

CURRENT NEWS

EARLY BIRD

June 6, 2012

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Item numbers indicate order of appearance only.

PANETTA TRIP

1. **U.S. Seeks Larger Role For India In Afghanistan**
(*Wall Street Journal*)....Julian E. Barnes
The U.S. is encouraging India to take a more-active role in Afghanistan after years of keeping New Delhi's participation limited in deference to Pakistan. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta arrived in New Delhi on Tuesday and attended meetings with Indian Prime minister Manmohan Singh and National Security Adviser Shiv Shankar Menon. On Wednesday, he is due to meet with the defense minister, A.K. Antony, and deliver a speech on the growing U.S.-India partnership.
2. **Panetta Stresses The Importance Of Indian Alliance**
(*Stars and Stripes*)....Jennifer Hlad
In meetings with the prime minister and national security adviser, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta stressed the importance of a partnership with India both for ongoing efforts in Afghanistan and for the United States' new focus on security in the Asia-Pacific region.
3. **India-US Defence Talks To Focus On China, Afghanistan**
(*Yahoo.com*)....Dan De Luce, Agence France-Presse
US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta holds talks Wednesday with his Indian counterpart which are likely to be dominated by NATO's planned exit from Afghanistan and China's growing power.
4. **PM, Panetta Discuss Military Strategy**
(*Economic Times (India)*)....Our Political Bureau
Soon after announcing details of Washington's plans to 'rebalance' its military strategy in Asia-Pacific, US defence secretary Leon Panetta discussed its implications with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh here on Tuesday. The US views India as a vital partner in the Asia-Pacific region.
5. **China Cloud On Indo-US Def Talks**
(*Times of India*)....Times News Network
New Delhi: India and the US on Tuesday began talks to step up their bilateral strategic and defence cooperation, which comes in the backdrop of the drawdown of international security forces from Afghanistan as well as China's growing assertiveness, especially in the South China Sea.

PAKISTAN

6. **U.S. Confirms Al-Qaeda's No. 2 Died In Airstrike**
(*Washington Post*)....Joby Warrick and Greg Miller

Al-Qaeda's No. 2 leader, Abu Yahya al-Libi, the charismatic commander who helped steer the terrorist group after Osama bin Laden's death last year, was killed by a CIA drone strike in Pakistan's lawless frontier region, U.S. officials confirmed Tuesday.

7. **Drone Strike Killed No. 2 In Al Qaeda, U.S. Officials Say**

(New York Times)....Declan Walsh and Eric Schmitt

A Central Intelligence Agency drone strike in Pakistan's tribal belt killed Al Qaeda's deputy leader, Abu Yahya al-Libi, American officials said on Tuesday, dealing another blow to the group in a lawless area that has long been considered the global headquarters of international terrorism but the importance of which may now be slipping.

8. **Afghanistan Withdrawal Fuels Fears In Neighboring Pakistan**

(McClatchy Newspapers (mcclatchydc.com))....Tom Hussain, McClatchy Newspapers

The impending withdrawal of U.S.-led NATO combat troops from Afghanistan is raising worries next door in Pakistan, where a growing number of experts are warning that the forces' departure could reinvigorate a domestic insurgency that Pakistan's military is barely keeping at bay.

9. **US, Pakistan Talks On Supply Lines Continue, Despite NATO Deal**

(DEFCON Hill (TheHill.com))....Carlo Munoz

The United States will continue to pursue negotiations with Islamabad over key supply routes into Afghanistan, despite NATO plans to begin using other routes outside Pakistan, a Defense Department official said on Tuesday.

DEMPSEY TRIP

10. **US Denies Secret Plans For U-Tapao**

(Bangkok Post)....Wassana Nanuam and Thanida Tansubhapol

US Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman General Martin E Dempsey has denied rumours of a hidden Pentagon agenda behind Nasa's use of U-Tapao airport in Rayong as a base to conduct atmospheric studies.

11. **Phil, US To Share Real-Time Info On Security Developments**

(Philippine Star)....Alexis Romero

Philippine and US security officials yesterday vowed to engage in "real-time information sharing" on security developments and reaffirmed their commitment to the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT).

12. **US Troops Can Use Clark, Subic Bases**

(Philippine Star)....Jaime Laude

American troops, warships and aircraft can once again use their former naval and air facilities in Subic, Zambales and in Clark Field in Pampanga as long as they have prior clearance from the Philippine government, a senior defense official said.

AFGHANISTAN

13. **Captured Taliban Bombers Freed After Paying Bribes, Say Americans**

(London Daily Telegraph)....Ben Farmer

Taliban bomb-makers and leaders caught red-handed trying to kill American troops in Afghanistan have been freed without trial after paying off corrupt local officials, officers complain.

14. **Air Combat Uptick In Afghanistan**

(U-T San Diego)....Gretel C. Kovach

Air combat over Afghanistan heated up in May at the start of another summer fighting season, with more weapons releases than the same period last year.

15. **Suicide Bombers Kill 22 Civilians At Afghan Market**

(Yahoo.com)....Mirwais Khan, Associated Press

Two suicide bombers blew themselves up in a market area in southern Afghanistan on Wednesday, killing at least 22 people wounding about 50, authorities said.

16. **Central Asia Group Seeks Bigger Afghanistan Role**

(Yahoo.com)....Associated Press

Central Asian states meeting in Beijing this week say they want a role in stabilizing Afghanistan after most U.S. combat troops leave at the end of 2014, with China's economic juggernaut leading the charge.

ASIA/PACIFIC

17. **Philippine-American Ties Warm Amid South China Sea Dispute**

(Wall Street Journal)....James Hookway and Brian Spegele

Philippine President Benigno Aquino III is scheduled to arrive in the U.S. on Wednesday on a visit to strengthen warming ties between the two countries, even as tensions continue between Manila and Beijing in the contested waters of the South China Sea.

18. **Putin Arrives In China, Seeking Stronger Ties**

(New York Times)....Jane Perlez

The Russian president, Vladimir V. Putin, arrived in China on Tuesday for meetings aimed at strengthening a partnership between the two countries and offsetting the influence of the United States.

19. **NGO Issues Report On US Military**

(Global Times (China))....Deng Jingyin

A military think tank yesterday published its first annual reports on the US' and Japan's military and security developments, in response to an annual US report issued last month, which it said misrepresents China's military development.

MIDEAST

20. **Asia Summit To Debate Nuclear Iran**

(Wall Street Journal)....Brian Spegele and Wayne Ma

Iran's president will attempt to shore up support from Russia and China during a closely watched summit of Central Asia leaders beginning Wednesday in Beijing, just as concerns rise over Tehran's nuclear program.

21. **Iran And Azerbaijan, Already Wary Neighbors, Find Even Less To Agree On**

(New York Times)....David M. Herszenhorn

The perennially tense relationship between Azerbaijan and Iran, wary neighbors on the Caspian Sea, has deteriorated in recent weeks amid deep unease in Tehran over expanding military cooperation between Azerbaijan and Israel.

22. **Gantz: Israel 'Super-Ready' To Attack Iran**

(Jerusalem Post)....Lahav Harkov

Israeli preparedness to attack Iran is a major deterrent, IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Benny Gantz told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday.

23. **Syria Bars 17 Western Diplomats And Allows Increased Aid Agency Presence**

(New York Times)....J. David Goodman And Nick Cumming-Bruce

Syria's Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday that more than a dozen Western ambassadors and envoys were no longer welcome, a response to the coordinated expulsion last week of Syrian diplomats from the United States and 10 other nations.

EUROPE

24. **Clinton, In Georgia, Pledges Military Aid**

(Washington Post)....Reuters

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton pledged U.S. assistance in training pro-Western Georgia's military in coastal defenses and underscored Washington's rejection of Russia's "occupation" of two separatist Georgian regions after a five-day war between Tbilisi and Moscow.

CONGRESS

25. **Senators To Open Inquiry Into 'Kill List' And Iran Security Leaks**
(*New York Times*)....The New York Times
The Senate will investigate recent national security leaks to the news media after articles in The New York Times about a "kill list" for terrorists and the use of cyberweapons against Iran, a Senate official said on Tuesday.
26. **Smith Watches Special Forces At Work**
(*Tacoma News Tribune*)....Adam Ashton
Rep. Adam Smith, D-Tacoma, used his second trip to Africa to visit with a Special Forces contingent helping the Ugandan military track down warlord Joseph Kony.
27. **Deep In Defense Bill, Language To Block Pay Raises**
(*Washington Post*)....Joe Davidson
Developments that strike at the federal workforce have been coming quickly lately.
28. **F-35 Production Quality Worries Senate Panel**
(*Reuters.com*)....Andrea Shalal-Esa, Reuters
The U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday questioned the quality of production on the Lockheed Martin Corp F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, citing a "potentially serious issue" with its electronic warfare capability.

AMERICAS

29. **Latin America Treaty Rejected By 4 Nations**
(*Washington Post*)....Associated Press
Four Latin American countries announced Tuesday that they are pulling out of a regional defense treaty while pressing for changes in the Organization of American States.

ARMY

30. **Army To Review Mental Health Compensation**
(*USA Today*)....Gregg Zoroya
The Army says it will pore through -- in less than 90 days -- about 190,000 medical files of current and former soldiers dating to 2001 to see whether any were shortchanged on retirement compensation for mental health problems.

NAVY

31. **Cost To Repair Fire-Damaged Sub In Maine Set At \$400 Million**
(*Portland (ME) Press Herald*)....David Hench
Navy officials issued a preliminary cost estimate Tuesday of \$400 million to repair the nuclear submarine that burned last month at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery -- if the sub can be fixed at all.

AIR FORCE

32. **'Hometown Girl' Is First Female Four-Star General In Air Force**
(*Dayton Daily News*)....Barrie Barber
Before Gen. Janet C. Wolfenbarger begins overseeing a historic reshaping of the biggest command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, she made a little history herself.
33. **Pentagon: No Air Show**
(*Miami Herald*)....Douglas Hanks
Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has a blunt message for Miami-Dade County: There will be no aviation expo on the Homestead air base.

CYBER SECURITY

34. FBI Probes Leaks On Iran Cyberattack

(*Wall Street Journal*)....Evan Perez and Adam Entous

The FBI has opened an investigation into who disclosed information about a classified U.S. cyberattack program aimed at Iran's nuclear facilities, according to two people familiar with the probe.

MILITARY

35. Ceremonies Hail Grads Headed Into Military

(*USA Today*)....Natalie DiBlasio

Not that long ago, Joshua Stinson's decision to join the Marines wouldn't have gotten big fanfare in his community. But the 18-year-old is one of a growing number of military-bound high school seniors honored in special graduation ceremonies across the nation.

VETERANS

36. Veterans Pension Program Is Being Abused, Report Says

(*New York Times*)....James Dao

A yearlong investigation into a federal pension program for low-income veterans has concluded that weak oversight and unclear rules have made the system ripe for abuse, including by financial planners and lawyers who help well-off retirees qualify for benefits by transferring or hiding assets.

37. 'This Is A Dirty And Cruel War'

(*Columbia (SC) State*)....Andrew Shain

...During an historic visit Monday to the now-reunited Vietnam, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta exchanged a diary taken from a slain North Vietnamese soldier by a Marine for four letters that Flaherty had written but never had the chance to send. It was the first exchange of war artifacts between the two countries, former enemies now looking to expand relations.

WORLD WAR II

38. D-Day Taught 'Inhumanities Of War'

(*USA Today*)....John McAuliff

Richard Main and 160,000 other men stormed the beach at Normandy, France, 68 years ago today. And at the age of 90, the lesson he learned that day is as evident to him now as on D-Day itself.

39. 'Band Of Brothers' Honored On D-Day Anniversary

(*Yahoo.com*)....Associated Press

A statue in the likeness of a Pennsylvania native whose quiet leadership was chronicled in the World War II book and television miniseries "Band of Brothers" is being unveiled near the beaches where the D-Day invasion of France began in 1944.

BOOKS

40. Covert Wars, Waged Virally

(*New York Times*)....Thomas E. Ricks

Is the United States at war with Iran? If David Sanger's account in his new book, "Confront and Conceal," on President Obama's foreign policy, is to be believed -- and I find it very believable -- we certainly are.

BUSINESS

41. Defense Chiefs Signal Job Cuts

(*Wall Street Journal*)....Nathan Hodge

U.S. defense contractors are preparing to disclose mass job cutbacks ahead of November elections if Congress fails to reach a deficit-reduction deal by then, industry officials said.

COMMENTARY

42. **Boastful Babbling A Gift To Our Foes**

(*New York Post*)....Peter Brookes

Last week's media bombshell that we'd infiltrated the Iranian nuclear program with a supersecret computer virus made it undeniable: There's been way too much aired about sensitive US operations over the last year or so. Someone ought to tell Team Obama.

43. **Coaxing Karzai To Reform**

(*Los Angeles Times*)....Christopher J. Fettweis

Deadlines concentrate the mind. Without a little extra incentive and pressure, sometimes nothing gets done.

44. **A New Road Map For Peace In Syria**

(*Washington Post*)....David Ignatius

Kofi Annan is tinkering with a radical idea for reviving his moribund peace plan for Syria -- a road map for political transition there that would be negotiated through a "contact group" that could include, among other nations, Russia and Iran.

45. **It Is Time To Consider The Military Options In Syria**

(*Financial Times*)....Roula Khalaf

The Houla massacre has whipped up a new wave of outrage at the brutality of Syria's dictatorship. More Syrian envoys were kicked out of western capitals, more financial sanctions slapped on the regime in Damascus, and more furious calls for a political transition from Bashar al-Assad issued. So what? Mr Assad is no closer to ceding power than he was a year ago, when the rebellion against him was already raging.

46. **Air-Sea Battle: Clearing The Fog**

(*Armed Forces Journal*)....Capt. Philip DuPree, USN and Col. Jordan Thomas, USAF

the service leads in the multiservice ASB office -- would like to correct them. Let us say at the outset what Air-Sea Battle is not. It is not a strategy, it is not designed to threaten other nations and it is not just the manifestation of traditional joint operations.

47. **Defense Measure Lets President Lock Citizens Up, Indefinitely**

(*USA Today*)....Editorial

Most Americans probably don't think they could be locked up indefinitely without charges or a trial. Surprise: Most Americans are wrong.

48. **Don't Mess With Success**

(*USA Today*)....Mac Thornberry

We are fortunate to have gone more than 10 years without another successful terrorist attack in America, other than the Fort Hood and Little Rock shootings. There are many factors contributing to that success, including the work of our military, intelligence professionals and law enforcement, as well as sheer luck. As we have seen recently, however, foreign terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula have not stopped trying.

49. **Behind The Sea Games**

(*China Daily*)....Editorial

Hawaii is famous for its sun and surf. But it is not for the sunshine that the naval vessels of 22 nations are heading there.

50. **US Seeks New Asian 'Pivot'**

(*Bangkok Post*)....Editorial

with military forces. Last weekend, at an under-played conference in Singapore, Defence Secretary Leon Panetta revealed more details of the evolving strategy. Then he went off for a visit to the US's new ally in the region, Vietnam.

51. **Drones Away**

(*Wall Street Journal*)....Editorial

An executive role at al Qaeda might need to come with a Mayor Bloomberg health warning. U.S. officials say the organization's number two was killed on Monday by an American unmanned drone in the Pakistani tribal belt. Abu Yahya al-Libi, a Libyan in his late 40s, was the third senior al Qaeda leader killed by a Hellfire missile in the past year -- and the most important since Navy SEALs got Osama bin Laden last May.

52. **Defense Needs, Not Politics, Should Guide Military Cuts**

(*Boston Globe*)....Editorial

Admiral Mike Mullen, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has warned for years that "our national debt is our biggest national security threat." If people start doubting that the United States can pay its bills, the country's influence around the world will wane. Mullen's statements helped pave the way for trims to the federal budget, including military spending. Before raising the debt ceiling last year, lawmakers set in motion a mechanism that will make automatic cuts to the 2013 budget. But now that those cuts are looming, lawmakers around the country are working hard to roll them back to preserve military jobs in their home areas.

53. **War In Cyberspace**

(*Baltimore Sun*)....Editorial

Reports that the U.S. and Israel have tried repeatedly over the years to derail Iran's nuclear weapons program by using malicious computer codes to cause machines at the country's Natanz nuclear facility to malfunction have lifted the veil of secrecy over the war unfolding on the world's newest battlefield. The elaborately designed and executed series of cyber-attacks reportedly slowed Iran's progress toward getting a bomb, but they also raise troubling questions about the United States' own vulnerability to such weapons and whether the nation's defenses are adequate.

Wall Street Journal
June 6, 2012
Pg. 9

1. U.S. Seeks Larger Role For India In Afghanistan

Secretary Panetta's Request Is Expected to Tweak Pakistan, Which Has Resisted a Bigger Delhi Role There

By Julian E. Barnes

NEW DELHI—The U.S. is encouraging India to take a more-active role in Afghanistan after years of keeping New Delhi's participation limited in deference to Pakistan. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta arrived in New Delhi on Tuesday and attended meetings with Indian Prime minister Manmohan Singh and National Security Adviser Shiv Shankar Menon. On Wednesday, he is due to meet with the defense minister, A.K. Antony, and deliver a speech on the growing U.S.-India partnership.

In a statement after the meeting with Mr. Singh, Pentagon press secretary George Little said Mr. Panetta discussed the U.S. strategy in Asia with both leaders. Mr. Little said that Mr. Panetta said the U.S. "views India as a net provider of security from the Indian Ocean to Afghanistan and beyond."

Before Mr. Panetta arrived in India, defense officials briefing reporters on the visit said the Pentagon chief planned to discuss how India could take a more active role in Afghanistan, including by training Afghan security forces after the U.S. draws down most of its forces by the end of 2014.

"We welcome [India's] playing a more-active role in Afghanistan, a more-active political and economic role," said a senior U.S. defense official. "We welcome India's contributions to training the Afghan national army and Afghan national police."

A spokesman for India's Ministry of External Affairs couldn't be reached to comment.

Last year, Indian and Afghan officials reached agreement for India to train members of the Afghan national army. The training is to take place inside India.

The U.S. encouragement of India may be designed to tweak Pakistan, or pressure Islamabad to take a more conciliatory position on Afghanistan. Pakistan has fiercely resisted attempts by India to forge closer relations with Afghanistan.

An Afghanistan with close ties to India, many in Islamabad believe, would threaten Pakistan and deprive Pakistan of the "strategic depth" it wants in central Asia.

U.S.-Pakistani relations have been at a low point for more than a year. Since a November border incident between the U.S. and Pakistan that left 24 Pakistani troops dead, Islamabad has closed the Afghan border to American military shipments.

The closure has put pressure on the U.S. and its allies, forcing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to ferry supplies through a more-expensive northern route. Pakistani and U.S. officials have so far been unable to forge an agreement on reopening the border crossings.

And support for Pakistani civilian and military aid is eroding in the U.S. Congress, with increasing number of lawmakers voicing skepticism about relations with Pakistan.

Senior defense officials acknowledged the message of encouragement to India on Afghanistan was a shift, but said it was an evolutionary one. "Pakistan has nothing to fear with India playing a more-active, constructive role in Afghanistan," a senior official said.

"Over the last 10 years, for a variety of reasons, India has not played a particularly active role in Afghanistan even though it steadily increased its economic investments in Afghanistan," the senior official said.

Another defense official said with Western powers preparing to wind down, Afghanistan was at a pivotal moment, and the U.S. recognized that other countries in the region were going to play a more critical role.

"We really need to engage with India on Afghanistan writ large as we move forward with transition," the official said.

The senior official said that Pakistan's and India's interests weren't necessarily in conflict.

Stars and Stripes

June 6, 2012

Pg. 2

2. Panetta Stresses The Importance Of Indian Alliance

By Jennifer Hlad, Stars and Stripes

NEW DELHI — In meetings with the prime minister and national security adviser, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta stressed the importance of a partnership with India both for ongoing efforts in Afghanistan and for the United States' new focus on security in the Asia-Pacific region.

Panetta arrived in India on Tuesday afternoon after meeting with Vietnamese military leaders in Hanoi.

"Secretary Panetta underscored the link India plays between East and West Asia and how the United States views India as a net provider of security from the Indian Ocean to Afghanistan and beyond," acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs George Little said.

After meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Indian National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon on Tuesday, Panetta will visit with the Indian Defense Minister A.K. Antony on Wednesday and deliver a policy speech at India's oldest think tank.

Economic development has been the main thrust of India's role in Afghanistan, with an investment of about \$2 billion, defense officials said Tuesday.

The Pentagon welcomes increased economic development, and, while the U.S. "doesn't necessarily envision a role of the Indian military in Afghanistan," the Indian military police could provide training for Afghan forces as they move forward, a senior defense official speaking on background said.

The relationship between India and the United States has improved and expanded dramatically since 2001, when the U.S. lifted economic sanctions it had placed on India in 1998 for performing underground nuclear tests. For example, the U.S. has sold about \$8.5 billion worth of military arms to India in the last 11 years, according to defense officials, and the American military now performs several joint military exercises with India.

In Tuesday's meetings, Little said, Panetta discussed the nations' shared interests, particularly in the Pacific and reiterated the need for increased teamwork with India, "the only country specifically mentioned as a key partner in the Department's Strategic Guidance issued earlier this year."

The Pentagon also hopes India and Pakistan will work together more closely on the shared goal of a peaceful, stable Afghanistan.

"There are historical tensions and a lack of trust between India and Pakistan," the official said, but they have taken steps to repair that relationship and both have legitimate interests in Afghanistan's future," the senior defense official said. "Pakistan has nothing to fear with India playing a more constructive role in Afghanistan."

Yahoo.com
June 6, 2012

3. India-US Defence Talks To Focus On China, Afghanistan

By Dan De Luce, Agence France-Presse

US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta holds talks Wednesday with his Indian counterpart which are likely to be dominated by NATO's planned exit from Afghanistan and China's growing power.

Panetta's two-day visit to New Delhi is part of a tour of the region that has stressed Washington's strategic shift to Asia, with US officials portraying India as an anchor for the new approach.

In talks Tuesday with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Panetta "underscored the link India plays between East and West Asia and how the United States views India as a net provider of security from the Indian Ocean to Afghanistan and beyond", his press secretary George Little said.

Panetta will meet Defence Minister A.K. Antony on Wednesday before giving a policy speech at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses.

In his talks with Antony, Panetta was expected to discuss NATO's planned withdrawal of combat forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014 as well as an expanding arms

trade and joint military training between the two countries.

Indian officials are worried the departure of most of the US-led force could leave a dangerous vacuum in Afghanistan, and question if the Kabul government and its fledgling army will be able to fend off Taliban insurgents.

US officials said Panetta was encouraging India to play a more active role in Afghanistan, despite Pakistan's deep suspicion of its arch-foe's motives in the country.

Earlier on his nine-day tour through Asia, Panetta unveiled plans to shift the majority of the US naval fleet to the Pacific by 2020, a symbolic step meant to signal US determination to preserve its influence in the face of a rising China.

Beijing said Monday the US naval plan was "untimely" and called on Washington to respect its interests in the region.

The tilt towards Asia is designed mainly as a way to check China's role, particularly in the contested South China Sea, reinforcing US diplomacy in support of smaller nations locked in territorial disputes with Beijing.

The US administration views India as a counterweight to China, though in public statements senior officials insist the new strategy is not meant as a challenge to Beijing.

Panetta's visit follows India's successful test launch in April of a new missile capable of delivering a one-tonne nuclear warhead anywhere in China, marking a major advance in its military capabilities.

India views the rocket, which has a range of 5,000 kilometres (3,100 miles), as a boost to its regional power aspirations and one that narrows -- albeit slightly -- the huge gap with China's missile systems.

India is investing in military hardware to modernise its armed forces, and the United States has become one of its major arms suppliers, with \$8.5 billion in sales over the past 11 years, according to the Pentagon.

Panetta's trip coincides with two weapons deals that are close to being wrapped up.

India has agreed to buy 145 howitzer guns from the US unit of British arms group BAE Systems in a deal worth \$560 million. And India is close to clinching a \$1.4 billion agreement to purchase 22 Apache attack helicopters manufactured by Boeing, US officials said.

Economic Times (India)

June 6, 2012

Pg. 2

4. PM, Panetta Discuss Military Strategy

US defence secy asks India to be more active in Afghanistan

By Our Political Bureau, New Delhi

Soon after announcing details of Washington's plans to 'rebalance' its military strategy in Asia-Pacific, US defence secretary Leon Panetta discussed its implications with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh here on Tuesday. The US views India as a vital partner in the Asia-Pacific region.

Panetta, who is on a two-day tour to Delhi, had an hour-long meeting with the prime minister at his 7 Race Course residence, during which he is believed to have touched upon Af-Pak and military trade.

Panetta has come with a mission to encourage New Delhi to play a more active role in Afghanistan, at a time when the US-Pak ties are fragile. India has focused on reconstruction work in Afghanistan. India's concerns over Pakistan's role in aiding

and abetting terror are also expected to figure in talks.

Panetta is understood to have discussed the issues with national security advisor Shivshankar Menon and will meet defence minister AK Antony on Wednesday. Panetta, who is visiting India for the first time after assuming office last year, will deliver a lecture on 'Indo-US Defence Relations' at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, followed by an interactive session, which will be his only public event during the visit.

According to a US embassy release, "secretary Panetta underscored the link India plays between east and west Asia and how the United States views India as a net provider of security from the Indian Ocean to Afghanistan and beyond. The leaders discussed US-India defence relationship... and common security challenges."

The Pentagon chief, who has been touring Asia over the past nine days, had said at a security conference in Singapore on Saturday that the US will shift a majority of its warships to the Asia-Pacific region by 2020.

It would maintain six aircraft carriers in the region in the long run and rebalance its fleet so that 60% of its other warships would be assigned to the Pacific by 2020, compared to 50% now. He, however, tried to dismiss speculation that the shift was designed to contain China's emergence as a global power.

He also said Washington's bolstering its military presence in the Asia-Pacific would be through alliances - joint exercises and operations - rather than setting up bases. President Barack Obama had unraveled the "Pivot to Asia" strategy blueprint in January. The US has already enlisted support of

countries like Japan, Australia, South Korea and Vietnam.

Times of India
June 6, 2012
Pg. 14

5. China Cloud On Indo-US Def Talks

US Defence Secy Meets PM and Security Adviser Amid Realignment Of His Forces In Asia

By Times News Network

New Delhi: India and the US on Tuesday began talks to step up their bilateral strategic and defence cooperation, which comes in the backdrop of the drawdown of international security forces from Afghanistan as well as China's growing assertiveness, especially in the South China Sea.

While the substantive delegation-level talks between defence minister A K Antony and his counterpart Leon Panetta are slated for Wednesday, the visiting US defence secretary met PM Manmohan Singh and national security adviser Shivshankar Menon soon after landing here on Tuesday afternoon.

Panetta has arrived in India at a time when the Obama administration is talking about a strategic shift towards Asia, which even extends to shifting the bulk of the American naval fleet to the Asia-Pacific region by 2020, with an eye firmly on China. Washington would like New Delhi to be a potentially pivotal partner in this endeavour.

While India wants to position itself as 'neutral' in this geopolitical power play, it is certainly wary of the rapidly-modernizing People's Liberation Army (PLA) and its long-term intentions.

In the backdrop of China's aggressive behavior in South China Sea, impinging on the

territorial claims of Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore, both Antony and Panetta in recent days have stressed the critical need to ensure the freedom of navigation and passage in international waters.

On the Afghanistan front, the US has already made it clear that it wants India to play a more active role in the war-torn country over and above the around \$2 billion New Delhi has already committed to rebuilding it. Pakistan remains strongly opposed to any such enhancement in India's role in the strategically-located Afghanistan.

On the bilateral front, India continues to remain 'unconvinced' about the benefits of the 'foundational' military pacts like the Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum Agreement (CISMOA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA) that the US has been pushing for the last several years.

But India is now close to inking \$647 million contract for the acquisition of 145 M-777 ultra-light howitzers from the US in a direct government-to-government deal under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme.

Boeing is also set to bag the \$1.4 billion contract to supply 22 missile-armed helicopter gunships to the IAF after its AH-64D Apache Longbow outperformed Mil Moscow Helicopter Plant's Mi-28N 'Night Hunter' in the field trials, as reported by TOI earlier.

Washington Post
June 6, 2012
Pg. 1

6. U.S. Confirms Al-Qaeda's No. 2 Died In Airstrike

Libi's killing is blow to terror group's command structure in Pakistan

By Joby Warrick and Greg Miller

Al-Qaeda's No. 2 leader, Abu Yahya al-Libi, the charismatic commander who helped steer the terrorist group after Osama bin Laden's death last year, was killed by a CIA drone strike in Pakistan's lawless frontier region, U.S. officials confirmed Tuesday.

U.S. intelligence officials said the death of the Libyan jihadist, who escaped from U.S. custody in Afghanistan in 2005, leaves al-Qaeda's leadership ranks in Pakistan so depleted that there is no obvious successor.

Libi, the second al-Qaeda deputy commander to be killed in 10 months, was targeted in a drone strike early Monday on a house in North Waziristan, U.S. officials said. Despite reports from Pakistan that more than a dozen people died, U.S. officials said Libi was the only one killed.

A U.S. official described Libi as one of al-Qaeda's "most experienced and versatile leaders." His death was viewed as a particularly heavy loss for al-Qaeda because of his standing as both a spiritual figure and operational manager for a terrorist organization that has been struggling since bin Laden's death at the hands of Navy SEALs last year.

The death of Libi "puts additional pressure on al-Qaeda in the post-bin Laden era," said White House press secretary Jay Carney. It "damages the group's morale and cohesion and brings it closer to demise than ever before," he said.

The missile strike also illustrates the Obama administration's determination

to continue the CIA drone campaign despite escalating Pakistani objections, which were reiterated Tuesday when an American diplomat was summoned to Pakistan's Foreign Ministry in Islamabad.

U.S. charge d'affaires Richard Hoagland "was informed that the drone strikes were unlawful, against international law and a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty," according to a statement from the Islamabad government.

The message was delivered amid a flurry of drone activity in Pakistan, with three strikes since Saturday. U.S. officials said Libi was among a total of three operatives killed.

The pace of the drone campaign reflects the extent to which the CIA has continued to patrol Pakistan with unmanned aircraft, even as the terrorist threat has shifted. U.S. officials now see al-Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen as significantly more dangerous than the core group in Pakistan, but the number of strikes this year in each country stands about even.

According to the Long War Journal Web site, there have been 22 drone strikes in Yemen and 21 in Pakistan.

Libi's death "underscores we cannot give in to Pakistan's demand for an end to drone operations," said Bruce Riedel, a former CIA analyst who is a counterterrorism expert at the Brookings Institution.

Libi was among a collection of aliases used by a militant whose given name was Muhammad Hasan Qaid, according to the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism.

He was one of the last surviving members of the generation of al-Qaeda fighters who battled against the Soviets in Afghanistan. He was admired among the group's rank and file and served as a bridge between al-Qaeda's Pakistan

leadership and affiliates around the world. Libi also possessed credentials that allowed him to issue religious edicts and operational mandates to the group's adherents.

Libi "played a critical role in the group's planning against the West," said the U.S. official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss American counterterrorism operations. "There is no one who even comes close in terms of replacing the expertise AQ has just lost."

Libi, thought to be in his late 40s, had moved into the No. 2 spot after the death in August of Atiyah abd al-Rahman, another Libyan national killed in a missile strike. Like his predecessor, Libi was regarded as the group's general manager, answering to al-Qaeda's senior commander, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Libi, a former member of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, rose to celebrity within al-Qaeda's ranks after he escaped in 2005 from the U.S. detention facility at Bagram, Afghanistan.

Jarret Brachman, a government consultant and al-Qaeda expert, said Libi was embittered by his imprisonment and animated by an ideology that was virulently anti-Western and "extreme," even by al-Qaeda's standards. "He was off the reservation, ideologically," Brachman said. "He was an absolutist, at war with the West, at war with the Shia. Yet he knew how to package his views and communicate them in a way that sold."

Libi is the latest in a series of leaders to be killed within months of ascending to al-Qaeda's top operational post. The position was considered the group's No. 3 job before bin Laden's death.

In a measure of the rapidity of that turnover, Libi was

not even listed on public U.S. counterterrorism charts until 2009, when he was added to the Rewards for Justice Web site, which until this week had offered \$1 million for information on his whereabouts.

A senior Pakistani official played down Libi's importance and said the government in Islamabad had played no role in providing information for the drone strike. The drone program is "unfinished bad business between us," the official said. "They rarely get anything more than foot soldiers. It's diminishing returns."

U.S. and Pakistani officials confirmed that the missile targeting Libi had struck a house in North Waziristan at sunrise Monday. A security official from the area said in a phone interview that numerous "foreigners" were described as being among the victims, and other Pakistani sources put the death toll at 16. U.S. officials disputed those reports, calling them "wildly" inaccurate.

With Libi's death, al-Qaeda lost not only a seasoned leader but also a key representative to its affiliates abroad, said Seth Jones, a Rand Corp. analyst and author of "Hunting in the Shadows: The Pursuit of al Qa'ida after 9/11."

Libi "was most directly involved in maintaining relations with the affiliates," including franchises in North Africa, Jones said. "His death will have an impact on those networks," Jones said, though he added that al-Qaeda has managed to survive previous losses of key leaders. "No one is irreplaceable," he said.

Special correspondents Haq Nawaz Khan in Peshawar, Pakistan, and Shaiq Hussain in Islamabad and staff researcher Julie Tate and staff writer David Nakamura in Washington contributed to this report.

New York Times
June 6, 2012
Pg. 1

7. Drone Strike Killed No. 2 In Al Qaeda, U.S. Officials Say

By Declan Walsh and Eric Schmitt

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — A Central Intelligence Agency drone strike in Pakistan's tribal belt killed Al Qaeda's deputy leader, Abu Yahya al-Libi, American officials said on Tuesday, dealing another blow to the group in a lawless area that has long been considered the global headquarters of international terrorism but the importance of which may now be slipping.

Mr. Libi's death would be another dramatic moment for an American covert war in Pakistan that has been particularly active over the past year, starting with the death of the group's founder, Osama bin Laden, in May 2011 and followed up by drone strikes against several senior lieutenants, including Atiyah Abd al-Rahman.

But that very success could, paradoxically, signal a shifting target: as Al Qaeda's leadership in the tribal belt has been cornered or killed, new efforts to attack Western targets have been mounted by the group's affiliates in Yemen and Somalia.

Unlike many of the relatively unknown figures killed in other drone strikes, Mr. Libi, who had a \$1 million bounty on his head, was a virtual ambassador for global jihad. An Islamic scholar by training, he used frequent video appearances to expound on world events, chastise critics and boast about his escape from an American military prison in Afghanistan in 2005.

He negotiated with the ethnic Pashtun militant groups that have sheltered Al Qaeda in the tribal belt for over a decade, and at one point urged Pakistanis to overthrow their own government.

The White House spokesman, Jay Carney, said that as a result of Mr. Libi's death, "there is no clear successor to take on the breadth of his responsibility, and that puts additional pressure" on Al Qaeda, "bringing it closer to its ultimate demise than ever."

The details of his death in Hassu Khel, a village in the North Waziristan tribal agency, remained hazy. And it is not the first report that he has been killed: rumors of his death coursed through jihadi Web sites in December 2009 after a similar strike in South Waziristan that American officials claimed had killed a high-ranking figure in Al Qaeda.

If his death is borne out this time, it would be a milestone in a covert eight-year airstrike campaign that has infuriated Pakistani officials but that has remained one of the United States' most effective tools in combating militancy.

Local tribesmen and American officials said that a C.I.A.-controlled drone fired on a compound early Monday morning. Word spread quickly among local tribesmen that Mr. Libi had been killed or wounded, and American intelligence officials using powerful satellite and other surveillance equipment listened and watched carefully for a sign of his fate.

Apparent confirmation came late Tuesday, although American officials did not give supporting details. After previous strikes in the tribal belt, the National Security Agency has monitored cellphone, radio and Internet

messages to confirm the effects of the missions.

American officials said that Mr. Libi was the only person who died in the attack, although others were present in the compound. A tribesman from the area, speaking by phone and citing Taliban sources, said that three to five militants had been killed. But he agreed that no civilians had died because there had been no public funerals in the area.

Mr. Libi, who was thought to be in his late 40s, was born in Libya, and during the 1990s he was a member of an Islamist group that sought to overthrow Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi.

His star rose after he escaped from a United States military detention center at Bagram Air Base outside Kabul in July 2005, picking a lock and dodging the prison guards, along with three other Qaeda operatives.

A year later, Mr. Libi released a 54-minute video mocking his American captors — the first of many that would burnish his reputation as a propagandist.

After Bin Laden's death, Mr. Libi moved up to become Al Qaeda's deputy, behind Ayman al-Zawahri.

One American official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, described Mr. Libi as one of Al Qaeda's "most experienced and versatile leaders," and said he had "played a critical role in the group's planning against the West, providing oversight of the external operations efforts."

Another American official said: "Zawahri will be hard-pressed to find any one person who can readily step into Abu Yahya's shoes. In addition to his gravitas as a longstanding member of A.Q.'s leadership, Abu Yahya's religious credentials gave him the authority to issue

fatwas, operational approvals and guidance to the core group in Pakistan and regional affiliates. There is no one who even comes close in terms of replacing the expertise A.Q. has just lost."

Some independent experts, however, were more cautious. "Killing the top leadership harms Al Qaeda, but it won't defeat them," said Bill Roggio of the Web site Long War Journal, which tracks drone strikes in the tribal belt, among other topics. "There are people who will step up to fill the void. Al Qaeda has a far deeper bench than the administration gives it credit for."

Mr. Roggio said that while drone strikes offered an attractive short-term tactic against Qaeda militants, they did not present a complete strategy. "Until we tackle Al Qaeda's ideology, state support and ability to exploit ungoverned space in countries like Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen, you're not going to defeat the organization," he said.

Mr. Libi's death also raises questions about the center of gravity of Al Qaeda's global operations. In 2007, the National Intelligence Estimate, a document produced by 16 American intelligence agencies, declared that the tribal belt had become Al Qaeda's global headquarters. Yet in recent years, some of the most dangerous plots have come from its affiliate in Yemen.

Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the young Nigerian who tried to detonate a bomb in his underwear as an airliner approached Detroit in December 2009, was trained in the mountains of Yemen. Last September, an American drone attack 90 miles east of the Yemeni capital, Sana, killed Anwar al-Awlaki, an American preacher and jihadist recruiter,

and Samir Khan, an American citizen of Pakistani origin.

Some American officials consider Mr. Awlaki's death to be at least as significant, in counterterrorism terms, as the killing of Mr. Libi. Even in death, Mr. Awlaki's archived exhortations for jihad are considered a potent force.

Still, Pakistan's tribal belt remains a hub of regional and international militancy. Faisal Shahzad, who tried to explode a car bomb in Times Square in May 2010, said he had received explosives training from the Pakistani Taliban. Insurgent fighters based in Waziristan regularly attack NATO and Afghan forces in Afghanistan and have been targeted by C.I.A. drones. And Mr. Zawahri, the Qaeda leader, is widely believed to be in Pakistan.

But the strikes are intensely contentious among Pakistan's political and military elite. In April, Pakistan's Parliament passed a resolution demanding that the drone campaign immediately stop, but the tempo of strikes picked up greatly after negotiations to reopen NATO supply lines through Pakistan to Afghanistan bogged down last month.

A senior Pakistani security official said that Pakistani intelligence had no independent confirmation of Mr. Libi's death. Even if it was proved, he added, his country's opposition to the drone campaign would not change.

"Practically speaking, the drone strikes are a big success. But strategically they are a huge loss. They create more polarization, more enemies, and are an attack on our sovereignty," he said. "We have always told the Americans that if anyone should carry out these strikes, it should be us."

Other Pakistanis say that Al Qaeda should simply leave their

country. After Mr. Libi's death was announced, Tazeen Jay, a blogger, wrote on Twitter, "I long for the day when they die elsewhere, not in Pakistan."

Declan Walsh reported from Islamabad, and Eric Schmitt from Washington. Ihsanullah Tipu Mehsud contributed reporting from Islamabad, and Jackie Calmes from Washington.

McClatchy Newspapers

(mcclatchydc.com)

June 5, 2012

8. Afghanistan

Withdrawal Fuels Fears In Neighboring Pakistan

By Tom Hussain, McClatchy Newspapers

ISLAMABAD — The impending withdrawal of U.S.-led NATO combat troops from Afghanistan is raising worries next door in Pakistan, where a growing number of experts are warning that the forces' departure could reinvigorate a domestic insurgency that Pakistan's military is barely keeping at bay.

As President Barack Obama winds down U.S. involvement in the war, the Pakistani commentators argue that NATO's withdrawal will embolden Pakistani militants, perhaps creating a territorial vacuum that will enable the militants to set up bases in Afghanistan from which they could launch operations in Pakistan.

The fears reflect uncertainty about the stability of nuclear-armed Pakistan, a vital if deeply troublesome U.S. ally in the region. In recent months, against the backdrop of a seven-month freeze in relations between Islamabad and Washington, the experts are challenging a long-dominant narrative here that blames the U.S. military presence

in Afghanistan for Pakistan's insurgency.

The first to express the changing perception was Ayaz Amir, Pakistan's leading English-language columnist and an opposition member of Parliament, who wrote in March in *The News International*: "Those who think that the American presence is the sole cause of militancy are living in a world of their own... Our nightmare will not end. With the American withdrawal, another phase of it, perhaps a more dangerous one, will begin."

Since then, other commentators have followed suit as 150,000 Pakistani counter-terrorism forces have struggled to keep a lid on domestic militant groups such as the Pakistani Taliban, an organization that's separate from but allied with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Already, Pakistani Taliban groups the military evicted in 2009 from the Bajaur and Mohmand tribal areas and the district of Swat have relocated to the neighboring Afghan provinces of Kunar and Nurestan, from which they frequently send raiding parties to attack paramilitary installations, blow up schools and kidnap residents in Pakistan. They also broadcast messages via an FM radio station.

It's a striking mirror image of the Afghan Taliban's use of havens in Pakistan's tribal areas to wage war against coalition forces in Afghanistan, the commentators have noted.

The Pakistani military, convinced that the U.S. inevitably would abandon Afghanistan, has maintained covert relations with Afghan Taliban commanders based on its soil, figuring the policy will help position it as the arbiter of an eventual political solution in Afghanistan, the

commentators said. The double-dealing has earned the ire of the U.S. and its NATO partners, which have excluded Pakistan from tentative peace talks with the Taliban, and has encouraged Afghan President Hamid Karzai to seek closer ties with Pakistan's blood rival, India.

In the final years of the U.S. combat presence in Afghanistan, commentators say a nightmare scenario is emerging for Pakistan's strategic planners. Since the Taliban regime was overthrown in November 2001, the commentators have dreaded the prospect of a strong Afghan administration allied with India, leaving Pakistan with two hostile borders to defend.

Increasingly, they're calling for a review of Pakistan's policy on Afghanistan and its approach to relations with the U.S.

The policy "has grabbed us by the throat ... things can't continue like this," Najam Sethi, a newspaper editor, has said on the current-affairs program he hosts on Geo News, Pakistan's most popular cable channel.

The Pakistani military's operations against militants in the restive tribal areas along the Afghan border, which began in 2009, have produced mixed results.

By last August, the counter-terrorism forces apparently had succeeded in wresting control of most of the Pakistani Taliban's territory and breaking the insurgents' command-and-control structure. But the military decided against a fight to the bitter end, reasoning that the predominantly Pashtun insurgents – like their fellow tribesmen who battled Pakistani forces during the 1980s Soviet occupation of Afghanistan – would never surrender.

Instead, the military leaned on Pakistan's civilian government and political parties to unveil last October a policy of "give peace a chance," which sought to exploit divisions among the insurgents in order to restore peace in the tribal areas. Experts said the military assumed that the presence in those areas of Afghan Taliban allies – frequently the target of U.S. drone attacks – would put pressure on the insurgents and keep them off balance.

In January, the Haqqani network, an Afghan militant faction that's been based in Pakistan since the 1980s, formed a council of Pakistani militants with the declared purpose of persuading the insurgents to stop fighting the military and join the insurgency in Afghanistan. But the idea backfired. The leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Hakimullah Mahsud, used the lull to reassert his control and replace his peace-inclined rivals with trusted associates who want to continue to fight.

Mahsud has reorganized the insurgency into a guerrilla campaign across the tribal region and adjacent areas of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. The insurgents have extended their reach to major Pakistani cities, where their favored method has been sectarian attacks on Shiite Muslims.

The Pakistani military's mistake, commentators said, was to believe that the Afghan Taliban would work against their Pakistani counterparts.

"They are, after all, each other's buddies, comrades in arms who have fought shoulder to shoulder in Afghanistan," said Saifullah Mahsud, the executive director of the FATA Research Center, an independent research center in Islamabad.

Hussain is a McClatchy special correspondent.

DEFCON Hill (TheHill.com)
June 5, 2012

9. US, Pakistan Talks On Supply Lines Continue, Despite NATO Deal

By Carlo Munoz

The United States will continue to pursue negotiations with Islamabad over key supply routes into Afghanistan, despite NATO plans to begin using other routes outside Pakistan, a Defense Department official said on Tuesday.

NATO Secretary General Anders Rasmussen announced that the alliance secured agreements with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to begin moving weapons and troops out of Afghanistan through those Central Asian nations.

"These agreements will give us a range of new options and the robust and flexible transport network we need. I thank all three partner countries for their support," Rasmussen told reporters during a Tuesday briefing from Brussels.

The deals were part of NATO's overall strategy "to actively engage with Afghanistan's neighbors" as American and NATO forces begin their exodus out of the country. However, these new deals were not a sign that NATO or American commanders were walking away from efforts to reopen critical supply routes located in Pakistan.

"We continue to be in discussions with our Pakistani counterparts about ... trying to get those [routes] open, and in general trying to improve the relationship with Pakistan writ large," DOD spokesman Capt. John Kirby told reporters Tuesday at the Pentagon.

He noted the Pentagon has its own chain of supply routes in Central Asia, known as the Northern Distribution Network, and continually uses those lines to move men and materiel to and from Afghanistan.

That said, "I would not take the pursuit of this deal and this agreement as any kind of repudiation of the importance of those [routes] or the larger relationship with Pakistan," said Kirby.

Islamabad shut down the supply routes to U.S. and coalition forces last November after a number of Pakistani soldiers were killed in an errant airstrike by American forces.

Since then, ongoing negotiations to unblock the routes have yielded little to no progress.

American and Pakistani negotiators were reportedly close to a deal weeks before NATO's annual summit in Chicago in May; all indications coming out of Pakistan prior to the NATO summit was that the deal was all but complete.

But an eleventh-hour demand by Pakistan to increase the price-per-truck cost to the United States and its allies to move through supplies through the country, as well as other issues, brought negotiations to a grinding halt.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Pakistani Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani reportedly sat down in Kabul in May in an attempt to break the impasse over the supply routes.

But pressure within the administration to get those routes back open has grown significantly, since the White House announced its plans to have all American forces out of Afghanistan by 2014.

Nearly 32,000 U.S. troops are scheduled to leave the country this summer. The

remaining 68,000 soldiers will be gone a year after that.

U.S. military planners are already exploring options on how to move the mountain of metal American forces have accumulated in Afghanistan over a decade in combat.

Access to those Pakistani routes is widely considered a critical piece to the Pentagon's Afghan withdrawal strategy.

Bangkok Post

June 6, 2012

Pg. 3

10. US Denies Secret Plans For U-Tapao

By Wassana Nanuam and Thanida Tansubhapol

US Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman General Martin E. Dempsey has denied rumours of a hidden Pentagon agenda behind Nasa's use of U-Tapao airport in Rayong as a base to conduct atmospheric studies.

Gen. Dempsey was speaking to reporters at the Royal Thai Armed Forces Headquarters where he met Supreme Commander Thanasak Patimapakorn yesterday.

Nasa has asked the government and the army for permission to base aircraft being used in the study at the airport.

Nasa's website says the US space agency will conduct its Southeast Asia Composition, Cloud, Climate Coupling Regional Study in August and September, to "address key questions regarding the influence of Asian emissions on clouds, climate, and air quality as well as satellite observability of the system".

The agency said basing the aircraft in Thailand is optimal for achieving its scientific objectives, and the preferred location is U-Tapao.

The opposition Democrat Party says it is worried the Nasa project could have military

objectives such as establishing a base in an attempt to counterbalance China's growing influence in Southeast Asia.

Gen. Dempsey said the Pentagon had nothing to do with the Nasa study, as it is a civilian organisation.

However, he said the US Defence Department was discussing with Gen. Thanasak the possibility of establishing a Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Centre at U-Tapao.

Gen. Dempsey said his visit was to clarify remarks by US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta in Singapore on Sunday that the US is looking to re-establish closer military cooperation in the region.

"The US intends to pay more attention to all relationships in the Asia-Pacific region because 10 years ago it was very busy elsewhere, but we are now coming back," Gen. Dempsey said.

Foreign Minister Surapong Tovichakchaikul said the US wants to help countries with natural disasters. Security would be unaffected by Nasa's proposal to use the airbase.

Philippine Star

June 5, 2012

Pg. 11

11. Phl, US To Share Real-Time Info On Security Developments

By Alexis Romero

Philippine and US security officials yesterday vowed to engage in "real-time information sharing" on security developments and reaffirmed their commitment to the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT).

These were discussed during a meeting yesterday between Defense Undersecretary Honorio Azcueta and Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the US

Joint Chiefs of Staff, in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

"We discussed information sharing, realtime information sharing," Azcueta told reporters after the meeting.

"We welcome his visit and we appreciate it and it is a manifestation of their commitment to us under the Mutual Defense Treaty and we have a strong and vibrant security and military relationship as well as cooperation," he said.

The MDT was signed by the Philippines and US in 1951 "to declare publicly and formally their sense of unity and their common determination to defend themselves against external armed attack."

The treaty also seeks "to strengthen their present efforts for collective defense for the preservation of peace and security."

Under the treaty, the two countries, separately or jointly, shall maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.

The US has vowed to honor its commitment under the treaty but remains silent as to whether it would be invoked in case tension escalates in Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), for its part, said the Filipino should be wary of the US plan to boost its presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

In a statement, CPP claimed the Aquino regime and the US have been discussing arrangements that would provide American forces greater access to Philippine land, water and airspace.

It added that the government would provide support facilities for the docking and refurbishing of US warships and stationing of US troops and base for the

operations of US spy and attack drones.

Azcueta said the modernization of the military was also brought up during the meeting.

"We informed him (Dempsey) that we (had given) them a list (of equipment), if they can provide us with their excess defense articles," he said.

Azcueta said the list includes long-range patrol aircraft and radars. The list was forwarded by defense officials to the US government during the bilateral strategic dialogue last January.

The US military officer, however, did not provide any specific commitment on the matter.

"He (Dempsey) said he knows about the list... He did not say anything. That was just the statement so it's just a courtesy call," Azcueta said.

Azcueta and Dempsey also emphasized the need for more bilateral exercises to enhance the US and Philippine troops' interoperability.

-- With Delon Porcalla,
Jaime Laude

Philippine Star

June 6, 2012

Pg. 1

12. US Troops Can Use Clark, Subic Bases

By Jaime Laude

American troops, warships and aircraft can once again use their former naval and air facilities in Subic, Zambales and in Clark Field in Pampanga as long as they have prior clearance from the Philippine government, a senior defense official said.

"They can come here provided they have prior coordination from the government," Defense Undersecretary for defense affairs Honorio Azcueta told

reporters after his meeting with Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, on Monday.

Coming straight from the just-concluded three-day Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Dempsey was in the country the other day for a follow-up meeting with senior defense and military officials.

Azcueta pointed out that a shift of US security focus toward the Asia-Pacific region is expected to increase with more military engagements between the two long-time allies.

Earlier, US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced that the US is increasing the deployment of its naval presence in the region, without necessarily establishing permanent military bases in any country in the region.

Asked if US troops as well as their warships and fighter planes would be allowed access to their former naval base in Subic, Azcueta said yes.

"That's what we want... increase in exercises and interoperability," Azcueta said.

Aside from offering a safe haven for ships due to its secured location from cyclones, the former US naval base in Subic has an airfield that can accommodate civilian and military planes.

During the Vietnam war in the 1970s, Subic Naval Base, especially its airfield, was used by the US military as staging point of all its major air operations against the Vietcong.

However, in 1992 Subic Naval Base and the Clark Air Base in Pampanga, the two biggest US military bases outside mainland America, were shut down after the Philippine Senate rejected an extension of their presence in the country.

China wary of US AsiaPac plan

Meanwhile, China's top newspapers expressed concern over the US plan, saying that such move might widen the rift between the two countries.

Although Panetta gave assurance that the plan was not aimed at containing China, whose fast-modernizing navy has kindled worries among its neighbors, the People's Daily did not buy that.

"Opinion across the Asia-Pacific generally does not believe that the United States' strategy of returning to the Asia-Pacific is not aimed at China; it's there plain for all to see," said a commentary in the paper, which reflects the current thinking in Beijing.

"The United States verbally denies it is containing China's rise, but while establishing a new security array across the Asia-Pacific, it has invariably made China its target," it said.

"This strategy is driven with contradictions and undoubtedly will magnify the complexities of Asia-Pacific security arrangements, and could even create schisms."

The People's Daily commentary was blunter than Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Weimin, who responded to Panetta's announcement by saying China hopes the United States will respect its regional interests, and by calling the Pentagon's steps "out of keeping with the times."

Beijing appears keen to avoid outright confrontation with the US, but the comments in state newspapers reflected persistent worries that Washington is bent on frustrating its emergence as a major power.

"After this new (US) military deployment and adjustment is completed, the intensity of US meddling in Asia-Pacific affairs will surely increase," the Liberation

Army Daily quoted a People's Liberation Army researcher as saying.

"This trend will increase people's fears about the United States using its military dominance to interfere in the sovereignty of the region's countries," said the researcher, Han Xudong, a professor at China's National Defense University.

China is focused on ensuring stable conditions for a Communist Party leadership transition later this year that will see the appointment of a new president to succeed Hu Jintao.

Still, Beijing and Washington have repeatedly been in dispute over US arms sales to Taiwan, which China sees as an illegitimate breakaway from its control; and the South China Sea, where China confronts a mosaic of disputes over islands and seas also claimed by Southeast Asian nations.

The US has backed a multilateral approach to solving those territorial disputes, which Beijing has rejected as meddling.

-- With Reuters

London Daily Telegraph

June 5, 2012

Pg. 16

13. Captured Taliban Bombers Freed After Paying Bribes, Say Americans

By Ben Farmer

Taliban bomb-makers and leaders caught red-handed trying to kill American troops in Afghanistan have been freed without trial after paying off corrupt local officials, officers complain.

American officers in Ghazni province say in several cases they have been powerless to prevent the release of insurgents despite strong evidence that they were

attacking the US-led Nato forces.

The men were released not as part of the judicial process, or as part of a formal reconciliation deal, but after corrupt officials had taken bribes worth thousands of pounds. A former Afghan intelligence chief from the eastern province confirmed to The Daily Telegraph that the practice had been rife for some time.

Paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division have been sent to southern Ghazni this summer with just months to try to stabilise security and bolster the Afghan forces before pulling out.

The Taliban has had free run of the area in recent years, installing its own shadow administration and attacking military convoys using the highway running through Ghazni between Kabul and Kandahar.

Since the arrival of US soldiers, seven paratroopers have been killed, mainly when their vehicles have been hit by huge home-made bombs dug into roads. Attacks have dropped recently as large caches of arms and ammunition and tons of fertiliser-based explosives have been seized, with many prisoners taken.

American policemen and federal agents attached as advisers to the paratroopers have been able to use forensic and biometric techniques to strengthen the cases against those caught.

But the evidence has been ignored by officials intent on lining their own pockets by releasing prisoners. "We are talking about people who may have American blood on their hands," complained one officer.

In one example, an insurgent caught in Muqur district on March 31 with eight home-made bombs was

released two weeks later after never facing trial.

Of 20 prisoners taken in Muqur district since the 82nd Airborne arrived, it is unclear how many are still in custody.

When confronted, Afghan officials have said the men were wrongly held, or had sworn their innocence on the Koran. In at least one case, American officials later found that sums of up to 600,000 Pakistani rupees (£4,200) had changed hands to gain the release of the prisoners.

Mohammad Aref Shah Jahan, who was until last year head of the Afghan intelligence service in Ghazni, said there was a long-standing financial trade in prisoners.

"They are releasing the real Taliban and keeping people who are nothing," he said.

Musa Khan Akbarzada, the governor of Ghazni, denied any knowledge of corruption and said all captives taken in Ghazni must go before court.

U-T San Diego
June 6, 2012

14. Air Combat Uptick In Afghanistan

May weapons releases higher than same month last year

By Gretel C. Kovach

Air combat over Afghanistan heated up in May at the start of another summer fighting season, with more weapons releases than the same period last year.

Air crews with NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan had 393 weapons releases in May compared to 369 the same month in 2011, according to the latest report from U.S. Air Forces Central Command.

Close air support activity in Afghanistan involving gunfire, bombs and other weapons releases had been lower each of

the previous months of this year compared to 2011.

Air crews have had 1,047 weapons releases this year through May, dropped more than 20 million pounds of supplies and flew 2,801 Medevac or personnel recovery sorties, according to Air Forces Central, the command that oversees US airpower operations in Southwest Asia.

Yahoo.com
June 6, 2012

15. Suicide Bombers Kill 22 Civilians At Afghan Market

By Mirwais Khan, Associated Press

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan -- Two suicide bombers blew themselves up in a market area in southern Afghanistan on Wednesday, killing at least 22 people wounding about 50, authorities said.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the explosion, which occurred near small shops in a parking and waiting area for trucks that supply logistics to Kandahar Air Field, a massive military installation run by the U.S.-led coalition.

One suicide bomber detonated his motorbike filled with explosives first. Then, as people rushed to assist the casualties, another suicide bomber on foot walked up to the area and blew himself up, said Javid Faisal, a spokesman for Kandahar province. He said the death toll stood at 22 and that 50 were wounded. All the dead were civilians, he said.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi claimed responsibility for the attack.

The explosion occurred 500 meters from an Afghan military base and about five kilometers from the main gate to the air field.

Yahoo.com

June 6, 2012

16. Central Asia Group Seeks Bigger Afghanistan Role

BEIJING (AP) -- Central Asian states meeting in Beijing this week say they want a role in stabilizing Afghanistan after most U.S. combat troops leave at the end of 2014, with China's economic juggernaut leading the charge.

The war-torn nation's future is expected to feature prominently in discussions by leaders of the six nations that make up the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The bloc, which includes China, Russia, and four Central Asian states, seeks closer security and economic ties among its members, most prominently through regular meetings and joint military exercises targeting separatists, religious extremists and drug traffickers.

In comments published Wednesday in the ruling Communist Party's flagship newspaper, the People's Daily, Chinese President Hu Jintao outlined a broad plan for the SCO's future role as the region's pre-eminent grouping, while firmly rejecting outside meddling.

"We will continue to follow the concept that regional affairs should be managed by countries in the region, that we should guard against shocks from turbulence outside the region, and should play a bigger role in Afghanistan's peaceful reconstruction," Hu said.

How they plan to do so remains a question. The SCO has yet to declare a unified strategy on Afghanistan and shows little sign of filling the void left by the withdrawal of U.S. and other foreign forces.

Member nations Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are doing their part

to ensure an orderly withdrawal, having agreed to allow the reverse transport of alliance equipment after Pakistan shut down southern supply routes six months ago.

The fourth Central Asian member of the SCO is Tajikistan.

The pullout will also prompt the end of military operations out of Kyrgyzstan's Manas air base, meeting China and Russia's oft-stated objections to a permanent U.S. presence in Central Asia.

While the SCO's security plans in Afghanistan remain unclear, economic outreach looks set to lead the way.

China — which shares a small stretch of border with Afghanistan — is the most dynamic economy in the region and its firms have already moved into Afghanistan. Kabul is hoping exploitation of its vast untapped mineral deposits will help offset the loss of revenue when foreign aid and spending drops with the withdrawal of international combat troops.

The U.S. Defense Department has put a \$1 trillion price tag on Afghanistan's mineral reserves. Other estimates have pegged it at \$3 trillion or more.

In December, China's state-owned National Petroleum Corp. signed a deal allowing it to become the first foreign company to exploit Afghanistan's oil and natural gas reserves. That comes three years after the China Metallurgical Construction Co. signed a contract to develop the Aynak copper mine in Logar province. Beijing's \$3.5 billion stake in the mine is the largest foreign investment in Afghanistan.

China's government has also contributed substantial aid to Afghanistan over the past decade in the form training and equipment for some security

units and government offices, infrastructure investment, and scholarships for Afghan students.

Russia, which lost nearly 15,000 troops in its disastrous 1979-1989 invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, appears keen to recover some of its lost influence there. Stemming the flow of heroin into Russia is a key concern to be met by increased intelligence work in the country and bolstered border security in surrounding states.

Moscow also has offered generous assistance to rehabilitate Soviet-era dams and power stations and is exploring natural gas exploitation and infrastructure contracts — putting it on a potential collision course with China.

Joint participation in the SCO might help paper over some of those differences, but practical cooperation remains elusive.

"China and Russia have no joint approach to Afghanistan. Cooperation is basically limited to a common political stance," said Zhao Huasheng, director of the Center for Russia and Central Asia Studies of Fudan University in Shanghai.

Wall Street Journal
June 6, 2012
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17. Philippine-American Ties Warm Amid South China Sea Dispute

By James Hookway and Brian Spegele

Philippine President Benigno Aquino III is scheduled to arrive in the U.S. on Wednesday on a visit to strengthen warming ties between the two countries, even as tensions continue between Manila and Beijing in the contested waters of the South China Sea.

On Tuesday, those tensions appeared to cool slightly, after the Philippine government said that China and the Philippines had pulled back maritime-surveillance vessels from the center of a contested shoal, where they have been locked in a weekslong standoff over territorial rights.

The Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs said China withdrew two coast-guard vessels from a lagoon at the middle of Scarborough Shoal, 119 nautical miles, or about 220 kilometers, off the Philippines' northeast coast. A Philippine fisheries protection vessel also partially withdrew in a move the Philippines said it hoped would ease tensions.

"We have been conducting diplomatic consultations with China and the result is the pullout," said Philippine Foreign Affairs Department spokesman Raul Hernandez. "It is part of the process of defusing tension in the area."

The moves didn't mark a full drawdown, however, as both countries are keeping government ships in adjoining areas just outside the lagoon, leaving them ready to re-enter if tensions rise again. There are also some Chinese fishing vessels still in the area. The two countries have announced previous efforts to ratchet down tensions, which have failed as the countries assert their claims to the resource-rich waters.

A spokesman for China's Foreign Ministry, Liu Weimin, said in a statement Tuesday that Chinese "administrative" ships remained deployed near Scarborough Shoal, which China calls Huangyan Island and the Philippines calls Bajo de Masinloc.

"Chinese fishing vessels in the lagoon are operating under normal conditions," Mr. Liu added. "They are no longer receiving interference."

Scarborough Shoal is inside what the Philippines says is its exclusive economic waters under the United Nations definition, while China disputes any claim in the area by the Philippines.

That has heightened ill feelings in the broader South China Sea, which already is the site of several competing sovereignty claims and which is believed to contain large reserves of oil and natural gas beneath the seabed.

In addition, the South China Sea includes some of the world's busiest shipping lanes and security issues in the area are a major source of concern for the U.S., which is now stepping up its diplomatic and military engagement in East and Southeast Asia, drawing complaints from China.

Mr. Aquino has said he would raise the issue in his meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama scheduled for Friday, and predicted that British Prime Minister David Cameron, whom he is set to meet Wednesday in London, is likely to inquire about the situation in the South China Sea.

"It is a body of water where quite a substantial amount of world trade has to pass through. So it's a matter of concern for everybody," Mr. Aquino said.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton infuriated China in 2010 when she said Washington has an interest in ensuring that the South China Sea should remain open to navigation amid the continuing territorial disputes there.

Since then, the U.S. has strengthened ties with Mr. Aquino's administration, which was elected in 2010. The U.S. recently handed over a second refitted coast-guard cutter to the Philippines to help bolster its meager defenses.

The two governments also are discussing ways to enhance the U.S.'s military presence in the Philippines, which numbers several hundred troops who rotate in and out of the country in order to help train and advise Philippine armed forces in their efforts to eliminate Islamist terrorists in the deep south of the country.

The Philippines could emerge as a key part in the long-term U.S. security strategy in Asia and the Pacific. U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said over the weekend in Singapore that the U.S. aims to station 60% of its naval fleet in Asia by 2020, up from about 50% now, reflecting how the U.S. security concerns are shifting toward Asia after a decade focused on the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Mr. Liu, the China Foreign Ministry spokesman, Monday described Washington's plans to scale up its military presence in the region as "untimely," and said all parties should focus on maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Aquino, who arrives in the U.S. late Wednesday, is also likely to discuss growing trade relationships and ways to step up investment in the Philippines during his visits to Britain and the U.S. Once one of Asia's laggards, the Philippines is performing much more strongly after Mr. Aquino launched a drive to tackle corruption and reduce waste from government spending.

His initiative helped lead the country to a series of credit-rating upgrades in recent months, restoring investor confidence in the country. In the first quarter of 2012, gross domestic product rose 6.4% on year compared with 4.9% growth in the 2011 period.

18. Putin Arrives In China, Seeking Stronger Ties

By Jane Perlez

BEIJING — The Russian president, Vladimir V. Putin, arrived in China on Tuesday for meetings aimed at strengthening a partnership between the two countries and offsetting the influence of the United States.

Admired by the Chinese for his staying power as leader of Russia for 12 years, Mr. Putin discussed with President Hu Jintao their common approaches to Syria, according to state television. They appeared certain to deal with their mutual interests in Iran and their efforts to squeeze the United States out of Central Asia, Chinese and American analysts said. Both Beijing and Moscow also oppose an American plan for a missile-defense system in Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe that is intended as protection against Iran.

Mr. Putin's visit, during which he will participate in a summit meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a regional security organization that includes Russia, China and former Soviet republics in Central Asia, stood in stark contrast to his decision not to attend a summit meeting hosted by President Obama last month in the United States.

After their meeting on Tuesday, Mr. Putin and Mr. Hu urged international support for the peace plan brokered for Syria by Kofi Annan, the special United Nations and Arab League envoy, despite calls from Arab and Western states for a tougher response to the bloodshed.

In a show of solidarity with Iran, its president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, will attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting as

an observer. The Kremlin announced that Mr. Putin would meet separately with Mr. Ahmadinejad. This month, Russia is scheduled to host the next round of talks among world powers on the Iranian nuclear program.

Despite their commonality of interests, the relationship between China and Russia is seeded with historic rivalries from the cold war, and the realization in Moscow that the power equation has changed dramatically in recent years because China's overall economy is now far larger than Russia's.

The two countries have yet to come to an agreement on delivering gas from Russia, the world's second biggest producer behind the United States, to China, one of the fastest-growing consumers.

China had originally expected Mr. Putin to make Beijing his first overseas trip after his inauguration as president in early May. But Europe is Russia's biggest energy customer, and Mr. Putin visited Germany and France last Friday, and dropped by Belarus and Uzbekistan in the past week.

The talks between Mr. Putin and Mr. Hu, along with the two-day Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit meeting, are fraught with the symbolism of two major powers interested in further developing a multilateral organization that does not include the United States, and where Iran plays a role, if only as observer.

"Iran, too, is very keen on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," said Vali Nasr, an Iran expert and former State Department official in the Obama administration. "That it is happening in China reflects China's increasing interest in Central Asia and also its

desire to lead international and regional alliances without the U.S."

The six members of the organization are China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Afghanistan, like Iran, will also attend the meeting in Beijing as an observer, a sign of China's growing interests there after the planned 2014 withdrawal by the United States.

Despite what would seem to be a confluence of needs on energy, there was little chance that Russia and China would resolve the outstanding differences over delivery of gas to China in time for an agreement between the two leaders, Arkady V. Dvorkovich, a Russian vice prime minister, said on the eve of the visit. The sticking point after two decades of talks remained price, with Russia wanting to sell its gas at \$350 to \$400 per 1,000 cubic meters, while China is prepared to pay only \$200 to \$250, according to Chinese press reports.

The English-language newspaper China Daily recently reported that China, frustrated by the stalemate between the China National Petroleum Corporation and Russia's Gazprom, increased its supplies from Turkmenistan, a sign of how Beijing's economic strength allows it to play the market.

Even so, the atmospherics on energy had improved and there was now an "opportunity for both sides to unfold a new age of energy cooperation," said Xu Xiaojie, a former director of investment of overseas investment for the China National Petroleum Corporation.

On the subject of the violence in Syria, China and Russia, both permanent members of the United Nations

Security Council, have blocked efforts by Western powers to condemn or call for the removal of President Bashar al-Assad. After the meeting between Mr. Hu and Mr. Putin on Tuesday, Chinese state television reported that "On the Syrian issue, the two heads of state said the international community should continue to support the joint Arab League/U.N. Special Envoy Annan's mediation efforts and the U.N. monitoring mission, to promote a political solution to the problem in Syria."

The two countries "cover each other's back in the United Nations Security Council" on Syria, a senior American official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity in keeping with diplomatic protocol.

Both leaders seemed unconvinced that Mr. Assad is losing his grip on power, the official said, though he added that if it appeared that the Syrian leader had alienated the vast majority of the population, it was conceivable that Russia would distance itself from its longtime ally, with China following suit.

China reiterated the joint approach on Syria at the daily press briefing at the Foreign Ministry on Tuesday, hours after Mr. Putin's arrival. "Both sides oppose external intervention in Syria and oppose regime change by force," Liu Weimin, the spokesman said.

Within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Afghan leader, President Hamid Karzai, is likely to receive special attention. China's vice foreign minister, Cheng Guoping, said Afghanistan was likely to gain full observer status from the organization at the summit meeting.

China, in particular, has started talking to elements of the Taliban to try to ensure

protection of its iron ore, steel and other mineral interests in Afghanistan after the American withdrawal, said Sajjan Gohel, international security director of the Asia-Pacific Foundation, based in London, who visited Beijing recently.

Bree Feng contributed research.

Global Times (China)

June 6, 2012

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19. NGO Issues Report On US Military

Think tank also focuses on Japanese army upgrades

By Deng Jingyin

A military think tank yesterday published its first annual reports on the US' and Japan's military and security developments, in response to an annual US report issued last month, which it said misrepresents China's military development.

The Chinese Strategic Culture Association, a non-government organization composed of experts, scholars and activists specializing in Taiwan and international affairs, pointed out in the report that the US still possesses the strongest armed forces in the world, with the ability to start two large-scale regional wars and launch small-scale emergency operations.

The US is also capable of providing strong support for its return to the Asia-Pacific region and its global strategy of shifting east, the report said.

China should remain alert over the US intervening in South China Sea spats, and also its intention to transfer its strategic center, the report said.

"On the other hand, we should see the deep integration of the economies of the US and China, and the common interests in maintaining peace, stability, development and

cooperation in the world. So we should deepen cooperation and communication between the two countries, especially in the military field, in order to cope with the threats and challenges we are facing," the report said.

Compared with the US military report, the report on Japan's military power focuses more on Japan's strategic adjustments regarding China, the speed of its military equipment upgrades and easing of arms export bans.

Japan has enhanced its military surveillance and espionage activities on China while increasing military deployment in its southwestern islands. It adopted a tough attitude on the issue of the Diaoyu Islands and also actively meddled in the South China Sea issue, the report said.

The report suggested that China and Japan should enhance military exchanges in order to prevent confrontation.

The Chinese government should demand that Japan be more transparent about its military development, and Asian countries have the right to ask Japan to explain their acts that violate the Peace Constitution of Japan, the report said.

Luo Yuan, vice president of the association, told the Global Times that these two reports objectively reflect the military strategy, power, deployment and foreign relations of the two countries in 2011.

"All the quoted information is from the published documents of the US and Japanese military authorities. It is the first military report on another country issued by a non-government think tank in China," said Luo, also a major general at the PLA Academy of Military Sciences.

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20. Asia Summit To Debate Nuclear Iran

Tehran Seen Pressing Russia, China for Support Over Its Standoff With West; Syria Also a Key Topic

By Brian Spegele and Wayne Ma

BEIJING—Iran's president will attempt to shore up support from Russia and China during a closely watched summit of Central Asia leaders beginning Wednesday in Beijing, just as concerns rise over Tehran's nuclear program.

Meanwhile, the meeting provides an opportunity for Russia and China to seek to persuade Iran to tamp down provocations in a friendlier atmosphere than meetings with a heavy Western presence.

Russia and China are also expected to discuss Syria, as they face increasing international pressure to more forcefully respond to attacks on civilians there. The two have blocked international efforts to take a tougher stance against Damascus.

The annual meeting of leaders of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will spotlight China's growing demand for oil and natural gas and its efforts to build stronger ties with resource-rich Central Asian nations. It comes as Russia and China remain deadlocked in negotiations over major gas-pipeline projects once intended to highlight energy cooperation between the countries.

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Beijing on Tuesday and met with China President Hu Jintao. The two pledged to deepen cooperation on nuclear power, among other matters; further details weren't disclosed. The two countries also unveiled details of a previously announced

investment partnership that they hope will raise as much as \$4 billion, and a person familiar with the matter said its initial investment will be about \$200 million in a Russian timber company. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad also arrived late Tuesday.

Along with Russia and China, other organization member states include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Iran holds observer status, as do India, Pakistan and Mongolia.

Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai is also expected to attend. Leaders may discuss regional security cooperation, particularly as an expected withdrawal from Afghanistan by North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces draws nearer and Afghanistan's stability comes under scrutiny.

China's and Russia's close economic and strategic ties to Iran will play a central part in this week's talks, with Iran looking for support as it deals with rising pressure from the U.S. and Europe over its nuclear ambitions. Washington has voiced increasing worries that Iran is developing nuclear weapons. Tehran insists its efforts are peaceful.

Iran, which relies on China for oil revenue and strategic support, will likely seek to mollify Beijing that it has taken steps to address international concerns. Hopes for progress were dealt a setback last month during talks in Baghdad. China in its public statements has been calling for improved cooperation between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency even as it has dismissed U.S. calls for tougher measures against Iran.

China "will try to persuade the Iranians to be more forthcoming and more engaged in diplomacy," said Michal Meidan, a China analyst

for political-risk consultancy Eurasia Group, adding that IAEA talks "give China room for maneuvering."

Meanwhile, Mr. Ahmadinejad likely will be seeking reassurances over energy ties to Beijing. Iran is a major supplier of Chinese crude, but shipments were sharply curtailed this year in what people familiar with the matter have described as a commercial dispute. While resolved, the dispute underscores the give-and-take in China-Iran relations. "The Iranians are concerned that the Chinese are making backup plans," Ms. Meidan said.

Analysts say signing major energy deals with Iran right now would be too provocative, and Beijing is likely to warn Tehran against provoking conflict in a region where tensions already run high.

China has aggressively diversified its sources of imported oil in recent years, a trend analysts partly attribute to concerns over the stability of Iranian oil supply. Iran was China's third-largest oil supplier last year, with about 557,000 barrels a day, after No. 1 Saudi Arabia and No. 2 Angola.

As part of China's global quest for resources to support its booming economy, it has sought to bolster energy infrastructure with its neighbors. But negotiations to embark on major Russia-China pipelines projects have stalled. Analysts say newly available energy resources coupled with China's moderating economy have made China's need for a gas deal with Russia less pressing for now, particularly as Beijing and Moscow remain divided over pricing.

Russian state-controlled natural gas giant OAO Gazprom wants gas prices similar to those it receives in Europe, while China National Petroleum

Corp., the country's largest energy producer, is holding out for a discount, especially on gas piped out of eastern Siberia, which it argues would go to waste if not sent to China.

"China is taking a wait-and-see attitude when it comes to new deals, especially with natural gas, because the economy is slowing down markedly," said Gordon Kwan, head of energy research for Mirae Asset Securities in Hong Kong. "There's no urgency to do major new deals especially when China sits atop the world's largest shale gas resources."

Growing alternative gas supplies, in particular from nearby Turkmenistan, have also slowed Russia-China talks. China's natural-gas imports from Turkmenistan rose to about 4.8 million tons in the January-to-April period, up 76% from a year earlier.

New York Times
June 6, 2012

21. Iran And Azerbaijan, Already Wary Neighbors, Find Even Less To Agree On

By David M. Herszenhorn

BILASUVAR, Azerbaijan — The perennially tense relationship between Azerbaijan and Iran, wary neighbors on the Caspian Sea, has deteriorated in recent weeks amid deep unease in Tehran over expanding military cooperation between Azerbaijan and Israel.

A vital border crossing here has been shut for days at a time, stranding long lines of trucks. Not far away, Iranian warships maneuver in the Caspian Sea. Last week, a senior aide to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was refused entry at the airport in Baku, the Azerbaijani capital. Ambassadors on each side have returned home.

And a public relations war is raging as officials trade nasty barbs online and in the news media — including an exchange in which the two predominantly Muslim countries each accused the other of being overly friendly to gay people.

In March, in perhaps the gravest sign of the strains, authorities in Azerbaijan arrested 22 people they said were part of an Iranian-backed plot to kill American and Israeli diplomats and attack other targets in Baku, though the allegations are as yet unproved.

"Relations between Azerbaijan and Iran have become very hot," said Elhan Shahinoglu, the director of Atlas, a foreign policy research organization in Baku.

Officially, Azerbaijan says it wants to remain neutral in the confrontation over Iran's nuclear program. But the government of President Ilham Aliyev has loudly defended its right to strengthen military ties with Israel, signaled most recently by Azerbaijan's purchase of \$1.6 billion worth of Israeli-made weapons. However, both countries have denied reports that Azerbaijan has given Israel access to its military bases to keep watch over Iran.

The rising importance of Azerbaijan as a strategic ally of the West will be on full display on Wednesday, when Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton lands in Baku on a diplomatic swing through the South Caucasus. With overland supply routes closed in Pakistan, NATO is relying heavily on airfields in Azerbaijan to move supplies to and from Afghanistan.

Ties to the West, however, are only one factor in the tensions with Iran. Azerbaijan has long chafed at Iran's support of Armenia, Azerbaijan's western neighbor and sworn

enemy, in the long-running war over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Even as the situation in and around Azerbaijan has grown increasingly volatile, American officials have seemed largely distracted by the civil war in Syria and by domestic politics.

State Department officials in Washington refused to respond to questions about the friction between Azerbaijan and Iran, the United States' relationship with Baku or the implications for American and international security. "We're not prepared to comment," Robert B. Hilton, a spokesman on European and Eurasian affairs, wrote in an e-mail message.

The United States has not had an ambassador in Baku since the departure in December of Matthew J. Bryza, a well-respected career diplomat and expert on the region, whose nomination was derailed in Congress because of opposition from Armenian-American interest groups.

President Obama had granted Mr. Bryza a temporary recess appointment in 2010.

Late last month, Mr. Obama nominated Richard L. Morningstar, a former ambassador to the European Union and currently the special envoy for Eurasian energy issues, to be the next ambassador in Baku. He is awaiting confirmation by the Senate.

Ali M. Hasanov, a senior political aide to President Aliyev, said the lack of an ambassador was problematic. "We are missing the consultations with the American ambassador," he said in an interview at his office in Baku. "Americans cannot write off a country like Azerbaijan. They cannot leave Azerbaijan on its own."

But American officials often see Azerbaijan as a no-win situation, in which any sign of friendship will inevitably draw criticism from Armenian-American groups or from local and international watchdog groups, which have documented a number of cases of human rights abuses by the Aliyev government.

In a sort of 21st-century echo of Great Game politics, the 19th-century rivalry between Russia and Britain over Central Asia, Russia is also wary of Azerbaijan's relationship with the West.

Moscow is now seeking to renegotiate a lease for a major radar installation in Gabala, Azerbaijan, that is used to track missiles across a huge portion of the globe. Baku demands \$300 million for a new five-year term, a jump from the current \$7 million lease. Mr. Hasanov said the increase was justified because of a sharp rise in property values.

Russia has blamed the United States for pressing Azerbaijan to raise the rent, and has recently threatened to abandon the radar station.

In interviews, government officials, diplomats, academic experts, human rights advocates and citizens said the strained ties between Azerbaijan and Iran also raised the prospect of unrest among the more than 20 million ethnic Azerbaijanis who live in Iran, mostly along its northern border.

Some members of Azerbaijan's Parliament have proposed renaming their country North Azerbaijan to send the message that they view northern Iran as occupied territory that should be called South Azerbaijan. The proposal has not gained momentum, but Iran aggressively seeks to shape public opinion in the border zone, and even broadcasts

television programs entirely in the Azerbaijani language.

It is in the border areas where the current tensions are felt most. Every day in Bilasuvar, truckers line up to cross into Iran, many of them heading to Nakhichevan, an exclave that is cut off from the rest of Azerbaijan because of Armenia's control of Nagorno-Karabakh. By land, it is accessible only through Iran.

Emiro Rovshan, a truck driver carrying a load of shoes, said that in the past three or four months, border closings, apparently ordered by Iran, had become more common, occasionally stranding drivers for days. Still, Mr. Rovshan said, Azerbaijanis should not complain. "We are dependent on Iran," he said. "The way we go to Nakhichevan is a blessing, it is like a gift to us."

Leyla Yunus, the director of the Institute of Peace and Democracy, an organization that monitors human rights abuses in Azerbaijan, said that political repression by the Aliyev government was benefiting Iran, and that the lack of economic opportunities, especially for young people in rural areas, could push them to embrace the religious fervor of Tehran's theocratic authorities.

"What are people watching in rural areas?" Ms. Yunus asked. "Iran TV."

Ms. Yunus said that the United States had muted its criticism of human rights abuses to protect its larger interests in Azerbaijan. "From 2003 to today, we do not see strong criticism from Washington," she said.

For Israel, Azerbaijan has emerged as an extraordinary ally — a friendly Muslim nation that is willing to cooperate on military and strategic issues. And Israel, more than other countries, seems to feel empathy for

the tough neighborhood in which Azerbaijan finds itself, bordered by a declared enemy and two other countries it cannot fully trust.

From Azerbaijan's view, Israel has been more understanding than European countries that have criticized Baku about rights abuses but that do not acknowledge the challenges on its borders or the difficulty in building a secular culture in a predominantly Muslim country.

In a clear rebuke of Iran's theocracy, Baku has loudly emphasized its desire for a secular society, evidenced by its role as host of this year's Eurovision Song Competition. It was in response to Eurovision, which draws many gay fans, that Iranian Web sites said Baku was planning to hold a huge gay rights parade.

Mr. Hasanov, the presidential aide, said he believed that Azerbaijan and Iran would ultimately work things out. "We will find a formula in which the secular state will live in peace with the religious state," he said. "We are proud of the fact that we are Muslims, and we are proud that we are a secular country."

Jerusalem Post

June 6, 2012

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22. Gantz: Israel 'Super-Ready' To Attack Iran

IDF chief slams 'chatter' by former defense officials

By Lahav Harkov

Israeli preparedness to attack Iran is a major deterrent, IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Benny Gantz told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday.

Gantz listed reasons Tehran may give up on nuclear weapons, such as "the vectors of international diplomatic isolation, economic pressure

and sanctions, disturbances to the [nuclear] project that I won't get into and a credible military threat."

He added that "in order to be a credible military threat, we must be super-ready – and as far as I'm concerned, we're super-ready."

The IDF chief explained that Iran had yet to determine whether to use its nuclear capabilities for weapons, and only Tehran could make that final decision. The IDF is prepared for either scenario, he said.

"There is a lot of chatter and public debate on this matter," he pointed out. "The Iranian issue – capabilities or lack thereof, how things are developing and where it's going – is very dynamic, and very few people know what is possible or impossible."

Gantz said many people claimed to know what was happening, but they did not, and the public debate and professional debate were far from each other.

"Some people used to know, and they don't today," he stated, in reference to former defense establishment officials like former Mossad chief Meir Dagan and former Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) chief Yuval Diskin, who have said an attack on Iran would not be effective.

Gantz also said the IDF was concerned about arms smuggling between Hezbollah and Syria, noting that there was more movement than ever before and that Iran and Hezbollah were very involved in Syria.

Instability on the Golan Heights has increased as a result of the situation in Syria, as have the security issues near the border, although there has not yet been any terrorist activity, he said.

The chief of staff called Syria a "lose-lose situation," because if Syrian President Bashar Assad were to fall, radical elements would take over. If he remains in power, he will be weak, Gantz continued, and there will be instability.

"Good things won't happen in Syria," the IDF chief said, explaining that there was likely to be an increase in arms smuggling in either case.

He also called for the IDF to compile a multi-year plan with an increased budget, saying that at present the military was "floating like a raft, not sailing like a boat."

"The framework of the budget does not allow a reasonable continuation of a multi-year plan in the complex strategic reality and negative trends," he stated. "We must ensure our ability to attack from the air and ground at the same time. I must ensure that the active units are not hollow and can fulfill any mission."

Gantz added that he had total faith in the air force and intelligence, but that he must make sure to preserve their power.

New York Times
June 6, 2012

23. Syria Bars 17 Western Diplomats And Allows Increased Aid Agency Presence

By J. David Goodman And Nick Cumming-Bruce

Syria's Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday that more than a dozen Western ambassadors and envoys were no longer welcome, a response to the coordinated expulsion last week of Syrian diplomats from the United States and 10 other nations.

But Syria's tough words appeared to be tempered by an agreement to allow international relief agencies to

increase their presence and deliver aid to an estimated one million people from field offices in four cities — Dara'a, Homs, Idlib and Deir al-Zour — upended by the 15-month-old uprising against President Bashar al-Assad's government.

"Whether this is a breakthrough or not will be apparent in the next few days," said John Ging, director of operations for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in Geneva. "Freedom of movement, unimpeded access for humanitarian action within Syria is what it's all about now. The good faith of the Syrian government will be tested today, tomorrow and every day."

The announcement came as a Foreign Ministry statement listed 17 diplomats declared persona non grata by the Syrian government, including Ambassador Robert S. Ford of the United States and several others who have not been in the country for many months. The State Department closed its embassy in Damascus in February as the conflict worsened.

Last week, 11 Western nations acted in unison to expel envoys from Syria in an expression of outrage over a massacre in the Houla region, near Homs, that left 108 people dead, including many women and children.

The response by the Syrian government on Tuesday appeared to underscore the largely symbolic nature of those expulsions and the determination of Mr. Assad to maintain his course despite international outcry over the seemingly intractable cycle of killing. Mr. Assad has denied any responsibility for the May 25 Houla massacre.

"The Syrian Arab Republic still believes in the importance

of dialogue based on principles of equality and mutual respect," read the ministry statement, quoted by Syria's state news agency, SANA. "We hope the countries that initiated these steps will adopt those principles, which would allow relations to return to normal again."

Along with Mr. Ford, the list included diplomats from Belgium, Britain, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Switzerland, each of which joined in expelling Syria's representatives last week, as well as the entire embassy staff from Turkey. The Turkish government, which is host to thousands of Syrian refugees along the border, has been especially critical of Mr. Assad.

The diplomatic wrangling has occurred against a backdrop of more violence in recent days, in violation of a nearly two-month-old cease-fire agreement brokered by Kofi Annan, the special envoy for the United Nations and the Arab League. There have been reports of at least two further killings of large numbers of people at close range since the Houla massacre.

Antigovernment activists have blamed the Syrian military for the brutality of the conflict and have reported that a large number of attacks on military checkpoints over the past three days have killed dozens of Syrian soldiers. The Syrian government, for its part, has said that much of the killing, including the massacre at Houla, was carried out by groups of armed men or "terrorists."

Journalists have been largely prevented from moving freely about Syria to report on events there, making competing claims difficult to verify. But the government's account of at least one spate of violence appeared to gain credibility on

Tuesday as a militant group claimed responsibility for the deaths of 13 men in the eastern city of Deir al-Zour last week, news agencies reported.

The group, Al-Nusra Front, also has claimed responsibility for a string of recent attacks, including twin suicide car bombings that killed 55 in the Syrian capital last month. Analysts have seen indications that the branch of Al Qaeda in neighboring Iraq was involved in establishing the shadowy group.

Western nations that want Mr. Assad to resign have been prevented from engaging in more robust international action in support of the Syrian opposition, in part by Russia and China, which have resisted any such efforts by the United Nations Security Council.

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia traveled to China on Tuesday for meetings with President Hu Jintao that included discussion of their approach to Syria. Both leaders urged continued support of a peace plan negotiated by Mr. Annan "to promote a political solution to the problem in Syria."

The credibility of Mr. Annan's plan has been severely undermined by the violence, which has left an estimated 10,000 people dead and many more displaced.

A spokesman for the Free Syrian Army, a collection of anti-Assad militiamen, was quoted by Reuters on Monday as saying it no longer felt bound by the cease-fire component of Mr. Annan's plan because the government had failed to respect it.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an activist group, said that clashes on Tuesday between rebel forces and the Syrian military had left more than a dozen soldiers dead in western Latakia Province.

Mr. Annan is to brief the Security Council on Thursday about the plan, which officially took effect in mid-April.

The agreement to allow aid workers greater range in the country was accepted two days ago by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Damascus, and it was assumed to have the blessing of higher authorities, a senior United Nations official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. Syria's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Fayssal al-Hamwi, conveyed the decision by the Syrian government at a meeting on Tuesday.

Relief agencies working in Syria — specifically the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross — had made some limited progress in increasing access to populations in need in recent weeks, said Kelly Clements, deputy assistant secretary to the United States mission in Geneva.

Under the agreement, the Syrian government will facilitate visas for aid personnel and customs clearance for relief supplies entering Syria and will allow relief agencies previously limited to a base in Damascus to establish field offices in Homs, Idlib, Dara'a and Deir al-Zour, said Mr. Ging of the United Nations humanitarian affairs office.

Once established, relief teams in these four cities would focus on delivering food, medicine, hygiene kits, blankets, kitchen sets and materials to repair schools, a United Nations bulletin said.

J. David Goodman reported from New York, and Nick Cumming-Bruce from Geneva.

Washington Post
June 6, 2012
Pg. 8

24. Clinton, In Georgia, Pledges Military Aid

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton pledged U.S. assistance in training pro-Western Georgia's military in coastal defenses and underscored Washington's rejection of Russia's "occupation" of two separatist Georgian regions after a five-day war between Tbilisi and Moscow.

Speaking in the Black Sea resort town of Batumi, Clinton also urged Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili to hold free and fair parliamentary elections as his term in office expires. While praising Georgian economic and anti-corruption measures, U.S. officials fear that Saakashvili's dominance has stifled other potential leaders.

Clinton's comments are seen as likely to antagonize Russia, which sent troops into Georgia in 2008, routing its military before recognizing the two breakaway regions as independent countries.

-- Reuters

New York Times
June 6, 2012

25. Senators To Open Inquiry Into 'Kill List' And Iran Security Leaks

By The New York Times

WASHINGTON — The Senate will investigate recent national security leaks to the news media after articles in The New York Times about a "kill list" for terrorists and the use of cyberweapons against Iran, a Senate official said on Tuesday.

Tara Andringa, a spokeswoman for Senator Carl Levin of Michigan, the Democratic chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said the committee would hold hearings "pertaining to recent

public reports of classified information."

Senator Dianne Feinstein, chairman of the Intelligence Committee, said in a statement: "Today I sent a classified letter to the president outlining my deep concerns about the release of this information. I made it clear that disclosures of this type endanger American lives and undermine America's national security." She said she had discussed the possibility of joint hearings with Mr. Levin.

The announcement of hearings came after two Republican senators, John McCain of Arizona and Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, called for the appointment of a special counsel to investigate the leaks.

"Such disclosures can only undermine similar ongoing or future operations and, in this sense, compromise national security," Mr. McCain said on the Senate floor. "For this reason, regardless of how politically useful these leaks may be to the president, they have to stop."

Mr. McCain referred to the articles in The Times, which detailed Mr. Obama's engagement in the decisions of which terrorists to target, and said he personally directed the cyberefforts against Iran. Mr. McCain, the ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee, told reporters that he believes the leaks were designed "to enhance President Obama's image as a tough guy for the elections."

The statement from Mr. Levin said of the hearing that "any discussion of classified information by the committee or committees would necessarily be closed."

Tacoma News Tribune
June 6, 2012

26. Smith Watches Special Forces At Work

By Adam Ashton, Staff writer
Rep. Adam Smith, D-Tacoma, used his second trip to Africa to visit with a Special Forces contingent helping the Ugandan military track down warlord Joseph Kony.

Smith, the ranking Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, came away with the impression that the 50 to 100 elite service members aiding the Ugandan military are doing good work at a low cost to U.S. taxpayers.

He thinks they have a reasonable shot at tracking down Kony, the leader of the Lords Resistance Army who has terrorized communities in central Africa since the 1980s.

The mission, though, is bigger than Kony. Its real value, Smith said, comes in improved ties to developing militaries that will be important U.S. allies in an unstable part of the world.

"There's a lot of instability and insecurity in that region, and it's a region where we need to develop better relationships," Smith said.

He joined a congressional delegation on its visit to Uganda and Kenya last week. The lawmakers spent two days in each country meeting with intelligence, defense and economic development officials.

Smith described the Kenyans as important allies in searching for Islamist militants in Somalia. A terrorist attack took place shortly after the lawmakers' visit to Nairobi. A fertilizer bomb in the city injured 38 people, and Kenya's leaders have not yet said whether it was carried by the Islamist group al-Shabab.

Part of the visit centered on learning about Kenya's preparations for upcoming elections. Smith's last trip to Kenya in 2009 focused on

violence that followed the country's elections that year.

President Obama sent the Special Forces contingent to Uganda in October. The service members mostly spend their time training the Ugandan forces at small bases.

Smith described that relationship as an effective way to pursue Western interests without sending tens of thousands of conventional soldiers for an overseas conflict.

"That's much cheaper and more effective than dropping 100,000 guys in Afghanistan," he said.

He said the Ugandan forces are drawing in on Kony and his holdout followers from the Lords Resistance Army.

"That's a big, big part of the world, and it's dense jungle in some places," Smith said. "It's not going to be easy, but they have a decent bead on where he is, and where the rest of the leaders of the LRA are."

Read more here:
[http://www.thenewstribune.com/2012/06/06/2012-06-06/smith-watches-special-forces-at.html#storylink=cpy](http://www.thenewstribune.com/2012/06/06/2012-06-06/2012-06-06/smith-watches-special-forces-at.html#storylink=cpy)

Washington Post
June 6, 2012
Pg. B4
Federal Diary

27. Deep In Defense Bill, Language To Block Pay Raises

By Joe Davidson

Developments that strike at the federal workforce have been coming quickly lately.

In the past few days, House Republicans proposed funding the nation's student loan program with federal retirement money, the House approved legislation that would deny proposed pay raises for more than half the government's civilian employees, and a union complained that a Pentagon policy leaves its

civilian workforce "confused and anxious."

Let's start with the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, H.R. 5854 in Capitol Hill shorthand. The House approved it overwhelmingly Thursday, with a 407-12 vote. The legislation would affect the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, which together employ more than 50 percent of Uncle Sam's staff.

The bill does lots of good things, including providing money for military family and veterans' housing, a vocational rehabilitation loan program, and medical and prosthetic research.

But deep into the bill, Sec. 231 would rescind several important pieces of VA funding for fiscal year 2013: "\$62,924,000 are rescinded from 'Medical services', \$12,737,000 are rescinded from 'Medical support and compliance', and \$5,593,000 are rescinded from 'Medical facilities'."

Why would money be taken from those worthwhile accounts? Because otherwise it would be used to pay for the 0.5 percent civilian pay raise that President Obama has proposed for next year.

"Amounts rescinded in this section shall be derived from amounts that would otherwise have been available for the increase in civilian pay for fiscal year 2013 proposed in the President's request," is the legislative language.

So, the House wants to provide services to veterans while attacking the pay of those who deliver the services.

Another section would block Defense Department pay raises.

It's unlikely that the legislation will get through the Senate in its current form. And if it does, the White House

said the president is likely to veto it. A statement from the administration says that it objects, among other things, to the civilian pay sections of the bill, "as well as any other effort to reduce pay for civilian personnel that would effectively extend the freeze on civilian pay through FY 2013."

That two-year freeze on basic pay rates will cost federal workers \$60 billion over 10 years.

"A permanent pay freeze is neither sustainable nor desirable," the White House statement adds. "The Administration encourages the Congress to support the proposed 0.5 percent pay raise."

Despite the threatened veto, members of Obama's party overwhelmingly joined Republicans in voting for the measure.

"Democrats supported the bill because it provides critical funding to programs that support our veterans and our military. There is no disconnect with the White House," said Mariel Saez, a spokeswoman for Rep. Steny H. Hoyer (Md.), the Democratic whip. He "will work to ensure the provision is dropped during conference."

Hoyer also spoke against a Republican proposal to pay for an extension of reduced interest rates for student loans by increasing federal employees' retirement contributions. In a letter to Obama, House and Senate Republican leaders noted that the president's 2013 budget proposal calls for increasing employee contributions by 1.2 percent over three years, in increments of 0.4 percent per year. The GOP plan would use that increase to pay for the student loan program.

"Such loans are an important aspect of paying for higher education in America, but seeking to have federal

employees - who have done more than their share to address our nation's financial and economic issues - pay for such an extension is the wrong course," said Colleen M. Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union.

While Capitol Hill proposals are enough to keep federal employees occupied, another situation across the Potomac has them a bit perplexed. In a letter sent Friday to Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta, American Federation of Government Employees President John Gage asked for clarification on a workforce policy that was issued and rescinded on the same day in May.

The policy concerns a call by 26 senators and 131 members of the House to "eliminate the arbitrary cap on the civilian workforce." In similar letters to Panetta, the Senate and House members said that if the cap limiting the workforce to 2010 levels is not lifted, a similar cap should be imposed on contractors.

"If there is work to be done and the funding to pay for that work, managers should not be arbitrarily prevented from using civilian employees," both letters said.

Despite the arguments from the lawmakers, the Pentagon issued guidance last month extending the cap through 2018, according to Gage's letter.

"Just when it appeared that the Department could not be more biased in favor of service contractors," he said, "civilian personnel were hit with this broadside."

But for unexplained reasons, the Pentagon took the guidance back almost as soon as it was issued.

"Regardless," Gage wrote, "the issuance of the May 23 guidance has left the civilian

workforce more unnecessarily confused and anxious than ever."

The Pentagon had no comment.

"As a policy, we don't comment on correspondence sent to the secretary," said Cynthia O. Smith, a Defense spokeswoman. "The secretary will respond to Mr. Gage as appropriate."

Union chief steps down

Meanwhile, Gage has announced that he will not seek reelection as president of the American Federation of Government Employees, the nation's largest federal labor organization.

In a letter sent Tuesday to his union members, Gage said: "I've never been able to put the union in the proper place; I've never been able to be the activist and simultaneously take care of those who love me. For once, I'm putting my family first."

An election for his successor will take place at the union's August convention in Las Vegas.

Gage has been president for nine years and has worked full-time for the AFGE since 1977. High on his list of accomplishments is the union's victory last year in an election to represent almost 50,000 Transportation Security Administration officers.

"I intend to finish negotiating AFGE's first contract with TSA," Gage said in his letter.

Reuters.com
June 5, 2012

28. F-35 Production Quality Worries Senate Panel

By Andrea Shalal-Esa, Reuters
WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday questioned the quality of production on the Lockheed

Martin Corp F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, citing a "potentially serious issue" with its electronic warfare capability.

"The committee is ... concerned about production quality and whether it is sufficient to ensure the delivery of JSF aircraft to the U.S. and its allies at an affordable price," the committee said in a report accompanying its fiscal 2013 defense budget bill.

Italy has already scaled back its planned orders for the new, radar-evading warplane and several other countries are slowing their orders, citing budgetary pressures. Japan has warned it could cancel its order if the cost per plane rises from what it was offered.

Lockheed is building the new radar-evading fighters for the U.S. military and eight foreign countries helping to fund its development, Britain, Norway, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Turkey, Australia and Italy. Japan and Israel have also ordered the fighters for their militaries.

Questions over the quality of production of the F-35 will compound the mounting woes of the \$396 billion Pentagon program, which has already been restructured three times in recent years to extend the development phase and slow production.

The committee said it was troubled by the average rate of scrap, rework and repair at Lockheed's Fort Worth, Texas facility from 2009 through the first two months of 2012, but gave no details.

"Inattention to production quality" had led to the discovery of a potentially serious issue with an aperture on the plane that was critical to its electronic warfare capability, the report said. The full extent of the problem was not known, but it underscored the need for the Pentagon and Lockheed to

"rigorously manage production quality," it said.

Lockheed has hired about 200 temporary workers to keep production of the F-35 and F-16 fighters on track at the Fort Worth plant, where 3,300 union workers are in the seventh week of a strike over pension and health care benefits.

Lockheed says the new workers are being carefully trained, but union officials have questioned whether the quality of production -- already an issue -- would be maintained by workers with less experience on the complex weapons system.

No new talks have been scheduled.

The Pentagon projects the cost to develop and buy 2,443 planes for the U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps will be around \$396 billion.

The committee's report reiterated long-standing congressional concerns that Lockheed is already producing planes even as testing continues, which can lead to costly retrofits.

The most recent restructuring added 33 months and \$7.9 billion to the development plan.

The report also cited concern about lack of progress on software development for the new aircraft, noting that "the potential cascading effect of failures to deliver software ... can be particularly pernicious."

No comment was immediately available from the Pentagon's F-35 program office or Lockheed about the Senate report.

The Senate report said it was hopeful that the Pentagon's new acquisition approach to the program -- which more closely ties orders for future planes to contractor performance -- would help address the software and production quality issues.

But it said the approach required "a very clear, specific

and realistically achievable set of performance criteria" that made it clear to Lockheed how its performance would be assessed.

The committee directed the Pentagon to provide these criteria to the congressional defense committees so they could be assessed before they were implemented.

Lockheed and the Pentagon have been negotiating for over five months about a contract for a fifth batch of 32 planes, but the two sides are still far apart, a source familiar with the issue told Reuters last week.

Last week, Lockheed Chief Executive Bob Stevens said his company was working hard to drive down overheads, but the Pentagon's demands for ever more cost data were adding to the very overhead costs the government wants to see lowered.

Washington Post
June 6, 2012
Pg. 11

29. Latin America Treaty Rejected By 4 Nations

By Associated Press

COCHABAMBA, Bolivia -- Four Latin American countries announced Tuesday that they are pulling out of a regional defense treaty while pressing for changes in the Organization of American States.

The foreign ministers of Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Nicaragua said on the final day of an OAS meeting that their countries are withdrawing from the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance.

Ecuadoran Foreign Minister Ricardo Patino said the treaty, signed in 1947, is no longer relevant. The treaty says an armed attack against any OAS member state is to be considered an attack against

all of them. Patino said the countries decided "to throw into the trash something that's no longer useful."

In Washington, State Department spokesman Mark Toner said the U.S. government "supports reforms to the management and procedures of the human rights organs of the OAS, but only those reforms that are achieved through consensus and that contribute to strengthening the institutions."

USA Today
June 6, 2012
Pg. 2

30. Army To Review Mental Health Compensation

190,000 records dating to 2001 to get second look

By Gregg Zoroya, USA Today

WASHINGTON -- The Army says it will pore through -- in less than 90 days -- about 190,000 medical files of current and former soldiers dating to 2001 to see whether any were shortchanged on retirement compensation for mental health problems.

Army Secretary John McHugh had announced the unprecedented review three weeks ago, but details about the scope of the effort surfaced this week.

The estimated 190,000 cases represent about 160,000 soldiers who went through medical exams -- in some cases more than once -- since 2001, says Lt. Col. Richard Paz, executive officer for a task force leading the effort.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., who has pushed hard for a broad review, says she was pleased "that the Army is taking sweeping steps to review this problem, (but) it will be essential that it's done right. That means prompt attention to the problems of servicemembers identified

during the review and quick action to implement and enforce solutions."

The 10-year review was prompted by a scandal at the Madigan Army Medical Center near Tacoma, Wash., where post-traumatic stress disorder diagnoses of soldiers seeking medical retirements were downgraded, potentially reducing pension payments.

The review is "going to be hard to execute, but let's satisfy these soldiers," says Maj. Gen. Richard Thomas, new head of the Army's Western Regional Medical Command.

The scandal led to several internal Army investigations, Senate hearings and McHugh's decision for a 10-year review.

"The secretary's opinion was if there's any possibility that we've left a service member disadvantaged, we must reach out to them. And he wanted absolute assurance that we've left no one behind," says Maj. Gen. Richard Stone, Army deputy surgeon general.

"What we need to absolutely assure the American people and our servicemembers... (is) that there is not those sorts of (Madigan) patterns anywhere else in the Army," Stone says.

The focus of the Army review is looking at evaluations done in the course of determining whether a soldier should be medically retired.

More than 200 medical administrative workers across 31 Army hospitals are culling through both digital and, where necessary, paper records to see where there was a behavioral health diagnosis and whether that diagnosis was changed, Paz says.

Where a mental health diagnosis was changed to a lesser illness, the soldier or veteran will be allowed the opportunity to be re-examined -- even after many years have

passed -- to determine whether a mistake was made, Stone says.

The Army will also work to determine whether there are any hospitals that systematically mishandled in the same way as Madigan, Stone says.

"The secretary's opinion was if there's any possibility that we've left a servicemember disadvantaged, we must reach out to them. And he wanted absolute assurance that we've left no one behind," Stone says.

Portland (ME) Press Herald
June 6, 2012

31. Cost To Repair Fire-Damaged Sub In Maine Set At \$400 Million

That's the Navy's initial estimate, but it's still unclear whether the USS Miami can be saved.

By David Hensch, Staff Writer

Navy officials issued a preliminary cost estimate Tuesday of \$400 million to repair the nuclear submarine that burned last month at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery -- if the sub can be fixed at all.

Navy investigators are still examining the USS Miami to determine the extent of the damage and whether the vessel can be saved. The Navy must be sure that the steel hull was not damaged so badly that it cannot withstand the intense pressure of the deep ocean.

Fire broke out in the forward compartments of the submarine May 23 and burned for 10 hours as firefighters from three states fought to extinguish it.

Members of Maine's congressional delegation said the shipyard is in a good position to make the repairs if the Navy decides to go ahead.

"That (\$400 million) number certainly could change, but I think it's a workable figure and I'm optimistic that this

means the boat is repairable, that the work can be done at Kittery and the Navy will be able to come up with the money for the repair," said U.S. Rep. Chellie Pingree, D-Maine, who toured the submarine Monday. Pingree is a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, which has a Defense Appropriations subcommittee that may be in a position to seek additional money in the defense spending bill to make the repairs. The House has already passed its version of the bill.

"Should the Navy determine ... that the Miami can safely operate following repairs, I stand ready to work to help ensure the Navy has the necessary funds," Collins said.

She said the dry dock at the shipyard where the USS Miami was getting a 20-month engineered refueling overhaul was due to be vacant for 14 months once work on the Miami was finished. That means extended repairs can be done without affecting the Navy's current maintenance schedule.

The \$400 million repair estimate is twice the cost of the initial overhaul, which was intended to extend the Miami's useful life by 10 years. But it's a fraction of the roughly \$2 billion it costs to build the latest generation of submarines, the Virginia class.

Pingree's spokesman, Willy Ritch, said it is not clear whether the \$400 million would be in addition to the \$200 million already budgeted for the overhaul.

The Miami, a Los Angeles-class attack submarine, cost \$900 million to build in 1990.

The number of U.S. attack submarines is projected to drop

in the coming years as older submarines are retired more quickly than they are replaced. Pingree said Monday that the Navy had 98 submarines in the late 1980s and will have 43 in 2020. A 1999 Defense Department study recommended a minimum of 55 submarines in 2015 and 62 in 2025.

Navy officials have said that makes each submarine increasingly important.

The cost of repairing the Miami after the fire would have been higher, but many pieces of expensive equipment had been removed as part of the overhaul. Also, the fire did not damage the rear half of the sub, where the nuclear propulsion system is located.

Pingree was notified of the repair estimate Monday night in a telephone call from Navy officials, Ritch said.

"When I was at the yard (Monday), every indication I got from the workers there was that they could fix the Miami," Pingree said in a news release. "Nothing is official yet, but this preliminary estimate gives us more reason to believe the ship will be repaired right here in Kittery."

Dayton Daily News

June 6, 2012

Pg. 1

32. 'Hometown Girl' Is First Female Four-Star General In Air Force

Beavercreek grad to lead Materiel Command as Wright-Patterson heads into restructuring phase.

By Barrie Barber, Staff writer

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE — Before Gen. Janet C. Wolfenbarger begins overseeing a historic reshaping of the biggest command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, she made a little history herself.

Again.

Wolfenbarger, 54, had a fourth star pinned on her Tuesday, to become the first woman in the Air Force to achieve the highest rank. It came 32 years after the "hometown girl" who graduated from Beavercreek High School was part of the first graduating class of 97 female cadets in 1980 at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

"I am humbled, I am honored, I am ready, and I am really, really excited," she told an audience of about 1,000 who witnessed the historic promotion and change of command ceremony at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton A. Schwartz, Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donnelly and Air Force commanding generals from around the world attended. Gen. Donald Hoffman, outgoing AFMC commander and a former F-16 pilot, retired at the ceremony 38 years to the day he started his Air Force career as a second lieutenant.

Wolfenbarger will have the responsibility to manage AFMC, a command with a \$60 billion budget and a workforce of more than 80,000 service wide, as it consolidates 12 directorates into five across nine bases by Oct. 1. AFMC, responsible for the testing, development and acquisition of equipment and systems, employs about 13,700 people at Wright-Patterson, or about 9,900 civilians and 3,800 military personnel.

Budget cuts drove the consolidation plan leaders say will leave a leaner and smaller but still capable Air Force but has left some defense contractors concerned about the future. AFMC's budget remained largely the same

between last year and this one, but the future remains unknown as political leaders argue over federal budget cuts, officials said.

Wolfenbarger, a former AFMC vice commander who had key roles in the development of the F-22 Raptor, B-2 Spirit and C-17 Globemaster III aircraft, said the restructuring ranks as her top priority.

"Our mission is as serious today as it ever has been," she said.

While the general will confront both budgetary constraints and a massive restructuring that will lead to the reduction of about 1,000 jobs service wide by this fall, AFMC at Wright-Patterson will gain more responsibility with a new Air Force Life Cycle Management Center, said Maurice "Mo" MacDonald, the Dayton Development Coalition's vice president of military affairs.

The new center will expand the base's role as an acquisitions hub. "That's a significant undertaking," he said, adding "AFMC is very susceptible to budget cuts because of the budget they work with."

Richard Eckhardt, a retired AFMC civilian deputy comptroller and chief financial officer, said employees will face a learning curve with the changes and want certainty in their jobs.

"It's a period of change, and anytime you go through a period of change you have challenges," he said.

Modern history

Wolfenbarger's historic accomplishment marks another major aviation-related milestone in the Miami Valley since the Wright brothers invented the airplane, said Tony Sculimbrene, executive director of the National Aviation Heritage Alliance.

"We had another piece of history created today," he said. "The Air Force didn't assign it's first female four-star general to a place that's not going to count."

Wolfenbarger is one of a handful of women who have reached the highest levels of command in the U.S. military. Army Gen. Ann E. Dunwoody, commander of the Army Materiel Command, was the first woman to achieve four-star rank in 2008.

"It finally says that women are being recognized for their contribution and their capabilities to be leaders in our armed services, that it's really not just a man's world," said Mary D. Ross, an Army and Gulf War veteran and national commander of the Women Veterans of America in Nashville, Tenn.

"They are earning these positions out of their own merit, not just because they are women," said Susan Feland, president of Academy Women, which represents female military officers.

Wolfenbarger's promotion follows the Pentagon opening more roles to females to serve in combat in recent weeks.

Opening the door to more combat-related jobs will remove a barrier to promotion for women, said Feland, program director at the Stanford University Graduate School of Business's Center for Leadership Development and Research.

Women have proven they can handle the expanded roles in Iraq and Afghanistan and in past conflicts, said Wilma L. Vaught, a retired Air Force brigadier general and Vietnam veteran.

"The big thing I think that we're seeing happening with women in the service is they have a greater opportunity to compete on a

level playing field, and the playing field hasn't always been level and that makes a big difference," said Vaught, president of the Women in Military Service Memorial Foundation in Arlington, Va.

Miami Herald

June 6, 2012

Pg. 6B

Florida Briefs

33. Pentagon: No Air Show

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has a blunt message for Miami-Dade County: There will be no aviation expo on the Homestead air base.

The Pentagon chief rejected the county's appeal of the Air Force's decision not to turn over its runway to the proposed show, which would target major aviation companies looking to show off planes to buyers throughout the Western Hemisphere. The show was a top priority for the Beacon Council, Miami-Dade's tax-funded economic development agency, and it had hoped to find a sympathetic ear in the Pentagon.

"As you know, the department is facing a difficult budget environment," Panetta wrote in a May 30 letter that arrived at the Beacon Council's Miami office on Friday. "While your goal is undoubtedly worthwhile, we are simply not in a position to devote resources in playing a central role in a commercial endeavor of this nature."

Frank Nero, the Beacon Council's president, said the letter baffled him, since the show only needs to use the base's runway once every other year for the expo. Most of the activity would take place on county-owned land next to the base. Nero said he did not think it would cost the base anything.

The push for a commercial air expo is not connected to the yearly Homestead air show, which features aerial acrobatics and is not affected by the Pentagon's opposition to the Beacon Council's plans. The site is now being promoted as a potential production facility built by celebrity developer and television star Donald Trump.

Nero noted the November elections could bring a new secretary of defense, no matter which party wins the White House.

"Are we giving up completely? No," Nero said. "But doing this with the current leadership is probably not going to happen."

DOUGLAS HANKS

Wall Street Journal

June 6, 2012

Pg. 2

34. FBI Probes Leaks On Iran Cyberattack

By Evan Perez and Adam Entous

WASHINGTON—The FBI has opened an investigation into who disclosed information about a classified U.S. cyberattack program aimed at Iran's nuclear facilities, according to two people familiar with the probe.

The investigation follows publication last week of details of the cyber-sabotage program, including the use of a computer worm called Stuxnet, which Iran has acknowledged it found in its computers.

The Central Intelligence Agency ran the operation in conjunction with Idaho National Laboratory, the Israeli government and other U.S. agencies, according to people familiar with the efforts.

The covert effort also includes drone surveillance and cyberspying on Iranian scientists, the people said.

The New York Times on Friday published an account of the U.S. cyberattack operation in an excerpt from a forthcoming book by one of its reporters, David Sanger, that he said he has been working on for a year. Other news organizations, including The Wall Street Journal, followed up with details about the program.

Paul Bresson, a spokesman for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, declined to comment.

The probe comes on the heels of another leak investigation involving revelations about a double agent who infiltrated al Qaeda's Yemen affiliate.

FBI Director Robert Mueller told lawmakers recently the FBI was looking into how news leaked about the double agent and a new-generation underwear bomb the al Qaeda affiliate had hoped to use in an airliner attack.

The Associated Press, which first reported the Yemen news, has said it held the news for several days at the government's request.

Republican Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, in speeches on the Senate floor Tuesday, called for the president to appoint a special counsel to investigate what Mr. Chambliss called "a pattern of leaks."

Mr. McCain said the leaks raised the prospect that they are "an attempt to further the president's political ambitions for the sake of his re-election at the expense of our national security." Some Democratic lawmakers also criticized the leaks but said they didn't believe they were politically motivated.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest on Friday brushed aside suggestions that the

information was intentionally leaked.

"It's classified for a reason, because publicizing that information would pose a significant threat to national security," he told reporters. White House officials had no immediate comment on Mr. McCain's comments or on the FBI probe.

The U.S. and its Western allies suspect Iran's nuclear program is aimed at producing atomic weapons. Tehran denies that and says the program is for peaceful purposes.

The reports on the Iran cyberattacks said the operation, called Olympic Games, began in the Bush administration and accelerated under Mr. Obama.

The New York Times account attributed some information to officials who served in both the Bush and Obama administrations.

Mr. Sanger, in an appearance on CBS News's "Face the Nation" program Sunday, suggested that deliberate White House leaking "wasn't my experience."

He added: "I spent a year working the story from the bottom up, and then went to the administration and told them what I had. Then they had to make some decisions about how much they wanted to talk about it...I'm sure the political side of the White House probably likes reading about the president acting with drones and cyber and so forth. National-security side has got very mixed emotions about it because these are classified programs."

A spokesman for New York Times Co. declined to comment, and Mr. Sanger said he stood by his comments from Sunday.

35. Ceremonies Hail Grads Headed Into Military

Communities show enlistees appreciation

By Natalie DiBlasio, USA Today

Not that long ago, Joshua Stinson's decision to join the Marines wouldn't have gotten big fanfare in his community.

But the 18-year-old is one of a growing number of military-bound high school seniors honored in special graduation ceremonies across the nation.

"There are all sorts of bells and whistles and ceremonies for kids going off to college, but there is no conversation about kids going off to the military," said Ken Hartman, former school board member in Cherry Hill, N.J. "What about these kids going off to war? Sacrificing their lives? There is nothing for them."

Frustrated by a lack of recognition for enlistees at Cherry Hill High School, Hartman launched Our Community Salutes, a program to distinguish the graduates entering the military.

Since Hartman's first ceremony in 2009, Our Community Salutes has grown. This year, 4,700 enlistees were recognized in 22 ceremonies in states including California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia.

"It's important that people know and care that young kids enlist in the military -- it slips under the radar," Stinson said. "They think everyone enlists after college or that are in their 20s, but really there are kids that enlist out of high school."

In fiscal 2011, 28.8% of enlistees were 17 or 18 when they entered active duty, totaling 43,850, Department of

Defense spokeswoman Eileen Lainez said.

The ceremonies show the graduates that their community is behind them, said Gene Clark, executive director of Our Community Salutes.

"It's taken off, and it's going to explode," Clark said. "I already have 44 cities planning ceremonies for 2013, and that number is only going up."

Toni Stinson, Joshua's mother, organized this week's inaugural Our Community Salutes event in Fredericksburg, Va., after the school board rejected her request to have military-bound students in her son's class wear red, white and blue cords at graduation.

"People in the service now can expect to deploy, and families sacrifice a lot," she said. "It isn't a safe place that they go. They deserve recognition."

Stinson, holding back tears, told the students they "will certainly make this community proud. Train hard. Stay safe."

Speakers, including Virginia state Rep. Rob Wittman, Brig. Gen. Joseph Osterman and Chief Master Sgt. Scott Fuller, made up the receiving line after the 37 recognized enlistees accepted their congressional record of enlistment. "Thank you for your sacrifice. Service really is a family affair," Wittman said, greeting each family individually throughout the evening.

Navy enlistee Joshua Love didn't have any family attending the ceremony in Fredericksburg, and he didn't know anyone at the ceremony, but he appreciated the support. "It's an honor to be recognized. I really feel like my community is behind me," he said.

Love will leave for Navy basic training in September. "Before I go," he said, "I just

want to live my life as a kid for a little bit longer."

New York Times
June 6, 2012

36. Veterans Pension Program Is Being Abused, Report Says

By James Dao

A yearlong investigation into a federal pension program for low-income veterans has concluded that weak oversight and unclear rules have made the system ripe for abuse, including by financial planners and lawyers who help well-off retirees qualify for benefits by transferring or hiding assets.

The report by the Government Accountability Office, to be released on Wednesday, found that more than 200 firms had sprouted up across the country to help veterans "restructure" assets so they can appear indigent and therefore eligible for tax-free pensions, which can pay more than \$20,000 a year.

While transferring assets to qualify for the pension is not illegal under current rules, Congressional officials and veterans groups say the practice undermines the purpose of the pension system — aiding poor veterans — and burdens federal spending at a time of deep budget cuts.

The G.A.O. also found that some firms overcharge veterans for services — in some cases more than \$10,000 — or sell them financial products that are potentially harmful, like trusts that limit a veteran's access to the money or deferred annuities that generate income only after the veteran's death.

The report placed partial blame for the problems on the Department of Veterans Affairs, saying it has unclear eligibility rules, does not systematically verify financial information and uses forms that

do not require applicants to report asset transfers and other financial details.

The G.A.O. also said Congress should consider giving the department "look-back" authority to deny applicants who transfer or hide assets in the years just before applying for pensions. Other means-tested programs, like Medicaid, have such policies.

A bipartisan group of senators, including Ron Wyden, Democrat of Oregon, and Richard M. Burr, Republican of North Carolina, plans to introduce legislation giving the V.A. look-back authority. The Senate Special Committee on Aging was scheduled to discuss that bill and the G.A.O. report in a hearing on Wednesday.

"If things continue as they are, and people see this program as a magnet for rip-offs and waste, I believe that in this financial climate support for the program will fall apart," Mr. Wyden said. "I want to preserve this for people who need it."

The Department of Veterans Affairs said it concurred with the G.A.O.'s recommendations. A senior official said the department was also drafting new regulations that would clarify the types of asset transfers that might disqualify a pension applicant. Some transfers, such as for medical expenses, would remain acceptable under the new rules.

"By making it clear the impact of asset transfers, we would close this gap and reduce the incentive for people to engage in this kind of behavior," said Michael Daugherty, assistant director of the V.A.'s Pension and Fiduciary Service.

To qualify for the pension, applicants must be over 65 or be permanently disabled, have served during wartime and fall below the income threshold:

about \$12,200 for a person with no dependents. Last year, the system paid \$4.3 billion to 517,000 veterans or their survivors — up from about \$3.7 billion in 2007.

In addition to their pension checks, veterans who cannot cook, bathe or otherwise care for themselves can also receive stipends to pay for help, a benefit known as aid and attendance.

The G.A.O. and Congressional officials said firms that market services to veterans had been particularly aggressive about obtaining aid and attendance benefits, which can increase a pension by more than 50 percent.

The number of applicants approved for aid and attendance has grown sharply, to 38,000 in 2011, up from 22,500 in 2006. Though the G.A.O. and Congressional officials suggested that lax oversight had contributed to the high acceptance rate, V.A. officials said there were other factors at play, including a weak economy and a desire to get benefits quickly to frail veterans.

As part of their investigation, G.A.O. employees also posed as the children of an 86-year-old veteran who was seeking help qualifying for a pension. In calls to 19 firms, they were told time and again that they could qualify even with assets worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, provided they put their money in annuities or trusts, for which the firms charged administrative fees.

"V.A. allows you to qualify, regardless of what your assets are," one company representative said, according to a G.A.O. transcript. "And I've had people with over a million dollars qualify for this benefit."

Investigators working for the G.A.O. and the Special

Committee on Aging found that financial planners and lawyers often worked through nursing homes or assisted living centers for the elderly to gain access to veterans. In those cases, the pensions presumably helped finance the cost of living in the homes.

Investigators also found numerous cases of firms charging high fees for helping veterans apply, even though organizations like the American Legion, as well as many states, offer the same assistance free. In one case, a veteran in Utah reported signing a contract that gave his first pension check to an agent who helped him apply. But because of delays in the system, that check was unusually large: \$16,000.

Investigators said some firms posed as veterans advocates when marketing services. And some of those services included selling products that turned out to be harmful to the veterans.

A Montana man, for instance, reported that a lawyer advised his father, a World War II veteran, to sell his house so he could move into an assisted living development. The lawyer assured the man that his father would qualify for aid and attendance benefits that would help pay the bill. But the V.A. rejected the application, leaving the veteran on the hook for the entire monthly rent for his new home.

"I do not know, fully, who is at fault," the man, Kris Schaffer, says in testimony submitted to the Senate committee. "I only know that, for my father, this is a terrible miscarriage of justice."

Columbia (SC) State

June 5, 2012

Pg. 1

37. 'This Is A Dirty And Cruel War'

43 years later, Vietnam letters from slain Columbia soldier are coming home to S.C.

By Andrew Shain

When Army Sgt. Steve Flaherty of Columbia was killed in 1969 during a battle in South Vietnam's A Shau Valley, U.S. soldiers could not recover his body immediately.

That allowed the North Vietnamese time to take his unsent letters — filled with his descriptions of the horror and fear of combat. The North Vietnamese used Flaherty's words as propaganda. "It has been trying days for me and my men," Flaherty wrote. "We dragged more bodies of dead and wounded than I can ever want to forget."

Now, 43 years after Flaherty was buried at Greenlawn Cemetery, his letters are coming home.

During an historic visit Monday to the now-reunited Vietnam, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta exchanged a diary taken from a slain North Vietnamese soldier by a Marine for four letters that Flaherty had written but never had the chance to send. It was the first exchange of war artifacts between the two countries, former enemies now looking to expand relations.

"When I read them, I started sobbing," Flaherty's sister-in-law, Martha Gibbons of Irmo, said Monday. "It almost put me on battlefield with him."

The letters also have reopened emotions about the war for Flaherty's family.

"It's a senseless loss of life," said Flaherty's uncle, Kenneth Cannon, a Navy veteran who lives in Prosperity. "A lot of good lives were wasted in the war in Vietnam to serve no purpose. He didn't deserve that."

Flaherty was 6 years old when he was adopted from

a Japanese orphanage. His future brother volunteered at the orphanage while stationed overseas in the Army.

His aunt and uncle said Flaherty was a well-liked, well-behaved child who excelled at sports and academics. "He was very well-disciplined," Gibbons said.

Flaherty was a baseball star at Dentsville High, now site of Dent Middle School, and received a baseball scholarship to Bryan College in Tennessee, where he was named to the all-conference team as a freshman.

The Cincinnati Reds were interested in Flaherty, relatives said. Instead, he surprised his family by choosing Army green.

Gibbons said they thought Flaherty was joking. "He said he felt obligated to serve his country because it had given him a home."

As a member of the 101st Airborne Division, Flaherty often would write but did not reveal his fears and concerns like those in the letters that were exchanged Monday. Some of the mail was to his mother, who along with his father and only brother are deceased. Other letters were addressed to "Betty" and "Mrs. Wyatt," whom surviving relatives do not know.

"I felt bullets going past me," he wrote to Betty in an excerpt, released by Army. "I have never been so scared in my life."

To Mrs. Wyatt, he wrote: "Our platoon leader was killed and I was the temporary platoon leader until we got the replacement. Nothing seems to go well for us but we'll take that ridge line."

Flaherty was 22 when he was killed in a battle along one of the North Vietnamese Army's major supply routes.

Bob Destatte, a retired analyst with the Department

of Defense's POW/Missing Personnel Office, discovered Flaherty's letters in an article on a Vietnamese online magazine. The article was about a former North Vietnamese soldier who had held onto the correspondence so it could be returned to Flaherty's mother. For years, the soldier kept the letters in a bundle on a bookshelf's high ledge, where no one could reach them easily, the article said.

Destatte worked the Defense Department and the U.S. Embassy in Vietnam to get the letters returned. The exchange was arranged as part of the visit by Panetta. Destatte then worked with the Richland County Sheriff's office to find Flaherty's relatives.

"We have an obligation to honor the memory of our comrades who gave their lives and help ensure their service and sacrifice are not forgotten," Destatte said.

Gibbons looks forward to sharing the letters with her four grandchildren, who often look at a scrapbook she keeps about Flaherty. Cannon said he wants to find Betty and Mrs. Wyatt to share the letters with them.

And he wants people who have never been sent to war to understand the experience.

"People will see the heart that it takes to fight," Cannon said. "And they'll get to know Steve."

'Got too close to being dead'

Excerpts of letters from Army Sgt. Steve Flaherty of Columbia taken by the North Vietnamese, which he abbreviates as NVA, after he was killed in a 1969 battle:

Letter to Betty: "We have been in a fierce fight with NVA. We took in lots of casualties and death. It has been trying days for me and my men. We dragged more bodies of dead

and wounded than I can ever want to forget.

"Thank you for your sweet card. It made my miserable day a much better one but I don't think I will ever forget the bloody fight we are having.

"I felt bullets going past me. I have never been so scared in my life. Well I better close for now before we go in again to take that hill."

Letter to Mother: "If Dad calls, tell him I got too close to being dead but I'm O.K. I was real lucky. I'll write again soon.

"Our platoon started off with 35 men but winded up with 19 men when it was over. We lost platoon leader and whole squad.

"The NVA soldiers fought until they died and one even booby trapped himself and when we approached him, he blew himself up and took two of our men with him."

Letter to Mrs. Wyatt:

"This is a dirty and cruel war but I'm sure people will understand the purpose of this war even though many of us might not agree."

USA Today

June 6, 2012

Pg. 5

38. D-Day Taught

'Inhumanities Of War'

After 68 years, vets recall pals

By John McAuliff, USA Today

Richard Main and 160,000

other men stormed the beach at Normandy, France, 68 years ago today. And at the age of 90, the lesson he learned that day is as evident to him now as on D-Day itself.

War should always be "the last answer," Main, of Carroll, Iowa, said during his visit to the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

"I made a lot of good friends, and lost a lot of good

buddies," Main said, recalling his friends among the 9,000 killed or wounded on June 6, 1944.

Main is echoed by fellow veterans traveling with him on the flight from Iowa to the national memorial, organized by the Eastern Iowa Honor Flight, a non-profit group that helps veterans travel to memorials.

Robert Schurk, an 87-year-old native of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, sees D-Day as a lesson in the "inhumanities of war."

When the troops reached Normandy, Schurk was training to be a basic electrician in the Army.

And when the Allied forces liberated France, he saw the destruction of war firsthand when he joined up with a team that was repairing the damage.

D-Day marked a turning point in World War II, the deadliest military conflict in history. It was the moment that Gen. Dwight Eisenhower said he would accept "nothing less than full victory" as he ordered the assault that liberated France and began the crusade that ended Adolf Hitler's regime.

Paul Beronich never traveled overseas during his enlisted years, but he remembered feeling full of pride and confidence, inspired by the unity of the Allied forces.

"Then we were together, all the Allies," the 90-year-old Des Moines veteran recalled.

Yahoo.com

June 6, 2012

39. 'Band Of Brothers' Honored On D-Day Anniversary

SAINTE-MARIE-DU-MONT, France (AP) -- A statue in the likeness of a Pennsylvania native whose quiet leadership was chronicled in the World War II book and television miniseries "Band of Brothers" is

being unveiled near the beaches where the D-Day invasion of France began in 1944.

The 12-foot tall bronze statue in the Normandy village of Sainte-Marie-du-Mont shows Maj. Dick Winters with his weapon at the ready, evoking the massive Allied operation that paved the way for the end of the war.

The unveiling is one of many ceremonies Wednesday commemorating the 68th anniversary of the invasion.

Winters -- a native of Ephrata, Pennsylvania who died last year aged 92 -- only accepted serving as the statue's likeness after monument planners agreed to dedicate it to the memory of all junior U.S. military officers who served that day.

New York Times

June 6, 2012

Pg. C1

Books Of The Times

40. Covert Wars, Waged Virally

By Thomas E. Ricks

CONFRONT AND CONCEAL: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power. By David E. Sanger. Illustrated. 476 pages. Crown Publishers. \$28.

Is the United States at war with Iran? If David Sanger's account in his new book, "Confront and Conceal," on President Obama's foreign policy, is to be believed -- and I find it very believable -- we certainly are.

The stunning revelations by Mr. Sanger, The New York Times's chief Washington correspondent, about the American role in using computer warfare to attack Iran's nuclear program already have made headlines, and rightly so. He persuasively shows that under Mr. Obama, the United States government

has been engaged in what one presidential adviser calls "a state of low-grade, daily conflict."

The heart of this book is the chapter titled "Olympic Games," which Mr. Sanger writes is the code name for a joint program of Israel and the United States to insert malicious software into the machinery of the Iranian military-industrial complex and so set back Iran's ability to manufacture weapons-grade uranium. Specifically, in 2008 and 2009 the software threw off the balance of centrifuges at the Natanz nuclear enrichment center. It did so in a variety of unpredictable ways, making it at first seem like the problems were random or the result of Iranian incompetence. The key to getting inside the computers -- which were not connected to the Internet -- was to load the virus into thumb drives that Iranian nuclear technicians, perhaps unknowingly, would bring to work and plug into the computer systems there.

In one of the most impressive steps in the cybercampaign, the inserted software recorded the operation of the centrifuges. Then, as the computer worm took control of the machines and began destroying them, the software played back the signals of the normal operation of the centrifuges. "The plant operators were clueless," Mr. Sanger writes. "There were no warning lights, no alarm bells, no dials gyrating wildly. But anyone down in the plant would have felt, and heard, that the centrifuges were suddenly going haywire. First came a rumble, then an explosion." This is an account that long will be consulted by anyone trying to understand not just Iran but warfare in the 21st century. It alone is worth the price of the book.

And that is a good thing, because the rest of the book -- overviews of Mr. Obama's handling of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Arab Spring, and China and North Korea -- offers a solid but rather dutiful summary of this administration's foreign policy. As I read it, I wondered if the author -- in the course of working on a book to be titled something like "The Education of a President" -- had come across the extraordinary material on the cyberwar against Iran.

Those other spinach-laden sections are not bad, but they are not as compelling as Mr. Sanger's guided tour of the anti-Iranian operations. He offers a healthy meditation on Mr. Obama's heavy use of drone strikes in Pakistan, asking how such strikes differ from a program of targeted assassination, if at all. And throughout, Mr. Sanger clearly has enjoyed great access to senior White House officials, most notably to Thomas Donilon, the national security adviser.

Mr. Donilon, in effect, is the hero of the book, as well as the commenter of record on events. He leads the team that goes to Israel and spends "five hours wading through the intelligence in the basement of the prime minister's residence." He is shown studying the nettlesome problems of foreign relations, working closely with the president, and fending off the villains of this story -- which in Mr. Sanger's account tend to be the government of Pakistan and, surprisingly, the generals of the American military. "We fought the Pentagon every step of the way on this," a "senior American diplomat" tells Mr. Sanger. At another point, a "senior White House official" reports that, "There was

incredible resistance inside the Pentagon." And so on.

The virtue of this book -- its foundation of White House sources who give the author insiders' material like a transcript of Mr. Obama's last telephone call with the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak -- is also its weakness. That is, Mr. Sanger shows us the world through the eyes of Mr. Obama, Mr. Donilon and those around him. But he also tends to depict Washington and the world as they see it. The perceptions of White House officials, especially in the first year of the Obama presidency, which saw a steep learning curve for the president and those around him, are not always dispositive.

When, for example, the White House moved closer to the Pentagon's hawkish view of North Korea, "We had people in the Pentagon telling us, 'We told you so,'" a senior administration official informs Mr. Sanger. That official adds, rather snidely, that "perhaps they were making a case for not cutting the budget" of the Pentagon.

Mr. Sanger's sure touch in discussing foreign policy falters when he addresses the Pentagon. He incorrectly states that "battlespace" is a term of cyberwar, when it actually is United States military jargon for any sort of battlefield, conventional or not. More important, Mr. Sanger seems unaware that a large number of military officers agreed with President Obama that Iraq was a "war of choice," and a huge mistake.

Nor by the time Mr. Obama took office was "much of the military... running on autopilot." Rather, after five years of sweating and bleeding in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military was engaged in a good deal of soul-searching about

those wars. The "surge" in Iraq was largely the product of military dissidents who believed that invading Iraq had been a mistake.

These are minor blemishes in an important book. I raise them mainly because of the warning signal they send about civil-military relations under President Obama. White House mistrust and suspicion of generals is not a recipe for an effective use of military force because it impedes the candid sort of discussion that consciously brings to the surface differences, examines assumptions and hammers out sustainable strategies.

Rather, it suggests that Mr. Obama and those around him are repeating some of the dysfunctionality that characterized the dealings of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson with the Pentagon during the descent into the Vietnam War. With Syria hanging fire, a nuclear-armed Pakistan on the brink and the Afghan war dragging on, that is not a reassuring state of affairs.

Thomas E. Ricks is the author of several books about the United States military, including "The Generals: American Military Command From World War II to Today" (Penguin Press, forthcoming).

Wall Street Journal
June 6, 2012
Pg. B3

41. Defense Chiefs Signal Job Cuts

By Nathan Hodge

WASHINGTON—U.S. defense contractors are preparing to disclose mass job cutbacks ahead of November elections if Congress fails to reach a deficit-reduction deal by then, industry officials said.

Firms including Lockheed Martin Corp., Boeing Co. and

Northrop Grumman Corp. may idle thousands of workers at the beginning of the year, they said, when more than \$50 billion in new defense cuts could take effect—along with similar reductions across federal agencies.

The layoff threat promises to put a spotlight back on the federal budget impasse and signals the start of a campaign by contractors to get Congress to rescind the requirement for mandatory cuts. It also comes as U.S. job gains have slowed, pushing up the unemployment rate.

"It is quite possible that we will need to notify employees in the September and October time frame that they may or may not have a job in January, depending upon whether sequestration does or doesn't take effect," Robert Stevens, chairman of Lockheed Martin, the Pentagon's biggest supplier with operations in California, Georgia and Texas, said last week. He said the industry plans a "full-throated voice" to draw attention to the possible cuts.

Defense manufacturers and their suppliers employ around 1 million workers combined, and their facilities are found in congressional districts around the country. Adding to the political impact, some of the industry's biggest employers have facilities in election battleground states. Ohio, for instance, is home to a General Dynamics Corp. tank-manufacturing plant while BAE Systems makes armored vehicles in York, Pa.

Defense industry officials said that they will have to notify employees of potential layoffs 60 or 90 days ahead of time, in line with state and federal plant-closing laws.

The Worker Adjustment and Retraining and Notification Act, a federal law also known

as the WARN act, requires companies to notify employees in advance of mass layoffs and plant closings. Requirements vary, but the shutdown must affect 50 or more employees, or more than a third of the employer's active workforce at a facility.

Lockheed's Mr. Stevens said the across-the-board cuts would also hit suppliers, which may have to be notified in advance that they may not have subcontracts early next year.

An industry representative said "hundreds of thousands of notices" could go out to employees, unless there is clear guidance from the government about what specific jobs and programs might be affected.

As part of last year's Budget Control Act, the defense industry is already planning for an initial round of defense cuts that reduce defense outlays by around \$487 billion over the next decade.

But the failure last year of a special congressional panel to hash out a deficit-reduction deal triggers a provision in the law that calls for the defense budget to be cut by more than \$50 billion a year, or roughly 10% of the agency's \$531 billion base budget, over 10 years.

Unless Congress changes the law, those cuts take effect at the beginning of January.

"Sequestration is already here," said an industry official, noting a recent slowdown in military spending with military services delaying the award of new contracts or reducing the quantity of orders in anticipation of deeper spending cuts.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has urged Congress to reverse the cuts, but industry observers say they don't expect lawmakers to begin serious discussions over how to avoid the defense cuts until after the November elections. Restoring

defense funding would require cuts to other government programs or a tax increase.

"I think most people agree that it is unlikely that sequestration or the tax cuts get dealt with prior to the election," said Northrop Grumman CEO Wes Bush. "The window isn't that long between the 6th of November and the end of the year."

Republican lawmakers have proposed alternatives to the sweeping military cuts, including partially offsetting defense cuts with increases in domestic-spending reductions. Sen. Harry Reid (D., Nev.) has countered that he would prefer sequestration unless Republicans agree to include tax increases in any deal.

Adding to the uncertainty over the budget cuts is how, exactly, the Pentagon will impose the cuts. Most in the industry believe that the cuts will affect all programs across-the-board, meaning that military services will have less discretion to spare higher-priority programs from the budget ax.

"The Department of Defense is not currently planning for sequestration," said Lt. Col. Elizabeth Robbins, a Pentagon spokeswoman. "The Office of Management and Budget has not directed agencies, including DoD, to initiate any plans for sequestration."

Automatic cuts may hit separate wartime spending accounts, once believed to be exempt from sequestration. Congress funds the war in Afghanistan and other military operations through an account called "overseas contingency operations," which is separate from the Pentagon's base budget. The administration requested \$88 billion in fiscal 2013 to cover wartime costs.

In a May 25 letter to Rep. Paul Ryan (R., Wis.), chairman of the House budget committee, acting White House budget director Jeffrey Zients said the war funding would be "subject to sequester," although the president could exempt military personnel costs.

Rep. Howard McKeon (R., Calif.) the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said he was disappointed in the administration's interpretation of the law. "Of course now more than ever, it is the troops on the front lines in Afghanistan who will bear the brunt of sequestration," he said.

New York Post
June 5, 2012
Pg. 21

42. Boastful Babbling A Gift To Our Foes

By Peter Brookes

Last week's media bombshell that we'd infiltrated the Iranian nuclear program with a supersecret computer virus made it undeniable: There's been way too much aired about sensitive US operations over the last year or so. Someone ought to tell Team Obama.

It started with the Osama bin Laden takedown last May, in which operational and intelligence details found their way out of the White House Situation Room to the press in just a number of hours.

In a slap at the leakers, then-Defense Secretary Bob Gates said, "We all agreed that we would not release any operational details from the effort to take out bin Laden... That all fell apart on Monday — the next day."

The situation was made worse by exposing the role a Pakistani doctor played in finding bin Laden. The doc is now going to jail for 30--

some years — and the crafty inoculation program meant to get Osama's DNA is blown.

Earlier this year, info escaped about the busting of the plot to put an "underwear bomber" on a US-bound aircraft by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

While kudos go to the intel community for this fabulous counterterrorism op, it was revealed that the expected bomber was a double agent who'd penetrated AQAP. Now al Qaeda knows, too.

Then, late last week, came a news story on "Stuxnet," the tippy-top-secret US-Israel cyberassault on Iran's uranium-enrichment plant at Natanz that's been going on since the George W. Bush presidency.

It's terrific the cyberattack reportedly led to the destruction of some centrifuges used in Iran's bomb program, but now the mullahs know for sure who was behind the operation.

Moreover, dope on our highly successful drone program continues to ooze out.

All this boastful blabbing risks big consequences.

First, it's likely to hurt future operations. It's not like we'll never want to use these techniques again — but they'll be harder to pull off now that we've given the bad guys glimpses of our playbook. For the same reason, these revelations put our brave intelligence officers and special operators deeper in harm's way.

And telling Iran who did a number on their nuclear plant will likely lead to attempts at revenge. Iran is no cyberslouch; wonder what US targets now have bull's eyes on their circuitry?

Nor can this eyeopener have any positive effect on Washington's farflung hopes for a peaceful, diplomatic settlement with Tehran over its nuclear program.

And with all this out in the open, it'll certainly be harder to lecture others — such as China and Russia — on their cyber conduct.

Naturally, leaks also effect our ability to recruit folks for future operations. Who wants to work for Uncle Sam if his name may be splashed across a newspaper's front page? Jail is the gentlest of downsides if that happens. Plus, Washington's hemorrhaging of secrets is sure to give foreign governments pause about cooperating with us. That can't be good.

We throw around the phrase "too much information" a lot in social banter, but TMI applies to our national security, too (even in a free, open society). Maybe the administration thinks TMI means "tell more intelligence"?

Whatever happened to "no comment"?

The leaking can't help but lead one to think Team Obama is so insecure about its national-security image that it feels it must dish data about these highly classified operations for purely political purposes. If so, that's shameful.

Regardless of the reason, though, the growing litany of leaks needs to stop ASAP.

Peter Brookes is a Heritage Foundation senior fellow and a former deputy assistant secretary of defense.

Los Angeles Times
June 6, 2012
Pg. 15

43. Coaxing Karzai To Reform

By Christopher J. Fettweis

Deadlines concentrate the mind. Without a little extra incentive and pressure, sometimes nothing gets done.

It is a deadline that lies at the heart of one of the most controversial foreign policy decisions that President Obama

has made. His announced timeline for withdrawal from Afghanistan has drawn fire from many quarters. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and others have argued that by making U.S. plans clear, the president is sending the wrong message to the Taliban and complicating efforts to defeat it. Announcing "dates certain" for withdrawal, according to this view, is political, not strategic.

Nothing could be further from the truth. There is a distinct strategic logic behind the announcement of withdrawal dates.

The difference between the McCain and Obama positions lies in the interpretation of what the main objective is in Afghanistan: Is the United States trying to defeat the Taliban, or to establish a viable national government? McCain clearly thinks it is the former. He is correct that it is a strange strategic decision to communicate our plans to the enemy, if indeed the Taliban was our primary concern.

But the most important factor in Afghanistan -- or what strategists sometimes refer to as the "center of gravity" -- is not the Taliban but the Karzai government. It is not our enemies who represent the main obstacle to success but our allies.

The Afghan security forces have nearly 350,000 trained men under arms, compared with perhaps one-tenth that number of insurgents. Polling indicates that the people have no love for the Taliban and do not wish to see it return. In other words, the insurgents can kill many people and make life miserable, but they won't bring down the Karzai government. Only Karzai can do that, through mismanagement, endemic corruption and incompetence.

As it stands, Karzai has little incentive to take steps toward better governance. As long as he can count on the support of NATO troops, there is no reason to cooperate with the regional warlords, improve services for his people or try to cut deals with local Pashtun leaders who might be seduced away from the Taliban. He has to make no tough decisions as long as his basic security is assured.

Without a sense of urgency on Karzai's part, the insurgency in Afghanistan is unlikely to go away any time soon. It certainly cannot be permanently defeated as long as it has safe haven across the border in Pakistan. The goal of the United States is not to force the various Taliban groups to surrender but to encourage the ineffective, venal Karzai government to make the kind of adjustments that would allow it to survive on its own. And a deadline is the only way to accomplish that mission.

The Obama administration is thus in an awkward position. It cannot fully explain the strategic logic of its policy without insulting its partners in an undiplomatic, counterproductive fashion. Setting deadlines for withdrawal acknowledges that reality.

It is worth remembering what happened when the Soviet Union attempted to build a nation in Afghanistan. Once Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev announced in April 1988 that Soviet troops would leave by February, their puppet in Afghanistan, Najibullah, was forced to get serious about governing without friendly foreign troops.

The deadline worked. The Soviets withdrew according to schedule, by which time Najibullah's government had consolidated its position enough

to hold on to power far longer than the CIA thought it would. As it turned out, that government outlasted its sponsor's, and collapsed only after the aid spigot from Moscow went dry.

The lesson is this: Although Najibullah was even less popular than Karzai is now and had much stronger opposition, once faced with the certainty of having to stand on his own, he got his act together. Since Western aid will continue after the troops are gone, the post-NATO Afghan government would probably be able to persevere indefinitely.

The Karzai government will never be ready to stand on its own unless it is given incentive to do so. Setting a deadline for withdrawal is the correct strategic choice.

Christopher J. Fettweis, an associate professor of political science at Tulane University, previously taught strategy as an assistant professor of national security affairs at the U.S. Naval War College.

Washington Post
June 6, 2012
Pg. 19

44. A New Road Map For Peace In Syria

By David Ignatius

ISTANBUL -- Kofi Annan is tinkering with a radical idea for reviving his moribund peace plan for Syria -- a road map for political transition there that would be negotiated through a "contact group" that could include, among other nations, Russia and Iran.

The former secretary general's new plan was outlined Tuesday by a diplomat who is familiar with the United Nations mission. The proposal, which is expected to be presented to the U.N. Security Council later this week, comes as Annan's peace mediation with President

Bashar al-Assad appears to have hit a dead end in Damascus, leading to growing concerns that the Syria crisis will spiral into all-out civil war.

What's intriguing about Annan's new approach is that it could give Russia and Iran, the two key supporters of Assad's survival, some motivation to remove him from power, and also some leverage to protect their interests in a post-Assad Syria. This would also make the plan controversial, with Israel and Saudi Arabia asking why the United Nations would give the mullahs in Tehran a share of the diplomatic action.

The reason Annan is said to be considering this unconventional approach is that nothing else has worked. The United States and its key Western allies don't want to intervene militarily, fearing that this could produce a highly unpredictable and unstable outcome. The West wants Russia to broker a deal, but so far President Vladimir Putin hasn't seen enough pragmatic benefit to embrace this course.

To break the deadlock, Annan would create his contact group, composed of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council (Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States), plus Saudi Arabia and perhaps Qatar to represent the Arab League, and Turkey and Iran. The idea is to bring together the countries with most influence on the situation.

This unwieldy group would then draft a transition plan and take it to Assad and the Syrian opposition. This road map would call for a presidential election to choose Assad's successor, plus a parliamentary ballot and a new constitution -- with a timeline for achieving these milestones.

Assad would presumably depart for Russia, which is

said to have offered him exile; the Syrian dictator is rumored to have transferred \$6 billion in Syrian reserves to Moscow already. Under this scenario, Assad presumably could avoid international prosecution for war crimes. Iran is also said to have offered exile to Assad and his family.

To contain the bloodletting that would follow Assad's ouster, Annan is said to favor a detailed plan for reforming the security forces, similar to reforms in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism.

The Russians' participation could help stabilize Syria during the transition, because they might get buy-in from the Syrian military, many of whose senior officers are Russian-trained. As Syria's main weapons supplier, Moscow has, over many decades, developed and cultivated contacts throughout the regime power structure.

Would Russia or Iran support this unconventional proposal? It's impossible to know. In recent days, the United States is said to have held exploratory talks with Russian officials who apparently have indicated some interest. Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, said a week ago that Moscow wasn't wedded to Assad's remaining in power, but the Russians have done nothing to move the Syrian dictator toward the exit.

As for Tehran, the Iranians have been signaling recently through various channels that, as part of any diplomatic settlement of the nuclear issue, they may want a parallel process to deal with regional issues. Annan's contact group would address this Iranian desire.

If Annan's idea for a contact group proves to be a non-starter, there aren't any obvious alternatives, other than a deepening civil war.

Assad last week resisted the former secretary general's de-escalation proposals, such as withdrawing Syrian troops from conflict zones and releasing political prisoners. And if progress isn't made soon, Annan probably will have to abandon his peace effort -- with all sides understanding this means a bloody war to the finish.

Who will bell the cat? That, in colloquial language, has been the puzzle for more than a year in the push to oust Assad. The Arab League wants a U.N. peacekeeping force, but it won't happen. Saudi Arabia and Qatar have been arming the Sunni opposition and urging the U.S. to mount a major covert action. But that proposal scares the Obama administration and most of its Western allies. What does that leave for an option? Annan appears to have come up with a new idea.

Financial Times
June 6, 2012
Pg. 9

45. It Is Time To Consider The Military Options In Syria

By Roula Khalaf

The Houla massacre has whipped up a new wave of outrage at the brutality of Syria's dictatorship. More Syrian envoys were kicked out of western capitals, more financial sanctions slapped on the regime in Damascus, and more furious calls for a political transition from Bashar al-Assad issued. So what? Mr Assad is no closer to ceding power than he was a year ago, when the rebellion against him was already raging.

Houla embodies the daily tragedy of Syria over the past 14 months while the world stumbles from one failed policy to another. Before Houla there was Baba Amr and Dera'a, to cite but a few places ravaged

by regime forces. It would be unfair to say that western powers have not tried to put an end to Syria's plight, using all diplomatic means available. The removal of Mr Assad, after all, would yield significant strategic gain by weakening Iran, Syria's main ally.

Today the US and Europe are prevented from taking tougher international action by a world power -- Russia -- which itself is intervening in Syria through the sale of weapons to the regime.

The only diplomatic mechanism to which Russia has signed up is the Kofi Annan initiative, a plan that is unravelling as UN monitors sent to observe a ceasefire instead bear witness to more crimes. The grim reality is that unless Russia can be made to end its support for Mr Assad, the only way to halt a slide into full-scale civil war is to put military options on the table.

We've all heard the arguments against intervention and they are persuasive: no UN Security Council resolution and none of the Arab League unity that was present in the case of Libya; no united opposition; and greater strategic risk because of Iran's support for the Assad regime.

It is true that Syria does not lend itself to an easy military solution, and such a move would hold enormous risks. But there are ways of securing both international and regional legitimacy for the creation of a Nato-protected zone in the Idlib province near the Turkish border and possibly also in Dera'a, near Jordan. There, a more disciplined rebel force could be assembled and higher-level defectors would find shelter. Only then can the serious cracks within the regime that western governments have been hoping for become possible, and only then will Mr

Assad understand that he must sign up to a transition plan that ends his presidency.

Although a trickle of weapons is starting to flow to some rebel forces with money from Qatar and Saudi Arabia, these Arab states will pick and choose their clients, fragmenting a disparate rebel force further but without giving it sufficient strength to alter the balance of power.

Where can the legitimacy for a broader, more organised intervention come from? It is likely that the Gulf Co-operation Council, which groups six Arab states including Saudi Arabia, would back the creation of a protected zone. A decision by the UN General Assembly could be sought by invoking the responsibility to protect -- the doctrine, developed after Rwanda's genocide, that the international community must act if governments fail to protect their own citizens. The Henry Jackson Society, a UK think-tank, has also argued that legal authorisation from the General Assembly could be based on the "Uniting for Peace" resolution of 1950, which was used to overcome the Soviet Union's obstruction at the Security Council in the Korean war.

Moreover, support for intervention is passionate on the ground, where Syria's peaceful revolutionaries and the armed rebels now believe the world has abandoned them. Worse still, they fear losing ground to the more radical new elements taking advantage of the uprising. Western intelligence agencies blame al-Qaeda for bomb attacks in Damascus, which have added a dangerous new element to the conflict.

It is ludicrous to wait for the Syrian opposition overseas to unite under the banner of the Syrian National Council.

Instead it is through the local co-ordinating committees of activists and the revolutionary councils in towns across the country that western powers need to advance, and justify, a more robust strategy.

A peaceful diplomatic solution to Syria undoubtedly remains the preferred way. But if it is impossible to achieve, it is not through tougher action but through inaction that Syria will face a prolonged, bloodier, and more sectarian conflict that threatens stability across the region.

The writer is the FT's Middle East editor.

Armed Forces Journal
June 2012

46. Air-Sea Battle: Clearing The Fog

The goal is to ensure all forces can get to the fight

By Capt. Philip DuPree, USN
and Col. Jordan Thomas, USAF

Recent articles about Air-Sea Battle reflect misperceptions about this new operational concept. These may have been fostered by the fact that portions of the concept document are classified. In any event, we -- the service leads in the multiservice ASB office -- would like to correct them. Let us say at the outset what Air-Sea Battle is not. It is not a strategy, it is not designed to threaten other nations and it is not just the manifestation of traditional joint operations.

Perhaps the most troubling misperception is that ASB is only about air and naval forces, that it ignores the land component. To the contrary: It is an operating concept that seeks to assure, in the face of rising technological challenges, that all components of U.S. and allied forces can be brought to bear as deemed necessary.

In 2009, then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates directed the departments of the Navy and the Air Force to develop a concept to counter emerging anti-access/area-denial challenges, known as A2/AD. Last year, the departments responded to Gates' directive with the Air-Sea Battle concept. In October, Gates' successor, Leon Panetta, formally endorsed the effort.

It should be noted that ASB is one of several supporting concepts nested under the Joint Operational Access Concept approved by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Both concepts will be complemented by the Joint Concept for Entry Operations, now in early development, which will be more primarily concerned with land forces.

The A2/AD outlook

We can define anti-access capabilities as ones that slow deployment of friendly forces into a theater, prevent them from operating from certain locations within that theater or cause them to operate over longer distances than they would like. Area-denial efforts are those that reduce friendly forces' freedom of action in the more narrow confines of the area under the enemy's direct control.

Such problems are not new. During World War II, for example, Imperial Japan possessed robust A2/AD capabilities in the form of air forces, surface fleets, submarine forces, naval minelayers and air defenses. All had to be overcome by U.S. and Allied air and naval forces to make effective power projection possible.

More recent adversaries have been largely unable to mount anti-access capabilities. During our operations over the last 20 years in the Middle East and Central Asia, our

air superiority and sea control were not challenged in any meaningful way outside of adversaries' national airspace and littoral waters.

In the future, we are less likely to be so fortunate. Several decades of U.S. dominance have not blinded potential enemies to the value of A2/AD concepts. The ability to strike at incoming forces far beyond a nation's borders promises a powerful asymmetric challenge to the U.S. military, which since the Cold War has developed the means and the methods "to rapidly deliver combat power whenever and wherever U.S. strategy required," as Gen. Norton Schwartz and Adm. Jon Greenert wrote in a recent article. "Potential adversaries were clearly mindful of this transformation," the chief of staff of the Air Force and the chief of naval operations wrote in "Air-Sea Battle: Promoting Stability in an Era of Uncertainty" (The American Interest, Feb. 20). "They observed the inability of Soviet-era doctrine and weapons to blunt American power and reconsidered their approach to resisting U.S. military intervention. Competitors with the will and means gradually shifted from planning to fight American forces when they arrived and instead focused on denying U.S. access to the theater."

The emergence of A2/AD as a major concern is due to the proliferation of technology that places precise, long-range fires in the hands of potential foes. Such weapons include ballistic and cruise missiles, integrated air defense systems, anti-ship missiles, submarines, guided rockets, missiles and artillery, 4th- and 5th-generation combat aircraft -- even space and cyberwarfare capabilities.

If left unchecked, these could allow adversaries to

challenge joint and coalition forces in the global commons: those areas of air, sea, space and cyberspace shared by all nations and used for commerce, transportation, communication and trade. Since credible U.S. power projection is a fundamental pillar of regional stability, even the perception of a slipping ability to gain access to the global commons without resorting to the threat of invasion or other escalation is a sign of strategic weakness that can lead to regional instability.

A 'pre-integrated' joint force

For decades, the primary asymmetrical advantage underwriting U.S. and allied power projection has been superior technology and the commensurate development of tactics, techniques and procedures, or TTPs. When adversaries can counter U.S. advantages with their own asymmetrical capabilities, our best response lies in better integration and more flexible capabilities.

Accordingly, the central idea of ASB is an unprecedented level of joint integration leading to air and naval forces that can launch networked, integrated attacks-in-depth to disrupt, destroy and defeat an adversary's A2/AD capabilities.

At its core, ASB seeks a "pre-integrated" joint force that possesses habitual relationships, interoperable and complementary cross-domain capabilities, and realistic, shared training, while retaining the flexibility to develop new TTPs on the fly. Such forces will provide the strategic deterrence, assurance and stabilizing effects of a "force in being" and will also be operationally useful at the outset of hostilities, without delays for buildups and extensive mission rehearsal.

Moreover, they will ensure that a joint force commander has a full range of options when facing an adversary with an A2/AD capability.

Another way to put this is that ASB seeks to preserve U.S. and allied air-sea-space superiority. It is this level of domain control that unlocks a land force's deterrent and war-fighting potential. If air and naval forces cannot establish control of the air, space, cyberspace and maritime environments, or if they cannot sustain deployed forces, no operational concept is tenable. If ground forces cannot get to the fight or be sustained in an advanced A2/AD environment, they will fail to serve the vital interests of America, our allies and the international system.

We may have developed a blind spot to this perennial truth, mainly because U.S. and allied forces have enjoyed uncontested freedom of action in the air, sea and space domains for more than a generation. Some who write about conflict in contested areas seem to assume future adversaries will not effectively oppose deployment and sustainment of ground, air or naval forces. That has been largely true over the past two decades, but will not be guaranteed in the future. Against advanced adversaries, freedom of action cannot be taken for granted.

A future without ASB?

Perhaps the best way to understand the value of the ASB concept is to imagine a future where its integrated air and naval capabilities and capacity do not exist.

In such a future, attempts to use the familiar expeditionary model of massing combat power -- the so-called "iron mountain" -- at a handful of main operating bases to conduct extensive mission rehearsal and subsequently seize the initiative

at a time and place of the Joint Force commander's choosing, may not be feasible. Advanced adversaries could deny secure U.S. land basing at very long ranges, preventing air and naval forces from gaining local air superiority. Sea basing could also be challenged and attempts at ad hoc integration may be insufficient. Enemy capabilities could prevent surface action groups from operating at effective ranges and sea control may therefore be untenable. Space and cyberspace access would not be assured, and global communications and the exchange of information could be held hostage by any motivated aggressor.

Without freedom of action in the air, sea and space provided by integrated air and naval forces, aggressive nations with proliferated A2/AD capabilities could restrict or close off international airspace and vital sea lanes at will. Joint forces attempting to undo such aggression would face robust area denial threats and be required to operate in a heavily contested environment.

Lacking the networked, integrated force required to prevail in such conditions, U.S. and allied forces may not be able to prevent the undermining of the interconnected international systems of finance, trade, security and law enabled by access to the global commons. The loss of a secure global commons could weaken alliances, partnerships and the rule of law, and could force other nations to accommodate regional hegemony and make the world permanently less free. In this future, it would not matter how capable any ground assault forces are because, without freedom of action in the global commons, the joint force could not credibly deploy and sustain them.

A better future

Air-Sea Battle seeks a better future -- one that employs teamwork between air and naval forces to maintain U.S. superiority in the air, space and cyberspace, and at sea, at an acceptable cost, allowing the joint force to shape future A2/AD environments, deter other nations from threatening the global commons, and use all service and joint competencies to defeat a capable A2/AD adversary when necessary.

Though it is meant to facilitate all courses of action, the concept itself is not provocative. Instead, it is designed to produce forces that are more likely to have a stabilizing effect, making a major war less likely. ASB air and naval forces will allow the U.S. and its allies to avoid relying on more escalatory capabilities that existentially threaten another nation or its leadership (e.g., nuclear escalation or threat of invasion), or involve alternatives that are inherently defensive and less likely to deter adventurism and regional coercion (e.g., ceding the commons and relying on blockades and offensive mining).

In some cases, the commander might use such air and naval forces to deter potential adversaries; assure allies, friends and partners; and keep the global commons open and accessible to all. In other situations, he or she may need to use the freedom of action provided through ASB for strike operations, forcible entry or other methods of power projection.

Development of forces with this level of integration and capability will require years of effort and significant institutional change. This change has begun in the departments of the Navy and Air Force; the CNO and

CSAF have written: "The Air-Sea Battle operational concept will guide our efforts to train and prepare air and naval forces for combat. We already train together and share joint doctrine. Under Air-Sea Battle, we will take 'jointness' to a new level, working together to establish more integrated exercises against more realistic threats."

In an ever-changing world that demands continued U.S. leadership, concepts like Air-Sea Battle are essential to sustaining America's military freedom of action and ability to project power.

USA Today

June 6, 2012

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Our View

47. Defense Measure

Lets President Lock

Citizens Up, Indefinitely

Legal system can handle terror cases

By Editorial

Most Americans probably don't think they could be locked up indefinitely without charges or a trial. Surprise: Most Americans are wrong.

In the decade since the 9/11 attacks, Congress has been willing to do almost anything to ward off more terrorist strikes. It has given the government broad authority to hunt, hold and try suspected terrorists. Trouble is, the law is written so broadly that the government would have little difficulty applying it to virtually anyone.

The latest example is a provision in the annual defense authorization bill that would allow the U.S. military to detain anyone indefinitely without charges or trial — even U.S. citizens — if the president determines they're suspected of being terrorists or having aided terrorists.

One would hope no president would ever abuse that authority, but the Founders saw enough of a threat to protect against it constitutionally. The Fifth Amendment guarantees that "no person" can be "deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law." It is the bedrock protection Americans have always had against a rogue government. It's one of the rights that sets the U.S. apart from countries where the dictator decides what the law is. Why should it be so casually discarded?

Lawmakers who allow fear of terrorism to overcome respect for more than two centuries of American legal tradition wrote this indefinite-detention measure into last year's defense authorization bill. President Obama promised not to use the authority against American citizens, but that doesn't undo the law, or bind him or any successor. A federal district court ruled the law unconstitutional last month, but higher courts have yet to weigh in. The House effectively renewed the authority last month. The Senate could take it up soon.

Backers insist this is a necessary protection against terrorists who could otherwise manipulate America's legal system, sneer at prosecutors, withhold knowledge of imminent terrorist attacks, and walk free to commit murder and carnage. That sounds more like an episode from the TV show *24* than what happens in real life.

In real life, suspected terrorists depicted as too hard to try in civilian courts turn out to be just as vulnerable to American justice as the average thug. President George W. Bush labeled suspected dirty bomber Jose Padilla an "enemy combatant" and kept the U.S. citizen hidden

away in a military prison for three-and-a-half years, until it looked as if the Supreme Court might declare that action unconstitutional. Padilla was transferred to a civilian jail, tried and convicted in federal court and sent to the Supermax prison in Florence, Colo.

In real life, prosecutors in federal courts have similarly tried and convicted scores of accused terrorists. And the government already has some leeway — granted under a public-safety exception in a 1984 Supreme Court ruling — to question terror suspects before reading them their Miranda rights.

Supporters of the no-trial/no-charges rule say U.S. citizens are protected because they can always use their right to challenge their imprisonment, known as habeas corpus. But courts in terrorism cases have often either been slow to grant habeas relief or have given the government's evidence so much deference that the protection is virtually nullified.

Although the threat of terrorism remains very real, Tuesday's news that a U.S. drone strike in northern Pakistan killed Abu Yahya al-Libi, al-Qaeda's second in command, is further confirmation that the terror group is on the ropes. The United States can defeat Osama bin Laden's organization without compromising the values that set Americans apart from terrorists in the first place. Increasingly, the choice between security and civil liberties is looking like a false one.

USA Today

June 6, 2012

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Opposing View

48. Don't Mess With Success

No executive can deny your rights

By Mac Thornberry

We are fortunate to have gone more than 10 years without another successful terrorist attack in America, other than the Fort Hood and Little Rock shootings. There are many factors contributing to that success, including the work of our military, intelligence professionals and law enforcement, as well as sheer luck. As we have seen recently, however, foreign terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula have not stopped trying.

Throughout the last decade, there has been a debate about whether we should deal with terrorism as crime or as war. The answer is that we need the best tools from each and the flexibility to use them appropriately. This approach does not alter or endanger our constitutional rights.

Past efforts to protect Americans have taken place within an existing legal and policy framework that is consistent with the approach that the U.S. and other nations have used since at least World War II. Despite claims to the contrary, the defense bill has not created any new, or changed any existing, legal authorities.

Proposals such as the amendment by Reps. Adam Smith, D-Wash., and Justin Amash, R-Mich., would change the framework by requiring that every terrorist, whether here legally or not, be granted the full constitutional rights of an American citizen. Granting foreign terrorists additional privileges — including the right to remain silent — would make it harder to get the timely information we need to prevent attacks. It would

also mean that for the first time, we would voluntarily remove lawful options from our counterterrorism arsenal.

Today, sensational allegations often travel faster than reason and judgment. The truth is that no executive can take away a U.S. citizen's constitutional rights. The right to challenge any detention in a federal court has been affirmed repeatedly by the Supreme Court. Even al-Qaeda terrorists at Guantanamo Bay have been given the right to habeas corpus. Congress and the courts provide stringent oversight of any military detention.

A few on either end of the political spectrum have invented hypotheticals about terrorist detention that play to anti-militarism or hostility toward the Obama administration. Such tactics should not drive national policy — especially when it has helped keep us safe for a decade.

Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, is vice chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

China Daily

June 6, 2012

Pg. 8

49. Behind The Sea Games

Hawaii is famous for its sun and surf. But it is not for the sunshine that the naval vessels of 22 nations are heading there.

They are taking part in the world's largest multinational maritime exercise, the biennial Rim of the Pacific exercise starting June 29.

The number of participants this year is a big increase on the seven — Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States — that took part in the first RIMPAC exercise in 1971.

Such an expansion is a response to the US' "pivot" toward the Asia-Pacific region.

To achieve this, the US is ramping up its military presence in the region. US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced in Singapore at the weekend that around 60 percent of the US fleet would be assigned to the region by 2020.

In April the first deployment of an estimated 2,500 US marines arrived in north Australia. The build-up is expected to include B-52 bombers, FA-18s, C-17 transport aircraft and nuclear powered submarines.

The increased naval presence of the US in the Pacific will enable it to boost the number and size of the military exercises in the region in the next few years and to plan for more port visits over a wider area, including the Indian Ocean.

Meanwhile, the use of Australia's Cocos Islands as a future US drone base is under discussion. The atoll is being eyed as a base to monitor south Asia and the South China Sea. A drone base on the islands is attractive to the US, as they are more than 2,400 kilometers closer to the South China Sea than the US naval base at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

The US clings to its 20th century notions of being the world's "sole superpower" and seeks to expand its influence and control over the shipping lanes and resources in the Asia-Pacific. Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney also said in the Wall Street Journal that security in the Pacific means a world in which US economic and military power is second to none.

The US' increased naval presence in the Pacific will upset the region's stability.

In the name of promoting freedom of navigation in the

region, the US is attempting to hold sway over it.

Bangkok Post
June 6, 2012
Pg. 10

50. US Seeks New Asian 'Pivot'

The new US military posture represents a startling change from... the first 35 years after the fall of Saigon.

A string of US presidents has spent the past 30 years proclaiming Washington's return to Asia. Now, President Barack Obama has decided to boost US presence in Asia the old fashioned way -- with military forces. Last weekend, at an underplayed conference in Singapore, Defence Secretary Leon Panetta revealed more details of the evolving strategy. Then he went off for a visit to the US's new ally in the region, Vietnam.

The White House last year announced that US military policy was about to "pivot" away from its traditional emphasis on Europe and the Middle East. Under President Obama, the equivalent of a division of US Marines is being shifted out of Japan, but moved to Guam. More marines have been assigned to permanent duty in northern Australia. New agreements for port calls and repair facilities are being negotiated with the Philippines and Singapore. Within a couple of years, the number of US aircraft carrier task forces based in the East Asian region is to rise to six, up from the present total of zero.

Mr Obama's policy is described as evolution, rather than sudden change. And in some ways, this is true. Washington has consistently claimed that the United States is a Pacific nation. But the new US military posture represents a startling change from the

prevailing mood in the first 35 years after the fall of Saigon to communist forces in 1975.

The end of the Vietnam war was a turning point. Thailand and the Philippines asked or ordered US forces to depart. The only major focus of US military attention in the region was Northeast Asia, where North Korea continues to pose a major threat. The Japanese pondered, then opposed, the presence of so many US forces on their soil; thus the marines's move to Guam.

Now Mr Obama has signed off on the so-called pivot policy. US military forces will again be a common sight throughout the region, including in and near the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. That is not to say things will revert to the bad old Vietnam War days, of course. US forces are not fighting, no war is under way or seriously threatened. And Mr Obama, Mr Panetta and the generals and admirals of the Pentagon are unanimous on the lack of desire for new US bases.

The pivot is, however, of great importance. First and foremost it affects China and its sometimes overbearing claims to virtually everything in the South China Sea. Vietnam, once a reluctant Beijing ally and then a victim of Chinese military invasion, has cheered the return of US gunboat power. It has made no secret of offering the US access to its waters and bases, including the US-built Cam Ranh Bay, featuring earlier this week on Mr Panetta's tour. The Philippines, involved in physical confrontation with China in the Spratly Islands, has mostly positive if mixed emotions about the return of the military ships of its former colonial master.

For Thailand, the pivot means a request by the Pentagon to use U-tapao naval air base as the centre of a

new, regional headquarters for disaster relief. The government needs to closely study this idea. Assuming there is no hidden agenda, such as the establishment of a US military base, it could be an excellent addition to regional security.

Wall Street Journal
June 6, 2012
Pg. 14

51. Drones Away

Check another name off the President's 'kill list.'

An executive role at al Qaeda might need to come with a Mayor Bloomberg health warning. U.S. officials say the organization's number two was killed on Monday by an American unmanned drone in the Pakistani tribal belt. Abu Yahya al-Libi, a Libyan in his late 40s, was the third senior al Qaeda leader killed by a Hellfire missile in the past year -- and the most important since Navy SEALs got Osama bin Laden last May.

Some people are naturally unhappy with America's drone war. Al Qaeda, for one. Last June, a U.S. Predator blew up Ilyas Kashmiri, the group's "commando commander," while he and nine other men drank tea in a Pakistani apple orchard. Anwar al-Awlaki, the spiritual leader of a Yemeni cell that has repeatedly tried to bring down civilian planes over the U.S., was killed in his car in late September. Al-Libi, who took the deputy's job after bin Laden's death, ran al Qaeda's Pakistani operations and in frequent video appearances called for terrorist attacks on the U.S.

Count Pakistan, too, among the disgruntled. The foreign ministry called Monday's strike an "illegal" violation of "Pakistani territory." Protestations of sovereignty would be more credible if

Pakistan controlled its territory -- and if its military hadn't allowed and abetted the creation of the world's leading terrorist sanctuary in the mountains of North Waziristan. After 9/11, the U.S. declared war on al Qaeda and associated forces who are plotting encores. Pakistan pledged its support but has played a double game.

Perhaps the loudest dissent, however, comes from America's anti-antiterror crusaders. The lobby got fresh wind last week after the Administration confirmed the existence of a "kill list" personally vetted by President Obama. According to a new book, the Commander in Chief had by his third year in office "approved the killings of twice as many suspected terrorists as had ever been imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay," the *bête noire* of the left in the Bush years.

As these columns have noted, the Administration's deliberate reluctance to capture terrorists and interrogate them deprives the U.S. of crucial intelligence about possible plots and al Qaeda's organization.

But President Obama's decision to expand the drone program into Pakistan and Yemen -- which are difficult for U.S. troops to access -- is one of his finest accomplishments. These precision strikes are also the most humane weapon invented to date in aerial warfare, producing relatively few civilian casualties. Monday's success adds a military and moral exclamation point.

Boston Globe
June 5, 2012
Pg. 12

52. Defense Needs, Not Politics, Should Guide Military Cuts

Admiral Mike Mullen, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has warned for years that "our national debt is our biggest national security threat." If people start doubting that the United States can pay its bills, the country's influence around the world will wane. Mullen's statements helped pave the way for trims to the federal budget, including military spending. Before raising the debt ceiling last year, lawmakers set in motion a mechanism that will make automatic cuts to the 2013 budget. But now that those cuts are looming, lawmakers around the country are working hard to roll them back to preserve military jobs in their home areas.

Massachusetts is no exception. Representative Niki Tsongas inserted an amendment that requires congressional approval before the Pentagon can make more changes to the Electronic Systems Center at Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford, which is set to lose several hundred jobs. Representative William Keating has been fighting to save 103 part-time National Guard jobs and 33 full-time jobs at Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod.

Both are doing what they were elected to do: stand up for their constituents. However, the hard choices of what to cut from the military budget should be driven by national defense needs, not politics. Both the Hanscom center and the Otis base have compelling reasons to exist, starting with access to a highly specialized and educated work force here in Massachusetts. Both projects deserve to be evaluated on their merits in a transparent process. There are many reasons a cash-strapped military might see fit to trim its active ranks but preserve

the National Guard, which costs far less.

The Pentagon should set up an independent commission to ensure that spending decisions in the 2013 budget are based on military need, not politics. Such a commission might well recommend that the Air Operations Group at Otis, one of several around the country that analyzes intelligence data to support troops in Afghanistan and elsewhere, be allowed to continue its work.

Independent commissions have helped lawmakers overcome deadlocks over military cuts in the past. The Base Realignment and Closure Commissions set up in 1988 forced Congress to vote on recommendations as a package, without allowing powerful lawmakers to take their states off the chopping block. So it's a shame that the House recently voted down Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's request for another base-closing commission. If Congress is going to mandate cuts in military spending, it must establish a sensible, transparent process to guide those tough decisions.

Baltimore Sun
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Pg. 18

53. War In Cyberspace

Our view: Computer viruses may have slowed Iran's drive for a bomb, but the U.S. is vulnerable to similar attacks

Reports that the U.S. and Israel have tried repeatedly over the years to derail Iran's nuclear weapons program by using malicious computer codes to cause machines at the country's Natanz nuclear facility to malfunction have lifted the veil of secrecy over the war unfolding on the world's newest battlefield. The elaborately designed and executed series of cyber-attacks reportedly slowed

Iran's progress toward getting a bomb, but they also raise troubling questions about the United States' own vulnerability to such weapons and whether the nation's defenses are adequate.

The reports, first published Friday in The New York Times, suggest that the U.S.-Israeli collaboration against Iran's nuclear program began as far back as 2006 under President George W. Bush. Mr. Bush authorized the operation at a time when there was little international support for foreign intervention to stop Iran's drive to build a bomb and the U.S. military was tied down in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Fearing the consequences of doing nothing, Mr. Bush gave the go-ahead for the cyberwar project that eventually produced the "Stuxnet" virus that was discovered in Iran's computer networks in 2010. That bit of malicious code reportedly caused several hundred centrifuges used to purify uranium into weapons-grade material at Natanz to suddenly spin out of control and self-destruct.

When the Obama administration took office in 2008, the secret cyberwar program was continued with the goal of delaying Iran's progress toward a weapon long enough for the president's new diplomatic and economic sanctions to force Iran back to the bargaining table. Iran agreed to resume negotiations this year, but it remains unclear what role Stuxnet's sabotage played in that decision, or whether the country's leaders will ultimately agree to stop enriching uranium, as the U.S. and its allies have demanded.

Meanwhile, another recently detected virus on Iranian computers, called "Flame," remains shrouded in

mystery, although investigators have surmised the weapon is at least five years old and was probably designed to target information stored on the computer drives of Iranian nuclear researchers and technicians. The revelation of Flame's existence suggests there may be still other complex cyber weapons operating against Iran's nuclear program that remain undiscovered.

The Times' report suggests that one of the major goals of the secret operation was to dissuade Israel from unilaterally bombing the Natanz plant and other Iranian sites, which U.S. officials feared could set off a wider regional war with unpredictable consequences. In order to convince Israeli leaders that the U.S. was serious about not tolerating an Iranian bomb, American officials acceded to Israel's demand that experts from the Israel Defense Forces' cyberwarfare unit be involved in the operation at every stage.

The U.S., Russia, China and other major powers all have developed offensive cyber weapons that are said to be capable of taking out an adversary's communications, power and water supplies, air traffic control system, financial markets and other critical national infrastructure. Conceivably, with the click of a mouse, an enemy could inflict as much physical and economic damage as a major shooting war.

Yet, in the digital realm, even small, weak states — or terrorists — could develop the potential to bring a superpower to its knees. Because modern societies are so dependent on the computers that run everything from street lights and cellphones to nuclear power plants, virtually every developed nation, by definition, is vulnerable to this kind of threat.

While it is certainly preferable for the U.S. to try to deter Iran's nuclear ambitions by attacking its computer systems rather than by bombing the country into rubble, policymakers must recognize that a troubling new chapter in the military use of cyberspace has begun, one in which the traditional rules governing conflicts may no longer apply. There's no question America and its allies are right to be concerned by the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran, but we have entered uncharted waters in which the threats to our security have become as dangerous in cyberspace as they are by land, sea and air, and we must be prepared to meet them.