



## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

AS OF 0530 HOURS, JANUARY 24

### OVERVIEW

Following the collapse of Yemen's government, the United States has suspended certain counterterrorism operations in the country, according to the *Washington Post*. In Saudi Arabia, new King Salman bin Abdulaziz appointed his nephew Prince Mohammed bin Nayef – who is reportedly a “central figure” in relations with the U.S. and has spent years battling al-Qaeda militants – to the post of deputy crown prince, putting him second in line to the throne and extending the line of succession to a younger generation. Also of note, the Pentagon said that a group of about 100 American troops would begin arriving in the Middle East in the coming days to establish training sites for Syrian rebels battling ISIL.

### NEWS HEADLINES AT 0500

- Obama to cut short India visit, fly to Saudi Arabia – Indian officials
- Indonesian divers begin operation to raise wreckage of AirAsia jet
- Leftist Syriza party set to win Greek vote, setting up showdown with Europe
- Supreme Court to review lethal injections
- CIA's spying chief plans to retire
- Two Marines killed in helicopter crash at California base
- Baseball legend Ernie Banks, known as 'Mr. Cub,' dies at 83

### OVERSEAS HEADLINES OF NOTE

- *India Today*: Obama, Modi to discuss militant 'havens' in Pakistan
- *Rudaw*: Kurds expected invitation to London anti-ISIS conference – Barzani
- *Tasnim*: Iranian, U.S. diplomats hold nuclear talks in Switzerland

### THIS DAY IN MILITARY HISTORY

- 1972 – After nearly 28 years of hiding in the jungles of Guam, local farmers discover Shoichi Yokoi, a Japanese sergeant who was unaware that World War II had ended

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*Washington Post*, Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Greg Miller and Craig Whitlock

The Obama administration has been forced to suspend certain counterterrorism operations with Yemen in the aftermath of the collapse of its government, according to U.S. officials, a move that eases pressure on al-Qaeda's most dangerous franchise.

#### 2. Saudis Aim to Project Stability

*Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Ahmed al-Omran and Felicia Schwartz

Saudi Arabia's new king swiftly moved to allay worries about continuity atop the oil kingdom, extending the line of succession to a younger generation by naming a nephew who has battled militant extremists and political dissidents alike.

### **3. First U.S. troops head to Middle East to train Syrian opposition**

*Reuters, Jan. 23 | David Alexander and Phil Stewart*

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel has ordered the first group of about 100 U.S. troops to head to the Middle East in the next few days to establish training sites for Syrian opposition fighters battling Islamic State militants, the Pentagon said on Friday.

## **MIDEAST**

### **4. Yemen Unrest Spells Setback for U.S.**

*Wall Street Journal, Jan. 24, Pg. A6 | Damian Paletta and Julian E. Barnes*

The White House's counterterrorism strategy suffered a stark setback this week as a close ally, Yemen's President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, resigned under pressure from a pro-Iranian rebel group called the Houthis.

### **5. New Saudi King and U.S. Face Crucial Point in the Relationship**

*New York Times (News Analysis), Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Helene Cooper, Rod Nordland and Neil MacFarquhar*

Almost a decade ago, an Arab diplomat famously likened the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia to a Catholic marriage "where you can have no divorce." But there can be estrangement. As the Obama administration begins the arduous task of assessing the newly reconstituted House of Saud after the death of King Abdullah on Friday, the relationship between the United States and its most important Arab ally, one fostered with great care and attention to detail over the years, is at a critical and tumultuous point.

### **6. Second-in-waiting is a veteran of anti-terror fight**

*Washington Post, Jan. 24, Pg. A8 | Kevin Sullivan*

In August 2009, a young Saudi militant with ties to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula sent word to Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, then Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism chief, that he wanted to turn himself in. Mohammed sent his private plane to pick the man up, and he was taken to the prince's home in the port city of Jiddah. But once the militant got within a few feet of Mohammed, he detonated a bomb that he was carrying in a body cavity.

## **IRAQ/SYRIA**

### **7. Mosul strikes are start of new effort against Islamic State**

*Associated Press, Jan. 23 | Lolita C. Baldor*

An uptick in airstrikes in northern Iraq this past week marks the beginning of a broader effort to disrupt Islamic State supply lines ahead of an expected operation later this year to take back Mosul from the militants, U.S. military officials said Friday.

### **8. U.S. Won't Admit to Killing a Single Civilian in the ISIS War**

*TheDailyBeast.com, Jan. 24 | Nancy A. Youssef*

Five months and 1,800-plus strikes into the U.S. air campaign against ISIS, and not a single civilian has been killed, officially. But Pentagon officials concede that they really have no way of telling for sure who has died in their attacks—and admit that no one will ever know how many have been slain.

**9. Syrian Airstrike Hits Damascus Suburb, Killing Dozens**

*New York Times, Jan. 24, Pg. A7 | Anne Barnard*

A Syrian government airstrike on Friday hit a market square in an insurgent-held suburb of Damascus, the capital, killing several dozen people, antigovernment activists in the area said, while five Lebanese soldiers were killed in clashes with militants who crisscross the Syrian border, in one of the worst recent cases of spillover violence.

**AFRICA**

**10. Beleaguered, Nigerians Seek to Restore a General to Power**

*New York Times, Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Adam Nossiter*

Boisterous crowds packed the streets for the retired general, while young men climbed lampposts, walls and billboards to glimpse his gaunt face. Others danced on careening motorcycles, brandishing homemade brooms, symbols of his campaign. With Nigeria's presidential election only weeks away, Boko Haram's unchecked rampaging here in the country's north is helping to propel the 72-year-old general, Muhammadu Buhari, to the forefront.

**11. Leader of Libyan Islamists Ansar al-Sharia dies of wounds**

*Reuters, Jan. 23 | Ulf Laessing*

The leader of Libyan Islamist group Ansar al-Sharia has died of wounds suffered when fighting pro-government troops several months ago, his family and officials said on Friday.

**12. Reserve mobilization canceled for Ebola mission**

*MilitaryTimes.com, Jan. 23 | Andrew Tilghman*

Military officials said Friday that the mission to help contain the Ebola virus in West Africa will not require the mobilization of several hundred reservists who had been on tap to deploy.

**EUROPE**

**13. Spain negotiates permanent US Marines Africa force**

*Agence France-Presse, Jan. 23 | Not Attributed*

Spain said Friday it was starting negotiations with Washington to host a permanent US Marines intervention force for deployment on missions to Africa.

**UKRAINE/RUSSIA**

**14. War Is Exploding Anew in Ukraine; Rebels Vow More**

*New York Times, Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Rick Lyman and Andrew E. Kramer*

Unexpectedly, at the height of the Ukrainian winter, war has exploded anew on a half-dozen battered fronts across eastern Ukraine, accompanied by increasing evidence that Russian troops and Russian equipment have been pouring into the region again.

**POLITICS**

**15. Frustration Grips Authorization Vote Over Islamic State**

*Wall Street Journal, Jan. 24, Pg. A4 | Michael R. Crittenden*

In his State of the Union speech this past week, President Barack Obama repeated a call he has made several times for Congress to officially endorse the fight against Islamic State forces and "show the world we are united in this mission."

**DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

**16. Hagel worries about morale in today's force**

*MilitaryTimes.com, Jan. 23 | Andrew Tilghman*

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said he is worried about low morale in today's military and believes it may take years to fully tackle the problems affecting the overall mindset and outlook of the force. "This is as important as anything. I have tried to make that as big a priority as we have in this building, with all our commanders, with all our people all over the world," Hagel said in a Jan. 21 interview with Military Times in his Pentagon office.

**17. Can the Pentagon downsize its headquarters staff?**

*Washington Post Online (Federal Eye), Jan. 23 | Lisa Rein*

Facing budget pressures, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said two years ago that he was ordering the number of top brass and senior civilians at the Pentagon to start shrinking by 20 percent. But federal auditors reported this week that the Defense Department has not produced a realistic plan to make the cuts — and can't say how many people it has or needs at its management headquarters.

**18. Obama Defense Budget Said to Add Funds for Nuclear Upgrades**

*Bloomberg, Jan. 23 | Tony Capaccio*

President Barack Obama approved a Pentagon request to increase spending to improve the aging U.S. nuclear arsenal and bolster military satellite systems, according to a defense official.

**19. Hope for new effort to close prison**

*Los Angeles Times, Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Carol J. Williams*

President Obama has recharged his campaign for closing the Guantanamo Bay detention center with a strategy legal experts say holds out new hope of achieving that signature objective of his presidency.

**AIR FORCE**

**20. SpaceX to drop lawsuit against Air Force over contract to launch satellites**

*Washington Post, Jan. 24, Pg. A16 | Christian Davenport*

SpaceX, Elon Musk's start-up space company, announced late Friday that it would drop its lawsuit against the Air Force protesting the award of a lucrative contract to launch military satellites.

**ARMY**

**21. Fort Hood Could Not Have Foreseen 2014 Gun Attack, Army Says**

*New York Times, Jan. 24, Pg. A11 | Manny Fernandez*

Officials at the Fort Hood Army base in central Texas could not have prevented a shooting rampage last year in part because the troubled soldier behind the attack gave no clear warning that he posed a threat, according to an Army report released Friday.

**22. Army Communications in Pacific Stretched, Tested**

*BreakingDefense.com, Jan. 23 | Sydney J. Freedberg Jr.*

As the US Army deploys more troops to the Pacific, it's running into the limits of its long-range communications systems. The shortfall in comms capacity is not only becoming an issue as the service ramps up its "Pacific Pathways" exercises with Asian partners: It is also raising concerns about the network's resiliency against a cyberattack.

**MARINE CORPS**

**23. CMC's planning guidance emphasizes regional missions**

*MarineCorpsTimes.com, Jan. 23 | Hope Hodge Seck*

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Joseph Dunford released his long-awaited planning guidance Friday, emphasizing development of the Marines' noncommissioned officer ranks, and new missions for each of the three Marine expeditionary forces that operate worldwide.

**VETERANS**

**24. A Nurse's Story: World War II Vet's Lobotomy Scarred Family She Raised**

*Wall Street Journal, Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Michael M. Phillips*

When Paul Ludden visits his mother in the nursing home, he sits on her bed and sings with her. Dorothy, 94 years old, remembers words to 1940s ditties. But she struggles to find memories of her days as a Navy nurse during World War II. When she grows quiet, Paul strokes her gray head, passing fingers over divots in her skull -- tangible reminders that the war left his mother with profound mental illness and that government doctors treated her by cutting into her brain and giving her a lobotomy.

**NOTABLE COMMENTARY**

**25. Saudi Arabia's challenges**

*Washington Post, Jan. 24, Pg. A14 | Editorial*

Saudi King Abdullah had a not-undeserved reputation as a relative moderate and modernizer of his hidebound and autocratic monarchy. He waged war against Islamic extremists, both at home and abroad; invested heavily in education, including for women; worked to preserve good relations with the United States and to check Iranian expansionism; and proposed a landmark plan for Arab peace with Israel.

**26. A Smooth Saudi Succession, but a Rough Road Ahead**

*Wall Street Journal, Jan. 24, Pg. A13 | Karen Elliott House*

The death Thursday of Saudi Arabia's 90-year-old, long-ailing King Abdullah is hardly a surprise, nor are the ascensions of his 79-year-old brother Prince Salman as Saudi king and 69-year-old Muqrin, another brother, as crown prince. But the quick choice of Mohammed bin Nayef as the kingdom's new deputy crown prince is surprising -- and is significant domestically and internationally.

## **27. Playing Politics on Iran**

*New York Times, Jan. 24, Pg. A18 | Editorial*

Normally, the visit of a world leader to the United States would be arranged by the White House. But in a breach of sense and diplomacy, House Speaker John Boehner and Ron Dermer, Israel's ambassador to Washington, have taken it upon themselves to invite Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to Congress to challenge President Obama's approach to achieving a nuclear agreement with Iran.

## **28. There's nothing secular about Boko Haram**

*Washington Post, Jan. 24, Pg. A15 | Colbert I. King*

A reader of last week's column about Islamist extremism wrote, "It is not really about Islam. It is about things you understand all too well: poverty, alienation, disenfranchisement, and a search for meaning and identity. Identifying with Muslim extremist groups gives terrorists a package of support, doctrine, and legitimacy to draw on." The writer commented that, while Boko Haram does not have "much to do with Islam," through its militancy it is able to attract money and training from groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

## **29. Russian Aggression, Western Talk**

*Wall Street Journal, Jan. 24, Pg. A12 | Editorial*

President Obama devoted two short paragraphs in his State of the Union speech on Tuesday to the crisis in Ukraine. "We're upholding the principle that bigger nations can't bully the small," he said, "by opposing Russian aggression, and supporting Ukraine's democracy, and reassuring our NATO allies." Thanks to American and European sanctions, he added, "Russia is isolated with its economy in tatters." Vladimir Putin begs to differ.

## **30. 'American Sniper' missed its real target**

*Washington Post, Jan. 24, Pg. A15 | Alyssa Rosenberg*

Given the ferocious fights over politics and fidelity to history that have defined this Oscar season, perhaps it's no surprise that "American Sniper" star Bradley Cooper wants to avoid his portrayal of Navy SEAL Chris Kyle becoming a partisan football. "It's not a political movie at all, it's a movie about a man - a character study," he insisted in December. "We hope that you can have your eyes opened to the struggle of the soldier rather than the specifics of the war." But what about the specifics of the man himself? "American Sniper" scrupulously sands off Kyle's edges and political beliefs until he becomes precisely the generic stand-in for U.S. service members that Cooper feared the movie might represent.

## **TOP STORIES**

### **1. U.S. halts some counterterror efforts in Yemen**

***Move follows resignations in Sanaa; Security services believed to be in hands of rebels***

*Washington Post, Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Greg Miller and Craig Whitlock*

The Obama administration has been forced to suspend certain counterterrorism operations with Yemen in the aftermath of the collapse of its government, according to U.S. officials, a move that eases pressure on al-Qaeda's most dangerous franchise.

Armed drones operated by the CIA and the U.S. Joint Special Operations Command remain deployed for now over southern Yemen, where al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is based. But some U.S. officials said that the Yemeni security services that provided much of the intelligence that sustained that U.S. air campaign are now controlled by Shiite rebels, known as Houthis, who have seized control of much of the capital.

Even before the disintegration of the government, officials say, the growing chaos in Yemen had resulted in a steady erosion in intelligence-gathering efforts against AQAP and a de facto suspension in raids by Yemeni units trained, equipped and often flown to targeted al-Qaeda compounds by U.S. forces.

"The agencies we worked with . . . are really under the thumb of the Houthis. Our ability to work with them is not there," said a senior U.S. official closely involved in monitoring the situation. In a measure of U.S. concern over the crisis, officials also signaled for the first time a willingness to open talks with Houthi leaders, despite their suspected ties to Iran and antipathy toward the United States.

The developments have unraveled a campaign that President Obama described last year as a model for how the United States should fight terrorist groups, and avoid being drawn more directly into overseas conflicts. The turmoil in Yemen has exposed the risks of that strategy, with U.S. officials now voicing concern that the suspension in operations in Yemen could enable AQAP - which has launched a series of plots against the United States and claimed credit for the attacks in Paris this month - to regroup.

"The chaos has aided al-Qaeda," said the senior U.S. official, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter. "There's no question in our mind that al-Qaeda has gotten a breather."

The White House disputed that joint efforts against al-Qaeda had halted. White House spokesman Alistair Baskey said that "the political instability in Yemen has not forced us to suspend counterterrorism operations" and that "we also continue to partner with Yemeni security forces in this effort."

Asked if those forces were still intact and functional, a senior administration official said, "It is difficult for me to assess what is a very fluid situation on the ground."

Other U.S. officials said that joint operations had been deteriorating since last fall, when Houthi militias began a series of advances toward the capital of Sanaa, but that cooperation had broken down in recent days amid a Houthi assault that culminated with the resignation of Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, a staunch U.S. ally.

Before that development, U.S. military trainers and advisers had continued working closely with Yemeni counterterrorism forces, primarily from al-Anad air base, a Yemeni military installation in the southern part of the country.

A senior military official said that counterterrorism training with Yemeni units has been put "on hold," but that partnered operations between U.S. and Yemeni forces are still ongoing in areas outside the capital.

The Pentagon has been tight-lipped about how many U.S. troops it has deployed to Yemen, but the senior U.S. official said the total number of trainers and advisers numbered in the "dozens" and that the presence had gradually increased over the past two years. The U.S. advisers could accompany Yemeni units on missions around the country, and even provided helicopter transport during operations, but were precluded from directly engaging in combat.

U.S. officials and analysts have said the most reliable Yemeni units were assigned to the Interior Ministry. Their training and equipment, officials said, were designed exclusively for counterterrorism missions, meaning that they were not capable of fending off the Houthi advances and were never summoned to Sanaa to protect Hadi.

U.S. advisers also spent years training units from the Defense Ministry that until 2012 had served under the command of one of the sons of then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh, the long-standing leader of Yemen who was forced from office three years ago but is suspected of having colluded with Houthi elements in recent months to oust Hadi.

Some of the U.S.-trained Yemeni troops resisted the Houthis' advance into Sanaa, but others stepped aside or may even have cooperated with the rebels, the senior U.S. official said. The senior U.S. official said that the United States "wouldn't be averse" to talks with the Houthis on subjects including permission to continue operations against AQAP. "We're not against the Houthi movement."

Yemeni military leadership ranks were overhauled in 2012 largely to remove Saleh relatives and loyalists. April Longley Alley, a senior analyst and Yemen expert with International Crisis Group, described the outcome of that effort as "an absolute disaster."

"Some of the moves were good, but collectively they were very damaging," Alley said. "In the transition, some of the elite troops lost privileges. This created angst towards Hadi and the transition. Some even joined the Houthi."

As a result, Alley said, "al-Qaeda is gaining strength and the Houthis are at the forefront of fighting them, which creates its own problems and fuels recruiting for al-Qaeda."

U.S. officials said they are weighing whether to begin withdrawing military trainers and liaison officers. There is no plan to close the U.S. Embassy, but the senior U.S. official indicated employees from the State Department, CIA and other agencies will probably be withdrawn.

"We will be bringing our numbers down," the official said.

U.S. officials expressed hope that counterterrorism operations could resume if the political conflict in Yemen is resolved.

"It's unclear where that is going to fall out," said a senior administration official. "It is very hard to say until we see what emerges from the current vacuum."

Although AQAP claimed credit for the attacks in Paris this month, U.S. officials have said they have not uncovered evidence of direct involvement by the group after one of the gunmen, Chérif Kouachi, returned to France from Yemen after getting training and as much as \$20,000 from the organization.



AQAP's plots targeting the United States include an attempt to bomb a Detroit-bound airliner on Christmas Day 2009, a plan that failed only when the bomb sewn into the operative's underwear failed to ignite. The group has not been linked to any major attacks outside Yemen in recent years but continues to be regarded as the most immediate terrorism threat to the United States.

Michael Vickers, undersecretary of defense of intelligence, described AQAP as "the most dangerous of al-Qaeda's organizations" in a speech in Washington this week.

The United States has sought to counter the AQAP threat through a campaign of airstrikes that began in late 2009, involving drones flown from separate bases outside Yemen operated by the U.S. military's elite Joint Special Operations Command and the CIA.

The pace of U.S. airstrikes has tapered off, with no known attack since Dec. 6. With Hadi's departure, the United States may no longer have explicit Yemeni permission for the drone campaign. Even if it were to continue, U.S. officials said it may become increasingly difficult to find targets.

"The issue would be whether you have the intelligence you need," the senior U.S. official said. "To a large extent, that was a product of the cooperation we got from the Yemenis."

*--Greg Jaffe contributed to this report*

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## **2. Saudis Aim to Project Stability**

### ***New King Names First Member of Next Generation to Royal Line of Succession***

Wall Street Journal, Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Ahmed al-Omran and Felicia Schwartz

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia -- Saudi Arabia's new king swiftly moved to allay worries about continuity atop the oil kingdom, extending the line of succession to a younger generation by naming a nephew who has battled militant extremists and political dissidents alike.

On the same day he ascended to the throne, King Salman bin Abdulaziz appointed his 55-year-old nephew Prince Mohammed bin Nayef to the post of deputy crown prince, putting him second in line after Crown Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz.

After decades of the crown being passed from one son of the kingdom's founder, Abdulaziz ibn Saud, to another, the decision to insert a grandson into the line of succession marked an important generational shift for the Saudi royal family and the country that bears its name. The move followed the death on Friday of one of Saudi Arabia's most popular and longest-serving leaders, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz.

Prince Mohammed bin Nayef is credited with dismantling al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia through an aggressive anti-terrorism policy that he led from 1999 under his father, a long-serving interior minister and later crown prince. Well before becoming interior minister himself in 2012, Prince Mohammed has been a central figure in the kingdom's close relations with the U.S., and met in December in Washington with President Barack Obama.

"He's an architect of the Saudi counterterrorism effort; he's been the main point of contact for the U.S. on that," a State Department official said.

James Smith, the U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia from 2009 to 2013, said the new king and deputy crown prince "might be the hardest working people I know in government," and noted the Prince bin Nayef's propensity to work long hours, often through the night.

"I asked him one time, 'Why do you stay up all night?'" Mr. Smith said. "He smiled and said, 'That's when the bad guys come out.'"

The kingdom faces an array of challenges, and many of its critics have questioned whether its aging leadership has the energy and vision to tackle them. King Salman is 79 years old and Crown Prince Muqrin is 69.

The militants of Islamic State to its north have made clear the kingdom is on its list of hated targets, while a militia said to enjoy Iranian support has ousted the president of its southern neighbor on the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen.

"They've seen the rest of the Middle East unravel literally around them, and they're determined not to let the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia be the next to unravel," said Bruce Riedel, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. "They'll work with the U.S. to prevent that, even as there's going to be frictions on other issues."

Saudi Arabia has become more aggressive in recent years in asserting its power in the Middle East. Even while it continues to see the U.S. as its ultimate protector, the kingdom has grown increasingly suspicious of Washington's role in nuclear talks with Iran, which it views as a territorial and ideological rival.

But the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have long had issues on which they've agreed to disagree, including Israel.

"The fact that we may disagree on an issue or strategy does not in any sense mean there is a breach in the relationship," Mr. Smith said.

State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have a long history of working together. "We don't have any indication that cooperation will change," she said.

State television on Friday morning aired a brief speech by the new Saudi monarch in which he expressed sorrow over Abdullah's death and affirmed that the kingdom would hold to the same "correct path" it has taken since its founding in 1932.

King Salman's son, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, was named defense minister, a position the new king held until he succeeded his half-brother. The 34-year-old prince was also designated chief of the royal court, replacing Khaled Al Tuwaijri, who was removed from all his posts. Mr. Tuwaijri was an influential adviser to the late king.

All other current ministers in the cabinet, including the oil minister Ali al-Naimi, will keep their positions, King Salman said in another royal decree.

The path to royalty in Saudi Arabia, unlike most other monarchies, isn't straight because the throne doesn't pass automatically from parent to eldest child upon the death or abdication of the monarch.

Saudi law stipulates only that the throne passes to the "most upright" of the sons and grandsons of the kingdom's founder.

The moves by Saudi Arabia's new king came just hours before Abdullah's surviving sons carried their father's shrouded remains on a pallet atop their shoulders to his grave at Oud Cemetery in the capital, Riyadh.

In keeping with the traditions of the Wahhabi strand of Sunni Islam, which frowns on idolizing the dead and dramatic public expressions of grief, the grave was unmarked and members of the royal family and other mourners were somber and restrained.

In 2006, the Saudi royal family established a panel designed to help future kings choose their heirs, but exempted King Abdullah and his successor from its mandate.

Under the provisions of the so-called Allegiance Committee, any future king's choice for crown prince will be subject to a vote by the panel, whose members are all from the royal family. If the committee disapproves of the king's selection, it offers an alternative candidate. If the two sides still fail to agree, the committee votes on one of the two nominees.

Given the strength of royal prerogatives, however, it is far from certain whether the Allegiance Committee will be convened under any of King Salman's successors.

Prince Mohammed bin Nayef has long been seen as a top contender to lead his generation into the Saudi succession.

A factor that set him apart from his peers among the founder's grandsons is his having paid in blood for his country after a suicide bomber attempted to assassinate him in 2009. He survived the attack with minor injuries.

Under Prince Mohammed bin Nayef's authority as interior minister, Saudi Arabia launched a sweeping crackdown on dissent that has intensified after the beginning of the Arab uprisings, with many human rights activists and critics of the government sentenced to travel bans and long jail terms.

Noted for his iron fist in cracking down on religious extremists and government critics, Prince Mohammed has also established rehab centers to lure extremists away from their ideology.

*--Bill Spindle contributed to this article*

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### **3. First U.S. troops head to Middle East to train Syrian opposition**

Reuters, Jan. 23 | David Alexander and Phil Stewart

WASHINGTON -- Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel has ordered the first group of about 100 U.S. troops to head to the Middle East in the next few days to establish training sites for Syrian opposition fighters battling Islamic State militants, the Pentagon said on Friday.

Admiral John Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary, said the troops, mostly special operations forces, were authorized last week and would begin arriving in countries outside Syria in the coming days, with a subsequent wave of several hundred military trainers following in the weeks thereafter.

The U.S. focus in the campaign against Islamic State has been mainly on Iraq, with the exception of a large number of air strikes to support Kurdish fighters trying to prevent the takeover of the Syrian town of Kobani near the Turkish border.

Kirby said on Friday that Kurdish forces now control about 70 percent of Kobani, which was seen a few months ago as being near collapse, with much of it in the hands of Islamic State.

He said the advanced element of U.S. forces headed to establish training sites amounted to fewer than 100 troops.

"They're going to ... take a look at what's there and prepare for further deployments," Kirby said.

Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have offered to host sites where U.S. forces could train members of the Syrian opposition to fight Islamic State and provide security in their home communities. Kirby did not say where exactly the first training sites were located.

The U.S. military has said it is planning to send more than 400 troops for the training mission and several hundred support forces for a total of about 1,000 or more.

Kirby said last week that several hundred foreign military troops were also expected to act as trainers, including forces from the host countries.

He said on Friday that active recruitment of Syrian trainees had not started, although U.S. military officials have been discussing the matter with Syrian groups.

Kirby said Major General Michael Nagata, the special forces chief tapped to handle the training mission, has had "very productive" meetings with Syrian opposition leaders.

"But it didn't lead to specific people signing up yet," Kirby added.

U.S. officials have said if the current momentum continues, training could begin in the spring, with the first trainees returning to Syria at year's end. Officials plan to train 5,000 Syrian fighters a year for three years.

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## **MIDEAST**

### **4. Yemen Unrest Spells Setback for U.S.**

*Ousted President's Backing Helped Counterterrorism Strategy, but Pentagon Says Strikes to Continue*

Wall Street Journal, Jan. 24, Pg. A6 | Damian Paletta and Julian E. Barnes

WASHINGTON -- The White House's counterterrorism strategy suffered a stark setback this week as a close ally, Yemen's President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, resigned under pressure from a pro-Iranian rebel group called the Houthis.

A new government hasn't been formed, and U.S. officials described the situation as worrisome and extremely fluid. President Barack Obama and other top U.S. officials had been close to Mr. Hadi for several years, and he provided

his consent for the U.S. government to conduct targeted drone strikes and to train troops in the effort to weaken al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, known as AQAP, which is loosely based in the country.

"We're in uncharted territory now," said retired Gen. James Mattis, the former head of U.S. Central Command said Friday. He predicted that Iran, which U.S. and allied officials have said provides support to the Houthi rebels, could attempt to cause "mischief."

At the White House, however, press secretary Josh Earnest noted that the Houthis and AQAP are enemies, suggesting the situation was very uncertain.

Thousands of demonstrators on both sides took to the streets across the country on Friday as the political stalemate continued, the Associated Press reported from the capital, San'a.

White House officials haven't signaled how they will adjust their approach following the government's collapse on Thursday, though it could affect everything from troop training to drone operations.

There are no immediate plans to remove U.S. special operations forces from Yemen, for example, and drones that routinely patrol the country haven't been pulled from the area.

At the Pentagon, officials said they would continue to strike AQAP and mount other counterterrorism operations. "We will pursue AQAP under any circumstance," said an official.

Rear Adm. John Kirby, the Pentagon spokesman, said the partnership with the Yemeni government helped tremendously with operations against militant groups there. But he also noted that the U.S. conducts operations in parts of the world without explicit approval of other governments.

"Certainly a willing partner in Yemen, as in many places in the world, makes missions like that much more effective," he said. "But we have also proven the ability to go after terrorists in various places of the world unilaterally. We will still retain that right, that responsibility and the resources to do that."

The unrest in Yemen and the resignation of the president, Adm. Kirby said, wouldn't amount to a veto over U.S. operations.

But he added that the U.S. needs a better understanding of the situation "before we can make any new decisions or move forward in any significant way on counterterrorism in Yemen."

The U.S. military is maintaining naval ships in the region to assist with an evacuation of American personnel from Yemen if it becomes necessary. But Adm. Kirby said there was no need for an evacuation now.

There are still believed to be active training camps in Yemen, and the U.S. has conducted dozens of drone strikes in recent years to try to further destabilize the group, always with the support of Mr. Hadi.

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## **5. New Saudi King and U.S. Face Crucial Point in the Relationship**

New York Times (News Analysis), Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Helene Cooper, Rod Nordland and Neil MacFarquhar

WASHINGTON -- Almost a decade ago, an Arab diplomat famously likened the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia to a Catholic marriage "where you can have no divorce."

But there can be estrangement. As the Obama administration begins the arduous task of assessing the newly reconstituted House of Saud after the death of King Abdullah on Friday, the relationship between the United States and its most important Arab ally, one fostered with great care and attention to detail over the years, is at a critical and tumultuous point.

Saudi Arabia's new king, Salman, 79, inherits both the policies put in place by the more assertive brother he is succeeding and the conflicts that in recent years have characterized relations with Washington. On issues from Iran to the Arab Spring, from Syria to domestic issues within Saudi Arabia like the recent flogging of a journalist, there have been significant differences between American officials and the Saudi royal family.

The close ties once nurtured so lovingly by the Bush administration have given way to complaints from the Saudis about an aloof American president who should have done more to unseat President Bashar al-Assad of Syria and less to unseat former President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. The Saudis also remain deeply skeptical about President Obama's efforts to negotiate an agreement with Iran over its nuclear program.

"The Saudis are hard pressed to think of any country or collection of countries that can do what the United States can do," said Jon B. Alterman, director of the Middle East program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "At the same time, they are worried that the United States' intentions are changing at a time when they don't have an alternative or even the structure to find an alternative."

Yet Saudi Arabia is still managing to change the global economy at a crucial time by flooding oil markets, keeping oil output so high that it is aiding Mr. Obama on a number of fronts. By depressing oil prices, Saudi Arabia has given him a boost at home. The Saudis have helped Mr. Obama abroad as well, because those lowered prices help pressure Iran over its nuclear ambitions and Russia over its aggression in Ukraine. As a result, Obama administration officials are treading carefully as they navigate the Saudi succession. While Mr. Obama is going ahead with a long-planned trip to India, Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. will lead a delegation to Saudi Arabia to pay respect and offer condolences.

"The president certainly hopes, and we expect, that the strong relationship that exists between the United States and Saudi Arabia will endure under the leadership of the new king," Josh Earnest, the White House press secretary, said Friday. The Saudis have long relied on the United States as their military umbrella. But that relationship soured after King Abdullah felt that Mr. Obama was ignoring the region, or at least Saudi concerns. According to a leaked diplomatic memo, in 2008 King Abdullah urged the United States to weigh military action against Iran to "cut off the head of the snake." Now the Saudis worry about an American deal with Iran, and Saudi Arabia, like Israel, relishes the split between Congress and the White House over more sanctions and the possibility that they could scuttle an agreement.

And the interests of the two countries tend to diverge on other issues, especially combating Al Qaeda and other extremist organizations, which receive some of their funding from Saudi sources. "I think the Saudis and the Americans have developed the habit of coexisting with their disagreements," said Khalid al-Dakhil, a political-science professor in Riyadh, the Saudi capital.

White House officials said they were confident that the United States and Saudi Arabia would continue to work together on a range of issues, including the fight against the Islamic State and the response to the recent instability in Yemen. And they said the relationship had improved in recent months, in part because of Mr. Obama's decision to launch airstrikes against the Islamic State, a campaign that Saudi Arabia has joined and that King Salman's ascension to the throne was not expected to derail.

"We are much closer now," a senior administration official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. "I wouldn't say we are completely aligned, but it's far less than it was at times."

Others are not so sure.

"The recent shift in Saudi regional and foreign relations is not how outspoken it has become, but how muscular it has become," said Fawaz A. Gerges, a professor of international relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science. "It has long prided itself on acting behind the scenes."

An annual "intelligence" dinner at a hotel in Washington every year illustrates that point. The host is the Saudi ambassador to the United States, Adel al-Jubeir, the guests a group of American and Arab spies and intelligence officials, Middle East policy experts and top national security officials in the American government like John O. Brennan, the C.I.A. director who served as the agency's Saudi Arabia station chief in the late 1990s. Save welcoming remarks by Mr. al-Jubeir, there is no set program, no keynote speech, just high-level national security officials and foreign policy experts networking. Attendees describe the affairs as a Saudi show of force.

"There's no desire even to talk to the gathered public," said one foreign policy expert who attended last year's dinner, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he didn't want to lose his invitation to this year's dinner. "The point seems to be to say, 'Hey, we can get 300 important people in a room. Now let's move on.'"

Lacking American support in key areas, Saudi Arabia is increasingly striking out on its own. Without the military means to sway events in Syria, and with Mr. Obama balking at forcibly removing Mr. al-Assad in Syria, Saudi Arabia used oil to try to influence Syria's two main backers, Iran and Russia. As worldwide demand softened, Saudi Arabia continued pumping, even as prices tumbled to around \$50 a barrel from more than \$100.

To maintain its own social spending, including \$130 billion in benefits designed to ensure domestic stability, the kingdom needs an oil price of \$100. But given its foreign reserves of around \$730 billion, it could hold out for a few years with lower prices, analysts say.

Saudi Arabia has not been drawn directly into the Arab uprisings in Tunisia, which is relatively stable, or Libya, although that may yet occur. Its main problem is next door in Yemen.

Militiamen from the Houthis, a Zaydi sect of Shiite Islam and traditional rulers of Yemen, have seized power. Seeing the Houthis as modeled on Hezbollah in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia had already cut off the \$4 billion in annual aid to the pro-American government. The United States has seemed much more inclined to try to reach an agreement with the Houthis, at least on the fight against Al Qaeda.

But despite these differences, the pattern of accommodation that emerged under King Abdullah is likely to endure. "The default setting for the Saudis is always the status quo," added Eugene L. Rogan, the director of the Middle East Center at St. Antony's College, Oxford.

Still, the days when American and Saudi leaders acted in unison in the Middle East, and when Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador, was the toast of Washington and a constant presence at the Bush White House, are in the past. And if King Salman is anything like his brother, a certain amount of friction will be a given. Late in January 2011, King Abdullah became so angry during a phone call with Mr. Obama over the president's determination to abandon support for Mr. Mubarak that he hung up on him.

Saudi aides were quick to leak the anecdote.

*--Helene Cooper reported from Washington; Rod Nordland from Amman, Jordan; and Neil MacFarquhar from Moscow. Michael D. Shear contributed reporting from Washington, Ranya Kadri from Amman, and David D. Kirkpatrick from Cairo*

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## **6. Second-in-waiting is a veteran of anti-terror fight**

***Mohammed bin Nayef is first of his generation to join line of succession***

Washington Post, Jan. 24, Pg. A8 | Kevin Sullivan

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia - In August 2009, a young Saudi militant with ties to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula sent word to Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, then Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism chief, that he wanted to turn himself in. Mohammed sent his private plane to pick the man up, and he was taken to the prince's home in the port city of Jiddah. But once the militant got within a few feet of Mohammed, he detonated a bomb that he was carrying in a body cavity.

The explosion blew the attacker apart and lightly injured Mohammed, who has survived at least three other assassination attempts. "It was a mistake," Mohammed acknowledged at the time. On Friday, King Salman's first act in his new role was to name Mohammed, 55, deputy crown prince, which makes him second in line to the throne. Most significant, Mohammed is the first member of his generation - the grandsons of national founder King Abdul Aziz - to be formally added to the succession line. Salman's move was designed to ensure the Saud family's long-term hold on power.

By choosing Mohammed, analysts said, the king has selected a man who is regarded as smart, is well liked by U.S. officials and who has learned the lessons of years of fighting al-Qaeda militants. "When somebody sees things with his own eyes, when he's targeted, I think he is toughened," said Awadh al-Badi, a researcher and scholar at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh.

"He has led the fight against terrorism and his accomplishments are tangible," Badi added, noting that Mohammed effectively neutralized a wave of al-Qaeda attacks within the kingdom.

Mohammed is the son of Nayef bin Abdul Aziz, who was crown prince when he died in 2012 and was one of two heirs to the throne who were outlived by King Abdullah, the last monarch. Mohammed's father preceded him as interior minister.

Badi said Mohammed has been exposed to the pressures and realities of power, which would be a plus should he eventually ascend to the throne. "There is no doubt he is familiar with how things work in the world," he said. "He's



part of the political establishment, and I'm sure he is one of the people who is very capable. He is known for his seriousness."

U.S. officials see Mohammed as a strong ally in the struggle against the Islamic State and al-Qaeda. The prince earned a degree in political science at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Ore., in 1981 and speaks excellent English.

Mohammed met with President Obama in the Oval Office on Dec. 12, discussing terrorism and regional issues. At the time, F. Gregory Gause III, a prominent international affairs professor at Texas A&M University, called Mohammed "America's favorite Saudi official." Gause cited the good cooperation between U.S. officials and the Saudi Interior Ministry.

"What he has - and which American officials have grown to appreciate in particular - is that he's quite pragmatic and not particularly ideological," said a senior Obama administration official in Washington, who commented on the condition of anonymity to be able to speak more freely. "He certainly gives priority to the terrorist threat, and on all the practical ways of trying to deal with the problem," the official added. "On other regional challenges, he is trying to work with us, and with an emphasis on countering the same terrorist threat we perceive. He has been a particularly constructive partner." [Read: Abdullah's death sets up complex succession process]

Human rights activists had high hopes for Mohammed when he took over as interior minister, but those hopes were quickly crushed, said Adam Coogle, a Saudi-based Middle East researcher for Human Rights Watch. "What's very troubling about his record is that he is the principle architect of this massive onslaught against dissidents and human rights activists," Coogle said. "He is the chief, number one hard-liner, and he is persecuting moderate, independent voices for reform."

Coogle said Mohammed's father would often lock people up arbitrarily and without charges for a few days or weeks when he was interior minister, then let them go when he thought he had taught them a lesson. Mohammed made the system more professional, with actual charges and trials, but the outcome is that those whose only crime is to criticize the regime receive prison sentences of 10 or 15 years, he said. "So he's actually worse than his father," Coogle said.

*--Steven Mufson in Washington contributed to this report*

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## **IRAQ/SYRIA**

### **7. Mosul strikes are start of new effort against Islamic State**

Associated Press, Jan. 23 | Lolita C. Baldor

WASHINGTON — An uptick in airstrikes in northern Iraq this past week marks the beginning of a broader effort to disrupt Islamic State supply lines ahead of an expected operation later this year to take back Mosul from the militants, U.S. military officials said Friday.

Coalition airstrikes have pounded at least two dozen locations around Mosul, destroying dozens of vehicles, buildings, fighting positions and insurgent units.

The airstrikes, said one senior military official, are the start of a new phase, and military leaders are watching to see how Islamic State militants respond as their supply and communications lines dry up. The official was not authorized to discuss the operations publicly so spoke on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, at the Pentagon Friday Rear Adm. John Kirby said U.S. efforts to train Iraqi forces and moderate Syrian rebels to fight Islamic State militants are moving forward, even as insurgents still control about 21,000 square miles of Iraq.

Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary, laid out a flurry of details and data aimed at showing the progress the coalition has made since it began airstrikes against the insurgents in Iraq last August.

Kirby said that about 270 square miles in Iraq have been regained from militants, mostly by Kurdish forces in the north. He cautioned that control of land across the country will continually change over time, and it will be a long struggle.

"I think we all recognize that it's a small percentage of the total right now. But we're only six, seven months into this thing, too," said Kirby. "ISIL had a big head start on us, coming into the summer. A pretty aggressive first quarter for those guys."

He added, however, that while it will take time to uproot the Islamic State group, 270 square miles also is not an insignificant amount.

U.S. officials have said the coalition has stalled the momentum of the Islamic State militants, and Kirby said Friday that about 6,000 of the fighters have been killed, according to estimated battle damage assessment of the airstrikes. U.S. officials estimate there were between 20,000 and about 30,000 insurgent fighters, including core Islamic State militants and other aligned militias.

Kirby said the number killed is "not a metric that we're going to hang our hat on when it comes to talking to the success of this strategy ... This is not a uniformed army with identification cards and recruiting posters. So, it's hard to say at any given time how many fighters they have in the field."

Instead, he said that more relevant measures of success would be the effect airstrikes and other operations have had on the insurgents' ability to operate and communicate. He said the Islamic State group is more on the defensive, struggling to get supplies and financing and having difficulties replacing destroyed weapons and machinery.

"While we're seeing all that, we're also mindful that they're still a potent force inside Iraq and in Syria. And that this is going to continue to take some time," he said.

Kirby also said that training has begun in all four planned sites in Iraq. About 3,600 Iraqi and Kurdish forces are in the pipeline for training at sites in Irbil, Bismayah, Taji and at Anbar Province's al-Asad Air Base. The training camp in Irbil began operations Friday, and about 100 peshmerga fighters have started their instruction.

So far, plans are to train nine Iraqi brigades and three Kurdish brigades.

Training for the moderate Syrian rebels has also begun to move forward. Kirby said Friday that an advance team of fewer than 100 U.S. troops will soon head to training sites in Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar to begin site surveys

and other preparations for the Syrian rebel training. The next wave of several hundred trainers and support troops could deploy in the coming weeks.

Preliminary discussions with Syrian rebel groups have started, but actual vetting of individual fighters for the training hasn't begun yet. Kirby said military leaders are optimistic that they will have an adequate pool of rebel fighters, adding that they will be vetted periodically throughout the process to insure they are working with the right people.

The recruiting process is expected to take three to five months, so training could begin by early spring. That training will take six to eight months, so the first Syrian fighters won't be on the battlefield until late fall or the end of the year.

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## **8. U.S. Won't Admit to Killing a Single Civilian in the ISIS War**

*Civilian deaths, a keystone metric of the last war in Iraq, has now become the statistic no one wants to talk about*  
TheDailyBeast.com, Jan. 24 | Nancy A. Youssef

Five months and 1,800-plus strikes into the U.S. air campaign against ISIS, and not a single civilian has been killed, officially. But Pentagon officials concede that they really have no way of telling for sure who has died in their attacks—and admit that no one will ever know how many have been slain.

“It’s impossible for us to know definitively if civilians are killed in a strike. We do everything we can to investigate. We don’t do strikes if we think civilians could be there. But we can’t have a perfect picture on what’s going on,” one Pentagon official explained to The Daily Beast.

Stuart Jones, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, told al Arabiya that U.S. and coalition strikes in Iraq and Syria have killed 6,000 ISIS fighters. That no civilians could be among that figure strikes observers and even military officials as all but impossible.

Yet neither the Iraqi and Syrian governments nor the Congress are pushing U.S. military for answers. And with no American ground troops to assess the damage of the air campaign, human rights groups and Pentagon officials alike admit that one casualty of the war itself is an accurate breakdown of who has been killed in it.

“If you don’t know the very basic information, for example who is dropping bombs and where, it is very hard to verify or deny claims of civilian harm,” said Marla Keenan, managing director at Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), which tracks civilian casualties.

Civilian deaths, a keystone metric of the U.S. campaign to win hearts and minds in Iraq during the 2003-11 war, has now become the statistic no one wants to talk about. The U.S. military said earlier this month that it’s investigating claims of slain innocents. But until recently, the attitude towards so-called “collateral damage” seemed remarkably incurious, despite the Pentagon’s assertions that their strikes are so precise that they minimize civilian deaths and that they are committed to investigating suspected civilian deaths.

“I am tracking no civilian casualties,” Lt. Gen. James L. Terry, commander of Operation Inherent Resolve, the U.S. campaign in Iraq and Syria, told reporters at a Pentagon briefing last month. “Where we—if we even suspect

civilian casualties, we would immediately direct investigation, determine the cause, and then seek to understand the lessons learned from that and apply those lessons learned.”

U.S. Central Command, which oversees military missions in the region, is not transparent about how they conduct investigations, however. CENTCOM officials have said they are investigating two claims of civilian deaths both which occurred in late December—after Terry asserted there were no such deaths. But they have not said where those deaths may have occurred other than say one happened in Iraq and Syria, who raised concerns, precisely how many civilians may have been killed or how CENTCOM is conducting its investigation. So far, CENTCOM officials said, they usually open such cases when their own evaluation, human rights groups or media outlets make claims of civilian deaths. In all, the two cases involve less than five civilians, CENTCOM officials said.

One reason CENTCOM can be so vague is that no one in a position of authority is asking aggressive questions about civilian casualties. In testimony on Capitol Hill about the U.S. campaign against the Islamic State, no one has pushed Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or Brett McGurk, President Obama’s deputy envoy for the coalition effort to defeat Islamic State, on the issue of civilian casualties.

“I think the public just prefers to believe we can drop bombs and not harm anyone,” Keenan said.

In both Iraq and Syria, the governments themselves are believed to have killed more civilians than the U.S. strikes, making it unlikely they’d raise concerns about civilian deaths. In Iraq, the Iraqi security forces and local militias have been responsible for hundreds of deaths this year alone, according to Iraq Body Count, which has been tracking civilian casualties since the 2003 U.S. invasion. And in Syria, the regime of President Bashar al Assad is suspected behind the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians since the war began there in 2011.

More recently Assad has piggybacked on U.S. air strikes to wage his own war against his opponents and has then blamed civilian deaths on coalition forces.

And as of now, both Iraq and Syria are benefiting from the strikes, which is perhaps why the Iraqi government has not pressed the issue with the United States, U.S. officials told The Daily Beast. They want the U.S. campaign to continue, officials explained.

“I don’t see the upside for the Iraqi government. The Iraqi government wants as many sorties as the coalition will fly and as many weapons as the coalition will give them. Civilian casualties are a source of friction,” Christopher Harmer, an analyst for the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington, D.C.-based research group.

The Syrian government also wants the campaign to continue as it is benefiting from the war on ISIS, which threatens the current regime. And in all their propaganda videos, ISIS rarely brings up civilian deaths at the hands of U.S. and coalition forces. Perhaps that has something to do with all of the civilians ISIS fighters have killed themselves.

Coalition and U.S. strikes are usually carried out in small towns and villages where the number of residents is smaller and independent observers are even less. Allegations come from residents who can make contact with human rights groups or journalists, a far departure from the last Iraq war when U.S. troops and journalists blanketed the country. Those who claim such deaths can have an either political or financial incentive for doing so.

The lack of credible information leads to various sides making their own claims, and a war that is having unknown effects. For example, on Dec. 28, coalition forces struck the Syrian city of al Bab, which has been the scene for strikes by both coalition and Syrian government forces targeting rebel forces and ISIS. Residents told McClatchy that coalition strikes killed 50 residents in a nearby jail. Pentagon officials said its forces never struck the jail and pinned the deaths—which, based on local reports, they believe is closer to 25 -- on Assad forces during a strike launched two days prior. No one can say for certain which claim is true, three weeks after the initial charges were made.

That such attacks could be happening against civilians by government forces without repercussions is a failure of the nations that back them, observers said.

“The international community supporting these governments has a responsibility to put pressure on these governments to protect their civilians,” said Sahr Muhammed, senior program manager for CIVIC with a focus on Middle East.

International observers do keep some rough estimates about the total number of people killed and displaced in Iraq and Syria. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, about 18,680 Iraqis have been slain since November 2012. (I added the numbers on the right side of the chart). In April 2014, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a U.K.-based group, said it had documented the death of 150,000 Syrians since the war there erupted in March 2011.

But there’s maddeningly little information on how many of those deaths have come at the hands of the U.S.-led coalition. The only group that appears to have any breakdown of civilian deaths by coalition strikes in both countries is the International Committee of the Red Cross, which has sources and observers, but they do not release such statistics. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition group, occasionally reports incidents but does not appear to have a total number. Iraq Body Count shows no reported civilian deaths by coalition air strikes.

Either way, Muhammed explained, “we will never know the number of how many have been killed.”

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## **9. Syrian Airstrike Hits Damascus Suburb, Killing Dozens**

New York Times, Jan. 24, Pg. A7 | Anne Barnard

BEIRUT, Lebanon -- A Syrian government airstrike on Friday hit a market square in an insurgent-held suburb of Damascus, the capital, killing several dozen people, antigovernment activists in the area said, while five Lebanese soldiers were killed in clashes with militants who crisscross the Syrian border, in one of the worst recent cases of spillover violence.

The airstrike near Damascus hit the center of the town of Hamouriyeh in east Ghouta, a rebellious swath of suburbs that have been under siege for two years by government forces. Video posted by antigovernment activists showed bloody victims, burning buildings, destroyed market stalls, and corpses, including the burned body of a small child. The government said via the official news agency, Sana, that it had carried out operations against terrorists.

The continuing attacks come as the United Nations is pushing for a freeze in fighting in the northern city of Aleppo, the government is continuing its strategy of seeking local cease-fires and Russia is trying to convene a new round of

peace talks set to start in Moscow on Monday. Several opposition groups have said they would not attend the talks organized by Russia, the most powerful ally of the Syrian government.

Last week, government forces evacuated nearly 4,000 people from the town of Douma, just north of Damascus, and a rare delivery of United Nations aid was allowed to enter the area. Footage showed emaciated and exhausted-looking people leaving Douma. Sana reported that they had been kept there against their will by "terrorists."

Some local residents, on the other hand, said in interviews that they had left in desperation because of a lack of food and medicine inside Douma, and that fighting-age men were forced to join government forces in order to leave. Numerous Ghouta residents said that young men were being pushed to join a force called Jaish al-Wafa, or the Loyalty Army, a newly organized pro-government militia.

Mohammad Sallh al-Deen, an opposition activist in the Ghouta town of Erbin, said via Skype that the attack in Hamouriyeh was meant to step up pressure on more people to agree to be evacuated, a strategy the government has used in the central city of Homs and in Damascus suburbs like Moadhamiyeh.

"It was the strongest attack in a long time," he said, citing contacts in Hamouriyeh. "Carnage is everywhere in town." He put the death toll at 50 people, including six children. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, based in Britain and working with a network of local contacts, put the toll at 46, including six children.

He said he believed President Bashar al-Assad's forces were stepping up attacks "because it wants them to give up and leave Ghouta under his supervision, so the youths will join the Loyalty Army. This way Bashar will kill the revolt completely in Ghouta."

Earlier in the week, a car bomb killed 15 people, mostly college students, in a government-held section of Homs that insurgents have repeatedly hit, and the northeastern province of Qamishli suffered one of its highest single death tolls in the nearly four-year-old civil war. Government airstrikes hit a market in Tal Hamis. Two local activists, giving their names as Mosaab and Amir, said in Skype interviews that 70 bodies had been identified and that 13 others were burned beyond recognition, with more than 100 wounded.

State media said Islamic State fighters were the targets of the airstrikes, but the activists said that civilians and fighters with the Kurdish militias known as the People's Protection Units were among the dead.

In Lebanon, the army said in a statement that five soldiers had died in clashes that also killed many militants on the outskirts of Ras Baalbek, north of Aarsal, the Lebanese border town where Syrian insurgents and allied foreign fighters have formed a stronghold.

Lebanon, which is deeply divided over the war in Syria, has worked hard to keep wholesale war from spilling over, but the army and Hezbollah militants have increasingly fought running battles with Syrian insurgents along the mountainous border.

*--Mohammad Ghannam and Hwaida Saad contributed reporting*

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## AFRICA

## 10. Beleaguered, Nigerians Seek to Restore a General to Power

New York Times, Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Adam Nossiter

KADUNA, Nigeria -- Boisterous crowds packed the streets for the retired general, while young men climbed lampposts, walls and billboards to glimpse his gaunt face. Others danced on careening motorcycles, brandishing homemade brooms, symbols of his campaign.

With Nigeria's presidential election only weeks away, Boko Haram's unchecked rampaging here in the country's north is helping to propel the 72-year-old general, Muhammadu Buhari, to the forefront.

After ruling Nigeria with an iron hand 30 years ago as the country's military leader, Mr. Buhari is now a serious threat at the ballot box, analysts say, in large part because of Boko Haram's blood-soaked successes.

"The state is collapsing and everybody is frightened," Jibrin Ibrahim, a political scientist with the Center for Democracy and Development in Abuja, the Nigerian capital, said of Boko Haram.

"They are able to capture more and more territory, but also increase the level of atrocity," he added. "A lot of people are frightened that these people can take over the whole country. So a lot of people are saying, 'Give Buhari a chance.' "

A Buhari victory over President Goodluck Jonathan would be a rare upset for an incumbent in a country where petrodollars have long flowed and the presidency has great latitude to distribute them.

But oil prices have crashed; attacks on schools, markets and entire villages continue unabated; and Nigeria's army has been thoroughly incapable of stopping Boko Haram, which now controls substantial portions of the northeast and regularly sends the country's soldiers fleeing.

"We have to solve it; it's the first problem of the country," Mr. Buhari said tersely about the battle with Boko Haram during a long day of campaigning this week.

"This should have been an easy one," added the former general, who is believed to have been a target of bombings in this city over the summer in which dozens were killed. "But it has been allowed to develop over five years."

There is much at stake in Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, even as it falters -- the currency has dropped sharply, questions are swirling about the ability to pay civil servants and the country's oil-money reserves have withered. The campaign has become a vociferous, at times violent, joust between Buhari partisans in the mostly Muslim north and supporters of Mr. Jonathan in the largely Christian south.

Mr. Buhari's tenure as Nigeria's military ruler was brief: a 20-month stint in the 1980s, ended by another military coup. Yet it is remembered with trepidation by many Nigerians.

His self-proclaimed "war against indiscipline" was carried to "sadistic levels, glorying in the humiliation of a people," wrote the Nobel laureate and writer Wole Soyinka. Mr. Buhari forced tardy civil servants, even older ones, to perform frog jumps, jailed journalists for critical articles, and expelled tens of thousands of immigrants from other West African countries, blaming them for the country's problems.

The current president and his party, which has held power since military rule ended more than 15 years ago, have made this past a central part of Mr. Jonathan's re-election strategy, hoping to fan old fears about the general.

Full-page newspaper ads suggest that Mr. Buhari is eager to introduce Shariah law all over the country, beyond the northern states where it already exists (in the campaign, Mr. Buhari has not said that).

Other ads remind readers of the retired general's coup-prone past. (Historians say that even before Mr. Buhari came to power in a military coup at the end of 1983, he played an active role in the coups that marked Nigeria's early years.)

But Mr. Buhari's supporters are far more interested in the instability shaking the north, urging a total overhaul of the lackluster fight against the Islamists. Many of them turned out in this northern metropolis this week for a glimpse of the general, who has traded his medal-bedecked uniform for traditional robes and thick-framed spectacles.

Hadiza Bala Usman, the main campaigner for the return of more than 200 schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram last spring, was waiting for the general at the airport here. She helped start the group that pressed the government on the girls' fate, demonstrating for weeks in a public square in Abuja. Nine months after their abduction, the girls remain missing.

"The resources meant for the military don't go to the military; the bullets and boots don't go to the soldiers," Ms. Usman said. "And what is happening to security, you see it in all the sectors."

"The support we're giving" to Mr. Buhari "is for ending the insurgency," she added. "And so no more children are abducted."

A retired general in the crowd of supporters, Alhassan Usman, who is not related to Ms. Usman, agreed, expressing anger that Boko Haram had gained the upper hand over Nigeria's soldiers.

"The issue is lack of discipline; the commander has eaten his money," he said, arguing that officers take money meant for soldiers, who then see little reason to obey orders.

Mr. Buhari stood as ramrod straight as he had in the days when he rose in a coup against Nigeria's fledgling, but corrupt, democracy. After taking power, he soon instituted what he called his attempt to straighten out a chaotic nation.

That tarnished past has been, if not forgotten, at least pushed aside by many in the tumultuous jumble of Nigerian history. Mr. Buhari is expected to do particularly well in the Muslim north, his home turf, on Election Day, as he did in an unsuccessful run four years ago.

Still, his campaign faces stiff obstacles. Tens of thousands of people in northern Nigeria have been displaced by relentless violence, and many of them will be unable to vote in the Feb. 14 election. Even if they can, Nigerian elections are prone to violence and fraud.



This week, the streets of Kaduna were packed three-deep with people, many waiting since early morning or trekking miles from nearby villages to see him. Partisans yelled as they climbed on the general's vehicles, frenetically brushing windshields with the symbolic brooms.

Mr. Buhari spoke only briefly to the packed stands in a downtown stadium, vaguely promising greater security, prosperity and better education. But the words appeared not to be the point. It was his presence, and an implicit promise of austerity and military action, that the crowd seemed to want, after years of scandalous stories in the Nigerian news media about missing oil funds and high living by officials in Mr. Jonathan's administration.

"The enthusiasm for Buhari is almost like a religion," said Nasir el-Rufai, a former government minister running for governor of Kaduna State.

"Look at all these people," he said, pointing at the crowds pressing up against his own car before the general arrived. "They are all waiting just to see Buhari."

As military ruler, Mr. Buhari showed little respect for the democratic process, rising to power in a coup that swept aside a civilian government and promising to include the political participation of Nigerian citizens "at some point."

His government also carried out a bizarre kidnapping plot targeting a former minister who had fled to London. It involved Israeli secret agents, giant packing crates and anesthetic drugs.

In an interview, Mr. Buhari said that the times had changed and that he had changed with them.

"I operated as a military head of state," he said. "Now I want to operate as a partisan politician in a multiparty setup. It's a fundamental difference. Whatever law is on the ground, I will make sure it is respected."

Yet it is Mr. Buhari's long military career, not the respect for civil liberties he has proclaimed later in life, that will ultimately swing voters wary of his past, analysts say.

"You've got the Boko Haram in the northeast, where they bomb churches and marketplaces, and slaughter children," Mr. Buhari said.

But he also noted the security problems in the nation's south, where militants at oil fields have created havoc for years. "No highway in the country is absolutely safe," he said.

Though supporters insist he will knock out the Islamists "in a month," as Mr. el-Rufai put it, the retired general is far more cautious. He spoke of a methodical approach, declining to say whether he would fire the country's top military chiefs.

"We have to see the whole picture," Mr. Buhari said. "We'll ask them to brief us, one by one. Why haven't they been performing?"

"Let them justify the use of funds," he said. "What is the intelligence community doing?"

Referring to Boko Haram, he added, "Where do they get weapons?"

He focused on the individual failures in confronting Boko Haram -- the misspent money, the lack of weaponry for the soldiers, their lack of motivation for the fight -- rather than on an overall condemnation of the army.

His jaw muscles tightening, he said, "This is not the Nigerian Army I knew."

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### **11. Leader of Libyan Islamists Ansar al-Sharia dies of wounds**

Reuters, Jan. 23 | Ulf Laessing

BENGHAZI, Libya -- The leader of Libyan Islamist group Ansar al-Sharia has died of wounds suffered when fighting pro-government troops several months ago, his family and officials said on Friday.

Mohamed al-Zahawi, who founded a brigade of Ansar in Benghazi after helping to oust Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, had been in hospital since he was hurt, members of his family told Reuters.

Fadhil al-Hassi, a Libyan military commander, said Zahawi had died from wounds sustained in an ambush in September. "I saw myself how he got wounded in his car," he said.

There was no immediate statement from Ansar al-Sharia.

There had been speculation for months over Zahawi's fate, after he disappeared from public view.

The United States blames Ansar al-Sharia for an assault on a diplomatic compound in Benghazi in 2012 which killed the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans.

Former army general Khalifa Haftar declared war on Ansar al-Sharia in May, pushing it out of much of the eastern city.

Fighting is still going on between Haftar's troops, which have now merged with regular army forces, and Islamist fighters in the port area and other districts of Benghazi.

The struggle is part of a wider conflict between former rebel groups who helped topple Gaddafi and are now competing for control of the major oil producer.

Libya has two rival governments and parliaments. The internationally-recognized Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni has been forced to work out of the east since a faction called Libya Dawn seized Tripoli in August.

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### **12. Reserve mobilization canceled for Ebola mission**

MilitaryTimes.com, Jan. 23 | Andrew Tilghman

Military officials said Friday that the mission to help contain the Ebola virus in West Africa will not require the mobilization of several hundred reservists who had been on tap to deploy.

About 350 mobilization orders were canceled because the number of new Ebola patients in Liberia is declining and the size of the U.S. force in West Africa is drawing down.

"We are confident we can meet the continuing needs of this mission without activating these reservists," Rear Adm. John Kirby said Friday.

The 350 reservists included 280 from Minnesota, 40 from Iowa, 16 from Texas and 14 from Ohio, Kirby said.

Today's troop level for the mission known as Operation United Assistance is about 2,300, down from a peak of about 3,000 in December.

In Liberia, where the U.S. mission has focused, only eight new cases of Ebola were reported last week, down from a peak of more than 300 a week last summer, the World Health Organization announced Friday.

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## **EUROPE**

### **13. Spain negotiates permanent US Marines Africa force**

Agence France-Presse, Jan. 23 | Not Attributed

Spain said Friday it was starting negotiations with Washington to host a permanent US Marines intervention force for deployment on missions to Africa.

The Spanish government said it was ready to permanently extend an agreement under which the force has been based at Moron de la Frontera, near Seville in southern Spain.

The government approved negotiations to amend the two countries' 1988 defence accord, Deputy Prime Minister Soraya Saenz de Santamaria said after a cabinet meeting.

Spain's foreign and defence ministers will negotiate the amendment, as requested by the United States last month, "with a view to hosting the deployment for an indefinite time", she told a news conference.

The US force was first stationed at Moron in April 2013 in the wake of a deadly attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya the previous year. Its temporary status was renewed last year.

Its duties in Africa include protecting embassies, rescuing military personnel and evacuating civilians or intervening in conflicts and humanitarian crises.

The force is made up of 800 Marines plus air support, including MV-22 Osprey vertical take-off transport planes.

The contingent aims to strengthen vigilance in "an area that is a top security priority for our partners and neighbours but also for Spain", Saenz said.

Spanish newspaper El Pais reported that the new agreement could increase the strength of the contingent to 3,000 personnel if needed.

The force operates under the orders of the US military's Africa command, based in Germany.

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## UKRAINE/RUSSIA

### 14. War Is Exploding Anew in Ukraine; Rebels Vow More

#### *Hints of Russia's Role; A Cease-Fire Vanishes – Putin is Perceived as Unbowed*

New York Times, Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Rick Lyman and Andrew E. Kramer

DONETSK, Ukraine -- Unexpectedly, at the height of the Ukrainian winter, war has exploded anew on a half-dozen battered fronts across eastern Ukraine, accompanied by increasing evidence that Russian troops and Russian equipment have been pouring into the region again.

A shaky cease-fire has all but vanished, with rebel leaders vowing fresh attacks. Civilians are being hit by deadly mortars at bus stops. Tanks are rumbling down snowy roads in rebel-held areas with soldiers in unmarked green uniforms sitting on their turrets, waving at bystanders -- a disquieting echo of the "little green men" whose appearance in Crimea opened this stubborn conflict in the spring.

The renewed fighting has dashed any hopes of reinvigorating a cease-fire signed in September and honored more in name than in fact since then. It has also put to rest the notion that Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin, would be so staggered by the twin blows of Western sanctions and a collapse in oil prices that he would forsake the separatists in order to foster better relations with the West.

Instead, blaming the upsurge in violence on the Ukrainians and the rise in civilian deaths on "those who issue such criminal orders," as he did on Friday in Moscow, Mr. Putin is apparently doubling down, rather than backing down, in a conflict that is now the bloodiest in Europe since the Balkan wars.

With the appearance in recent weeks of what NATO calls sophisticated Russian weapons systems, newly emboldened separatist leaders have abandoned all talk of a cease-fire. One of the top leaders of the Russian-backed rebels said Friday that his soldiers were "on the offensive" in several sectors, capitalizing on their capture of the Donetsk airport the day before.

"We will attack" until the Ukrainian Army is driven from the border of the Donetsk region, Aleksandr Zakharchenko, leader of the Donetsk People's Republic rebel group, said in comments carried by Russian news agencies.

"On our side, we won't make an effort to talk about a cease-fire," Mr. Zakharchenko said. "Now we're going to watch how Kiev reacts. Kiev doesn't understand that we can attack in three directions at once."

For long-suffering residents of Donetsk, who have lived with constant shelling, chronic electricity failures and, since September, a cutoff of pensions and other government support payments from Kiev, the resumption of military action came as little surprise.

"It was pure illusion that peace could be achieved now," said Enrique Menendez, a former advertising agency owner who now runs a humanitarian relief operation in eastern Ukraine. "None of the sides has yet achieved its goals. The only real surprise is that the fighting started in the winter instead of the spring."

While the separatist forces now seem ascendant, analysts have little doubt that their fortunes are tied to the level of support provided by Moscow. In August, on the verge of defeat, they were rescued by an all-out Russian incursion that turned the tide on the battlefield and drove Kiev to the bargaining table. The same dynamics appear to be at work now, Ukraine and NATO say, with Russian troops in unmarked uniforms apparently joining the separatists in the assaults on Ukrainian positions.

While Moscow denies any role in the fighting, Sergei A. Markov, a political analyst close to the Kremlin, says it is not surprising that Mr. Putin has continued to support the rebellious republics of southeast Ukraine even in the face of economic pressure from the West. In fact, the intensity of the standoff, he said, has undermined the influence of Mr. Putin's liberal economic advisers in government, rendering their voices almost mute in debates over Ukraine.

Konstantin Sonin, a professor at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, echoed that point. "The influence of economists as a whole has completely vanished," Mr. Sonin said of the Kremlin. "The country is on a holy mission. It's at war with the United States, so why would you bother about the small battleground, the economy?"

Mr. Putin is said to watch his approval ratings closely, and they have risen to great heights recently with the annexation of Crimea and the tensions with the West over eastern Ukraine. In this respect, said Igor Shuvalov, a first deputy prime minister of Russia, continued fighting in Ukraine may actually help to solidify Mr. Putin politically at a time of deteriorating economic conditions.

"When a Russian feels any foreign pressure, he will never give up his leader," Mr. Shuvalov said Friday at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. "We will survive any hardship in the country, eat less food, use less electricity."

Nevertheless, Mr. Markov said, the stresses of juggling a war and the deepening economic crisis in Russia have left Mr. Putin noticeably preoccupied,

"We have much less time than before," he said of a recent meeting between experts and Mr. Putin in which he participated. "It was clear to me that the thoughts of Mr. Putin were somewhere else, but not in our room."

The slow grind of combat in southeastern Ukraine that began in April has now killed at least 5,086 soldiers and civilians, the United Nations reported on Friday. The world body bases its estimate on official morgue and hospital reports, and analysts believe that it understates the total death toll. The report said that 262 of the deaths occurred in the past nine days, making that period the deadliest since the September cease-fire.

Signs of the new belligerence were evident across eastern Ukraine on Friday.

Indeed, fighting has also flared beyond Donetsk, including a road and rail hub northeast of the city, as well as a strategic checkpoint near Luhansk, the other main rebel stronghold. Rebel commanders claimed on Friday to have captured the village of Krasny Partizan, north of Donetsk, which would be another setback for government forces.

In another worrisome sign, the rebels were not the only ones taking a more aggressive tone.

Speaking to security officials in Kiev after the loss of Donetsk airport, President Petro O. Poroshenko of Ukraine expressed frustration with the broken peace process.

"If the enemy does not want to abide by the cease-fire, if the enemy doesn't want to stop the suffering of innocent people in Ukrainian villages and towns, we will give it to them in the teeth," he said.

Any major offensive by either side would clearly be a repudiation of the cease-fire signed on Sept. 5 and endorsed by the group's main sponsor, Russia. That agreement, always shaky, began to break down several weeks ago. It had set the de facto borders of the rebel republic to encompass about one-third of the Donetsk region of Ukraine.

Mr. Zakharchenko has threatened to expand his territory before, but his warnings have not typically prompted much alarm. Now, with the war raging and his troops on the march, more attention is being paid.

As recently as a few weeks ago, peace seemed to be slowly seeping into the blood-soaked fields of eastern Ukraine. Russia seemed occupied with the drop in oil prices and the ruble's collapse. The shaky cease-fire was holding. Language on both sides was noticeably more conciliatory.

That all seems a long time ago now on the war-rattled streets of Donetsk, where a main hospital was hit by a shell this week.

If one were to ask the remaining residents of Donetsk, even those who have been loyal to the Kiev government, whether they supported this new rebel advance, they would say yes, Mr. Menendez said -- and not necessarily for political reasons.

"They just want to push the front lines out of the city," he said, "to stop the shelling on them."

*--David M. Herszenhorn and Andrew Roth contributed reporting from Moscow, and Alison Smale from Davos, Switzerland*

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## **POLITICS**

### **15. Frustration Grips Authorization Vote Over Islamic State**

Wall Street Journal, Jan. 24, Pg. A4 | Michael R. Crittenden

WASHINGTON -- In his State of the Union speech this past week, President Barack Obama repeated a call he has made several times for Congress to officially endorse the fight against Islamic State forces and "show the world we are united in this mission."

Republican leaders in Congress say they are prepared to tackle the issue, as well. "I expect that we will have hearings on that and that we will, in fact, have a debate and a vote," House Speaker John Boehner (R., Ohio) said this week.

But as military operations approach their sixth month, the process of actually securing a congressional vote authorizing the use of force against Islamic State fighters remains at a standstill.

Republicans on Capitol Hill say they are waiting for the administration to outline exactly what it wants in a use-of-force authorization. The White House has said Mr. Obama plans to send Congress a draft authorization but wants to consult with lawmakers first on the language.

The wording of such an authorization is important because it determines what limits, or lack thereof, there will be on U.S. operations against Islamic State forces. A narrowly written authorization that sets a time limit or specifically says ground troops can't be used could tie the administration's hands, while a broadly written measure would raise concerns among lawmakers wary of giving the White House a blank check.

The lack of action has frustrated some lawmakers.

"We really don't want to talk about solutions to hard problems, and you have a commander-in-chief who I think is just overselling our successes and underestimating the threats," said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R., S.C.), describing lawmakers as "dysfunctional to the core" on foreign policy.

Sen. Angus King (I., Maine), who pressed Mr. Obama to present Congress with an authorization for the use of military force at a recent closed door meeting of Senate Democrats, said Mr. Obama needs to take the initiative. He should tell lawmakers, "I'm the commander in chief, here's the authorization I need," Mr. King said.

Advocates for an authorization say without one, lawmakers' power to declare war becomes meaningless.

"It's the Congress that has the biggest institutional stake in the matter because it's our power to declare war," said Rep. Adam Schiff (D., Calif.), suggesting some lawmakers may not want to take a formal vote in case the war goes badly.

The White House argues that current military operations are authorized under resolutions passed by Congress lawmakers in 2001 and 2002 in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and to deal with Iraq. While some Democrats and Republicans have repeatedly called for a vote, congressional leaders have said they want to hold off until the administration drafts its own authorization.

Sen. Bob Corker (R., Tenn.), the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said he's had numerous conversations with the White House about a possible authorization but is still waiting for the White House to act. He said it was a "tactical error" for Mr. Obama to call on Congress to act when lawmakers are waiting on the administration.

"I hope that they're going to come to a conclusion. I think they're having an internal debate to figure out what they want -- they've got a lot of voices over there," Mr. Corker said.

Mr. Schiff questioned the idea of lawmakers waiting for the administration to send language to Capitol Hill. He is one of a number of lawmakers who have introduced their own authorization legislation as a way to try and ramp up pressure on the issue. Another, Sen. Tim Kaine (D., Va.), said any additional delay dishonors members of the armed services.

"Five months of war has been far too long to make our service members and their families wait for a political consensus on the scope of the U.S. mission," Mr. Kaine said.

If and when the White House delivers an authorization to Congress, it is likely to spark a heated political debate that could make passage difficult. Hawkish lawmakers such as Mr. Graham want to give the administration wide latitude, including the ability to deploy ground troops, arguing that deference should be shown to the White House.

## **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT**

### **16. Hagel worries about morale in today's force**

MilitaryTimes.com, Jan. 23 | Andrew Tilghman

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said he is worried about low morale in today's military and believes it may take years to fully tackle the problems affecting the overall mindset and outlook of the force.

"This is as important as anything. I have tried to make that as big a priority as we have in this building, with all our commanders, with all our people all over the world," Hagel said in a Jan. 21 interview with Military Times in his Pentagon office.

"After those 13 years of war, what has happened is, various parts of the institution ... have worn down, have been strained and under considerable stress and you need to pay attention to that."

One important symptom of the problem, Hagel said, is that "our suicide rates are not showing great progress." An estimated 288 active-duty service members took their own lives in 2014, similar to the 286 reported suicides in 2013.

Hagel said he believes many factors are contributing to waning morale. Among the biggest is the defense budget cuts that are forcing individual units to scale back training, leading the services to eliminate jobs and prompting Congress to consider cuts to troops' pay and benefits.

"What is more important to a family of a service man or a woman than health care for their children or education for their children if there is uncertainty about that?" Hagel said.

Another factor weighing down morale is the pessimism that many troops feel about how the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have turned out, Hagel said.

A Military Times survey of 2,300 active-duty troops last year found morale indicators on the decline in nearly every aspect of military life. Troops report significantly lower overall job satisfaction, diminished respect for their superiors, and a declining interest in re-enlistment now compared to just five years ago.

Hagel, who is the first former noncommissioned officer to hold the Pentagon's top post, will step down soon after two years on the job. During his tenure, he has launched several major initiatives aimed in part at addressing potential morale problems, the long-term impacts of which, for the most part, remain unclear at this point.

They include:

- Completing an internal investigation of the sprawling military health system. The review found some hospitals failed to meet quality and patient safety standards and some were failing to properly report incidents when medical errors harmed patients. The review ordered several facilities to fix those problems.



- Responding to a spate of scandals involving senior officer misconduct in 2013 by appointing a two-star admiral to serve in a newly created position to directly advise the defense secretary on ethics and misconduct issues.
- Completing a top-to-bottom review of the nuclear force after widespread morale and misconduct problems surfaced in the Air Force's missileer community, including cheating and drug use. That resulted in several key changes in how that career field is managed.
- Overseeing a forcewide effort to improve sexual assault training, increase reporting and improve victims' services.
- Launching a broad review of the military's criminal justice system, which remains underway.
- Launching a review of the military medals and awards system to ensure that today's troops are recognized most appropriately. That also remains underway.

"I am proud of the progress I think we have made," Hagel said. "I do not think it starts to show up for a while because it takes time to fix it. You are not going to fix some of this in a year or two years, but you can get at it. You can start to turn it around. You can start to reassure people. You can do the things that you need to do to make the institutional changes that we can make."

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#### **17. Can the Pentagon downsize its headquarters staff?**

Washington Post Online (Federal Eye), Jan. 23 | Lisa Rein

Facing budget pressures, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said two years ago that he was ordering the number of top brass and senior civilians at the Pentagon to start shrinking by 20 percent. But federal auditors reported this week that the Defense Department has not produced a realistic plan to make the cuts — and can't say how many people it has or needs at its management headquarters.

In a new report, the Government Accountability Office described an unwieldy personnel system that seems unable to account for the size of military and civilian staffs at the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff and the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force secretariats and staffs — all headquarters that ballooned in size after the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and have only recently begun to level off.

Compounding the problem, contractors form a large chunk of these employees, but DOD does not have an accurate handle on how large, auditors found.

"Without a systematic determination of personnel requirements and periodic reassessment of them, DOD will not be well positioned to proactively identify efficiencies and limit personnel growth within these headquarters organizations," GAO concluded in a 90-page report released this week.

In other words, downsizing is hard to do when you don't know how big you are.

The assessment from Congress' watchdog arm echoed similar alarms auditors sounded as far back as 2012. They came to much the same conclusion about the Defense Department's pledge to reduce headcount at its six geographic

combatant commands, Special Operations, strategic and transportation commands and National Guard and Reserve headquarters.

Auditors are consistently finding that cutting layers of management requires a reliable starting point for how big the military bureaucracy has gotten; DOD apparently does not have one. The agency has not reported to Congress on its efforts to shrink headquarters staff after getting a June 2014 deadline extended to December, GAO found.

DOD's headquarters organizations are responsible for policymaking, budgeting and management of defense functions, among other key roles.

"However, accounting for the resources devoted to headquarters has been a long-standing challenge for DOD," auditors wrote.

The increases in staff vary by organization. Civilian and military staff at Army headquarters, for example, grew by 60 percent to 3,639 in fiscal 2013 from 2,272 in fiscal 2001, not including contractors.

Defense officials have faced pressure to push the military off a war footing with the drawdown of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hagel's 2013 directive would force the Pentagon and command staffs to shed an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 jobs, a tiny percentage of DOD's active-duty troops and civilian employees but a high-profile, symbolic effort to address growth in the bureaucracy's top layers.

Auditors also pointed out that the definition of a headquarters job is subject to interpretation. Many employees who report from non-headquarters offices at DOD do jobs like planning and budgeting that overlap with what employees at headquarters do. But those jobs aren't counted toward the total the agency has pledged to cut.

GAO recommended that defense officials set up a system to determine how many employees they need at headquarters organizations.

In response to the audit's conclusions, some defense officials told GAO that they do not regularly reassess how many employees they need because their needs do not change much from year to year. Others said they are starting to figure out their needs.

DOD also raised concerns that the GAO report "lacks perspective when characterizing the department's headquarters staff" given that the scope of headquarters' missions requires a "complex and multilayered structure."

A DOD spokesman did not have an immediate comment on this week's report.

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## **18. Obama Defense Budget Said to Add Funds for Nuclear Upgrades**

Bloomberg, Jan. 23 | Tony Capaccio

WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama approved a Pentagon request to increase spending to improve the aging U.S. nuclear arsenal and bolster military satellite systems, according to a defense official.

The extra money would be used to upgrade infrastructure, such as silos for missiles and shipyards used to overhaul submarines, said the official, who asked not to be identified discussing the plan before Obama submits his budget proposal to Congress on Feb. 2.

The request will assume about \$34 billion more than permitted under the caps imposed by the budget process called sequestration. It won't include details of spending reductions that would be needed if Congress and the president fail to agree on eliminating or relaxing the spending limit, the official said.

That's because the Pentagon wants to keep focus on the budget request instead of what's at risk of being cut, the official said. Sequestration is scheduled to go into full effect again on Oct. 1 after the across-the-board cuts were waived for two years.

### *Sequestration Hearing*

The chiefs of the military services will have an opportunity to outline their concerns, starting with testimony at a Jan. 28 hearing that the Senate Armed Services Committee called to review the impact of sequestration. The chiefs are likely to outline repercussions for weapons, readiness and maintenance as well as the broader strategic implications, the official said.

The proposed budget will reflect a slight slowdown in the Army's plan to reduce its force to 450,000 by 2017 from about 500,000 today in order to give the service more time to minimize disruptions from the change.

The official also said a separate \$50.9 billion request for war spending will earmark most of the money for Afghanistan even as U.S. force levels continue to be reduced.

The war spending also will pay for ground, naval and air forces to support U.S. advisers in Iraq and for air strikes dedicated to fighting Islamic State terrorists in that country and neighboring Syria.

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### **19. Hope for new effort to close prison**

*After years of fighting with Congress, Obama is moving detainees from Guantanamo, a key step in his plan*  
Los Angeles Times, Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Carol J. Williams

President Obama has recharged his campaign for closing the Guantanamo Bay detention center with a strategy legal experts say holds out new hope of achieving that signature objective of his presidency.

After years of being thwarted by Congress from transferring detainees cleared of terrorism suspicions from the remote prison at the U.S. naval base in southern Cuba, the administration has in less than three months resettled 27 of the long-held foreign men in countries as far-flung as Estonia, Oman and Uruguay.

Dozens more are ready to be moved out as soon as other countries agree to take them, a diplomatic task that received an unexpected boost last month with an appeal by Pope Francis for predominantly Catholic nations to help empty the prison.

Obama has also spotlighted the staggering costs of maintaining the offshore detention operation -- more than \$3 million a year per detainee, by the Pentagon's calculation -- in his effort to counter Republican opposition to closing

Guantanamo. And he has pointed out the failure of the U.S. military tribunal there to bring any of its most notorious terrorism suspects to justice.

Drawing down Guantanamo's population from its current 122 -- already fewer than half the 245 detainees Obama inherited from the Bush administration -- is a key element of the president's fresh push to deliver on the promise he made as a candidate to close Guantanamo within a year of taking office, lawyers and human rights advocates say.

A second crucial step needed to close the prison, they say, is moving the seven "high-value detainees" charged in major terrorism cases out of the dysfunctional military commissions and into U.S. courts.

Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the self-confessed Sept. 11 mastermind, has been in U.S. custody for 12 years and at Guantanamo since 2006.

"It's shocking that there is not more public pressure to try these people," said Shayana Kadidal, senior managing attorney on the Guantanamo project at the Center for Constitutional Rights, a New York-based public interest law firm.

He was referring to the five men whose prosecution has been mired in pretrial challenges to the war court that rights advocates see as an end run around U.S. law. "If they had been brought to the United States in 2009, those trials would be long over," he said.

Obama has for years opposed indefinite detention at Guantanamo for the moral stain it has left on America's reputation, but the money issue may offer better prospects for wearing down those opposed to closing the prison.

"It makes no sense to spend \$3 million per prisoner to keep open a prison that the world condemns and terrorists use to recruit," the president said during his State of the Union address Tuesday night. "It is not who we are. It is time to close Gitmo."

In the 13 years since President George W. Bush created the prison and military tribunal, only eight militant foot soldiers from among the 780 men taken to Guantanamo have been tried and convicted, and only three of those remain at the prison to serve their terms.

Hundreds swept up in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the frenzied early days after the Sept. 11 attacks were years later deemed by military authorities to pose no threat to U.S. or allied security. But the releases slowed after reports emerged of some freed detainees joining Al Qaeda and other extremist groups.

The recidivism rate remains a topic of heated disagreement, with Republican lawmakers contending 30% of former captives are believed to have taken up with militant groups, and the administration saying the percentage is half that at most.

Obama's first executive order after inauguration in January 2009 called for a six-agency task force review of all detainees and for decisions on whether they were to be prosecuted, deemed eligible for transfer or release, or categorized as "indefinite detainees" because of lingering suspicion but too little evidence to prove criminal acts.

Fifty-four prisoners still at Guantanamo were cleared for release by the task force in January 2010. Congress, in the meantime, had imposed a ban on detainee movements or relocation of terrorist trials to U.S. soil.

A slight easing of those restrictions took effect in late 2013, and State Department diplomats are intensively engaged in negotiating repatriation or resettlement, lawyers for some of the captives said.

But finding countries that will take in the detainees is a struggle, legal analysts say, pointing to the Bush-era condemnation of the prison's residents as "the worst of the worst" militants on the planet.

An additional 35 prisoners remain at Guantanamo after being designated for indefinite detention, to be reconsidered annually by a multi-agency Periodic Review Board. That figure is down by at least two now after a Saudi and a Kuwaiti were lifted from the "forever prisoners" list and repatriated in November.

That contingent is the most problematic for Obama, as both Congress and rights groups supportive of closing Guantanamo object to administration proposals to bring them to some underused U.S. prison. The groups criticize the idea as simply transferring an illegal detention practice from Guantanamo to another venue.

Rights advocates, detainees' lawyers and other critics of Obama's failure to close Guantanamo have accused him of sacrificing that cause for other priorities, namely healthcare reform and economic crisis intervention during the first years of his administration. But even five years after the missed closure deadline, those critics say they are encouraged by the president's resumed focus on ridding the nation -- and his legacy -- of the prison and war crimes tribunal.

"Privately, the level of commitment has been even more intense, as he is telling other officials that this is his top goal now and raising it with foreign leaders," said Chris Anders, senior legislative counsel at the American Civil Liberties Union, who has monitored the legal battle over Guantanamo for a decade.

But closing Guantanamo will require Obama to expend political capital on the issue during his last two years in office, Anders said. Congress has tabled a bill that would impose new restrictions on Guantanamo releases.

Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), sponsor of the bill and one of Obama's fiercest critics on the detention issue, recently said his administration "is more interested in emptying Guantanamo so that it can close it ... than protecting the national security interests of the United States."

"He's going to have to take some unpopular steps if he wants to do this," Anders said, including using his veto power to defeat tactics by opponents such as attaching riders to must-pass legislation such as the annual defense authorization bill.

Anders is also encouraged by the administration's change in approach on the thorny problem of where to send dozens of Yemenis and other detainees cleared for release but unable to go back to their home countries.

Most of the 75 Yemenis at Guantanamo have been cleared, but U.S. authorities have been reluctant to send them home to a country engulfed in political chaos and increasingly under the sway of Yemen-based Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

Among the 27 prisoners released since early November have been 12 Yemenis, all sent to other countries in apparent recognition that their homeland won't be stable any time soon.

The quest for new havens for the releasable detainees got a lift last month when Francis appealed to diplomats at the Vatican to open their doors to those marooned at the prison because of turmoil in their homelands.

Cori Crider, an attorney with the British human rights group Reprieve and defense lawyer for several Guantanamo prisoners, accompanied six detainees in December on their journey to freedom in Uruguay, the first Latin American country to heed the pope's moral intervention.

"That signal from the Vatican can only help. Other new states that hadn't previously taken detainees have come forward," Crider said.

"Hope springs eternal, even when it has been so disappointing previously," she said of Obama's recent revving up of the stalled closure effort.

"I don't see closing Guantanamo as a light switch," she said of an expected incremental process. "But every detainee that goes is a move away from this dark chapter."

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## **AIR FORCE**

### **20. SpaceX to drop lawsuit against Air Force over contract to launch satellites**

Washington Post, Jan. 24, Pg. A16 | Christian Davenport

SpaceX, Elon Musk's start-up space company, announced late Friday that it would drop its lawsuit against the Air Force protesting the award of a lucrative contract to launch military satellites.

In a joint statement, the Air Force and SpaceX said that the California-based company agreed to drop the suit because the Air Force "has expanded the number of competitive opportunities for launch services."

SpaceX filed the suit in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims in spring of last year, arguing that the contract, which was awarded to the United Launch Alliance, should have been competitively bid.

The announcement comes after months of acrimony between the parties. Musk, the billionaire founder of Tesla and PayPal, had accused the Air Force of improperly awarding a sole-source contract and said it was taking too long to certify his company for the launches.

SpaceX had hoped that it would be certified by the end of last year. But earlier this month, the Air Force said that was not likely to happen until the middle of this year.

In an interview with Bloomberg Business Week, Musk accused military procurement officials of holding up the certification to curry favor with the ULA, the joint venture of defense contracting giants Lockheed Martin and Boeing.

"Essentially we're asking them to award a contract to a company where they are probably not going to get a job, against a company where their friends are," he said. "So they've got to go against their friends and their future retirement program. This is a difficult thing to expect."

Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James called Musk's remarks "rather unfortunate" and said the service was working diligently to get SpaceX certified for the launches. She also appointed retired Gen. Larry D. Welch, a former chief of staff, to lead an independent review of the certification process, which would explore whether there are "ways that we can streamline, speed it up, do things a little bit differently."

In the joint statement, the parties said that "under the agreement, the Air Force will work collaboratively with SpaceX to complete the certification process in an efficient and expedient manner."

The multibillion-dollar contract is for 36 rockets to launch defense payloads, including satellites. By 2030, the Pentagon expects to spend almost \$70 billion on the program.

SpaceX, once considered a small but feisty start-up, has recently scored major victories in an industry long dominated by traditional players. It was the first commercial company to resupply the International Space Station. It also won a major contract from NASA last year to ferry astronauts to the space station.

It also has attracted attention for pushing the envelope of space travel. And next week it plans once again to try to land a rocket booster on a floating barge. If successful, that could be a significant step toward developing reusable rockets, which could vastly decrease the costs of space flight.

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## **ARMY**

### **21. Fort Hood Could Not Have Foreseen 2014 Gun Attack, Army Says**

New York Times, Jan. 24, Pg. A11 | Manny Fernandez

HOUSTON -- Officials at the Fort Hood Army base in central Texas could not have prevented a shooting rampage last year in part because the troubled soldier behind the attack gave no clear warning that he posed a threat, according to an Army report released Friday.

The gunman, Specialist Ivan A. Lopez, killed three soldiers and wounded 12 others before taking his own life last April after a confrontation about the handling of his request for leave. In the span of a little more than eight minutes, Specialist Lopez, 34, fired at least 35 rounds at soldiers in a two-block area within Fort Hood in Killeen, shooting at them with a .45-caliber handgun as he walked or drove by.

The investigation effectively cleared the soldier's superiors and other Fort Hood leaders of any wrongdoing or negligence, recommending specifically that Specialist Lopez's leaders not receive any adverse action. In the days after the shooting, Army officials had said the primary trigger behind the rampage appeared to have been a dispute over a leave request, and they also said Specialist Lopez was being evaluated for post-traumatic stress disorder. But Friday's report found that no single event led to the shooting, and that Fort Hood officials were not aware of many of the personal issues that Specialist Lopez was facing, including financial troubles, medical treatments and the deaths of his grandfather and mother.

Specialist Lopez had been undergoing what the report described as a spiritual crisis, which caused him to change his religious preference to atheist and was perhaps aggravated by the deaths of his grandfather and mother. And he was frustrated by the difficulties he faced moving his family from Fort Bliss in El Paso to Fort Hood, where he had arrived just eight weeks before the shooting.

Those issues overwhelmed Specialist Lopez's ability "to effectively cope with them, and led to his irrational, violent outburst," wrote the report's author, Lt. Gen. Joseph E. Martz, who led a military review of the shooting that interviewed and obtained statements from nearly 200 witnesses. General Martz concluded that Specialist Lopez's military career and medical history "offer no ready explanations or clear indicators of future violent behavior," noting that the Army lacked a system capable of identifying such soldiers as a threat.

Days before the shooting, Specialist Lopez had been granted a four-day pass, during which he picked up his wife and daughter in Odessa, Tex., retrieved his belongings in El Paso and moved into his apartment in Killeen. When he returned to Fort Hood, he pressed his superiors to approve a 10-day leave as part of his relocation, although, as one superior told him a few hours before the shooting on April 2, he was technically not entitled to leave, the report stated.

General Martz found that Specialist Lopez's request could have been handled more efficiently, but that personnel in his unit's headquarters were correct in maintaining that he did not qualify for leave -- known as Permissive Temporary Duty, or P.T.D.Y. -- because he had already moved into his apartment in Killeen.

"No other soldier could reasonably have foreseen that he would react as he did to the denial of his P.T.D.Y. request, and none of them had the opportunity to stop him," the report stated.

General Martz's report recommended that the Army improve the training and time available for leaders to identify and manage high-risk soldiers. In response to the earlier attack at Fort Hood in 2009, Army and Pentagon officials made several recommendations for improvements, including how to respond to emergencies. General Martz found that the Army has put in place 57 of 77 recommendations, and that none of those outstanding would have affected the shooting last year or the response to it.

In a statement, a Fort Hood spokesman said officials at the base were evaluating and implementing the report's recommendations. "Fort Hood officials remain committed to doing what's necessary to ensure the safety and security of all personnel on Fort Hood," said the spokesman, Col. Christopher Garver.

The Army released a redacted version of the report, with descriptions of Specialist Lopez's medical conditions and evaluations blacked out. The report contained no mention of post-traumatic stress disorder. But it noted instances in which Specialist Lopez, who had served in Iraq in 2011, had been "misleading or deceptive."

In December 2011, a convoy he was part of suffered a blast from a roadside bomb. Specialist Lopez had claimed to be near the explosion, but the report found there was no evidence he was within the blast radius.

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## **22. Army Communications in Pacific Stretched, Tested**

BreakingDefense.com, Jan. 23 | Sydney J. Freedberg Jr.

PENTAGON -- As the US Army deploys more troops to the Pacific, it's running into the limits of its long-range communications systems. The shortfall in comms capacity is not only becoming an issue as the service ramps up its "Pacific Pathways" exercises with Asian partners: It is also raising concerns about the network's resiliency against a cyberattack.



“One of the biggest issues we’re working on is the net[work] architecture,” said Lt. Gen. Stephen Lanza. As commander of Washington State-based I Corps, Lanza routinely deploys forces to East Asia — and he has to keep in touch with them across the vast Pacific. “One of the challenges that we have is, when you get forward of the international date line, how [do] you work communications?”

There’s a lot more demand on the network because there are a lot more forces available to deploy to places like Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Australia. After years of I Corps being tapped out supporting deployments in the Middle East, Lanza told reporters Friday at the Pentagon, “All our forces right now are in the Pacific [theater]. I just had my aviation brigade come back from Afghanistan, I just had our fires [i.e. artillery] brigade come back from Iraq.”

“Last year,” said Lanza, “we had over 2,000 people” — regular Army, National Guard, and Reserve — “involved in three different countries” as part of Pacific Pathways exercises. An exercise just getting underway in Thailand will eventually involve “well over a thousand soldiers,” he said, and there’ll be more exercises after that.

No, no, no, “the Army is not trying to be a Marine Corps,” Lanza said when asked if his soldiers were treading on Marine turf. There’s plenty of work for everyone, and the services do different things, he said. When Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines, for example, the Marines went in first with their KC-130 and V-22 aircraft — “they are the best first responders we have” — but Army logistics units followed to sustain long-term operations. It’s the Army, incidentally, that provides not only logistical support but much of the long-haul communications for the other services, making the Army’s coms issue potentially everyone’s issue.

With all these Army exercises in the Western Pacific, the day-to-day demand on the communications system is growing — and it’s growing in the theater with the greatest distances in the world and relatively few permanent US bases to provide infrastructure. The demand will only grow as the service downsizes and implements its new Army Operating Concept of more decentralized operations.

But day-to-day communications aren’t the only issue. “The larger concern is the cyber threat,” Lanza said. In fact, he said, cybersecurity looms larger for him than air and missile defense, one of the Army’s major contributions to a prospective “Air-Sea Battle” in the Pacific.

Integrating cyber into theater and tactical-level operations — as opposed to strategic-level espionage — is a growing focus in the US Army. The service recently stood up a new Cyber Center of Excellence and a new corps of cyber specialists. For its part, I Corps is training hard on how to operate under cyberattack, both with the US forces under its command and foreign partners.

“That’s one of the great things about ...this bilateral training with Japan,” said Lanza. With I Corps and a 3-star Japanese counterpart HQ working side by side, he said, “we went through that scenario, where we had to sustain our ability to communicate during a cyberattack.”

Lanza intends to conduct similar training with other foreign partners. Within his own command, he continued, “we’re integrating cyber training into the training of the corps as we go up to our certification.”

“That to me is one of the biggest concerns[:] What is the threat to our network?” Lanza said. “How do you build redundancy into the system? How do you build other ways to communicate?” The answers to all these questions — in terms of both training and technology — are very much a work in progress.

## **MARINE CORPS**

### **23. CMC's planning guidance emphasizes regional missions**

MarineCorpsTimes.com, Jan. 23 | Hope Hodge Seck

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Joseph Dunford released his long-awaited planning guidance Friday, emphasizing development of the Marines' noncommissioned officer ranks, and new missions for each of the three Marine expeditionary forces that operate worldwide.

The lean 15-page document contains no expectation of a decreased operating tempo as the Marine Corps resets following lengthy wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Rather, it leans into the Corps' role in a fraught environment in which troops may be called to operate in a decentralized manner all over the world.

Combat readiness, Dunford writes, will require the Marines to address shortfalls in the Corps' inventory of noncommissioned officers and staff noncommissioned officers.

"Our objective is to address the gaps for NCOs and SNCOs by grade, [military occupational specialty], and qualifications in the structure that we man across the Marine Corps," he wrote.

Programs like the new Squad Leader Development Program, which creates a specific MOS and career track for infantry squad leaders, will help reach this goal, he said.

Operationally, Dunford said the services plans to continue efforts to align units with all geographic combatant commands to meet the needs of joint commanders and enable the Corps to be better able to act anywhere in the world.

To this end, he said I Marine Expeditionary Force, on the West Coast, will focus on maintaining proficiency in major operations and campaigns. The East Coast-based II MEF will maintain proficiency in Marine expeditionary brigade-level crisis response, he said. And III MEF, out of Japan, will be designated a standing joint task force headquarters for U.S. Pacific Command.

Dunford also called for a service-level training exercise and employment plan that will help synchronize manning, training, equipping and experimentation efforts across the Marine Corps.

Operationally, Dunford maintained the Marines' emphasis on partnering with the Navy, saying the Corps' exercise priorities for 2015 and 2016 would focus on fighting from the sea in the current anti-access area denial threat environment that stood in the way of traditional beach assaults.

"Our current ability to conduct amphibious operations is complicated by the proliferation of weapons capable of targeting our forces from increasingly greater ranges," he wrote. "Our service-level exercise priorities for 2015 and 2016 will focus on how we will fight from the sea in this Anti-Access, Area Denial (A2AD) threat environment."

Technological experiments, he said, will focus on disruptive concepts and capabilities.

Meanwhile, Dunford said, the Marine Corps will maintain a close joint relationship with U.S. Special Operations Command, partnering with special operations forces to better meet the needs of the joint force. This concept was also put forward in previous commandant Gen. James Amos' Expeditionary Force 21 strategy and resulted in the 2014 deployment of small special operations force liaison teams aboard certain Marine expeditionary units.

Dunford maintained focus on the F-35B Joint Strike Fighter, expected to reach initial operating capability this year, and the Amphibious Combat Vehicle program, now entering the first phase of development.

Notably, Dunford said he would continue to prioritize a self-deploying, high-speed version of the ACV, even while moving forward with current prototypes in development that do not include the high-speed capability. High-speed, long-range ship-to-shore connectors also remain a priority, he said.

"The capabilities we field will support out concepts of ship to objective maneuver and operational maneuver from the sea and will be fully incorporated into our service exercise and experimentation program," he said.

At sea, a host of platforms are expected to take the operational burden off a limited number of amphibious ships, Dunford said the first step would be to develop plans for Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force-Crisis Response-Africa, based in Morón, Spain, and Marine Rotational Force-Darwin in Australia to use the alternative sea-based platforms.

That plan will be implemented beginning this year, he said.

Unlike Amos' planning guidance, released in 2010, Dunford included no detailed checklist of tasks to be accomplished with specific deadlines.

Announcing the publication of his planning guidance in a video, Dunford encouraged Marines to provide feedback on his ideas.

"My intent was to focus on those areas most important to our war-fighting and combat readiness," he said. "I want each of you to read it, discuss it with your fellow Marines and provide feedback to your leadership. With your help, our Corps will continue to innovate, adapt and win."

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## **VETERANS**

### **24. A Nurse's Story: World War II Vet's Lobotomy Scarred Family She Raised**

Wall Street Journal, Jan. 24, Pg. A1 | Michael M. Phillips

SUNLAND, Calif. -- When Paul Ludden visits his mother in the nursing home, he sits on her bed and sings with her. Dorothy, 94 years old, remembers words to 1940s ditties. But she struggles to find memories of her days as a Navy nurse during World War II.

When she grows quiet, Paul strokes her gray head, passing fingers over divots in her skull -- tangible reminders that the war left his mother with profound mental illness and that government doctors treated her by cutting into her brain and giving her a lobotomy.

This is the woman who raised Paul and his two brothers, patching their scrapes, cooking their dinners and seeing them through to adulthood. But she is also a mother who could be childlike and emotionally distant, prone to humiliating public displays of hostility, and who once chased a friend out of the house with a butter knife.

Dorothy is one of the last survivors among roughly 2,000 psychiatrically ill veterans the Veterans Administration lobotomized in the 1940s and 1950s. The Wall Street Journal in 2013 first detailed the VA lobotomy program and profiled the troubled life of World War II pilot Roman Tritz, 91, the only living lobotomized veteran the newspaper could locate at the time.

Lawmakers then asked the VA to find other surviving lobotomized veterans. VA headquarters, which says its files on such old cases are archived and difficult to access, hadn't found any other survivors when Dorothy's family contacted the Journal.

Following the war's end in 1945, hundreds of thousands of veterans swamped VA hospitals with psychological wounds ranging from what is now called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder to schizophrenia. VA mental wards were crowded with veterans, sometimes violent and out of touch with reality. But psychiatrists had few tools to treat them. Lobotomies, in which doctors sliced brain fibers thought to transmit excessive emotions, seemed a promising surgical solution to the VA.

Doctors knew and relatives discovered, however, that lobotomies often erased personalities and left patients unable to care for themselves. Some like Dorothy were able go through the motions of normal life, but their marred minds exacted a painful toll on them and their families for decades.

After the Journal's first article ran in 2013, Mr. Tritz emerged somewhat from decades of self-isolation. Readers contributed hundreds of dollars to pay his meal tab at the restaurant where he has eaten twice daily for decades.

Once worried about FBI taps, he agreed to get a telephone. He received Christmas cards from strangers who now knew of his 34 combat missions and the lobotomy that followed. He also recently allowed a government surgeon to perform a needed gastrointestinal procedure, despite his lingering mistrust of VA doctors.

Dorothy Dieffenwierth, as she was known before marrying, grew up in Florida, enrolled in nursing school and enlisted in 1943 at age 22. Men wounded in the Pacific filled beds in hospitals where she worked in the Northwest. She told her family how she tucked sheets into perfect corners and prepared gauze packets for the doctors.

Early on, commanders reported she was an "average nurse" with a "pleasant personality," her military records show. Later reports hinted at a descending darkness. "Somewhat emotional and has a variable temperament," her commander at the Naval hospital in Astoria, Ore., wrote in 1945.

Dorothy told doctors she suffered a nervous breakdown at a Naval hospital near Seattle, her recent VA records show. Her family says it isn't known whether her wartime experience sparked mental illness, aggravated it or coincided with its onset. "Oh, those poor boys," was about all she would say of the war, says Paul, 58, the first of her three sons.

Dorothy was released from active duty in 1946. The next year, she was sent for three months of treatment at the Madison Rural Sanitarium, a Seventh-day Adventist facility in Tennessee, where staff stressed fresh foods,

particularly soybeans. A few weeks after she was released, her family committed her to the VA hospital in Tuscaloosa, Ala. The VA says it can't locate Dorothy's medical records from those days.

VA doctors there variously diagnosed her with psychosis and schizophrenia, ruling her illness connected to her military service, her current VA record shows. A doctor sent a form letter to her father, Rev. Daniell Dieffenwierth, seeking permission to treat her with electroconvulsive therapy. "This treatment is not entirely without risk," the letter warned.

Shock therapy was one of the few treatments psychiatrists had available in the late 1940s. Antipsychotic drugs weren't on the market until the mid-1950s. VA doctors were instructed to exhaust other options before resorting to lobotomies, agency documents show.

Rev. Dieffenwierth grew worried as his daughter's stay lengthened into years. He peppered the hospital chaplain with letters; the responses were only somewhat reassuring.

"Dear Brother Dieffenwierth," the chaplain, Harvey C. Porter, began his letters. "Dorothy was in my Sunday School Class yesterday and I am pleased to tell you she looked especially well," Chaplain Porter wrote soon after her arrival at the hospital. "She has a splendid voice and everyone enjoys hearing her sing."

Within months she appeared more fragile. "She always agrees to sing for us when we ask her, but she does not always feel like doing it," Chaplain Porter wrote.

Judging from Dorothy's current record, doctors lobotomized her in the late 1940s, the heyday of the lobotomy program at Tuscaloosa and some 50 other veterans hospitals around the country.

In the operation, a surgeon cut holes on both sides of her head and inserted an edged or rotating tool to sever neural fibers connecting the frontal lobe to the rest of the brain. The doctor then repositioned bone in the openings.

The VA's lobotomy use is best viewed in the context of postwar psychiatry's limits, says an agency spokeswoman. "The procedure became available to severely ill patients who had not improved with other treatments," she says. "Within a few years, as safer and more effective treatments were developed, the procedure disappeared within VA and across the United States." She says privacy concerns and missing records limit her ability to discuss Dorothy's case.

In 1950, a social worker reported to Dorothy's father that she "has continued to improve." The bar was low: "We are very happy that she is able to begin writing letters at this stage of her adjustment period," the social worker wrote. "She has cooperated with the ward personnel, has been obedient, easily directed."

In 1951, doctors released her from the hospital. Tuscaloosa VA social workers had written a guide for lobotomized veterans' relatives. It would have warned that Dorothy was coming home more child than adult. "We cannot say he will be completely well," the guide said. "Only time can tell you that."

The Navy Reserve declared Dorothy unfit for duty and, three weeks after her release from the veterans' hospital, gave her an honorable discharge. She studied vocal music at a junior college and tried, but failed, to complete an undergraduate music degree. She spent the summer of 1955 in New York City, singing in a chorus.

There, she met Bob Ludden. Bob grew up in Minnesota, where he once was a psychiatric-ward attendant. Among his jobs was strapping down patients before electroconvulsive therapy. He remembers being fascinated by the procedure and upset by how the electricity sent the patients into spasms.

A music student, he was shy around women. He was struck by Dorothy's beauty -- her face was framed in dark curls -- and admired her lyric soprano. He was surprised one so lovely would date him.

When Dorothy mentioned her lobotomy, he tried not to think about the implications, although "I knew she'd been in and out of mental institutions," says Bob, 85. "I so wanted the relationship to work out that I buried it in my mind."

With summer's end in sight, Bob felt pressured to move. Less than a month after they met, they married. They spent their honeymoon at Niagara Falls, accompanied by Dorothy's father, who died two years later, and her stepmother.

Dorothy's father and brothers told him she had had a rough time during the war. He got the impression the lobotomy was the doctors' way of helping her forget.

"You could go a long way with beauty, charm and a lovely voice," says Paul. "And that was my mother."

The couple lived most of their adult lives in Dixon, Ill., Bob repairing pipe organs and Dorothy keeping house. Adept at the mechanics of motherhood, she was also childlike and volatile, her family says. The boys never knew if she was going to blow up in public. She once doused Bob with a glass of water during a spat at a restaurant, he says, and occasionally threatened to kill him.

"Since I had nothing to compare it to growing up, I just thought this was the norm for everybody," says Bruce Ludden, 56, their second son. "I didn't realize I was the kid with the sick mom, and everyone else has a normal mom."

As Bruce grew older, his friends noted his mother's odd behavior. She chased one friend from the house while brandishing a butter knife. Dorothy sometimes seemed to believe she was an aristocrat with a maid named Hephzibah -- a figure in the Bible -- whom she would ask to fetch tea and perform other chores.

Bruce and Paul don't recall when they learned of the lobotomy. Terms like "schizophrenia" and "lobotomy" crept into family conversations, they say, as their embarrassment grew over her behavior. Bob says he retreated from his family to avoid chaos she created.

But Dorothy also patched scraped knees and cooked. "Fixing boobos and making dinner -- that's pretty monumental considering what they did to her," Bruce says. "I didn't have a sane mom, but I had one who was adequate to get me through life, and for that I'm grateful."

At no point, according to the family and medical records, did Dorothy seek further psychiatric treatment. "She was sweet and tender, but there wasn't depth," says Paul. "It's like there's an emotional disconnect."

When the youngest Ludden brother committed suicide in 1996 at age 35, Bruce was struck by her seeming detachment. She quickly resumed her household routines, he says. Her displays of grief appeared veneer-thin, "not something coming out of the very, very, very deepest part of her heart."

The couple moved to Southern California five years ago to be closer to Paul, who lives in Chatsworth and has put aside his musical teaching and conducting career to care for his parents.

In October, a vessel burst in Dorothy's brain, flooding her skull with blood. Such subdural hematomas are common when brain matter atrophies, as often happens with the elderly. Scientists haven't done enough research on the long-term effects of a lobotomy to know whether it can provoke such bleeding. "My hunch is it's possible that the fact that she had a lobotomy may have slightly increased her risk for subdural hematoma," says Dr. David Sultzer, a VA psychiatrist who has examined Dorothy's records. "How much it increased her risk is unknown."

She has moved from the house she shared with Bob to a nursing home in Sunland. Gangrene, linked to deep-vein thrombosis, is attacking one leg. Bob is now her legal guardian.

Her memories are mostly gone, as are her words to describe those that remain. She can't remember the wounded men she treated, although she recalls her smart white nurse's uniform.

She has one memory of Tuscaloosa: "They put me under and doctors gave me an operation." She can't recall why, and the missing thought frustrates her. Her face screws up as she tries to grasp it. "Dear, dear, dear, dear," she says.

Paul visits her frequently. He stands by her wheelchair, and she leans her head against him. "Lord Jesus," he says, "bless my mom. Give her peace in her life and in her mind."

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## NOTABLE COMMENTARY

### 25. Saudi Arabia's challenges

*The country's new leadership needs to steer toward significant reforms*

Washington Post, Jan. 24, Pg. A14 | Editorial

Saudi King Abdullah had a not-undeserved reputation as a relative moderate and modernizer of his hidebound and autocratic monarchy. He waged war against Islamic extremists, both at home and abroad; invested heavily in education, including for women; worked to preserve good relations with the United States and to check Iranian expansionism; and proposed a landmark plan for Arab peace with Israel.

Yet it was telling that, as the 90-year-old king's death was announced, Iranian-backed militants were overturning the government of Yemen, a close Saudi ally, while the kingdom faced global opprobrium for the brutal flogging of a liberal blogger who dared to criticize religious authorities. In the end, King Abdullah's policies failed to prevent a significant decline in Saudi influence and to answer the challenge of accommodating the rising, Internet-bred generation of Arabs - including the 46 percent of Saudis who are 25 or younger.

The king's successor, Salman bin Abdul Aziz, was greeted with understandable skepticism, since he is 79 years old and reputed to be mentally infirm. But the new regime quickly sent a strong message of stability and continuity by naming 69-year-old Muqrin bin Abdul Aziz as crown prince and - more significantly - Interior Minister Mohammed bin Nayef, 55, as deputy crown prince. Prince Mohammed, the first grandson of the Saudi dynasty's founder to be placed in the line of succession, is American-educated and has led the mostly successful campaign to suppress al-Qaeda inside Saudi Arabia.

The Post's David Ignatius reports that Prince Mohammed is the Saudi official in whom the United States has the most trust. That could prove important in navigating the increasingly difficult relationship between the governments, which are united in fighting al-Qaeda and the Islamic State but at odds about how to handle Iran's nuclear program and its bid for hegemony in the Middle East. For now, it's uncertain how quickly the next generation of Saudi leaders, including newly appointed defense minister Prince Mohammed bin Salman, 34, will assert themselves, and whether the succession scheme will be challenged. Some experts expect a collective leadership for the immediate future, which would probably impede significant policy changes.

What seems clear is that the Saudi monarchy will have to accelerate the late king's glacial pace of reform if it is to survive the early 21st century. For now the kingdom is a relative island of stability in a region torn by sectarian war, terrorism and repression; but those vicious and bloody conflicts will eventually give birth to a new order - one that will most likely be closer to the new democracy in Tunisia than the atavistic Islamic State. A country of 27 million people that depends on petroleum for most of its revenue, forbids women to drive and whips liberal intellectuals for expressing themselves will not remain stable for long in this environment.

While the Obama administration has protested the persecution of dissidents, it has done little to promote reform in Saudi Arabia. A statement by President Obama praised King Abdullah for his Arab peace initiative and his commitment to alliance with the United States while making no mention of his domestic record, other than his dedication to education. If Saudi Arabia is to remain a strategic ally of the United States, U.S. diplomacy will have to start encouraging the kingdom's next rulers to adopt fundamental political reforms.

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## **26. A Smooth Saudi Succession, but a Rough Road Ahead**

Wall Street Journal, Jan. 24, Pg. A13 | Karen Elliott House

The death Thursday of Saudi Arabia's 90-year-old, long-ailing King Abdullah is hardly a surprise, nor are the ascensions of his 79-year-old brother Prince Salman as Saudi king and 69-year-old Muqrin, another brother, as crown prince. But the quick choice of Mohammed bin Nayef as the kingdom's new deputy crown prince is surprising -- and is significant domestically and internationally.

The 55-year-old Prince Mohammed is the first of the grandsons of Abdul Aziz, founder of modern Saudi Arabia, to be named in the line of succession. For nearly 60 years, one after another of Abdul Aziz's more than three-dozen sons followed each other as king. Muqrin is the youngest surviving son.

Watching this band of brothers diminish in number and vigor left many inside the kingdom -- and abroad -- fearing that one day soon the next-generation princes would quarrel over succession and thereby risk destabilizing oil-rich Saudi Arabia.

Now the succession issue appears to be settled. This new leadership trio is likely to continue the kingdom's foreign policies -- specifically its regional competition with Iran, its distrust of the U.S., and its acceptance of low oil prices. At home, the main impact is likely to be further suppression of dissent; the brief spring of more tolerance when King Abdullah began his reign in 2005 is a distant memory.

Mohammed bin Nayef's appointment surely will be welcomed by the U.S. and other Western nations that have worked closely with him over the past decade as the kingdom's top officer in charge of curbing terrorism. Educated in the U.S. and fluent in English, Prince Mohammed was long seen as Washington's preferred candidate among the



younger princes who aspired to be king. As a result, some inside Saudi Arabia will see his selection as proof that the U.S., despite growing tensions with Saudi Arabia, still exercises a major say in who leads the kingdom. American support for him is a negative among young Saudi fundamentalists, who oppose Saudi ties with what they see as foreign infidels.

Since 2012 Prince Mohammed has been head of the powerful ministry of interior charged with internal security. The ministry has its own paramilitary force to guard key facilities, such as oil installations, and operates a sophisticated surveillance system monitoring Saudi citizens.

The ascent of this new-generation ruler could come sooner than expected. The new King Salman is said to suffer from Alzheimer's, and Crown Prince Muqrin's credentials to be king continue to be questioned by some in the royal family because his mother was only a Yemeni concubine of Abdul Aziz.

By contrast, the new deputy prime minister has two advantages: First, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef is part of the powerful family faction called the Sudairi (a Sudairi woman bore Abdul Aziz seven sons, including King Salman) who have dominated family affairs much of the past half-century. Second, Prince Mohammed has no sons, at least so far, which would make his ascension less threatening to other family factions.

What is clear is that the appointment of Mohammed bin Nayef as deputy crown prince and his cousin, Mohammed bin Salman, 30, the new king's son, as defense minister and chief of his father's royal court, injects clarity and vigor into the future succession of the Al Saud dynasty. The new deputy crown prince is credited by Saudis for keeping terrorism inside the kingdom at bay, but the new defense minister, who has been his father's chief aide in recent years, is seen as inexperienced and arrogant and thus lacks public support. In the short term, though, the new leadership team faces serious challenges at home and especially abroad.

Even as the Al Saud princes buried their late king and then gathered after the day's fifth and final prayer required of Muslims to pledge their bay'ah or allegiance to the new king, crown prince and deputy crown prince, Iranian-backed Houthi rebels had evicted the Saudi-supported leader of neighboring Yemen. (And at home, in Medina, a Saudi jihadist was shot attempting to storm a building housing security agencies.)

The kingdom's efforts to confront and curb Iranian influence will continue unabated. In particular, the Saudis will continue to accept lower oil prices, a tactic that is helping to bankrupt Iran. Efforts to secure U.S. cooperation against the Islamic State terror group, or ISIS, in Syria and Iraq will also continue, as will the kingdom's disappointment that the Obama administration is doing little to remove Iran's ally, Bashar Assad, in Syria. Given the late Saudi king's prolonged poor health, Salman as crown prince was involved in most of the kingdom's foreign-policy decisions; he is unlikely to change much, unless he decides to be even tougher on Iran.

King Salman, who served more than 50 years as governor of Riyadh, the kingdom's most conservative city, had the role of maintaining strong relations with the Wahhabi religious scholars whose support legitimizes Al Saud rule. These religious leaders deeply oppose Iran's brand of Shiite Islam, as does the new king -- unlike his predecessor, who at least advocated religious tolerance even for Shiites.

Notwithstanding concerns over King Salman's health, he has a reputation as a hard worker (he once told me that he met 700 visitors in one day), a religious conservative and a tough-minded autocrat. Indeed, in a 2010 interview in his Riyadh office, he explained why Saudi Arabia cannot contemplate democracy. "If Saudi Arabia adopts democracy, every tribe would be a party" and the country would be ungovernable.

Beyond the focus on Iran, the Saudi regime is deeply worried that young Saudis, often educated but unemployed, will be attracted to ISIS's call to fight in Syria and Iraq and to establish a true Islamic caliphate that would recapture the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Obviously, this is a call for the dissolution of Saudi Arabia. The government has imposed mandatory 20-year sentences on Saudis who go abroad to fight, but that hasn't eliminated the appeal of ISIS propaganda.

One Saudi imam told me during a visit in November that his son is begging to go to Syria to join ISIS. While the imam says he is discouraging the teenager, he acknowledged that he finds the ISIS call for a caliphate "exciting." Like all too many Saudis, he sees the Al Saud as too worldly, while another group of Saudis argues that the rulers are too religiously conservative.

Prince Mohammed bin Nayef's expanded role as minister of interior and deputy crown prince guarantees the use of tough antiterror policies. The prince survived a 2010 attempt on his life by a terrorist who blew himself up in the prince's home without wounding the intended victim. Yet the prince has also been responsible for the kingdom's efforts to rehabilitate terrorists by providing religious training and, if they convincingly recant terrorism, giving them a job, a car and a wife.

Having settled the generational succession issue, the Al Saud monarchy now faces the much tougher challenge of preserving its rule in a region racked by radicalism, conflict and chaos -- and at home a people divided between those who want more modernity faster and those who want to return to the fundamentalism of Islam's seventh-century founding.

*--Ms. House, a former publisher of The Wall Street Journal who won a Pulitzer Prize as a reporter for her coverage of the Middle East, is the author of "On Saudi Arabia: Its People, Past, Religion, Fault Lines -- and Future" (Knopf, 2012)*

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## **27. Playing Politics on Iran**

New York Times, Jan. 24, Pg. A18 | Editorial

Normally, the visit of a world leader to the United States would be arranged by the White House. But in a breach of sense and diplomacy, House Speaker John Boehner and Ron Dermer, Israel's ambassador to Washington, have taken it upon themselves to invite Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to Congress to challenge President Obama's approach to achieving a nuclear agreement with Iran.

Mr. Netanyahu, facing an election on March 17, apparently believes that winning the applause of Congress by rebuking Mr. Obama will bolster his standing as a leader capable of keeping Israel safe. Mr. Boehner seems determined to use whatever means is available to undermine and attack Mr. Obama on national security policy.

Lawmakers have every right to disagree with presidents; so do foreign leaders. But this event, to be staged in March a mile from the White House, is a hostile attempt to lobby Congress to enact more sanctions against Iran, a measure that Mr. Obama has rightly threatened to veto.

In his State of the Union address, Mr. Obama laid out an approach to international engagement that includes shrinking America's military commitments overseas and negotiating limits on Iran's nuclear activities in return for a

gradual lifting of sanctions. A move by Congress to pass legislation proposing new sanctions could blow up the talks and divide the major powers that have been united in pressuring Iran. Given an excuse to withdraw from talks, Iran could accelerate its nuclear program, curbed for a year under an interim agreement, and force the United States or Israel to use military action or a cyberattack to keep Tehran from producing nuclear weapons.

In a recent Washington Post op-ed article, the foreign ministers of Britain, France, Germany and the European Union also implored Congress to hold off on new sanctions. Similar messages have come from scores of other experts, including two former American national security advisers, Brent Scowcroft, a Republican, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, a Democrat. According to Secretary of State John Kerry, even Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, warned Congress that new sanctions would scuttle the talks, saying it would "be like throwing a grenade into the process." Mossad later tried to paper over any perceived differences with Mr. Netanyahu.

Mr. Netanyahu has long defined Iran as Israel's top threat and made clear his contempt for negotiations. Like his Congressional allies, however, he has never offered a real alternative, except more sanctions (which can't work if the rest of the world eases up on Iran) or military action. If a deal is finally reached and Congress finds it lacking, tougher sanctions can be imposed then.

Domestic politics are also at work. Republicans apparently see value in trying to sabotage any possible success for Mr. Obama, even if it harms American interests.

As for Mr. Netanyahu, it's hard to see how disrespecting an American president whom even he says has significantly advanced Israel's security can benefit his country.

There is no doubt that Mr. Obama will maintain America's security commitments to Israel, whatever the tensions over the Iran issue. But this event is bound to further harm a bilateral relationship that has endured a lot of battering over the past six years. The White House has said that, understandably, Mr. Obama will not meet with Mr. Netanyahu when he is in town. Even Mr. Kerry, who recently called almost 50 world leaders in an effort to block the Palestinians' attempt to join the International Criminal Court, is losing patience with Mr. Netanyahu's decision to "play politics," according to his aides. Can Mr. Netanyahu really afford to dismiss such allies?

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## **28. There's nothing secular about Boko Haram**

Washington Post, Jan. 24, Pg. A15 | Colbert I. King

A reader of last week's column about Islamist extremism wrote, "It is not really about Islam. It is about things you understand all too well: poverty, alienation, disenfranchisement, and a search for meaning and identity. Identifying with Muslim extremist groups gives terrorists a package of support, doctrine, and legitimacy to draw on." The writer commented that, while Boko Haram does not have "much to do with Islam," through its militancy it is able to attract money and training from groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

The writer urged me to draw on my understanding of "black alienation in the inner city" for insight into the behavior of Boko Haram. A few other readers echoed that sentiment.

Indeed, I'm all too familiar with the mistrust, anger and sense of disconnection present in some communities marginalized on the basis of economic and social standing and race.

But is Boko Haram motivated by economic deprivation or feelings of victimization? Or is it something else? Something more akin to violent religious extremism?

Bishop Oliver Dashe Doeme, prelate of the Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri, in northeast Nigeria, doesn't view Boko Haram as just an opportunistic bunch of hoodlums using religion as cover for their mercenary exploitation.

In an interview this week with the international Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need, Doeme said that, within five years, Boko Haram has decimated his diocese. Fifty churches have been destroyed, with 200 more abandoned, he said. The bishop stated that 1,000 of his congregants have been killed, many by Islamists. He said, "The [extremists] point a gun or a knife at them saying that if they do not convert they will be killed. Some of them have been killed for refusing to convert."

Nigerian Christians certainly regard Boko Haram as religiously motivated.

Since 2009, the bishop said, nearly 70,000 of the 125,000 Catholics in the Diocese of Maiduguri have fled their homes. So have half of the diocese's priests, with many seeking refuge in a neighboring diocese.

The situation is so dire in northern Nigeria that Doeme has asked for Western troops to help defeat Boko Haram. The Nigerian military, he said, ranges from inept to corrupt. "Among the soldiers there were sympathizers with Boko Haram - some of them were even Boko Haram members and many of them just ran away," he said.

Boko Haram is about more than disenfranchisement and a quest for identity.

Its mission is to establish Islamic law - or at least Boko Haram's version of it - over Nigeria. It is driven by a religious fundamentalism that sanctions the deliberate destruction of churches and the slaughter of worshipers.

On Christmas Day it targets churches. There's nothing secular about Boko Haram.

No less than Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau has said so himself. Claiming credit for a massacre that took place in the northeastern Nigerian town of Baga - in which hundreds were shot on sight or dragged from their homes and killed - Shekau said in a YouTube video, according to the Associated Press: "We are the ones who fought the people of Baga, and we have killed them with such a killing as he [Allah] commanded us in his book."

Amnesty International said as many as 2,000 civilians were killed and 3,700 homes and businesses were destroyed in the Jan. 3 attack on Baga near Nigeria's border with Cameroon.

"This is just the beginnings of the killings," Shekau said. "What you've just witnessed is a tip of the iceberg. More deaths are coming."

Sorry to all who think groups like Boko Haram don't have much to do with religion. But something is loose in the land, and it's a religious fundamentalism fueled by hatred, the likes of which most of us have never seen before.

It's been a while since I visited ethnically and religiously diverse Nigeria. Ethnic strains were evident during my trips in the 1980s - the country fought a civil war in the '60s. But today's violent religious extremist threat was virtually nonexistent.

So, too, the case in Yemen, where I first heard the Islamic call to prayer, and in Egypt, Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Sudan, where, in a previous profession, I visited on business.

Back then there was no al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Sanaa, no Islamic State receiving funding from supporters in Kuwait, no Saudi Arabian money flowing to 9/11 plotters and no reason for an Egyptian president to demand that imams help in the fight against terrorism.

This is a different time. "Alienation" and "a search for meaning" may be contributing factors.

So, too, hatred - leading to mayhem and massacres committed, albeit wrongly, in God's name.

Sadly, it does have to do with religion.

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## **29. Russian Aggression, Western Talk**

Wall Street Journal, Jan. 24, Pg. A12 | Editorial

President Obama devoted two short paragraphs in his State of the Union speech on Tuesday to the crisis in Ukraine. "We're upholding the principle that bigger nations can't bully the small," he said, "by opposing Russian aggression, and supporting Ukraine's democracy, and reassuring our NATO allies." Thanks to American and European sanctions, he added, "Russia is isolated with its economy in tatters."

Vladimir Putin begs to differ. Russian forces on the same day opened fire on Ukrainian positions in the rebel-controlled Luhansk region, not far from the Russian border, according to a Ukrainian military spokesman. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko cut short his trip to Davos to deal with the "worsening situation" on the home front, and Kiev's forces abandoned the airport in Donetsk on Thursday.

Moscow has issued the usual denials about reinforcing the rebels in Luhansk, calling its regulars "volunteers" and sneering at "hallucinations about a 'Russian invasion,'" as a Russian defense spokesman put it. There are now some 9,000 such volunteers fighting alongside pro-Kremlin rebels in eastern Ukraine, according to Mr. Poroshenko, and they are armed with hundreds of tanks, heavy artillery and personnel carriers.

"For months now there has been a push by the separatists for expansion of their territory," a Western diplomat at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe told us. The rebels have "a lot of ammo," the official said, "and that's coming from somewhere. This could not be happening without sophisticated logistical support from the Russian Federation."

Meanwhile, the Western diplomatic push continues. The German, French, Ukrainian and Russian Foreign Ministers held a new round of talks in Berlin on Wednesday. The aim is a cease-fire along the lines of September's failed Minsk Protocol, but as Mr. Poroshenko told reporters, "To have a complete de-escalation we don't need any blah-blah-blah. We need just to withdraw Russian troops."

It doesn't help that the West's commitment to sanctions is flagging. "I think the sanctions must stop now," French President Francois Hollande said on Jan. 5. He added: "It has been costly for him . . . Mr. Putin does not want to annex eastern Ukraine. What he wants is for Ukraine not to fall into the NATO camp."



Mr. Hollande's musings on Russia's intentions were echoed by European Union foreign-policy chief Federica Mogherini, whose bureaucracy in a discussion paper circulated to EU foreign ministers suggested bifurcating the Ukraine issue into the annexation of Crimea and Russia's "destabilization of eastern Ukraine." If Moscow pulls back from eastern Ukraine, the paper said, sanctions could be rolled back and cooperation resumed.

European foreign ministers later clarified that there are no immediate plans to lift sanctions, but the Mogherini paper revealed the depth of Western misunderstanding of Russia: Just as Mr. Putin feels the pressure of falling oil prices, Mr. Hollande and Ms. Mogherini telegraph a willingness to welcome him back into good Western graces if only he'll settle for his gains so far. The West should instead be maintaining the pressure, so the Russian people come to understand the costs of Mr. Putin's revanchism.

The Russian leader doesn't want to deal with the West like a normal nation. He wants to re-create Kremlin dominance over Russia's near abroad and use energy exports as a political weapon against Western Europe. If the West permits him, he will consolidate his gains, continue to stir trouble in Ukraine and wait until the right moment to go on the offensive again.

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### **30. 'American Sniper' missed its real target**

Washington Post, Jan. 24, Pg. A15 | Alyssa Rosenberg

Given the ferocious fights over politics and fidelity to history that have defined this Oscar season, perhaps it's no surprise that "American Sniper" star Bradley Cooper wants to avoid his portrayal of Navy SEAL Chris Kyle becoming a partisan football.

"It's not a political movie at all, it's a movie about a man - a character study," he insisted in December. "We hope that you can have your eyes opened to the struggle of the soldier rather than the specifics of the war."

But what about the specifics of the man himself? "American Sniper," based on Kyle's memoir of the same name, scrupulously sands off Kyle's edges and political beliefs until he becomes precisely the generic stand-in for U.S. service members that Cooper feared the movie might represent. "American Sniper" would have been a better film about Kyle and the war he fought in if director Clint Eastwood had been as bold with politics on film as he was on the Republican National Convention stage in 2012.

In the film, Kyle uses the word "savages," but "American Sniper" doesn't make room to explore the depth of his contempt for Iraqis that comes through in his memoir. He drove remote-controlled cars at them at high speed for the pleasure of watching their alarm: "Their high-pitched screams, coupled with sprints in the opposite direction, had me doubled over. Cheap thrills in Iraq were priceless," Kyle wrote. He bragged about stealing from their homes against orders. He compared them to U.S. welfare recipients in their dependency and inability to handle freedom.

And Kyle saw his distaste for the people he was fighting as explicitly connected to his faith. "On the front of my arm, I had a crusader cross inked in," he wrote. "I wanted everyone to know I was a Christian. I had it put in red, for blood. I hated the damn savages I'd been fighting. I always will. They've taken so much from me." In a scene in the movie, Kyle is accused of shooting someone carrying a Koran, which he mistook for a weapon. In the film, he simply protests that he couldn't possibly have made such a mistake. But in his memoir, Kyle writes that he told investigators, "I don't shoot people with Korans - I'd like to, but I don't."

I understand why Eastwood might have wanted to avoid these elements of Kyle's memoir, as well as his distaste for the military's civilian leadership and his belief that the United States never really wanted to find any weapons of mass destruction. They make Kyle a harder sell, both to people who already see the war on terror as fundamentally racist and to those who adamantly deny that it is animated in any way by anti-Arab bias.

But "American Sniper" would have been a much bolder movie, and much more interesting, if it had been willing to explore the proposition that society has a use for people who enjoy violence and who find it relatively easy to turn the people they kill into abstractions.

Alternately, Eastwood might have connected one of the central moments in "American Sniper" to more complicated stories Kyle told about himself.

In the film, after Kyle gets into a fight in defense of his younger brother, his father tells him that there are three kinds of people: sheep, wolves and sheepdogs. "I will whip [you] if you become a wolf. But we protect our own." The line between a wolf that hunts for the joy of violence and a sheepdog that fights only when it must to keep its flock safe at times can be a difficult one to keep clear.

In Kyle's memoir, he brags of breaking up gang activity by beating sailors aboard the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk, of brawling with ultimate fighters, of flipping over cars, of decking a man who insulted a waitress. He didn't include in the book more extreme stories he apparently told acquaintances, including a tale of shooting or helping to shoot 30 people during looting that took place under the cover of Hurricane Katrina and another of killing two men who tried to carjack him at a gas station.

It's curious that Eastwood excludes both Kyle's fanciful stories of violence committed out of uniform and his more believable ones. Including some of them could have let "American Sniper" pose a series of powerful questions: Was Kyle a sheepdog? Or did he become a wolf? And what happens to a wolf that thinks it's still protecting the flock, when in fact it's simply gratifying its own violent urges?

Eastwood and Cooper may have hoped to avoid commenting on the war in Iraq with "American Sniper." But in doing so, they made a movie that lacked the courage to truly see Chris Kyle as a person.

*--Alyssa Rosenberg writes The Post's Act Four blog*

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