

CURRENT NEWS

EARLY BIRD

June 24, 2012

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Item numbers indicate order of appearance only.

MIDEAST

1. **Turkey Vows Action After Downing Of Jet By Syria**
(*New York Times*)....Liam Stack
Turkey's president said Saturday that his country would do "whatever is necessary" in response to the downing of a Turkish military jet by Syria, adding a new complication to the tense relationship between the former allies split by Turkey's support for Syrian rebels trying to overthrow the government.
2. **Syria, Turkey Mount Joint Rescue For Downed Jet's Pilots**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Patrick J. McDonnell
A day after Syria shot down a Turkish jet, officials from the neighboring countries moved to tamp down tensions Saturday as they mounted a joint rescue operation for two pilots still missing in the eastern Mediterranean.
3. **Turkey Says Syria Downed Plane In International Airspace**
(*Bloomberg.com*)....Ali Berat Meric, Bloomberg News
A Turkish warplane shot down by Syrian forces was in international airspace when it was struck, and Turkey is still weighing a response to the attack, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu said.
4. **Russians Push For Syrian Election**
(*London Sunday Times*)....Uzi Mahnaimi
...The Russians believe an election this year or early next would be seen as a concession to the opposition and could reduce any risk of western military intervention.
5. **Poll: Most Of Syria's Neighbors Want Assad To Step Down**
(*Jerusalem Post*)....Hilary Leila Krieger
Overwhelming majorities in the Arab countries surrounding Syria want to see President Bashar Assad step down, according to a new Pew Research Center poll.
6. **As Hopes For Reform Fade In Bahrain, Protesters Turn Anger On United States**
(*New York Times*)....Kareem Fahim
...Thousands of Bahrainis rose up 16 months ago, demanding political liberties, social equality and an end to corruption. But the Sunni monarchy, seen by the United States and Saudi Arabia as a strategic ally and as a bulwark against Iran, was never left to face the rage on its own. More than a thousand Saudi troops helped put down the uprising and remain in Bahrain, making it a virtual protectorate. The United States, a sometimes critical but ultimately unshakable friend, has called for political reform but strengthened its support for the government. Last month, the Obama administration resumed arms sales here.
7. **Declaration Of Winner Is Said To Be Near In Egypt**
(*New York Times*)....David D. Kirkpatrick

The commission overseeing Egypt's first competitive presidential election will declare an official winner on Sunday, the panel said Saturday, amid growing conviction that the announcement has become a bargaining chip in a negotiation for power between the ruling generals and the Muslim Brotherhood.

8. **Egypt Appears To Underline The Limit Of U.S. Influence**
(*Washington Post*)....Karen DeYoung
...Even to Republicans, Egypt seems to exemplify the rule that there is only so much a U.S. president can do to run the world. More than any of the Arab Spring countries, U.S. policy toward Egypt since its revolution began last year has been hemmed in on all sides.
9. **State Dept. Wonders How Egyptian Got Visa**
(*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*)....Matthew Lee, Associated Press
The State Department said Friday it is looking into how a self-professed member of a banned Egyptian terrorist organization was issued a U.S. visa and traveled to Washington this week for meetings with senior officials in the administration of President Barack Obama..
10. **Taking Advantage**
(*National Journal*)....Sara Sorcher
In Egypt, Washington signaled that good relations are more important than basic freedom for civil-society activists. Other nations in the region took note.
11. **For Iraq, Another Enemy: Slow Governance**
(*ArmyTimes.com*)....Lara Jakes, Associated Press
Iraq's government, already infamous for its lethargy and red tape that has snarled national progress, may soon shut down for much of the summertime.

AFGHANISTAN

12. **Series Of Attacks Underscores Difficulties U.S. Troops Face Training Afghan Forces To Hold Their Own**
(*Fayetteville (NC) Observer*)....Drew Brooks
...But the attack underscored the difficulty of arming and training Afghans to hold off the Taliban on their own. Dozens of attacks in which Afghan security forces have turned their weapons on their allies have eroded trust.
13. **Lash And Burn: Taliban Vice Squads Returning To The Fray**
(*London Sunday Times*)....Miles Amooore
Brutal morality police are exploiting a US pullout from a remote Afghan region, writes Miles Amooore in Jalalabad.
14. **Flash Flooding In Northern Afghanistan Kills At Least 37**
(*Boston Globe*)....Associated Press
...The US-led coalition said two NATO service members were killed Friday by insurgents in southern Afghanistan. So far this year, 203 NATO service members have been killed in Afghanistan. Last week was particularly violent in Afghanistan, as insurgents stepped up attacks against international forces.

BOOKS

15. **A Misdirected Surge**
(*Washington Post*)....Rajiv Chandrasekaran
The day after he arrived in Kabul in June 2009, Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, then the top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan, gathered his senior officers to discuss the state of the war.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

16. **Pentagon Tests New Way Of Estimating Program Costs**
(*Defense News*)....Sarah Chacko

The Pentagon is putting its new weapons cost-cutting strategy to its first big test as it negotiates with Lockheed Martin over the price of the next batch of F-35 Joint Strike Fighters (JSF).

ARMY

17. Army Will Expand Suicide Prevention Efforts

(Austin American-Statesman)....Jeremy Schwartz

The Army chief of staff on Friday said he will dispatch top Army officials to major installations across the country to study suicide prevention efforts in hopes of lowering record suicide rates among active duty service members.

18. At Birthplace Of Tang And Bulletproof Vest, An Enduring US Mission

(Boston Globe)....Jaelyn Reiss

...The base, tucked just off Route 27 near Lake Cochituate in Natick, specializes in research and development of anything that touches a soldier's life while on duty, including clothing, food, and supply needs.

MARINE CORPS

19. Montford Marines Who Were Desegregation Pioneers To Get Their Due

(Fayetteville (NC) Observer)....Michael Futch

...At 88 and in poor health, he plans to fly to Washington this week to attend two ceremonies paying tribute to the fighting men known as the Montford Point Marines. These veterans will receive the nation's highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal. About 400 of the estimated 420 living Montford Point veterans are expected to attend.

NAVY

20. Report: Submarine Hazing Centered On Homosexuality

(Newport News Daily Press)....Brock Vergakis, Associated Press

A Navy hazing case that led to the firing of the top enlisted officer aboard a nuclear submarine was sparked by gay jokes about a sailor who said another man tried to rape him while in a foreign port, according to an investigative report obtained by The Associated Press.

NATIONAL GUARD/RESERVE

21. Guard Generals Not Disciplined In Misuse Of Aircraft

(Norfolk Virginian-Pilot)....Bill Sizemore

The former head of the Virginia National Guard and his assistant, both retired generals, were found to have misused government aircraft in a Pentagon investigation concluded a year ago, yet it appears they have faced no disciplinary action.

22. Combat Pilot Faces Different Kind Of Fire

(Topeka Capital-Journal)....Rick Dean

Guardsmen sent to fight blaze in Colorado.

23. Guard Deaths In Afghanistan Hit Lexington Area Hard

(Columbia (SC) State)....Sammy Fretwell

Ryan Rawl and J.D. Meador died on the same day, in a crowded market thousands of miles from the community that watched them grow from youngsters to soldiers in the S.C. National Guard.

CONGRESS

24. A Defense Spending Crisis In January? Think Summer

(Newport News Daily Press)....Hugh Lessig

Automatic cuts in U.S. defense spending will take effect in January 2013 if Congress does nothing about it. That's what it says on paper. In reality, the drag on the defense industry is already in the works, portending serious consequences for Hampton Roads and Virginia into the summer and fall, analysts and elected officials say.

25. **Kerry's Closeness To Obama Draws Fire**
(*Boston Globe*)....Bryan Bender
More oversight, less advocacy needed, critics say.

ASIA/PACIFIC

26. **Largest-Ever RIMPAC Headed To Isles**
(*Honolulu Star-Advertiser*)....William Cole
Pearl Harbor, and by extension Waikiki, are about to become very busy places.
27. **U.S. Gives Osprey Probe Updates, Reassurances**
(*Japan Times*)....Kyodo
After briefing Japanese officials on how probes into two crashes involving Osprey planes are progressing, the U.S. Defense Department emphasized the safety and capability of the controversial aircraft amid concerns about their planned deployment to Okinawa.
28. **Okinawans Mark The Day Guns Fell Silent**
(*Japan Times*)....Kyodo
Okinawa on Saturday marked the 67th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Okinawa, the World War II ground assault during which an estimated quarter of the local population perished. Today, many Okinawa residents are fighting contentious plans to relocate the U.S. Futenma air station and moves to deploy the accident-prone Osprey aircraft at the base.

CYBER WARFARE

29. **Stuxnet Cyberweapon Set To Stop Operating**
(*Christian Science Monitor (csmonitor.com)*)....Mark Clayton
Goodbye Stuxnet. And Iranian officials would doubtless hasten to add: "Good riddance."

DRUG WAR

30. **U.S. To Boost Drone Flights In Caribbean Drug Effort**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Brian Bennett
After quietly testing Predator drones over the Bahamas for more than 18 months, the Department of Homeland Security plans to expand the unmanned surveillance flights into the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico to fight drug smuggling, according to U.S. officials.

VETERANS

31. **VA Says Bay Pines Vets' Care Falls Short**
(*Tampa Tribune*)....Howard Altman
As the military struggles to cope with an alarming suicide rate among veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs for the first time is monitoring how its hospitals handle patients making the critical transition from hospitalization to living on their own.

MOVIES

32. **Brain Injury Is Real Through Eyes Of 4 GIs**
(*San Antonio Express-News*)....Kristina M. Jackson
A soldier returns from Iraq and has trouble remembering how to complete everyday tasks.

COMMENTARY

33. **The LOST Sinkhole**
(Washington Post)....George F. Will
 There they go again. Like those who say climate change is an emergency too obvious and urgent to allow for debate, some proponents of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, a.k.a. the Law of the Sea Treaty (LOST), say arguments against it are nonexistent.

34. **Annan's Plan For Syria Is Dead; Washington Needs A Plan B**
(Philadelphia Inquirer)....Trudy Rubin
 ...But here's the sad truth: Even though an unchecked civil war will devastate civilians, attract radical jihadis, and destabilize the entire region, diplomacy won't prevent this. It's time for a reality check on what the West can and can't do to curb the killing--and to prevent a new failed Islamist state.

35. **Annan's Syrian Gamble**
(Washington Post)....Jim Hoagland
 Kofi Annan must strike a deal with the devil to end the sickening atrocities being committed by the Syrian army. But the devil Annan has in mind is Vladimir Putin, not Bashar al-Assad.

36. **Not-So-Crazy In Tehran**
(New York Times)....Nicholas D. Kristof
 WHEN I decided to bring two of my kids with me on a reporting trip to Iran, the consensus was that I must be insane. And that someone should call Child Protective Services!

37. **More Fighting With Enemy Swords**
(McClatchy Newspapers (mcclatchydc.com))....Ben Barber
 A few days ago I felt like I stepped on a land mine.

38. **Vietnam Still Lurks In The Situation Room**
(Washington Post)....James Mann
 Journalist James Mann on how three generations see the world differently.

39. **The Cool War**
(Tampa Tribune)....John Arquilla
 ...But now, somehow, it seems that war may no longer seem so terrible. How has this come to pass? The culprit is the bits and bytes that are the principal weapons of cyberwar.

40. **What's Behind A Leak**
(Washington Post)....David Ignatius
 ...People in the news business always have a bias toward more information, even on sensitive subjects involving intelligence policy. So the reader should discount for my inherent bias in favor of informing the public, and of the process that leads to disclosure — namely, leaks.

41. **Stuck On Syria**
(Washington Post)....Editorial
 NOT FOR the first time, the debate about Syria in Washington is being overtaken by developments on the ground.

42. **Settle Army's Makua Issue**
(Honolulu Star-Advertiser)....Editorial
 The legal battle between the Army and community activists over Makua Valley is surely not over yet, but this week, there was hope that the clock may finally be running out.

New York Times
June 24, 2012
Pg. 12

1. Turkey Vows Action After Downing Of Jet By Syria

By Liam Stack

CAIRO — Turkey's president said Saturday that his country would do "whatever is necessary" in response to the downing of a Turkish military jet by Syria, adding a new complication to the tense relationship between the former allies split by Turkey's support for Syrian rebels trying to overthrow the government.

"It is not possible to cover over a thing like this," said President Abdullah Gul of Turkey, according to the Anatolia news agency. "Whatever is necessary will no doubt be done."

Syria said Friday that its military forces had shot down a Turkish jet that had entered its airspace just off the Syrian coast. But Mr. Gul said Saturday that while the exact route of the plane had not yet been confirmed, it was routine for military jets flying at high speeds to briefly cross into another country's airspace, and that the jet's presence over Syrian territory was not intended as a hostile act.

The plane went down over the Mediterranean off the coast of the Syrian province of Latakia and south of the Turkish province of Hatay. On Saturday, Turkish officials confirmed that parts of the jet had been recovered.

Mr. Gul said the two governments were communicating at a high level despite the absence of a Turkish ambassador in Syria since Turkey closed its embassy in March. Syria's state news agency, SANA, reported that the Syrian and Turkish Navies had established contact and

were searching for the missing pilots.

Syria appeared eager to try to defuse the crisis. "We have no hostile intentions against Turkey," Jihad Makdessi, a spokesman for the Syrian Foreign Ministry, told the Lebanese broadcaster LBC.

But Mr. Gul's promise to respond — he did not specify whether he meant diplomatic or military measures — signaled Turkey's anger and resolve. Faruk Celik, Turkey's labor and social security minister, said that even if Syria's airspace had been violated, the Syrian response was unacceptable, according to The Associated Press. "Turkey cannot endure it in silence," Mr. Celik said.

Other Turkish officials urged restraint. Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc said Turkey was awaiting an explanation from Syria about the downing of the plane, which he said was an unarmed surveillance craft. He called for calm while the details were sorted out, saying, "We should not give any credit to provocative acts and statements."

The episode was another blow to relations between the neighbors, who were close before President Bashar al-Assad of Syria began his crackdown on Arab Spring protests 16 months ago, setting off a revolt by political and militia groups now supported by Turkey.

Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has been one of the most strident critics of Mr. Assad's government and its long crackdown, which has killed thousands since it began in March 2011.

Since then, Turkey has allowed more than 32,000 refugees to seek shelter in a string of camps across its 550-mile border with Syria. It has

also provided crucial support to dissident groups and the Free Syrian Army, an anti-Assad militia whose leaders live under the protection of Turkish security forces in a fortified camp near the Syrian border.

On Friday, opposition activists reported that as many as 25 men had been shot dead in the village of Daret Azzeh, in northern Aleppo Province, in what the activists described as a battle between the Free Syrian Army and members of a pro-Assad paramilitary group.

On Saturday, Al Dunya television, a channel close to the Syrian government, dismissed those claims, saying those killed by the rebels were civilians and not armed fighters.

Opposition activists said the bloodshed continued on Saturday across Syria, with dozens reported killed in fighting and shelling in Deir al-Zour, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Dara'a, Idlib and Damascus and its suburbs. Syria's restrictions on journalists make it impossible to confirm such reports.

Abou Bilal al-Homssi, an opposition activist in Homs, said that shelling had deterred the Red Cross from entering the area. "This is our second week under siege; the humanitarian situation is extremely dangerous," he said.

In Deir al-Zour, near the border with Iraq, at least 22 people were killed on Saturday as Syria's army battled rebels and shelled neighborhoods there, according to the Local Coordination Committees, a network of activist groups in Syria. The activists described "intense shelling" that made it impossible to reach the wounded and recover the bodies of the dead. In the Tareeq Halab neighborhood of Hama on Saturday, security forces conducted a sweep to arrest young men and

shelled the area, damaging the mosque of Fatima al-Zahraa, a local landmark, activists with the Local Coordination Committees said.

The London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition group with contacts in Syria, said that government forces killed at least two people in Hama on Saturday.

The group also reported that the Syrian Army on Saturday raided the southern town of Dara'a, where the uprising against Mr. Assad was born, with tanks, leaving one person dead.

On Saturday, Mr. Assad announced the formation of a new cabinet, led by a longtime insider, Riad al-Hijab, according to state news media.

But the move fell short of a pledge he made last month for a more inclusive government, as crucial ministers kept their positions, including Defense Minister Dawood Rajiha, Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim al-Shaar and Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem.

Dalal Mawad and Hwaida Saad contributed reporting from Beirut, Lebanon, and Sebnem Arsu from Istanbul.

Los Angeles Times
June 24, 2012

2. Syria, Turkey Mount Joint Rescue For Downed Jet's Pilots

Turkey says its F-4 Phantom aircraft downed off the Syrian coast may have wandered into Syrian airspace unintentionally. Both sides avoid bellicose rhetoric.

By Patrick J. McDonnell, Los Angeles Times

BEIRUT — A day after Syria shot down a Turkish jet, officials from the neighboring countries moved to tamp down tensions Saturday as they mounted a joint rescue

operation for two pilots still missing in the eastern Mediterranean.

The incident dramatically escalated tensions between two countries whose relations were already severely strained because of Turkey's tacit support of the 16-month uprising against Syrian President Bashar Assad.

But there was a notable lack of bellicose rhetoric Saturday emanating from both capitals, Ankara and Damascus, underscoring the explosive potential of the incident.

Turkish President Abdullah Gul conceded Saturday that the F-4 Phantom aircraft downed Friday off the Syrian coast, apparently by a surface-to-air missile, may have wandered into Syrian airspace, but he said any such action was not "ill-intentioned" and was not unusual.

"We will wait to clarify some details, and then of course everything that needs to be done will be done," Gul told reporters.

Turkey has said it would act "with determination" once the facts were clarified.

Turkey is a NATO member and was probably consulting the United States and other allies before deciding how to respond. But there was no public indication that Turkey was seeking support from North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies for retaliatory action.

Russia, a close ally of the Syrian government, will also be watching closely. Moscow has said it opposes any foreign intervention in the Syrian conflict, which has left at least 10,000 people dead, as the nation plunges toward a sectarian-tinged civil war.

Diplomats have been extremely concerned about the possible "spillover" effect in neighboring nations, including Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

On Thursday, a Syrian pilot defected to Jordan with his MIG-21 aircraft.

Turkish authorities were said to be studying the doomed F-4 Phantom's flight path in a meticulous effort to conclude whether it was in Syrian airspace when it was shot out of the sky. The outcome seemed likely to color Ankara's response.

Syria's official state news agency reported that air defenses shot the aircraft down when it was less than a mile from the Syrian coast, well within domestic airspace.

A war between the two nations — both with huge armies, modern air forces and considerable missile-launching capabilities — would probably create massive instability in one of the world's most volatile regions.

But the overall tone of the Turkish response did not suggest that Ankara regarded the incident as a justification for war. Turkish public opinion also seemed muted, though there was some saber-rattling in the Turkish press.

On the Syrian side, a Foreign Ministry spokesman took the unusual step of calling a Turkish television channel and reassuring the Turkish people directly that the incident was an "accident" and not an act of aggression.

"There was no hostile act against Turkey whatsoever," Syrian Foreign Ministry spokesman Jihad Makdissi told Turkey's A Haber television news channel, according to a translation provided by the station and quoted by the Associated Press. "What is important now is that Turkey and Syria are working together to find the pilots."

Search vessels from the two nations were said to be scouring the area where the jet was thought to have plunged into

the Mediterranean. There were no reports of wreckage having been recovered.

Among the many unanswered questions was what the U.S.-made jet was doing so close to the Syrian coast, and whether it had strayed there inadvertently or was there for a specific purpose.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry is expected to release a more detailed statement Sunday.

The incident did put foreign powers on notice that Syria's Russian-made air defenses remain capable of defending its borders. Washington and other Western nations have so far ruled out a Libya-style intervention in Syria, but Western military planners have been examining the options.

Before the outbreak of the Syrian rebellion, Syria and Turkey were close allies that had even mounted joint military exercises. The 500-mile Turkish-Syrian border was a hub for international trade. The Syrian uprising, however, has strained relations to something close to a breaking point. Each nation has expelled the other's diplomats, and both sides have exchanged verbal broadsides. The border has become a tinderbox.

Turkey has joined the United States and other nations in calling on Assad to step down. A mutual animosity appears to have developed between Assad and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who once regarded the Syrian leader as a friend.

More than 30,000 Syrian refugees have fled into Turkey and are living mostly in border-area camps. Damascus has charged that insurgents and arms are flowing into Syria through the porous frontier. Several cross-border shooting incidents — including one in April that left two dead

on the Turkish side — have drawn angry condemnations from Ankara.

Turkey is hosting both a major Syrian rebel umbrella group, the Free Syrian Army, and several political opposition coalitions, including the best-known faction, the Syrian National Council. But Turkey has denied reports that it is supplying arms to Syrian rebels or facilitating arms transfers.

Bloomberg.com
June 24, 2012

3. Turkey Says Syria Downed Plane In International Airspace

By Ali Berat Meric,
Bloomberg News

A Turkish warplane shot down by Syrian forces was in international airspace when it was struck, and Turkey is still weighing a response to the attack, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu said.

The unarmed plane briefly entered Syrian airspace minutes before it was hit on June 22, and then plunged into Syrian waters about 8 miles (13 kilometers) offshore, Davutoglu said on state television today. It was on a test flight related to Turkey's radar system, and the mission had nothing to do with spying on Syria, he said. The plane was clearly identifiable as Turkish, and Syria made no attempt to issue a warning after the earlier infringement, he said.

"No one should doubt Turkey's determination to do what is necessary" in response to the incident, Davutoglu said. He said Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan will consult opposition leaders over Turkey's response in the next two days, and will probably make a statement on the issue on June 26.

The downing of the plane has heightened tensions that

have arisen in the past year between the former allies over Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's crackdown on anti-government protesters, which has left more than 10,000 people dead. Syria has criticized Turkey for hosting meetings of Syrian opposition groups, while Turkey has called for a change of regime in its southern neighbor.

The plane was hit in Syrian airspace and it should be thought of as "an accident, certainly not an attack," Syrian Foreign Ministry spokesman Jihad Makdissi told the Turkish news channel A Haber yesterday. He said Syria has no hostility toward the Turkish government or people.

NATO Briefings

The state-run Syrian Arab News Agency said on June 22 that the plane was inside Syrian airspace when it was shot down.

Davutoglu described that allegation as "disinformation." He said Turkish rescue teams are still searching for the pilots, and Syria has also deployed personnel for the search, though they are not working together. He said Turkey will give detailed information about the incident to fellow members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the coming week.

Erdogan, previously an Assad ally, has repeatedly called in recent months for the Syrian leader to step down and end the bloodshed. Several thousand Syrians have sought refuge in Turkey. In April, two people seeking to flee into Turkey were wounded by gunfire across the border from Syrian forces, prompting reports in Milliyet and other Turkish newspapers that Turkey's army was considering establishing a buffer zone inside Syria.

Weapons Supply

U.S. intelligence officers based in southern Turkey are working to determine which Syrian opposition groups should receive arms across the border, and Turkey is helping to pay for the weapons along with Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the New York Times reported June 21, citing U.S. and Arab officials.

Turkey hasn't raised the issue of the downed plane at a NATO level, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters on June 22, according to the department's website. NATO rules allow members that are attacked to request support from the organization.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed hopes that Turkey and Syria will show restraint and resolve the issue through diplomatic channels, the Turkish news service Anatolia said, citing his spokesman, Martin Nesirky.

UN Syria envoy Kofi Annan, speaking on June 22 before the Turkish plane was reported missing, said that talks are under way for a conference on Syria to be held in Geneva on June 30, to which all potential contributors to a solution would be invited.

London Sunday Times
June 24, 2012
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4. Russians Push For Syrian Election

By Uzi Mahnaimi

Russia has launched a secret plan to save President Bashar al-Assad by pressing him to hold an early election, writes Uzi Mahnaimi.

As a close ally, Moscow has considerable influence over Assad, but officials in the Russian foreign ministry have growing doubts about his ability

to cling to power in the face of the uprising against him, which has been strengthened by arms from other Arab countries. "We suggested to Assad that he consider an early election," said a Russian diplomat close to the talks. "It's possible that he'll take our advice."

The Russians believe an election this year or early next would be seen as a concession to the opposition and could reduce any risk of western military intervention.

Although Russia continues to honour its arms contracts with Syria, insisting that a delivery of three Mi-25 attack helicopters on the MV Alaed turned around by Britain last week will go ahead, it will not intervene militarily.

"Obviously they'd like to see our military's presence once the final showdown begins," said the diplomat. "However, we were very clear and said they can't expect any intervention on the ground to save Assad."

Speaking privately, Russian foreign ministry officials say Assad's regime is doomed, but he has refused to countenance any suggestion that he should step down. "We think Assad will fight to the last drop of his blood," said one.

A Russian diplomat who met the Syrian president recently in Damascus said he had contrasted his position with those of the former presidents Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Zine Ben Ali of Tunisia.

"Assad said Mubarak had gone but Egypt remained, Ben Ali had gone but Tunisia remained. 'If I go, Syria will go with me,' he said."

Jerusalem Post
June 24, 2012
Pg. 2

5. Poll: Most Of Syria's Neighbors Want Assad To Step Down

By Hilary Leila Krieger,
Jerusalem Post correspondent
WASHINGTON

Overwhelming majorities in the Arab countries surrounding Syria want to see President Bashar Assad step down, according to a new Pew Research Center poll.

The only neighboring country surveyed that did not strongly endorse Assad's departure was Lebanon, where the public was split sharply along sectarian divides. Israel was not included in the report.

Eighty-nine percent of Jordanians and Egyptians, 88% of Tunisians and 67% of Turks want Assad to go, as do 53% of Lebanese. But while only small minorities in every country except Lebanon want him to stay, 97% of Shi'ite Lebanese do. In contrast, only 20% of Sunnis and 28% of Christians do.

The numbers track closely with unfavorable views of Assad personally, which represents a dramatic shift. In a 2008 survey of Arab public opinion released by the Brookings Institution, Assad was the second most admired leader in the world, trailing only Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah.

However, even in places with huge majorities in favor of Assad's relinquishing power, there is division about how that should be accomplished.

Only in Tunisia – with 63% and 61% support, respectively – do the majority of those surveyed want to see more sanctions applied or Arab military force used against Syria.

And while there is some support in Jordan, Egypt and Turkey for Arab-led action – 28%, 47% and 29%, respectively – backing for Western-led intervention is barely in the double digits (10% and 11% for the first two) and

only somewhat higher (24%) in Turkey.

The survey was conducted between mid-March and mid-April, before the most devastating civilian massacres were reported. The margins of error ranged between +/3.8% to +/-5.2% in the various countries.

New York Times

June 24, 2012

Pg. 6

6. As Hopes For Reform Fade In Bahrain, Protesters Turn Anger On United States

By Kareem Fahim

MANAMA, Bahrain — In a dark alleyway of a low-slung suburb here, two dozen protesters gathered quietly and prepared to march toward a United States naval base. A teenager wrapped his scarf close to his mouth, bracing for tear gas. A man peeked out of his doorway, holding his infant daughter above his head, to show her a ritual of defiance that has become a grinding way of life.

For months, the protests have aimed at the ruling monarchy, but recently they have focused on a new target. To their familiar slogans — demanding freedoms, praising God and cursing the ruling family — the young protesters added a new demand, written on a placard in English, so the Americans might see: “U.S.A. Stop arming the killers.”

Thousands of Bahrainis rose up 16 months ago, demanding political liberties, social equality and an end to corruption. But the Sunni monarchy, seen by the United States and Saudi Arabia as a strategic ally and as a bulwark against Iran, was never left to face the rage on its own.

More than a thousand Saudi troops helped put down

the uprising and remain in Bahrain, making it a virtual protectorate. The United States, a sometimes critical but ultimately unshakable friend, has called for political reform but strengthened its support for the government. Last month, the Obama administration resumed arms sales here.

Backed by powerful allies, the government has pursued reform on its own terms. Dialogue between the country’s Shiite majority and the king has stopped. Twenty-one of the most prominent dissidents still languish in prison, and no senior officials have been convicted of crimes, including dozens of killings, that occurred during the crackdown last year. Opposition activists are still regularly detained or interrogated for their words.

On Friday, in what activists called a dangerous escalation, riot police officers forcefully dispersed a rally by Bahrain’s largest opposition party, injuring its leader. Every night, protesters march and clashes erupt, in a violent standoff that often seems a breath away from an explosion. As political leaders pursue sectarian appeals and a once cosmopolitan society comes undone.

Some Bahrainis had pinned hopes for reconciliation on a report, issued six months ago, that investigated the events of February and March 2011 and found that the security forces had used indiscriminate force and torture in putting down the uprising. King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa promised to heed the report’s findings and punish officials responsible for abuse.

Government officials assert that reforms are bearing fruit, that a new special unit is investigating allegations of abuse, and that thousands of people who lost their jobs because they participated in

the revolt or were accused of sympathizing with it have been rehired. Foreign advisers have been hired to overhaul the security services.

The justice minister, Khalid bin Ali al-Khalifa, said the polarization in Bahrain had not “reached a dangerous level yet.”

“It reaches a dangerous level when you don’t have a government in place,” he said. “Many of the people are getting along with each other.”

John F. Timoney, a former Philadelphia and Miami police chief who was hired to help reform a Bahraini police force implicated in torture and killings, said that new curriculums were being taught at the police academy and that police stations were being fitted with cameras to prevent torture during investigations. He also said that the current climate could overwhelm his efforts.

“It’s a heavy lift, changing the culture,” he said. “If there’s no political solution here, it’s all for naught.”

The possibility of a solution seems remote. Opposition groups and human rights activists say that the reforms leave the state’s undemocratic core intact, and that they fail to address central grievances like corruption and the institutionalized discrimination against the Shiite majority.

Nabi Saleh, an island suburb of the capital, graphically illustrates their complaints. A Shiite village in the center is surrounded by seafront homes or compounds that residents say belong to government loyalists, members of the royal family or expatriates. Two slivers of beach are available for the public.

During the day, police officers sit at the entrance to town, tear-gas launchers on their laps, waiting for the

inevitable nightly skirmishes with young people in the village.

A few months ago, when one of the village’s few Sunni residents put his house up for sale — fed up with the nightly smell of tear gas — his neighbors begged him to reconsider, and he did.

“This government wants us to separate,” said the man, a business owner who requested anonymity, fearing retribution by the authorities. He added, speaking of the royal family, “When their chairs shake, they take action.”

Men like Ali, 22, a resident of the island, are shaking their chairs. Several months back, during an antigovernment protest, he lost an eye to a concussion grenade fired by the police. After he was fitted with a glass eye, he quickly returned to the streets. He said he had no intention of stopping now.

“Until they fall,” he said.

Opposition activists say the government often casts them as a fifth column, backed by Iran and bent on toppling the Khalifa dynasty, which conquered Bahrain in the 18th century.

At a rally at a Manama mosque last month, a mostly Sunni crowd gathered in support of a proposed union with Saudi Arabia. The monarchy has said such a union would strike a blow to Iranian interference in Bahrain. There is scant evidence of any direct interference, though Iranian officials frequently proclaim their solidarity with the protesters.

People stubbed out cigarettes on a portrait of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader. Sheik Abdul Latif Mahmoud, the leader of a Sunni political group, warned darkly of a plot to “redivide” the region.

“Those who created the crisis wanted us to separate from each other on a sectarian basis,” Mr. Mahmoud said.

Bahrain’s mainstream Shiite political opposition has taken a gradualist approach to reform, calling for a constitutional monarchy. “Saying we want to bring the regime down makes Sunnis live in fear,” said Hadi Hasan al-Mosawi of the Wafaq party, the largest Shiite opposition group. “We don’t want to threaten people.”

Opposition activists say Wafaq is losing support from members frustrated with its inability to bring change and independent activists frustrated with its religious focus and limited view of reform. “When a huge number loses patience, what will happen?” Mr. Mosawi asked.

The march on the American naval base, the headquarters of the Fifth Fleet, never reached its destination. When the protesters got to the road leading to the base, riot officers surrounded them and fired tear gas.

It was one of several protests last month that focused on Bahrain’s decades-old alliance with the United States, which includes close military cooperation and a free-trade agreement. Days earlier, the Obama administration announced the resumption of arms sales after a seven-month suspension.

At the start of the uprising last year, a spokeswoman for the United States Navy said that the protests “were not against the United States or the United States military or anything of that nature.”

That has changed. In a Shiite village, protesters burned American flags, and in another, a young man held up a sign reading, “The American administration supports the dictatorship in

Bahrain.” Activists frequently liken United States statements — condemning violence by both the government and its opponents — to Russia’s on Syria.

A senior Obama administration official said last month that the weapons sales would not include arms used for crowd control like tear gas. Security challenges required the sale, the official said, adding: “Maintaining our and our partners’ ability to respond to those challenges is an important component of our commitment to gulf security.”

Officials framed the sales as an attempt to support Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, who was visiting Washington at the time and is seen as representing a reform-minded faction in the government.

Many analysts say it is too late for such a strategy. After the uprising was put down by force in the spring of 2011, they say, hard-liners in the government, backed by the Saudis, became ascendant, eclipsing the reform faction represented by the crown prince.

A young activist with the Bahrain Center for Human Rights who attended the march, Said Yousif al-Muhafdah, said he was unmoved by American assertions that the country was pressuring the Bahraini government. “I don’t want to say Hillary Clinton is lying,” he said. “I want to say this government doesn’t care.”

The American approach faced a critical test this month. Doctors who had been convicted in a military court for their participation in the popular uprising, on charges widely seen as political, appeared before an appeals court. Michael H. Posner, the assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor, had taken up their case

and said he had tried to get the government to dismiss the charges, several of the doctors said.

Mr. Posner was visiting Bahrain when the verdicts were announced: nine of the convictions were upheld. He said the United States was “deeply disappointed.”

New York Times
June 24, 2012
Pg. 10

7. Declaration Of Winner Is Said To Be Near In Egypt

By David D. Kirkpatrick

CAIRO — The commission overseeing Egypt’s first competitive presidential election will declare an official winner on Sunday, the panel said Saturday, amid growing conviction that the announcement has become a bargaining chip in a negotiation for power between the ruling generals and the Muslim Brotherhood.

“As the beginning of a transition to democracy, it is a disaster,” said Omar Ashour, a political scientist at the University of Exeter and the Brookings Doha Center, who is here in Cairo. But, he added, the disaster began the day before the presidential runoff, when the military dissolved the Brotherhood-led Parliament and seized legislative power.

“The generals have their fingers on the reset button if they don’t like the outcome,” Mr. Ashour said. While the Brotherhood may have more legitimacy and the ability to bring hundreds of thousands into the streets, “the generals have the guns and tanks and armored vehicles,” he said. “We are playing realpolitik at the moment.”

Television talk shows have obsessed over fragmentary reports of conversations

between Brotherhood leaders and the ruling generals, mainly a face-to-face meeting last weekend between the Brotherhood’s parliamentary leader, Saad el-Katatni, and Gen. Sami Hafez Enan. But a Brotherhood spokesman, Jihad el-Haddad, said Saturday that there had been no direct meetings since then, when the Brotherhood made its demands for the reinstatement of Parliament and the empowerment of an elected president.

What is more, he said, the Brotherhood agreed Friday that from now on any talks with the generals would be conducted by a new “national front” it had formed with more secular or liberal advocates of democracy. In so doing, the Brotherhood is acceding to arguments for greater collaboration and openness that have been for years advanced by its more liberal leaders.

Mr. Haddad also insisted that the announcement of a president was merely a first step toward the resolution of the standoff, adding that thousands of Brotherhood members and their allies have once again occupied Tahrir Square in Cairo. “The governing will within the national front is that there will be no meeting with SCAF unless there is an elected president,” he said, referring to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

He acknowledged, though, that most Egyptians now believed that the weeklong delay in the announcement had turned the declaration of a president into a bargaining chip in the generals’ indirect negotiations with the Brotherhood and its new allies.

The members of the commission of judges overseeing the vote — all appointed by former President Hosni Mubarak — have said

they delayed the announcement of the official results to investigate allegations of fraud from both sides. But the delay is a tacit threat to the Brotherhood, whose candidate, Mohamed Morsi, appeared to be the winner with 52 percent of the vote. His opponent, Ahmed Shafik, a former air force general and Mr. Mubarak's last prime minister, has also declared himself the winner.

Both the Brotherhood and the generals have been fairly open about their bargaining positions. Indeed, the two sides appeared to have reached a rough accord on power-sharing just a few months ago, before it disintegrated in angry disputes over the transitional government and presidential elections.

"Now each side feels like the other did not live up to its end of the agreement," said Michael Hanna, a researcher at the Century Foundation in New York. "The problem now is overcoming these accumulated suspicions."

The Brotherhood's leaders say their chief demand is the recognition of their victories in the parliamentary and presidential elections. They pointedly say that they respect a ruling on June 14 by the Supreme Constitutional Court that the military used as a writ to dissolve Parliament: that political parties were wrongly allowed to run parliamentary candidates competing for the one-third of seats set aside for individuals rather than party lists. But instead of the immediate dissolution of the whole legislature, the Brotherhood proposes new elections for those seats or perhaps accelerated elections for the whole chamber.

The Brotherhood also demands that the military council roll back the provisions of its interim charter stripping

the incoming president of almost all of his power and making him largely dependent on the military council. "This would at least solve 75 percent of the problems we find with the decree, which gives the military council a veto over everything," Khairat el-Shater, the Brotherhood's chief strategist, told Reuters.

Since seizing power after Mr. Mubarak's ouster, the generals, for their part, have appeared focused primarily on a new constitution that could protect their power, their privilege and perhaps the generally secular character of the state. "The constitution is their biggest priority," Mr. Hanna said. "It gives them a way to protect themselves, a legal shield."

Under the old military-backed autocracy, top military leaders enjoyed nearly total autonomy and immunity from oversight, and they were allowed to build their own commercial empire far outside the defense industry. And in public statements the generals have repeatedly said they expect to preserve their empire and their autonomy within any new civilian government.

The generals have repeatedly rearranged the transitional timetables to ensure that the Constitution is written while they remain in power, and they have tried to insert specific provisions to protect their power and immunity.

And as recently as a few weeks ago, Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, the leader of the military council, said cryptically that the generals did not intend to leave power until a constitution was complete, even though the slow-starting constitutional assembly had no chance to finish before the generals pledged transfer of power on June 30. Now that the generals

have renewed their hold on power, Mr. Hanna said, his meaning may be clearer.

Until the spring, the two sides seemed to have reached a rough agreement to ease the generals from power. Brotherhood leaders have said consistently that they expected, for at least the near term, only limited public scrutiny of the defense budget, working with the generals to manage defense matters, protecting them from criminal prosecution over events in the past and the continuation of their commercial empire.

The breakup appeared to begin when Parliament sought to replace the military's prime minister and the generals refused. Evidently taking a cue from the generals, the bureaucracy — including the election commission — and the state news media grew more critical of the Brotherhood as the group grew more assertive.

The Brotherhood broke its promise not to run a presidential candidate, and the judges of the election commission blocked its first choice, Mr. Shater. The Brotherhood sought to dominate a constitutional assembly, and the court struck it down. And the standoff culminated in the parliamentary dissolution.

Now it is unclear if the two sides can return to their earlier accord, in part because neither one trusts the other. The generals said last week that they would give no ground on the shutdown of Parliament or on their interim constitution until the completion of a permanent charter.

Mr. Haddad, of the Brotherhood, said it, too, was digging in for a long fight. "We are prepared logistically to stay as long as we need to in Tahrir Square," he said of the five-day old encampment there. "We have supply lines, coming in

and out of Tahrir Square, so it is designed for a long stay."

Washington Post
June 24, 2012

Pg. 9

8. Egypt Appears To Underline The Limit Of U.S. Influence

Obama team seems stymied; critics aren't offering better ideas

By Karen DeYoung

As Egypt awaits the results of its convulsive presidential vote, now expected to be released Sunday, the Obama administration has expressed no public preference for the outcome. Whether the new government is run by Islamists or military-aligned autocrats, it holds little short-term promise for U.S. interests in the Middle East.

The inability to shape events in an important regional partner - the reluctance even to try, beyond exhorting Egyptians to "do the right thing" - would appear to leave the administration ripe for partisan criticism in a political season when President Obama's "weakness" in the world has become a Republican mantra.

Meanwhile, GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney has charged Obama with a lack of leadership on foreign policy issues from Syria to Iran to Russia to the European financial crisis, but neither Romney nor his surrogates have weighed in with a better idea on Egypt.

Even to Republicans, Egypt seems to exemplify the rule that there is only so much a U.S. president can do to run the world.

More than any of the Arab Spring countries, U.S. policy toward Egypt since its revolution began last year has been hemmed in on all sides. The secular democracy the

administration once envisioned has not materialized because - as Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said ruefully last week - the youthful demonstrators who started the revolution "decided they wouldn't really get involved in politics."

Attempts to organize them through aid to nongovernmental organizations backfired, leading to complaints of U.S. interference.

When the Muslim Brotherhood emerged as the only truly organized civilian force, the administration was faced with accepting an outcome that it had hoped to avoid. It has tried to swallow its concerns even as it has warned Islamists that Egypt's precarious economy is not likely to survive the international isolation that extremism might provoke.

As an Islamic electoral victory appeared certain, Egypt's generals threatened to renege on their promise to cede the power they have held since the fall of Hosni Mubarak.

In the past two weeks, the military has shut the doors of the newly elected parliament, written new constitutional powers for itself, and delayed revealing the outcome of the presidential vote. On Friday, after results of last weekend's election were delayed, tens of thousands of Egyptians returned to Cairo's Tahrir Square to warn of chaos to come.

The Obama administration defended the Egyptian military this year from a Democratic-led attempt in Congress to punish it with an aid cutoff. Now some U.S. lawmakers have renewed the push for punishment. But there is little indication that the generals are listening.

The Egyptian crisis, a former senior U.S. military official said, is a lesson on whether the era of buying relationships with powerful

militaries abroad has outlived its usefulness. "What do we mean by a relationship? What are the pieces of it? In one sense, we gave them a lot of money," he said. "That held us together."

"But I don't think we, strategically, put the pieces together for these countries in a way that makes a lot of sense," the former official said, speaking of a series of administrations. "There's a limited amount we can do. It's not about their relationship with the outside world," he said of the Egyptian military. "This is about the future of their people. However they get there, it's up to them to decide."

At risk is a bigger prize, at least from the U.S. point of view: the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. Both Congress and the Israelis think the military is "the best bet in preserving the peace treaty," said Martin Indyk, who twice served as U.S. ambassador to Israel and now heads the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. "The Israelis are saying don't screw around with this."

Indyk's recently published book, "Bending History," outlines the "inevitable tension between Obama's soaring rhetoric and desire for fundamental change ... and his instinct for governing pragmatically." And he sees Egypt as offering a prime example. Beyond patience, some aid adjustments, and the administration's near-constant warnings that America and the world are watching, "there isn't a better idea out there," he said. "What are we going to do?"

For the moment, there may be no other good options, said Stephen V. Hadley, who served as George W. Bush's national security adviser and who has been floated as a possible secretary of state in a Romney administration.

"It's a bit of a conceit that came out of the Vietnam era, that all would be right with the world if only the United States had the right policies," Hadley said. "Well, I'm sorry. Would that we had that much control. But we don't."

Hadley has plenty of bones to pick with Obama on other issues. But revolutions like that in Egypt, which emerged from decades of dictatorship and suppression of dissent, "are long processes," he said. "This is hard, what the Egyptians are trying to do. Let's give them a break."

Hadley's views are identical to those voiced by senior administration officials who spoke on condition of anonymity lest they be seen as trying to interfere.

"The reality is that these processes are, by definition, long-term, generational ones," one official said. "You can't measure it by six months, or even a year from now. It's going to be going on for a long time."

St. Louis Post-Dispatch
June 23, 2012

9. State Dept. Wonders How Egyptian Got Visa

By Matthew Lee, Associated Press

WASHINGTON--The State Department said Friday it is looking into how a self-professed member of a banned Egyptian terrorist organization was issued a U.S. visa and traveled to Washington this week for meetings with senior officials in the administration of President Barack Obama.

Spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said the "circumstances of this particular case" were being reviewed. She declined to discuss specifics, citing privacy laws, but said the department is trying to better understand how and why Hani Nour Eldin was granted a visa and held meetings

with officials at the White House and State Department.

Eldin, a recently elected member of Egypt's parliament, was one of six Egyptian legislators invited to visit Washington by the Woodrow Wilson Center think tank for discussions about the current political situation in Egypt. However, Eldin has also identified himself as a member of Gamaa Islamiya, or the Egyptian Islamic Group, which the State Department has designated a "foreign terrorist organization."

Members of such groups are ineligible for U.S. visas and barred from entering the United States.

Eldin could not be reached for comment Friday as he and the rest of the group were returning to Egypt. But he confirmed his membership in Gamaa Islamiya in an interview with The Daily Beast website, which first reported on the matter.

Applicants for U.S. visas undergo a significant vetting process to determine whether they intend to return to their home country or could pose a threat to the United States.

Nuland said that like other applicants, all members of the Egyptian delegation went through a full set of screenings.

"Those screenings do depend, however, on the integrity of the information that's available to us at the time we do screen," she said. "This particular case is one that we are now looking into."

In addition to the discussions at the Wilson Center, Eldin's delegation held meetings with Denis McDonough, Obama's deputy national security adviser, and William Burns, the deputy secretary of state, according to administration officials.

June 23, 2012

10. Taking Advantage

In Egypt, Washington signaled that good relations are more important than basic freedom for civil-society activists. Other nations in the region took note.

By Sara Sorcher

At the Cairo airport, Sherif Mansour got the welcome he was expecting. Authorities handcuffed the civil-society advocate as he arrived from Washington and whisked him to a police station across the street from Freedom House, his employer for the past five years. Mansour, an Egyptian-American who was senior officer for Middle East and North Africa programs, had hoped that the U.S.-funded nongovernmental organization would be able to help democracy take root in a new Egypt. Instead, more than a year after protesters toppled President Hosni Mubarak, the government sealed Freedom House in a crackdown on groups that receive foreign funding.

After three decades of dictatorship in Egypt, the United States was eager to help the new government lay the infrastructure for a transition to democracy. Elections alone wouldn't bring about that transition, the thinking went: Egypt would also need a vibrant civil society. So Washington sent tens of millions of dollars to NGOs that promised to educate voters on complicated election laws; teach polling-station monitors how to guard the integrity of ballots; provide expertise to political parties and would-be politicians; and document any abuses. Most groups based abroad used Egyptian staffers to get the job done.

But after Mubarak's fall, the ruling military council grew reluctant to transfer power (as the takeover last weekend

underscores). Meanwhile, the generals watched as the civil-society groups went about equipping protesters with the means to push them out and helping activists spotlight the government's human-rights abuses. In late December, the government launched an attack on those groups that went far beyond any meddling during the Mubarak era. Prosecutors, backed by police and soldiers with machine guns, raided 17 NGO offices, including the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, Freedom House, and the International Center for Journalists—which receive U.S. funds. The authorities seized cash and paperwork and sealed the offices. To make matters worse, Cairo barred IRI's country director, Sam LaHood, son of U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, and six other American workers from leaving the country and charged them with illegally operating pro-democracy programs and stirring unrest.

This was a moment of truth for Washington. Congress had passed new conditions on Egypt's \$1.3 billion military-aid package, an annual rite that dates back to the 1978 Camp David accords. Before the U.S. released any aid, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton had to certify that the Egyptian government supported a democratic transition, had implemented due process, and was protecting basic human rights such as freedom of expression and association. But with American NGO workers hiding from prosecutors at the U.S. Embassy, how could Clinton sign off on the aid?

Luckily, Cairo budged, but not much: In exchange for \$5 million in "bail," Egypt released the Americans, who flew home on March 1, playing the

Indiana Jones theme song over the airplane's public-address system. Three weeks later, in a demonstration of support for the security partner that has kept the peace with Israel, Clinton used the national-security waiver—a provision in the law that allows her to skip certification—to release the money despite Egypt's record.

This was an object lesson, and it was not lost on Egypt's government: As long as it didn't detain American citizens or upset strategic interests, it could do more or less what it wanted at home. It could shut down U.S.-funded programs and silence critics by accusing them of operating without a license, sowing instability, or undermining the revolution. It could even dispatch requests to police departments worldwide asking countries to arrest 15 other NGO workers—including 12 Americans. Freedom House President David Kramer, who was assistant secretary of State for democracy, human rights, and labor until January 2009, says that the waiver "essentially said, 'Go ahead, it's OK to do this kind of thing. You let the Americans out. We really don't care what you do to your civil society.'"

Attention to Egypt's civil-society crisis has faded in Washington, but Mansour returned voluntarily to join Egyptian staffers who are still on trial—a decision that cost him his job. In the courtroom, they are confined to a cage. The prosecuting judges have indicated that the case against the 43 local and expatriate workers from foreign NGOs is just the first stage of a broader assault on civil society. With some 400 groups targeted for investigation, Mansour worries about the future of Egypt's homegrown democracy advocates. "We're the first line of defense. If they get us,

they'll get the rest," he laments. Clinton's waiver, Mansour says, was a clear message to the NGO community: Fight on your own.

The backlash to the Arab Spring is in full swing in Egypt, as the ruling class seeks to lock down control of the country before the planned transition to civilian rule in July. (Last weekend, just before the presidential runoff elections, Egypt's military dissolved the new Islamist-led parliament and imposed an interim constitution sapping the president's power.) By granting Cairo the full \$1.3 billion without conditions, the United States has already signaled that, as during the Mubarak era, it is unwilling to rupture a crucial national-security relationship for the sake of democratic change. Other countries in the region—worried that the desire for reform might one day upend their own hold on power—took note.

Governments across the Arab world are copying Egypt's example and cracking down on reform groups. And the backlash doesn't just threaten civil-society movements where they were beginning to blossom; it also threatens to kill them where they haven't yet taken root.

The Counter-Spring

Washington's effort to help Egypt's transition went awry almost immediately, with the \$65 million it sent directly to the civil-society organizations after the revolution. Egypt's highly restrictive laws give the government discretion over what groups can work in the country or receive foreign funding. Some of the organizations that Washington considers key had applications pending for years, but Mubarak tacitly allowed them to operate anyway. Western officials, looking to make connections

with a broader swath of the Egyptian people beyond the elites at the top, assumed that the new power structure in Cairo would revise the laws to accord with basic democratic rights. “It wasn’t that people said, ‘Oh, who cares about the law anymore,’ ” says Tamara Wittes, director of the Brookings Institution’s Saban Center for Middle East Policy, who was deputy assistant secretary of State for Near Eastern affairs until January. “They said, ‘Well, these laws are no longer relevant.’ ”

That proved to be a dangerous assumption. The Egyptian establishment, angry about the influx of money that bypassed its authority, is pushing for an *even more* restrictive NGO law that would give government officials wide latitude to decide whether the civil-society groups are pursuing acceptable goals—and to disband them if they aren’t. The interim government’s proposal would allow Egypt to send officials to NGOs’ meetings and to veto candidates for their boards of directors. The human-rights committee of the newly elected (and now-dissolved) parliament developed a less restrictive option in May. It’s not clear whether the final law will be “an improvement or something worse,” says Kareem Elbayar, the Middle East legal adviser for the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law.

Both proposals would require groups to obtain the Egyptian government’s approval before accepting foreign money. The regime could force organizations dependent on such funding—especially human-rights and political opposition groups—to discontinue their work, Elbayar says. Meanwhile, over the past two months, the government has “aggressively denied” most

foreign-funding requests and made it very hard for new civil-society organizations to register. And, Elbayar says, a tougher law could have far-reaching implications. “Egypt is a very influential country, and it would be a net loss for civil society in the region. ... Restrictive governments are learning from one another.”

Events seem to bear him out. Within days of Clinton’s waiver, authorities in the United Arab Emirates raided two foreign NGOs—the National Democratic Institute and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, a German think tank that promotes democracy—that were also targeted in Cairo. The UAE shuttered a branch of Gallup, the Washington-based polling organization. The regime there had tolerated those groups, which operated throughout the Gulf region, for years. But the Arab Spring frightened the monarchy. “The UAE was convinced by governments like Bahrain and Saudi Arabia that these organizations were problematic,” says Stephen McInerney, executive director of the Project on Middle East Democracy, a U.S.-based advocacy group. Those other Gulf nations, he says, told the Emirates, “Egypt’s going after them. It’s important for you to [do likewise] because these groups cause trouble.” Clinton was then in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for a security conference. “We very much regret” the action taken against the NGOs, she said at the time. But she stressed that “our overriding interests to cooperate, particularly in the security arena, the antiterrorism arena, are ones that are paramount.”

Meanwhile, as part of what international human-rights groups are calling a wider crackdown on dissidents, the

UAE has since March rounded up and detained at least 11 activists from the Reform and Social Guidance Association—a nonviolent Islamist political association calling for democratic reforms—even though the group had conducted a peaceful political discussion for many years. Another prominent activist was rearrested in May despite a previous pardon and release from detention; now he faces deportation.

Next door in Bahrain, Arab Spring protests by the disenfranchised majority Shiite population demanded that the Sunni rulers institute reforms. An independent inquiry last November, commissioned by the king, found that in response, Bahraini forces systematically raided homes of protesters, terrorized their occupants, and tortured detainees once in custody. At first, the United States held back a \$53 million arms package pending the monarchy’s progress implementing reforms.

But Bahrain is a key ally, home of the U.S. 5th Fleet, and a counter to Iranian influence. In late January, Washington signed off on the sale of some military equipment around the same time that Bahrain barred several international human-rights groups, including Human Rights First and Physicians for Human Rights, from entering the country. The commander of Bahrain’s defense forces then accused 19 NGOs based in the United States of orchestrating a coup attempt against the government. Nevertheless, when the crown prince visited Washington in May, the Obama administration approved further sales for the island’s “external defense” that it had previously delayed—and now plans another weapons package. (It is still withholding some Humvees,

advanced missiles, and other items such as small arms and tear gas that could be used for internal repression.)

The administration, to be sure, is walking a fine line, and the Arab Spring has made doing so even tougher. Washington needs Gulf nations to fight terrorism, provide oil, and counter Iran. Michael Posner, assistant secretary of State for democracy, human rights, and labor, says that the United States was “very clear” that it resumed arms sales to Bahrain only because of national-security interests. “We recognize there were a number of unresolved, very serious human-rights issues,” Posner says. “We weren’t extending military cooperation because human-rights issues had been dealt with successfully.... Those issues are still with us, and those are the things that we’re raising.” (See “*Democracy’s March*”.)

But without securing a specific implementation deadline for reforms or a quid pro quo for the weapons, President Obama could issue only a somewhat powerless call for reform. Bahrain is taking advantage. It jailed Nabeel Rajab, the president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, for three weeks in May; after being released, Rajab was rearrested this month. The Justice Ministry filed a lawsuit to dissolve the Islamic Action Society, or Amal, a political opposition group, this month as well. Bahraini activists who criticized the government at a United Nations human-rights review in Geneva were threatened, and the state media attacked them. “[This] is a new level of targeting of civil society,” says Brian Dooley of Human Rights First, who maintains that Bahrain also impeded the work of international NGOs.

And Posner, there last week, told reporters that a court verdict that reduced, but did not eliminate, prison sentences against nine medics for their roles in the protests has “deeply disappointed” Washington. The convictions, he said, appear to be based partly on their criticism of the government’s actions.

Once, Bahraini protesters thought that Obama would be a friend, says Maryam al-Khawaja, the foreign-relations director of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. Now they think the United States is “part of the oppression.... [It’s] willing to do business as usual with a government that’s committing human-rights violations on a daily basis.” If Washington doesn’t ratchet up the pressure for reform or exact consequences for failing to do so, Khawaja says, anti-American sentiment will grow to the point where Bahrainis won’t want a U.S. base in their country—and may even welcome support from Iran.

Elsewhere in the Gulf, strict laws against civil-society advocates and a pervasive political climate that discourages dissent have long made it difficult (or impossible) for independent groups to operate. Unlike Arab Spring countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, where pocketbook issues largely drove the protests, oil wealth in the Gulf states pays for universal health care and tax-free income. But those governments also appear to be using their strict laws to quiet individual actors who call for change and to shut down unregistered groups.

In Oman, for example, Amnesty International has documented a wave of arrests of activists, bloggers, and writers as a mechanism to “criminalize dissenting opinions” and suppress any

move toward broad reform. In June, the government’s public prosecutor announced legal action against anyone who publishes “offensive” writing that incites others to act “under the pretext of freedom of expression.” More than 30 people have been arrested. And in Saudi Arabia, the government this year imposed travel bans—lasting as long as 10 years—on several activists in an attempt to thwart their advocacy efforts abroad. Some, such as the reformer Mohammad al-Qahtani, are now on trial for supporting human rights.

Farther afield, Jordan, which has a strict NGO law, arrested many activists who were calling for wider political freedom, lower fuel and electricity prices, and an end to corruption. After the arrests in March, demonstrators marched for their release. Local papers described a rare show of unity in recent months as leftist activists joined with Islamists to protest the repression—and what both groups see as an ongoing crackdown on reformists.

In Libya, where the popular uprising overthrew dictator Muammar el-Qaddafi, many civil-society groups appear willing to work with Western countries. But McInerney, who visited recently, says that some government officials now worry that foreign funding will allow groups to carry out “sinister activities.” He says he heard high-level speculation about Egypt’s propaganda that the organizations were fronts for the CIA.

Although Libya’s developing NGO law seems to be emulating progressive legislation in Tunisia—the good-news story in the region—the government in June unilaterally announced a new provision: Foreign donors

desiring to fund civil-society groups must register with the state. Moves here and across the region (outside high-profile cases in Egypt and Bahrain) have met with little, if any, public condemnation by American officials. The Obama administration, eager to preserve its flexibility in the region, shows no sign of conditioning its aid on governments’ respect for civil society and human rights.

What’s happening in the Gulf countries could foreshadow a broader, worldwide crackdown on civil-society groups. Since winning Russia’s presidential election in March, Vladimir Putin has been accusing Washington of supporting pro-democracy programs to fuel opposition-party protests. Freedom House’s Kramer also flagged Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Venezuela (which have, to varying degrees, blamed foreign funding for instability) as potential trouble spots. “If the second-largest recipient of U.S. aid”—Egypt—“can get away with this, then why can’t they?” Kramer wonders.

Even in Israel, the only liberal democracy in the Middle East, civil-society and human-rights groups are coming under more scrutiny. Last November, a ministerial committee passed a set of measures from right-wing parties barring “political” groups—loosely defined as those attempting to affect Israel’s political and security agenda—from receiving more than about \$5,000 from a foreign government. The panel also approved a 45 percent tax on donations to these groups from states or international agencies such as the European Union and the United Nations. Some NGOs that receive foreign funding had been criticizing the Israeli occupation and publishing information

about human-rights violations in Palestine, especially after the 2009 Gaza war. After strong criticism from Clinton and other U.S. officials, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is said to have quashed the legislation. Now it won’t head to the parliament for a vote—but even if it did, it is highly unlikely that the United States would cut off \$3 billion in annual aid.

The Battleground

Just days after Mubarak fell, Mansour was invited to sit next to Clinton at the inaugural “Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society” at the State Department. “I was very happy to hear from you that U.S. foreign policy does not have to choose between oppressive governments and the aspiration of the people,” he told Clinton.

Now Mansour worries the Arab Spring could sputter if activists can’t advance the cause of civil society in his bellwether nation. He compares this moment to 2005. That year, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice proclaimed to an Egyptian audience that, after pursuing stability at the expense of democracy in the Middle East for decades and achieving neither, the United States would side with “impatient patriots” across the region. But then, Hamas won Palestinian elections, Iran’s proxies posed obstacles for democratization in Iraq and Lebanon, and Egypt spurned liberalizing reforms when the Muslim Brotherhood made unexpectedly strong gains in the 2005 elections.

In response, the Bush administration backed away from its “freedom agenda,” and the Arab Spring died (until it rose again on its own last year). “That’s what I fear may happen with this Arab Spring, if there isn’t enough support both from abroad and from within,” says Mansour, who sought political asylum in the

U.S. in 2006 after Mubarak's government harassed him for leading a coalition of NGOs to monitor elections.

Autocrats in the Arab world have long warned the United States that it faced a stark choice: Support us, or deal with the extremists. The first democratic elections in Tunisia and Egypt ushered in parliaments dominated by Islamist groups. The West is largely unfamiliar with these new players, and Washington might understandably overlook the new governments' democratic failings for the sake of U.S. national-security.

But one lesson of the Arab Spring is that no government is totally immune from its people's demand for democratic freedoms. Washington can force illiberal rulers to answer these demands and, in doing so, risk upsetting its long-standing allies in a volatile region. Or it can grant foreign aid and maintain relations no matter how these regimes respond to opposition. That choice carries an often-overlooked risk, too: The United States could end up alienating the Arab populations that are the future of the Middle East—the very people whom Washington keeps promising to help. It would be a sad irony if the world's oldest democracy found itself on the wrong side of history.

ArmyTimes.com
June 23, 2012

11. For Iraq, Another Enemy: Slow Governance

By Lara Jakes, Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq's government, already infamous for its lethargy and red tape that has snarled national progress, may soon shut down for much of the summertime.

A proposed new law, which a parliamentary committee plans to discuss Sunday, aims to shorten workdays and help public employees avoid searing temperatures that commonly exceed 120 degrees and blanket the country during summer's peak. It will also cut work hours during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan that begins in late July, Younam Kanna, chairman of parliament's labor and social affairs committee, said Saturday.

But Iraq is already feeling the heat from its people and foreign partners. Experts say its government largely has failed to overcome decades of war, sanctions and military occupation and settle into a new democratic system that delivers reliable security, electricity and other public services, or fosters job growth. Much of the government's work has been slowed by a political crisis, fueled by ethnic and sectarian tensions, that flared immediately after U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq last December and has produced demands for the Shiite prime minister's ouster.

"The employees in our ministries are looking for any pretext to run away from their offices," Jassim al-Obeidi, a real estate agent in Baghdad, said Saturday. "I think that this measure will add more delay to the work in the government offices, and the only damaged party will be the ordinary people who will have to spend more time and efforts trying to finish their paperwork for the government."

Kanna, a member of parliament's tiny Christian political coalition, said the new law should not significantly affect the government work. But he said it is still not decided how short workdays might be cut. He also declined to comment on whether it

would apply to security forces, lawmakers or top ministry officials.

"We think that the proposed measure is necessary for government employees, especially those who work in the streets, construction sites or open fields," Kanna said Saturday. "Working under high temperatures for a long time will definitely affect the health of the employees or workers."

Last week, the U.S.-based Fund for Peace ranked Iraq No. 9 on its annual Top Ten list of failed states worldwide. The nonpartisan research group ranked 178 nations and cited persisting security problems in Iraq, like the attacks that have killed more than 160 people so far this month, amid few improvements in soothing the long-standing ethnic and sectarian tensions. Other groups highlight corruption as a key obstacle undercutting development and trust in state institutions.

But Iraqis frequently complain that languid administration compounds the problems caused by instability and corruption.

Like many Muslim countries, official work in Iraq usually grinds to a halt during Ramadan, which this year begins July 20. But the law would for the first time legalize the slowdown for the country's government.

Before then, parliament is trying to rush through votes on as many as 50 pieces of legislation that have been stalled for at least since the beginning of the year. Laws to divide oil revenues between the central government in Baghdad and Iraq's self-rule Kurdish region, and settle boundaries for disputed lands in the country's north, have languished for years. Parliament's major accomplishment so far this year was approval of Iraq's \$100

billion operating budget — which included \$50 million to pay for pricey armored cars for each of the 325 lawmakers.

Lawmakers earn an estimated \$22,500 each month in salary and allowances for housing and security. In contrast, a midlevel government employee makes around \$600 a month.

Education ministry employee Abas al-Saadi welcomed the extra time, noting that "there are a lot of holidays in this country during the year and few more hours off will not hurt."

"With the summer temperatures in this country and the constant electricity cutoffs, I think the law recommendation is positive and helpful for employees, especially those who want to fast during Ramadan," he said.

Associated Press writer Sameer N. Yacoub contributed to this report.

Fayetteville (NC) Observer
June 24, 2012

12. Series Of Attacks Underscores Difficulties U.S. Troops Face Training Afghan Forces To Hold Their Own

By Drew Brooks, Staff writer

Pfc. Jarrod A. Lallier was gunned down Monday by men who were wearing the uniforms of his allies.

The 20-year-old Fort Bragg paratrooper died when three men in Afghan police uniforms fired on a group of soldiers with small arms and a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, military officials said.

The men who killed Lallier escaped, so it isn't clear whether they were actually Afghan police or Taliban militants in stolen uniforms.

But the attack underscored the difficulty of arming and training Afghans to hold off the

Taliban on their own. Dozens of attacks in which Afghan security forces have turned their weapons on their allies have eroded trust.

In one of those attacks earlier this year, two other Fort Bragg soldiers died. Staff Sgt. Jordan Bear and Spc. Payton Jones were shot to death in March.

Like Lallier, they were members of the 82nd Airborne Division's 4th Brigade Combat Team.

In April, a Fayetteville Observer reporter and photographer spent two weeks with the 4th Brigade in Afghanistan in an area of Kandahar where all three of the 82nd soldiers died.

The paratroopers they saw were training Afghan security forces and patrolling with them without incident.

But those soldiers described a sometimes-uneasy relationship with the Afghans - distrust that is just one more hurdle in the difficult mission of getting out of Afghanistan without leaving behind a country that will sink into lawlessness.

Less than a mile from Combat Outpost Zarif Khel, an Army minesweeper halted the single-file line of soldiers trailing behind him.

Within seconds, a small, wiry Afghan was on his hands and knees, scooping dirt aside while stabbing at the ground with a knife.

The Afghan, a member of the local police force, was searching for an improvised explosive device.

In the Zharay district of Kandahar province - where the Taliban originated - IEDs are the top threat.

American troops in Zharay have adjusted their patrols and operating procedures to limit the effectiveness of the bombs - walking in straight

lines, never taking the "easy route" and always traveling with equipment that can detect them.

But the wiry Afghan, who never said a word to the group during the joint Afghan-U.S. patrol, might have been their best protection, according to several of the paratroopers.

Only half in jest, some soldiers said he may also be one of their biggest enemies.

"He's the best mine hound we have," a soldier said following a routine foot patrol outside the base. "He also may be setting half the bombs he finds."

The comment was a joke at the end of a patrol on a hot, dusty day. But it demonstrates the uneasiness provoked by attacks on American soldiers by supposedly friendly Afghans.

Afghan security forces have turned their weapons on their allies nearly 60 times since 2007, with roughly a third happening so far this year, according to published reports.

Bear and Jones, the 82nd paratroopers, died in a wave of such attacks that happened after American soldiers mistakenly burned Qurans taken from Afghan detainees.

The two soldiers were killed when three Afghan nationals - two soldiers and a teacher - fired at them from a guard tower, according to the U.S. military. Officials in Afghanistan said the shooters fired indiscriminately.

Hours after learning that two of their brigade comrades had been killed by supposed Afghan allies, a group of soldiers at Forward Operating Base Pasab had unexpected visitors.

The soldiers, who work as welders for the 782nd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, had a group of their students - Afghan soldiers - ask them to lunch.

Speaking weeks later, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Bill Wencil said he and the other soldiers were uncertain if the lunch was in response to the killings of Bear and Jones. He said the topic never came up.

While admitting the soldiers kept their rifles ready during the lunch, Wencil praised the relationship between his soldiers and their Afghan allies.

"It's been really good to have them around every single day," he said. "We can go eat chow together. Maybe next time we'll have a volleyball game."

British Brig. Gen. Richard Cripwell, who heads the international effort to turn the mission over to that Afghans, said Wednesday the high-profile attacks have done little to slow the transition.

"Any death out here is an absolute tragedy, and it is more so when it is caused by Afghan forces," Cripwell told reporters during a Pentagon briefing.

"But I should be clear, firstly, that it's a tragedy as much for the Afghans themselves," Cripwell added. "Every single day there are tens of thousands and more ongoing relationships between ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) forces and the Afghans. We work extremely closely. We work extremely well together. These attacks are absolutely not representative of the huge, huge majority of the Afghan forces, and they are dismayed by them as we are."

Cripwell said the Afghan government is working to prevent insurgents from slipping into its military or police ranks.

"They are turning every stone they can to ensure the loyalty of their own forces," he said.

Cripwell said that the day-in, day-out relationships between Afghan and coalition

forces were working extremely well.

"We are going on operations with them every day," he said. "There is absolutely no lack of trust between us and our Afghan colleagues."

Soldiers with the 82nd at Forward Operating Base Azizullah got a demonstration early in their deployment of the shame that some Afghans feel when their troops behave dishonorably.

The chaplain for the 2nd Battalion, 321st Field Artillery arrived at the base chapel to find an Afghan soldier rifling through his belongings, according to battalion commander Lt. Col. Philip Raymond.

The Afghan soldier was chased to his own compound, where he was seized by his own forces and punished with a beating.

Raymond said that later that day, the Afghan commander came to him with tears in his eyes, mortified and begging for forgiveness.

Raymond said the incident did not damage relationships on Azizullah and said that both American and Afghan leaders have done their best to quell any problems as they arise.

"It's human nature to have disagreements," Raymond said. "But we have to get over our egos. Distrust can fracture a team."

Raymond said many issues can be avoided with a little cultural sensitivity.

"It's honestly giving a darn about who they are," he said. "It's realizing that soldiers are soldiers. By the end of an air assault, everybody looks the same, smells the same and acts the same."

Lallier, the paratrooper killed Monday, was a member of the 1st Battalion of the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

The battalion works out of Forward Operating Base Pasab, which often serves as a hub of sorts for American troops traveling across the districts of Zharay and Maiwand.

Pasab is home to two Afghan National Army compounds. It's also the home of the 4th Brigade Combat Team's headquarters in Afghanistan. In the brigade's offices, American officers work across the hall from their Afghan counterparts.

"Shona ba shona" - Pashto for "shoulder by shoulder" - is an unofficial motto for 4th Brigade leaders, who have preached cooperation and cultural understanding.

It is a motto that has been tested by the actions of soldiers on both sides of the alliance this year.

A week after Bear and Jones were killed, an American soldier - Staff Sgt. Robert Bales - allegedly snuck off his base and killed 16 Afghan civilians in Kandahar's Panjwai district. Many of them were children.

Bales, who served with a unit based in Washington state, isn't representative of the coalition soldiers in Afghanistan. Cripwell, the British general, and other coalition soldiers acknowledge that the Afghans who turn on their allies are not representative of the thousands who have joined the tough fight to turn back the Taliban.

Fort Bragg soldiers were instructed not to speak about the Bales case to reporters. But they were certainly conscious of the incident as they discussed their efforts to build a strong working relationship with the Afghans.

"They have their good and their bad," said Capt. CeCe Carlson, a soldier with the 4th Brigade Combat Team. "We can't judge everybody on the actions of a few. I hope they

don't judge us on the actions of a few."

London Sunday Times
June 24, 2012
Pg. 24

13. Lash And Burn: Taliban Vice Squads Returning To The Fray

Brutal morality police are exploiting a US pullout from a remote Afghan region, writes Miles Amooore in Jalalabad

THE black-clad Taliban insurgent raised a long, thin cane above his head before bringing it down on a villager's bare back.

The villager, identified only as Amanullah, 28, writhed on the grass with his hands tied behind his back as fellow residents of Bala Deh, a village in the remote province of Nuristan, in northeast Afghanistan, looked on. After 70 lashes Amanullah could barely stand when the Taliban untied him.

His crime? Failing to grow his beard long enough.

"We couldn't do anything except watch," said Haji Saeed Ahmad, 51, a teacher, who said he had been forced to witness the punishment. "They try to control you with fear."

Ahmad and others from Kamdesh, a mountainous district of Nuristan, said the Taliban had been beating people for smoking cigarettes, listening to music or chewing tobacco since they arrived three months ago.

The morality police, who dress from head to toe in black, hark back to the Taliban's rule in the late 1990s when the notorious vice and virtue ministry was established to enforce a strict moral code. The ministry's 30,000-strong force beat women for revealing any trace of skin, smashed televisions, banned music and

kite-flying and forced men to grow long beards.

Today in Kamdesh, residents describe morality squads, their faces hidden by black balaclavas, who behave even more aggressively. "They're so strict they even beat their own people if they catch them breaking the rules," a United Nations official said.

The birth of these radical morality squads — the first to appear in Afghanistan since the Taliban regime fell in 2001 — highlights the risks of Nato's plan to pull out most of its soldiers by the end of 2014.

When American forces withdrew from Nuristan in 2010, Osama Bin Laden told his commanders that their "first option" was to decamp there to escape CIA drones in Pakistan.

Nuristan's security void, compounded by Afghan government neglect, attracted more than Al-Qaeda fighters: Pakistani militants affiliated to an array of jihadi groups entered in even greater numbers, according to Afghan and UN officials.

Local journalists who have met insurgent commanders report the presence of Pakistan's militant Lashkar-e-Taiba, other groups affiliated to the Pakistani Taliban, Afghan Salafi militants and ordinary Taliban.

This mix taking refuge along the border with Pakistan has grown so toxic that American special forces plan to increase their strike operations to prevent militants from infiltrating neighbouring regions, according to a western official.

One of the most high-profile leaders to take advantage of the security void is Maulana Fazlullah, local sources said.

Fazlullah, nicknamed the "Radio Mullah", became notorious for running a parallel government in 2006 in Pakistan's Swat valley, where

he burnt down music shops and intimidated barbers who shaved off beards. During nightly radio addresses, Fazlullah read out the names of men he wanted beheaded for violating his rules.

Afghan and UN officials believe the morality police, who now enforce the Taliban's grip over most of Kamdesh district, are Fazlullah's men.

"They are guided by Afghan Talibs but most of them have Pakistani accents, even though they say they are from Jalalabad," said Habib Rasoul, 34, a wood carver who fled Kamdesh to escape recent clashes.

Men caught at checkpoints or by roving patrols with photographs or music on their mobile phones are detained, fined and then beaten. Even sporting a shirt collar — the mark of an infidel — carries a punishment of up to 15 lashes on the palm of the hand.

The Taliban's enforcers burn down the homes of government employees and, locals say, chop the ears off construction workers for taking money from the Afghan government or the international community.

"Whenever we go near these men, our bodies begin to shake," said Ahmad, the teacher who fled Kamdesh last month with his nine children.

Since the American departure there has been a near-total collapse of the state: police and officials have fled. Some have even handed their weapons to the Taliban.

As a buffer against the Taliban's influence, the Americans turned to a man they had spent the previous five years hunting. Despite misgivings among President Hamid Karzai's advisers, they provided weapons and cash to Mullah Mohammed Sadiq, the commander of a rival insurgent faction who was wanted for

planting bombs and attacking Nato forces.

The decision to support Sadiq worked, at least temporarily, and violence in the region fell. But in September last year, hundreds of insurgents pushed into a valley south of the district centre, overrunning four checkpoints.

As the Taliban then pressed further north towards Kamdesh, seizing control of villages and countryside, Sadiq's men began to run out of ammunition. Morale deteriorated.

In March, the Taliban began to send vice and virtue squads to patrol the villages. They targeted government collaborators in Bazigal Valley, burning the homes of some and abducting others.

By April Sadiq's militia had not been paid for eight months and began to talk of surrendering, locals and officials said.

Kabul eventually caved in to Sadiq's demands for reinforcements just as Taliban forces were mustering for an assault on the district centre. Afghan commandos stormed the village of Benuz in mid-April, raiding Taliban-occupied homes. The government and Nato, which supported the Afghan special forces with helicopters and jets, called the operation a success. "They don't know what they're talking about," said Ahmad. "The Taliban are still in control. Sure, they left some soldiers behind but the Taliban continue to hold the villages. Their police continue to beat people."

Nato announced last month that it would hand control of Nuristan over to Afghan security forces. Many locals thought the announcement a joke: there have been no western forces stationed in Nuristan for years. "Who are they handing it over to?" asked one UN official. "After 10

years, there are few roads, no state institutions in most districts, the police are almost non-existent and the Taliban are in the ascendancy. If the government can't support the province we'll see the collapse of Nuristan very soon."

Harsh punishments

Chewing tobacco: 30 lashes

Smoking cigarettes: 30 lashes

Failing to grow a long beard: 70 lashes

Possession of a music cassette: temporary detention and beating

Possession of videos or photographs on a mobile phone: temporary detention and beating

Failure to keep trousers above ankles: up to 20 lashes

Wearing a collar: 15 lashes

Boston Globe

June 24, 2012

Pg. 4

14. Flash Flooding In Northern Afghanistan Kills At Least 37

By Associated Press

KABUL - Flash floods have swept northern Afghanistan, killing at least 37 people, Afghan and UN authorities said Saturday.

More than 100 homes, hundreds of acres of farmland, and farm animals were destroyed by the floods that followed four or five days of heavy rain in the region.

Abdul Hai Khateby, the spokesman in Ghor Province, said 24 people have been killed in four districts, including the provincial capital of Chaghcharan.

"Many, many houses have been destroyed, and there are reports of lots of cattle and other animals being killed," Khateby said. "It is cloudy, and we expect more rain."

The provincial spokesman of Badakhshan, Abdul Marouf Rasekh, said that 13 people were killed Friday night in the Yaftal district and that four other districts have been affected.

The Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority said an estimated 135 houses had been destroyed in Badakhshan, forcing residents to flee.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said many of the unpaved, rutted roads in the area have been severely flooded, making aid distribution difficult.

Elsewhere, a bomb exploded at a music store Saturday in Jalalabad, the provincial capital of Nangarhar in the east.

Provincial spokesman Ahmad Zia Abdulzai said that the shopkeeper and one of his customers were killed in the blast and that two other people were wounded.

The US-led coalition said two NATO service members were killed Friday by insurgents in southern Afghanistan. So far this year, 203 NATO service members have been killed in Afghanistan.

Last week was particularly violent in Afghanistan, as insurgents stepped up attacks against international forces. The fighting suggests the Taliban are not planning to wait for international combat forces to complete their exit from Afghanistan at the end of 2014. The United States plans to withdraw 33,000 American troops by the end of September, leaving about 68,000 US military personnel in the country.

Washington Post

June 24, 2012

Pg. 1

15. A Misdirected Surge

By Rajiv Chandrasekaran

Excerpted from "Little America: The War Within the War for Afghanistan."

The day after he arrived in Kabul in June 2009, Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, then the top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan, gathered his senior officers to discuss the state of the war. They barraged him with PowerPoint slides — the frequency of Taliban attacks and their impact; the number of local security forces; and an evaluation of the Afghan government's effectiveness in each province. The metrics were grim, the conclusion obvious: The Americans and their NATO allies were losing.

The part of the country that concerned McChrystal most was the city of Kandahar and the eponymous province that encompasses it. Founded by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C., Kandahar city has long been the symbolic homeland of ethnic Pashtuns. In the 1990s, just as every other band of conquerors had done for the past thousand years, the Taliban used it as a springboard from which they captured Kabul and much of the rest of the nation. If the Americans were going to retake Afghanistan, they needed to start with Kandahar.

But the Pentagon had not sent most of the new U.S. forces that had arrived in Afghanistan to Kandahar. The first wave — a Marine brigade comprising more than half of the 17,000 additional troops President Obama authorized in February 2009 — had been dispatched to neighboring Helmand province, which McChrystal and his top advisers considered of far lower strategic significance.

"Can someone tell me why the Marines were sent to Helmand?" the incredulous McChrystal asked his officers.

The answer — not fully known at the time to

McChrystal and his officers — would reveal the dysfunction of the U.S. war effort: a reliance on understaffed NATO partners for crucial intelligence, a misjudgment of Helmand's importance to Afghanistan's security, and tribal politics within the Pentagon that led the Marines to insist on confining themselves to a far less important patch of desert.

The consequences were profound: By devoting so many troops to Helmand instead of Kandahar, the U.S. military squandered more than a year of the war. Had the initial contingent of Marines been sent to Kandahar, it could have obviated the need for a full 30,000-troop surge later that year, or it could have granted commanders the flexibility to combat insurgent havens in eastern Afghanistan much sooner, allowing them to meet Obama's eventual withdrawal deadlines without objection.

Instead, U.S. forces will begin heading home this summer with much of the east in disarray and security improvements in Kandahar still tenuous. Helmand is faring considerably better, but the gains there are having only a modest impact on Afghanistan's overall stability.

Without the diversion into Helmand, U.S. troops could have pushed into more critical areas of the country before a clear majority of Americans concluded that the war was no longer worth fighting. Before the U.S. military death toll neared 2,000. Before the conflict became the longest in American history.

As Obama battles for reelection, White House aides have sought to depict the president as an engaged and decisive leader on national security matters. But the Helmand deployment also exposes the limits of his

understanding of Afghanistan — and his unwillingness to confront the military — early in his presidency.

Just weeks after Obama took office in 2009, Adm. Mike Mullen, then the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, urged him to approve the 17,000-troop increase before the new White House had finished a review of war strategy. Mullen said the additional forces were needed to secure the country in advance of Afghanistan's presidential elections that August. But White House officials never pressed the Pentagon for details about where the new troops — the first major military deployment of Obama's presidency — were heading. If they had received them, they would have learned that more than half of the forces were heading to a part of the country that was home to about 1 percent of its population.

"Nobody bothered to ask, 'Tell us how many troops you're sending here and there,'" said a senior White House official involved in war policy. "We assumed, perhaps naively, that the Pentagon was sending them to the most critical places."

The problem escalated later in 2009 when McChrystal asked for 40,000 more troops. Some of the new forces would be sent to Kandahar. Others would secure the regions around Kabul as well as a few Pashtun-dominated pockets in the north and west where insurgent activity had increased. But thousands of the additional troops were slated to go to Helmand — on top of the nearly 11,000 Marines who already were there.

McChrystal wasn't happy about devoting a third of his surge to Helmand, but he believed the Marines had to expand their counterinsurgency operations across the province

to demonstrate momentum to the Afghan people. "We had to show we could fulfill our commitments," he said.

The military's counterinsurgency strategy was supposed to place troops near civilian population centers to protect residents from insurgents, not chase bad guys in the desert or remote valleys.

When McChrystal presented his troop request to Obama's war cabinet — he spoke via a secure video link from Kabul to participants in the White House Situation Room — he displayed a map of Afghanistan dotted with blue bubbles that indicated where he intended to place the new forces. Several bubbles were in Helmand.

But in more than two hours of discussion, the 14-member war cabinet — which included Vice President Biden, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton — never asked McChrystal why he wanted so many more Marines in Helmand. The civilians didn't know enough about Afghanistan to focus on that issue. They were also concerned about micromanaging the war, of looking like President Lyndon B. Johnson picking bombing targets in North Vietnam.

From his seat along the wall, Obama's top adviser on the Afghan war, Douglas E. Lute, believed that those around the table were missing a crucial point. Instead of arguing about counterinsurgency strategy — whether Afghan President Hamid Karzai would improve and whether the Pakistanis would crack down on Taliban sanctuaries — they should have focused more on how the forces would be employed. That would have revealed how the military had misused the first wave of troops Obama authorized.

Had they inquired, the president's civilian advisers also could have learned that the initial 17,000 troops played only a minor role in the overall security effort for the Afghan election. In fact, the new troops protected polling sites in Helmand and Kandahar where Karzai supporters engaged in some of their most egregious ballot tampering.

After the meeting, Lute and his staff assembled a list of follow-up questions for McChrystal. Lute, a three-star general, asked McChrystal to provide more explanation of the location of the bubbles. At the war cabinet's next meeting, McChrystal talked briefly about the need to "demonstrate momentum" in Helmand. To Lute, the answer seemed unsatisfactory, but nobody around the table pressed McChrystal any further.

NATO alliance vs. winning war

Shortly after McChrystal was appointed the top commander in Afghanistan in 2009, Defense Secretary Gates had told him to take stock of the war effort within 60 days. The idea for the assessment had originated with national security adviser James L. Jones, who grew alarmed when McChrystal told the Senate Armed Services Committee, during his confirmation hearing, that he did not know whether the 17,000 troops Obama had approved that February would be enough. Jones believed the Pentagon was lobbying for more forces before the 17,000 had fully deployed — and after McChrystal's bosses had all but told the president that they would not be asking for more that year. As a compromise, Jones suggested that McChrystal first conduct an assessment of the war. Then, if he determined that he required

more troops, he could make a formal request.

McChrystal, the rangy former commander of the secretive Joint Special Operations Command, convened a group of outside experts from Washington's prominent national security think tanks to travel to Kabul for a month to help him draft the assessment — and then sell the conclusion inside the Beltway by writing op-eds, giving speeches and talking it up at Washington cocktail parties.

Among them was Andrew Exum of the Center for a New American Security, the most influential cradle of counterinsurgency strategists in the capital. He was the youngest of the outside advisers, but he had served in Iraq and had led a platoon of elite Army Rangers in Afghanistan. Exum understood that Kandahar was of critical importance, but he had no idea how tenuous the situation was until the group met with Sarah Chayes.

Chayes was a former National Public Radio reporter who ran an agricultural cooperative in Kandahar. She had once been close to the Karzai family but had a falling-out with the president and his half-brother Ahmed Wali Karzai over their connections to warlords and, she alleged, their involvement in corruption. Frustrated by the failure of commanders and diplomats to grasp how graft was pushing Afghans toward the Taliban, she had accepted an offer to advise Gen. David McKiernan, McChrystal's predecessor. She stuck around when McChrystal arrived, hoping to convince him and his staff that fighting corruption had to be a central element of their counterinsurgency campaign. She told them that Kandahar seemed to be slipping away.

Ahmed Wali and his cronies had divided the spoils for themselves, and the have-nots were turning to the insurgency. She explained that the Taliban had taken control of the four districts that ring the city — Arghandab, Zhari, Dand and Panjwai — shutting down schools, seeding roads with bombs and forcing pro-government tribal leaders to flee.

Exum grew alarmed. On a trip to the main NATO base in the south, he and others on the assessment team asked the top intelligence officer on the Canadian task force responsible for Kandahar for his take on the situation.

"I have no idea what's going on inside the city," the officer said, according to Exum's notes of the meeting. That was because the few Canadian troops in the city were focused on reconstruction activities, not providing security or gathering intelligence.

The problem was partly rooted in a 2005 decision by President George W. Bush to reduce American forces in Afghanistan and deploy them in Iraq. As the Taliban was gathering strength and violence was flaring across southern Afghanistan, his administration asked NATO to take up the task of stabilizing that region. The Canadians got Kandahar, and Helmand fell to the British.

By 2009, the British had 9,000 troops in Helmand because London kept adding more to confront expanding Taliban ranks. Although Kandahar was home to far more people, Canada had deployed only 2,830 soldiers to the province. Most of them were assigned to headquarters and support roles; fewer than 600 went on patrol.

When Exum returned to Kabul, he asked U.S. Maj. Gen.

Michael Tucker, the soon-to-depart director of operations for all NATO troops, why more Canadians had not been sent into the city. Tucker said he did not want to dictate to the Canadians where to place their forces. "It is wrong," he said, "to tell a commander, from this level, to put troops in Kandahar city."

Exum was sitting next to Tucker. When he did not want others to see what he was recording in the Moleskine notebook he took everywhere, he scribbled in Greek. "This guy is a jackass," he wrote. "Kandahar — not Helmand — is the single point of failure in Afghanistan."

The decision to send the Marines to Helmand instead of Kandahar had been made by McKiernan, but he had been urged to do so by his subordinates in Kandahar, including a then-one-star U.S. Army general, John "Mick" Nicholson. When Nicholson met with Exum and his teammates to explain his reasoning, he emphasized that the Kandahar mission was Canada's largest overseas deployment since the Korean War. Military leaders in Ottawa were reluctant to ask for more help — some were convinced that security in Kandahar was improving, others didn't want to risk the embarrassment — and McKiernan didn't want to upset the Canadians by forcing them to cede additional territory. To Exum and others on the team, however, it seemed that U.S. commanders thought that managing the NATO alliance was more important than winning the war.

The British had the opposite view about U.S. assistance in Helmand. Eager to reduce casualties, British commanders wanted to concentrate their forces around Lashkar Gah and a few other

key towns. They were happy to let U.S. troops assume responsibility for the remote parts of Helmand, so long as the transfer was portrayed as a partnership, not a takeover.

Nicholson insisted that the Marines could be used more effectively in Helmand for three other reasons: It was the epicenter of poppy production, the Taliban were conducting more attacks there, and Afghan officials had told commanders that foreign troops should stay out of Kandahar city, given its religious significance. But Exum thought the new troops should be closer to the largest population center in the south, not where violence was worst. The drug argument similarly made no sense to him, because Richard C. Holbrooke, the State Department's point man for Afghanistan, had just announced that to avoid antagonizing farmers, the United States would no longer participate in the eradication of poppy fields. A CIA study also claimed that the Taliban got most of its money from illegal taxation and contributions from Pakistan and Persian Gulf nations, not from drugs. And even if the Afghans were right about the psychological impact of foreign forces inside the city, the surrounding districts seemed like the best home for the Marines.

The Taliban's surge in Helmand was "a feint," Exum wrote in his notebook. "It draws our attention and resources away from Kandahar."

When he recommended that the Marines be sent to Helmand, Nicholson did not know it would be a force of more than 10,000. He had assumed that Marine commanders would dispatch the equivalent of an infantry brigade, which typically ranges from 3,500 to 5,000 personnel. That would have allowed the

Army to send more troops to Kandahar. But the Marines insisted on bringing their own helicopters and logistics teams, and they wanted to set up their own large headquarters that duplicated some of the functions performed on the giant NATO base at Kandahar's airport. To Nicholson, "it was a lot of overhead we didn't need."

Breaking with tradition

There was another reason the Marines had wound up in Helmand: They wanted it.

In discussions with senior Pentagon generals in charge of troop deployments in 2008, the Marine commandant, Gen. James Conway, was willing to dispatch thousands of forces to Afghanistan as soon as the president approved a troop increase. His zeal for Afghanistan stood in contrast to that of his comrades in the upper echelons of the Army, who had more than 120,000 soldiers in Iraq and were struggling to find enough units to replace those coming home. Conway, however, could afford to turn his sights to Afghanistan because he was planning to pull his Marines out of Iraq. He wanted his Marines to hunt bad guys, and by then there were more of them in Afghanistan.

But the gray-haired Conway, who looked as though he could win a wrestling match with a 19-year-old lance corporal, drove a hard bargain. He required that any new forces be kept in a contiguous area where they could be supported by Marine helicopters and supply convoys. These stipulations effectively excluded Kandahar. The geography of the province, and the Canadians' desire to hold on to key districts around Kandahar city, made it nearly impossible to carve out a Marine-only area there. Helmand was the next best option, even if it was less vital.

Conway's requirement had its roots in World War II. Marines landing on the Pacific islands of Guadalcanal and Tarawa hadn't received the air support they had expected from Navy planes to hold off Japanese troops. Since then — in Vietnam and Iraq — Marine commanders have insisted on deploying with their own aviation and supply units. In the initial years of the Afghan war, the Pentagon broke with tradition and sent small Marine units into remote districts to help train and mentor Afghan soldiers. They were forced to rely on the Army for air support, particularly when they came under attack. But overstretched Army helicopter crews were sometimes slow to respond and the delays rekindled concern within the Corps about abandonment.

Conway made an even more remarkable demand: a three-star Marine general at the U.S. Central Command, not the supreme coalition commander in Kabul, would have to have overall operational control over the force going to Helmand. That meant McChrystal would lack the power to move the Marines to another part of Afghanistan or change their mission in anything other than minor, tactical ways.

The Pentagon brass were willing to meet Conway's conditions. They needed boots on the ground, and he was the only one offering them.

After the Marines arrived in Helmand, the U.S. ambassador in Kabul, Karl Eikenberry, joked that the international security force in Afghanistan, then made up of 41 nations, felt as though it had 42 members because the Marines acted so independently. Before long, some American officials began referring to the Corps's area of operations as "Marineistan."

'Welcome to Hell'

With so many troops in Helmand, the Marines could afford to conduct missions that were unheard of elsewhere in Afghanistan. One of them was a charge into an abandoned town.

Set atop a dusty plain between two ridgelines, the orchards of Now Zad once yielded pomegranates as large as softballs, luring visitors from across southern Afghanistan during the harvest season. Some grew so intoxicated by the prospect of farming the fertile soil that they transplanted their lives. Waves of settlers in the 1960s and 1970s transformed Now Zad, which means "newborn" in Persian, into the fourth-largest city in Helmand province.

By the fall of 2006, the city looked like old death. The Taliban had invaded it with hundreds of fighters earlier that year. The pomegranate fields had been booby-trapped with mines. Homes and shops had been blown to rubble. Bullet holes pocked the few walls left standing. As the fighting escalated, most residents fled.

After desperate pleas from President Karzai, the British commanders responsible for Helmand dispatched a platoon of Ghurkas to evict the insurgents. But the fearsome Nepalese warriors were outmanned by the Taliban. A bloody standoff ensued as the insurgents roamed the city and the Ghurkas hunkered inside the police station. Every few days, the Taliban would try to storm the compound, sometimes getting close enough to hurl grenades, but the Ghurkas, and subsequent contingents of British troops, managed to keep them at bay with torrents of bullets and rockets.

U.S. Marine Brig. Gen. Larry Nicholson was appalled when he visited Now Zad in February 2009. The first thing he saw when he landed

was a wall at the police station that was scrawled with graffiti: WELCOME TO HELL. American Marines had relieved the British the year before, and they had expanded the patrol zone by a few blocks, but they were still surrounded on three sides by insurgents hiding in trenches and abandoned houses. A no man's land lay in between, trod only by wild dogs. Injuries from IEDs — improvised explosive devices — were so common that the Marine company in Now Zad was the only one in the country to be assigned two trauma doctors and two armored vehicles with mobile surgical theaters.

To Nicholson, a compact former infantryman whose weathered face appeared perpetually sunburned, the opposing forces staring at each other evoked the trench battles of World War I. He met a Marine at Now Zad who told him, "Sir, we patrol until we hit an IED, and then we call in a medevac and go back" to the base. "And then we do it again the next day."

When Nicholson became the top Marine commander in Afghanistan in April 2009, he resolved to save Now Zad. IEDs had blown off the legs of more than two dozen Americans in and around the city. Fighting a war of attrition with fixed positions was not something Marines did, at least not in his book.

But his bosses at the NATO regional headquarters in Kandahar felt differently, as did the American and British diplomats in the provincial capital. They maintained that Now Zad didn't merit more troops and dollars. They believed that stalemate was good enough in an imperfect war: A small unit of Marines had succeeded in tying down hundreds of insurgents

who couldn't launch attacks elsewhere. Nicholson was told not to worry about Now Zad.

But he would not let go. His job was to protect the people of Helmand, and that meant allowing the displaced to return home. He bristled when British and American officials told him that the former residents of Now Zad would not come back. That's how people in the West might behave, but the only real assets most Helmandis had were their homes and their land. Nicholson felt they would reclaim them if they could.

It seemed as though every day he received word of another American double amputee in Now Zad. Each folded, handwritten casualty notification his aide passed to him stopped his heart a beat longer. Failing to act, he thought, would mean his brother Marines had sacrificed lives and limbs in vain.

When Nicholson's political adviser, John Kael Weston, the diplomat he trusted most, arrived in Helmand that June, he asked the general which outpost he should visit first.

"Kael," Nicholson said, "you've got to go to Now Zad."

At first glance, the 37-year-old Weston seemed like a surfer who'd taken a wrong turn on the way to the beach. But his tousled hair and untucked shirts belied his place among the most erudite and experienced diplomats of his generation, one who had spent more time in Iraq and Afghanistan — six consecutive years in the two war zones, with just a few short breaks — than anyone else in the State Department.

Weston's job description called for him to advise the Marines about Afghan government matters, palaver with local leaders, and keep his bosses in Kandahar and Kabul apprised of political developments in the Marine

area of operations. But he saw his writ in more expansive terms. Weston was the brigade's political commissar; he constantly reminded the Marines that the military had been deployed in support of the Afghan government, not the other way around. And he was Nicholson's confidant. They had forged an enduring friendship while serving for a year in the Iraqi hellhole of Fallujah.

When Weston got to Now Zad, he climbed a guard tower to see the dead pomegranate trees that had been rigged with explosives. He walked through the shuttered bazaar, praying that his next footfall would not be atop a pressure-plate IED buried in the dirt. Halfway through the patrol, he asked the corporal ahead of him, who was scanning the ground with a metal detector, how much training he had received to use the device. "Well, sir," the corporal replied, "not as much as you'd like to think."

The following day, he mourned with the Marines of Golf Company when they received word that Cpl. Matthew Lembke, who had enlisted on his 18th birthday and served two tours in Iraq, then re-upped to deploy with his buddies to Afghanistan, had died of an infection. Three weeks earlier, he had stepped on an IED while on a night patrol. The blast had blown off his legs and deposited the rest of him in the crater left by the bomb.

As Weston prepared to depart the outpost, a young corporal approached him. "Sir, I just hope this all adds up," he said. "All of my friends are getting hurt over here."

Now Zad seemed like a blood feud to Weston. "It is truly an area where you've got a company of bad guys versus a company of good guys," he told his parents in an audio

recording he sent them shortly after the trip. "The question for me, the general and others at headquarters is going to be: What kind of further effort do you put towards a place like Now Zad?"

He would answer that question three months later. By then, Nawa, Garmser and Khan Neshin — the districts that had been the Marines' initial focus — had grown relatively quiet. Nicholson wanted to address other problems in the province, and the arrival of a replacement battalion in northern Helmand provided an opportunity to make a big push in Now Zad. One night in early October, Nicholson made his pitch to Weston.

"I'm frustrated," he said. "I feel like a bulldog who wants two more links in my chain."

"You're on twitch muscles," Weston replied.

"I am. There are places I can't go right now and it's killing me," Nicholson said. "I'd like to finish Now Zad because I think there's a strategic payback and benefit of showing people what we're doing — we'll repopulate the second-largest city in Helmand." (Only Nicholson thought Now Zad was once that big. Afghan records listed it as fourth.)

"The people have to want to come back," Weston said. "And right now, it doesn't sound like they want to."

"If you clear it, they will come," Nicholson continued.

"I'm just being honest with you," Weston said. "I don't believe in the time we've got that Now Zad is where we should focus our attention. Our report card ain't going to be about Now Zad."

"When Now Zad starts to be repopulated, it will be one of the biggest stories to come out of Afghanistan."

"If the world still cares about Afghanistan."

"The world will care about it," Nicholson said.

Defense News
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16. Pentagon Tests New Way Of Estimating Program Costs

By Sarah Chacko

The Pentagon is putting its new weapons cost-cutting strategy to its first big test as it negotiates with Lockheed Martin over the price of the next batch of F-35 Joint Strike Fighters (JSF).

Contract negotiations for the production of 32 JSFs began earlier this year. This will be the first opportunity for Pentagon officials to see how well their "should-cost" approach to setting weapons prices works.

Under this approach, Defense Department experts review the program's technical requirements, production and testing processes, and staffing to determine what they think the price should be. That figure is based on reductions that could be made in those areas and efficiencies that should come over time with the program, such as improved supply chain management.

An independent office in the Pentagon — the Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, and before that, the Cost Analysis Improvement Group — already assesses the cost of weapon systems for budgeting purposes using sophisticated models that consider past weapon costs. Historically, the budget figure is the floor from which costs rise, not the ceiling under which costs are contained, defense officials have said.

"We're trying to say, 'OK, we understand this is the

budgeted amount of dollars, but can we execute to a lesser amount so we can use that difference between what was budgeted and what we think we can execute in some other way to buy some other good or service,” said Shay Assad, who oversees the Pentagon’s should-cost effort.

As for the JSF contract talks, it remains to be seen how big of an effect this will have.

Lockheed officials say they have yet to be told what the Pentagon believes the upcoming production lot should cost.

Assad said that during the contract talks, Pentagon officials will share with Lockheed elements of the department’s should-cost calculation — namely, areas where savings are expected. But the department will not share its internal should-cost figures, he said.

The new contract will define the costs of 32 JSFs: 22 F-35As for the Air Force, three F-35Bs for the Marine Corps and seven F-35Cs for the Navy. Experts estimate the costs of the planes will be anywhere from \$80 million to \$120 million each.

Lockheed has provided historical cost data and other information to support the department’s should-cost estimate and has cut costs to make its proposal for this round of procurements lower than the last, said Tom Burbage, Lockheed’s executive vice president and general manager of the F-35.

“We’re [cutting costs] as aggressively as we know how,” he said.

But Lockheed does not know if its proposal for the next group of F-35s will meet the price point DoD is seeking, said Bruce Tanner, Lockheed’s chief financial officer.

And while DoD has said it would also find ways to improve its processes and create savings, Lockheed has not seen that effort, Tanner said. Instead, the department seems to have based its should-cost estimate on what the program would cost if everything was working under optimal conditions, which could be risky, he said.

“It serves no purpose to either side to negotiate to a level you can’t perform and then overrun to a level that you expected when you began the contract, and call that overrun,” Tanner said. “It’s frustrating to both sides.”

Experts Skeptical

Acquisition experts are anxious to see how well the effort performs, but some are skeptical it will succeed at containing costs on large programs.

“It’s an interesting way to try to impose discipline on what has become an undisciplined process. But I don’t think it gets at the core problem here,” said Todd Harrison, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

The major cost driver on weapon programs is requirements that are added over time with little regard for costs, Harrison said.

“Until they get that process under control — and [until] they develop a rational way to understand the cost they’re imposing on the system with every additional requirement they put on it — I don’t think they’re going to be successful,” he said.

Weapon systems also tend to run over their projected costs because they require innovation and new technology that is unpredictable, said Michael O’Hanlon, who specializes in defense policy at the Brookings Institution.

“It’s not just bad management or profit-hungry corporations or performance-crazed military services that always put added capability ahead of costs,” O’Hanlon said. “The fundamental reason why weapons cost more is because we’re usually inventing something new as we build them.”

Another major cost driver on the Joint Strike Fighter has been the Defense Department’s push to field planes as they are still being developed, Harrison said. As problems are found in testing, contractors not only have to revise the design of new planes, they have to fix the planes that have already been produced, he said.

Should-cost estimates would be more useful as DoD decides which weapon systems to buy, Harrison said. Defense officials could compare their should-cost estimates to the proposals they receive from contractors to see if it’s worth pursuing, he said.

But when programs are already in production, the should-cost is more like a “wish-it-would-cost,” Harrison said.

Assad said the Pentagon has developed ways to measure any savings the should-cost initiative yields.

“We have specific targets for program execution, very specific targets for the size of a program office or other areas that program managers will have defined,” Assad said. “So we can measure that, we can examine that and we can know at the program level whether or not we accomplished it.”

Austin American-Statesman
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Pg. 1

Fort Hood

17. Army Will Expand Suicide Prevention Efforts

Leaders set to visit posts across U.S. in response to record death rates

By Jeremy Schwartz,

American-Statesman Staff

FORT HOOD — The Army chief of staff on Friday said he will dispatch top Army officials to major installations across the country to study suicide prevention efforts in hopes of lowering record suicide rates among active duty service members.

Gen. Ray Odierno made the announcement during a visit to Fort Hood, where alarming suicide numbers have helped galvanize national attention on the issue in recent years.

“Obviously suicide continues to be a major concern. It’s something that is vexing to us, and we have studied it incredibly hard,” Odierno told reporters. “We’re focused on this, and we’re going to sustain our focus on this.”

Odierno said Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Lloyd Austin would visit Army posts to study existing suicide prevention programs and look for improvements.

The Army has spent millions of dollars to implement a range of suicide prevention programs, but solutions have proven elusive so far: The Associated Press recently reported that active-duty suicide rates are at their highest point in the past decade, as the U.S. has waged wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Odierno spoke hours after Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta told an annual convention on military suicide in Washington, D.C., that suicide numbers among service members are moving in a “tragic direction.”

Panetta said part of the solution lies with commanding

officers who have day-to-day contact with their troops.

"We have to make clear that we will not tolerate actions that belittle, that haze, that ostracize any individual, particularly those who have made the decision to seek professional help," Panetta said in a speech to mental health professionals.

Panetta, who pledged to elevate mental fitness to the same level of importance as physical fitness, called suicide perhaps the most frustrating challenge he has come across since becoming defense secretary, in part because the trend is heading in the wrong direction even as more resources are aimed at the problem.

At Fort Hood, there have been 7 suicides this year as of early June, on pace to eclipse last year's 10, but still less than the record 22 suicides in 2010, when one particularly difficult week saw four soldiers commit suicide.

Fort Hood today is as close to capacity as it has been since the wars began, with more than 40,000 soldiers on-post and just a few units deployed to Afghanistan. The 2010 spike in suicides occurred when Fort Hood's population was similarly swelled by soldiers returning from war.

"We want to make sure we have the right feedback and programs in place that will help us in our attempts to reduce what I consider to be a very serious problem in the Army," Odierno said. "It's about creating environments where we can identify those who may be at risk and then helping them with the proper programs."

Army officials have studied soldier suicide in the past, resulting in increased emotional and psychological training for soldiers, beefed up substance abuse counseling and increased

family and marriage counseling efforts.

Odierno, who headed Fort Hood's III Corps command group from 2006 to 2008, was back in Central Texas this week to observe post-Iraq training exercises designed to help the Army transition to what Odierno called "a new security environment." Odierno is leading an effort to change training within the Army to ensure soldiers are prepared for a broader set of contingencies, including more conventional warfare, and focus on other parts of the world, such as Asia and Africa.

Odierno also said that in November the Army will implement a far more robust jobs program aimed at helping soldiers entering the civilian workforce. The recently approved \$1.5 billion VOW Act will provide job-seeking skills for soldiers before they leave active duty as well as more transition assistance to soldiers as they leave.

Odierno addressed Army-wide budget cuts, saying that "as far as the specific impact on Fort Hood, my guess would be relatively small." While the Army is cutting its force by about 80,000 over the next five years, Odierno said he expected the cuts to be spread out across Army installations.

But Odierno warned that a so-called sequestration, or across-the-board budget cuts that would result if Congress is unable to agree on a budget deal, would be disastrous to the Army and force major personnel cuts. "Then all bets are off," Odierno said.

Boston Globe
June 24, 2012

18. At Birthplace Of Tang And Bulletproof Vest, An Enduring US Mission

By Jaclyn Reiss, Globe Correspondent

The new soldiers crossed into the shelter tent, surrounded on all sides by green, beige, and white cloth. The air inside sweltered as soldiers clad in black "Go Army" T-shirts listened intently to their group leader, wiping sweat from their brows.

This was no scene from a Middle Eastern war zone - this was the Natick Soldier Systems Center, the only active-duty US Army facility in New England.

The base, tucked just off Route 27 near Lake Cochituate in Natick, specializes in research and development of anything that touches a soldier's life while on duty, including clothing, food, and supply needs. Secretary of the Army John McHugh praised the center in March after a first-time visit, describing the operation as enduring and valuable.

On June 14, the base invited 60 future soldiers from the Army's delayed entry program to celebrate the military branch's 237th birthday, and to educate the recruits about how research conducted there directly affects soldiers' lives.

Also unofficially known as the Natick Army Labs and open since the mid-1950s, the facility has developed and holds patents for products that affect not only the armed forces, but also the general public, said John Harlow, the site's chief of public affairs.

Harlow said that the facility is researching how to construct more durable helmets, including observing concussions when wearers receive head blows. He said the center has contracts with the National Football League and National Hockey League, sharing their helmet research to make sports safer.

He also said that the bulletproof vest was developed at Natick, and that the base holds patents for Tang, the orange juice drink that scientists helped develop for NASA astronauts, and GPS systems.

But while celebrating the Army's milestone, which predates the nation's birthday on July 4 by over a year, base leaders showed the new soldiers research relevant to the wars that they may fight, including efficient shelter technologies, developments in packaged meals, and specially designed chambers that simulate a range of altitudes and temperatures.

Of the 1,800 employees at the Natick base, 1,200 have an advanced degree past a typical four-year bachelor's degree, Harlow said, citing Captain David DeGroot, a research physiologist in the facility's Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine, as one example.

DeGroot, who holds a doctorate in physiology and studies climate and altitude, told a group of future soldiers that the chambers simulating varying degrees of both weather and elevation could duplicate conditions at Mount Everest - which the facility did for 42 days in the 1980s - as well as mountain ranges in Pakistan, to test how a person's physical performance changes at different elevations.

He said researchers have collected all their experimental findings from the chambers since its inception in 1969 into one database. The cumulative knowledge will be able to help predict who might be more susceptible to altitude illness, and how to prevent and treat it.

"It helps us figure out who might have a bit of a headache, and who might be laying on the ground in the fetal position, unable to move," at high altitudes, DeGroot said.

While some research simulates outdoor activity in an indoor facility, other departments study the reverse. Multiple tented shelters standing atop a small gravel lot on the 78-acre Natick campus are duplicates of those that house American soldiers overseas.

Steve Tucker, a senior engineer, gave the group of mostly teenage future soldiers a tour of one tent's features, explaining that his team researches how to make its light bulbs, exterior, window netting, and air conditioning more efficient in order to cut down on fuel use.

Tucker said his team is in the beginning stages of researching threads that can channel solar energy, with the aim to use energy-collecting textiles in tents.

The researchers have much at stake. Designing more efficient shelters would cut down on the fuel and supplies that have to be delivered by soldier-escorted convoys, which are frequently exposed to roadside land mines and enemy snipers on their delivery routes, said Nicholas Tino, a mechanical engineer.

"More fuel means more danger, and saving energy saves lives," Tino said.

However, some research conducted in Natick proves more lighthearted.

In the Combat Feeding department, Jeremy Whitsitt, a technology integration analyst, showed the budding soldiers how to use a makeshift microwave, a thin device that resembles a popcorn bag and utilizes the chemical reaction between magnesium and water to create heat.

Whitsitt also introduced the teens to the Army's standard packaged rations, known as "Meals Ready to Eat" or MREs,

which soldiers consume while deployed in the field.

"The MRE must withstand 100 degree heat, sit in a box for three years, and still taste good," Whitsitt explained, adding that the meals also must be lightweight, since the soldiers will be carrying them in their packs.

Whitsitt also outlined advances that his department has implemented, including flexible, lightweight packaging to replace clunky metal cans that require an opener; beef jerky and energy bars with added caffeine; and tasty pocket sandwiches that soldiers can carry easily and snack on.

"Our customer is you guys - the war fighter," he said to the group, adding that nutritionists and chefs develop appetizing food to ensure soldiers actually eat it, and receive enough calories to keep up their strength.

In the base's textile research facility just a short walk away, textile technologist Peggy Auerbach passed around a bowl of fireball candies before dimming the office's lights and peering through a glass pane at a mannequin dressed in an Army uniform.

Suddenly, a burst of flame ignited the uniform for a few seconds before the fire was extinguished. Auerbach then approached the mannequin, which is equipped with 123 sensors to detect burn levels, and ran her hands over the mostly unscathed camouflage uniform, observing charred parts and musing aloud on how to prevent the burns.

Auerbach's job is to test fabric to not only achieve maximum nonflammability, but also to provide uniforms that would protect soldiers from getting seriously burned.

Holding up test swatches of three different fabrics with the same camouflage print,

Auerbach showed how a uniform made of 50 percent cotton - currently worn by soldiers serving in this country - melts and drips inward easily, providing a high burn risk for the wearer.

She then said that the two other fabrics - one used in uniforms for ground soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq, and one for US Air Force personnel there - resist flames better than the current one.

The ground soldier uniform, made mostly of rayon, is designed to balloon outwards - away from the wearer's skin - to provide an additional layer of safety against burning its wearer.

"We want the flame to go out, but we don't want it to tear and let the fire in," Auerbach said, ripping a scorched fabric swatch to illustrate her point.

While many base employees are recruited from local colleges and universities, about 100 workers are part of the armed forces, Harlow said.

Gimbala Sankare, a 24-year-old Manhattan native and soldier who volunteered to serve at the base as a test subject, said he genuinely appreciates the work being done in Natick.

Sankare said his work testing equipment in Natick will prepare him for going out into the field with it.

"I can assure myself and other soldiers that it will save lives, because I know how it works," Sankare said.

Harlow agreed, and added, "Every time we see a soldier come home to hug their wife or husband and child, we know we have done our job."

Fayetteville (NC) Observer
June 24, 2012

19. Montford Marines Who Were

Desegregation Pioneers To Get Their Due

By Michael Futch, Staff writer
Few people know their story.

Unlike the Army's Triple Nickels and the Army Air Corps' Tuskegee Airmen, the history of the groundbreakers who went through Montford Point has been largely overlooked.

Fayetteville's James Robert Simpson was among the roughly 20,000 Marines who lived it, training on a small, swampy peninsula jutting into the New River on the North Carolina coast. The World War II veteran, the eldest son of a farming couple from rural Cumberland County, was a "Point man" - one of the first blacks to serve in the Marine Corps.

"I'm proud of that," Simpson said. "To be a part of history, for sure."

At 88 and in poor health, he plans to fly to Washington this week to attend two ceremonies paying tribute to the fighting men known as the Montford Point Marines. These veterans will receive the nation's highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal.

About 400 of the estimated 420 living Montford Point veterans are expected to attend. In addition to Simpson, five men from Fayetteville are expected to make the trip: Robert Burns Sr., Cosmas Eaglin Sr., Linwood Haith, David Montgomery and Joseph Stinchcomb, according to Capt. Kendra Motz, a spokeswoman for the Marine Corps.

"It's most of them, which is awesome," Motz said.

Simpson said he will go to Washington - where he and his fellow Marines will receive a bronze replica of the medal - with mixed feelings.

His wife, Lillie, died May 24 at age 83. The couple had

been married 66 years. She was a strong and caring woman, a retired nurse who had worked for more than three decades at Womack Army Medical Center on Fort Bragg.

Hampered by diabetes and on dialysis, she had remained strong in faith.

"My family, after God, is my life," he said. "If her health had sustained, I was going to have her there with me."

Lillie Simpson had urged her husband to go.

She knew the importance of the long-overdue national recognition.

She, too, had played a role in the changing face of this country. In the 1960s, the nursing school at what is now Fayetteville Technical Community College denied her admission because of her race. She wrote to Gov. Terry Sanford to protest the discrimination that she and a few other African-American women faced.

Sanford overturned the school's decision. And Lillie Simpson became one of the first black graduates of the school's nursing program.

From 1942 through 1949, the Marines at Montford Point endured and prevailed over harsh racist treatment, both in the military and the outside civilian worlds.

"They paved the way for all the other African-Americans coming into the Marine Corps. They made the sacrifice," said Louise Gregg, who with her husband operates the Montford Point Marine Museum at Camp Johnson in Jacksonville. "They thought nothing of it. They had no way of knowing they were making history. They just wanted to be Marines."

The Montford Point Marines reflect a painful chapter in the 236-year history of a military institution that remains predominantly

white. In April 1941, Maj. Gen. Thomas Holcomb, the commandant of the Marine Corps, declared: "If it were a question of having a Marine Corps of 5,000 whites or 250,000 Negroes, I would rather have the whites."

But this original generation of black Leathernecks proved in combat that they were just as tough and equally adept as any other hard-nosed combatant.

Simpson recalls that basic training at Montford Point Camp could be cruel. He reported for duty in June 1944.

"You can't forget it," he said, the only time this old Marine raised his voice when talking about his memories. "It was rough. That was the roughest I had ever seen as far as life was concerned. The training was rough."

Yet he looks back with pride at his place in the integration of the Marines, the last military branch to accept blacks.

As he put it so simply, "It means the world to me."

In late 2011, members of the U.S. House and Senate gave their approval - by unanimous vote - to recognize the original Montford Point Marines.

On Nov. 23, President Obama signed a bill to award them a specially designed Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of their personal sacrifice and service to their country.

After becoming the commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James Amos spearheaded the effort to change the oversight. He spent well over a year lobbying Congress to acknowledge the Montford Pointers by granting them the civilian medal. In 2006, the Tuskegee pilots had received the honor.

"Basically, it was a heavy push from Gen. Amos to raise awareness, not only among the

American people in general, but also among the Marines in the Marine Corps," Motz said. "He thought the current Marines and the ones coming in should be aware of the history these Marines brought to the Marine Corps."

"We are totally thrilled," said Gregg of the museum in Jacksonville. "This is something that these men totally deserve, and they have been waiting for this for over 60 years. These men are true patriots. That's all they wanted to do was serve their country and be recognized when they came home, but were not. We are sorry it came so late. So many of them have passed away. So many are 88 and 90 years old. We've lost a lot of them."

During the Civil War, the Army and Navy both enlisted blacks in separate units. But integration of all the services did not come until after 1948, the year that segregation no longer was the official policy of the U.S. government.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's creation of the Fair Employment Practices Commission in 1941 forced the Marine Corps, despite objections from its leadership, to begin recruiting blacks.

But even with the new policy in place, no mixing of the races was allowed.

African-Americans from all states were not sent to the traditional boot camps in Parris Island, S.C., and San Diego. Instead, the recruits were segregated for basic training at Camp Montford Point outside Camp Lejeune. It was a remote, 1,600-acre tract surrounded by thick pine forests, inhabited by snakes and bears and swarming with mosquitoes.

"The African-Americans during those days - well, the Army had already accepted African-Americans and there

were some in the Navy, as well," Gregg said. "These guys knew America loves Marines. They wanted to be accepted by white society. A lot of them were professional men who left their families. They made sacrifices. They felt if they were in the Marine Corps, they would be accepted."

"Not only that," she added with a laugh, "they loved the dress blue uniform."

Today, about 10 percent - or, 19,778 - of the 196,093 active-duty Marines are black. Amos has made diversifying the branch a priority and has ordered commanders to be aggressive in recommending qualified black Marines for officer positions.

"Our push for diversity in the Marine Corps is not just singular to African-Americans, but to all cultures and races," said Motz, the Marines spokeswoman.

James Robert Simpson was among seven men picked for the Marines from a group of 386 recruits fresh out of high school. Before that, he had thought about becoming a pilot.

"I didn't know anything about the Marines," he said at his Rosehill Road home.

Born in Fayetteville, Simpson grew up in the community of Savannah, about five miles from the Cedar Creek crossroads. When the U.S. went to war, he was living at home and helping his father, Edmond Fisher, and his mother, Cora, on the corn, tobacco and cotton farm.

In 1943, Simpson was drafted after graduating from Armstrong High School in Eastover.

"We was called up by the draft," he said, "and required to report."

He was assigned to Platoon 472 at Montford Point. The accommodations for blacks were inferior to those for

white Marines stationed nearby. Instead of barracks, the men stayed in what some have described as cardboard huts. A single stove heated each of the overcrowded huts, which held up to 42 enlistees.

Some of the men could not take it physically, both the rugged living conditions in the heavily wooded swamplands and the grueling training. Farm life, Simpson said, had helped prepare him for the worst.

"They didn't want us to be part of the Marine Corps, and they tried to turn us off. They tried to put it beyond our reach," he recalled. "You see, being a young man like that and coming against something like that - you never thought you'd come against something like that. You could conclude that it couldn't be any rougher on the battlefield."

After boot camp, he received advanced training in California before serving in the South Pacific.

He was with the 6th Fleet aboard the USS Puget Sound between Hawaii and Japan when the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. "We were heading to that area for an invasion of Japan," he said.

After World War II, thousands who trained at Montford Point made the Marine Corps a career. Many saw combat in Korea and Vietnam.

According to the Montford Point Marine Association, the initial intent of the Corps hierarchy was to discharge these men after the war, once again leaving the Marines an all-white service. Even after President Truman's 1948 order, historians say, the Marine Corps continued to resist desegregation.

Attitudes were changing, and blacks had proven

themselves as the war had progressed. But it would not be until the Korean War that black Marines fought alongside whites.

Simpson returned to Montford Point, where he was discharged about 1946. He went into the insurance business and later became an ordained minister.

In 1974, Montford Point's name was changed to Camp Johnson in honor of Gilbert "Hashmark" Johnson. He was one of the first black sergeants major on the base, and as far as Greggs knows, it's the only Marine Corps installation bearing the name of an African-American.

"The saying is, 'Once a Marine, always a Marine,' " Simpson said. "That's how it was instilled in you the whole year we were there."

And like the other men who earned their stripes there, completing the rigid training on the cusp of an American society in transition, he remains a Montford Point Marine for life.

Newport News Daily Press
June 24, 2012

20. Report: Submarine Hazing Centered On Homosexuality

By Brock Vergakis, Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va.--A Navy hazing case that led to the firing of the top enlisted officer aboard a nuclear submarine was sparked by gay jokes about a sailor who said another man tried to rape him while in a foreign port, according to an investigative report obtained by The Associated Press.

The report sheds light on a hazing case that led to the reassignment of Master Chief Machinist's Mate Charles Berry, who had been serving as

"chief of the boat" on the Kings Bay, Ga.-based USS Florida.

The Navy announced March 30 that Capt. Stephen Gillespie had relieved Berry as chief, due to dereliction of duty. Aboard a submarine, the chief of the boat advises the commanding officer of issues involving enlisted sailors.

The Navy's announcement said the case involved allegations of hazing aboard Florida, but gave no details. It said Berry was not involved in the hazing, but had knowledge of it and failed to inform his chain of command.

Lt. Brian Wierzbicki, spokesman for Kings Bay's submarine force, said Saturday he did not immediately have a contact number for Berry. The AP left a voice mail message at a phone listed for a Charles Berry in St. Marys, Ga.

An investigative report obtained by The Associated Press under the Freedom of Information Act says the hazing was directed at a sailor who had reported that another man pulled a knife and tried to rape him while in the port at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

All names in the documents provided to The Associated Press were redacted.

The report says the sailor was generally well-liked on the ship and endured the torment for months because he thought it would eventually stop. Among other things, he was called a derogatory term for a gay person and referred to as "Brokeback," a reference to the gay-themed movie "Brokeback Mountain." In addition, someone posted a drawing of a stick figure being sexually assaulted.

Before a group training session on the repeal of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, the sailor was subjected to comments about coming out of the closet and

asked when other sailors could meet his boyfriend and whether his boyfriend was Filipino, the nationality of the person he said tried to rape him.

The report says the sailors who made the derogatory comments didn't realize their shipmate had a knife pulled on him or the psychological toll the comments were taking on him. After eight months of harassment in 2011, the sailor eventually wrote a note saying he had suicidal thoughts and that he could snap and hurt himself or someone else.

The report says there was a culture of hazing and sexual harassment aboard the submarine and there was inadequate knowledge about the Navy's policies against it to stop the behavior before the sailor reached that point.

More counseling and training was ordered at all levels to avoid similar problems in the future.

"The Navy's standards for personal behavior are very high and it demands that sailors are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. When individuals fall short of this standard of professionalism and personal behavior, the Navy will take swift and decisive action to stop undesirable behavior, protect victims and hold accountable those who do not meet its standards," the Navy said in the March 30 statement.

Berry was temporarily assigned to another post in Kings Bay. Several other junior sailors who participated in the harassment also faced disciplinary action, including loss of rank and pay.

Military suicides in response to hazing have recently gotten the attention of Congress. The nephew of Rep. Judy Chu, D-Calif., killed himself after enduring hazing by his fellow Marines in

Afghanistan. A congressional hearing on military hazing was held earlier this year, and Chu is pushing a proposal to better track and define hazing in the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

"We're talking about acts that can result in death, but if not death, then clearly trauma. These are folks that can have post-traumatic stress syndrome because of the acts of others," Chu said. "These are peers administering justice to peers. What happened to the hierarchy that is supposed to be occurring in the military?"

The hazing episode is among a series of embarrassing incidents for the Navy's submarine force that were addressed in a blog post this week by Vice Adm. John Richardson focusing on the importance of character.

"A violation by one seems to be a violation against all," wrote Richardson, the Norfolk-based commander of the Navy's submarine force.

The Navy recently started a training course to discuss real-life examples of bad personal decisions that other officers have made in the past.

The Navy also issued new guidelines earlier this month to ensure that future leaders are all held to the same leadership standards, regardless of their command, during job screening.

Associated Press Writer Russ Bynum in Savannah, Ga., contributed to this story.

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot
June 24, 2012

21. Guard Generals Not Disciplined In Misuse Of Aircraft

By Bill Sizemore, The Virginian-Pilot

The former head of the Virginia National Guard and his assistant, both retired generals, were found to have

misused government aircraft in a Pentagon investigation concluded a year ago, yet it appears they have faced no disciplinary action.

They flew on the guard's Black Hawk helicopters - at a cost of \$5,000 per hour - when they could have driven, the investigators found. In addition, the top general was found to have used the aircraft for a nongovernmental purpose and brought his wife along without proper authorization.

The findings of the Defense Department's inspector general were not made public but were released to The Virginian-Pilot this month, two years after the newspaper filed an open-records request.

As adjutant general, the Virginia Guard's top post, from 2006 to 2010, Air Force Maj. Gen. Robert Newman Jr. was responsible for the combat readiness, administration and training of more than 8,200 personnel. Army Brig. Gen. Stephen Huxtable was assistant adjutant general from 2009 to 2010.

Both are now retired from the military. Newman is a homeland security consultant. Huxtable still works for the state as director of personnel and administration for the Department of Military Affairs.

The Pentagon investigation, launched in response to an anonymous complaint, concluded in a report dated May 24, 2011, that both generals improperly used official government transportation and recommended that the National Guard Bureau in Arlington "consider appropriate corrective action."

A spokesman for the bureau was unable to say last week whether any such action has been taken.

Newman said he was following the procedures for use

of military aircraft that were in place at the Virginia Guard when he assumed his post. A spokesman for the guard said the procedures have since been tightened.

Over a 13-month period examined by the investigators, Newman traveled by helicopter 27 times. Six of those flights were found to be improper. All were within Virginia, covering distances as short as the 60 miles from Richmond to Fort Pickett, near Blackstone.

On five of those trips, the investigators found that Newman brought along his wife, Becky, without proper approval. Defense Department regulations prohibit guardsmen's family members from traveling on government aircraft without approval from the governor or lieutenant governor.

Most of the trips were ceremonial. Newman and his wife flew to Fort Pickett for a change of command and a dedication of new howitzers, to Lexington for the dedication of a new building at Virginia Military Institute, to Winchester to visit a new armory, and to Bedford for an infantry deployment.

In one of those instances, the Winchester armory visit, the investigators found that Newman had no pressing schedule conflicts that required him to fly rather than drive.

An additional trip to Fort Pickett for a meeting of the Virginia National Guard Foundation, a private nonprofit organization, was improper because it served no official government purpose, the investigators found.

Huxtable used Virginia Guard helicopters for 16 trips during the period examined by the investigators. They found that one of those trips, to Roanoke for an event honoring soldiers and veterans, was

improper because Huxtable had no pressing reason to fly rather than drive.

Huxtable did not respond to a request for comment.

Newman, in an emailed statement, said he followed procedures "that were in existence, and used by my predecessor, when I assumed the post of adjutant general."

He said that when his wife accompanied him, it was "in her very active role of supporting our Virginia Guard families."

In addition, Newman said, he was informed by staff that "flights on which I flew were ones where the crew completed required training, thus enabling the use of training dollars as opposed to operational funds."

Cotton Puryear, a spokesman for the Virginia Guard, said that when Army Maj. Gen. Daniel Long Jr. became adjutant general in 2010, he instituted a process requiring all officers to review their travel and other activities with the state inspector general to ensure that regulations are being followed. Long also personally spot-checks travel records on a regular basis, Puryear said.

Newman was appointed to the top Virginia Guard post by then-Gov. Tim Kaine, a Democrat. Kaine's Republican successor, Gov. Bob McDonnell, declined to reappoint him after The Pilot reported that for several years he held a paid position with a business run by one of his subordinate officers, whom he promoted while collecting a paycheck from the business.

Newman said a subsequent inspector general's investigation exonerated him of conflict-of-interest allegations arising from that relationship.

In 2008, a state investigation found that Newman and his wife improperly spent \$3,600 in state

funds on household items for the adjutant general's part-time residence at Camp Pendleton in Virginia Beach.

In 2010, two state investigations found that Huxtable collected paychecks on several occasions from both the state and federal governments for the same work hours.

Topeka Capital-Journal

June 23, 2012

Pg. 1

22. Combat Pilot Faces Different Kind Of Fire

Guardsmen sent to fight blaze in Colorado

By Rick Dean, The Capital-Journal

Steve Hood is no stranger to firefighting.

A 29-year veteran of the Kansas Army National Guard, with 23 of those years spent flying military helicopters, Hood has flown combat assault missions in Iraq, as well as seen medical evacuation duty in two separate tours of combat zones in Kosovo and Iraq.

And though no one was shooting at him during his most recent mission, the Clay Center native and Wakarusa resident will return from Colorado grateful to have escaped live fire.

Hood, 47, was among nine Kansas Guardsmen in three-person crews dispatched to aid firefighting efforts in the High Park mountain area near the Roosevelt National Forest west of Fort Collins. Sent to Colorado on June 12, the Kansas Guardsmen could return home this weekend after more than 18,000 firefighters from several states worked to control blazes that consumed more than 68,000 acres, destroyed more than 100 homes and forced widespread evacuations before containment efforts gained some control.

"On a scale of 1 to 10, this one was an 8," Hood said of the High Park firefight.

No stranger to aerial firefighting operations — he is a veteran of campaigns against major blazes in Montana and California — Hood said the combination of ever-changing winds in the Rockies coupled with the turbulent updraft created by raging forest fires created conditions that made even veteran pilots wary.

"If you don't read the winds right," Hood said, "you can lose lift or experience loss of tail rotor effectiveness."

The first condition, he noted, causes sudden loss of altitude — a potential killer when making low-level water drops of as close to 45 to 60 feet above a burning tree line. The second failure puts a chopper into a spin. Skilled pilots can sometimes work their way out of both dilemmas, but no one wants an emergency landing in a fire zone.

Still, Hood and the Kansans went out every day, flying multiple missions each day, in their UH-60 Black Hawk, a chopper that bears its own shrapnel scars from Iraq. Armed with a water-carrying "Bambi bucket," the Black Hawk pilots would fill the 460-pound buckets by descending above a local reservoir, then begin what sometimes is a seat-of-the-pants attack on the flames.

"Much of the time there is no planning," Hood said. "You're given an area to attack, and you fly to the spot and make your plans when you get there and see what the wind and smoke conditions are like."

The aerial crews can make two kinds of drops on each pass.

A low-level drop, generally used on the edges of fire lines in a containment effort, can effectively knock down flames — and trees — in a small area, much the way

a high-pressure hose works for urban firefighters. Higher altitude drops designed to distribute cooling water over a large area aren't always as effective, largely because wind can render a pilot's aim ineffective.

"You might have a wind along the ground that's different from what you have at 200 feet," Hood explained. "Sometimes all you can do is use basic Kentucky windage" — aiming left, for example, when shooting into a left-to-right wind — "to try to get the water where it needs to be."

There are times, though, when even combat-experienced pilots there is only so much they can do.

"We get close enough to the flames that our crew chiefs are getting pretty baked back there," Hood said. "But, no house is worth losing a crew member. It's bad that homes are burning, but houses can be replaced. Lives can't."

After the Kansas Guardsmen finish their Colorado mission, they go back on call for duty as needed in their home state, be it dropping hay bales to starving cattle in snow-stranded ranges or flying first responder/med-evac missions in tornado-ravaged Greensburg, Reading or Chapman.

"But it's good to know we did some good here," Hood said of the Colorado effort. "It's neighbor-helping-neighbor. I know when we need help, they'll be there for us."

Columbia (SC) State

June 23, 2012

Pg. 1

23. Guard Deaths In Afghanistan Hit Lexington Area Hard

2 soldiers from Lexington

County were killed, 2 injured

By Sammy Fretwell

Ryan Rawl and J.D. Meador died on the same day, in a crowded market thousands of miles from the community that watched them grow from youngsters to soldiers in the S.C. National Guard.

Their deaths left the people of Lexington sobbing and wondering when the dying will end. Rawl and Meador were killed Wednesday while working at a military checkpoint in Afghanistan. The deaths are among at least seven involving Lexington-area soldiers in the Middle East during the past nine years.

"It's just a tragedy that this small community has lost so many kids," said Otis Rawl, a Lexington native who is not related to Ryan Rawl but played football with his father. "This is preying on people's minds here. You go out and see people and you don't really know what to say at a loss like that."

Rawl and Lexington Mayor Randy Halfacre said they've encountered a steady stream of comments in town as news of the deaths began to spread this week.

"It seems to me we've borne more than our fair share of tragedy in this war," the mayor said, noting that Lexington is "a hotbed of patriotism" with a high level of support for the military.

At least 14 civilians were killed in the suicide bombing, which occurred in the town of Khost. The bodies of the three South Carolina Guardsmen, including a soldier from Easley, will be returned to the state early next week, with funeral arrangements to follow. At least 35 others were injured, including five from the S.C. National Guard.

State Adjutant General Robert Livingston said the five S.C. National Guard soldiers injured in the suicide bombing in Afghanistan are in critical but

stable condition with shrapnel wounds and broken bones.

Livingston said several amputations have been performed. He did not name those who were injured, but a Guard spokesman said two are from the Midlands, two from the Lowcountry and one from the Upstate. The two Midlands residents are from Lexington County.

Speaking at a news conference in Columbia, Livingston said the deaths and injuries occurred as the Palmetto State soldiers were teaching Afghani security forces how to operate a checkpoint in Khost. While the S.C. soldiers were part of a security team that previously had success spotting suicide bombers, in this case a huge crowd near the checkpoint made it difficult, he said.

"Most of the marketplaces are not quite this robust, and so detection was very difficult and detonation was very devastating," Livingston told reporters.

Livingston said the blast was large enough to affect a wide area of people. But the impact of the explosion extends beyond Afghanistan, Lexington-area residents said.

Otis Rawl said he remembers both Meador and Ryan Rawl as youngsters, growing up playing youth baseball or wrestling at Lexington High School.

Ryan Rawl, who was a deputy with the Richland County Sheriff's Department, also was a Lexington football player in the late 1990s. His dad had played for the Wildcats a generation before him. A small fullback, he was known for his toughness and work ethic, friends said.

Though six years apart in age, Ryan Rawl and John David Meador had similar interests and family histories,

acquaintances said. Rawl and Meador leave behind wives and young children. Each graduated from Lexington High.

Brooke Avis Box, who grew up in the same neighborhood as Meador, said the 36-year-old Meador and Rawl, 30, had become good friends while serving in the National Guard. She spoke with Meador by satellite telephone last weekend.

During that conversation, Meador told her he wanted to get home to see his wife and kids, then coach baseball in the Irmo area. Three days later, Meador was dead. Her Facebook page was full of messages celebrating Meador's life.

"I had a lot of sadness and I was really angry," Box said. "I'm sad for his wife, his family. It's really hard."

Now an Upstate resident, Box said military service is ingrained in the Lexington community west of Columbia. But that doesn't make the deaths any easier.

"We are patriots," she said. "We believe in God and country. But war is an ugly thing. When you lose somebody you love and care about, it seems very senseless. To think of J.D., one of the bravest people I know, dying at the hand of a coward, makes me sick to my stomach."

Statewide, Wednesday was the deadliest single day in Afghanistan for the S.C. National Guard, which has deployed more than 12,000 troops there since the war began in 2001. Until this week, the most recent combat fatalities were in October 2010, including one soldier from Lexington. Wednesday's casualties were the first in 2012.

Sixteen members of the S.C. National Guard have died in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2003. South

Carolina has about 1,500 National Guardsmen in combat areas, a number that is expected to swell to 2,500 by the end of July, Adjutant General Livingston said.

Gov. Nikki Haley, also at Friday's press briefing, said she was personally affected by the deaths because she had visited with the soldiers' unit and their families before the soldiers left for the Middle East in August.

"These were fathers. These were husbands. These were sons. And they were heroes," Haley said. "What I will ask for the people of this state to do is what they have always done, which is to wrap your arms around these families and remember to thank these soldiers each and every day."

Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin asked that flags on all city buildings be flown at half-staff Friday in memory of the three soldiers who died.

"These men are heroes and we ask that all the people of Columbia keep them and their families in our thoughts and prayers through this difficult time."

Staff Writer Tim Flach also contributed to this story.

Newport News Daily Press
June 24, 2012

Exclusive

24. A Defense Spending Crisis In January?

Think Summer

By Hugh Lessig

Automatic cuts in U.S. defense spending will take effect in January 2013 if Congress does nothing about it. That's what it says on paper.

In reality, the drag on the defense industry is already in the works, portending serious consequences for Hampton Roads and Virginia into the summer and fall, analysts and elected officials say.

A recent survey of smaller businesses engaged in ship construction, maintenance, repair and supply found that many are already contemplating layoffs and cutbacks. The prospect of an 11th-hour deal around Christmas would provide little comfort to companies that must make key decisions in the coming weeks.

Building a ship takes years, and so does the planning.

"If you need 20 tons of steel, you don't pick up the phone and it's delivered the next day," said Ashley Godwin, a senior defense adviser for the Shipbuilders Council of America. "It requires purchases well in advance."

The burden falls heavier on small- and medium-sized businesses that don't have the financial flexibility or lengthy project lists of larger corporations, she said.

"The smaller companies, a lot of them go hand to mouth, month to month," she said. "The don't have the cash reserves and they have small work forces."

The fallout from defense cuts will spread throughout the economy, said Barry DuVal, the former Newport News mayor and current president and CEO of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce. He's talked to smaller companies whose employees are in limbo, not sure what will happen.

"These people are not out buying automobiles or purchasing new houses," he said. "They're probably less interested in a vacation this summer. This sort of uncertainty creates a cloud on the economy, especially for states that are depending on defense spending."

Big word, big impact

The current crisis is rooted in the Budget Control Act that President Barack Obama signed into law last year. It created a bipartisan committee to find

an additional \$1.2 trillion in savings over the next decade to reduce the budget deficit. The committee failed, so the law spells out mandatory, automatic cuts in defense and non-defense spending: \$600 billion each over the next 10 years.

That process is known as sequestration. If that's too much of a mouthful, consider the term used by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta before a Senate panel last week. The automatic cuts, he said, are a "meat ax approach."

But so far in this bitterly contested presidential election year, Congress has failed to strike a deal to avoid the cuts.

Republicans have refused to consider tax increases while Democrats are concerned about cutting entitlement programs. This week, the top Republican on the House Armed Services Committee released a video that painted the defense-cut fallout in stark terms and accused Democrats of blocking a solution.

Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon took aim at Obama and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, and said Republicans have put responsible plans on the table. At the same time, he said, Democrats have offered no plan of their own.

The spot invoked the GOP's favorite son, Ronald Reagan, who advocated peace through strength, and interspersed archival black-and-white footage of ticker-tape parades, saying those who deserved a hero's welcome will instead receive pink slips.

"The time for guarded language," McKeon said, "has passed."

Fair enough, says Rep. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, D-Newport News.

He agrees that sequestration would have a devastating impact on the military and defense industry.

But he bristles at the GOP's insistence at extending the Bush-era tax cuts that are set to expire.

\$1 trillion

If Congress allowed the tax cut to expire on incomes over \$250,000, it would generate nearly enough money — \$1 trillion — to avoid sequestration, not only the cuts to defense, but the cuts to entitlement programs as well, Scott said.

Eliminating all the Bush-era tax cuts would generate \$4 trillion in savings over 10 years.

Republicans want to keep the tax cuts in place, as do some Senate Democrats. But to Scott, it makes no sense to extend the cuts, reducing the flow of money to the treasury, then figure out how to deal with the \$1.2 trillion in additional cuts through sequestration that no one wants to see.

"They are trusting the media not to notice that they are supporting a \$4 trillion tax-cut extension," he said, "hoping that nobody notices while we suffer through and commiserate how hard it is to find a trillion dollars for the sequester."

He said Republicans who rail against the size of government ought to spell out the consequences of that policy.

"Is the water too clean? Is the air too clean that we don't need to regulate air pollution? Should we cut back on consumer regulation?" He asked. "The thing that frustrates me is that everybody gets to say 'we need to reduce the size of government,' and reporters write it down as if they said something."

Scott said no proposal for deficit reduction is popular. But given the furor over sequestration, he says the least unpopular choice would be allowing the tax cuts to expire on portions of income over \$250,000, then plowing

that money into public works programs to create jobs.

That idea faces tough sledding with Republicans, who say taking money out of people's wallets is the last thing needed in this fragile economy. Democratic Sen Jim Webb of Virginia has a third course. He doesn't want to raise taxes on ordinary income. Rather, Congress should look at capital gains and dividends, where the most wealthy people make their money, according to a report this week in The Hill.

1 million lost jobs

The National Association of Manufacturers released a study Thursday that paints a stark picture if the cuts go into effect. It used a multiplier model that factors how layoffs affect the rest of the economy — what DuVal was talking about when he referred to workers not buying cars and homes.

By that yardstick, the cuts would cost more than 1 million private-sector jobs by 2014, including 130,000 manufacturing jobs. The unemployment rate would increase by 0.7 percent. The hardest-hit states would be, in order, California, Virginia and Texas.

If the situation does not change, Virginia will lose nearly 115,000 jobs in 2014 alone, the study says. The industries hardest hit by sequestration also spell bad news for the Old Dominion.

Aerospace, ships and boats and search/navigation equipment businesses top the list.

"We have aerospace in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads, and we have ships and boats in Hampton Roads," said DuVal. "And the support of those is search and navigation. The gross number of jobs lost would have a devastating impact at a fragile time."

Boston Globe

June 24, 2012

Pg. 1

25. Kerry's Closeness To Obama Draws Fire

More oversight, less advocacy needed, critics say

By Bryan Bender, Globe Staff

WASHINGTON - Since he was elevated to the leading foreign policy position in Congress three years ago, John F. Kerry has been on the road a lot. He has brokered runoff elections in Afghanistan, shuttled between warring factions in Africa, and patiently sat through marathon tea-drinking sessions with recalcitrant Middle East dictators, all to advance the Obama administration's top foreign policy goals.

In the words of Vice President Joe Biden, Kerry "probably has the closest relationship with the president and the vice president of any chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee."

"When he takes on the responsibility of being an envoy for this administration, he does it with great skill," Biden told the Globe.

Yet Kerry's frenetic pace of travel on behalf of the administration is stoking a lively debate. Some foreign policy specialists question whether the Massachusetts Democrat has his eye on the secretary of state's job if Obama is reelected and, as a result, has been too lenient on oversight of the administration's policies, the chairman's primary role.

The fiercest criticism is directed at his committee's oversight of the war in Afghanistan and the administration's use of lethal force, including the expansion of drone strikes in Pakistan and elsewhere.

"Times of war is when the need for oversight is at its zenith," said Bruce

Fein, a constitutional lawyer and former top Justice Department official in the Reagan administration. "That's where the checks and balances are needed. Kerry is doing the opposite. He seems to be running for secretary of state and has not had serious oversight of the conduct of wars that are more endless than Vietnam."

Peter Singer, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, expressed concern over a lack of questions asked about the drone strikes that have killed suspected terrorists across the world, operations he generally supports. Such a strategy is "one of the biggest changes in American foreign policy in the last 10 years," he said. "It has huge ramifications for US foreign policy and should involve [the Foreign Relations Committee]. But Congress has been largely absent of any engagement on these issues."

Kerry strongly challenges any suggestion that he has allowed his relationship with Obama or any future ambitions to affect his stewardship of the committee, where he first came to prominence as a Vietnam veteran-turned-war protester in 1971, famously testifying, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

In an interview, he said his critics are simply ill informed.

"I will categorically say to anybody who thinks I am pulling any punches they haven't read my comments; they haven't listened to me in the hearings; they are just operating off some out-there stereotype," Kerry said. "I think we can point with clarity to real impact on the aid programs in Afghanistan, to the approaches in Pakistan. We have had a huge number of oversight hearings, and, more importantly, we have

issued some very constructive reports."

The Senate panel Kerry chairs has been, since it was established in 1816, one of the most influential in the Senate, reviewing the foreign aid budget, shaping policy through legislation, and voting on the president's ambassadorial appointments and international treaties before presenting them to the full body.

Some modern chairmen, however, also used the perch to confront the administration in power on a range of policies, whether the president was from the opposing political party or not, according to historians and congressional scholars.

In the 1960s, for example, Senator William Fulbright, a Democrat, used public hearings to try to end US involvement in the Vietnam War, under Democratic and Republican presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, respectively. In the 1980s, Senators Charles Percy and Richard Lugar, both Republicans, confronted Ronald Reagan's sale of arms to the Middle East and Central America and the more conservative direction of his foreign policy.

More recently, Lugar and Biden challenged President George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq.

"Kerry's been activist in a different way than some previous chairmen of the committee," said Ralph G. Carter, a political science professor at Texas Christian University and authority on the Senate panel. "Most we think of in that role have been challengers of administration policy. Kerry's been more heavily relied upon as an unofficial representative of the administration in diplomatic roles, and I wouldn't be surprised if he gets nominated to be Hillary Clinton's successor

as secretary of state in the next Obama administration."

Other factors contribute to Kerry's role on behalf of the administration. As a former Democratic nominee for president and a member of the committee for almost three decades, Kerry has unique access to and the respect of many world leaders.

He also shares a common vision of America's role in the world with Obama, who served on the committee with him from 2005 to 2009. Indeed, many of Obama's positions were informed by stands Kerry took during his failed 2004 White House run, including ending the war in Iraq and increasing US forces in Afghanistan.

To some of his former colleagues in the Senate, the path he has blazed as chairman reflects that relationship.

"He has carried around the world the authority of president and vice president," said Timothy Wirth, a former senator who runs the United Nations Foundation, a global advocacy group. "He is almost a wing of the administration."

Former senator Gary Hart, who served with Kerry on the committee in the 1980s and who Kerry recently dispatched on a fact-finding mission to Russia, put it this way: Kerry has, in effect, become "the congressional secretary of state."

The debate over Kerry's tenure on the committee has only intensified in recent weeks as he has emerged as a key surrogate for President Obama's reelection campaign, attacking the foreign policy positions of the presumptive GOP nominee, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney. Kerry has also been selected to be a stand in for Romney in the president's debate preparations.

Kerry insists the frequent chatter about his prospects, in

the hallways of Congress and the State Department and on political blogs, is a distraction, though he did not say he was not interested in the job.

"I'm doing the job I love as chairman and senior senator; I'm working hard at both, and I'm already preparing to run for reelection" in 2014, Kerry said. "Any other speculation is a waste of other people's time."

By his staff's count, Kerry has held 17 hearings on Afghanistan and Pakistan since he became chairman. These, Kerry said, have provided plenty of opportunity for members to ask tough questions of the administration.

"There's nothing to stop any colleague from making that hearing as contentious as they want it to be," Kerry said.

Yet, some observers contend the Afghanistan hearings have not been rigorous. "Kerry needs to get every scrap of paper and review the official story," Fein said. "They need to subpoena the underlying documents. The hearings now consist of what we have already read in the newspapers."

"Real oversight is putting the critics before the committee there right next to the officials from the administration."

Danielle Brian, executive director of the watchdog group Project on Government Oversight, concurs.

The committee "has been particularly weak in conducting even the most basic oversight of official claims of progress in the war," Brian said.

She said she wrote to Kerry in February urging him to convene a hearing to take testimony from a military whistleblower, Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Davis, who has made statements about battlefield successes against the Taliban and efforts to train Afghan

security forces, "which appear to vary greatly from the statements to Congress by senior military officials."

"Credible challenges to the Pentagon's party line have been made," she wrote. "As the US commits another year of funding to the war in Afghanistan, the public and Congress deserve an accurate assessment of the effort."

The Foreign Relations panel says it has no plans to hold such a hearing to hear testimony from Davis, whose detailed analysis of the conduct of the war made headlines earlier this year.

"This is about oversight, which we do on a daily basis," the committee said in a statement. "It's not about providing platforms."

Kerry pointed out several actions he has taken to bolster overall oversight, including hiring a chief investigator for the committee in 2009. Such a position had not been designated in nearly two decades.

The committee has released four public reports on Afghanistan during his tenure, including a review last year of US aid.

Not all of the committee's oversight has been conducted in public. Kerry's staff wrote a confidential paper last fall that aides said was highly critical of how the Obama administration has been funneling humanitarian aid to Pakistan, using legislation that Kerry championed to provide \$7.5 billion in nonmilitary aid over five years.

The report, according to Kerry aides, concluded that the Obama administration's handling of the program suffered from a series of failings, including "unclear strategy, repeated changes in direction, excessive bureaucracy, and ineffective

communications," as well as a lack of consultation with Congress.

The rebuke was not made public at the time, they said, because Kerry believed doing so privately would be more effective.

"We are trying to be helpful without beating people over the head on the front page," said Bill Danvers, the committee's staff director.

Others believe the criticism of Kerry is unjustified, especially because he is a member of the same party as the president.

"He has played a very constructive role by being another voice on foreign policy but one that is in tune with the administration," said Joseph Nye, a professor at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Even critics agree that Kerry has had several significant accomplishments through his committee. He is perhaps proudest of shepherding the New START arms treaty with Russia through the Senate with wide bipartisan support in 2010.

Yet, it is outside the committee room where Kerry most shines, many longtime foreign affairs experts say.

"He was patient, tireless, pragmatic, and firm when necessary," recalled Karl Eikenberry, who was US ambassador in Kabul in 2009, when Kerry intervened to persuade President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to agree to a run-off election in keeping with the country's constitution. "He is probably the most skilled negotiator I have ever known."

Kerry insists that he will also continue to wield his oversight authority, especially concerning Afghanistan.

"I have been crystal clear about wanting a much different presence, a much clearer set

of restraints" for US military involvement, Kerry said.

He expressed confidence that the Obama administration is setting forth an achievable plan to transfer responsibilities to the Afghans and bring the bulk of 90,000 US troops home in the next several years.

"We're basically drawing down the presence in Afghanistan," Kerry said. "Now, if they weren't doing that, then you'd be having a different kind of oversight hearing, perhaps."

Honolulu Star-Advertiser
June 23, 2012

Pg. B1

26. Largest-Ever RIMPAC Headed To Isles

By William Cole

Pearl Harbor, and by extension Waikiki, are about to become very busy places.

Military ships, planes and personnel from 22 nations are converging on Hawaii for the largest-ever Rim of the Pacific naval exercises and war games in and around the islands.

This year's RIMPAC exercise, the 23rd in a series that began in 1971, is scheduled for Wednesday to Aug. 7.

The 22 participating nations number eight more than two years ago, when the last of the biennial exercises was held in Hawaii — a sign of the growing attention being paid to events in Asia and the Pacific.

The list of firepower and people is impressive: Some 42 surface ships, six submarines, more than 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel are taking part in RIMPAC.

Two big-deck U.S. Navy ships — the aircraft carrier Nimitz and amphibious assault ship Essex — will be the centerpieces of the war games as they launch aircraft and fend

off mock attacks by submarines and simulated missiles.

Marines will launch amphibious assault vehicles from the Essex and hit the beach with support from helicopters.

In Washington state last week, the oiler Henry J. Kaiser loaded up 900,000 gallons of a 50/50 blend of traditional petroleum-based fuel and biofuel made from waste cooking oil and algae oil for a demonstration of the "Great Green Fleet" during RIMPAC.

The Pearl Harbor destroyers Chung-Hoon and Chafee will be among ships testing the biofuel.

Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia, Singapore and the United States are among the nations in this year's RIMPAC.

Military personnel from India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Republic of Philippines, Thailand, Tonga and the United Kingdom also will be taking part.

Russia, India, Mexico, the Philippines, New Zealand, Norway and Tonga are participating for the first time, said Cmdr. Charlie Brown, a spokesman for the U.S. Navy's 3rd Fleet.

"We had 14 countries participate in 2010. We've got 22 this year, so I think that's an indication of the interest that countries have in participating in RIMPAC and the value they see in this kind of unique training opportunity," Brown said.

China was not invited to participate or observe, Brown said. Certain prohibitions are in place regarding China's access to U.S. military operations, but Adm. William Fallon invited the People's Liberation Army to observe the exercise "Valiant Shield" in 2006 when Fallon

was head of U.S. Pacific Command.

Brad Glosserman, executive director of the Pacific Forum Center for Strategic and International Studies in Honolulu, said the exercise's increase in size is an acknowledgement of the growing importance of maritime cooperation.

"If you think about what the headlines have been for the last couple of years, they've really been discussing the (fact) that we're facing an increasingly fraught security environment with a great deal of uncertainty," Glosserman said.

A recent example involved a standoff between fishing boats from China and the Philippines at Scarborough Shoal, a disputed area in the South China Sea claimed by those two countries and at least four others.

"I think everyone recognizes that (this maritime security environment) is where either we learn to live and work together, because we do have considerable shared interests, or this is where we get in each other's way and potentially start to stare each other down," Glosserman said.

Russia's presence "speaks to a Russian desire to be more deeply engaged in this region," Glosserman said.

"Everyone knows and I think it's very clear that (President Vladimir Putin) would like to be a big player," he said.

India, too, is trying to establish itself as a more visible and more prominent regional player.

"One of the key elements I think of the rebalancing (toward Asia and the Pacific)," Glosserman said, "is the notion of the increasing importance of the Indian Ocean — we're starting to look at the Indian and Pacific oceans as a single

theater, if you will, and that clearly underscores the importance of India."

Japan Times
June 24, 2012

27. U.S. Gives Osprey Probe Updates, Reassurances

By Kyodo

WASHINGTON — After briefing Japanese officials on how probes into two crashes involving Osprey planes are progressing, the U.S. Defense Department emphasized the safety and capability of the controversial aircraft amid concerns about their planned deployment to Okinawa.

After a meeting Friday in the suburbs of Washington, Pentagon press secretary George Little backed the tilt-rotor transport planes.

"The Osprey is a highly capable aircraft with an excellent operational safety record, which includes more than five years of worldwide deployments and 140,000 flight hours," Little said in a statement.

During the director general level meeting, which included officials from the Defense and Foreign ministries, U.S. officials updated the findings regarding the crash of an air force CV-22 Osprey in Florida earlier this month and a fatal crash in April of a Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey in Morocco, the Pentagon said.

The Defense Department takes Japan's inquiries very seriously and "provided relevant information to the extent currently possible, and will continue to do so," Little said in the statement.

The two crashes are fueling safety concerns and opposition to a plan to deploy the MV-22 in Okinawa at the unpopular U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

Before the meeting, the Pentagon spokesman signaled that the United States has no plan to cancel the deployment to Japan of MV-22s — which can take off and land like a helicopter and fly like a conventional plane — because of the two recent accidents.

"We expect to continue our deployment of MV-22 Ospreys to Okinawa," Little said.

The MV-22 that crashed during a joint drill with Moroccan forces April 11 killed two marines and injured two others. The CV-22 Osprey that crashed June 13 during training in southern Florida wounded five crew members.

Col. Jim Slife, commander of 1st Special Operations Wing at Florida's Hurlburt Field, where the CV-22 involved in the June 13 accident was based, said the following day he has no reason to suspect any fundamental design flaws.

The U.S. Air Force has removed the lieutenant colonel who supervised the training in Florida, sources said, apparently indicating the accident was due to problems with the training rather than the aircraft's technology.

Japan Times
June 24, 2012

28. Okinawans Mark The Day Guns Fell Silent

By Kyodo

NAHA, Okinawa Pref. — Okinawa on Saturday marked the 67th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Okinawa, the World War II ground assault during which an estimated quarter of the local population perished.

Today, many Okinawa residents are fighting contentious plans to relocate the U.S. Futenma air station and moves to deploy the accident-

prone Osprey aircraft at the base.

In a memorial service for the war dead at Peace Memorial Park in Itoman on Okinawa Island, the site of the final stage of the battle in 1945, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda pledged to reduce the concentration of American military bases in the prefecture.

"It is very regrettable that we have imposed a massive burden on the people of Okinawa for such a long time," Noda said. "I will make every effort to ease the burden of hosting the U.S. bases so substantial progress can be made."

Okinawa accounts for just 0.6 percent of Japan's total land area but hosts 74 percent of U.S. military facilities in terms of area.

"We should not forget the woeful history that has been carved in this beautiful land," Noda said, referring to the 1945 battle. "As the person in charge of managing the state, it is my duty to take all possible measures to ensure national security."

Meanwhile, Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima reiterated his call for U.S. Marines Corps Air Station Futenma in the city of Ginowan to be moved outside the prefecture "at the earliest possible date."

In addition to the Futenma relocation, opposition is growing over the planned deployment of the controversial MV-22 Osprey transport aircraft at the air base.

An MV-22 crashed during a joint drill with Moroccan forces April 11, killing two U.S. Marines and injuring two more, while a U.S. Air Force CV-22 Osprey crashed June 13 during training in southern Florida, injuring five crew members.

"We cannot accept the deployment," Zenshin

Takamine, chairman of the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly, said during the memorial service.

"I expect the central government to work on national security" in the interests of the entire country, he said.

The Battle of Okinawa started when U.S. forces landed on the main island and remote surrounding islands in spring 1945.

The names of the war dead, regardless of nationality or military or civilian status, are inscribed on the memorial park's Cornerstone of Peace. The list stands at 241,167 names, 36 of which were added this year.

Christian Science Monitor
(csmonitor.com)

June 23, 2012

29. Stuxnet Cyberweapon Set To Stop Operating

Stuxnet infected some 130,000 computers worldwide, most of them related to Iran's nuclear fuel enrichment program. It's programmed to shut down just after midnight Sunday, but there likely are other cyber espionage systems out there.

By Mark Clayton, Staff writer

Goodbye Stuxnet. And Iranian officials would doubtless hasten to add: "Good riddance."

At one second past midnight Sunday, the world's most powerful known cyber weapon, reportedly created by the US with Israeli support to clandestinely infiltrate and then wreck Iran's nuclear fuel enrichment program, will cease to operate.

At present, the program still wakes up, goes through various check functions, looking for a target to destroy. But deep inside Stuxnet's labyrinth of software code are a few lines that will

soon order the program to stop working altogether in a pre-programmed, belated and ultimately unsuccessful bid to prevent it from being detected and deciphered, say computer forensic experts who have examined the program's code.

As a practical matter, Stuxnet's departure is likely to be an invisible non-event as far as the wider world is concerned. All but a few hundred of the more than 130,000 computers globally – about two-thirds in Iran – that were identified in summer 2010 as infected with the computer worm have already had their software patched and cleaned up.

But the final deactivation of that powerful destructive digital code isn't likely to give much enduring relief to anyone. Not to Iran, which on June 21 announced it was still worried about another imminent "massive" cyber attack against it should negotiations with the US and other nations over its controversial nuclear program fail.

Certainly relief won't come soon for President Obama and his national security team, which approved in spring 2010 unleashing a particularly potent version of Stuxnet, the New York Times reported this month. Called "the bug" inside the White House, Stuxnet was targeted to destroy a key group of 1,000 nuclear centrifuges Iran was believed using to make bomb grade uranium fuel, the Times reported.

Lawmakers in Congress now are calling for an investigation into the leaking of the top-secret US operation code-named "Olympic Games" in which Stuxnet, a name that was given "the bug" by anti-virus firms that found it spreading on networks in 2010.

There's no relief either for worried cyber security experts,

some of whom have called Stuxnet the digital equivalent of the first nuclear attack on Hiroshima. They warn that Stuxnet's code provides a template and conceptual model for a far more destructive "son of Stuxnet" cyber weapon that could be deployed by other nation states or hackers for cyber attacks against power grids and other civilian infrastructure.

A prime target, they say, would be Stuxnet's own presumed creator – the US, which is to a far greater degree than its potential adversaries, including nations like North Korea and Iran, reliant on cyber-physical industrial control systems of the kind Stuxnet was specifically designed to infiltrate and destroy.

"It can be argued that the time was ripe for history's first cyber weapon, and having it come from China or Russia would have created another unpleasant Sputnik experience," wrote Ralph Langner, the Hamburg, Germany-based cyber security expert in a recent opinion article in the New York Times. "On the other hand it is evident that the United States is not prepared to defend against such sophisticated cyber-physical attacks that they chose to experiment with in the open, with the actual weapon eventually being downloadable from the Internet."

Mr. Langner's discovery that Stuxnet was not just another piece of criminal malware, but was actually the world's first nation state-built cyber super-weapon and apparently targeting Iran's nuclear program, was verified and first published by the Monitor on Sept. 21, 2010.

Ever since, the hunt has been on for who built and unleashed Stuxnet – and the fragments of other digital

weapons that keep popping up. That hunt has yielded a drumbeat of surprises. First, has come the discovery of at least two other highly sophisticated cyber espionage systems that also appear to target Iran's nuclear program – and also show clear signs that they are directly related siblings of Stuxnet – and developed by the same source, according to forensic analysis and recent news media reports.

"Whoever was running this operation needed these programs to conduct a large number of highly targeted and clandestine operations against Iran and its allies," says John Bumgarner, a former Army intelligence officer now research director for the US Cyber Consequences Unit, a nonprofit security think tank.

As it turns out, Stuxnet was probably the last piece of the puzzle, the digital muscle deployed to take out Iran's nuclear centrifuge systems. In fact, it had two other siblings – espionage programs that gathered intelligence and prepared the cyber battlefield.

"Flame," a highly sophisticated espionage program was in essence a giant vacuum cleaner – sucking up information from wireless sources, turning on computer microphones, stealing files, Mr. Bumgarner says. Discovered just last month, Flame is believed to have been on the loose since at least late 2007 and was likely created earlier that year, according to Kaspersky, the Moscow-based anti-virus company.

Meanwhile, "Duqu," another espionage program was deployed to infiltrate specific computers within key companies that had programs related to Iran's nuclear program. It was far more highly targeted than Flame and came later, according to Symantec,

the big anti-virus company that did a comprehensive analyses of Stuxnet. Duqu and Stuxnet shared a common programming platform apparent in their code, linking them to the same team of programmers, Symantec found.

By the time Stuxnet was created sometime between January-June 2009, Flame was already in existence – created probably no later than summer 2008, Kaspersky reported this month. Meanwhile, Stuxnet's 2009 version used a fragment of code based on Flame, Kaspersky says. Thus, Stuxnet, Duqu, and Flame all share key components.

The trio was created, Kaspersky argues, by two independent developer teams – one for Flame, and the other for Stuxnet and Duqu, each "developing its own platform since 2007-2008 at the latest." In 2009, part of the code from the Flame platform was used in Stuxnet. That cross-linking means all three programs now are tied together.

Journalistic accounts appear to have tied that group of malware together and laid them at the feet of the White House. Flame, which came to light last month after Iran spotted infiltration of its oil networks, was part of a larger cyber assault, according to anonymous "western officials," cited by the Washington Post June 19.

"This is about preparing the battlefield for another type of covert action," one former high-ranking US intelligence official told the Post, adding that Flame and Stuxnet were elements of a broader assault that continues today. "Cyber-collection against the Iranian program is way further down the road than this."

That dovetails with the findings of cyber researchers that have dissected the code of

the trio of miscreant malware: Stuxnet, Flame, and Duqu.

"We have no doubt they were all developed by the same people," says Liam Ó Murchú, manager of operations for Symantec Security Response, in a phone interview. "It's clear to us that there are enough similarities, and in some cases completely copied code, to relate them all together."

There's something else that links everything together, too: major efforts to cover their tracks. After Flame was discovered, a special module was activated on computers in Iran and elsewhere – in Syria, Sudan and Libya – to delete them. Duqu's operators also systematically deleted it off computers after its discovery.

Symantec's Ó Murchú, however, notes that update features in Flame, Duqu, and Stuxnet all allow their handlers to extend their lives. It also suggests that new versions of Flame and Duqu, and perhaps even Stuxnet – that the anti-virus companies and Iran have not yet detected – are still operational, he and others say.

Internet domains that controlled Flame shut down about an hour after news of the operation broke worldwide, but at least three infected machines in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon received malware upgrades – essentially new versions of Flame, Kaspersky researchers told Wired.com.

Indeed, the self-destruct mechanisms themselves suggest some larger geopolitical themes. With Flame and Duqu, deletions occurred after discovery. But there would never be that option for Stuxnet, which was designed to penetrate the inner networks of Iran's Natanz nuclear centrifuge plant – far from any internet connection.

Stuxnet's mission was to destroy centrifuges, then itself.

It is programmed to terminate June 24, 2012 – seven years to the day after Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected president – a matter likely viewed by the Bush Administration and others around the world with trepidation given his strident views on nuclear matters.

If Stuxnet had succeeded, Iran might be out of the nuclear fuel refining game. It's not. So, is Iran rightly concerned about further cyber intrusions?

"It's just my opinion, but I think Stuxnet and other cyber espionage programs were all about trying to prevent another Mideast war," Mr. Bumgarner says. "We've seen these programs deleted, or like Stuxnet, shutting itself down. But I'm guessing that the story isn't over yet."

Los Angeles Times

June 23, 2012

Pg. 1

30. U.S. To Boost Drone Flights In Caribbean Drug Effort

By Brian Bennett

WASHINGTON — After quietly testing Predator drones over the Bahamas for more than 18 months, the Department of Homeland Security plans to expand the unmanned surveillance flights into the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico to fight drug smuggling, according to U.S. officials.

The move would dramatically increase U.S. drone flights in the Western Hemisphere, more than doubling the number of square miles now covered by the department's fleet of nine surveillance drones, which are used primarily on the northern and southwestern U.S. borders.

But the high-tech aircraft have had limited success spotting drug runners in the

open ocean. The drones have largely failed to impress veteran military, Coast Guard and Drug Enforcement Agency officers charged with finding and boarding speedboats, fishing vessels and makeshift submarines ferrying tons of cocaine and marijuana to America's coasts.

"The question is: Will they be effective? We have no systematic evidence on how effective they are," said Bruce Bagley, who studies U.S. counter-narcotics efforts at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Fla.

Despite that, a new control station will arrive this month in Corpus Christi, Texas, allowing Predators based there to cover more of the Gulf of Mexico. An additional drone will be delivered this year to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's base in Cocoa Beach, Fla., for operations in the Caribbean.

The Federal Aviation Administration has already approved a flight path for the drones to fly more than 1,000 miles to the Mona Passage, the strait between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

"There is a lot more going on in the deep Caribbean, and we would like to know more," said a law enforcement official familiar with the program who was not authorized to speak publicly. The official said drones may be based temporarily at airfields in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

The Predator B is best known as the drone used by the CIA to find and kill al Qaeda terrorists in Pakistan and Yemen. An unarmed version patrols the U.S. borders searching known overland smuggling routes.

On the ocean, however, there are no trails or roads to follow. And the Predator

cannot cover as much open water as larger, higher-flying surveillance aircraft, such as the Global Hawk.

"I'm not sure just because it's a UAV [unmanned aerial vehicle] that it will solve and fit in our problem set," the top military officer for the region, Air Force Gen. Douglas M. Fraser, said recently.

Fraser's command contributes ships and manned surveillance airplanes to the Joint Interagency Task Force South. Last year, the task force worked with U.S. agencies and other countries to seize 119 metric tons of cocaine, valued at \$2.35 billion.

For the recent counternarcotics flights over the Bahamas, border agents deployed a maritime variant of the Predator B called a Guardian with a SeaVue radar system that can scan large sections of open ocean. Drug agents can check a ship's unique radio pulse in databases to identify the boat and owner.

The planned drone flights are partly a response to demands from leaders in the western Caribbean to shift more drug agents, surveillance aircraft and ships into the area, as cartels have switched from the closely watched U.S.-Mexico border to seaborne routes. In the last four years, drug seizures in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico have increased 36%, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

"As we tighten the land borders, it squishes out to the seas," said the law enforcement official.

Over the last several years, however, drug-war personnel have been diverted from the Caribbean to the southwestern U.S. border. In Puerto Rico, for example, 1 out of 8 DEA positions is vacant.

The increase in drug traffic has contributed to an

unprecedented rise in homicides in Puerto Rico, a major transit point for cocaine moving from Central America to northeastern U.S. cities. In 2011, the homicide rate hit a historic high of 1,136, with 8 out of 10 killings related to drug trafficking.

"We need help fighting this battle along the Caribbean border to protect U.S. citizens there being buffeted by violence," Puerto Rico's Gov. Luis Fortuno told a congressional panel this week.

Despite budget cuts in other areas, Customs and Border Protection has requested \$5.8 million to push its drone operations farther into the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico.

But test flights for the Guardian showed disappointing results in the Bahamas, according to two law enforcement officials familiar with the program who were not authorized to speak publicly.

During more than 1,260 hours in the air off the southeastern coast of Florida, the Guardian assisted in only a handful of large-scale busts, the officials said.

One of the most recent occurred early Dec. 22, when a Guardian trained its infrared eye on a sailboat heading toward New Providence island in the Bahamas. Photographs of the sloop and grid coordinates were relayed by the U.S. embassy in Nassau. The Royal Bahamas Defense Forces found no drugs, but arrested 23 men, five women and a boy. The passengers were believed to be migrants from Haiti.

The head of an interagency drug task force based in the Bahamas called the mission a "great case" in an internal email obtained by The Times. The mission proved "what we all suspect to be the case with a piece of equipment that has

such promising capabilities and potential," wrote U.S. Coast Guard Cmdr. Louie C. Parks Jr.

But federal officials who received the laudatory message said it only underscored that such success stories have been extremely rare.

Tampa Tribune
June 24, 2012

31. VA Says Bay Pines Vets' Care Falls Short

By Howard Altman, The Tampa Tribune

As the military struggles to cope with an alarming suicide rate among veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs for the first time is monitoring how its hospitals handle patients making the critical transition from hospitalization to living on their own.

The first published review in the country: Bay Pines VA Health Care System near St. Petersburg.

The results are eye-opening.

The VA's Office of Inspector General pulled the records of 20 discharged mental health patients at Bay Pines and found that the hospital failed to provide timely follow-up care to eight of those patients.

Inspectors also checked the records of 10 patients considered at high risk of suicide and found the hospital didn't provide follow-up care in a timely manner for three of those patients.

VA regulations require that all discharged patients receive follow-up contact within seven days of being discharged. If that contact is by phone, an in-person or remote health evaluation must take place in two weeks. High-risk patients must receive two outpatient follow-up evaluations within 14 days of discharge and two more within 15 to 30 days.

The stakes are high. Mental health experts say the transition from being hospitalized to living on their own is a crucial time — maybe the most crucial time — for patients at risk of committing suicide.

"Continuity of care is a critical issue, particularly for suicidal patients," said David Rudd, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Science at the University of Utah and scientific director of the National Center for Veterans Studies. "Follow-up post-discharge is a contextual warning sign for those with inpatient stays or emergency room referrals for suicidality. Given the significance of suicide risk for veterans, the efforts to track follow-up efforts in the VA system is essential."

Since 2009, there have been 31 confirmed suicides of patients who had been treated by Bay Pines, according to spokesman Jason Dangel.

Hospital officials say that, overall, mental health care at Bay Pines is of high quality. They point out that the review encompassed a small percentage of the roughly 1,300 acute inpatient psychiatry patients the hospital treats every year.

All patients whose records were reviewed by inspectors did get mental health follow-up, though not all within the prescribed time, said Dominique A. Thuriere, chief of mental health and behavior sciences at Bay Pines. Overall, the hospital treats about 20,000 mental health patients annually, Thuriere said.

Inspectors say the sample of 30 patients gives a statistically valid snapshot of how services are being delivered.

"Thirty is a reasonable number of patient experiences to review for these purposes, and when aggregated across the

number of facilities reviewed for the year, will provide an adequate basis to comment on VHA's performance," said Cathy Gromek, spokeswoman for the VA's Office of Inspector General.

With recent reports that more troops have killed themselves in the past five months than were killed by insurgents in Afghanistan, suicide prevention has become a major priority of both the VA and the Department of Defense.

VA Secretary Eric Shinseki and Department of Defense Secretary Leon Panetta stressed the importance of better prevention at a suicide prevention conference last week.

"Our shared commitment to help the most challenged of our men and women find the strength and hope they need to prevail over the issues of suicide is critical," VA Secretary Eric Shinseki said on Wednesday at the Department of Defense-VA Suicide Prevention Conference in Washington.

The suicide rate of male veterans "appears to be almost twice that of the general population," Shinseki said.

Reacting to those who are suicidal is not good enough, Shinseki said. Intervention, he said, is critical.

Panetta, in a speech on Friday, called suicide "the most frustrating challenge I have come across since becoming Secretary of Defense last year. Despite increased efforts and attention, the trends continue to move in a troubling and tragic direction."

Inspectors visited Bay Pines the week of April 9 for a routine review that the Office of Inspector General performs at all VA hospital facilities about every three years to ensure quality care for veterans. The review examined 11 activities

ranging from colorectal cancer screening to polytrauma care.

But with suicide prevention becoming an increased priority, Office of Inspector General officials — who regularly adjust inspection criteria — began to look at how hospitals deal with continuing mental health care.

Almost two weeks after inspectors visited Bay Pines for the routine review, the Office of Inspector General released a separate report criticizing the hospital's continuity of care in the 2011 suicide of a 75-year-old man living in a housing program for homeless veterans. The program was a combined effort of the VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The two reports are unrelated, and the man who shot himself had not been hospitalized before his suicide. But inspectors found that he had not been seen by a VA case manager for almost five months before his death — "a deviation from his treatment plan," according to the April 18 report.

"Both of the (case managers) we interviewed told us that the size of their caseloads made it impossible to meet their program visitation requirements," according to the report.

This program was new at the time of the patient's suicide, and new staff were still being hired, Thuriere said. "This would explain the high case loads."

New supervisors have since been hired, and monitoring of the staff has improved, Thuriere said.

The two Office of Inspector General reports compared different aspects of mental health services at the hospital. One focused on patients being discharged from the inpatient psychiatric ward. The other report focused on a patient who

had never been hospitalized and had no known mental illness.

Thuriere said that in both cases, the hospital, like all VA facilities, is challenged by patients who struggle with homelessness and are difficult to track. She said for the hospitalized patients, Bay Pines puts a lot of effort into tracking an often difficult-to-reach population.

"Most of our appointments following discharge from a psychiatric hospitalization are made within five days," Thuriere said. "A lot of time and energy has been put into place designing a process for ensuring we have access to care within seven days of discharge and we assist the patient by making reminder phone calls and sending letters so that they remember to keep their appointments."

Patients are also given an appointment at the time of discharge, Thuriere said. Staff on the inpatient and outpatient ends are put in charge of tracking the patient to make sure the follow-up is successful.

"In a survey of 'no-show' patients, we found that the most frequent reason for a no-show is that the patient forgot about the appointment," she said.

Rudd said that "complete compliance is a difficult but admirable target," but the inpatient discharge rate inspectors found at Bay Pines is "not acceptable, as 30 percent without follow-up creates considerable risk."

The good news, said Rudd, is that "the willingness to take this problem head on is an excellent sign for our veterans and for efforts to reduce tragic losses to suicide."

Officials from the VA Office of Inspector General say that because Bay Pines was one of the first hospitals to be reviewed on continuity of care,

it is impossible to say how it compares to other facilities.

"We believe that implementation of these recommendations will improve the effectiveness of the facility and reduce patient risk," said Gromek, adding that the results from Bay Pines and other facilities evaluated on mental health continuity will likely be combined into an overall report looking at how the issue is being handled throughout the VA system. Gromek said the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa likely will be reviewed next year.

Thuriere said Bay Pines provides "excellent care" to its patients, and he expects that it is on par with other VA hospitals in terms of how it handles patients in transition.

"We have an unparalleled comprehensive system for mental health services in the VA," she said. "A veteran can have access (to mental health services) at his will and desire. For the average citizen, a non-veteran who wants to see a mental health provider, just call a private hospital, or a private mental health clinic and see how soon you get treatment."

San Antonio Express-News
June 24, 2012

32. Brain Injury Is Real Through Eyes Of 4 GIs

By Kristina M. Jackson

A soldier returns from Iraq and has trouble remembering how to complete everyday tasks.

He gets frustrated easily and has trouble sleeping. Doctors have difficulty alleviating his symptoms or even diagnosing the cause.

"Along Recovery," a documentary showing today at the Santikos Palladium as part of the San Antonio Film Festival, follows four members of the U.S. Army as they

are treated for traumatic brain injury.

The four men sustained injuries from improvised explosive devices while in Iraq and Afghanistan. The pressure from the blasts might leave no physical damage but cause symptoms that resemble a severe concussion, including memory loss and headaches. Traumatic brain injury is often paired with post-traumatic stress, which means additional mental health treatment for soldiers.

"I wanted to give the injury a human face," director Justin Springer said.

The film was shot at Brooke Army Medical Center (now San Antonio Military Medical Center), a facility renowned for its treatment of TBI. Springer, who served in the Army from 2003 until 2008, gained intimate access to sessions with neurologists and psychiatrists.

"I knew what combat was like, but a soldier has no clue what's going on in a hospital," he said.

For almost two years, Springer filmed his subjects during recovery. One struggles to repeat short lists of words back to hospital staff. Another watches a video of his vehicle being destroyed by an IED. A third recounts some of the memories that haunt his nightmares and keep him from sleeping.

Springer witnessed these injuries firsthand during his two tours in Iraq. After an IED blast, soldiers in his unit would start to exhibit symptoms without admitting they needed treatment.

"The Army is such a tough-guy world," he said. "Men don't like to see doctors."

The Defense Department standardized protocol for diagnosing TBI in 2010, but Springer believes much

more can be done, including continuing research and expanding veterans' options for care.

"This is a long-term injury that requires long-term treatment."

Washington Post

June 24, 2012

Pg. 23

33. The LOST Sinkhole

By George F. Will

There they go again. Like those who say climate change is an emergency too obvious and urgent to allow for debate, some proponents of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, a.k.a. the Law of the Sea Treaty (LOST), say arguments against it are nonexistent. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says any such arguments "no longer exist and truly cannot even be taken with a straight face." Favoring condescension over persuasion, she ridicules people who she says think that, because the treaty was negotiated under U.N. auspices, "the black helicopters are on their way."

Clinton's insufferable tone is not a reason for the necessary 34 senators to reject ratification. It is, however, a reason for enjoying their doing so.

LOST, approval of which is supposedly somehow suddenly imperative, emerged from the mists of U.N. deliberations that began in the 1950s. The result, three generations later, is pernicious when it is not superfluous.

For centuries there has been a law of the sea. There might be marginal benefits from LOST's clarifications and procedures for resolving disputes arising from that law — although China and the nations involved in contentious disputes about the South China Sea have all ratified LOST, not that it seems to matter. But those hypothetical benefits

are less important than LOST's actual derogation of U.S. sovereignty by empowering a U.N. bureaucracy — the International Seabed Authority (ISA), based in Jamaica — to give or withhold permission for mining, and to transfer perhaps hundreds of billions of dollars of U.S. wealth to whatever nation it deems deserving — "on the basis of equitable sharing criteria, taking into account the interests and needs of developing states, particularly the least developed and the land-locked among them."

Royalties paid by nations with the talent and will for extracting wealth from the seabed will go to nations that have neither, on the principle that what is extracted from 56 percent of the earth's surface is, the United Nations insists, "the common heritage of mankind." And never mind U.S. law, which says that wealth gained from the continental shelf — from which the ISA would seek royalty payments — is supposed to be held by the U.S. government for the benefit of the American people.

LOST was approved by a U.N. conference in 1982, during the Reagan administration, which refused to sign it. In 1994, after some provisions pertaining to seabed mining were changed, President Bill Clinton sent it to the Senate, which has never brought it to a vote. LOST's supporters say President Reagan's objections have been met. Well.

Kenneth Adelman, a Reagan adviser, attended a National Security Council meeting at which Secretary of State Alexander Haig said LOST was undesirable but inevitable because it was the result of a process involving most nations. Reagan said: "Uh, Al, isn't this what the whole thing's all about?" Adelman

says when those in the meeting seemed puzzled, Reagan said: "Wasn't refusing to go along with something 'really stupid,' just because 150 nations had done so, what winning the 1980 election was about? Reagan was primarily, but not exclusively, concerned about seabed mining provisions that were slightly improved in 1994. His June 29, 1982, diary entry says: "Decided in NSC meeting — will not sign 'Law of the Sea' treaty even without seabed mining provisions."

Five former Republican secretaries of state (Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, James Baker, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice) support LOST, saying in a Wall Street Journal op-ed piece, "we would strengthen our capacity to influence deliberations and negotiations involving other nations' attempts to extend their continental boundaries." But would such influence be wielded vigorously by some administrations? And would this influence be superior to existing U.S. influence, particularly that of the U.S. Navy?

Donald Rumsfeld, who is five times more persuasive than these former secretaries of state, opposes LOST because it "remains a sweeping power grab that could prove to be the largest mechanism for the worldwide redistribution of wealth in human history." It "would regulate American citizens and businesses without being accountable politically to the American people." Which makes it shameful that the Chamber of Commerce is campaigning for LOST through an organization with the Orwellian name the American Sovereignty Campaign.

If the Navy supports LOST because the civilian leadership does, fine. But if the Navy thinks it cannot operate well

without LOST, we need better admirals, not better treaties. Here is an alternative proposal for enhancing the lawfulness of the seas: Keep the money LOST would transfer to ISA, and use it to enlarge the Navy.

Philadelphia Inquirer
June 24, 2012

34. Annan's Plan For Syria Is Dead; Washington Needs A Plan B

By Trudy Rubin, Inquirer
Opinion Columnist

Kofi Annan, who's been assigned the hopeless task of resolving the Syrian crisis by diplomacy, is calling for "concerned nations" — including Russia and Iran — to confer this week in Geneva.

I sympathize with Annan, now the special Syria envoy of the United Nations and the Arab League. The Bosnian and Rwandan genocides happened while he was head of U.N. peacekeeping, and he desperately wants to prevent further slaughter in Syria. "The longer we wait, the darker Syria's future becomes," he rightly said last week, in a plea for key countries to develop a peace plan.

But here's the sad truth: Even though an unchecked civil war will devastate civilians, attract radical jihadis, and destabilize the entire region, diplomacy won't prevent this. It's time for a reality check on what the West can and can't do to curb the killing—and to prevent a new failed Islamist state.

First, let's dispense with the Annan Plan, which calls for a cease-fire, an end to violence, and the right of the opposition to protest freely, in Arab Spring fashion. This won't work because it would spell the end of the regime of Syrian President Hafez al-

Assad, and he will never accept it. As for the opposition, some leaders might have bought into negotiations early on, but no more; they won't sit down with a mass murderer.

Nor should anyone delude himself about easing Assad out of power — an option Europeans and the Obama team once hoped for. Russian officials bluntly reject any such plan. Last week, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told the radio station Echo Moskvy: "This scheme is, unequivocally, unworkable from the very beginning. Because he [Assad] won't go." Translation: We won't push him to go.

The issue is not Assad himself, but the survival of the regime, which is Russia's last Mideast ally. If Assad goes, his family cabal and the regime based on his Alawite (Shiite) sect would be in deep jeopardy. This is unacceptable to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who detests revolutions from below.

Finally, no one should pretend it's still possible to stop the flow of arms to Syrian combatants. "It is far too late to choose between nonviolence and militarization," rightly notes Steven Heydemann, a Syria expert at the U.S. Institute for Peace.

The Iranians are arming their Syrian ally, and the Russians don't hide the fact that they're bolstering Syrian air defenses and refurbishing Syrian attack helicopters.

Meantime, opposition fighters inside Syria — most of whom took up arms only after the regime started killing civilians — are buying weapons with funds from Syrians abroad and from Arab Gulf countries.

So what, if anything, should the United States do?

What we should not do, despite Sen. John McCain's pleas, is establish no-fly

zones protected by U.S. air power. The Arizona Republican neglects to say that setting up such zones would require U.S. warplanes to bomb Damascus in order to take out Syrian air defenses that are supplied by Moscow. Washington would have no backing from the U.N. Security Council, and no likely support from NATO. Even Mitt Romney — despite his constant critiques of President Obama's foreign policy — rejects this option.

But that does not mean we should do nothing, even though this is the position of many on both sides of the aisle.

A long, drawn-out sectarian civil war in Syria that pits rebellious Sunnis against Assad's Shiite sect will destabilize the region — and provide a new haven for Islamist jihadis. If funding and arming the rebels is left entirely to Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the opposition will become dominated by Islamists and will continue to fragment.

Here is where the United States can play a critical role.

Syrian activist Amr Al-Azm, a history professor at Shawnee State University, says Washington should be far more active in influencing which rebel groups get funding. "Right now you have a vacuum and anyone can jump in and set themselves up as warlords," says Al-Azm, the son of the famous Syrian philosopher and fighter for intellectual freedom Sadiq Al-Azm.

Al-Azm, and other non-Islamist activists, would like to see Washington channel funds from its allies to responsible fighting groups within Syria, and help them set up organizational structures — like provincial military councils.

The issue is not so much who buys the weapons, says Al-Azm, but "how to get some

control over what is flowing in and how [the weapons] are used."

This will require Washington to get our Arab allies to agree on a strategy for arming the rebels, who need help with intelligence and communications, along with antitank and antiaircraft weapons. It also means the CIA will need far better intelligence about what is going on inside Syria.

A more proactive strategy might convince Syrians — and Putin — that Washington is serious about wanting Assad gone, which could lead to more and bigger defections within Syria's military. "Putin understands the West has no stomach for a fight," says Al-Azm. "If the West puts its feet down, Putin might think differently."

The Annan plan was Plan A, and it's over. It's time for the White House to adopt Plan B.

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June 24, 2012

Pg. 23

35. Annan's Syrian Gamble

By Jim Hoagland

GENEVA--Kofi Annan must strike a deal with the devil to end the sickening atrocities being committed by the Syrian army. But the devil Annan has in mind is Vladimir Putin, not Bashar al-Assad.

That is what Annan, whom I first met in Africa four decades ago, seeks to achieve by pursuing a desperate strategy centered on the Russian president-in-perpetuity.

The former U.N. secretary general is no naive Boy Scout who believes in Assad's worthless promises. He is prolonging his stymied U.N. peace-making mission to give Assad enough rope to hang himself.

That is, Annan awaits the moment when not even Putin will be able to stomach the shame of aiding and abetting the crimes against humanity being ordered by his protege in Damascus. (It is through the Syrian massacres that Assad has become Putin's Man in Damascus. The televised image of Russia's U.N. ambassador voting repeatedly to block pressure on Assad establishes a link in history that would not otherwise exist.)

There are times when, as degrading as it is, you have to deal with devils. But you must be sure that your devil can deliver. That is, I think, where the bet by my friend Annan will go wrong. Even if Putin would — a huge if — I doubt he could force Assad to give up power to save the regime his Alawite clan runs.

This is the "Yemeni variant," named after the strategy the United States employed in helping to push Ali Abdullah Saleh out of the presidency in February. The most intricate refinement I have heard would have the United States and Russia agree on a list of acceptable Syrian generals to take power. The generals would promise a new constitution and elections to make peace with opponents they have been systematically murdering for 18 months.

But Putin's grip on power is eroding at home as his economy stumbles. He shows no sign of knowing what to do about it. And for all the disappointments and shortcomings of President Obama's foreign policy record, it looks commanding next to the absence of serious Russian initiatives in world politics for a decade. No one listens seriously to Putin on international affairs. Not even blood-stained dictators who use his country's weapons to stay in power.

Nor Iranian ayatollahs pursuing their nuclear ambitions.

It is either Annan's sense of desperation, or of historical irony, that has brought him to the Putin variant. The desperation would spring from two brutal realities that are now clear:

*Assad is personally in charge of the bloody campaign of atrocities. His internal position is too weak for him to have allowed anyone else to take charge. His departure for Moscow is essential to ending the killing.

*The United States, Europe, Turkey and the Arab League will not intervene militarily to stay Assad's murderous hand by enforcing the principle of the international community's Responsibility to Protect, applied with great effect in Libya. (Turkey is the key actor in determining whether humanitarian intervention could succeed in neighboring Syria. But the civilian government in Ankara does not trust the loyalty of its army enough to give it important new responsibilities.)

The burial of the Responsibility to Protect in the ruins of Homs and Idlib would be a serious blow to Annan's reputation. He was instrumental in getting the United Nations to adopt the principle in 2007 that states could not gravely abuse their own citizens with impunity.

"Kofi will not go on forever providing cover for others," a European diplomat here told me. "His resignation would allow the world to see very clearly what Russia is doing — and what the United States is not doing — that makes them both complicit in the killing of a nation. But he also knows resignation is a gun with only one bullet."

As for the irony that may underlie the Putin variant:

The Russian is an expert in counterrevolution, which Assad wages with brutality. It was Putin who unraveled the Russian revolution of 1990, which seemed to herald a new era of constantly expanding freedom for the world's oppressed.

Instead, counterrevolution has become the dominant political force of our time, as events in Ukraine, Belarus, Yemen, Egypt and Syria demonstrate. While Tunisia and Libya remain unfinished works in political transformation, authoritarian regimes elsewhere have reemerged to dim or extinguish the liberties revolution had promised.

For every action there is reaction, in politics as well as physics. Syria's brave opposition is underlining that universal law in blood for all with eyes to see. The most significant accomplishment of Annan's mission may well be determined by when, and how, he decides to end it.

Jim Hoagland is a contributing editor to The Post.

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June 24, 2012
Pg. SR13

36. Not-So-Crazy In Tehran

By Nicholas D. Kristof

TEHRAN--WHEN I decided to bring two of my kids with me on a reporting trip to Iran, the consensus was that I must be insane. And that someone should call Child Protective Services!

That anxiety reflects a view that Iran is the 21st century's Crazy Country, a menace to civilization. That view also animates the hawks who believe that only a military option can stop Iran.

Look, I have no illusions about Iran. On my last trip here, in 2004, I was detained

and accused of being a spy for Mossad or the C.I.A. I've talked to people who have been brutally tortured. I think that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapons capacity and that, if it were to deploy those weapons, this would be a huge and possibly fatal blow to global antiproliferation efforts.

But we need a dollop of humility and nuance, for Iran is a complex country where we've repeatedly stumbled badly. For starters, consider for a moment which nation assisted Iran the most in the last dozen years. Not Russia, not China, not India. No, it was the United States under President George W. Bush. First, we upended the Taliban in Afghanistan, Iran's enemy to the east, and then removed the Saddam Hussein government from Iraq, Iran's even deadlier threat to the west. Look at the Iraq-Iran relationship today, and it seems we fought a wrenching war in Iraq — and Iran won.

Now we may be heading for another war — perhaps triggered by Israeli strikes on Iranian nuclear sites — and this might well help the ayatollahs as well by igniting a nationalist backlash that would bolster their rule.

On my road trip across Iran, the regime seemed on the defensive, its base corroding. In Mashhad, I interviewed a grand ayatollah, Sayid Muhammad Baqer Shirazi, and he didn't want to talk about politics at all. That seemed to me an acknowledgment that the regime now sometimes embarrasses even the mullahs who created it.

Americans think of Iran as a police state, but that overstates its control: Iranians are irrepressible. While interviewing people on a lovely Caspian Sea beach, a plainclothes policeman hustled forward. At first, I thought

that the young woman I was interviewing was in trouble for criticizing the regime — but, no, her sin was rolling up her sleeves.

The policeman shouted at her. She shouted at him. Neither was intimidated. Finally, she covered her forearms a bit more, and he accepted a truce.

The confrontation was a reminder that Iran is a complex and contradictory country, in ways that don't register at a distance. Iran imprisons more journalists than any other country, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, yet it has a vigorous Parliament and news media with clashing views (within a narrow range). Some ethnic Turks seek to secede and join Azerbaijan, but the country's supreme leader is an ethnic Turk. Iran's regime sometimes embraces anti-Semitism, yet Parliament has a Jewish member.

Iranians gripe about their government without worrying about being overheard, yet participants in protests are tortured, gays can be executed and the Bahai religious minority endures mind-boggling repression. Iranian women constitute almost 60 percent of university students and hold important positions in the country, yet, under a new law, a woman can't even go skiing without a male guardian.

My daughter dressed primly in a head scarf and manteau because the police sometimes haul off women who are insufficiently covered (not foreigners, usually, but still). Iranian women we met spent their time helpfully rearranging her scarf.

"She has much better hijab than most girls these days," one matron told us approvingly, even as she tugged it over a few escapee strands of hair.

Elsewhere, young women told my daughter to be more revealing. "Come on, you're young," declared one young woman, and she pulled the head scarf back so that it covered almost nothing. "Show it!"

We sometimes think that Iran's leaders are impervious to public opinion, but women's clothing reflects social pressures that have led them to back off in some areas. Women are still required to cover themselves, but many women in Tehran do so with gauzy, come-hither scarfs rigged to blow off in the slightest breeze.

Hard-liners shudder, but they have long since given up flogging women for bad hijab. In some areas, the regime can evolve.

We can't do much to nurture progress in Iran, but promoting Internet freedom, shortwave news broadcasts and satellite television all would help. A war would hurt.

Our long-term aim should be the kind of "grand bargain," however unlikely, that some Iranian officials floated in 2003 to resolve all issues between our countries.

Iran looks childish when it calls America the "Great Satan" or blusters "Death to America." Let's not bluster back or operate on caricatures. And let's not choose bombs over sanctions and undercut the many Iranians who are chipping away at hard-line rule in tiny ways — even by flashing their hair.

McClatchy Newspapers
(mclatchydc.com)
June 23, 2012

37. More Fighting With Enemy Swords

By Ben Barber

A few days ago I felt like I stepped on a land mine.

I wrote an article suggesting that to defeat some

of the terrorists stalking us and our allies around the world we may have to borrow their methods of fighting and arm insurgent groups to harass governments like Iran that threaten us.

I was swamped by negative messages from friends I deeply respect — people who have spent years in the field as diplomats, journalists or soldiers.

One said "we don't do that — it's not who we are."

Another said that when we arm insurgent groups we may create monsters that we cannot control.

Others said that by arming the Afghan mujahideen against the Soviets in the 1980s, we created the al Qaida and Taliban forces we are fighting today.

I was taken aback by the reaction at first. Then I saw how widespread it was and decided to rethink what I was trying to get at.

My primary question I hoped to answer was "how to we deal with terrorists that bomb planes and churches and hotels and hospitals?" Who has an answer?

For many years, we've tried working with armed intervention, drones, diplomacy, foreign aid and training local governments. We've applied pressure on international banks and shipping to halt supplies of weapons materials. But we have often failed to deter the bad guys because of the asymmetric aspect of guerrilla and insurgent/religious warfare. Suicide bombers are difficult to stop and, powerful weapons render dozens or even hundreds of people vulnerable to a single man with an AK-47 submachine gun or a truck with explosives.

So I thought about using the techniques of the terrorists and their supporters to defeat them. For example, Iran has been sending rockets to Hamas

and Hezbollah to attack Israel. To respond, we could support Iran's ethnic minorities such as Kurds, Baluchis and the 20 million Azaris. On June 21 in the New York Times, columnist Nick Kristof wrote: "that sense of hopelessness has led some young Iranians of ethnic Turkish origin to favor seceding and joining Azerbaijan." Why not hurry that along?

And the lead article in that paper was that the CIA is "steering arms to Syrian rebels."

If we look at the past we find that we have done this many times — sometimes successfully and other times not.

*When Serbian troops slaughtered thousands of people as Yugoslavia broke up in a civil war in 1991, they were stopped only after the United States sent arms and advisors to help the Croats defeat Serb forces. I saw the defeated Serb soldiers in Vukovar, bitter at the U.S. intervention. But the United States did not send weapons to help Bosnia's Muslims defend themselves and thousands died as a result.

*After the attacks on New York and the Pentagon on 9/11, al Qaida and its Taliban backers were driven from power in Afghanistan when U.S. forces provided money, weapons and air power to the Northern Alliance, a Tajik insurgent group.

*When the Soviet army occupied Afghanistan in 1979, U.S. weapons and other aid helped Mujahideen fighters drive out the Soviets. The Afghan War led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of communism. Because we did not stick around afterwards, we left a civil war to simmer. The Taliban took power with Pakistani help and al Qaida was born.

*Vietnam rightfully drove out the Khmer Rouge from Cambodia in 1979. But it wrongfully remained as occupiers. So U.S. aid to guerrilla forces on the Thai border helped push Vietnam out and restore Cambodian independence.

*When al Qaida set up terrorist control over western Iraq, torturing many in secret prisons in 2005 and 2006, U.S. forces allied with Sunni tribal leaders to defeat al Qaida and set up local militias that restored some tribal authority.

There are many other examples of U.S. forces helping or using guerrilla forces to achieve positive outcomes. We helped Serb partisans and the French resistance fight Nazi Germany. U.S. aid helped largely Christian Southern Sudan gain independence from the mainly Arab and Muslim north.

India also engaged in what it saw as positive intervention when it helped rebels in East Pakistan in 1971 to create the independent nation of Bangla Desh. But India failed when it backed Tamil separatists in Sri Lanka who then refused to lay down their arms and fought both the Indians and the Sri Lankans for years.

And does anyone remember the Spanish Civil War in which thousands of Americans fought with Spaniards against Franco's fascists only to be bombed into submission by Nazi Germany's warplanes.

The sword of supporting rebels can cut two ways -- it can stir up hatred and violence to undermine legitimate national governments, or it can help overthrow repressive regimes. It is up to those who provide such aid to carefully consider the consequences, to try and remain engaged long enough for

some solution – negotiated or otherwise – to be reached.

Certainly we accept that terrible things will happen when people rise up against repressive governments. But what is our role to be? Do we stand by and let Bashar Assad slaughter 14,000 more Syrians?

When the Hutus slaughtered 800,000 Tutsis in Rwanda as they did in 1994, were we right to stand by and do nothing?

Some of my critics say the worst thing is U.S. intervention – we should not interfere in other countries. Do they mean leave the Tutsis to their fate? The Burmese Karens? The South Sudan Christians? The Tibetans?

Is the United States the “reluctant sheriff” as analyst Richard Haass has written? Is the powerful U.S. military and its shadowy arms such as intelligence and drones the only court of last resort in an otherwise dog-eat-dog world order?

The United Nations has lately been debating the theory known as “Responsibility to Protect” – it seeks to define the line we cross when the world community must intervene. I find it a bit ludicrous that this is still under debate 60 years after the U.N. was created precisely because of the failure to prevent the Holocaust. My father's own native land Czechoslovakia was handed over to Nazi Germany as an act of British-French appeasement.

But despite the U.N. and international consensus that we must never again allow genocide and similar repression to take place, most nations are unwilling to act and send our sons and daughters into harm's way unless our interests are directly affected.

So the final question my article asks is this: can violence be a cure for violence?

Unfortunately, the answer is sometimes “yes.” And those are the moments when we must accept the dangers and act responsibly.

About the writer

Ben Barber has written about the developing world since 1980 for Newsday, the London Observer, the Christian Science Monitor, Salon.com, Foreign Affairs, the Washington Times and USA TODAY. From 2003 to August, 2010, he was senior writer at the U.S. foreign aid agency. His photojournalism book — GROUNDTRUTH: The Third World at Work at play and at war — is to be published in 2012 by de-MO.org.

Washington Post

June 24, 2012

Pg. B3

38. Vietnam Still Lurks In The Situation Room

Journalist James Mann on how three generations see the world differently

Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, was seeking to describe what makes the Obama administration's foreign policy distinct from that of its predecessors - not just the George W. Bush administration, but also the Democrats of the Bill Clinton years.

Her comments hinged on the Vietnam War. “We just don't have that Vietnam hangover,” Rice told me in an interview last year. “It is not the framework for every decision - or any decision, for that matter. I'm sick and tired of reprising all of the traumas and the battles and the psychoses of the 1960s.”

With every president and administration, journalists and analysts embark on a quest to identify a doctrine or set of principles defining the group's foreign policy. Are

they realists? Internationalists? Neocons? Do they go it alone or lead from behind?

But to understand the Obama administration's approach to the world, it helps to think in generational terms, not foreign policy slogans. Rice's remarks highlight the twists and turns that the Democratic Party has taken over the past four decades, and how the interplay of three generations has shaped the Obama administration's views on the use of force and America's role in the world, as well as on specific challenges ranging from Afghanistan to China.

The first, eldest cadre of Democrats is the post-Vietnam generation: those foreign policy hands who started their careers in the 1960s, '70s or '80s. Next come the post-Cold War Democrats, who began working on foreign policy during Clinton's administration. The third and youngest group, which I call the Obamians, is made up of post-Iraq war Democrats - the president and some of his closest aides, who did not become involved in the execution of U.S. foreign policy until 2009.

In conversations with members of all three groups, Vietnam is a recurring symbol. “The president's conception of power is not founded on Vietnam. He's the first president who's not trying to justify himself in the context of that very tumultuous period,” asserted deputy national security adviser Denis McDonough, who has worked alongside Barack Obama since his first presidential campaign.

Obama is not the first Democratic leader to define himself as transcending Vietnam. At least since the 1980s, many of the party's political candidates (think Clinton or Gary Hart) have

portrayed themselves in that way. Yet in the somewhat self-serving logic of the Obamians, those earlier Democrats were still influenced by the war: They reacted against it by trying to prove that they were tough and willing to use force - that they were not like the antiwar Democrats of the Vietnam era.

In 2010, I asked a couple of Obama's close aides about their party's political vulnerability on national security. I had in mind the defeats of Democrats such as George McGovern and Michael Dukakis, whom Republicans portrayed as weak on defense. But the aides' answer was surprising: "Oh yes, we call it the 2002 problem," one of them said.

Why 2002? That was the year Democratic leaders in Congress voted to authorize Bush to use force in Iraq. The senior Democrats' acquiescence became the Obamians' formative foreign policy experience. In fact, in 2008 the Obama campaign attacked the more experienced Democrats of Hillary Rodham Clinton's team by linking her to Bush's unpopular war.

Indeed, Obama and some of his young aides can validly claim to be the first administration not affected by Vietnam. Obama is the first president in the modern era who neither served in the military nor was subject to the draft. His two immediate predecessors, Bush and Bill Clinton, were questioned during their campaigns about their draft record or military service. But Obama was 13 when American troops came home, and several of his close aides were even younger. They took as a given the existence of the volunteer professional army; the military is to them a constituency, not an emotional tug.

The embodiment of the oldest generation, the initial post-Vietnam generation, was the late Richard Holbrooke, Obama's special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. One administration official told me that during discussions on Afghanistan, when Holbrooke talked about the lessons of Vietnam, others in the room sat there rolling their eyes. When he cooperated with a New Yorker magazine profile tracing his career from Vietnam to Afghanistan, McDonough called him to the White House and chewed him out. The comparison between Afghanistan and Vietnam was not one that Obama found helpful.

The administration has included several other members of the post-Vietnam generation, such as Vice President Biden, former White House counsel Greg Craig, former director of national intelligence Dennis Blair and former Middle East envoy George Mitchell.

During the Vietnam era, such men did not embrace the antiwar left; most of them sought to counteract it. But in doing so, they struggled to cope with a widespread mistrust of American power and a sense of national decline. In one mid-1970s article in *Foreign Policy* magazine, Holbrooke denounced "the Vietnam-based, guilt-ridden anguish of the left" and debunked the idea "that because America has done some evil things, America itself is an evil force in the world."

This generation took a variety of lessons from the war - above all, how an ill-considered, open-ended military intervention can lead to disaster. This constant reminder has not always been welcome among the Obamians, though, particularly when the team was deciding to send additional forces to Afghanistan or to

dispatch warplanes over Libya. No surprise that the post-Vietnam generation has often been marginalized or isolated within the Obama team, with Biden a notable exception.

The post-Vietnam era came to a close in 1991 with America's victory in the Persian Gulf War and the Soviet Union's collapse. Soon a new generation of Democrats rose through the Clinton administration ranks at the State Department, the Pentagon and the National Security Council. They were, on the whole, more confident of American power and prosperity than the post-Vietnam Democrats. They felt little need to prove that the United States was a force for good in the world. The question preoccupying them was not whether the nation had the right and the power to send forces overseas, but whether and where this power should be used (Somalia? Bosnia? Haiti?).

After Clinton left the White House, these second-generation Democrats argued - in books, op-eds and study groups - that the party should recognize the continuing relevance of military power. "Force should never be used as a first choice, but in some cases it may need to be used sooner rather than later, particularly when innocent lives are at stake or when grave dangers are emerging," wrote several prominent officials from the Clinton administration in a study group called the Phoenix Initiative.

The title of a book co-authored by Kurt Campbell, one of these second-generation Democrats, captured the spirit in two words: "Hard Power."

When he came to the White House, Obama needed experienced people to fill foreign policy jobs, and the Clinton veterans were ready and waiting. Several returned to office under Obama,

including Tom Donilon, now national security adviser; Antony Blinken, the vice president's top foreign policy adviser; Michele Flournoy, Obama's former undersecretary of defense; Campbell, the assistant secretary of state for East Asia; and James Steinberg, the former deputy secretary of state.

Over his years in office, Obama has evolved and now is running for reelection as something of a Hard Power Democrat, highlighting his prowess in the use of force. Still, generational differences persist between the Obamians and the Clinton alums. For example, Bill Clinton and his secretary of state Madeleine Albright spoke of America as the "indispensable nation." As secretary of state under Obama, Hillary Clinton has offered similar themes. "The United States can, must and will lead in this new century," she said in a 2010 speech.

But when Obama's younger aides talk about America's role in the world, there is a subtle recognition that its post-World War II dominance may not last forever. "We're not trying to preside over America's decline," deputy national security adviser and Obama speechwriter Ben Rhodes observed in an interview. "What we're trying to do is to get America another 50 years as leader."

The distance between the Obamians and the post-Vietnam generation endures, too. In theory, the Vietnam experience is relevant to some of the problems the Obama administration confronts - for example, in negotiating with the Taliban while seeking to withdraw forces from Afghanistan.

But on the whole, the Obama Democrats don't want to think about Vietnam. It was

the preoccupation of an earlier generation, one that they see as having dominated American foreign policy for too long.

Rice recalled her exasperation when she worked for John Kerry's presidential campaign. "What frustrated me about the 2004 campaign was, there we were, relitigating 'Where were you in nineteen sixty-whatever?' as the big freaking issue between Bush and Kerry - you know, 'Did you serve, did you not serve, what did your swift boat brothers think?' " she said. "And I'm thinking, 'What does that have to do with me and the world we're living in today?'"

James Mann is author in residence at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. This article is adapted from his new book, "The Obamians: The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine American Power."

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39. The Cool War

Technology has made conflict cheaper, safer and faster--and the world is better for it.

By John Arquilla

"It is well that war is so terrible," Confederate General Robert E. Lee once said, "lest we should grow too fond of it." For him, and generations of military leaders before and since, the carnage and other costs of war have driven a sense of reluctance to start a conflict, or even to join one already in progress.

Caution about going to war has formed a central aspect of the American public character. George Washington worried about being drawn into foreign wars through what Thomas Jefferson later called "entangling alliances." John Quincy Adams admonished Americans not to "go abroad in search of monsters to destroy."

Their advice has generally been followed. Even when it came to helping thwart the adventurer-conquerors who started the 20th century's world wars, the United States stayed out of both from the outset, entering only when dragged into them.

This pattern briefly changed during the Cold War, with the launching of military interventions in Korea and Vietnam. The former was fought to a bloody draw; the latter turned into a costly debacle. Both were quite "terrible," costing tens of thousands of American lives and untold treasure — nearly 100,000 lives and trillions of dollars — reaffirming Lee's reservations.

Operation Desert Storm — a lopsided win against a weak opponent in Iraq — seemed to break the pattern, ushering in President George H.W. Bush's "new world order." But the military experiments in regime change begun by his son — an unexpectedly long and bloody slog through Iraq and Afghanistan — reawakened traditional concerns about going to war, propelling Barack Obama to the presidency and energizing Ron Paul's support within the GOP.

Even Obama's "intervention-lite" in Libya proved unsatisfying, unleashing much suffering and uncertainty about the future of that sad land. And a furious debate rages about the practical and ethical value of drone bombing campaigns and "targeted killing" of our enemies — due in part to the deaths of innocents caught up in these attacks, but also because of the possibility of fomenting rabidly anti-American sentiments, perhaps even revolution, in places like nuclear-armed Pakistan.

But now, somehow, it seems that war may no longer seem so terrible.

How has this come to pass? The culprit is the bits and bytes that are the principal weapons of cyberwar. It is now possible to intervene swiftly and secretly anywhere in the world, riding the rails of the global information infrastructure to strike at one's enemies. Such attacks can be mounted with little risk of discovery, as the veil of anonymity that cloaks the virtual domain is hard to pierce. And even when "outed," a lack of convincing forensic evidence to finger the perpetrator makes heated denials hard to disprove.

Beyond secrecy, there is also great economy. The most sophisticated cyberweaponry can be crafted and deployed at a tiny fraction of the cost of other forms of intervention. No aircraft carriers needed, no "boots on the ground" to be shot at or blown up by IEDs. Instead, there is just a dimly lit war room where hacker-soldiers click for their country, and the hum of air conditioners keeping powerful computers from overheating. Cool room, cool war.

The early returns seem to suggest the great efficacy of this new mode of conflict. For example, the Stuxnet worm, a complex program of ones and zeros, infected a sizable proportion of Iran's several thousand centrifuges, commanding them to run at higher and higher speeds until they broke. All this went on while Iranian technicians tried fruitlessly to stop the attack. The result: a serious disruption of Tehran's nuclear enrichment capabilities — and possibly of a secret proliferation program.

The sabotage occurred without any missile strikes or commando raids. And, for now, without any open acknowledgment

of responsibility, although reporters and others have pointed their fingers at the United States and Israel. It is loose lips in high places, not sophisticated "back hacking," that seem to have divulged the secret of Stuxnet.

Another example of the looming cool war is the malicious software known as Flame, which sought information via cybersnooping from target countries in the Middle East. The code that constitutes it seems to make the point that we no longer need physical agents in place if we can now rely on artificially intelligent agents to dredge up the deepest secrets. There will be no new John le Carr to chronicle this era's spies. Not when the closest thing to George Smiley is a few lines of source code.

Beyond Stuxnet-like "cybotage" and software-driven spying, the coming cool war might also influence whether some traditional wars are even going to break out. The good news is that a preemptive cyberattack on the military command-and-control systems of two countries getting ready to fight a "real war" might give each side pause before going into the fight. In this instance, the hackers mounting such attacks should probably publicize their actions — perhaps even under U.N. auspices — lest the disputants think it was the enemy who had crippled their forces, deepening their mutual antagonism. There are no doubt some risks in having a third party mount a preemptive cyberattack of this sort — but the risks are acceptable when weighed against the chance of averting a bloody war.

The other potential upside of cool war capabilities, in addition to tamping down military crises between nations,

would lie in multilateral tracking of transnational criminal and terrorist networks. These villains thrive in the virtual wilderness of cyberspace, and it is about time that they were detected, tracked, and disrupted. Think of Interpol, or an international intelligence alliance, using something like Flame to get inside a drug cartel's communications network. Or al-Qaeda's. The potential for illuminating these dark networks — and bringing them to justice — is great and should not be forgone.

On balance, it seems that cyberwar capabilities have real potential to deal with some of the world's more pernicious problems, from crime and terrorism to nuclear proliferation. In stark contrast to pitched battles that would regularly claim thousands of young soldiers' lives during Robert E. Lee's time, the very nature of conflict may come to be reshaped along more humane lines of operations. War, in this sense, might be "made better" — think disruption rather than destruction. More decisive, but at the same time less lethal.

Against these potential benefits, one must also weigh the key downside of an era of cyberconflict: the outbreak of a Hobbesian "war of all against all." This possibility was first considered back in 1979 by the great science-fiction writer Frederik Pohl, whose dystopian "The Cool War" — a descriptor that might end up fitting our world all too well — envisioned a time when virtually every nation fielded small teams of hit men and women. Their repertoires included launching computer viruses to crash stock markets and other nefarious, disruptive capabilities.

In Pohl's novel, the world system is battered by waves of social distrust, economic

malaise and environmental degradation. Only the rebellion of a few cool warriors — some, but not all, were hacker types — at the end, offers a glimmer of hope for a way out and a way ahead.

The question that confronts us today is whether to yield to the attractions of cyberwar. We have come out of one of mankind's bloodiest centuries, and are already in an era in which wars are smaller — if still quite nasty. Now we have the chance to make even these conflicts less lethal. And in reality, there may be no option. Once the first network or nation takes this path — as some observers believe the United States is doing — others will surely follow, starting a new arms race, this time not in weaponry, but in clandestine and devastating programs like Stuxnet and the Flame virus.

It is a curious irony that the United States, a power traditionally reluctant to go to war but furious in its waging, is now seemingly shifting gears. It is becoming a nation with the capability to go to war easily, while at the same time far less ferociously. Is this an improvement? Perhaps. Delaying Iranian proliferation with bits and bytes seems far superior to the costs and risks that would be incurred, and the human suffering inflicted, by trying to achieve such effects with bombs and bullets.

But looking ahead, how will Americans respond when others begin to employ cyber means to achieve their ends, perhaps even by attacking us? After all, Stuxnet escaped from that Iranian facility into the wild, and is certainly being studied, reverse engineered and tweaked by many around the world. No country may be foolish enough to engage the incomparable U.S. military in open battle, but we seem like

fairly easy pickings to the computer mice that may soon roar.

Despite all these concerns, though, a Cool War world will be a better place to live in than its Cold War predecessor. Yes, conflict will continue in the years to come, but it will morph in ways that make our self-destruction as a civilization less likely — even if it means living with occasional disruptions to vulnerable high-tech systems.

The bargain made when "cyber" and "war" came together need not turn out to be Faustian. This story can still have a happy ending: As war becomes "cooler," mankind's future may edge a bit closer to the utopian end that all of us, secretly or not so secretly, truly desire.

John Arquilla is professor and chair in the department of defense analysis at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, and author, most recently, of "Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits."

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Pg. 23

40. What's Behind A Leak

By David Ignatius

It's hard for a journalist to be objective on the subject of leaks, a bit like asking a lawyer if he thinks litigation is a good method for resolving disputes. People in the news business always have a bias toward more information, even on sensitive subjects involving intelligence policy.

So the reader should discount for my inherent bias in favor of informing the public, and of the process that leads to disclosure — namely, leaks.

We are in a new debate about leaks, flowing mainly from David Sanger's new book, "Confront and Conceal," which

is largely about the Obama administration's covert actions. (The reader should be aware of another personal bias: Sanger is a friend, even though he regularly beats the rest of us in breaking big stories.) What motivates critics is their belief that President Obama's advisers deliberately leaked secrets.

Actually, it's more than a belief; Sanger pretty much says it outright. In a concluding "note on sources," he explains: "Almost every senior member of the president's national security team was generous enough to sit down and talk through their experiences, some more than once." Sanger says that concerning his most sensitive revelations, about "Olympic Games," the code name for a U.S.-Israeli cyberwarfare assault against Iran, "both American and foreign sources demanded complete anonymity." Maybe so, but in reading the book we can guess who some of the key informants may have been.

Let me offer three cautionary comments — not to minimize the issue of national-security leaks, but to note some realities understood by every journalist working in this area, which may not be clear to the public.

My first caution is that when it comes to national-security leaks, every administration does it. Reading Sanger's book (and his coverage in the New York Times) it was obvious that he learned many important secrets about cyberattacks against Iran during the George W. Bush administration, as well as during the Obama administration.

Among the sensational Bush-era revelations: The cyberwar against Iran originated in 2006, when Bush complained to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

and national security adviser Stephen Hadley that his choices about the Iranian nuclear program were to either bomb it or accept it. "I need a third option," Bush told them repeatedly." Sanger says Bush was later convinced the cyberattack would work when, after elaborate testing of mock-ups, he "saw the remnants of a destroyed centrifuge."

Sanger also reveals that, during his last year in office, Bush was briefed on a plan to sabotage Iran's secret nuclear facility outside Qom by planting hidden equipment in the cement pads that would seal the entrance. This would have involved a risky insertion of special operations forces, and "Bush balked," according to Sanger.

Anyone doubting that the previous administration authorized national-security leaks need only consult the four excellent Bush books by my Post colleague Bob Woodward. There are "secrets" on nearly every page, and the Bush White House has confirmed that in some instances, the president cooperated and instructed others to do the same. When the 9/11 commission was battling over declassification of material, one member recalls preparing a tabbed version of Woodward's "Bush at War," to illustrate how much had already been leaked.

My second caution is that good reporters start by assembling stories in bits and pieces. When they have enough, they go to high-level sources in the White House or elsewhere and say: I've got the story and I'm planning to run it, whether you cooperate or not. Sometimes this is a bluff, but administrations usually decide it's best to help the journalist get it right. The stories come to them pre-cooked, in other

words, rather than being dished out from scratch.

Sanger offers a frank explanation of how this works in describing his September 2009 scoop about an Iranian letter disclosing the Qom facility: "The issue was too classified to discuss, I was told. Well, I said, it wouldn't be in a few hours, after we wrote a story describing the Iranian letter and the secret facility." Top National Security Council sources duly cooperated.

The final caution is that journalists do query government officials before publishing secrets, and they often agree to withhold particularly sensitive details. The disclosures in Sanger's book are remarkable, but I suspect it's equally amazing what he had but didn't publish, as he says, "at the government's request, and in consultation with editors."

Why do people confide these wiring-diagram details, which even reporters recognize sometimes shouldn't be in print? That is one of life's great mysteries.

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Pg. 22

41. Stuck On Syria

As the Obama administration debates what to do, the country's collapse looms larger.

NOT FOR the first time, the debate about Syria in Washington is being overtaken by developments on the ground. For months the Obama administration has been resisting proposals that it support the creation of safe zones for the Syrian opposition or supply the rebels with arms. Yet now reporting from inside Syria, including by Western journalists, shows that big pieces of territory have already been taken over by opposition

groups and that significant quantities of weapons are flowing to their fighters.

While the regime of Bashar al-Assad continues to control large cities and maintains outposts elsewhere, the opposition dominates much of the countryside, according to a new report by Joseph Holliday of the Institute for the Study of War. The largest of the liberated areas, he says, extends from Syria's northwestern border with Turkey to the main north-south highway between Damascus and Aleppo, and south to the outskirts of the central city of Hama. Government forces that have tried to penetrate the area have been met with roadside bombs, volleys of rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns mounted on trucks.

The growing rebel strength is welcome news, because it suggests that the Assad regime will not be able to restore its control over the country by force. But it raises new problems for those who seek to prevent Syria from tumbling into chaos or a sectarian war that spreads to its neighbors. Though able to hold onto rural territory, the rebels appear far from being able to challenge the regime's control over Damascus or other cities — which suggests that the war could drag on for months or years. The Assad army, meanwhile, is resorting to more extreme measures of force: It recently began deploying helicopter gunships.

Mr. Holliday counted some 300 armed rebel groups with an estimated 40,000 fighters. Though some are organized under provincial commands, it's not clear that any are able to impose order on the ground they control, even as government structures disappear. In effect, the Syrian state is collapsing

even as the Assad regime and the military and militia units loyal to it fight on. So far there is nothing to replace it.

Following the entirely predictable failure of a U.N. peace mission, the Obama administration is working on an initiative to obtain international agreement on the terms of an eventual Syrian transition, including Mr. Assad's departure from Syria and free elections. If it can be reached, such an accord could eventually prove useful, but it doesn't address the rapidly changing situation in Syria. What's needed is an aggressive effort to shape and support the emerging rebel organizations, aimed at helping them to consolidate control over territory, communicate with each other and establish governing structures.

The Obama administration should also be asking itself and its allies whether it can speed the rebels' military development; the longer the war lasts, the greater the chance that extremists will win. And it should consider what it will do if, as can be expected, the Assad regime mounts major new offensives against the rebel enclaves, using aircraft and unleashing the militias that have been committing massacres. To remain passive in such an instance should not be an option.

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Pg. 10

42. Settle Army's Makua Issue

The legal battle between the Army and community activists over Makua Valley is surely not over yet, but this week, there was hope that the clock may finally be running out.

U.S. District Judge Susan Oki Mollway has for years refereed this standoff over whether the Army could resume live-fire training at Makua, though it has managed its training operations without that option for eight years.

In 2010, the judge ruled that the Army's environmental impact statement, prepared at the insistence of plaintiffs Malama Makua, fell short of the mark. On Wednesday, she followed up by ordering quarterly reports updating the court on its progress. Spokesmen for U.S. Army Garrison Hawaii restated its position that its previous submissions were complete but added that staff would be working "diligently" to meet the court's request.

What makes it encouraging that Mollway is holding firm is that her order prolongs the ban on live-fire operations, meaning that more progress can be made on replacement training facilities. Lt. Gen. Francis J. Wiercinski took over the command of U.S. Army Pacific in January 2011; almost exactly a year ago, he said he was determined to keep Makua as an option for live fire in case it was needed.

But that Leeward Oahu option, he said, would be exercised only if the first choice couldn't be met: development and improvements at Schofield Barracks in Central Oahu and Pohakuloa Training Area on Hawaii island.

"I firmly believe that if those things stay on track at Schofield and PTA, we will not have to live fire in Makua," he said then.

The judge was right to insist on the completion of the environmental study before allowing the bullets to fly again. Here are some of its shortcomings:

*The document did not include an adequate study of how the training would affect cultural sites in the valley and Makua Beach limu — seaweed consumed by families that fish in the area.

*The Army did not do any subsurface investigations for the cultural sites, such as ancient burials or other artifacts of the valley's Native Hawaiian history.

*Seaweed from other parts of the island would need to be compared to draw any useful conclusions the arsenic contamination that was detected, and whether the Army's activities were accountable for it.

What should be paramount is the consideration of such damage and, in particular, the disturbance and hazard to residential communities, not only from the firing of ammunition but the increased risk of brush fires. The Army still has not made a persuasive case for ignoring these impacts in favor of keeping a back-pocket alternative site for live-fire training.

It would be far better if the Army would settle with the community once and for all on this issue. Rather than spend further funds on the studies, the ideal course would be to simply refocus its attention and resources on the ongoing upgrades in the two other locations.

Clearly, having well-prepared troops is critical to national security, and Hawaii is poised to play a greater role than ever in the Asia-Pacific region. But balance with community concerns is essential, too, and in the case of Makua Valley, there is a way to achieve both.