iran to Libya to as far away as the Pacific. That "Anglo- Saxon" perspective is now lost within this most important international organization.

The British exit also removes one of the E.U.'s most capable members. Whether it was with its world-class military or its skilled diplomatic corps, Britain contributed greatly to an array of E.U. missions over the years, despite its complicated relationship with Brussels. Removing those resources, personnel and assets from the E.U. will ultimately weaken the organization, an outcome that serves Putin's political purposes.

To be sure, the British government will continue to engage the E.U. and European capitals on foreign policy matters of mutual interest, just as the United States does now. But having a seat at the table with a vote and a veto is different from trying to influence those sitting at the table. The jobs of diplomats from E.U. countries seeking greater accommodation with Moscow just got easier. The job of E.U. diplomats fighting to resist Russian aggression, especially those from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, just got harder.

Meanwhile, other pro-Putin, anti-E.U. politicians and movements throughout Europe just became a little stronger. Marine Le Pen, whose National Front party in France is partially financed by a Kremlin-friendly Russian bank, celebrated the referendum result. Other nationalist, xenophobic, isolationist leaders and parties on the continent who share her views already have begun to call for E.U. exit referendums in their countries. Even the process of debating these initiatives will weaken European unity.

New doubts about the utility of E.U. membership also weaken Putin's opponents in Ukraine. Those who amassed on the Maidan in fall 2013 were demanding the very thing that British voters rejected - closer ties to the European Union. The ideas of these pro-European voices inside Ukraine will face increasing scrutiny from E.U. skeptics, who will ask why Ukraine should seek to join a club that others are leaving. This same debate will play out in other countries contemplating E.U. membership.

Finally, America's closest ally when voting in multilateral forums, pressing diplomatically on global security issues and championing democratic values just became a little weaker. That's a win for Putin. And who knows when the damage will end. The British economy will contract in the short term, and maybe longer. Scotland could split away. Even the future of Northern Ireland is unknown. At a minimum, our special partner will be distracted for years in managing these internal challenges and the negotiations with Brussels over its exit. More dangerously, the United Kingdom could end, as Scotland ponders another referendum. Such a dismantling would dramatically reduce the power and stature of our closest ally.

In parallel to European fissures, Putin is consolidating strength. He has restored autocratic rule at home, crushing all serious dissent and mobilizing popular support through foreign war. He stopped NATO's expansion by invading Georgia in 2008 and slowed E.U. expansion by invading Ukraine in 2014. He has increased Russia's economic hegemony in large parts of the former Soviet Union by building the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). As a result of his military intervention in Syria, Putin is expanding Russia's presence in the Middle East, as Europe and the United States pull back. Most amazingly, his model of government and style of leadership now inspire European admirers, both in a handful of governments and in some societies.

Will these dual trends of European disintegration and EEU integration continue for another 30 years, just as the opposite two trends endured for three decades? Probably not. In the long run, Russia remains plagued by too many internal challenges and skittish EEU partners, while we in the West will find ways to recalibrate our cooperation. But the short-term shift in the balance of power between a united democratic Europe and an illiberal Russia is obvious - and troubling.

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30. How Will China React to the Gavel Coming Down in the South China Sea?
WarOnTheRocks.com, June 26 | Patrick Cronin and Harry Krejsa

Rising tensions in the South China Sea have cast a pall over many actors and issues, but not international law. Indeed, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its mandatory dispute settlement mechanisms are arguably at the zenith of their popularity. Some believe that the U.S. Senate may soon finally ratify a treaty that has been adhered to by both Democratic and Republican administrations.

Perversely, the Obama administration's focus on international law — with the arbitration ruling likely to be handed down shortly — may be badly undercut depending on how China reacts and behaves. Ideally, China would find in the ruling a diplomatic off ramp to avoid a clash at sea and promote new joint development of maritime resources.

However, such a diplomatic tack should not be assumed to be that probable. One hint is China's long-adamant position that the panel's ruling will be a legal nullity because of Beijing's alleged indisputable sovereignty over South China Sea land features. Another less obvious clue is China's systematic attempt to use diplomacy and economic inducements to enhance the malleability of each Southeast Asian claimant state.

Certainly the Obama administration is making no assumptions. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and Secretary of State John Kerry, along with Senator John McCain and Pacific Command Commander Admiral Harry B. Harris,

Jr., have signaled that actions such as declaring an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), starting reclamation at Scarborough Shoal, or overtly militarizing land features in the Spratly Islands would require tough, cost-imposition measures by Washington. The temporary deployment of airborne electronic attack and close-air support aircraft (Navy EA-18 Growlers and Air Force A-10 Warthogs, respectively) put an exclamation mark on recent diplomatic signals.

Chinese leaders no doubt know that an ADIZ could not be enforced by Beijing, that assertive actions over disputed features would risk direct military engagement with the U.S. military, and that President Xi himself has pledged not to militarize at least the Spratly Islands (having now made clear that militarizing the Paracel Islands was not part of that pledge to made to President Obama last fall). Indeed, on this last point, Beijing insists it is Washington that is militarizing the South China Sea.

Although China often appears busy building what Secretary of Defense Carter called a "Great Wall of self-isolation" with its maritime assertions, it's simultaneously seeking to outmaneuver the world in shaping a new geopolitical order — or at least keeping a step ahead of international law.

The imminent ruling from The Hague on disputes in the South China Sea could be a momentous occasion for international jurisprudence, or just a footnote in the war of words over rocks and reefs. Dueling narratives may be the decisive factor, pitting Beijing's preference for bilateral, à la carte diplomacy against Washington's preference for universal rules and principles.

Although China will likely be rebuffed in court on its many technical violations of international maritime law, the arbitrators may avoid the most vexing issue — the legality of the controversial 9-dash line covering the vast majority of the South China Sea. Moreover, the arbitrators will probably have to stop short of issuing a cease and desist order.

But even if the arbitrators lean as far forward as international law permits, their work may change little. Amidst the long, drawn-out legal case, which was filed by the Philippines in 2013 and painstakingly researched and argued before the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), China has been assiduously preparing to render the ruling virtually meaningless by positioning itself to win the contested peace through a campaign of might, money, and moxie. It does so through its own interpretation of international law, as well.

The case has been a target of China's public ire and private diplomacy ever since. The People's Republic has fought to undermine and discredit the Philippines v. China case, both in legal legitimacy and geopolitical import. Yet these efforts are only the tip of the strategic iceberg. Now Beijing is maneuvering to ensure the verdict lands no more than glancing blows on Xi Jinping's "China dream."

In the court of law, China has steadfastly refused to recognize the PCA's jurisdiction. Decrying the trial as judicial overreach, the Chinese seats during the proceedings remained conspicuously empty. Under UNCLOS, the arbitration ruling is binding regardless of whether both parties assent, but China has sought to ensure the court of international opinion reaches a far murkier conclusion.

Chinese officials have not stopped at refusing to participate in a binding process. They have also actively sought to bust countervailing coalitions before they could cohere. For a time, countries neighboring the South China Sea were actively supporting the arbitration process, or at least observing how it might soon be applicable to their own claims and interests. Reading these tea leaves correctly, China spent the last few years actively disassembling any such

nascent coalition. Chinese officials have consistently sought to keep the United States and its partners from rallying support around such mechanisms for dispute resolution.

To those ends, China has used its economic heft as an effective wedge to dampen the international legal ardor of the four Southeast Asian claimant states with which it has disputes in the South China Sea. For instance, as U.S. relations with Brunei cooled, China provided a joint energy exploitation deal in 2013. China is presently offering the tiny nation attractive infrastructure investment incentives associated with its regional One Belt One Road initiative that could secure the long-term economic health of Brunei as it attempts to wean itself off its dependence on exporting fossil fuel.

In Malaysia, China's influence-purchasing has been less subtle. Prime Minister Najib Razak's government was roiled by allegations of major corruption after investigators traced $700 million in missing funds from the troubled state investment vehicle 1MDB to Najib's personal bank accounts. A Chinese state-owned enterprise bailed out the troubled fund last year, purchasing its energy assets to the tune of $2.4 billion. Despite both being claimant states in South China Sea territorial disputes, Brunei and Malaysia have been highly reticent to endorse the arbitration process of late. A summit of Southeast Asian defense ministers gathered in Kuala Lumpur last November presented a perfect opportunity for claimant states to help rally its neighbors to a forceful show of support for international arbitration, but no such statement materialized.

Vietnam and the Philippines, though also vulnerable to economic influence, have demonstrated how political transition can create openings for Chinese efforts at division as well. When Vietnam's new defense minister met his nine counterparts at an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Defense Minister's Meeting last month in Laos, the final result was stunning. A senior official from an ASEAN country told us directly that the meeting ended by canvassing each minister's thoughts about the South China Sea. Each delegation expressed their country's grave concern until Vietnam's defense minister responded to the question with baffling silence. Whether Vietnam's recent political transition created pressure for international Communist Party unity or not, the episode left other participants scratching their heads about how a nation on the frontlines of China's maritime coercion could pass up such a golden opportunity.

Despite being the initiator of South China Sea arbitration, the Philippines may now be facing its own crisis of political will. President-elect Rodrigo Duterte, whose populist campaign was sharply critical of the incumbent government, openly questioned the usefulness of his country's arbitration case with China. Instead, he suggested that he could return to bilateral talks, or even back away from Philippine claims in exchange for infrastructure investments — news China welcomed with open arms. Though Duterte has since walked back some of his more off-the-cuff foreign policy pronouncements, the cracks in the region's pro-arbitration coalition are harder to conceal when skepticism is coming from the original proponent.

These cracks were on full display during a meeting of foreign ministers from ASEAN earlier this month. The summit seemed ready to conclude on the side of arbitration and the rules-based international order, issuing a statement of "serious concern" with tensions in the South China Sea. The statement was interpreted as an unusually stern rebuke of China. But mere hours later, it was retracted as political will among the community seemed to collapse, and the ministers eventually left with no joint statement at all. The fragile coalition of states in support of strengthening a rules-based order had again crumbled after enough members were peeled off by Beijing.

Curiously, Indonesia — not technically a claimant state, but the largest Southeast Asian country, and one directly concerned about China's increasing claim to waters around the resource-rich Natuna Islands — is currently playing

the most assertive role among littoral countries. China vehemently protested the arrest of seven of its fishermen caught fishing illegally near the Natunas, according to Jakarta. But in the end, no one Southeast Asian nation can stand up to China's pressure tactics. After all, as suggested above, every littoral state is seeking to maintain autonomy and protect sovereignty, but not at the expense of war with a major power.

Over the last three years, China has indeed proved adept at thwarting collective action among its neighbors. Since the Philippines v. China case was first filed in 2013, it was clear that Beijing had little chance to win an argument based on the legal merits. Instead, it has pursued a strategy to discredit and undermine its proceedings, sow discord among those states likely to benefit from the case, and make the geopolitical impact of a ruling meant to be clarifying instead as murky as possible. If Beijing can succeed at dividing the four claimant states whose interests are most directly at stake, the willingness of the rest of ASEAN to stand on principle from a more distant and abstract position is certainly in doubt.

Yet China's history of weakening these rule-of-law coalitions should not be mistaken for the ability to build and hold blocs of opposition. After declaring it had gathered a list of 60 nations opposing The Hague's jurisdiction over South China Sea disputes, only eight have since publicly confirmed their support of Beijing's position.

Nonetheless, regardless of how the court's verdict does or does not change facts on the ground, we should not expect China's boundary-pushing behavior to change anytime soon. Even in the face of The Hague's legal rebuke, China is likely to continue trying to discredit those international laws and norms impinging on its creeping assertions of sovereignty in the South China Sea and elsewhere.

International law should matter. ASEAN's voice must be crystal clear about at least the core principles at stake, something that is impossible without unity from the key maritime states. Alas, China's diplomatic strategy is designed to ensure that America's heavy investment in a rules-based order does not yield big dividends at Beijing's expense.

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