

CURRENT NEWS

EARLY BIRD

May 13, 2012

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AFGHANISTAN

1. **The Triage Commander**
(*Washington Post*)....Rajiv Chandrasekaran
With America's legacy in Afghanistan on the line, Gen. John Allen is hastily accelerating handover of control to local forces.
2. **Spy Balloons Become Part Of The Afghanistan Landscape, Stirring Unease**
(*New York Times*)....Graham Bowley
...Shimmering more than 1,500 feet up in the daytime haze, or each visible as a single light blinking at night, the balloons, with infrared and color video cameras, are central players in the American military's shift toward using technology for surveillance and intelligence.
3. **Senior Afghan Peace Negotiator Shot Dead In Kabul**
(*Reuters.com*)....Hamid Shalizi, Reuters
Gunmen shot dead a top Afghan peace negotiator in the capital Kabul on Sunday, police said, dealing another blow to the country's attempts to negotiate a peace deal with the Taliban.
4. **Gunmen In Afghan Police Uniforms Kill 2 NATO Soldiers**
(*NYTimes.com*)....Graham Bowley
...In a separate episode on Saturday, a coalition soldier was killed by a roadside bomb in southern Afghanistan, NATO said.
5. **Afghan Police Kill UK Troops**
(*London Sunday Times*)....Miles Amooore and Tim Ripley
TWO British soldiers were reported killed inside an army base in Helmand province yesterday by gunmen wearing Afghan police uniforms.
6. **A U.S. Soldier And The Afghan Soldier Who Killed Him**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Laura King and Steve Chawkins
The man who turned his gun on Green Beret Andrew Britton-Mihalo of Simi Valley was also part of an elite corps. The tragedy is part of a worrisome trend in Afghanistan.
7. **From Poppies To Pips**
(*London Sunday Times*)....Miles Amooore
This extraordinary British entrepreneur has convinced farmers in Afghanistan to kick their opium habit and grow pomegranates instead.
8. **'Nasty Words' Used On Afghan Detainees**

(The Australian)....Brendan Nicholson

AUSTRALIAN guards at the jail used to hold suspected insurgents in Afghanistan have been accused of using abusive language while interrogating detainees.

MIDEAST

9. **U.S. May Scrap Costly Efforts To Train Iraqi Police**
(New York Times)....Tim Arango
In the face of spiraling costs and Iraqi officials who say they never wanted it in the first place, the State Department has slashed--and may jettison entirely by the end of the year--a multibillion-dollar police training program that was to have been the centerpiece of a hugely expanded civilian mission here.
10. **Islamic Group Revives In Syria**
(Washington Post)....Liz Sly
After three decades of persecution that virtually eradicated its presence, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood has resurrected itself to become the dominant group in the fragmented opposition movement pursuing a 14-month uprising against President Bashar al-Assad.
11. **Yemeni Forces Press Assault On Qaeda Bastion**
(Yahoo.com)....Agence France-Presse
Yemen forces pressed on Sunday with an assault to recapture the Al-Qaeda-held southern city of Zinjibar, advancing on two fronts in fighting that killed six soldiers in two days, a military official said.
12. **Yemen Officials Says Suspected US Drone Strikes Kill 11 Al-Qaida Fighters In Country's South**
(Washingtonpost.com)....Associated Press
Two suspected U.S. drone strikes killed 11 al-Qaida militants in southern Yemen on Saturday, Yemeni military officials said.
13. **Tehran Is Accelerating Nuclear Weapons Program, Says Iranian Opposition Report**
(Jerusalem Post)....Yaakov Katz
Iran is accelerating its nuclear weapons program, according to a report Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) Iranian opposition group compiled and The Jerusalem Post obtained on Friday. Publication of the report comes just days before Western powers are scheduled to begin a second round of talks with Iran in Baghdad.
14. **Coptic Christians Fear Rise Of Islamists On Eve Of Elections**
(Washington Post)....Leila Fadel
...Coptic Christians, whose forefathers lived in Egypt before the arrival of Islam, had hoped that the 2011 uprising that ousted authoritarian President Hosni Mubarak would give them equal rights. Instead, things have worsened. Egypt's Christians have been the victims of threats and dramatic violence, and they fear the ascendance of political Islam.
15. **Al-Qaeda Plots Its Revenge On Bomb Attack Double Agent**
(London Sunday Telegraph)....Sean Rayment, Philip Sherwell and Jason Lewis
...MI5 fears that it will try to exact revenge on the British spy, who penetrated al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), by publishing his photograph on the internet, a move to incite extremists to hunt him down.
16. **The Most Dangerous Man In The World**
(London Sunday Times)....Dipesh Gadhler and David Leppard
The bomb maker Ibrahim al-Asiri is the mastermind behind an Al-Qaeda cell in Yemen devising new ways to blow up passenger planes. Dipesh Gadhler and David Leppard investigate how a British agent has foiled his plans--for now.

PAKISTAN

17. **US, Pakistani Army Officials Meet On Border Issues**

(*Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)*)....Associated Press

The top U.S. commander in Afghanistan held talks with Pakistan's army chief Saturday aimed at improving border coordination, almost six months after American airstrikes accidentally killed 24 Pakistani soldiers along the frontier.

18. **Just A Week More, Kayani Tells US**

(*Pakistan Today (Islamabad)*)....Staff Report/Agencies

AS an ISAF delegation led by General John Allen arrived here to put pressure on Pakistan for reopening NATO supplies, Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani reportedly told the visiting emissaries that the government would take the final decision on the issue in a week's time.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

19. **U.S. Seeks Global Spec Ops Network**

(*Defense News*)....Barbara Opall-Rome

U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) wants to establish a worldwide network linking special operations forces (SOF) of allied and partner nations to combat terrorism.

ARMY

20. **Ceremony Marks The Return Of 4,000 Schofield Soldiers**

(*Honolulu Star-Advertiser*)....William Cole

The 3rd Brigade is back in Hawaii after a year in a volatile part of Afghanistan.

21. **Capt. Bruce Kevin Clark Returns Home**

(*Rochester (NY) Democrat and Chronicle*)....Sean Dobbin

As the door to Capt. Bruce Kevin Clark's plane opened, the wind picked up and hundreds of American flags billowed out to their full length.

ASIA/PACIFIC

22. **China, SKorea, Japan Try To Ease NKorea Tensions**

(*Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)*)....Associated Press

South Korea's president says China, Japan and South Korea all agree that any further provocations from North Korea would be unacceptable. President Lee Myung-bak made the remark Sunday at the fifth trilateral summit, hosted by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda also attended.

23. **China's Actions Revive U.S.-Philippine Alliance**

(*ArmyTimes.com*)....Matthew Pennington, Associated Press

China's assertive behavior is breathing life into America's historically tumultuous relationship with the Philippines.

24. **Beijing's Island Claim Crazy, Says Owner**

(*South China Morning Post*)....Julian Ryall

Hiroyuki Kurihara has a one-word comment on Beijing's claim to his islands in the East China Sea: crazy. Kurihara's family has owned three of the eight islands and reefs that make up the disputed Diaoyus since 1981.

25. **Potential China Link To Cyberattacks On Gas Pipeline Companies**

(*Christian Science Monitor (csmonitor.com)*)....Mark Clayton

Investigators hot on the trail of cyberspies trying to infiltrate the computer networks of US natural-gas pipeline companies say that the same spies were very likely involved in a major cyberespionage attack a year ago on RSA Inc., a cybersecurity company. And the RSA attack, testified the chief of the National Security Agency (NSA) before Congress recently, is tied to one nation: China.

EUROPE

26. **Hammond Heralds End To Defence Cuts**

(*London Sunday Times*)...Isabel Oakeshott

PHILIP HAMMOND, the defence secretary, has signalled an end to defence cuts and declared he has finally balanced his department's books. The development means there should be no further job losses in the armed forces.

27. **Let Down By Their Countrymen: How Our Forces Often Feel Unappreciated**

(*London Sunday Telegraph*)...Robert Mendick

MEMBERS OF the Armed Forces are suffering abuse and discrimination on Britain's streets just for wearing their uniforms in public. A survey of more than 9,100 servicemen discloses that almost one in five military personnel has been refused service in pubs, hotels and shops because they were in uniform.

AFRICA

28. **Tiny Guinea-Bissau Has Big Role In Drug Smuggling, And Seems Likely To Keep It**

(*McClatchy Newspapers (mcclatchydc.com)*)...Chris Collins, McClatchy Newspapers

...Guinea-Bissau, on the west coast of Africa, is one of the smallest and poorest countries in the world, but it has a big claim to fame: It's become a key hub for South American drug traffickers looking to make a few hundred million dollars a year shipping their goods to Europe via West Africa.

POLITICS

29. **Weary Warriors Favor Obama**

(*Reuters.com*)...Margot Roosevelt, Reuters

...Disaffection with the politics of shock and awe runs deep among men and women who have served in the military during the past decade of conflict. Only 32 percent think the war in Iraq ended successfully, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll. And far more of them would pull out of Afghanistan than continue military operations there. While the 2012 campaign today is dominated by economic and domestic issues, military concerns could easily jump to the fore.

LEGAL AFFAIRS

30. **Va. Appeals Court Revives Abu Ghraib Lawsuits**

(*Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*)...Larry O'Dell, Associated Press

A divided federal appeals court on Friday revived two lawsuits by former Iraqi detainees who alleged that civilian interrogators and translators participated in their torture at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, ruling that it's too early to consider dismissing the cases.

31. **U.S. Marine Receives Sentence, Sympathy**

(*Tampa Tribune*)...Howard Altman

The former Marine Corps captain, in chains and an orange jail jumpsuit, stood Thursday in Courtroom 33 and hung his head as the widow of the man he killed while driving drunk spoke softly, her voice quivering with sorrow.

32. **Officer: Military Could Learn From Civilian Courts**

(*Wall Street Journal (wsj.com)*)...Allen G. Breed, Associated Press

Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Miller knew that deserting his post was a serious crime. But, by then, he had a lot more on his mind and heart than his job.

MILITARY

33. **Historic Battleship Becoming Naval Museum In SoCal**

(*Atlanta Journal-Constitution (ajc.com)*)...Eric Risberg, Associated Press

...For the past decade, the lead ship of her battleship class known as "The Big Stick" has sat in the cold and fog, anchored with other mothballed ships in nearby Suisun Bay. This spring, workers began scrubbing and painting the Iowa's exterior, replacing the teak deck and reattaching the mast in preparation for the museum commissioning on July 4.

BUSINESS

34. **Lockheed Delivers Two F-35 Jets To Florida Base**
(Fort Worth Star-Telegram)....Bob Cox
 ...Nine test flights were accomplished Thursday, which, when combined with the two planes ferried to Florida, were a one-day record for 11 F-35 flights
35. **'Chief Skunk' At A Hush-Hush Weapons Complex**
(Los Angeles Times)....W.J. Hennigan
 Alton D. Romig Jr., 58, is "chief skunk" at Lockheed Martin Corp.'s famed Skunk Works secretive weapons development facility in Palmdale. It's one of the most coveted jobs in aerospace.

COMMENTARY

36. **Working Together Key To Western Hemisphere's Success**
(Miami Herald)....Leon Panetta
 During the past decade, a remarkable transformation has taken place in the Western Hemisphere. Across the region, countries are doing more than they ever have before to advance peace and security within and beyond their borders.
37. **Panetta Plays Chicken**
(Weekly Standard)....Gary Schmitt and Thomas Donnelly
 ...So, naturally, the news accounts portray the fight between the House GOP and the Obama administration as a choice between "protecting defense" and "slashing funds for the poor." Except it's not.
38. **Chicago Hope**
(National Journal)....Kevin Baron
 The upcoming NATO summit is one of a series of international meetings driving the Afghan endgame. But anything decided is likely to change over time.
39. **A Red Line Iran Can Heed**
(Washington Post)....David Ignatius
 Let's assume the signals from the White House and Tehran are reliable, and that Iran is serious about an agreement to remove its stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium from the country and stop producing more. What happens then?
40. **Russia's U.N. Power Play**
(Washington Post)....Janusz Bugajski
 ...Much more is at stake here than a symbolic diplomatic post. The tug of war over the General Assembly presidency illustrates the escalating campaign a resurgent Russia is waging against former satellites that are now an integral part of the European Union and NATO and dependable allies of the United States.
41. **To Give South Sudan A Chance At Peace, Supply It With Weapons**
(Washington Post)....Andrew S. Natsios
 Former envoy to Sudan Andrew S. Natsios says to stabilize the region, the U.S. should send guns.
42. **Egypt 'At Risk'**
(National Journal)....Sara Sorcher
 Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry, D-Mass., returned this week from visits to Afghanistan and Egypt, among other countries. He discussed his trip with National Journal.
43. **Whither Political Islam?**
(Philadelphia Inquirer)....Trudy Rubin
 ...I'm traveling to Cairo today to watch this crucial country's effort to mesh democracy and Islam. Then I'll head for Lebanon, a gathering place for Syrian activists trying to unseat dictator Bashar al Assad. Assad has rejected political reforms and stiffed a U.N. mediation effort. He has provoked a civil war that is now attracting Arab jihadis who seek a new cause, including remnants of AQI (al-Qaeda in Iraq).

44. **Is There A Romney Doctrine?**

(New York Times)....David E. Sanger

DURING the Republican primary debates in January, when Mitt Romney was still trying to outmaneuver the challengers who were questioning his conservative bona fides, he made a declaration about Afghanistan that led a faction of his foreign policy advisers to shake their heads in wonderment.

45. **Harming The Troops**

(New York Times)....Editorial

Republican lawmakers love to say they are protective of religious freedom and supportive of the military. Last week, Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee passed two measures that undermine both in an effort to deny equal rights to gay men and lesbians.

Washington Post
May 13, 2012
Pg. 1

1. The Triage Commander

With America's legacy in Afghanistan on the line, Gen. John Allen is hastily accelerating handover of control to local forces

By Rajiv Chandrasekaran

GELAN, Afghanistan — Standing in a plywood-walled command post before Gen. John R. Allen, the supreme allied commander in Afghanistan, the nervous-but-earnest young lieutenant cast his platoon's task for the day in the grand terms of counterinsurgency strategy — the American military's wartime playbook for the past several years. The goal of the platoon's walk through a bazaar and meetings with village leaders, the lieutenant said, was for the Afghan government to be “seen as an effective governing body that gains legitimacy with the local population.”

Such ambition used to elicit enthusiastic praise from visiting generals. Not anymore.

“How are *you* going to create *that* as an end state?” Allen asked, making no effort to mask his deep skepticism.

Faced with an order from President Obama to withdraw 23,000 troops by the end of the summer, and the prospect of further reductions next year, Allen is hastily transforming the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan. Instead of trying to continue large U.S. counterinsurgency operations for as long as he can, he is accelerating a handover of responsibility to Afghan security forces. He plans to order American and NATO troops to push Afghans into the lead across much of the country this summer, even in insurgent-ridden places that had not been candidates for an early transfer.

“My instruction to my commanders is to get the [Afghans] into the fight,” Allen said in an interview. “The sooner I can get them there, while I still have the time and the combat power, the more I can catch them if they fall.”

Here in Ghazni province, where American forces will mount the last major offensive of the decade-long war over the next few months, he is narrowing long-held U.S. goals. Instead of trying to reform the Afghan government, protect the civilian population and conduct security operations until Afghan forces are ready to take over — all of which Americans sought to do as recently as last year — a newly arrived brigade from the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division plans to spend the summer attacking Taliban redoubts before departing in mid-September, regardless of whether Afghan soldiers are capable of holding their own.

Six other American generals have taken turns commanding the war since 2002, and each sought to strike a decisive blow against the Taliban. Stanley McChrystal used a 30,000-troop surge to conduct intensive counterinsurgency operations across the south. David Petraeus, who succeeded him, increased the frequency of nighttime operations against Taliban commanders. But it is the silver-haired Allen, widely regarded in the military as one of the sharpest strategic thinkers in a four-star uniform, who may have the greatest impact on Afghanistan's future — and America's legacy in the strife-torn nation.

Unlike his predecessors, who had the luxury of troops and money, he has been forced to triage. He has narrowed targets for the development of local government, the pursuit of graft and the development

of the country's economy. His pragmatic focus is on the one prerequisite for America to head to the exits, as defined by the White House: Afghan security forces that are strong enough to keep the Taliban, which continues to enjoy sanctuary in neighboring Pakistan, from toppling the Kabul government. Although much of the Afghan army remains raggedy, with weak leadership and persistent supply shortages, he is betting that shifting responsibility sooner will increase the odds that Afghans will be able to stand their ground once the U.S. presence shrinks.

Allen's approach has disquieted some on Capitol Hill and in the Pentagon, but the general's plan has found favor among Obama and many of his top advisers, in part because the aggressive shift of responsibility to the Afghans could make it easier for the president to withdraw additional U.S. troops next year. For the first time since Obama became president, White House aides have ceased complaining about the military command in Kabul.

Obama has offered a degree of praise for Allen that never was accorded to his predecessors. When Obama and Allen walked out of a lunch in the White House earlier this year, the president put his arm around the general, according to administration and military officials. “John Allen is my man,” Obama said to staffers waiting in an anteroom.

But the improved relationship hasn't made Allen's job any easier. His to-do list over the next several months is more complex than any previous commander in Kabul: He has to remove 23,000 troops — shuttering bases and reallocating supplies — during the peak summertime fighting

season, while also accelerating the training of Afghan forces, deploying new teams of U.S. advisers to assist Afghan troops, and negotiating the terms of an enduring U.S. military presence with President Hamid Karzai's government.

“John Allen faces an unprecedented challenge,” said retired lieutenant general David Barno, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan from 2003 to 2005. “He's fighting a full-up insurgency at the same time he's withdrawing forces and changing the mission. It's an immense task.”

Allen's predicament has no equivalent in modern American warfare.

In Iraq, U.S. troops departed in a far less violent environment. In Vietnam, Creighton Abrams, the general who presided over America's withdrawal, had more troops at his disposal and more time to transfer responsibility to local forces.

By the early 1970s, according to historian Lewis Sorley, South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu's government was more effective, and the country's army was more competent, than Karzai's administration and the Afghan security forces are today. Allen “has a much more difficult job,” said Sorley, the author of “A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam.”

Allen, 58, is an avid reader of military histories and sees the Vietnam analogies — the insurgent safe havens across a national border, the plummeting public support back home — but he is studying a different withdrawal: that of the Soviets from Afghanistan in 1989.

“We're fighting on the same ground,” he noted.

Afghanistan's Communist government remained in power

through the pullout, falling only three years later, after the Soviet Union collapsed and its economic aid to Kabul ended. To Allen, that fact argues for sustained American assistance to Afghanistan, particularly to pay for its army and police, which will grow to a combined strength of 352,000 this year.

The annual price tag will be about \$4 billion, a staggering cost, but far cheaper than the \$100 billion annual tab to keep 100,000 American troops on Afghan soil. He and Obama plan to make the case for NATO to help foot the bill, and provide other long-term support to Afghanistan, during the alliance's annual summit in Chicago next weekend.

Allen blazed an unconventional path to the wood-paneled commander's office in Kabul. A native of Warrenton, Va., he attended the Flint Hill School in Oakton. He decided to apply to the U.S. Naval Academy after hearing his father, a Navy radio man who served aboard a destroyer that was torpedoed by a German U-boat in 1941, share tales of naval heroism.

Although Allen would go on to lead a Marine infantry company and a battalion, he never had sole command of a division-sized unit — a standard prerequisite to become a four-star wartime commander. Instead, his career has been filled with unusual accomplishments: He won a coveted leadership award given to only one Marine captain each year, and he became the first Marine to serve as the commandant of midshipmen at the Naval Academy.

He spent two years in Iraq's Anbar province, but his focus was not on day-to-day operations; he spearheaded an effort to reach out to Sunni tribal sheiks and persuade them to stand against al-Qaeda militants

— a shift that helped turn the course of the war in western Iraq.

He eventually became the deputy commander of the U.S. Central Command, where his portfolio focused largely on Iran. The job afforded him the opportunity to brief Obama, who grew impressed by the general's analyses. When Obama appointed the previous commander in Kabul, Petraeus, to head the CIA, Allen was said to be a shoo-in for the post. To end America's longest war, administration officials said, the president wanted someone with fresh ideas in Kabul.

Put aside the uniform and the 6-foot-tall Allen is more professor and Southern gentleman than hard-bitten Marine general. He is unfailingly polite and prone to measured locution. He devours tomes of military history while others are in bed — he sleeps only about four hours a night — and he sets aside several hours each week “to think about big ideas.”

When he was a brigadier general, he told Naval Academy students in a letter that he had been profoundly affected by reading classic military historians, among them Stephen Ambrose, John Keegan and Barbara Tuchman. “If my house were on fire and we were all running for our lives,” he wrote, “I would first save my family, and then all my volumes by these writers.”

He has not yet informed Obama, who has indicated that he wants to keep withdrawing forces next year, how many troops he believes should stay in Afghanistan through 2013, but he is not digging in his boots to maintain all of the 68,000 troops that will remain after the current drawdown phase is completed at the end of September.

By the end of the year, he predicted, “we could find that

the operational environment for '13 could be pretty significantly different,” although he said he will still need Special Operations forces, trainers for the Afghan troops and some conventional units to operate in areas not yet ready for transfer to Afghan control.

It is a very different method from that taken by Petraeus, who sought to push Obama, during war cabinet discussions in 2011, to delay the drawdown until the end of this year so that U.S. forces could continue large-scale counterinsurgency missions. Petraeus failed. But Allen did manage to persuade Obama, in private discussions, not to announce any additional troop cuts until he provides a range of options to the White House in late fall.

To those in the two-story yellow building that houses the NATO headquarters in Kabul, Allen's approach to the troop reductions reflects his leadership style.

Under Petraeus, “it was much more of a one-man show. There was much less oxygen for debate,” said a senior NATO official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the two generals. “John Allen listens a lot more carefully to what people are saying to him.”

When Allen arrived in Kabul last July, the U.S. and NATO war plan called for a gradual transition of territory to Afghan control by the end of 2014, the point at which NATO's combat mission will end. Based on the assumption that the United States would maintain substantial combat power in the country until then, the strategy envisaged the most violent, Taliban-saturated places to be handed over last, allowing U.S. troops maximum time to conduct counterinsurgency operations.

To Allen, that plan didn't reflect the new reality in Afghanistan — or Washington. Afghan military leaders wanted to assume more responsibility, and it seemed unlikely Obama would be willing to forestall additional drawdowns until 2014. As Allen chewed through his options, he concluded that he needed to upend the strategy: Instead of waiting until the very end to transition the toughest places, he would “front-load risk” and allow Afghans to take charge of those areas sooner.

The next set of districts and provinces to be transitioned to Afghan control will be announced in the coming weeks and it will contain several areas — including districts around the city of Kandahar—that remain insurgent battlegrounds. By handing off violent areas sooner, Allen said, it will thrust Afghans into a lead role while the U.S. military still has enough forces to come to their rescue, if needed. And it means that the final two rounds of transition will be far less challenging.

“I seek as much as I can to mitigate risk,” he said.

The accelerated transition comes with a cost. The original plan involved waiting until not just security had improved but local governments had been established and economic development had commenced. The new approach essentially jettisons governance and development goals. “The time scale for their delivery is not the same scale we're working on for the security transition,” the senior NATO official said.

The 82nd Airborne's upcoming Ghazni operation also reflects the new American way of war in Afghanistan. Soon after Obama took office in 2009, U.S. commanders vowed they wouldn't transition areas to Afghan control until coalition forces had cleared those places

of insurgents, held that ground and then built a functioning government and economy. But the newly arrived brigade will spend only five months on the ground; its soldiers must leave Afghanistan before the Sept. 30 drawdown deadline.

“We’re going straight from clear to transition,” one of Allen’s subordinate generals said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. “This is the last real glass-breaker where we exert our will. But then it’ll be up to the Afghans.”

Allen doesn’t intend to let the Afghan army fend for itself. Each battalion will have a small team of U.S. or NATO advisers who can summon air and artillery strikes, provide intelligence from drones, defuse roadside bombs and request medical evacuations. But U.S. military officials believe the Afghan army still has a long way to go before it can operate at top form, even with mentors. Only 18 of the country’s 293 battalions have been deemed by the Americans to be capable of independent operations with coalition advisers.

Some battalions have been plagued by poor leadership and weak morale. Others have been hindered by basic logistical challenges. When Allen visited the forward operating base in Qara Bagh, he asked about the status of the Afghan army battalion in the area. He was told that it had 100 percent of its assigned personnel, but the unit had only six working Humvees of the 28 it had been assigned. The problem was maddeningly simple: Nobody in the battalion had requisitioned the necessary spare parts from the supply depot.

The fast handover to Afghan forces is but one reminder of America’s diminished ambition. His other principal challenge is figuring out how to remove

23,000 troops by September. About 10,000 of them will be Marines from Helmand province, where violence has dropped significantly since the United States commenced large counterinsurgency operations in mid-2009; the rest will have to come from other parts of the country that are far less secure. For Allen and his top deputies, it is a process of trade-offs, of least-worst options. There are no good answers, even with their plan to hand off more responsibility to the Afghans.

“Petraeus had all the fun of building it up,” said Simon Gass, a British diplomat who serves as NATO’s senior civilian representative in Afghanistan. “John Allen has all the challenges of tearing it down.”

Late in the evening of April 25, Allen received a nightly summary of casualties across the country. The tally from southern Afghanistan was unusually high: two killed in action and 16 more wounded, several of them seriously, over the previous 24 hours. Allen decided to cancel his meetings the next morning and head to Kandahar.

He would spend just 30 minutes there, all of it at the base hospital, walking from bed to bed in the intensive care unit, bending over the wounded and putting his hand on their head or shoulder, and whispering words of encouragement.

Thank you for all you have done.

Take care of yourself.

You’re one tough guy.

Then he pressed a gold-rimmed commemorative coin in their palms.

“Every one of these counts in a big way to me,” Allen said a few days later. “On that morning, that was where I needed to be.”

Allen is painfully aware that two-thirds of Americans

no longer believe the Afghan war is worth fighting. He had hoped that his testimony before the House and Senate armed services committees in early April would help change minds, but “it didn’t penetrate.”

He recognizes that his war has far more modest goals than some of his predecessors envisioned. But it is not a hasty run to the exits. It is, he hopes, withdrawal and transition with honor — a decent ending to a long, grueling conflict that has claimed almost 2,000 American lives and left thousands more with severe, permanent injuries.

“I can’t spend a lot of time worrying about the numbers at home,” he said. “I’ve got to focus on the mission.”

Allen is convinced that his campaign ultimately will be successful, even if it may not appear to be a clear-cut victory. But, he cautioned, “it’s going to be hard as hell.”

Allen assumed his days would be consumed with the Afghan handover and the drawdown, not to mention all of the other chores his predecessors faced — the meetings with congressional delegations and defense ministers from 50 coalition nations, the regular sessions with Karzai and his security ministers, and the vexing problem of insurgent sanctuaries in Pakistan.

What he didn’t count on were what his staff calls “meteor strikes”: the release of a video showing Marines urinating on Taliban corpses; the burning of Korans at a giant U.S. base outside Kabul; and an Army sergeant’s allegedly murderous rampage near Kandahar. Each has thrown Allen and his staff for a loop, consuming hundreds of hours of time that could have been devoted to other tasks. And they have complicated his relationship with Karzai,

increasing Afghan leverage in negotiations over restrictions on nighttime raids and a transfer of prisoners to Afghan control.

Those who have attended meetings between Allen and Karzai said the general has sought to strike a polite but firm tone in the face of the president’s anger, navigating a middle ground between McChrystal’s deference to the Afghan leader and Petraeus’s forcefulness. “Allen has exercised an approach of astonishing patience under provocation,” a senior Western diplomat in Kabul said.

After Karzai complained about “twin demons” in his country, referring to the Taliban and international forces, Allen wanted to fire back. But he forced himself to seethe quietly in the presidential palace. Then, when he returned to Washington, he made clear how he felt: “I reject the equivalence of our forces with the Taliban,” he told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

“I’ll take it to a point,” he said over dinner in Kabul, “but I won’t take it to a fault.”

When Allen traveled to Ghazni, he had lunch with a dozen junior officers from the 82nd Airborne’s 1st Brigade. Instead of exhorting them to make the most of the last major U.S. operation of the war — telling them that the next several months would be America’s final chance to flush the Taliban from the province’s 7,000-foot plains — the general launched into a lecture about small-unit leadership.

“I need for our standards to be inviolate. We all know what’s right,” he said as the lieutenants and captains ate roast beef and noodles from Styrofoam containers. “This war can be lost without the Taliban winning. We have to win this morally as well as tactically and operationally.”

“We want them to miss us because we were special to them. We don’t want them wiping their brows and saying, ‘Thank God they’re gone.’”

New York Times
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Pg. 15

2. Spy Balloons Become Part Of The Afghanistan Landscape, Stirring Unease

By Graham Bowley

KABUL, Afghanistan — The traders crouched beneath the walls of an old fort, hunkered down with the sheep and goats as they talked, eyes nervously flitting up from time to time at the blimp that has become their constant overseer.

“It is there every day except the days when it is windy and rainy,” said Suleman, 45, who goes by only one name.

“It watches us day and night,” said another trader, Mir Akbar, 18, his eyes following the balloon as its nose swiveled with the wind from east to west.

“I notice it all the time,” said Rahmat Shah, 28, a secondhand car seller, who was standing slightly aside from the other men. “I know there is a camera in it.”

The dirigible, a white 117-foot-long surveillance balloon called an aerostat by the military, and scores more like it at almost every military base in the country, have become constant features of the skies over Kabul and Kandahar, and anywhere else American troops are concentrated or interested in.

Shimmering more than 1,500 feet up in the daytime haze, or each visible as a single light blinking at night, the balloons, with infrared and color video cameras, are central players in the American military’s shift toward using

technology for surveillance and intelligence.

In recent years, they have become part of a widening network of devices — drones, camera towers at military bases and a newer network of street-level closed-circuit cameras monitoring Kabul’s roads — that have allowed American and Afghan commanders to keep more eyes on more places where Americans are fighting.

The dirigibles are now such a common feature in daily Afghan life that some people here shrug and say they hardly notice them. Other parts of the network have become lasting parts of the urban landscape as well, particularly in Kabul, where long-necked closed-circuit cameras overlook locations susceptible to attacks, like the Supreme Court building, traffic circles and main highways past the military camps.

But other Afghans describe a growing sense of oppression, the feeling that even as the Americans are starting to pack up to leave, the foreigners’ eyes will always be on them.

It is often expressed in typically Afghan fashion, as a grumbled undercurrent of quips and brooding pronouncements: “It is an American kite,” or “Afghans and Americans are up there.” (They are not; there is no one in the balloons.) “It shows us that, sure, the Americans are still here,” and, “It is not effective because there are still these suicide attacks and car bombs.”

For others, the cameras are an outrageous intrusion into private lives, putting women and children on display for foreigners whom they see as immoral.

“We cannot sleep on our rooftops anymore,” said Mohammadullah, who goes by one name, a resident of Asadabad, the capital of

Kunar Province, where families regularly sleep on their roofs during the summer’s sweltering heat, and who was voicing a common concern. “Whenever our female family members walk in the yard during the day, or whenever we want to say ‘hi’ to our wife when we sleep on rooftops, we feel someone is watching us.”

First used in Iraq in 2004, the helium balloons were introduced to Afghanistan in 2007, and the military has been shipping them here ever since.

American commanders love them, for giving them a perpetual full-color view of important thoroughfares and helping to catch insurgents planting roadside bombs. They cost less than the multimillion-dollar drones that get headlines.

“It has been a game changer,” said Ray Gutierrez, who trains the civilian crews, all Americans, who operate the cameras, and the military units who use them. One recent afternoon, he stood in the small control room beneath the old fort where two men with joysticks scanned close-up views of the hillsides several miles away, practically as if they could reach out and touch them. “It lets us see the battlefield as we have never been able to see it before.”

For the Taliban, the blimps have become things to fear.

In Kandahar Province — where there are at least eight in the city of Kandahar alone and more in the districts — residents say the insurgents call them “frogs” because their big eyes are ever watchful, or “shameless” because there is nothing they will not peer into. (The residents in Helmand have their own name for them: “milk fish” because of their fins and milky color.)

The insurgents avoid the areas under the balloons and have taken to disguising

themselves as farmers to avoid detection — and a deadly follow-up airstrike, residents say.

In the Zhare district of Kandahar Province, a focus of the Obama administration’s troop increase in 2010, at least one aerostat can be seen from almost every village. While bigger ones float over cities like Kabul, smaller balloons, about 75 feet, tend to be used in outlying areas.

Beyond just seeing the Taliban, the aerostats deter them, too, making ambushes rarer along routes in their view, the Americans say.

“We can’t be fighting for these roads every day,” said Col. Brian Mennes, the commander of Fourth Brigade Combat Team of the 82nd Airborne Division, which is responsible for Zhare and neighboring Maiwand district.

The street cameras in Kabul have had a similarly positive effect, officials say.

Inside the police headquarters in downtown Kabul one recent morning, Gen. Mohammad Ayoub Salangi, the chief of police, was flicking through images of the city piped onto a screen beside his desk.

General Salangi said the cameras played an important role in handling the riots in February when the burning of Korans by American military personnel touched off angry protests. The police were praised for swiftly bringing the crowds under control, especially in the east of Kabul, and keeping violence to a minimum.

“Seventy percent of that was down to the cameras,” he said. “We were watching, and the cameras helped us to find out where we had to have antiriot units.”

It was also the cameras, he said, that spied a car packed with explosives in the

ground floor of a building that was under construction, from which heavily armed insurgents were attacking the American Embassy and NATO headquarters in September. "What I did, I told my strike force to stand by and we sent our emergency team in to defuse it," he said.

Though the balloons may not stay after the last American combat troops are gone — that is still being negotiated — they will have an even more important role amid the withdrawal of military forces, as planners hope the technology will help a dwindling force stay effective. And the military is building a bigger, 300-foot, untethered airship with more powerful surveillance capabilities intended for use here.

In the meantime, the Americans have mounted a publicity campaign devised to reassure Afghans that the cameras are not spying on women or children, and cannot peer through walls. But while some resent the intrusion, still others complain that the main problem is the cameras are not doing enough.

Sayed Agha, a resident of Asadabad, said he was in court recently where three Afghan fuel contractors were on trial for unloading American fuel tankers to private vendors in the local market. When the contractors denied the allegations, the Americans showed video images captured from a balloon.

"It was really bright and clear, as if someone followed them and filmed them while they were selling the fuel in the market," he said. "But it raises one question, that how come they could see the fuel contractors selling fuel in the market but not the armed opposition?"

The program is clearly not infallible, nor is it invulnerable. From time to time, Afghanistan's summer winds and storms snap the balloons' tethers. And then there is the target practice.

Often when crews bring the balloons down, for maintenance or to protect them from storms, says Eddy Hogan, who manages the aerostats, they find bullet holes all over, attesting to the balloons' role as an object of resentment.

The balloons' size, and the fact that helium is not explosive, means they can stay aloft even with lots of small holes in them.

"You can tell when, you bring it down and see hundreds of bullet holes in it, that they don't like it," he said. But, he added, "It takes hundreds and hundreds of rounds to bring them down."

Matthew Rosenberg and Taimoor Shah contributed reporting from Kandahar, Afghanistan, and Afghan employees of The New York Times from Kunar, Nangarhar, Kunduz and Helmand Provinces.

Reuters.com
May 13, 2012

3. Senior Afghan Peace Negotiator Shot Dead In Kabul

By Hamid Shalizi, Reuters

KABUL--Gunmen shot dead a top Afghan peace negotiator in the capital Kabul on Sunday, police said, dealing another blow to the country's attempts to negotiate a peace deal with the Taliban.

Maulvi Arsala Rahmani was one of the most senior members on Afghanistan's High Peace Council, set up by President Hamid Karzai two years ago to liaise with insurgents.

"He (Rahmani) was stuck in heavy traffic when another

car beside him opened fire," said General Mohammad Zahir, head of the investigations unit for Kabul police.

The Taliban denied involvement in the killing of Rahmani, a Taliban defector but with strong ties to the movement. "Others are involved in this," its spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said.

Rahmani was on his way to a meeting with lawmakers and other officials in a government-run media centre in the heavily barricaded diplomatic centre of Kabul when he was shot dead.

"His driver did not immediately realise that Rahmani had been killed," police official Zahir told Reuters, adding that no one had been arrested in connection with the shooting.

The Taliban said his death would not alter peace talks. "We don't believe it's a big blow to peace efforts because the peace council has achieved nothing," Mujahid told Reuters.

The 70-member High Peace Council appears to have made little progress in negotiating with the Taliban to end the war now in its eleventh year.

Any progress was severely halted when its head, former Afghan president Barhanuddin Rabbani, was assassinated by a suicide bomber last year. He has since been replaced by his son Salahuddin.

Rahmani told Reuters at the start of the year he was optimistic secret peace talks with the Taliban had a good chance of success and that the Taliban were ready to moderate their fundamentalist positions.

U.S. diplomats have separately engaged the Taliban in secret discussions abroad leading to an agreement on the establishment of a Taliban office in the Gulf state of Qatar, though the Taliban later suspended the talks, blaming

Washington for ignoring its demands.

Fear is mounting amongst Afghans and foreign governments alike that the planned pullout of NATO combat troops by the end of 2014 and Afghan national elections in the same year could see the country engulfed in more conflict and bloodshed.

NYTimes.com
May 12, 2012

4. Gunmen In Afghan Police Uniforms Kill 2 NATO Soldiers

By Graham Bowley

KABUL, Afghanistan — A day after an assailant wearing an Afghan Army uniform killed an American soldier in eastern Afghanistan, two insurgents dressed in Afghan police uniforms on Saturday shot and killed two coalition soldiers in the south of the country, NATO said.

NATO did not confirm the nationality of those killed. But a spokesman for the governor of Helmand Province said that the attack took place in the Gereshk district of Helmand Province, and that those attacked were British soldiers. The spokesman, Dawoud Ahmadi, said two attackers in national Afghan police uniforms opened fire on NATO troops on a highway at a checkpoint near a base where British forces are stationed.

As the attackers tried to escape, Afghan police officers chased them and killed one, but the second attacker escaped, he said.

The attack was the latest in a string of assaults on NATO soldiers by their Afghan partners. NATO said that in the latest episode the attackers were not actually trained police officers but insurgents who were wearing police uniforms.

"Our reporting right now says that they were insurgents dressed in police uniform," said a NATO spokesman in Kabul, Sgt. Thomas Dow.

He said that two international coalition soldiers had been killed, although Mr. Ahmadi and the Helmand police said that one NATO soldier had been killed and one wounded.

A spokesman for the Helmand police, Fareed Ahmad Farhang, said both gunmen were killed. He said the shootings took place on the highway from Helmand to Kandahar Province.

In a separate episode on Saturday, a coalition soldier was killed by a roadside bomb in southern Afghanistan, NATO said.

Taimoor Shah contributed reporting from Kabul, and an employee of The New York Times from Helmand Province.

London Sunday Times

May 13, 2012

Pg. 2

5. Afghan Police Kill UK Troops

By Miles Amooore and Tim Ripley

TWO British soldiers were reported killed inside an army base in Helmand province yesterday by gunmen wearing Afghan police uniforms.

The deaths of the soldiers in the Nahr-e-Saraj district of the province takes the death toll of British servicemen and women in the country to 414 since 2001. Next of kin were being informed last night.

Another Nato soldier, whose nationality was not disclosed, was killed by an improvised explosive device in a separate incident. A fourth died of nonbattle-related injuries.

It is understood the two gunmen opened fire at about 3pm at a joint Afghan-coalition

base. An Afghan policeman returned fire, killing one and wounding the other, who escaped.

Neither Nato nor the Ministry of Defence would confirm the nationalities of the dead soldiers and there was confusion over whether the gunmen were genuine police or insurgents in disguise. However, Afghan sources said the soldiers were British. Nato's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) would confirm only that two of its members had been killed.

In a statement, Isaf said: "We are aware of the claims that the shooters were AUP (Afghan uniformed police). However, operational reports indicate these were insurgents dressed in AUP uniforms and not actual AUP."

Fareed Ahmad, a spokesman for Helmand provincial police, claimed the killers had been working in the police for a year and were from Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan. Before yesterday's incident, 20 Nato troops had been killed by Afghan soldiers or police in at least 15 separate attacks this year.

Los Angeles Times

May 13, 2012

6. A U.S. Soldier And The Afghan Soldier Who Killed Him

The man who turned his gun on Green Beret Andrew Britton-Mihalo of Simi Valley was also part of an elite corps. The tragedy is part of a worrisome trend in Afghanistan.

By Laura King and Steve Chawkins, Los Angeles Times

KABUL, Afghanistan — In many ways, the two young soldiers were not so different from each other.

Each was tough-minded and physically powerful. Each worked hard to win a place

in an elite military unit, and spoke with pride of serving his country.

They were 25 years old, these two: one newly married, the other planning a wedding this year. Their upbringings were as disparate as their homelands were distant, but religious faith was entwined with the family lives of both.

Their lives ended, violently and nearly simultaneously, one evening late last month at a remote outpost in southern Afghanistan — one dead at the other's hands.

An Afghan special forces sergeant named Zakirullah has been identified by his commanders as the man who shot and killed U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Andrew Trevor Britton-Mihalo, a Green Beret from Simi Valley, before being gunned down himself.

"We had thought he might die while he was serving in the army," said an uncle of Zakirullah, who, like many Afghans, used one name. "But we never thought it would happen like this."

At the fatal intersection of these two young lives, American and Afghan, lies the heartbreaks of the Western presence in this country, and the many ways in which two ostensible allies have both buoyed and failed each other.

As the U.S. military embarks on the task of extracting itself from America's longest war, the phenomenon of members of the Afghan security forces turning their guns on Western troops is becoming, in the eyes of some commanders, a strategic threat.

At least 21 NATO troops have died in these assaults this year, accounting for a stunning 14% of troop deaths, with the latest shooting coming Friday in northeastern Afghanistan, the victim an American. The

total number of such attacks is unknown; they generally go unreported publicly by the military if they result in injuries only.

Although all have a corrosive effect on field morale and trust, the April 25 confrontation that killed Britton-Mihalo was cause for particular alarm: For the first time, the killer was a member of Afghanistan's special forces, handpicked from the ranks of its commandos, who are themselves considered an exclusive fraternity: carefully vetted, highly trained, closely watched.

With the NATO force preparing to end its combat role in Afghanistan, heavily freighted hopes are riding on the U.S.-mentored Afghan special forces.

They are being groomed to take the lead in nighttime raids, which have proved to be perhaps the single most effective tool in killing and capturing leaders of the Taliban and other insurgent groups. More than three dozen teams of Afghan special forces are spread across the country, partnered with U.S. counterparts in "village stability" operations meant to win the support of residents in isolated hamlets menaced by the Taliban.

In outposts like the makeshift base in Kandahar province where Zakirullah and Britton-Mihalo were deployed, the punishingly primitive, close-quarters conditions can foster strong bonds — or allow small irritants to fester.

"They work together, they patrol together, they are together all day of every day," said Col. Bismullah Waziri, executive officer of the Afghan commando brigade. "We are all aware that there are cultural issues. Sure, they are different

from us. And we are different from them."

Britton-Mihalo's military roots ran deep.

His dad was a Marine; Andrew was born in Costa Rica while his father was serving there. In December, he married Jesse Lamorte, an Army combat photographer who had served in Afghanistan with a special operations unit. He had proposed to her stateside, at a Special Forces winter ball. Two of his half brothers recently enlisted, and Britton-Mihalo had signed up for a third tour in Afghanistan.

From the beginning, his career aim was soldiering. He signed on with the Army in 2005, right after graduating from Royal High School in Simi Valley. Nobody who knew him was surprised when he made it into the elite Green Berets in 2008.

"He was something special when it came to dedication and endurance," said Paul Mole, one of his wrestling coaches in Simi Valley, where a 5-year-old Andrew had moved after his parents split up and his mother remarried.

Mole, who now teaches at Ponderosa High School in Parker, Colo., keeps a photo on his classroom wall: It's the Royal team that won the school's first wrestling championship, a squad whose standout was the boy then known as Andrew Mihalo. (He adopted the hyphenated name later, combining the surnames of his biological father and his stepfather.)

The young wrestler was known for his ability to withstand pain. When his shoulder was dislocated during a match and his coaches couldn't work it back into place, he dove onto the mat to pop it back in. He went on to win the match.

By the time of the championship bout, the 144-pound senior's injuries had raised doubt about his ability to keep going. Early on, his opponent took him down, but as a crowd chanted, "An-DREW! An-DREW!" he managed to turn the tables, get the decisive pin, and bring home the wrestling title.

"He was so happy, he was just a ball of emotion," recalled Rich Carrillo, Royal's current head coach.

"He couldn't stop crying. I put my arm around him and said: 'From here on, your life will never be the same. You're a hero.' I never realized just how much of a hero he would become."

As a youth, Zakirullah didn't bear the hallmarks of a hometown hero.

Born into a typically large family in the impoverished Pashtun farming hamlet of Wazir Tatang in Nangarhar province, near the Pakistani border, he spent some of his teenage years working as a mechanic and driver while other brothers went off to university.

Though close to his family as a boy, playing and tussling with his brothers in the dry riverbed where their village lies, he became estranged from the clan in his late teens. Five years ago, he left without telling anyone and joined the army, said an uncle, Haji Naamdaar.

Military life, it turned out, seemed to suit him. After a few years, he made the cut to become a commando. And from there, he advanced to an even more severe test: a special forces battalion. Along the way, he was promoted to sergeant. He returned to the family fold, becoming engaged to a cousin in a match arranged by tribal elders.

For Afghan troops, commando and special forces

training is modeled in part on the grueling winnowing process for celebrated U.S. special operations forces such as the Green Berets. Not only is physical endurance required, psychological resilience is considered a key attribute.

"Sometimes, even if they are doing something correctly, we shout at them and criticize them for doing it wrong, to see how they handle it," said Bismullah, the colonel. "If they crack, they're out."

Why Zakirullah pulled his gun on a comrade will probably never be known.

The shooting erupted about 8 p.m. on the base, in an abandoned residential compound in the remote village of Kajoor. After Zakirullah shot Britton-Mihalo, the slain American's fellow Green Berets returned fire, killing him instantly.

A military investigating panel, made up of Americans and Afghans, has returned from the scene but has not yet submitted its findings, and no date has been set for the inquiry's completion. Members of Zakirullah's team, just a month into a three-month posting in Kandahar province, has been pulled back to Kabul, the capital, for questioning and more training.

After the shooting, the Taliban claimed that the attack had been carried out at the group's behest, specifically mentioning Zakirullah by name. Although the group could easily have learned his identity after the fact, investigators are looking at whether he could have had some link to the insurgents.

Although nearly all Afghan soldiers are observant Muslims, displays of intense religious fervor can sometimes attract attention. Zakirullah "prayed five times a day like

anyone, but there was nothing unusual there," said Col. Nabiullah Merzaee, the deputy commander of the commando center where he trained.

NATO officials say "insider" shootings are often triggered by something more mundane than religious sentiment or insurgent sympathies. A grudge, a quarrel, an affront: All can be extremely serious matters in the Pashtun culture in which Zakirullah was reared, sometimes even when the actual disagreement appears trivial.

Naamdaar said that although he remembered his nephew as a generally easygoing boy, his temper occasionally flared if he felt he was being treated with disrespect.

"In an argument," he said, "he could sometimes go a little crazy."

To his sister Michelle Carranza, a mother of four in Simi Valley, Britton-Mihalo was a "normal, average brother — a goofball who teased us."

He loved animals. He kept snakes in his room as a boy, and always had a dog.

He was active in his family's Mormon church. For his Eagle Scout project, he built a wheelchair ramp at the local cemetery.

In his senior year of high school, his mother moved to Missouri, and Andrew was allowed to stay behind with his best friend's family.

"Some of my greatest memories of Andrew were sitting up till 4 a.m. in his pitch-black room, lying on his floor, solving all of the problems of the world like only brothers could," wrote the friend, T.J. Mathias, in a Facebook tribute. "We would discuss politics, school, girls, life, movies, music, cars ...

absolutely whatever came to mind."

His death at the hands of an Afghan ally is no more or less devastating than it would have been otherwise, said some who knew him.

"He was the world to me," Carranza said. "I don't know what was in the heart of the man who killed my brother. I don't know what he was seeking. Those are things I'm going to leave to a higher power. If I dwell on it, I let it take over."

More than 700 people have joined a Facebook page Britton-Mihalo's friends started in his memory, posting photos of a trip Andrew took to Disneyland, reminiscences of his school days, Ronald Reagan quotes about freedom, shots of fun times with the woman now known as Sgt. Jesse Britton.

At his old school, students observed a moment of silence to mark his death.

"In high school, we create a bubble; we try to keep them young and carefree for a few years," said Principal Deborah Salgado. "Then we send them out into an overly serious world."

In accordance with his family's wishes, Andrew Britton-Mihalo is to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery on May 25. Thirty days later, he would have celebrated his 26th birthday.

Back in Afghanistan, hundreds of mourners trekked from nearby villages for Zakirullah's funeral six days after his death. Wails rang out as he was carried to a forlorn-looking cemetery less than a mile from the family home, but there was little talk of his final act. Some of those in attendance did not know how he died; others clearly felt the circumstances were best buried with him.

It had fallen to Haji Naamdaar to identify and claim Zakirullah's corpse. In the chill of the morgue, the body lay swathed, grievous wounds hidden. All Naamdaar could see was Zakirullah's face. Gazing down at it, he saw neither rage nor fear written on the features of his young nephew.

"I thought he might look different," he said. "But he looked only like himself."

King reported from Kabul and Chawkins from Simi Valley. Special correspondent Hashmat Baktash in Kabul contributed to this report.

London Sunday Times

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7. From Poppies To Pips

This extraordinary British entrepreneur has convinced farmers in Afghanistan to kick their opium habit and grow pomegranates instead.

By Miles Amooore

For the grey-bearded Afghan opium farmer, the sight of a large, red-headed white man running through his poppy field in traditional Afghan clothes was one of the strangest things he'd seen. For James Brett, a British entrepreneur with a penchant for adventure and an obsession with pomegranates, running into a field of opium in one of Afghanistan's most lawless provinces felt completely natural.

"My translator kept telling me I'd get shot," says Brett, his burly frame rocking with laughter. "It irritated me. I didn't have time to worry about silly things like that. Bless the farmer: he looked more shocked than me."

By the end of the bizarre encounter, Brett had persuaded the farmer to grow pomegranates instead of opium. He pulled out a white cardboard sign, scrawled the words

"Pomegranate is the answer" on it in blue marker, and took a few photographs of himself and the bewildered farmer. He promised to return.

Those five minutes in the poppy field changed his life irreversibly, he says. If the eccentric Brit from Swindon has it his way, they will also change Afghanistan.

"It was a massive eye-opener," Brett says, as he recalls the experience. "I realised that the people growing opium are oblivious to what it can do in our society. In the back of beyond of Afghanistan, people don't have a clue."

In 2007, Brett, a father of three, took the first step towards helping Afghan farmers plant pomegranate trees instead of opium. He launched the initiative Plant for Peace, originally calling it POM354, after his car numberplate, but changing the name soon afterwards. Out of that has grown a wildly ambitious scheme that aims to revive Afghanistan's entire horticultural sector and, in the process, foster the peace and security that has so far eluded western powers fighting the Taliban since 2001. It's an almighty task for one man to accomplish. But since its inception five years ago, Plant for Peace has won powerful backing: supporters include Lady Caroline Richards, the wife of the chief of the defence staff, General Sir David Richards, and the Marquess of Reading.

To raise cash for his plan and to encourage the food industry to buy Afghan products, Brett will produce a fruit bar made entirely from ingredients grown in Afghanistan, including pomegranates and mulberries (plus raisins and almonds). Working initially with a factory

in Sunderland, he expects to launch the bar later this year.

Brett hopes the bar's production will prove to other British companies that importing Afghan ingredients and investing in Afghanistan's food sector is worthwhile, and that this will, in turn, lead to a future in which Afghanistan will once again export juice, fruit and nuts to a global market.

I met Brett on a sunny day at my house in Kabul. He'd recently returned to the Afghan capital to oversee the cleaning, packaging and transport of the ingredients that will go into his first fruit bar. He already has a prototype. He pulls what looks like a lump of hashish wrapped in cellophane from his bag and lets me break off a corner of the dark-brown substance. It's delicious — fruity flavours explode in the mouth. "One hundred percent Afghan ingredients," he says with evident pride. "There's a saying in Afghanistan: if you want a good day's work, you give a man a pomegranate."

Over a cup of green tea, we discuss his ambitious plans for the future of the country that he has grown to love. He exudes self-belief and he gets a kick out of proving sceptics wrong. And, in a country crippled by decades of war, a continuing insurgency, endemic corruption, foreign meddling and a chaotic political structure, there are plenty of those.

Today, despite the decade-long presence of Nato troops, Afghanistan produces about 90% of the world's opium. There is little incentive to tackle the opium curse: both the government and the Taliban profit from the trade. But none of this deters James Brett. He believes that his project will diminish the Afghan farmers' reliance on opium as a cash crop by providing a sustainable alternative. He also says that

it will even help Nato's stalled efforts to bring Taliban fighters in from the cold by creating jobs to offer to insurgents who agree to lay down their weapons.

Brett's love affair with pomegranates dates back to the late 1990s when he was on a business trip to the Pakistani city of Peshawar. A wizened Pakistani fruit-juice seller handed him his first glass of freshly made pomegranate juice. Brett tasted the deep-red drink, turned to his friend and promptly announced that he was going to put it in shops and supermarkets across Britain.

"It was a sort of spiritual moment. I can't put it into words," says Brett. "Never in my life had I thought about pomegranates. I had no history in the food or drinks industry. But from that day I couldn't stop thinking about them."

Brett also had no idea about the purported health benefits of pomegranates. He later learnt that pomegranates, now the toast of the health-food industry — and regarded by many nutritionists as a "superfood" — contain a high level of antioxidants that boost the immune system. Research also shows that the fruit's high levels of vitamins C and B5, potassium and tannins may reduce the risk of diabetes, prostate cancer and coronary heart disease.

On top of that, Brett had witnessed how heroin can destroy lives in the West. "I have seen first-hand the devastating effects of heroin on families, friends and society," he says. "A difficult childhood" led him to use drugs himself for 20 years — though not heroin. His two best friends did succumb, however, and died from heroin-related illnesses.

After raising £160,000 from businessmen, friends and relatives, he launched a pomegranate-juice company,

PomeGreat. He imported pomegranates from Iran and spent weeks in the laboratories of Mumbai University, India, "messaging about with a professor" to fine-tune the drink that, five years after that first sip in Pakistan, would end up on supermarket and health-shop shelves across Britain.

In 2004, however, Brett suffered a mental breakdown and was admitted to hospital. "I was a mess," he says. To add to his troubles, he was ousted as CEO of PomeGreat and received a letter informing him that his shares had been sold. "I was very unwell at the time so I couldn't make sense of it," he recalls. He did eventually recover, however, and continued with his mission to spread the word about pomegranates.

Brett was invited to Kabul to give a speech to Afghan farmers about the benefits of growing pomegranates. It was on this first trip to Afghanistan that he ran into a field full of poppies in the eastern province of Nangarhar, accosted an opium farmer and pledged to wean the bewildered old man off his reliance on opium as an income. Months later, he returned to Afghanistan and drove back to see the old farmer. Afghan villagers crowded round him as he dug in a sign that read: "This land has been acquired as an alternative livelihood: from poppies to pomegranates."

On the plane back to Britain, Brett calculated the cost benefits to the farmers he had spoken with, the amount of fruit they could cultivate, and how many trees they could plant on their land. The net value of dried opium as it leaves the farm was \$241 per kilogram last year. The price of a kilo of pomegranates, by contrast, is only \$1. But a hectare of poppy only yields 44.5kg of opium,

while the same amount of land planted with pomegranate trees can yield roughly 21,450kg. So an Afghan farmer will double his income if he plants pomegranates rather than opium.

Brett set about trying to convince Afghan tribes that pomegranates were the future. In 2007, a former Afghan MP organised a meeting of 400 tribal elders from Nangarhar. Brett stood before the gathering and presented his plan. "There was lots of shouting," he says. "But at the end they were unanimous. They said they wanted to do this project because I was the only person who had come to their community who didn't have a gun, a badge or a uniform."

As word spread of the eccentric Englishman's plan, the size of the tribal gatherings grew. In 2008, Brett addressed a crowd of 6,500 elders. Later that day, he picked up 13 tonnes of raw opium (with an estimated street value of \$780m) seized by the Afghan police. Brett drove with the minister of counter-narcotics into the hills outside Nangarhar's provincial capital, piled the sacks of raw opium high and burnt them. It was a symbolic gesture, but it boosted his profile among foreign donors.

Three months later, with money from the sale of a pomegranate wine company in Armenia and cash from private investors, Brett oversaw the planting of 40,000 pomegranate trees in Nangarhar on land previously used to grow opium.

Plant for Peace will provide training and equipment to help Afghan farmers improve the growth, sorting, storage and distribution of their produce. Brett has set up a food business, Funktional Foods, and aims, over the next 18 months, to construct Afghanistan's first fruit-bar factory and to persuade

British supermarkets to stock the products.

As support for Brett's plans has grown, his ambitions have become ever grander. He is a maverick, but there is a touch of the Walter Mitty about him, too.

His strategy is pretty simple: "grow, produce, sell". He will need money to continue that process, and he is convinced it will come. Right now, he believes that the West is ignorant of the country's needs. "You can only help any nation through what it can understand. In Afghanistan, horticulture and agriculture are all-important — and so far we have failed to take that on board."

The Australian
May 11, 2012
Pg. 5

8. 'Nasty Words' Used On Afghan Detainees

By Brendan Nicholson

AUSTRALIAN guards at the jail used to hold suspected insurgents in Afghanistan have been accused of using abusive language while interrogating detainees.

Defence Minister Stephen Smith told parliament yesterday no physical violence was involved and an investigation was under way.

In a separate incident, Mr Smith said three other Australian troops at the facility at the coalition base in Tarin Kowt had been charged with falsifying detainee records. These charges followed a complaint made by another Australian guard at the facility and an inquiry by the Australian Defence Force Investigative Service.

Opposition defence science spokesman Stuart Robert, a former army officer, said the guards had used "some particularly nasty words".

Mr Smith said Australian troops in Afghanistan had

detained more than 1355 suspected insurgents since August last year and between 200 and 300 of them had been interrogated.

Mr Smith said 106 suspected insurgents had been transferred to Afghan authorities in Tarin Kowt and 70 had been handed over to US authorities at Parwan, home to their Bagram Air Base.

Mr Smith said there had been 91 allegations of mistreatment against Australian personnel either at the time of suspects' capture or during their detention. So far, 79 allegations had been found to be unsubstantiated. Twelve were under consideration.

After the ADFIS investigation, a brief was sent to the director of military prosecutions and three members of a detainee management team were charged with disciplinary offences.

Mr Smith said the ADF was reviewing questioning techniques used in the initial screening of detainees from 2010-11. Defence Force chief David Hurley had advised him that a recent review of records from this period identified the possible use of unauthorised questioning techniques when interviewing detainees.

That was limited to inappropriate language, he said.

New York Times
May 13, 2012
Pg. 1

9. U.S. May Scrap Costly Efforts To Train Iraqi Police

By Tim Arango

BAGHDAD — In the face of spiraling costs and Iraqi officials who say they never wanted it in the first place, the State Department has slashed—and may jettison entirely by the end of the year—a multibillion-dollar police

training program that was to have been the centerpiece of a hugely expanded civilian mission here.

What was originally envisioned as a training cadre of about 350 American law enforcement officers was quickly scaled back to 190 and then to 100. The latest restructuring calls for 50 advisers, but most experts and even some State Department officials say even they may be withdrawn by the end of this year.

The training effort, which began in October and has already cost \$500 million, was conceived of as the largest component of a mission billed as the most ambitious American aid effort since the Marshall Plan. Instead, it has emerged as the latest high-profile example of the waning American influence here following the military withdrawal, and it reflects a costly miscalculation on the part of American officials, who did not count on the Iraqi government to assert its sovereignty so aggressively.

“I think that with the departure of the military, the Iraqis decided to say, ‘O.K., how large is the American presence here?’ ” said James F. Jeffrey, the American ambassador to Iraq, in an interview. “How large should it be? How does this equate with our sovereignty? In various areas they obviously expressed some concerns.”

Last year the State Department embarked on \$343 million worth of construction projects around the country to upgrade facilities to accommodate the police training program, which was to have comprised hundreds of trainers and more than 1,000 support staff members working in three cities — Baghdad, Erbil and Basra — for five years. But like so much else in the nine

years of war, occupation and reconstruction here, it has not gone as planned.

A lesson given by an American police instructor to a class of Iraqi trainees neatly encapsulated the program's failings. There are two clues that could indicate someone is planning a suicide attack, the instructor said: a large bank withdrawal and heavy drinking.

The problem with that advice, which was recounted by Ginger Cruz, the former deputy inspector general at the American Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, was that few Iraqis have bank accounts and an extremist Sunni Muslim bent on carrying out a suicide attack is likely to consider drinking a cardinal sin.

Last month many of the Iraqi police officials who had been participating in the training suddenly refused to attend the seminars and PowerPoint presentations given by the Americans, saying they saw little benefit from the sessions.

The Iraqis have also insisted that the training sessions be held at their own facilities, rather than American ones. But reflecting the mistrust that remains between Iraqi and American officials, the State Department's security guards will not allow the trainers to establish set meeting times at Iraqi facilities, so as not to set a pattern for insurgents, who still sometimes infiltrate Iraq's military and police.

The largest of the construction projects, an upgrade at the Baghdad Police College that included installing protective covering over double-wide residence trailers (to shield against mortar attacks) and new dining and laundry facilities and seminar rooms, was recently abandoned, unfinished, after an expenditure

of more than \$100 million. The remaining police advisers will instead work out of the American Embassy compound, where they will have limited ability to interact with Iraqi police officials.

Robert M. Perito, director of the Security Sector Governance Center of Innovation at the United States Institute of Peace, called the project a “small program for a lot of money.”

“The first problem is the State Department doesn't operate in dangerous environments,” said Mr. Perito, who last year wrote a history of United States police training in Iraq. “As soon as the U.S. military left, the State Department was on its own. And that immediately ran the price up and restricted the ability of advisers to move around.”

The State Department has consistently defended the program, even after it was whittled down in scope and criticized publicly by the head of Iraq's Interior Ministry, Adnan al-Assadi, who last year questioned the wisdom of spending so much on a program the Iraqis never sought.

“We have stood up a robust police-training program, which is doing a terrific job working with the local police in training and developing a program, which I think will pay enormous dividends,” said Thomas R. Nides, deputy secretary of state for management and resources, in a briefing in February with reporters in Washington.

In fact, at every turn the program has faced steep challenges.

In an interview on Friday, Mr. Nides said, “I don't think anything went wrong.” He added, “the Iraqis don't believe they need a program of that scale and scope.”

Mr. Nides said the scaling back of the program was part of his broader effort to reduce the size of the embassy.

After realizing that the security environment would largely prevent the trainers from traveling outside their barracks, the focus of the program was shifted to holding seminars and PowerPoint presentations on topics like how to spot suicide bombers, protect human rights and deal with large crowds.

The trainers are mostly retired state troopers and other law enforcement personnel on leave from their jobs back home, and a number of officials who criticized the program questioned what those trainers have to offer Iraqi police officials who have been operating in a war zone for years.

Mr. Perito said that the State Department never developed a suitable curriculum and that instead, advisers often “end up talking about their own experiences or tell war stories and it’s not relevant.”

Retired Lt. Gen. James M. Dubik, now a senior fellow at the Institute for the Study of War, who oversaw the training of Iraqi security forces from 2007 to 2008, said, “The evidence suggests that the State Department never really engaged the Iraqis to find out what they need and what they want.”

The program has consistently been challenged by the special inspector general’s office, which in an audit late last year warned that it could become a “bottomless pit” for taxpayer dollars. The office’s most recent quarterly report, released at the end of April, stated that embassy officials acknowledged “that those challenges may lead to the further restructuring” of the program “in the near future.”

Last year, in preparation for the withdrawal of the military, the State Department planned a large expansion of its role here, designed to maintain influence and be a counterweight to the vast political influence of Iran. Yet, after doubling the size of the embassy staff to nearly 16,000 people, mostly contractors, the State Department quickly reversed course this year — partly because of Iraqi objections to the expanded operation — and is now cutting back from the slightly more than 12,000 people presently in Iraq.

Since 2003, the American government has spent nearly \$8 billion training the Iraqi police. The program was first under the State Department, but it was transferred to the Department of Defense in 2004 as the insurgency intensified. Yet the force that the American military left behind was trained to fight a counterinsurgency, not to act as a traditional law enforcement organization. Police officers here, for example, do not pull over speeding drivers or respond to calls about cats stuck in trees.

“What is really needed is a restructuring and reorienting of that force so it becomes a law enforcement agency that serves a democracy,” Mr. Perito said.

Washington Post
May 13, 2012
Pg. 1

10. Islamic Group Revives In Syria

Branch of Muslim Brotherhood; Role in revolt concerns neighbors, West
By Liz Sly

ISTANBUL — After three decades of persecution that virtually eradicated its presence, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood has resurrected itself to become the dominant group in the fragmented

opposition movement pursuing a 14-month uprising against President Bashar al-Assad.

Exiled Brotherhood members and their supporters hold the biggest number of seats in the Syrian National Council, the main opposition umbrella group. They control its relief committee, which distributes aid and money to Syrians participating in the revolt. The Brotherhood is also moving on its own to send funding and weapons to the rebels, who continued to skirmish Saturday with Syrian troops despite a month-old U.N.-brokered cease-fire.

The revival marks an extraordinary comeback for an organization that was almost annihilated after the last revolt in Syria, which ended in the killing by government forces of as many as 25,000 people in the city of Hama in 1982. Only those who managed to flee abroad survived the purge.

The Brotherhood’s rise is stirring concerns in some neighboring countries and in the wider international community that the fall of the minority Alawite regime in Damascus would be followed by the ascent of a Sunni Islamist government, extending into a volatile region a trend set in Egypt and Tunisia. In those countries, Brotherhood-affiliated parties won the largest number of parliamentary seats in post-revolution elections.

Brotherhood leaders say they have been reaching out to Syria’s neighbors, including Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon — as well as to U.S. and European diplomats — to reassure them that they have no intention of dominating a future Syrian political system or establishing any form of Islamist government.

“These concerns are not legitimate when it comes to Syria, for many reasons,” said

Molham al-Drobi, who is a member of the Brotherhood’s leadership and sits on the Syrian National Council’s foreign affairs committee.

“First, we are a really moderate Islamic movement compared to others worldwide. We are open-minded,” Drobi said. “And I personally do not believe we could dominate politics in Syria even if we wanted to. We don’t have the will, and we don’t have the means.”

Signs of jihadist influence

Of far greater concern to the United States and other Western countries are recent indications that extremists are seeking to muscle their way into the revolt, said Andrew Tabler of the Washington Institute for Near East policy. The double suicide bombing in Damascus last week, in which 55 people died in circumstances reminiscent of the worst of the violence in Iraq, bore the hallmarks of an al-Qaeda attack, deepening suspicions that militants have been relocating from Iraq to Syria.

On Saturday, a group calling itself the al-Nusra Front asserted responsibility for the attack in a statement posted on a jihadist Web site.

The Brotherhood is eager to distance itself from the jihadists, whose radical vision of an Islamic caliphate spanning the globe bears no resemblance to its philosophy.

As the Brotherhood starts distributing weapons inside the country, using donations from individual members and from Persian Gulf states including Qatar and Saudi Arabia, it is going to great lengths to ensure that they don’t fall into the hands of extremists, Drobi said.

“We have on the ground our networks, and we make sure they don’t distribute arms to those who are not within the

streamline of the revolution," Drobi said.

Other leaders also stress the moderation of the group's policies, even by comparison with the original Brotherhood movement in Egypt, to which the Syrian branch is very loosely affiliated.

Syria's Muslim Brotherhood would support NATO intervention to help the opposition topple Assad, and it has published a manifesto outlining its vision of a future democratic state that makes no mention of Islam and enshrines individual liberties, said Mohammed Farouk Tayfour, who is the movement's deputy leader, vice president of the Syrian National Council and head of the council's relief committee, making him perhaps the most powerful figure in the opposition.

"In Tunisia and Egypt, the regime did not uproot the Islamic movement as they did in Syria," he said, citing a 1980 law that made membership in the Syrian Brotherhood punishable by death. "Based on that, I would not expect to gain that much support after the fall of the regime."

Syria's long history of secularism and its substantial minority population also make it unlikely the Brotherhood would ever achieve the kind of dominance it appears to have won in Egypt or Tunisia, analysts and activists say. Drobi predicted that the Brotherhood would win 25 percent of the vote if democratic elections were to be held.

Even that could be optimistic, experts say. A third of Syria's population belongs to religious or ethnic minorities, among them Christians, Alawites, Shiites and Kurds, who share concerns about the potential rise of Sunni Islamism.

It is in large part a measure of the dysfunction of the rest of the opposition that the Brotherhood has managed to assert itself as the only group with a national reach, at a time when most of the uprising's internal leadership is atomized around local committees that don't coordinate, said Yezid Sayigh of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut.

"There is no other political party outside of the Brotherhood that has organization across the country," he said.

The flow of weapons and money to fighters is one of the biggest concerns of secular Syrians, who worry that it will give the Brotherhood undue influence over the direction of the revolt and whatever may come after Assad, should the regime fall.

"The Muslim Brotherhood has played it really well. They've distanced themselves from extremism, and they're trying to gain the middle ground," said Amr al-Azm, a Syrian dissident and history professor at Ohio's Shawnee University who declined to join the Syrian National Council because he felt it was overly influenced by Islamists. "But they are trying to make sure they have a finger in every pie and a hand on every lever of power that they can."

The vast majority of Syrian activists on the ground do not support the Muslim Brotherhood, he and other Syrians insist.

"We don't want what happened in Egypt to happen in Syria," said Omar al-Khani, the pseudonym of an activist in Damascus with the Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union. He and several of his colleagues have accepted small donations from Muslim Brotherhood members outside the country, but the money

has not contributed to any noticeable increase in the group's influence in the Damascus area, he said.

"We won't let people living outside the country come here and tell those of us who made the revolution what to do," he said.

Support could swell

But although support for the Brotherhood inside Syria appears to be limited, activists say it is growing as the uprising drags on.

"The Muslim Brothers have resources, and they get help from Saudi Arabia and the gulf states," said Mousab al-Hamadi, an activist in Hama with the secular Local Coordination Committees. "They have a long history behind them, whereas other groups like us are newly born."

"From the point of view of religion, most Syrians don't accept political Islam," he added. "But the people here are still Muslim, and they are still conservative, so I think the Muslim Brotherhood will become the biggest political power in Syria after the departure of the Assad regime. And I will be the biggest loser."

Yahoo.com

May 13, 2012

11. Yemeni Forces Press Assault On Qaeda Bastion

By Agence France-Presse

Yemen forces pressed on Sunday with an assault to recapture the Al-Qaeda-held southern city of Zinjibar, advancing on two fronts in fighting that killed six soldiers in two days, a military official said.

Two soldiers were killed in overnight fighting bringing the total of army losses since the all-out operation was launched Saturday to six, said the official.

"The fighting continues and the army is advancing towards Zinjibar," the capital of the southern province of Abyan, he said on condition of anonymity.

"The death toll among soldiers has increased to six, while 18 others were wounded," the official added.

He said that government forces have made progress on the southern and eastern fronts of the city, with troops reached the Shaddad Fort, around three kilometres (1.8 miles) east of Zinjibar, and the Zinjibar Bridge, around one kilometre (0.6 miles) from the city.

The "wide offensive" began from three sides and was supported by the air force and the navy, said another military official on Saturday, adding that Defence Minister Mohammed Nasser Ahmed was overseeing the operation.

"The defence minister is supervising a military plan to regain control of the city of Zinjibar and (the neighbouring town of) Jaar from Al-Qaeda gunmen," the official said.

Six fighters of the Al-Qaeda-linked Partisans of Sharia (Islamic law), were also killed in the attack, said a tribal source in Jaar, to where the gunmen evacuate their casualties.

The militants took advantage of a central government weakened by an Arab Spring-inspired uprising to overrun Zinjibar in May last year. They also control Jaar and other parts of the province.

Military units also attacked Jaar from the west, a military official said on Saturday, adding troops had reached the area of Kadama, on the outskirts of the town.

Washingtonpost.com

May 12, 2012

12. Yemen Officials Says Suspected US Drone Strikes Kill 11 Al-Qaida Fighters In Country's South

By Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen — Two suspected U.S. drone strikes killed 11 al-Qaida militants in southern Yemen on Saturday, Yemeni military officials said.

The first attack took place near the border of Marib and Shabwa provinces southeast of the capital, Sanaa, killing six militants, including one Egyptian national, the officials said. The second strike hit two cars in Marib, killing five al-Qaida-linked fighters.

Over the past year, parts of Marib, Shabwa and other southern provinces have fallen under the control of al-Qaida militants who have capitalized on the turmoil in Yemen that stems from the popular uprising that toppled longtime leader Ali Abdullah Saleh.

There was no immediate word from the U.S. on whether Washington was behind Saturday's attacks. In the past two weeks, suspected U.S. airstrikes have killed at least three senior al-Qaida operatives in southern Yemen.

Yemeni officials have reported more frequent U.S. drone strikes since Yemen's new president, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, took power in February after Saleh stepped down. Hadi has since ramped up the fight against al-Qaida militants.

The Pentagon recently sent American military trainers to Yemen, and Washington has spent hundreds of millions of dollars to assist the impoverished Arab nation fight al-Qaida and other extremist groups in the country.

The U.S. says al-Qaida's Yemeni branch, known as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula,

is one of the group's most dangerous offshoots.

Yemen was the launching pad for two foiled al-Qaida attacks on U.S. territory: the Christmas 2009 attempt to down an American airliner over Detroit with an underwear bomb and the sending of printer cartridges packed with explosives to Chicago-area synagogues in 2010.

On Monday, The Associated Press disclosed that the CIA thwarted yet another plot by AQAP to destroy a U.S.-bound airliner using a bomb which could have been undetectable by conventional airport scanners.

Separately, Yemeni military officials said an assault by government troops Saturday on al-Qaida forces around the southern city of Zinjibar, the capital of Abyan province, left a general, a soldier and six militants dead.

The attack was part of the Yemeni military's broader campaign against al-Qaida-linked fighters in the south. Residents say the military used warplanes and artillery to pound areas west and north of Zinjibar.

All officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with military regulations.

Jerusalem Post

May 13, 2012

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13. Tehran Is Accelerating Nuclear Weapons Program, Says Iranian Opposition Report

By Yaakov Katz

Iran is accelerating its nuclear weapons program, according to a report Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) Iranian opposition group compiled and The Jerusalem Post obtained on Friday. Publication of the report comes just days before Western

powers are scheduled to begin a second round of talks with Iran in Baghdad.

The report first appeared in the Die Welt German daily, and Brussels-based Iran expert Emanuele Ottolenghi, who provided it to the Post, was asked by the paper to verify its contents.

The report and various additional charts outline the different offices involved in Iran's weapons program and identify some 60 directors and experts working in various parts of SPND and 11 additional institutions and companies affiliated with the program.

The SPND headquarters is based in Mojdeh, a military facility near Tehran. Mohsen Fakhrizadeh-Mahabadi, whom western intelligence agencies have identified as the man responsible for the nuclear weapons program, heads the facility. He is under United Nations sanctions.

MEK also identified a facility called the "Center for Explosives, Blast Research and Technologies" – known by its Persian acronym METFAZ – which is based in a five-story nondescript office building in Tehran's Pars neighborhood. Scientists there are responsible for building high-explosives for nuclear detonators and conducting tests at the Parchin site, a facility long suspected of being connected to nuclear activity which Iran has refused to open to UN inspectors.

SPND, according to the report, is comprised of seven sub-divisions: 1) a division that works on the main element for the bomb, including the enriched uranium; 2) a division that shapes and molds the material needed to build a warhead; 3) a division that produces metals required for a nuclear warhead; 4) a division that produces high explosive material used to cause a

nuclear detonation; 5) a division which conducts research on advanced chemical materials; 6) a division that conducts electronic calculations required for building a nuclear warhead; 7) and a division which is responsible for laser activities needed for a nuclear weapon.

"The information sharply contradicts the assessment by some that Iran has not yet made the decision to go forward with the weapons program, as well as the observation by others who suggest that the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has forbidden the development of a nuclear bomb, because it would be a 'sin' to do so," the report said.

The report claims that the Fordow uranium enrichment facility built in a mountain near the city of Qom was built under the personal supervision of Fakhrizadeh-Mahabadi. It said that experts who work at another facility involved in the weapons program are in direct contact with the Fordow site and supervise activities there.

"This makes increasingly clear the objectives with which the Fordow site was built," the report said.

MEK, which is a member of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), has long been suspected of working closely with the Mossad and the CIA. In 2002, for example, the NCRI revealed the existence of the Natanz uranium enrichment facility which until then had not been known to the world.

Ottolenghi, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said the MEK report could be a "game changer" in Western perceptions of Iran's nuclear program.

"Until now, intelligence agencies and policymakers surmised that Iran sought civil nuclear energy but kept the option open for nuclear

weapons, while pending a decision from its religious leaders," he explained.

"These documents support the opposite conclusions – namely that Iran's program was always military and its civil nuclear component was just a facade. Iran decided long ago to make nuclear weapons – the only question is when."

Washington Post
May 13, 2012
Pg. 11

14. Coptic Christians Fear Rise Of Islamists On Eve Of Elections

By Leila Fadel

CAIRO — A year after an attack by ultraconservative Muslims raised the spectre of a wave of religious strife in Egypt, the Christian churches in Cairo's Imbaba district have been repaired, with sturdy wooden rafters, fresh paint and portraits of the Virgin Mary and Jesus ready to be hung anew. But the deep wounds from those attacks and ensuing clashes, which left 12 dead, cannot be painted over.

Coptic Christians, whose forefathers lived in Egypt before the arrival of Islam, had hoped that the 2011 uprising that ousted authoritarian President Hosni Mubarak would give them equal rights.

Instead, things have worsened. Egypt's Christians have been the victims of threats and dramatic violence, and they fear the ascendance of political Islam.

With landmark elections set to begin May 23, many of the country's Christians fear that the next president could turn Egypt into a conservative Islamic state that does not have room for their community of at least 8.5 million.

Under Mubarak, Christians complained they were treated like second-class citizens —

forced to get special permission to build churches, and subjected to hate crimes that went unpunished.

But now, with the race shaping up as a choice between Islamists and former members of Mubarak's government, most Christians are rallying behind the latter — despite past persecution.

Some are attracted to former Arab League chief Amr Moussa, a Mubarak-era minister who has advocated a separation of religion and state.

Other Christians are rallying behind Ahmed Shafiq, the last premier who served under Mubarak, even though he is derided by revolutionaries as a symbol of the corruption and oppression of the former regime.

In addition to the attacks on churches, Christians have been terrified by other acts of aggression. Ultraconservative Muslims known as Salafists are accused of slicing off a Christian man's ear over accusations that he rented his apartment to prostitutes. Coptic families in Alexandria were displaced over a rumor that a Coptic man and a Muslim woman were romantically involved.

Christians also have encountered problems with the military. Last year, military forces cracked down on peaceful Christian protests, running over demonstrators with armored vehicles as state television anchors called on "honorable" Egyptians to protect the military. Nonetheless, some Copts are so fearful of a restrictive Muslim government that they hope the generals will intervene to stop an Islamist from becoming president.

In Imbaba, where garbage is heaped along unpaved roads and children play on broken jungle gyms, George Gamal, a

Christian, said he wanted Shafiq for president.

"If religion is mixed with politics, this country will be destroyed," the 50-year-old shop owner said. "It will be an Islamic emirate."

The fact that the leading Islamist candidates have promised not to impose a discriminatory version of Islamic law did not reassure him.

People stopped in to buy eggs and juice from him as he chatted politics with Waleed Fawaz, a rickshaw driver.

"People need to know that an Islamist president will lead to civil war. This is our country, too," Fawaz said.

In the dusty offices of El Watani, a Coptic Christian weekly newspaper, editor Yousef Sidhom said the country's religious tensions were exacerbated by Christians' increasing isolation in recent decades.

Despite making up at least 10 percent of the population, they were barred from being in the president's administrative intelligence force, he said, and have a miniscule role in other major institutions. In the new 508-member parliament, there are only seven Coptic Christians.

Faced with decades of discriminatory policies, Christians withdrew into their churches and clubs, he said.

"The church itself played a role in keeping this sick situation," he said, rather than working to increase integration and resolve problems of discrimination.

In January 2011, that isolation seemed to end. Christians joined the anti-government protests. Muslims and Christians wore Christian crosses and Muslim crescents intertwined around their necks and an aura of unity descended

over Tahrir Square, the center of the revolt.

"Copts enthusiastically flocked to Tahrir and all major squares to revolt against Mubarak," Sidhom said. "But no one ever imagined how strong and fierce political Islam would come back."

While Egyptians expected the well-organized Muslim Brotherhood to do well in parliamentary elections, many were shocked by the roughly 25 percent of seats the Salafists won.

Sidhom said he hopes that the Islamists will pay at the polls for their track record so far. The Muslim Brotherhood has lost popularity by breaking its promise not to field a candidate for president, and for doing little to alleviate problems of unemployment and crime. As for the more conservative Salafists, some leaders have floated the idea of forcing women to wear veils, and one parliamentarian advocated banning English in schools, drawing severe criticism from a wide swath of Egyptian society.

Some Christians say they could live with a victory by presidential candidate Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, an Islamist who is seen as more moderate than Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Mursi. Aboul Fotouh has said he would support a law that wouldn't require official permission for the building of churches or mosques. He has also said Copts and women should be allowed to run for president.

But when ultraconservative Salafists endorsed him, many Copts withdrew their support.

Amir Dous, an upper-class Coptic Christian, struggles with his choice for president every day. He protested in Tahrir Square last year with his wife, and now looks at the 13 presidential candidates with dismay.

Some days he thinks he'll choose Moussa, even though he does not represent revolutionary change. Moussa has sworn to serve only one term if he's elected president, and the four years could give floundering liberals time to organize, Dous said. Other days he favors Aboul Fotouh, whom he believes would protect minority rights and the goals of the revolution.

Then there are days when he thinks he might just leave Egypt if the country becomes more Islamically conservative.

"It scares me that maybe we could become Iran," he said. "We as educated people came out with the revolution and supported it and promised the poor people things would get better. I have the means to leave, but I will leave those people behind, stabbing them in back."

Special correspondent Ingy Hassieb contributed to this report.

London Sunday Telegraph
May 13, 2012
Pg. 1

15. Al-Qaeda Plots Its Revenge On Bomb Attack Double Agent

By Sean Rayment, Philip Sherwell and Jason Lewis

SECURITY CHIEFS believe the identity of the double agent who foiled an al-Qaeda underwear bomb plot will be exposed by the Islamic terrorist group within weeks.

MI5 fears that it will try to exact revenge on the British spy, who penetrated al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), by publishing his photograph on the internet, a move to incite extremists to hunt him down.

Sources have described the spy as "gold dust", adding that he was one of just a few agents in the past 10 years to have penetrated one of the groups aligned to al-Qaeda.

AQAP represents the "greatest operational threat" to Britain and the US, senior Whitehall sources told The Sunday Telegraph last night.

The agent, a British passport holder of Saudi heritage, volunteered to take part in an AQAP suicide mission but, instead, escaped with an underwear bomb designed to blow up a US airliner.

He is understood to have been recruited and trained by MI5's G6 section - which is responsible for agent handling - before being sent on his mission to penetrate the Yemeni-based terror group. A former security official told The Sunday Telegraph that although the mission to penetrate AQAP was a success, the agent was now "burned" and would never be able to take part in covert operations again. In all likelihood, the official said, the agent will have to be relocated outside the Middle East and provided with a new identity.

It can also be revealed that al-Qaeda believed that the double agent came from a family with radical Islamic ties and was recommended by a close relative who was trusted by leaders of AQAP, according to US intelligence.

"He apparently came from what AQAP regarded as a good family, meaning that they believed he was a radical Islamist in his DNA, and was brought into the group by a close male relative," said Dan Goure, a Pentagon consultant and vice-president of the Lexington Institute, a national security think-tank.

"They embraced him for his family ties, or his perceived family ties."

It is unclear whether the man's radical roots were genuine, and whether he infiltrated AQAP as a mole or only changed sides later.

AQAP would have conducted detailed checks on the foreign volunteer, helped by sympathisers in Britain.

The spy was issued with a more sophisticated version of the underwear bomb that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian who studied in London, tried to detonate on an aircraft over Detroit on Christmas Day in 2009.

The double agent passed the device to his Saudi handlers. It is being analysed by the FBI, which believes it carries the signature of AQAP's master bomb-maker, Ibrahim Hassan al-Asiri.

The foiling of the plot was a major coup for British, Saudi and US intelligence agencies, but the leaking of information about the operation from US and Saudi sources is seen as a significant own goal. It has exasperated MI5 and MI6, which believe their operations have been compromised.

Leon Panetta, the US defence secretary, has ordered James Clapper, the director of national intelligence, to head an investigation into the leaks.

This week, the latest edition of Inspire - the AQAP magazine distributed on the internet - contained alarming new messages from the group, including plans for an assassination campaign targeting individuals on Western city streets.

London Sunday Times
May 13, 2012
Pg. 17

16. The Most Dangerous Man In The World

The bomb maker Ibrahim al-Asiri is the mastermind behind an Al-Qaeda cell in Yemen devising new ways to blow up passenger planes. Dipesh Gadhur and David Leppard investigate how a British agent has foiled his plans--for now

Forced to his knees and pleading for his life, the suspected spy stood little chance as his fate was captured on film by Al-Qaeda. Seconds later the screen goes blank, a rifle shot rings out and chants of "Allahu akbar!" — God is great — fill the room. The same fate awaited two others.

When footage of the triple execution was released as a warning in March by the terror group's affiliate in Yemen, one man had more to worry about than most. For, remarkably, a British secret agent had infiltrated the organisation months earlier and was on the brink of delivering western intelligence agencies a huge coup.

This weekend it emerged that the agent, thought to be a jobless Arab in his mid to late twenties, was radicalised on the streets of Britain and at least one other European country. Then, while visiting relatives in Saudi Arabia, he was "turned" and recruited by intelligence officers.

Although he has Saudi roots, the fact that he had been given a British passport made him an attractive prospect for Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) as it planned its latest attack on America.

The agent managed to convince the group he was ready to die for the cause by carrying out a suicide bombing mission on a transatlantic passenger jet.

His weapon was to be a sophisticated bomb, hidden in his underwear, that was intended to evade airport security and cause carnage over American soil.

It had been designed by AQAP's master bomb maker, Ibrahim al-Asiri — a man so ruthless he had previously sent his own brother to his death with explosives hidden inside his body.

Instead of going ahead with the suicide attack, the undercover agent alerted his handlers and escaped Yemen with the bomb and a wealth of other intelligence material.

For the past three years the West has been playing a game of cat and mouse with Asiri, a former chemistry student who has got ever closer to landing a deadly blow against America.

"He is an evil genius," said Peter King, chairman of Congress's homeland security committee. "He is constantly expanding, he is constantly adjusting."

The undercover operative's daring role in the foiled bomb plot was supposed to have remained a secret. However, details of his bravery trickled out last week — to the anger of the British security services involved with the Saudis in the operation — in leaks after a CIA drone strike that killed another AQAP leader, Fahd al-Quso, in Yemen on Sunday.

The attack was based on information passed on by the agent. Yet Asiri, 30, the man Washington really wanted to eliminate, remains at large.

Eleven more militants were killed in drone strikes in southern Yemen last night.

As he plans his next move, the bomb maker is thought to be trying to implant explosives surgically inside humans — and has even considered hiding bombs inside pet cats and dogs.

"He is highly determined and fully committed to attack America," said Mustafa Alani, director of the Gulf Research Center and an associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute. "For Al-Qaeda, an attack inside the US is worth 11 attacks outside. It has become their obsession."

THE son of a Saudi military officer, Asiri had a comfortable upbringing in Riyadh in which listening to

music and socialising with his friends were the norm.

Yet he was radicalised by the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and jailed for nine months after an unsuccessful attempt to cross the border and join Al-Qaeda insurgents.

He moved to Yemen with his younger brother, Abdullah, a few years later when AQAP was formed through the merger of regional Al-Qaeda branches.

The group is now seen as posing the gravest threat to the West after having trebled its membership over the past three years and taken control of swathes of territory in the south of the country.

It is in Yemen that Asiri has honed his bomb making expertise with each device usually boasting a new twist.

"He seems to be largely self-educated," said Bruce Riedel, a former CIA officer and fellow of the Washingtonbased Brookings Institution. "He has been able to miniaturise bombs so they are capable of being smuggled."

Asiri's explosive of choice is pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN), an almost undetectable industrial chemical used by Richard Reid, the shoe bomber, in his attempt to blow up an American Airlines plane bound for Miami in December 2001.

Asiri first displayed his true zeal when he created a device containing about 100g of PETN hidden inside the rectum of his brother, Abdullah.

It used a detonator with a chemical fuse triggered when Abdullah met Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism chief in August 2009. The prince suffered only minor injuries; Abdullah's body was blown in half.

On Christmas Day of the same year, Asiri and AQAP launched their first direct attack on America.

But the infamous "underpants bomb" used by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, 23, a graduate of University College London, failed to explode on a Northwest Airlines flight above Detroit. Abdulmutallab was jailed for life in February.

In 2010 Asiri tried again, this time hiding PETN inside two inkjet printer cartridges and sending them on cargo flights to Chicago. The devices were intercepted after a tip-off from another Saudi-run informant, who was immediately removed from the field. But it took security officials in Dubai and at East Midlands airport nine inspections before they found the bombs.

Last September Asiri, by then among Washington's most wanted, narrowly avoided death in a drone strike. The same American attack killed Anwar al-Awlaki, AQAP's English-speaking ideologue and propagandist.

Having radicalised a string of westerners — including Roshonara Choudhry, the Londoner who tried to murder the Labour MP Stephen Timms — through Awlaki's online sermons, AQAP would not have been surprised by the arrival of a British passport-holder in Yemen seeking to join the jihad, or holy war. In reality, the new "recruit" was a double agent.

He made a convincing would-be suicide bomber. According to Alani, although he was born in the Middle East he spent several years in London and is thought to have dropped out of a British university. "He was involved in [extremist] activities in the UK," said Alani, who says he has close security contacts in Saudi Arabia. "But he later changed his mind."

It was during his visits to Saudi Arabia that his potential as an intelligence asset was recognised. About a year ago he moved to Yemen and,

like Abdulmutallab before him, enrolled at an Islamic or Arabic language school in Sana'a, the capital, in the hope of being "talent-spotted" by AQAP. He was accompanied by a handler at the school, who briefed Saudi intelligence on a daily basis.

Within three months, Alani said, the organisation had taken the bait — and he was soon being trained at a network of safe houses.

"He received instruction on how to avoid detection at the airport, how to behave," Alani said. "He was able to convince Al-Qaeda he was genuinely ready to carry out the mission."

The agent never met Asiri, but the device he described to his handler pointed to a more advanced version of the "underpants" bomb.

It contained up to 300g of PETN and had two triggering mechanisms — one chemical and one manual — to maximise the chances of detonation. Crucially, it had been made without metal components to bypass airport security arches — although American officials believe it could have been picked up by body scanners.

The agent was entrusted with the bomb and told by AQAP to reserve a seat on a transatlantic flight. The booking was never made. Instead, he and his handler were whisked out of Yemen and the device was handed over to the CIA on about April 20.

The agent has been moved to a country outside the Middle East. He may even be entitled to a massive payout for helping to track down Quso, who bombed a US warship off the coast of Yemen in 2000. Quso had a \$5m bounty on his head. Under America's 1984 Rewards for Justice programme, an individual can receive up to \$25m for information preventing a terrorist attack

such as the planned aircraft bombing.

THIS morning, however, he is more likely to be watching over his shoulder amid fears that AQAP could release further details about his identity — possibly even a photograph — in an attempt to get revenge.

What was originally deemed a triumph for intelligence gathering has turned to bitter recrimination over how details of the operation leaked out. Sources in Washington said General David Petraeus, head of the CIA, had an emergency meeting last weekend with Peter Westmacott, the British ambassador — presumably to warn him the agent's cover had been blown.

"The leak may end up helping AQAP," said Joshua Foust, who worked for the US Defense Intelligence Agency in Yemen in 2010. "They now know how the Saudis, the US and possibly the Brits are getting information, so they can backtrack and identify other informants. Those people are now in mortal danger."

Yesterday Scotland Yard said it had sent a team of detectives to help examine Asiri's latest work at the FBI's laboratories in Quantico, Virginia.

Asiri, meanwhile, continues to work with a small team of Arab doctors on his "body bombs". One who had refined such medical procedures was killed by a CIA drone strike in Yemen earlier this year.

Nor does there appear to be a shortage of bomb making equipment.

In the latest issue of Inspire, AQAP's English-language magazine, the group boasts that since taking over Zinjibar, capital of Abyan province, last May it has had access to "a large deal

of chemicals from military laboratories".

Asiri has cheated death so far, but knows his luck will run out as America ramps up its missile strikes in Yemen. He is unlikely to have kept his deadly skills to himself.

"It is safe to assume that in the nearly six years he has been in Yemen he has trained other individuals to replace him if he were to be killed," said Gregory Johnsen, an expert on the region at Princeton University.

"It is unlikely that Asiri is the only bomb maker AQAP has within its ranks — he is just the only name we know."

Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)
May 13, 2012

17. US, Pakistani Army Officials Meet On Border Issues

By Associated Press

ISLAMABAD - The top U.S. commander in Afghanistan held talks with Pakistan's army chief Saturday aimed at improving border coordination, almost six months after American airstrikes accidentally killed 24 Pakistani soldiers along the frontier.

Islamabad retaliated for the deaths in November by closing its border crossings to supplies meant for NATO troops in Afghanistan. The border remains closed despite U.S. pressure to reopen the route, which has long been one of the main ways to get goods and equipment to coalition forces in landlocked Afghanistan.

Pakistan's parliament has demanded that the Washington apologize for last year's attack and stop drone strikes targeting militants in the country's tribal region along the Afghan border. Although Pakistani lawmakers have not explicitly linked these issues to reopening the

supply route, the matters have complicated the discussions.

The U.S. has expressed its condolences for the deaths of the Pakistani soldiers at two Afghan border posts, but has stopped short of a full apology.

U.S. officials have made clear in private that they have no intention of stopping covert CIA drone strikes in Pakistan, and several attacks have occurred since parliament demanded they stop. Many Pakistanis believe the attacks mostly kill civilians, allegations disputed by the U.S. and independent research.

Despite the disagreements between the two countries, Saturday's talks between U.S. Gen. John Allen and Pakistani army chief Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani indicate progress in the relationship.

There is incentive on both sides to resolve the impasse over the NATO supply route. The U.S. has had to spend considerably more money over the past few months shipping supplies to Afghanistan through the more expensive northern route that runs through Central Asia. The route through Pakistan will become even more important as the U.S. begins to pull out equipment as it withdraws most of its combat troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

Islamabad is eager to free up more than a billion dollars in U.S. military aid that has been frozen for the past year and would likely only be released once the supply route is reopened. Another potential carrot could be an invitation to the NATO summit in Chicago on May 20-21, which will largely focus on the Afghan war.

A pair of high-level meetings are expected to take place in Pakistan this week to discuss reopening the NATO supply route.

Pakistan Today (Islamabad)
May 13, 2012

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18. Just A Week More, Kayani Tells US

Pakistan insists for enquiry against those responsible for Salala incident; Army says Kayani and Allen focused on operations in border areas and coordination mechanisms

By Staff Report/Agencies

RAWALPINDI--AS an ISAF delegation led by General John Allen arrived here to put pressure on Pakistan for reopening NATO supplies, Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani reportedly told the visiting emissaries that the government would take the final decision on the issue in a week's time.

The row between Pakistan and the United States over last year's attacks by NATO aircraft on Pakistani border posts that killed 24 soldiers has been exacerbated by the US' reluctance to tender apology and stop drone attacks — key demands put forward by Pakistan's parliament for reopening NATO supply routes to Afghanistan.

The ISAF delegation arrived for the most significant talks that Pakistan has hosted with the international military alliance and the Afghan military for a year, in a sign that tensions between Pakistan and the US are easing. Sources said the Pakistani side pressed the visitors for an enquiry against those responsible for the Salala attacks, and reminded them that there had been no formal apology from the US. The Pakistani military said in a statement that preliminary meetings between General Allen and Kayani focused on "operations in border areas and coordination

mechanisms to avoid untoward incidents”.

“The tripartite commission is expected to meet after the arrival of Afghan army chief, General Sher Muhammad Karimi on Sunday,” a senior security official told AFP. He said the date and time of the commission’s meeting would be disclosed later. The commission will focus on enhancing measures along the Pak-Afghan border and to improve co-operation at operational and tactical levels, the military said. Pakistani leaders are also scheduled to meet next week to discuss ending the nearly six-month blockade on NATO supplies. Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani will convene the meetings which will also debate how to repair relations with the United States in time to attend a key NATO summit later this month.

Defense News
May 14, 2012
Pg. 1

19. U.S. Seeks Global Spec Ops Network

1st 'Node' to Stand Up in '13

By Barbara Opall-Rome

AMMAN — U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) wants to establish a worldwide network linking special operations forces (SOF) of allied and partner nations to combat terrorism.

Championed by SOCOM commander Adm. Bill McRaven and Deputy Director of Operations Brig. Gen. Sean Mulholland, the network would comprise regional security coordination centers, organized and structured similarly to NATO SOF Headquarters in Mons, Belgium.

“Imagine the power a confederation of SOF interests could have. It could collectively increase its influence and

operational reach around the globe,” Mulholland told participants at a May 7 Middle East Special Operations Commanders Conference here.

Insisting that the U.S. lacks manpower, resources and in many cases the political will to meet mounting threats alone, Mulholland said a global network “of like-minded entities” was needed to address “mutual security concerns.” These centers would not be command-and-control nodes but rather centers for education, networking and coordination to gain regional solutions for regional problems.

He noted that NATO SOF Headquarters — after only six years of operations — has managed to standardize SOF practices across Europe, with a resulting fivefold increase in the number of operators deployed to Afghanistan.

“Operationally speaking, the increase in SOF capacity in Afghanistan has directly supported the burden sharing,” Mulholland said. “It has allowed [the International Security Assistance Force] to optimize SOF roles across the country.”

In a follow-up interview, Mulholland estimated it would cost less than \$30 million a year to operate and maintain each regional node. SOCOM plans to stand up the first one in Miami-based U.S. Southern Command later in 2013, with Mulholland tapped to command integrated SOF in Central and South America.

As for plans to extend the network into Africa, the Pacific and here in the divisive and rapidly changing Central Command, Mulholland said, “Some might see this as an unreachable goal. I believe it can be done.”

As evidence of the cooperation that exists among SOF in this region, Mulholland

cited a massive, three-week exercise taking place here through the end of May. Eager Lion 2012 involves some 10,000 air, land and maritime operators from 17 countries, all operating under a joint task force.

Maj. Gen. Ken Tovo, commander of SOF in Central Command, is commanding the exercise with his Jordanian counterpart, Brig. Gen. Mohammed Jeridad, director of Jordan’s Training and Doctrine Command.

Mulholland said the global SOF network would support another SOCOM objective of increasing the effectiveness of theater special operations commanders (TSOC) working for combatant commanders.

Expanding the regionally restricted TSOC structure into a global network would augment the situational awareness of operators working for combatant commanders, he said.

“Let me be clear: We don’t want them to work for us [SOCOM] ... but we can help them obtain a greater understanding of the intelligence picture outside of their regional [area of responsibility],” Mulholland said. Furthermore, the immediate needs for forces and resources can be addressed more efficiently by collaboration between SOCOM and combatant commanders.

“This, in my opinion, is one of the most important aspects of what SOCOM can do as it can illuminate the threat around the seams of a [geographic area of responsibility]. ... SOCOM’s global perspective gives it the ability to understand how the threat operates across the [combatant commands], and not just within one space.”

Commanders here were skeptical about the prospects of standing up a SOF

headquarters within Central Command, whose area includes 20 countries spanning Central Asia and the Middle East.

In a region wracked by instability, clashing cultures, strategic competition and mistrust, it is practically impossible, leaders here say, to reach consensus on common threats. When one nation’s freedom fighters are condemned by neighbors as terrorists, they said, it is unreasonable to expect a regional SOF headquarters to operate as it does in NATO.

Lebanese Brig. Gen. Chamel Roukoz, special operations forces commander in a nation whose government includes Hezbollah — a U.S.-designated terrorist group — acknowledged varying assessments of the terrorist threat. “We have different opinions about this, but we view it as those trying to spread instability and fear and whose victims must be unarmed civilians,” he said.

Addressing the May 7 conference here, Roukoz insisted “resistance is not terrorism.” He urged additional U.S. and international cooperation in combating terrorism “starting with that caused by Israel,” Washington’s longtime strategic ally.

As for Jordan, a neighbor at peace with Lebanon’s enemy, officers did not embrace the SOCOM plan. “It’s a bit premature for now,” said Brig. Gen. Omer Al Khaldi, chief of strategic planning for the Royal Jordanian Armed Forces.

Al Khaldi cited joint training and other existing forms of cooperation that the kingdom has with the U.S. and others in the region. He warned, however, that the establishment of a physical headquarters should not interfere with

domestic efforts to preserve “internal peace and security.”

When asked about near-term prospects for the regional headquarters, Tovo, the U.S. SOF commander in Central Command, acknowledged challenges given shifting friendships and lack of consensus, starting with where to establish the physical headquarters.

Tovo noted that NATO SOF headquarters was a special case that may not easily be replicated here. “They had an existing structure and an existing alliance, so NATO had a framework to work from.”

He added, “It’s going to be a bit more challenging to stand up a regional SOF coordination center here. So we’re going to kind of step back and let SOUTHCOM do it first and see what we can learn from that.”

Honolulu Star-Advertiser
May 12, 2012
Pg. B3

20. Ceremony Marks The Return Of 4,000 Schofield Soldiers

The 3rd Brigade is back in Hawaii after a year in a volatile part of Afghanistan
By William Cole

Afghanistan is one of the world’s toughest battlefields, and few areas of that country are tougher than the eastern provinces of Kunar, Nuristan and Nangarhar, Army Col. Richard Kim said at a homecoming ceremony Friday for nearly 4,000 Schofield Barracks soldiers.

Combat Outpost Honaker Miracle was one of the few remaining U.S. footholds in the deadly Pech River Valley of Kunar province. The base, about two football fields in size, was manned by a company of Hawaii soldiers.

The low-lying base took mortar, rocket and heavy

machine gun fire nearly every day last summer from the mountainsides that surrounded it.

“Pretty stressful,” said Spc. Robert Shafer, 23, an infantryman from Texas.

In mid-October the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry “Wolfhounds” out of Schofield waged a battle more than a week long against repeated attempts by an enemy determined to overrun a small outpost, Observation Post Shal, in Kunar province.

Taliban casualties were estimated between 120 and 200 fighters. Four Schofield soldiers who took part in the defense will receive Silver Stars for bravery, officials said.

About 2,000 of the 4,000 3rd Brigade Combat Team soldiers who had deployed were arrayed in formation on Weyand Field at Schofield on Friday in the ceremony marking their return to Hawaii.

Kim, a University of Hawaii graduate and the first Korean-born brigade commander in the U.S. Army, welcomed the soldiers back home and noted the progress they made in training Afghan security forces to take control of their country.

“We know our (Afghan) partners were truly in the lead because Afghans were regularly targeted by the insurgents and received more casualties than us,” Kim said. “While every casualty, American or Afghan, is a tragedy, it is only appropriate that they are out front when it comes to securing their own country.”

The 3rd “Bronco” Brigade also paid a heavy price, with 20 soldiers killed and 260 wounded in action. Eighty seven soldiers were awarded Purple Hearts for wounds received in battle.

Some of those wounded soldiers — a few walking with canes and one in a wheelchair

— were recognized on Weyand Field on Friday and given a round of applause from more than 1,000 family members, friends and fellow soldiers.

The 3rd Brigade deployed in March and April 2011. The last flight back to Hawaii returned April 8. On Friday the unit “uncased” its battle flags, symbolizing its return home.

With a troop drawdown under way in Afghanistan and the end of combat operations expected at the end of 2014, it’s unclear whether the 3rd Brigade could make a return to the country after at least a year of “reset” back home.

“We’ll see,” Kim said. “We’ll see what the future holds. Just like any unit, our job is, after we get home, to get reset, reconnect with our families (and) again train to get ready.”

That future — and whether it includes Afghanistan — is on the minds of many.

Audrey Zeldin watched the ceremony from the shade of a tree with her 2-year-old son, Matthew, in a stroller next to her. Her husband, Capt. Joshua Zeldin, served as a medical planner during the deployment.

“I think it’s the end (of Afghanistan deployments) for him,” Audrey Zeldin said.

The family is moving to Texas, where Matthew is going back to school.

“I’m glad he’s not going back (to Afghanistan) because it’s a dangerous place,” Audrey Zeldin said. “I wish they (the 3rd Brigade) wouldn’t have to go back.”

Sgt. Joseph Ferguson, 24, who wrote orders for the brigade in Afghanistan for the past year, won’t be deploying back to the war zone, either. He’s getting out of the Army in November.

“I’m glad I’m not going back. I’m done,” the Los Angeles man said.

Rochester (NY) Democrat and Chronicle
May 13, 2012

21. Capt. Bruce Kevin Clark Returns Home

By Sean Dobbin, Staff writer

As the door to Capt. Bruce Kevin Clark’s plane opened, the wind picked up and hundreds of American flags billowed out to their full length.

Welcome home, soldier.

The body of the Spencerport Army nurse, who died in southern Afghanistan after collapsing during a Skype video chat with his wife, was greeted on the tarmac of the Greater Rochester International Airport by scores of people, many of whom waved flags or saluted as Clark’s hearse rolled past.

“He really was one of the best students I ever taught,” said Margie Lovett-Scott, one of Clark’s nursing professors at The College at Brockport. “The younger students always migrated toward Bruce. He was a natural leader, a student leader right from the start. If I was not available, they went to Bruce.”

But just as striking were the number of attendees who had never met him. About 200 members of the Patriot Guard Riders — a group of motorcyclists who join funeral processions of service men and women at the families’ requests — were present, as were dozens more who were drawn to attendance by the tragic circumstances surrounding Clark’s death.

“My niece has been deployed a few times, and I can’t imagine that happening while I’m talking to her,” said Kathy Barnard, 53, of Greece. “I just feel so bad for his wife and the kids. It just gives me goosebumps. I can’t imagine it.”

According to a statement released by the family, Clark, 43, showed no alarm or discomfort before collapsing suddenly on April 30 while video chatting with his wife, Susan Orellana-Clark. Two hours passed as Orellana-Clark tried to get help for her husband, upon which two military personnel arrived.

For a time, Clark's family believed that he'd been shot, due to the way he fell forward and what they thought was a bullet hole in the closet behind him. Army Criminal Investigation Command has since said that was not the case; that Clark's body had no trauma beyond minor scrapes and a possible broken nose, which was likely suffered when he fell forward. An investigation into the cause of his death is continuing.

Clark was born in Michigan, which is where he met his wife. They married in 1999, and moved to Spencerport, Orellana-Clark's hometown, in 2000. There, they had two daughters, who are now ages 3 and 9.

Clark worked four years at Highland Hospital before enrolling at The College of Brockport, from which he graduated in 2006. That year, he joined the Army. He was on his first deployment, in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan province, when he died.

Calling hours are from 1 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. on Monday at Walker Brothers Funeral Home in Spencerport, and Clark's funeral service is at 10 a.m. Tuesday at St. Mary's Church.

Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)
May 13, 2012

22. China, SKorea, Japan Try To Ease NKorea Tensions

By Associated Press

South Korea's president says China, Japan and South Korea all agree that any further provocations from North Korea would be unacceptable.

President Lee Myung-bak made the remark Sunday at the fifth trilateral summit, hosted by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda also attended.

Wen said the three countries had the "pressing" task to calm tensions on the Korean peninsula and return to dialogue. China is North Korea's closest ally.

Noda said the three nations should work together to try to prevent further provocations from North Korea.

A failed rocket launch by North Korea last month drew sanctions from the U.N. Security Council, and there are now fears Pyongyang is preparing to conduct its third nuclear test.

ArmyTimes.com
May 12, 2012

23. China's Actions Revive U.S.-Philippine Alliance

By Matthew Pennington,
Associated Press

WASHINGTON —

China's assertive behavior is breathing life into America's historically tumultuous relationship with the Philippines.

With Washington turning its attention more to the Asia-Pacific region, the U.S. and the Philippines last week held the first joint meeting of their top diplomats and defense chiefs. The U.S. increased military aid and resolved to help its ally on maritime security.

The steps came with the Philippines locked in a standoff with China over competing territorial claims in the South China Sea that has stoked passions on both sides. The

U.S. is walking a delicate diplomatic line. It doesn't want the dispute to escalate, but it is showing where its strategic interests lie.

The relationship between the U.S. and its former colony thrived during the Cold War but ebbed after nationalist political forces prompted the closure of American military bases in 1992. As the U.S. seeks to build a stronger presence in Southeast Asia, a region it neglected during the past decade of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the alliance is assuming growing importance.

For its part, the Philippines is looking to Washington and its allies to help equip and train the nation's bedraggled military, to put up a show of resistance to Chinese vessels that frequently sail into waters Manila considers to lie within its exclusive economic zone.

Ernest Bower, director of the Southeast Asia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said it is very important for the U.S. to solidify its ties with its traditional allies in the region.

"The relationship with the Philippines went south when the U.S. lost Subic Bay [naval base] and Clark [Air Base]. The hangover is wearing off and interests are aligning again."

But for both sides, managing the new chapter in their alliance is something of a balancing act and carries its own risks.

Nationalist sentiments still make an increased American military presence in the Philippines a sensitive issue, and its law forbids a foreign base on its soil. Like other Southeast Asian nations, the Philippines does not want to alienate the region's economic powerhouse, with which it aims to have \$60 billion in two-way trade by 2016.

And the U.S. also still needs to get along with China to prevent their strategic rivalry from spiraling into confrontation.

The 60-year-old mutual defense treaty between the U.S. and the Philippines has the potential to put Washington in hot water in standoffs like the one playing out at the Scarborough Shoal, where Philippine and Chinese vessels have been facing off since April 10. Manila appears adamant that the U.S. would be duty-bound to come to the Philippines' assistance should a conflict break out, but the U.S. has hedged on the issue.

The broader trend is that for the past two years the U.S. has declared its "national interest" in freedom of navigation and peaceful settlement of disputes in the busy South China Sea. It has expanded its military cooperation with the Philippines into maritime security after a decade of focusing on fighting al-Qaida-linked militants in the country's south. And the U.S. has increased its foreign military financing to the Philippines, which was slashed last year, to \$30 million this year, double what was initially budgeted.

That, however, is little above its 2010 level, and scarcely enough to retool the decrepit Philippine fleet. To help in that effort, the U.S. last year supplied a 45-year-old Coast Guard cutter to the Philippines, now a flag ship in its navy, which headed briefly to the Scarborough Shoal at the start of the standoff. The U.S. plans to send a second cutter to its ally this fall and is also helping the Philippines develop its "Coast Watch" system — a network of about 20 radar stations tied to a central database in Luzon that is meant to help the island nation monitor its whole coastline.

Whether the intensified U.S. interest will help the Philippines build the “minimum credible defense” it aspires to have is another matter. President Benigno Aquino has increased the defense budget, but it remains meager compared with most of its Southeast Asian neighbors — let alone China’s spending, which is outstripped only by America’s. The Philippines says it is looking to the U.S. to provide more patrol boats and aircraft, and according to U.S. officials, is also seeking help from other allies such as South Korea, Japan and Australia.

Peter Chalk, a senior political analyst with the Rand Corp. think tank, said the U.S. gifting of old hardware is a mixed blessing for the Philippines, as it is responsible for the upkeep and getting spare parts is difficult. It also risks undermining the larger goal of modernizing the Philippine military, which wants more up-to-date equipment and training — although there are doubts about the Philippines’ ability to pay for it and maintain it.

“It’s nice to get stuff you don’t pay for, but that’s not helping defense reform and modernization which the government wants,” Chalk said.

In a sign of the possible pitfalls, the 76mm main gun on the first cutter, the Gregorio del Pilar, suffered a glitch that the Philippines has to repair.

More details of the deepened U.S.-Philippine security cooperation are likely to emerge when Aquino visits the White House this summer.

Last year, the U.S. announced deployments of forces in northern Australia and plans to dock Navy vessels in Singapore, as it rolls out its strategic pivot toward the Asia-Pacific. There are expectations that a planned relocation of troops from Japan could involve

more troop rotations through the Philippines as well.

Associated Press writer Jim Gomez in Manila contributed to his report.

South China Morning Post
May 13, 2012

Pg. 8

24. Beijing's Island Claim Crazy, Says Owner

Hiroyuki Kurihara's family caught up in diplomatic row after nationalist Tokyo governor vows he will buy chain that China says is part of its territory

By Julian Ryall, in Tokyo

Hiroyuki Kurihara has a one-word comment on Beijing's claim to his islands in the East China Sea: crazy.

Kurihara's family has owned three of the eight islands and reefs that make up the disputed Diaoyus since 1981. But they found themselves in the middle of a diplomatic showdown last month when Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara said he intended to buy the islands, part of the chain the Japanese call Senkaku, for the municipal government. Beijing responded by asserting the Diaoyus belong to China.

“Beijing’s claims are crazy,” Kurihara, 65, says. “The islands are Japanese territory. You can’t just change something like that because a government says so.”

Kurihara says Ishihara has been trying to persuade him and his brother Kunioki to sell the islands for 30 years. “I’ve always said no, until now, because if I was going to sell the islands, I would never sell them to a private individual. I would only sell to the Japanese nation, the city of Tokyo or Okinawa prefecture.”

But the nationalist governor’s announcement,

made during a speech in Washington, caught him offguard. “I was surprised by Ishihara’s speech as he had not spoken to me and we have not spoken about selling the islands again since then,” he says. “But there are many things that need to be discussed, between lawyers, real estate agents and so on.”

Kurihara last visited the islands 20 years ago, when he was acting as an adviser for a government research project. His family owns Minami Kojima, about 450 square metres and rising to a maximum height of 149 metres above sea level, the smaller Kita Kojima, which tops out at 135 metres high, and Uotsuri Jima, the largest of the disputed islands.

Kurihara owns an architectural firm and is also involved in medical consultancy services. On the wall of his office in central Tokyo are a series of maps and framed photographs depicting the islands. “I want to go back there but the government will not permit people to land on the islands,” he says with a shrug. Although his family owns the islands, they are leased to the national government for 25 million yen (US\$ 313,000) a year.

For decades, Tokyo has attempted to simply ignore the sovereignty issue – Taiwan also claims ownership – and stuck to the belief that keeping the islands off-limits to visitors would prevent debate from arising.

That approach worked to a degree until September 2010, when a Chinese fishing trawler collided with two Japanese patrol vessels in the disputed area. The skipper was arrested, and China suspended ministerial level contacts, although Japanese prosecutors later dropped the case.

But Ishihara’s announcement has thrust the dispute back into the diplomatic spotlight. The governor, a nationalist who has made sensational claims that riled China in the past, was likely seeking to embarrass the administration of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, which he says has failed to take a firm stand over the islands. By saying Tokyo would buy the Diaoyus, Ishihara may have wanted to force Noda into making a more forceful gesture. Noda did tell parliament on April 18 that the government wanted to ascertain the landowners’ intent. The day before, Japan’s chief cabinet secretary, Osamu Fujimura, said the government could seek nationalising the Senkakus “if necessary”.

No price has been mentioned for buying the islands, but even if the two sides could agree in principle to the deal, it would take several years to complete, Kurihara believes.

The Tokyo government has set up a fund to allow people to donate towards buying the chain and so far about 24,000 people have contributed 314 million yen (HK\$ 30.6 million). The rapid influx of donations surprised Kurihara, although he is pleased enough Japanese felt so strongly about the islands’ future.

Many Japanese feel China’s claim has no basis in history but is a matter of modern-day pragmatism. Research conducted in the late 1960s and released in 1971 indicated the presence of oil and gas, Kurihara points out. “It was only after those reports came out that China began to make noise over the issue,” he says.

More recently, Beijing’s concerns have to do with its military, he says. A map on his office wall shows the sweep of islands that run down from

the Russian Far East, through the Japanese archipelago and Taiwan and into the island states of the South China Sea. China's navy – which is expanding rapidly and has ambitions of becoming a blue-water fleet – must pass between the islands of neighbouring states to get to the Pacific Ocean, a route that Beijing may feel leaves ships too exposed. That, military analysts believe, is why China is being more aggressive in its disputes over the Senkaku Islands, as well as the Spratly and Paracel islands in the South China Sea.

"China claims it has maps that prove its claim to the Senkaku islands, but it was really the sailors and fishermen of the Ryukyu kingdom – or Okinawa today – who knew where the islands were and used them as navigation marks," Kurihara says. "Not many Chinese sailors went that far because it was too dangerous for them."

It was not until the late 1800s that work began to develop the islands, long after the Ryukyu kingdom had been incorporated into greater Japan, and an entrepreneur, Tatsuhiro Koga, built a fishing business on the islands.

At its peak, the little colony had 290 residents but they were forced to leave in 1943 because the US navy and air force made it impossible to bring in water and food.

Kurihara is grateful Ishihara is putting attention on the islands. He has little time for the administration's stance – or lack of one – on the future of the islands. "The Japanese government is weak," he says dismissively. "This is an opportunity for foreign countries to take advantage of our weaknesses."

May 10, 2012

Exclusive

25. Potential China Link To Cyberattacks On Gas Pipeline Companies

Those analyzing the cyberspies who are trying to infiltrate natural-gas pipeline companies have found similarities with an attack on a cybersecurity firm a year ago. At least one US government official has blamed China for that earlier attack.

By Mark Clayton, Staff writer

Investigators hot on the trail of cyberspies trying to infiltrate the computer networks of US natural-gas pipeline companies say that the same spies were very likely involved in a major cyberespionage attack a year ago on RSA Inc., a cybersecurity company. And the RSA attack, testified the chief of the National Security Agency (NSA) before Congress recently, is tied to one nation: China.

Three confidential alerts since March and a public report on May 4 by the Department of Homeland Security warn of a "gas pipeline sector cyber intrusion campaign," which apparently began in December. That campaign, against an undisclosed number of companies, is continuing, DHS said in the alerts, which were first reported by the Monitor.

"Analysis of the malware and artifacts associated with these cyber attacks has positively identified this activity as related to a single campaign," DHS said in its public statement May 4. It also described a sophisticated "spear-phishing" campaign – in which seemingly benign e-mails that are actually linked to malicious software are sent to specific company personnel in hopes of gaining access to corporate networks.

Along with the alerts, DHS supplied the pipeline industry

and its security experts with digital signatures, or "indicators of compromise" (IOCs). Those indicators included computer file names, computer IP addresses, domain names, and other key information associated with the cyberspies, which companies could use to check their networks for signs they've been infiltrated.

Two independent analyses have found that the IOCs identified by DHS are identical to many IOCs in the attack on RSA, the Monitor has learned. RSA is the computer security division of EMC, a Hopkinton, Mass., data storage company.

Discovery of the apparent link between the gas-pipeline and RSA hackers was first made last month by Critical Intelligence, a cybersecurity firm in Idaho Falls, Idaho. The unpublished findings were separately confirmed this week by Red Tiger Security, based in Houston. Both companies specialize in securing computerized industrial control systems used to throw switches, close valves, and operate factory machinery.

"The indicators DHS provided to hunt for the gas-pipeline attackers included several that, when we checked them, turned out to be related to those used by the perpetrators of the RSA attack," says Robert Huber, co-founder of Critical Intelligence. "While this isn't conclusive proof of a connection, it makes it highly likely that the same actor was involved in both intrusions."

Mr. Huber would not release details about the indicators, because access is restricted by DHS.

Jonathan Pollet, founder of Red Tiger Security, has arrived at similar conclusions.

"The indicators from each source are a match," says Mr. Pollet, whose company has extensive experience in the oil

and gas industry. "This does not directly attribute them to the same threat actor, but it shows that the signatures of the attack were extremely similar. This is either the same threat actor, or the two threat actors are using the same 'command and control' servers that control and manage the infected machines."

Among several DHS indicators with links to the RSA campaign, Huber says, is an Internet "domain name" – a humanly recognizable name for a computer or network of computers connected to the Internet. Scores of computer-server "hosts" associated with that domain were already known to have participated in the RSA attack, Critical Intelligence found.

Alone, the domain-name finding was strongly suggestive. But along with many other indicators he's checked, a link between the RSA and pipeline-company attacks is clear, Huber says.

"I don't think there's much question that the attackers going after the pipelines are somehow connected to the group that went after RSA," he says.

So who went after RSA?

Gen. Keith Alexander, chief of US Cyber Command, who also heads the NSA, told a Senate committee in March that China was to blame for the RSA hack in March 2011.

The infiltration of RSA by cyberspies is widely considered one of the most serious cyberespionage attacks to date on a nondefense industry company. Its SecurID system helps to secure many defense companies, government agencies, and banks. Information stolen from RSA has since been reported to have been used in attacks against defense companies Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and L-3 Communications.

Cyberspies attacked RSA using a spear-phishing e-mail that contained an Excel spreadsheet with an embedded malicious insert. Similarly, the gas-pipeline attacks have seen spear-phishing e-mails with an attachment or tainted link.

Nothing in cyberespionage is for sure, Huber and Pollet say – especially since identifying perpetrators is difficult or sometimes impossible because of the layers of digital obfuscation that's possible for attackers. But as other security firms check and confirm the findings, it could reveal important things, the two experts agree.

First, it would show that the same group hacking the gas-pipeline companies is also interested in high-tech companies that have a focus on cryptography and cybersecurity.

Second, the question arises: Why did DHS provide the indicators to the industry, but didn't identify the apparent link between the gas-pipeline and RSA attacks?

Finally, there's also the question of why DHS officials, in their alerts, requested companies that detected the intruders to only observe them and report back to DHS – but not act to remove or block them from their networks. Some speculate that blocking the intruders would have short-circuited intelligence gathering. (A DHS spokesman refused comment on the issue.)

This last point has raised consternation among security personnel at some pipeline companies. For a year now, big cybersecurity companies like McAfee have had digital defenses that could be deployed against the RSA hack. In fact, they might have been at least partially effective against the new pipeline hack, Huber says.

Has DHS's advice to only observe the intruders come at the expense of allowing the cyberspies to become more deeply embedded on company networks?

Marty Edwards, director of the DHS Control Systems Security Program, which issued the alerts, referred questions to public-affairs officials.

"DHS's Industrial Control Systems Cyber Emergency Response Team [ICS-CERT] has been working since March 2012 with critical infrastructure owners and operators in the oil and natural gas sector to address a series of cyber intrusions targeting natural gas pipeline companies," Peter Boogaard, a DHS spokesman, said in an e-mailed statement.

"The cyber intrusion involves sophisticated spear-phishing activities targeting personnel within the private companies," he continued. "DHS is coordinating with the FBI and appropriate federal agencies, and ICS-CERT is working with affected organizations to prepare mitigation plans customized to their current network and security configurations to detect, mitigate and prevent such threats."

But if anything, questions are growing about China's role either directly or through its cyber militia in vacuuming up proprietary, competitive data on US corporate networks – as well as possibly mapping critical infrastructure networks.

Sen. Carl Levin (D) of Michigan queried Alexander about "China's aggressive and relentless industrial espionage campaign through cyberspace" and asked him to provide some unclassified examples. Alexander's first named example was RSA.

"We are seeing a great deal of DOD-related equipment stolen by the Chinese," he

replied. "I can't go into the specifics here, but we do see that from defense industrial companies throughout. There are some very public ones, though, that give you a good idea of what's going on. The most recent one, I think, was the RSA exploits."

"The exploiters," he continued, "took many of those certifications and underlying software" from RSA, rendering the security system insecure until updated.

Chinese officials regularly pour cold water on such accusations. A Pentagon press conference on Monday with Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Chinese Defense Minister Gen. Liang Guanglie was intended to show US-Chinese cooperation on cybersecurity. But Liang took the opportunity to condemn claims that Chinese cyberspies are the predominant actors in cyberspying on US networks.

"I can hardly agree with [that] proposition," said Liang, as reported by The Hill's DefCon blog. "During the meeting, Secretary Panetta also agreed on my point that we cannot attribute all the cyberattacks in the United States to China."

London Sunday Times

May 13, 2012

Pg. 2

26. Hammond Heralds End To Defence Cuts

By Isabel Oakeshott

PHILIP HAMMOND, the defence secretary, has signalled an end to defence cuts and declared he has finally balanced his department's books. The development means there should be no further job losses in the armed forces.

He will announce this week that he has eliminated a £38 billion hole in the defence budget, making it possible to

place equipment orders again with confidence and claim that for the first time in modern history his department will have an underspend as well as a substantial contingency fund.

"In the next few days we will be in a position to make the grand announcement that I've balanced the books," Hammond said.

"In terms of reducing the size of the civil service, the army and the air force, we shouldn't have to do any more over and above what we've already announced."

Last week Hammond announced a U-turn on planes for Britain's new aircraft carriers, jettisoning the model originally chosen by the prime minister because of soaring costs.

In an interview with The Sunday Times this weekend, he described the decision as the "last big piece in the jigsaw". The contingency budget meant that future projects would not be delayed or cancelled because of a shortage of funds.

"For the first time in the defence budget we've got a reserve in each year, which means that if something comes up we'll be able to manage it, drawing on our own reserve rather than having to cancel or postpone equipment," he said.

Hammond blamed the job losses on the previous Labour administration, particularly the former prime minister Gordon Brown.

He said: "For a decade now the MoD has had a programme of spending that far exceeds the money available.

It does it on a sort of institutionalised basis. Nobody here, until quite recently, has blinked."

Jim Murphy, the shadow defence secretary, claimed Hammond had no right to be proud and said: "A government which appears triumphant at

cutting war widows' pensions, sacking soldiers by email and losing our military capabilities knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing.

"Ministers have made costly mistakes and if they can't even put aircraft on our aircraft carrier no one will believe such an incompetent government's hubristic claims."

In the past two years all three armed services have suffered heavy job losses.

London Sunday Telegraph
May 13, 2012
Pg. 12

Forces Poll

27. Let Down By Their Countrymen: How Our Forces Often Feel Unappreciated

By Robert Mendick

MEMBERS OF the Armed Forces are suffering abuse and discrimination on Britain's streets just for wearing their uniforms in public.

A survey of more than 9,100 servicemen discloses that almost one in five military personnel has been refused service in pubs, hotels and shops because they were in uniform.

Six per cent have been attacked in the street, while 21 per cent have reported strangers coming up to them and shouting abuse. In one case, a member of the Royal Navy was told by his son's head teacher to stop wearing his uniform on the school run because it "upset the parents".

A female RAF recruiter said that on more than one occasion members of the public have screamed "baby killer" at her as she walked to work in her uniform.

The study also discloses how servicemen and women face discrimination such as being refused mortgages and even mobile phone contracts as

a result of being in the Armed Forces.

Philip Hammond, the Defence Secretary, conceded that there was "still more we can do" to ensure that troops are treated "with the dignity they deserve".

The study, commissioned by Lord Ashcroft, the Conservative peer and philanthropist, appears to show that British troops receive worse treatment at home than their American counterparts.

US troops are routinely offered discounts in shops and restaurants, while a survey of the American public discloses that they often shake the hands of military personnel - while Britons are reticent and even embarrassed to do so.

Lord Ashcroft, writing in the conclusion of his report, entitled *The Armed Forces & Society*, called on the British public to show greater support to troops, a point he also makes on these pages.

"If you see a member of the Services in uniform and you appreciate what they do, go and tell them so," he writes, "If you are in a position to offer discounts to military personnel, it is a gesture they will appreciate."

With 17,000 service personnel due to be made redundant in the next three years, *The Armed Forces & Society* report casts new light on the complex relationship between military personnel and the public they serve.

Drawing on the responses of 9,106 service personnel, 16 focus groups from the Army, Navy, RAF and Royal Marines, as well as surveys of the general public in the US and UK, the report concludes that military personnel are generally held in higher regard than either NHS staff or the police.

But there are worrying findings, including:

*91 per cent of the British public believes that physical, emotional and mental health problems are common for those leaving the Forces

*one quarter of personnel have been refused a mortgage, loan or credit card in the past five years, while almost a fifth say they have had trouble obtaining a mobile phone contract

*half of serving personnel feel there is not much recognition for what they do

*one third of the US public say they have approached a member of the Forces to thank them for their service, compared with just 8 per cent in Britain. The main reason for the difference is Britons being too embarrassed to do so

*almost a fifth of service personnel have found themselves at "the back of the queue" for public services when they moved to a new area. US troops say such discrimination is unthinkable in America

*some personnel express concern that charities such as Help for Heroes and the repatriation ceremonies in Royal Wootton Bassett have caused the public to feel sorry for them — which is the last thing they want

*and three quarters of servicemen overseas say they have experienced difficulties getting companies to recognise British Forces Post Office addresses because they did not contain postcodes.

The experience of personnel wearing uniforms will raise considerable concern.

While 56 per cent of servicemen have had strangers thank them for their work and 29 per cent have been offered drinks or meals, 21 per cent have been abused in the street.

One RAF recruiter, a member of one of the focus groups, said the response was mixed: "Working in Leicester

as a recruiter I make a point of walking to and from work in my uniform. I have people running up and screaming 'baby killer' at me. I've had people spit at me.

"Equally, last week this great huge bloke, shaved head, beard, earrings, tattoos, stood up and gave me a round of applause, said, 'Well done love, I'm very proud.'"

A sailor said: "When my boy started school I would pick him up in uniform, and I was asked by the head not to go in uniform because it upset the parents. I do, though, and it doesn't upset the parents. It was a school issue, and the view of the staff. The military is not universally popular."

Mr Hammond described Lord Ashcroft's report as helpful. "We have worked hard to ensure our Armed Forces, veterans and their families have the support they need and are treated with the dignity they deserve," he said.

"This report shows there is still more we can do."

Gen Sir David Richards, the Chief of the Defence Staff, gave the go-ahead for the study, which took more than a year to come to fruition.

"They [members of the Armed Forces] deserve respect and support from the British public. So it's great to see that the vast majority of personnel get this recognition and are even thanked by strangers," he said.

"This report has made a valuable contribution to our understanding of what members of the Forces and the public think of each other."

The 66-page report concludes that, in general, public support for the Armed Forces was "very high indeed", with troops receiving more support than either NHS staff or the police.

But there is also a belief among 91 per cent of the 2,033 members of the public

polled that it is either "quite common" or "very common" for former members of the Armed Forces to have "some kind of physical, emotional or mental health problem as a result of their time in the Forces".

Military personnel, questioned for the report through specially convened focus groups, dispute the public view, pointing out that although there are clearly risks associated with serving in the military, the problems are actually "less common than many people thought".

The report notes that some troops — although admiring the work of the charity Help for Heroes — are concerned that its "high profile meant that too often the image of service personnel in the public mind was linked to dreadful injuries".

It notes also that the repatriation ceremonies at Royal Wootton Bassett had the effect of "allowing sympathy to play too great a part in the public attitude to the Forces".

One former servicemen said in the report: "It's a real shame that public perception is driven by things like Help for Heroes. It's almost like you've got to wheel out a horrific picture of a soldier with no legs and things like that."

Two thirds of service personnel think the public are badly informed about their work, while 62 per cent of the public admit that they know "very little" or "not very much" about day-to-day routine.

Half of the military personnel say British society — as distinct from Government — should "do more to recognise and support people in the Services".

Troops speak of their own visits to the US, where they discovered that military discounts are routine. US troops note how they are frequently bought drinks and meals,

while it is commonplace for strangers to approach personnel in uniform and thank them for the job they are doing.

The British public, on the other hand, is reticent about showing such largesse.

Being in the British military brings other problems, according to the study. Almost three quarters of personnel currently posted overseas say companies refuse to deliver to British Forces Post Office (BFPO) addresses.

One serviceman said: "There are large swathes of companies in the UK who refuse to send goods to BFPO addresses. It's as good as a postcode, but because it hasn't got a postcode, they say, 'We're not doing that.'"

One third of lower ranks in the Army, and a quarter of all personnel, say they have been refused a mortgage, loan or credit card in the past five years, while almost a fifth say they have even had trouble obtaining a mobile phone contract.

One member of the RAF said: "When you look at credit scoring, they see you are moving every 18 months to two years."

The idea that being in the Forces could actually be a disadvantage "baffled" US servicemen.

McClatchy Newspapers
(mclatchydc.com)
May 11, 2012

28. Tiny Guinea-Bissau Has Big Role In Drug Smuggling, And Seems Likely To Keep It

By Chris Collins, McClatchy Newspapers

BUBAQUE, Guinea-Bissau — Last year, as children played on the beach of this tropical island, splashing in the ocean and kicking soccer balls through makeshift goals in the sand, a small turboprop plane

flew overhead, drowning out conversations below with the steady hum of its engine.

Calvario Ahukharie, the head of Interpol in Guinea-Bissau, had been resting in the shade while sipping wine from a plastic cup. He looked up.

Another drug plane, Ahukharie recently recalled thinking. Another criminal turning my country into a cocaine warehouse.

Guinea-Bissau, on the west coast of Africa, is one of the smallest and poorest countries in the world, but it has a big claim to fame: It's become a key hub for South American drug traffickers looking to make a few hundred million dollars a year shipping their goods to Europe via West Africa.

As a way station, it is ideal, just a four-hour flight from Brazil, with dozens of unpopulated islands for drug-bearing planes to land. And it is virtually risk free. Other than the underfunded Interpol office, Western police agencies, including the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, don't have much of a presence. More importantly, the country's military is known to be deeply involved in the drug trade, guaranteeing that even if a shipment is detected, police intervention is useless.

Indeed, protecting the drug trade is thought to have been one of the primary motives behind a military coup here last month that saw the army take control of the nation just two weeks ahead of a presidential runoff election. The target of the coup, former Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Jr., had been widely expected to win the presidency and had promised to approve internationally backed plans to downsize the bloated and unwieldy military and put an end to the drug traffickers' payoffs that privates

and officers alike have come to rely on.

Gomes, whose house was ransacked by soldiers, was arrested April 12 along with interim President Raimundo Pereira. They were held incommunicado for two weeks before an outraged international community pressured the military to release them.

Nonetheless, coup leaders still control the country, the government has ceased functioning, hundreds have fled the capital, and some Western organizations have pulled out their staffs. Food prices are increasing and gas stations are operating intermittently. The military says it wants to form a civilian transition government, but it doesn't want Gomes or Pereira to participate.

Which means Guinea-Bissau's role in the drug trade is unlikely to end anytime soon. Many politicians are suspected of being on the take.

"All the problems in Guinea-Bissau are because of drug trafficking," Lucinda Gomes Barbosa, the former head of the country's anti-narcotics police, said in her first interview since leaving the agency last year. "There are people in high positions in government who are benefiting from this. They only think about money. They fight each other so that the drug trafficking can continue and they don't think about the problems that it creates in the country."

Ahukharie, the Interpol official, said the plane he watched fly over while he was vacationing proved the point. When he sought to inspect it after it landed on a rugged island runway, the island's governor refused him permission.

"It's like open war," Ahukharie said. "These kinds of things are frustrating because you have no strong will from the politicians."

In a country where nearly seven out of 10 people live on less than \$2 a day and 85 percent of the population survives mostly by farming, the spectacular wealth generated by the cocaine trade makes it easy for cartels to buy the loyalty of soldiers and public officials – who sometimes go for months without a government paycheck. Higher-level officials might demand more, but their cut is easily within the traffickers' budget.

Analysts say soldiers have come to see drug money as a right – much like police officers here expect small bribes to subsidize their meager wages.

At one point, the United Nations estimated that 40 tons of cocaine valued at \$1.8 billion was moving through West Africa each year – much of it through Guinea-Bissau. Others estimated it was 300 tons a year. By comparison, Guinea-Bissau's annual economic output is less than \$900 million.

Those taking drug money have proven they'll stop at nothing to stay in power. Assassinations, political arrests, torture, death threats and mass bribery are all fair game. Some believe the nearly simultaneous killings of the country's president and army chief in March 2009, crimes that have yet to be solved, were linked to drug-trafficking disputes.

"The result is a political process intensely focused on self-interest and survival rather than political, social or economic development, making government and military officials particularly vulnerable to the temptation of narcotics-fueled corruption," a U.S. diplomat reported to the State Department in 2009, according to a cable made public last year by the WikiLeaks Website.

The battle for control of the drug trade is continuous. In

December, Adm. Jose Americo Bubo na Tchuto, a former navy chief whom the U.S. has labeled a drug kingpin, was arrested by his former ally, armed forces Chief of Staff Gen. Antonio Indjai. The charge was masterminding an earlier coup attempt that failed, but Guinean officials here say the arrest had more to do with a dispute between the two men over a recent drug drop. Now, Indjai is accused of orchestrating last month's coup.

Before 2004, hardly any cocaine came through West Africa. But as authorities increasingly cracked down on direct shipments from Latin America to Europe – where the drug's popularity was growing rapidly – cartels began looking for alternative routes.

Guinea-Bissau was the perfect transit point. The country had been unstable for decades: None of its elected presidents have completed a five-year term since the country gained independence from Portugal in 1974.

And with a sprinkling of 88 lush, forested islands dotting its coast – most of them uninhabited and perfect for stashing drugs – the country became "drug traffickers' destination of choice," according to the 2009 diplomatic cable. Many Latin American "businessmen" began migrating here, settling into gated villas with private security guards.

The cartels began shipping the cocaine across the Atlantic by boat or small planes equipped with extra fuel tanks. The boats unloaded the drugs before reaching shore, and smaller boats ferried the cargo to land; the planes landed on airstrips monitored only by the military. From Guinea-Bissau, the cocaine was smuggled north into Spain via well-established sea- and land-trafficking routes,

or through human mules who ingest one or two kilograms of the drug in tiny packets before catching commercial flights into Europe.

For the first few years, traffickers operated in the open. They cruised the battered streets of the capital in shiny Hummers, weaving between dilapidated taxis held together by duct tape and "toka-toka" transport vans crammed full of passengers. One local disco reportedly threw a "Party for Drug Traffickers." Inexplicably, foreign currency deposits increased nearly fivefold in just a few years, from about \$2.3 million to about \$11 million, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

From 2005 to 2007, authorities in West Africa seized at least 33 tons of cocaine bound for Europe. Prior to that, they usually intercepted less than 1 ton per year. Based solely on statistics, it appears that drug trafficking through West Africa peaked in 2007, when the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimated that 25 percent of Europe's cocaine came through West Africa.

In the last few years, the amount of cocaine seized in Africa has decreased dramatically – from 5,535 kilograms in 2007 to 956 kilograms in 2009, according to the most recent United Nations report. Though there are many theories for what caused the decrease, the United Nations and several analysts say it may simply mean traffickers have found new ways to avoid detection.

Guinea-Bissau hardly has a functioning police and justice system, making anti-drug officers' jobs nearly impossible. The few high-ranking officials who have fought corruption are often threatened. Judges and politicians constantly throw

up roadblocks, either because they've been bribed or they fear the military themselves. Police lack basic resources like cars, fuel and steady paychecks.

Barbosa, the former head of Guinea-Bissau's Judicial Police – something akin to the FBI and the DEA – left her job last May, saying she'd grown tired of the military harassing her and her agents.

She offered three examples of how she and her predecessor, who resigned for similar reasons in 2008, tried unsuccessfully to arrest drug traffickers.

In September 2006, the Judicial Police seized 674 kilograms of cocaine after arresting two Colombians in Bissau, the capital. But heavily armed soldiers demanded the police release the suspects and the drugs. The cocaine disappeared and the Colombians, released on bail, fled the country.

In April 2007, the Judicial Police seized 635 kilograms of cocaine and arrested two Colombians, as well as two military officers. The Colombians were released on bail. The officers, after being turned over to the military, were never punished.

In July 2008, a private jet from Venezuela landed in the capital's airport with more than 500 kilograms of cocaine. The military unloaded the drugs before the Judicial Police could inspect the plane.

"The justice system has so far failed to finalize any investigation or trial against any of the serious drug traffickers," said Vincent Foucher, a researcher based in Dakar with the International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based organization that studies conflicts. "There have been a few convictions, but only small-time traffickers who swallowed some drugs – none of the big ones. They were

all released and vanished into thin air."

There isn't much optimism that the drug influence will soon disappear here. With few economic opportunities for the country's 1.6 million people, there's little hope for earning a legitimate living.

"The country is not stable because of poverty," Ahukharie said. "That's why people are easily manipulated and led astray."

Chris Collins is a McClatchy special correspondent.

Reuters.com
May 13, 2012

29. Weary Warriors Favor Obama

By Margot Roosevelt, Reuters
COLUMBIA, South Carolina--Mack McDowell likes to spend time at the local knife and gun show "drooling over firearms," as he puts it. Retired after 30 years in the U.S. Army, he has lined his study with books on war, framed battalion patches from his tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, a John Wayne poster, and an 1861 Springfield rifle from an ancestor who fought in the Civil War.

But when it comes to the 2012 presidential election, Master Sergeant McDowell is no hawk.

In South Carolina's January primary, the one-time Reagan supporter voted for Ron Paul "because of his unchanging stand against overseas involvement." In November, McDowell plans to vote for the candidate least likely to wage "knee-jerk reaction wars."

Disaffection with the politics of shock and awe runs deep among men and women who have served in the military during the past decade of conflict. Only 32

percent think the war in Iraq ended successfully, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll. And far more of them would pull out of Afghanistan than continue military operations there.

While the 2012 campaign today is dominated by economic and domestic issues, military concerns could easily jump to the fore. Nearly 90,000 U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan. Israeli politicians and their U.S. supporters debate over whether to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities as partisans bicker over proposed Pentagon budget cuts.

Mitt Romney has accused President Obama of "a dangerous course" in wanting to cut \$1 trillion from the defense budget - although the administration's actual proposal is a reduction of \$487 billion over the next decade.

"We should not negotiate with the Taliban," the former Massachusetts governor contends. "We should defeat the Taliban." He has blamed Obama for "procrastination toward Iran" and advocates arming Syrian rebels.

Romney, along with his primary rivals Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich, had also accused Obama of "appeasement" toward U.S. enemies - a charge that drew a sharp Obama rebuttal. "Ask Osama bin Laden and the 22 out of 30 top al-Qaeda leaders who've been taken off the field whether I engage in appeasement," the president shot back. He has reproached GOP candidates: "Now is not the time for bluster."

If the election were held today, Obama would win the veteran vote by as much as seven points over Romney, higher than his margin in the general population.

Fading cool factor

The GOP's heated rhetoric, aimed at the party's traditional

hawks, might be expected to resonate with veterans. Yet in interviews in South Carolina, a military-friendly red state, many former soldiers expressed anger at the toll of a decade of war, questioned the legitimacy of George W. Bush's Iraq invasion, and worried that the surge in Afghanistan won't make a difference in the long run.

"We looked real cool going into Iraq waving our guns," said McDowell, 50, who retired from the 82d Airborne Division in November with a Legion of Merit and two Bronze Stars. "But people lost their lives, and it made no sense."

Now he worries. "I really don't like the direction we are going, how we seem to come closer daily towards a war with Iran."

In Columbia, where McDowell lives in a leafy subdivision, the streets are named for American Revolutionary war heroes, and the Confederate battle flag still flies on the capitol grounds. Pizza parlors offer a 10 percent discount to uniformed soldiers from nearby Fort Jackson, one of eight military bases that pump \$13 billion a year into the state's economy.

In exit polls, a quarter of voters in January's primary identified themselves as veterans.

Among them were Karen and Kelly Grafton, devout Southern Baptists who live in the small town of Prosperity, outside Columbia, and spend their vacations at Nascar races. They voted for Santorum.

"He just came off a little bit better than the others," said Karen Grafton, 51, a real estate agent who served 20 years in the Air Force. "He stuck to his story about what he has done and what he will do."

The Graftons' votes, however, like many veterans',

can't be taken as evidence of a hard-line military stance. Registered Republicans, they cast their ballots for Obama in 2008 because he promised to bring the troops home from Iraq.

"I went to war for George Bush," said Grafton, 48, a retired Army master sergeant who served in special operations units in Somalia and Iraq. "But we can't keep policing the world."

Karen Grafton, a retired Air Force recruiter, said she'll be "glad when we're out of Afghanistan." The military budget? "I'm sure it can be cut," she said. "Everyone has to make concessions." Still, many former soldiers worry that Pentagon cuts could mean stingier salaries, pensions, and education and housing benefits.

Casualty stats are personal

In a squat building on a rutted street in West Columbia, three dozen former soldiers gathered around hot dogs and sodas for the Disabled Veterans of America's monthly meeting. Colorful military banners festooned the walls. The talk was somber.

Could someone volunteer to help care for "a fellow living in a dilapidated roach-infested trailer?" asked Chapter Commander John Ashmore. Could people contribute funds to an ex-Marine whose hospital bills were "overwhelming"?

Ashmore thanked everyone for distributing canned goods to the needy. And he had some news: "Veterans healthcare will be exempt from federal budget cuts," he said. "President Obama has signed a 3.6 percent cost of living increase to your benefits."

"I've already got it spent," shouted one of the group.

At the back, John Rush, 44, sat with a brace on an injured leg. He suffers from

post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after two tours in Iraq. "The explosions, the bombs going off. You're scared, you're mad. The stress wears you out."

Rush got out of the Army in 2008, but it took three years for the government to approve his paperwork for psychiatric treatment. He is unemployed, and much of the time he says he feels "confused."

As for voting in this presidential election: "I haven't had that spark to get out and register."

The Pentagon counts more than 6,300 American dead and 33,000 wounded in action in Iraq and Afghanistan. A Rand Corp study estimates that as many as 300,000 post-9/11 veterans suffer from PTSD or major depression, and about 320,000 may have experienced traumatic brain injuries, mainly from bombs.

For combat veterans such as McDowell, who enlisted at 19, the statistics are starkly personal.

With his direct gaze, erect posture and fondness for war mementos, he may seem to fit the stereotype of a battle-hardened sergeant. But this father of five shudders at the memory of the young Vietnamese-American at Fort Jackson, whose fear of deployment was brushed off by an officer. The soldier tried to commit suicide by shoving a pencil up his nose into his brain.

He chokes up when he recalls "the geek-faced kid" from Oklahoma who was brought in to fix office computers in McDowell's Iraq bomb dismantling unit. The young man, with no combat training, was sent into the field to hack into terrorists' laptops. Within weeks he suffered a mental breakdown. Returning stateside, he shot his two children to death and killed himself.

"It was sheer terror," McDowell said of the improvised explosive devices that guerrillas hid along roadways. "They'd strap gasoline cans to IEDs. Our soldiers burned alive. You'd hear them screaming, and you couldn't do anything."

Now he is "watching the primaries very closely to see who will be the least careless with soldiers and their families."

It's the economy, sir

Despite widespread disillusionment over recent wars, most veterans support some form of military action to keep Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. That doesn't mean they want another ground war: Veterans lean toward a military spending policy that emphasizes special forces and unmanned systems.

Terry Seawright, a Navy reservist who drives a Fedex truck, voted for Obama in 2008 and plans to do so again in 2012. "I like the coolness and calmness of him," said Seawright, 46. "I like the way he handled Egypt and Libya. He said, 'No troops on the ground.'"

Unless a conflict with Iran or Syria pushes foreign policy out front, economic issues seem more likely to sway the veterans' vote than military concerns - as is true for the country generally. Like other Americans, former soldiers are worried about jobs, the federal deficit, and the cost of living.

Michael Langston, a Baptist minister who served as commander of 110 military chaplains in Afghanistan, didn't carry a weapon but often visited the front lines. "I would go to trauma centers where they worked on soldiers who were burned and disfigured," he said. "We'd roll into villages where every man, woman and child had been massacred, and the

Taliban had cut off heads and feet."

Back in the U.S., Langston, 57, suffered nightmares and sweats. Always a mild-mannered man, he began yelling at his kids. When a vehicle backfired in a supermarket parking lot, "I hit the ground and rolled under a car." He was diagnosed with PTSD.

Looking back, Langston, a graduate of the Naval War College, sees "a failed policy. When we leave, these places go back to the way they've done everything for thousands of years."

For all his frustration over military interventions, Langston said the election issues for him are "healthcare, jobs and economic stability." A lifelong Republican, he voted for Gingrich in the primary but now supports Romney. "The economy is still faltering, the job rate has not gotten any better regardless of the hype, and the gas prices are killing us," he said.

Overall, like the rest of the nation, former soldiers are deeply concerned about the future. Only 24 percent in the Reuters poll said the country is headed in the right direction, with 60 percent saying it is off on the wrong track.

Langston said social issues will not influence his vote. As for "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the now repealed policy that forced homosexuals out of the military, he came around to supporting repeal after initially opposing it. "An individual has a right to be who they are," he said.

According to the Reuters/Ipsos poll, a majority of veterans now agree with him.

With the unpredictability of foreign involvements and the fragility of the domestic economy, it is too early to say who will eventually win the veteran vote.

Karen Grafton, who voted for Obama in 2008 based on his promise to end the Iraq war, now says, "I want someone to get us out of this economic turmoil. That's No. 1. I'm not sure he is the person to do that. But I don't blame him. He inherited a mess."

Asked about Obama's handling of his job, 27 percent of veterans approved, and 37 percent disapproved, with the rest undecided.

In his study, below a movie poster of "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," McDowell, the Ron Paul supporter, flipped through pages of an 82nd Airborne Division yearbook, lingering on photographs of dead comrades. He recalled their ages, how many children they had, and how they died.

Partly for their sake, he avidly follows the campaign. He was turned off by mudslinging among Republican candidates, he said. And Obama? "If no one else can get their act together, I'll vote for that Democrat," he said. "My concern is who will do right for the soldier."

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot
May 12, 2012

30. Va. Appeals Court Revives Abu Ghraib Lawsuits

By Larry O'Dell, Associated Press

RICHMOND--A divided federal appeals court on Friday revived two lawsuits by former Iraqi detainees who alleged that civilian interrogators and translators participated in their torture at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, ruling that it's too early to consider dismissing the cases.

The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals did not rule on the merits of the detainees' claims against CACI International and L-3 Services, formerly Titan

Corp. Instead, the court said in its 11-3 decision that more facts must be developed in the trial courts before it can consider the contractors' request to toss out the lawsuits.

"This is significant because it permits these cases to proceed in the lower court and permits our clients to tell their story and hopefully obtain justice for the torture and abuse perpetrated by each of these two corporate defendants," said Baher Azmy, an attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights who represents the former detainees.

The contractors could appeal the ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court or renew their request to dismiss the lawsuits after further discovery and fact-finding in the U.S. District Courts in Alexandria, Va., and Greenbelt, Md. They also could wait until the lower courts decide the cases on their merits.

"We're reviewing the ruling to determine how to proceed," said William Koegel, attorney for CACI.

In the CACI case, four Iraqi detainees alleged they were tortured by the company's interrogators as well as military personnel at Abu Ghraib, where photos of detainee abuse that became public in 2004 shocked the national conscience. U.S. District Judge Gerald Bruce Lee in Alexandria refused to dismiss the case, rejecting Virginia-based CACI's claim that it was immune from suit because its employees were performing duties required by the government.

U.S. District Judge Peter J. Messitte in Greenbelt also refused to toss out a lawsuit filed by 72 Iraqis against L-3 for their treatment at Abu Ghraib and other U.S.-run prisons in Iraq.

Last year, a three-judge panel of the federal appeals court overturned the lower court decisions. The panel dismissed

the lawsuits, ruling 2-1 that the state law claims against the contractors are pre-empted by federal authority to manage a war. The detainees appealed that decision to the full appeals court, which revived their lawsuits.

"Fundamentally, a court is entitled to have before it a proper record, sufficiently developed through discovery proceedings, to accurately assess any claim, including one of immunity," Judge Robert B. King wrote for the appeals court's majority.

Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson III wrote in a dissent that the majority's decision "inflicts significant damage on the separation of powers, allowing civil tort suits to invade theatres of armed conflict heretofore the province of those branches of government constitutionally charged with safeguarding the nation's most vital interests."

In another case, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals in 2009 affirmed the dismissal of a lawsuit filed by 250 Iraqi plaintiffs against CACI and L-3. The U.S. Supreme Court last year declined to review that decision.

Before deciding not to review the ruling, the justices sought the Obama administration's views on what to do. In court papers filed a year ago with the justices, the administration urged the Supreme Court not to hear the Abu Ghraib prisoners' lawsuit against the contractors. The administration said there was a need for more federal courts to weigh in with opinions "in this complex and developing area of the law" before asking the Supreme Court to step in.

Tampa Tribune
May 11, 2012

31. U.S. Marine Receives Sentence, Sympathy

By Howard Altman, The
Tampa Tribune

TAMPA --The former Marine Corps captain, in chains and an orange jail jumpsuit, stood Thursday in Courtroom 33 and hung his head as the widow of the man he killed while driving drunk spoke softly, her voice quivering with sorrow.

Scott Sciple, 38, was pleading guilty to DUI manslaughter and DUI with personal injury, and Carmen Rodriguez-Rivera had asked to make a statement before Hillsborough County Circuit Judge Lisa Campbell sentenced him for the April 25, 2010, wreck.

Sciple, the recipient of a Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts, listened silently as Rodriguez-Rivera talked about how both families — hers and his — are victims of war.

Rodriguez-Rivera, a nurse, blamed the Marines for failing to do a better job of treating Sciple, who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury after four tours of duty and recently was medically retired with 100 percent disability. It was the same conclusion the Corps itself came to in September, when it released the results of a scathing investigation showing "a disturbing vulnerability in the support we provide our combat veterans suffering the invisible wounds of PTSD."

"Had Capt. Sciple been referred and treated in a timely manner, it would have broken the chain of events" leading up to the accident, according to the Marine investigation.

Because of that, Rodriguez-Rivera, 51, urged the judge not to send to prison the man who killed her husband, Pedro Rivera.

"The government can't keep doing things to people who need help," she told the judge. "Look at the results. We have two families suffering."

After hearing her, Campbell signed off on a deal that gave Sciple credit for time served, placed him on two years of community control and another 12 years of probation. She also required that he seek treatment, perform 1,500 hours of community service, avoid alcohol and give up his driver's license for good.

Moments later, Sciple's mother Lynne walked to Rodriguez-Rivera and placed a crucifix around her neck. Then the two women embraced.

"Every time Scott got blown up, he lost his crucifix," his mother later said. "He lost another crucifix in the accident. When he was in the VA, he got another one and he wanted me to give it to her. She is such a godly woman."

This morning, a Marine escort is scheduled to take Sciple to the Poplar Springs Psychiatric Hospital in Virginia, a secure facility at which he will be treated for three months before returning to Tampa for further evaluation.

Though Rodriguez-Rivera agreed not to seek civil action against Sciple, there was no such agreement with the government, and last month, she filed a lawsuit against the United States of America. The suit, which seeks unspecified damages, contends that long before Sciple drunkenly drove the wrong way on Interstate 275 — killing Rivera, 48, a mechanic on his way to help a friend — the danger signs were plentiful, and often ignored.

The suit heavily cites the Marine investigation, which found that not only did Sciple witness horror, including the death of civilians he eventually

had to bury, but was wounded three times and often under attack.

In December of 2008, the warning signs began to flash, according to the Marine investigation.

On Dec. 4, 2008, Sciple drank alcohol on a flight layover in Amsterdam and "exhibited erratic behavior," according to the Marine investigation. A few months later, in June 2009, the outpost was hit by a rocket. Sciple, who was wounded so badly his fellow Marines thought he had bled to death, became aggressive when he was revived.

While the Marines recognized Sciple's injuries by awarding him a third Purple Heart, the investigation showed that the Corps did not to determine the extent of damage to his brain.

"There is a possibility that Capt. Sciple sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury during the rocket attack but was not immediately screened for TBI due to the severity of his extremity wound," the report stated.

Once Sciple arrived in San Diego for treatment, his command began to raise concerns about PTSD, according to the investigation. After extensive surgeries, Sciple continued to display strange behavior, at one point cutting his own sutures.

But despite all this, and an exam that showed he was suffering "mild deficits in verbal learning and attention" the problems were attributed to his medication and he was declared "cognitively fit for full duty." In June, 2009, he was assigned to a Wounded Warrior Battalion in San Diego.

His behavior continued to be erratic, culminating with a trip to buy sunglasses that ended in Mexico after he "hit a curb that 'woke' him up."

Despite further problems, including erratic sleep, sleepwalking and increasing problems from alcohol consumption, in the fall of 2009, Sciple once again was found to be fit for duty, this time as the commanding officer of a Headquarters and Service company.

Further evaluations, in February and March, 2010, found that Sciple was "worldwide deployable" and "in good spirits." In April of that year, he was sent to MacDill Air Force Base.

Five days later, with a blood alcohol level more than three times higher than the legal limit in Florida, Sciple drove drunk and killed Rivera.

In their investigation, the Marines recommended changes in how PTSD and alcohol cases are handled, including improved screening, evaluating and reporting, better training for medical professionals to recognize the symptoms and reducing the reliance on Marines to report their own problems.

These are important steps toward reducing the stigma of PTSD, said Carrie Elk, the military liaison for the University of South Florida's College of Nursing and a psychologist specializing in treating the disorder.

"PTSD is a natural response to these kinds of events, and when the stigma is lifted, hopefully it will result in a mindset that says, 'I will lose an opportunity if I don't get treatment,'" she said.

Wall Street Journal (wsj.com)
May 12, 2012

32. Officer: Military Could Learn From Civilian Courts

By Allen G. Breed, Associated Press

Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Miller knew that deserting his post was a serious crime. But, by then, he had a lot more on his mind and heart than his job.

Back in 2003-2004, while Miller was deployed as a cavalry scout in Afghanistan, his father died, his mother was diagnosed with cancer, and he was facing divorce. During his second tour, this time in Iraq, his best friend was killed by a roadside bomb.

A few months before his November 2007 serve-out date, while stationed at Fort Drum, N.Y., Miller learned that he had been "Stop-Loss'd" — meaning he would remain with his unit for a third deployment. He walked away twice, for a total of 19 months.

At his court-martial two years ago, Miller testified that he knew he was likely suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, but purposely avoided treatment "in fear that I would be labeled a 'nut' and no longer be respected by my peers or subordinates."

When it came time for sentencing, the prosecutor, Capt. Christopher Goren, argued that Miller should be made an example.

"If we allow Staff Sgt. Miller to get off easy, what kind of message will that send?" he asked the judge. "It would tell all those soldiers, lower soldiers, it is OK to go AWOL, which it is not."

Goren asked that Miller be sentenced to seven months' confinement, reduction in rank to the lowest enlisted grade and a bad-conduct discharge — which would have cut him off from the medical and mental-health benefits usually available to veterans.

But Col. Michael Hargis, the presiding officer, recommended that all but the demotion be suspended, on the

condition that Miller undergo treatment and counseling.

Maj. Gen. James L. Terry, then commander of the 10th Mountain Division, went along with the recommendation. Miller successfully completed his treatment and was granted an honorable discharge.

In the world of military justice, Miller's case is far from the rule. But some voices within that system are calling for change, saying military courts can learn from the recent experience of their civilian counterparts.

Civilian courts across the country have acknowledged the fact that, after a decade of fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, some veterans' crimes can be traced back to battle-zone trauma — and that they shouldn't go to jail or prison for them. The same consideration should be given by the military legal system when damaged warriors come before it, say some military law authorities, including Maj. Evan Seamone.

Seamone, an Iraq War veteran currently serving as chief of military justice at Fort Benning, Ga., makes the case in an article titled "Reclaiming the Rehabilitative Ethic in Military Justice," published recently in *Military Law Review*.

Too many service members, he argues, are cast out for crimes or misconduct that could be attributable to post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury or some other service-connected ailment. Such "punitive discharges" yank away the veteran's safety net, passing the burden and risks on to the civilian system, he says.

"In its philosophy and practice, the military justice system is masking a major consequence of its sentencing procedures, which civilian courts have learned over the last two decades: Incarceration

without adequate mental treatment leads to repeat offenses at a rate so alarming and harmful to society that it has created a 'national public health crisis' of 'epidemic' proportion," Seamone writes.

"In contrast to problem-solving courts, which target the illness underlying criminal conduct, courts-martial function as problem-generating courts when they result in punitive discharges that preclude mentally ill offenders from obtaining" treatment through the Veterans Administration, writes Seamone. "Such practices create a class of individuals whose untreated conditions endanger public safety and the veteran as they grow worse over time."

As awareness of PTSD, TBI and other "invisible wounds" of war has increased in the past several years, civilian courts have responded by setting up diversion programs to get eligible veterans into treatment, rather than locking them up. Seamone says nearly 100 of these so-called "veterans courts" have already been established, and another 100 or so are in the works.

But unlike these courts, Seamone writes, "military justice operates within a far smaller constellation dominated by the concept of 'good order and discipline.'"

"The lack of concern for treatment is troublesome because of its inherent assumption that somebody else, outside of the military, will someday be responsible for dealing with aggravated psychological problems," he writes.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Seamone said he found numerous cases in which military prosecutors "actually made the argument in

courts-martial that the military isn't a rehabilitation center."

"The major consideration becomes ... how to use the person as an example, as potentially a deterrent," says the soldier, who has worked as both prosecutor and defender in courts-martial.

Command control is a key difference between military justice and civilian, Seamone says. "The commander is ultimately the final authority on ... how the person should be dealt with."

The presiding officer and panel members — the equivalent of judge and jury — cannot give a sentence that includes probation, he says. The commanding officer has the power to grant clemency, but Seamone says such decisions are often made during hasty meetings amid the myriad other responsibilities of running a military installation.

"I don't think it's intentional," Seamone says. "A lot of the time, it becomes this problem of, 'It's not an issue that I can deal with right now myself. It's going to be something later on down the line that someone else will have to deal with.'"

Seamone cites studies estimating that around 20 percent of the veterans in custody or going through the criminal courts are not eligible for VA benefits "because of the nature of the discharge that they received." These people, he said, have been "essentially crippled."

"And that population has much more challenges in just getting out and being successful once they're released," he says.

The suspended discharge is permitted in the Manual for Courts-Martial, Seamone writes, and despite "generations of nonuse" it has occasionally been used, his research

revealed. Miller's is one of the cases he cites.

"What this Miller case tells me is there IS a rehabilitative ethic" in the military, Seamone said in the telephone interview. "That people DO want to do the right thing. Commanders DO want more options than just kicking someone out and having this discharge stay with them for the rest of their lives."

Retired Maj. Gen. Walter B. Huffman, a former judge advocate general of the Army, thinks Seamone's approach, especially in cases of suspected PTSD, "is a wonderful idea."

"It really doesn't generally rise to the legal definition of insanity," says Huffman, now dean emeritus of the law school at Texas Tech University. "So there's no way to account for it in the guilt or innocence phase of the trial."

Derek Richardson, a Marine combat veteran and third-year law student under Huffman, makes many of the same suggestions in a paper he's drafting. But he would take things even farther than Seamone.

Seamone's proposals are aimed primarily at people who are leaving the service. Richardson, a former corporal who fought in the battle of Fallujah in late 2004, says the military "has an interest in treating its servicemembers in order to restore them to full usefulness."

"When PTSD is acquired through service, and combat caused PTSD increases aggression, drug abuse, and violence," he argues, "the most basic concepts of justice require the military to effectively treat PTSD rather than punish it."

Studies have found that veterans with PTSD are more likely to have problems with drugs and alcohol, and are two to three times more likely to

abuse their domestic partners, Richardson says.

But while Richardson proposes creating a "mental health court" within the military justice system, Seamone would rely on agreements to use the parallel structures already in place in the civilian world.

In recent years, the rules have been liberalized to allow the VA to cover treatment for offenders who are still on active duty, Seamone says. He cites an instance in Buffalo, N.Y., in which federal authorities allowed a veteran's case to go through the state's deferred-adjudication program.

"So the involvement of the VA is changing the dynamic and allowing the court to build in a method to dismiss the sentence after someone successfully completes a program," he says. "We don't have to change the law in order to make these proposals go into effect. My major position here is that it's really a change in attitude, rather than the law that will enable this to happen."

Both men agree that not everyone with PTSD or TBI should automatically qualify for this alternate course. Seamone mentions the case of Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales, accused of gunning down 17 Afghan villagers in March.

"There may be some offenders who need treatment, but their crimes are just so egregious that they NEED to go to jail," Seamone says.

The Department of Defense has come under fire in recent years for allegedly discharging service members in such a way that they would not qualify for VA benefits. According to a report released in March by Vietnam Veterans of America, records show that the military separated more than 31,000 personnel for alleged

personality disorders between 2001 and 2010.

Still, not everyone in the military accepts the need to refocus military justice.

"No! Absolutely NO!" Donald Zlotnik, a highly decorated former special forces soldier and Vietnam veteran, wrote to Army Times after it ran an article on Seamone's paper. "If we open the mental health game to military courts no one will ever be punished and military discipline will be shattered."

But Miller, for one, is glad his commander chose the other path.

The 30-year-old Binghamton, N.Y., man left the Army in December 2010. He and his longtime girlfriend have a 3-month-old son.

Miller used some of his veteran benefits to study for a commercial driver's license and now has a steady job, driving a delivery truck for a local beer distributor.

He is grateful that his commander, Gen. Terry, accepted the military judge's recommendation and "allowed me to get the counseling and therapy I needed," Miller told the AP in an email.

If not, he added, "I honestly don't know how my life would be right now."

Allen G. Breed is a national writer, based in Raleigh, N.C.

Atlanta Journal-Constitution
(ajc.com)

May 13, 2012

33. Historic Battleship Becoming Naval Museum In SoCal

By Eric Risberg, Associated Press

RICHMOND, Calif. — Firing its 16-inch guns in the Arabian Sea, the U.S.S. Iowa shuddered. As the sky turned orange, a blast of heat from the massive guns washed over the

battleship. This was the Iowa of the late 1980s, at the end of its active duty as it escorted reflagged Kuwaiti oil tankers from the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz during the Iran-Iraq war.

Some 25 years later, following years of aging in the San Francisco Bay area's "mothball fleet," the 887-foot long ship that once carried President Franklin Roosevelt to a World War II summit to meet with Churchill, Stalin and Chiang Kai Shek is coming to life once again as it is being prepared for what is most likely its final voyage.

Not far from where "Rosie the Riveters" built ships in the 1940s at the Port of Richmond, the 58,000-ton battlewagon is undergoing restoration for towing May 20 through the Golden Gate, then several hundred miles south to the Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro. There it is to be transformed into an interactive naval museum.

On May 1, ownership of the Iowa was officially transferred from the U.S. Navy to the Pacific Battleship Center, the nonprofit organization that has been restoring the boat for its new mission.

"This means everything — it's going to be saved," John Wolfenbarger, 87, of San Martin, Calif., who served aboard the USS Iowa for almost two years in the mid-1940s and recently began giving public tours of the old ship during repairs here.

"When it gets down to San Pedro, it's going to be the happiest day of my life, like coming home!" he said, watching the mast being reattached.

For the past decade, the lead ship of her battleship class known as "The Big Stick" has sat in the cold and fog, anchored with other mothballed ships in nearby Suisun Bay.

This spring, workers began scrubbing and painting the Iowa's exterior, replacing the teak deck and reattaching the mast in preparation for the museum commissioning on July 4.

Jonathan Williams, executive officer of Pacific Battleship Group, has been overseeing the project, which will exceed \$4 million upon completion. Williams credited his dedicated staff and volunteers, along with the financial contributions from the state of Iowa, for making the restoration possible.

"The U.S. Navy, MARAD (United States Maritime Administration) and the crew that mothballed the battleship over the past 22 years did an excellent job and kept the heart and soul of Iowa alive," said Williams.

"Things are on track and we are following our schedule as planned," he added. "We are trying to make sure nothing is missed as the process is complex."

The fast Iowa-class battleships, ordered by the Navy in 1939 and 1940, could travel at a speed of 33 knots. The Iowa, first commissioned in 1943 and again in 1951 and 1984, saw duty in World War II and the Korean War. It took part in escorting tankers in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war before being decommissioned in 1990.

During World War II, when transferred to the Pacific Fleet in 1944, the ship shelled beachheads at Kwajalein and Eniwetok in advance of Allied amphibious landings and screened aircraft carriers operating in the Marshall Islands.

It was one of two ships of its class camouflaged during World War II— and it also was the only one with a bathtub, which was put in

for President Roosevelt. The Iowa also served as the Third Fleet flagship, flying Adm. William F. Halsey's flag as it accompanied the Missouri at the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay.

A dark part of the ship's history took place in 1989, when 47 sailors were killed in an explosion in the No. 2 gun turret. After the blast, the Navy alleged a crewmember caused the explosion as a result of a failed relationship with another male crewmember. A follow-up investigation found the explosion was most likely the result of human error.

Most visitors are immediately drawn to the sight and firepower of the Iowa's nine 16-inch guns, which could send an armor-piercing shell the weight of a small car 24 miles. When the ship was modernized during the 1980s, it was outfitted with Tomahawk cruise missiles, Harpoon anti-ship missiles and Phalanx gun mounts. It was also one of the first ships outfitted to carry a drone for reconnaissance flights.

Future plans for the Iowa include an interactive tour experience that will allow the visitor to experience what life at sea was like during active duty. Among the highlights will be viewing the inside of one of the main gun turrets, seeing the 17.5-inch armored conning station on the bridge and viewing Roosevelt's stateroom.

There will also be tours of secondary weapons, missiles, engineering, armor and special spaces. An ADA accessibility plan calls for an elevator to be installed from the main deck to one below for access to the main exhibit areas. The museum is scheduled to open on July 7.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram
May 11, 2012

34. Lockheed Delivers Two F-35 Jets To Florida Base

By Bob Cox

Two new F-35 joint strike fighter jets were ferried from Lockheed Martin to Eglin Air Force Base in Florida on Wednesday, which Lockheed officials say is a sign that the 18-day strike by the Machinists union is having little impact on the high-profile program.

A third jet, an F-35B model for the Marine Corps like the other two, has been accepted by the Defense Department and will also be ferried to Florida within the next few days.

"While the strike is creating some challenges, we're still meeting our key commitments to customers, thanks to the dedication and commitment of the many people performing in contingency roles," said Lockheed spokesman Joe Stout.

Lockheed is continuing to work on jets on the production line, although Stout did not characterize the pace of that work. One additional Marines jet was rolled out of the production plant Thursday and moved to the flight line for fuel testing.

As of Thursday, about 1,700 salaried employees at the plant had completed training required for certification to perform work in the plant.

In addition to work being performed at the plant, Stout said good progress is being made in flight testing at Edwards Air Force Base in California and at Naval Air Station Patuxent River in Maryland. There are Machinists on strike at both bases.

Nine test flights were accomplished Thursday, which, when combined with the two planes ferried to Florida, were a one-day record for 11 F-35 flights.

Union members continued picketing outside the Lockheed

plant gates, and there was no indication from either side that negotiations will resume anytime soon.

Robert Wood, spokesman for the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local 776, said Lockheed wasn't accomplishing much without the roughly 3,600 union members who are on strike.

"The truth is the production line isn't moving," Wood said.

The two F-35s delivered Thursday and others in the final stages of testing "is stuff that was already finished," he said. "There's little or nothing going on in there."

Less than 1 percent of the union-represented workers have crossed the picket line, Wood said.

The Machinists overwhelmingly rejected Lockheed's proposed contract on April 22, citing the company's plan to eliminate pensions for new hires and healthcare plan changes that could increase employee costs.

The two planes delivered Thursday mean that Lockheed has delivered 13 of the 31 jets in the Pentagon's first three low-rate production orders. More than 100 other jets are in some stage of production.

This week, Lockheed said that about 25 percent of the specific flight test points had been achieved in the testing phase.

Los Angeles Times
May 13, 2012

35. 'Chief Skunk' At A Hush-Hush Weapons Complex

By W.J. Hennigan, Los Angeles Times

The gig: Alton D. Romig Jr., 58, is "chief skunk" at Lockheed Martin Corp.'s famed Skunk Works secretive weapons development facility

in Palmdale. It's one of the most coveted jobs in aerospace.

For more than 70 years, workers at the shadowy site have designed and built the world's most innovative military aircraft, including the U-2 spy plane, SR-71 Blackbird and F-117 stealth fighter. About 2,000 people work on 600 programs at Skunk Works, which got its nickname in 1943 at its original Burbank headquarters that was located next to a manufacturing plant that produced a strong odor.

Secrecy: About 90% of all the work is classified. Romig wouldn't specify what goes on there or how much money is involved. "I think it's safe to say it's in the hundreds of millions of dollars" was all he would say. The Skunk Works mantra is "quick, quiet and quality," he said, and it guides every project from concept to flight. Romig works in a windowless office to ensure security, and most projects in the facility are so secret that employees can't tell one another what they're working on.

Takeoff: Being named vice president and general manager of advanced development programs for Lockheed in January 2011 was a culmination of a life's dream for Romig.

As a child from Telford, Pa., a rural town in the eastern part of the state, Romig and his father would make the 35-mile drive to what is now Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown to watch the latest commercial aircraft take off and land. They would stand atop the highest concourse for a glimpse of the action. "I was always in awe of what a jet could do compared to what props could do," he said. "The power was simply amazing."

American idols: While other boys his age were enamored with sports stars like Mickey Mantle or rock 'n'

roll icons like Elvis Presley, Romig had other heroes. Three men shaped his life, he said. The first was Wernher von Braun, the engineer who led NASA's development of the Saturn V rocket that put man on the moon. The second was J. Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist known as the "father of the atomic bomb" for leading the Manhattan Project during World War II. The third was Clarence "Kelly" Johnson, the engineer who founded the Skunk Works and headed the project to build the nation's first fighter jet, the XP-80 Shooting Star.

"While each of these men were proficient in their chosen professions, none of them were really known for the work that they personally accomplished," Romig said. "They were known for leading teams of brilliant engineers and scientists. I guess I have that same gene inside me."

Nukes: After graduating from Lehigh University with a doctorate in materials science, Romig got a job with Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, now operated by Lockheed. In his more than 30 years with Sandia, he held a variety of management assignments, including chief scientific officer for the nuclear weapons program.

Pillow talk?: At Sandia, Romig met his wife, Julie, a now-retired chemical engineer. Although most Americans may go home to their spouse and unload after a hard day at work, there's little about his job that Romig can discuss with his wife. He's had a government-vetted security clearance since 1979. "She's never asked, and I've never told," he said. "I've been in the black world for so long."

They live on Christmas Tree Lane in Lancaster, so in December they deck out

the outside of their home with lights, ornaments and fake reindeer. The intense engineer he is, Romig can tell you exactly how much electricity it takes to light up. "Sixty-eight amps," he said.

The couple will celebrate 30 years of marriage in September. They have one married son and a granddaughter.

His goal in sight: For the better part of a year while he was at Sandia, Romig interviewed for the Skunk Works job. On the Tuesday before Thanksgiving 2010, Romig received a call telling him he had landed it. All he could think about was childhood hero Kelly Johnson: "I knew I would be stepping into the role of an icon."

When he's not in Palmdale, Romig spends much of his time at Lockheed aircraft manufacturing plants in Marietta, Ga., and Fort Worth, where about 35% of Skunk Works employees, called "skunks," work.

Spare time: Romig said he and his wife share a love of the arts and history. They are members of the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

Leading leaders: As the head of one of the most innovative engineering teams in the world, Romig offered these leadership tips. "Don't be afraid to trust your employees to do their jobs," he said. "Don't be afraid of failure. Learn from it."

Miami Herald
May 13, 2012

36. Working Together Key To Western Hemisphere's Success

By Leon Panetta

During the past decade, a remarkable transformation has taken place in the

Western Hemisphere. Across the region, countries are doing more than they ever have before to advance peace and security within and beyond their borders. Their efforts are promoting security and stability not only in the Americas, but across the globe — and provide the United States with a historic opportunity to renew and strengthen our defense partnerships across the region.

I recently had the opportunity to visit three countries that demonstrate this progress during my first trip to South America as the United States Secretary of Defense.

My first stop was Colombia, which has transformed from a nation under siege by guerillas and drug-trafficking mafias to a country that has dramatically improved its security and is helping Central American nations and others confront illicit drug trafficking. During President Obama's visit to Colombia last month, our two nations agreed on a regional security cooperation action plan to help strengthen and coordinate these efforts.

I next traveled to Brazil to conduct the first-ever Defense Cooperation Dialogue between our two nations. This dialogue reflects Brazil's emergence as a global power and important contributor to international security through, among other efforts, its leadership of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and the U.N.'s Maritime Task Force in Lebanon.

My trip concluded in Chile, which was the first country to send peacekeeping forces to Haiti and is also using its expertise to build the capacity of security forces in the Caribbean Basin.

During the course of my week-long trip, these countries provided impressive

demonstrations of the growing military capabilities of their forces. I was moved by their commitment to furthering local, regional and global stability.

The United States has long-standing and productive defense ties with each of these nations. But in the past, the attitude of the United States was that it would have to act alone to guarantee the security of the hemisphere. That is no longer the case, nor is it our preference, because we are stronger when we work with other nations to advance peace and security.

We have entered a new era for defense and security partnerships in the Americas. This trip convinced me that the United States must reinvigorate our defense partnerships in the hemisphere on the basis of mutual respect and mutual interest consistent with President Obama's overall approach to the region.

In many ways, this approach is codified in the new strategic guidance issued by the Department of Defense earlier this year. One of the key pillars of that strategy is to build innovative defense partnerships across all regions, particularly with those nations that are stepping up to help promote regional and global stability. These innovative partnerships are built on enhanced training and exercises between our militaries, increased scientific and educational exchanges, and technology sharing.

The United States military sees new opportunities to collaborate with key partners in the Americas to meet emerging challenges in cyber security, to build the capacity of other nations in the hemisphere to respond to natural disasters, and to support whole of society efforts to confront transnational organized crime. We also hope to cooperate outside this region, whether by working with Brazil

and Colombia to help African nations counter illicit drug trafficking, or by working with Chile to promote security and prosperity in Asia-Pacific.

The United States and the other nations of this hemisphere are truly one family, and the United States fully supports greater regional security cooperation. In March, I had the opportunity to participate in the first-ever trilateral meeting with my Canadian and Mexican counterparts. At that meeting, we committed to working together to enhance our common understanding of the threats and of the approaches needed to address them. In October, I plan to travel to Uruguay to participate in the Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas, another important regional forum where I hope our nations will further demonstrate how we are taking the lead in developing collaborative and effective mechanisms to confront emerging threats.

The world we inhabit in the 21st century is full of complex security challenges, but it also is full of opportunities for nations to work together to meet these challenges. Nowhere are these opportunities greater than in this hemisphere.

Today the United States and all of the nations of this hemisphere share a common destiny — a destiny of working closely with our friends and partners across the region to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century and help realize our shared dream of a better life for all of our children.

Leon Panetta is secretary of the U.S. Department of Defense.

Weekly Standard
May 21, 2012

37. Panetta Plays Chicken

By Gary Schmitt and Thomas Donnelly

When he was director of central intelligence, Leon Panetta earned a reputation as an energetic advocate for his agency. When he replaced Robert Gates at the Pentagon, it was reasonable to hope that Panetta would continue to play the role of a senior statesman. And to some extent he has—explaining that defense cuts would heighten risks to the nation's security and stating that, should the "sequester" mandated by the 2011 Budget Control Act come to pass in January 2013, cutting another \$500 billion from defense, it would be a "disaster" for America's military. As he told the Senate Armed Services Committee, "Congress must do everything possible to make sure that we avoid sequestration."

But no longer. Now that the Republican majority in the House of Representatives has actually introduced a plan to avoid this disaster, blocking sequestration and proposing alternative reductions in federal spending to meet the goals set by the Budget Control Act, Secretary Panetta has reverted to his Democratic-congressman-from-California self. At a press conference Thursday, Panetta said the Republican bill would, "by taking these funds from the poor, middle-class Americans, homeowners, and other vulnerable parts of our American constituencies," virtually guarantee "confrontation, gridlock, and a greater likelihood of sequester." To top matters off, the secretary added that "defense should not be exempt from doing its share to reduce the deficit."

So, naturally, the news accounts portray the fight between the House GOP and the Obama administration as a choice between "protecting defense" and "slashing funds for the poor."

Except it's not. Since 2002, spending for the federal government's food stamp program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), has increased 270 percent, with participation in SNAP growing 160 percent since 2000. The proposed "slash" to the program would leave funding for food stamps in 2013 still 260 percent higher than a decade ago. Indeed, given the liberalized rules for eligibility, even if the economy recovers and returns to normal growth, the CBO projects nearly 37 million people will be receiving benefits in 2020, up from 17 million in 2000.

Or, take the proposed reforms to Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program in the House bill. While the past decade has seen a large expansion in Medicaid spending, the program is projected to grow by some 125 percent in the next 10 years. The House bill would slow that growth to 123 percent.

These proposals hardly justify the Democrats' accusations that the House GOP is rampaging through the federal budget like Attila the Hun.

Not that a little slashing isn't sometimes called for. The health care law passed in 2010 created a "Prevention and Public Health Fund" to prevent disease and promote "wellness." While presumably some of the money was well spent, U.S. tax dollars also went to improving signage for public parks and bike lanes in North Carolina, promoting "urban gardening" in Boston, and helping New York in its

lobbying campaign to increase taxes on soda.

Nor is it the case, as Secretary Panetta suggests, that those trying to prevent further cuts to the military budget are ignoring the need to address the deficit or arguing that defense shouldn't share the pain. Over the past four years, some \$800 billion has already been taken from defense coffers. If the sequester stands, defense, though consuming less than 20 percent of federal spending, will bear half the total cuts.

The real issue here is the desire of the administration and its allies on Capitol Hill to keep defense spending as low as possible to make room for the domestic welfare and entitlement programs they want. In this connection, it should be no surprise that the \$800 billion already lopped from defense is essentially the price tag for the 2009 Obama stimulus package that failed to restore the economy to healthy growth.

So, over the longer term, this really will be a matter of "guns versus butter"—with liberals wanting to add oleo, margarine, and extra virgin olive oil to one side of the ledger, while leaving the U.S. military looking more and more like the armless, legless Black Knight from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Under the administration's current plan to flat line future defense spending, and using CBO projections for the economy, America's defense "burden" will drop to just over 2.5 percent of GDP in a decade. This is a remarkable figure—half a percentage point lower than the lowest level reached in the post-World War II era and well below even the post-Cold War average. With this level of resources, the United States simply cannot continue to play the role it has over

the past 60 years in keeping the great powers at peace and helping provide the global security environment that has seen America prosper.

The GOP-sponsored plan in the House offers a sensible way forward. It keeps the government's pledge to begin addressing the deficit and does so by only slightly slowing the growth in welfare programs. And it steps back from what the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Martin Dempsey, has called the path to "a hollow force." Unfortunately, Senate majority leader Harry Reid, most of his Democratic colleagues, and the White House seem unwilling even to consider the plan, preferring instead to play Russian roulette with the country's security by letting the sequestration process go forward.

Perhaps this is to be expected given the Democrats' slim hold on the Senate and a president whose record puts his reelection in jeopardy. But it does not excuse Panetta's dismissal of what is, so far, the only plan to prevent the gutting of the department he leads. The Budget Control Act was a piece of national-security folly, for which congressional Republicans deserve a good share of the blame. But the relish with which Democrats, including Panetta, are playing a game of political chicken with the U.S. military is inexcusable.

National Journal
May 12, 2012

38. Chicago Hope

The upcoming NATO summit is one of a series of international meetings driving the Afghan endgame. But anything decided is likely to change over time.

By Kevin Baron

Only by the standards of a war that has cost as much as \$1 billion a month could an

American diplomat characterize a request for another 1 billion euros for Afghanistan as “a little bit of reinvestment.” But that’s what Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker said was needed from the NATO heads of state soon to convene in Chicago—possibly for the last time before the alliance ends its combat mission in the war.

It’s a tall order, one of several among the three principal Afghanistan-related agreements that U.S. officials are hoping to conclude at the May 20-21 biennial summit in President Obama’s hometown. There, NATO is expected to give Washington an internationally sanctioned political framework for ending the war. But if the Lisbon agreements reached barely 18 months ago are a guide, NATO’s endgame for Afghanistan is likely to change again by the time the war officially ends.

The State Department says that Obama wants NATO to take three big steps: designate 2013 as a “milestone” in shifting the military mission from combat to training the Afghan National Security Forces; establish a lasting funding commitment for the Afghan military; and approve NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen’s “road map” for the alliance’s role in the country after 2014.

Even though these terms would leave plenty of wiggle room for unexpected contingencies, they aren’t likely to satisfy either the war-weary electorates from Anchorage to Ankara who want out or the hawkish political and military leaders demanding that the U.S. maintain current combat-troop levels, at least through next year’s fighting season. The prospect of

financing an indefinite and ill-defined NATO role in Afghanistan for years to come may be an especially tough sell in European capitals amid economic austerity measures that have already toppled governments across the Continent.

Other hurdles loom. On the shift from combat to training, it’s unclear what “milestone” NATO envisions next year, but the decision is not really one the alliance can enforce. Some NATO members, abandoning the Lisbon time line, are already leaving or threatening to leave Afghanistan ahead of schedule. Obama will make the most important decisions on combat. In his recent speech delivered from Afghanistan, the president pledged to continue a “steady drawdown” of combat troops after this summer’s withdrawal of the remaining 23,000 “surge” forces. That strong restatement effectively quashed—at least for now—rumors swirling in Washington that administration officials, or possibly Gen. John Allen, commander of the international forces in Afghanistan, wanted to apply the model followed in Iraq. There, for years after the hard fighting subsided, the U.S. maintained an expensive residual force of roughly 50,000 troops to train Iraqi military and police forces.

Second is the question of the size and cost of the Afghan National Security Forces from now until 2014 and beyond. The Afghan government, NATO, and participating foreign countries agreed on plans calling for a surge to a 352,000-man force, at an annual cost of \$6 billion. But the U.S. has already backed off that goal, considering it prohibitively expensive for Afghanistan to maintain. The new plan is to field a force of just 230,000 at a bargain

price of \$4 billion a year. The U.S. reportedly has agreed to contribute about \$2 billion, with the Afghans paying \$500 million. Obama wants Europe and non-NATO funders such as Japan to come up with the rest. “We cannot and we will not abandon Afghanistan,” Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said, hat in hand at April’s pre-Chicago ministerial meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels. “We cannot shortchange the security that must be provided by the Afghan forces now and in the future.” Fulfilling that promise won’t be easy amid the European financial crisis and its unrelenting political aftershocks.

Third, Rasmussen’s promise to deliver a road map for NATO’s participation in Afghanistan after 2014 may be symbolically worthy but remains vague in practice. The 2012 Lisbon road map left the public expecting an end to the war by 2014. However, Crocker and Allen last year began floating the idea of a longer military presence to combat terrorism in the region and continue training Afghan soldiers. Obama made an extended role official when he inked the security agreement this month that allows for a military presence for a decade. Yet it’s anyone’s guess what that means for NATO after 2014.

The reality is that Chicago is just one of a series of international meetings driving the Afghan endgame. In December, Allen traced a line from November’s *loya jirga*, where Afghan elders agreed with President Hamid Karzai on negotiating a long-term foreign troop presence, to the Bonn conference, where NATO and the other contributing countries agreed that Afghanistan deserved continued funding. The next

battle over underwriting further military and civilian development in Afghanistan will come at the major-donor conference scheduled for Tokyo in July.

An even more important decision out of NATO’s hands will come in September, when Allen is expected to present yet another strategy and troop request after Obama ends the surge. Of course, the most critical decision of all will come from America’s voters in November, when they decide whether to provide Obama a second term to complete his planned drawdown from Afghanistan or to empower Mitt Romney to reexamine everything NATO hopes to decide this month, and more.

Washington Post
May 13, 2012
Pg. 21

39. A Red Line Iran Can Heed

By David Ignatius

Let’s assume the signals from the White House and Tehran are reliable, and that Iran is serious about an agreement to remove its stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium from the country and stop producing more. What happens then?

This question of “next steps” in the Iran nuclear talks is important, because neither side is likely to commit to the first set of “confidence-building measures” unless it knows where the process is heading. Iran believes that it has been tricked in the past by Western peace feelers that didn’t lead anywhere; the United States has the same wary suspicion. Both sides need more clarity.

A compelling framework for future talks has been prepared by analysts from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The authors are George Perkovich,

a leading U.S. scholar on proliferation issues, and Ariel Levite, a former deputy director of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission. In preparing the plan, the Carnegie team has had quiet discussions with U.S. and Iranian experts.

The basic idea of the Carnegie proposal is to create a “firewall” between Iran’s civilian nuclear program, which it could pursue, and a military bomb-making program, which it couldn’t. Along with separating permissible from impermissible, the Carnegie authors propose special procedures for dual-use technologies that are near the dividing line.

A big selling point for the Iranians is that this approach is based on the pledge by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei that Iran won’t build nuclear weapons. Khamenei’s most explicit statement came on state television in February: “Iran is not after nuclear weapons because the Islamic Republic, logically, religiously and theoretically, considers the possession of nuclear weapons a grave sin and believes the proliferation of such weapons is senseless, destructive and dangerous.”

President Obama sent a back-channel communication to Khamenei in March that his *fatwa* banning nuclear weapons would be a good starting point for negotiations. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan delivered the message when he met Khamenei on March 29. Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman reiterated Obama’s theme during the first round of negotiations with the Iranians in Istanbul on April 14.

So how could Iran fulfill this pledge in a way that reassures Israel and other nations that fear a nuclear-armed Iran? The Carnegie experts propose a

red-yellow-green system, like a nuclear traffic light. In the “green” approved category would be nuclear power plants, medical research reactors and basic academic and scientific research. Forbidden “red” activities would be those directly related to weaponization, such as warhead design and procurement of items used in making and testing bombs.

The “yellow” dual-use activities would be the trickiest problem, and the firewall would have to be carefully constructed. Some enrichment of uranium might be permitted, for example, if it were verifiably limited below 5 percent — so it could be used for only peaceful purposes. So-called “neutron triggers” would be banned, since they could be used to initiate a bomb’s explosion, except for those configured for oil exploration, which would be supplied to Iran.

Any real reduction of tensions with Iran will also require greater openness and transparency about past as well as present activities, so that each side is confident it isn’t being cheated, and that its basic security hasn’t been compromised. That’s part of the Carnegie proposal, too.

“This approach is not a zero-sum game,” argue Perkovich and Levite. “It would require commitments and concessions from both sides.” And by defining the activities that are part of building a nuclear weapon, it would fill a gap in the existing Non-Proliferation Treaty — and could be applied to other nations, not just Iran.

The negotiations that began last month in Istanbul between Iran and the “P5+1” group of nations are at the initial confidence-building stage. They’re aimed at gaining time for a comprehensive

agreement like what the Carnegie authors propose.

What’s likely to be on the table at the next meeting in Baghdad on May 23 is a plan for Iran to stop enriching uranium above 5 percent and ship its stockpile of 20-percent-enriched uranium (currently estimated at more than 100 kilograms) out of the country, in return for medical isotopes and fuel rods for a civilian research reactor. U.S. officials hope that this would mean that the Iranians would halt work at Fordow, near Qom, a facility that has been used for enrichment above 5 percent.

President Obama believes this interim agreement would buy time for further negotiations, by delaying Iran’s bomb-making ability. But to have a lasting pact, it will be necessary to translate Ayatollah Khamenei’s words into a clear and verifiable “red line.”

Washington Post

May 13, 2012

Pg. 21

40. Russia's U.N. Power Play

By Janusz Bugajski

A revitalized Russia is flexing its muscles at the United Nations. In addition to periodically blocking Western initiatives by threatening to use its veto in the Security Council, Moscow appears to be working through a proxy to prevent Lithuania from holding the presidency of the U.N. General Assembly.

The presidency is largely ceremonial but bestows international prestige on its holder, and more responsibility has been vested in the position in recent years. Duties involve chairing the annual gathering of world leaders in New York each September and other prominent U.N. events.

Traditionally, the presidency rotates every 12 months among the five regional groups of U.N. member states. The 67th session of the General Assembly is to be chaired by a representative of the Eastern European Group of countries. Lithuania applied for the post in 2004 and remained the sole candidate for seven years. Early in 2012, however, Serbia’s foreign minister, Vuk Jeremic, announced that he would run — a move immediately backed by Russia. The full 193-member assembly is expected to vote in June.

It is extremely rare for the full General Assembly to vote directly on this position. Such an election is likely to heighten divisions among U.N. member states, weakening the future president, and most U.N. members prefer to follow the usual regional rotation. Some have called for the matter to be resolved within the Eastern European Group. But Belgrade and Moscow are unlikely to back down, as they are maneuvering to achieve specific political objectives.

Moscow is determined to undermine the solidarity among its former satellites in Central and Eastern Europe, in whatever forum in which they play a leading role. These countries no longer take instructions from Moscow. So Russia has bestowed its diplomatic backing on Serbia to weaken the EEG members’ ability to resolve the issue on their own and to prevent Lithuania from enhancing its international standing.

Russia wants to humiliate Lithuania over a statement it found embarrassing at a May 2010 U.N. session commemorating the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II. Lithuania’s permanent representative to the United Nations, Dalius

Cekuolis, remarked that in contrast to what a large part of Europe experienced, the end of the war did not bring freedom to Lithuania but annexation by another totalitarian power, the Soviet Union.

Cekuolis's reference to Russian occupation — and he was being diplomatic — reportedly sparked outrage in the Kremlin. The regime of newly inaugurated (again) Russian President Vladimir Putin has spent the past decade trying to disguise the fact that the Soviet Union was Nazi Germany's collaborator and supplier of resources during two crucial years at the start of World War II, when the Third Reich overran Europe and launched the Holocaust. Stalin's regime was a willing accomplice of Hitler then, seeing him as the major tool for the destruction of Western capitalism. Putin seeks to promote Russia's dubiously glorious history to restore its position as a global power. Efforts to silence Lithuania are part of a broader strategy to discredit Moscow's former dominions.

Meanwhile, by raising its own profile in the United Nations, the Serbian government hopes to minimize further recognition of the statehood of Kosovo, its former province, and to gain reciprocal diplomatic favors from Moscow over the coming year.

The irony is that Serbia's foreign minister is benefiting from Russia's backing against Serbia's European partners at a time when his country is striving to move closer to the European Union. The results of Serbia's May 6 general elections suggest widespread public support for E.U. membership. Yet if Serbia's aspirations for E.U. accession are damaged by the U.N. dispute, this will also serve

Moscow's ambitions in aiming to divide Europe.

Jeremic has lost a great deal of credibility in his government over the past year because of setbacks to Serbia's Kosovo policy. Ninety members of the U.N. General Assembly have recognized Kosovo as a new state despite Jeremic's globe-trotting in an effort to delegitimize Kosovo. Many European officials dislike his arrogance. And Jeremic's heavy-handed approach includes threatening to retaliate against Lithuania via diplomatic avenues if it refuses to withdraw its bid for the General Assembly presidency. Lithuanian officials have accused Belgrade of preparing a campaign to block Lithuania's bid for a two-year seat on the U.N. Security Council starting in 2014.

Much more is at stake here than a symbolic diplomatic post. The tug of war over the General Assembly presidency illustrates the escalating campaign a resurgent Russia is waging against former satellites that are now an integral part of the European Union and NATO and dependable allies of the United States.

Janusz Bugajski is a senior associate in the Europe program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Washington Post
May 13, 2012
Pg. B5

41. To Give South Sudan A Chance At Peace, Supply It With Weapons

Former envoy to Sudan Andrew S. Natsios says to stabilize the region, the U.S. should send guns

North and South Sudan are at war. The reasons for

the conflict are complex, but the solution is not: To stop the killing, the international community must arm South Sudan. Unlike interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States need not fire any shots. Just as we have provided weapons to support Israel but never put our own troops at risk, we can help bring peace to this region. We need only make sure that, for the North, attacking the South is a little bit harder than shooting fish in a barrel.

South Sudan is less than a year old. Its war with the North is the result of an imbalance of military power that has encouraged military adventurism. Omar al-Bashir, president of the North and a possible coup target, believes he can secure his future by bombing the South into submission instead of negotiating. For this reason, he has undertaken extensive bombing in South Sudanese civilian areas since January, killing hundreds — an act of war.

Although the South has a large, well-motivated ground army, it has no air force or antiaircraft weapons to defend its people. Southern leaders believe Bashir and his generals plan to invade, occupy oil fields and install a puppet government that will give them control over oil revenue lost when the South became independent.

The only way to end the North's bullying and foster peace talks is to give the South the right tools: American antiaircraft weapons. If the United States provides the materiel, the South can end the North's bombing campaign. Most Northern air force pilots are mercenaries — if they start taking heavy losses, they will leave Sudan quickly.

The decision to arm the South shouldn't be controversial. The United States

has provided more than \$30 million per year in military technical assistance with bipartisan support from Congress to the Southern Sudanese army since 2006. I know because, as U.S. envoy to Sudan under President George W. Bush, I helped put the program in place. Because the Republic of South Sudan is a sovereign state, the United States can provide military assistance without the approval of the U.N. Security Council or the African Union.

Given the remarkably broad coalition of U.S. grass-roots organizations on the left and the right behind South Sudan, providing antiaircraft weapons could have broad support. Franklin Graham, son of Christian evangelist Billy Graham and head of relief organization Samaritan's Purse, called for the bombing of the North; a wide variety of humanitarian groups asked the U.N. security council for "escalated action" last month. If the United States does not act, the war could turn into a bloodbath as more southern cities are bombed — providing further fodder for critics of President Obama's foreign policy in the heat of his reelection campaign.

But the risks of not acting are greater than those of further intervention. China provides advanced weapons to North Sudan, endangering any future relationship with the South, which has warned Beijing about playing both sides. China might protest if the United States armed the South, but not too loudly — U.S. involvement would end the conflict, which threatens Chinese investments in the North. To ensure tacit Chinese (and Arab) support, the South would have to agree only not to invade the North again.

For South Sudan, this would be a great deal. Although

many hoped that Southern independence would bring peace to the region, it has not. In fact, the dispute over control of Southern Sudanese oil fields is one of the principal causes of the current war. The North has demanded \$36 a barrel to transport the oil to Port Sudan, while the going international rate is less than \$1. Because the South refused to pay the \$36 fee, Bashir's government began commandeering oil tankers as they left Port Sudan last year and selling the oil themselves, constructing a new pipeline to divert the oil from the southern line.

All revenue to the Southern government stopped in November. This past February, the South began shutting down all oil pumping. The North walked out of negotiations with the South in February and refused to return.

Diplomatic pressure will not move Bashir and his generals, who do not take promises of improved relations with the West seriously. The United States has promised three times — in 2003, 2006 and 2010 — to normalize relations with Sudan if the North would let the South leave voluntarily. It did, and we did not respond quickly enough. Now we have no credibility. Meanwhile, Bashir ridicules Security Council resolutions. "We will implement what we want," he said Thursday. "What we do not want, no one can impose upon us."

In the past three years, the Obama administration has engaged Sudan by getting Bashir to agree to a free and fair referendum on Southern separation and, last July, allow the South to peacefully become independent. Now that war has come, talking will not end it. Only redressing the imbalance of military might will convince Bashir

and his generals that fighting won't solve the two countries' profound political crisis. The Obama administration must arm the South Sudanese with antiaircraft weapons to create a stalemate and get the North back to the negotiating table.

Andrew S. Natsios, George W. Bush's former envoy to Sudan, is a professor at Georgetown University and the author of "Sudan, South Sudan, and Darfur: What Everyone Needs to Know."

National Journal
May 12, 2012

42. Egypt 'At Risk'

Back from abroad, John Kerry discusses the situations in Afghanistan and Egypt.

By Sara Sorcher

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry, D-Mass., returned this week from visits to Afghanistan and Egypt, among other countries. He discussed his trip with *National Journal*. Edited excerpts follow.

NJ You were in Afghanistan just before President Obama signed the strategic-partnership agreement outlining the relationship between the two countries once U.S. combat troops pull out in 2014. What was the mood there?

KERRY Very positive. There was a real sigh of relief; people felt a newfound confidence that the U.S. and others were going to be there to help them through the transition. It's a necessary ingredient of trying to transfer responsibilities to the Afghans and reduce the American presence.

NJ It's a pretty general document, with no specific commitments for U.S. aid dollars or troop levels.

KERRY Over the next year, they're going to [work on the details]—which makes

much more sense, frankly, than trying to pin that down today when you're not confident about exactly what the numbers are going to be of ready-to-operate battalions; you're not certain about what the competency is going to be; you don't know what the Taliban's reaction will be.

NJ What lessons can be learned from the sticking points during the final negotiations with Iraq?

KERRY The basic issue will be: Do our troops have the immunities they need to be able to operate? You don't want them subject to Afghan law.

NJ Is there still a lot of concern about the security situation?

KERRY Members of Congress across the board are impatient with the amount of cost relative to the perceived progress. That's completely understandable. The American people are clearly impatient with what is now termed America's longest war, even though we've really only had a strategy in place since 2009. We were drifting around, with a whole bunch of resources diverted to Iraq. We were coasting for about four or five years. [Since President Obama arrived], we've made a lot of military progress. That doesn't mean everywhere is safer, because the Taliban have resorted to more spectacular, violent events. But they're not controlling massive amounts of territory. We're on the right track to train up the Afghans, turn over responsibility, and create a very small counterterrorism platform which has the ability to protect America's national-security interests in the region.

NJ Egypt's criminal trials of American and other nongovernment workers strained ties with Washington

this year. Did you sense a shift in the relationship?

KERRY I did. There's a lot of tension. Egypt is really at risk, hanging in the balance of the outcome of the presidential election and the direction the Muslim Brotherhood decides to go. If the brotherhood doesn't embrace basic laws of economics and attract capital back to the country, it's very hard to see how you turn your economy around if everyone is scared of the instability.

NJ You supported Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's decision to allow military aid to go to Cairo, but you also warned Egypt not to take anything for granted.

KERRY I told the Egyptians very clearly, "We think this relationship is important." We wanted to act in good faith so they recognize that we're willing to honor our commitments, and we expect them to. If they don't, then everything is up for grabs. No question about it. If they suddenly pull out the rug on the peace treaty with Israel, if they put in place very restrictive laws, if they're not able to do the International Monetary Fund loan, then we're going to have to question what we're doing.

NJ What do you make of the role of the Muslim Brotherhood, which now holds a majority in parliament?

KERRY We have to find a way to hopefully be able to work with them. If they make it impossible because they adopt policies that we find really unacceptable to our basic value system—that's really a problem. We're providing this assistance now because we need to make it clear we're prepared to have a good relationship. If we suddenly cut it off, we'd be sending a horrendous message that basically says, "Screw you, we're out of here." And they'll

turn around and say, “There’s no reason to even think about the United States. Let’s go work with Iran or whoever it’s going to be.” So we’d be cutting off our nose to spite our face in that sort of self-righteous early approach.

NJ Are you hopeful about the prospects of working with them?

KERRY I am hopeful. Not because I believe I can take to the bank everything they say—but because everything they say is better than what they could be saying. They’re talking about pluralism, diversity, protecting minority rights, and understanding they can’t put an Islamic extreme regimen in place because it would be counter to a lot of Egypt’s culture. Not everything is going to be hunky-dory the day after the election. There has to be a lot of coalition building, work on the constitution—and they’re going to have to do it fast. They’re burning up reserves and the patience of the people. This revolution did not start as an Islamic revolution. It started as a generational revolution of young people who want jobs, who want a future, who want a different Egypt. Anyone who forgets that is begging for a redux of Tahrir Square and further confrontation.

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43. Whither Political Islam?

By Trudy Rubin, Inquirer
Opinion Columnist

The presidential candidates confronted each other in front of the TV cameras for four hours on Thursday, with only two breaks of about 30 minutes. They argued about security, the economy, education — and the role of sharia law.

The location was Cairo. The more secular candidate, former diplomat Amr Moussa, accused his opponent of being an Islamist hard-liner in moderate’s clothing. The Islamist, former Muslim Brotherhood leader Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, accused Moussa of complicity in the former Hosni Mubarak regime.

This was the first ever such presidential debate in the Arab region, closely watched by a majority of Egyptians. Politics has come to Egypt big time, but, in a country with no reliable polls, no one is certain which of 13 candidates will win in the first round in late May. Probably it will be an Islamist.

I’m traveling to Cairo today to watch this crucial country’s effort to mesh democracy and Islam. Then I’ll head for Lebanon, a gathering place for Syrian activists trying to unseat dictator Bashar al Assad. Assad has rejected political reforms and stiffed a U.N. mediation effort. He has provoked a civil war that is now attracting Arab jihadis who seek a new cause, including remnants of AQI (al-Qaeda in Iraq).

In neither Egypt nor Syria is a worst-case scenario preordained, but it’s hard to be optimistic. The Middle East has taken on a revolutionary momentum that makes predictions very risky.

But — in an effort to get some clues about what to expect in the near term — I’ll be looking at the prospects for an Egypt or Syria ruled by adherents of political Islam.

The television debate in Cairo homed in on these questions. In the secularist corner was Amr Moussa. He looks likely to split the non-Islamist vote with Ahmed Shafiq, the last prime minister under Mubarak. That opens the door for an Islamist president.

But Islamists come in many flavors, with different understandings of the meaning of pluralism and democracy. The Muslim Brotherhood, which advocates a gradual path toward Islamic rule, had been favored, having won 47 percent of the seats in parliamentary elections.

Some analysts compare their FJP (Freedom and Justice Party) to the Turkish ruling party, which has Islamic roots. But when Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayip Erdogan visited Cairo, and promoted the concept of a secular state with religious values, Brotherhood leaders publicly rejected this out of hand.

The FJP’s most charismatic candidate was disqualified for technical reasons, and the popularity of the fallback candidate, the more bland Mohammed Morsi, seems to be sinking. The Brotherhood’s vaunted organizational skills mean that Morsi can’t be counted out, but Egyptian analysts are downplaying his chances.

That has pushed the other TV debater, Aboul Fotouh, into the position of Islamist front-runner. He is considered a “moderate” Islamist, having been kicked out of the Muslim Brotherhood last year. Some liberals have endorsed him; so has the ultraconservative Salafist al-Nour Party, which won 27 percent of the parliamentary seats; its own presidential candidate was also disqualified.

This leads Aboul Fotouh to offer himself as someone who can appeal across Egyptian society — from the traditionally religious countryside to the educated urbanites who value individual freedoms. When I interviewed him in November, in Cairo, he stressed that he endorsed full rights for women

(his two daughters are doctors) and for Christians.

Last week, he insisted during the TV debate: “There’s no contradiction between religion and citizenship, or religion and the constitution, or religion and the state.”

Yet Moussa raised the point that resonates with more secular Egyptians, especially women, and with Coptic Christians: Can the Islamists be trusted? He alleged that Aboul Fotouh was “a Salafi with Salafis, a centrist with centrists, and he’s a liberal with liberals.”

The uncertainty about Islamist social — and economic — goals has led Egypt into a dangerous economic paralysis, as businessmen shift money out of Egypt and tourists stop coming. Nor is it clear how the Egyptian military — still the power behind the scenes — would react to an Islamist president.

Questions about “Whither political Islam?” also hover over the future of Syria. An uprising that was begun by the urban, secular Syrian middle class has morphed into a civil war under harsh military repression by the Assad regime.

As the violence continues, Salafi fighters gain more traction inside Syria, while Muslim Brotherhood members play a key role in the exile leadership outside the country. Assad’s resistance to change guarantees that the conflict becomes more violent; the longer it continues, the more it will become a magnet for Muslim jihadis from other countries.

So, both in Cairo and Beirut, I will be looking at the likely prospects for the spread of political Islam, what that will mean, and whether any shift in U.S. policy can affect this. (Syrians in the opposition argue that the United States must help the opposition overthrow

Assad sooner rather than later, if it doesn't want their country to deteriorate into an Iraq-like situation of chaos.)

This trip will be a far more grim voyage than my visits to Cairo during the heady days when the Egyptian revolution was young.

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Pg. SR1

News Analysis

44. Is There A Romney Doctrine?

By David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON--

DURING the Republican primary debates in January, when Mitt Romney was still trying to outmaneuver the challengers who were questioning his conservative bona fides, he made a declaration about Afghanistan that led a faction of his foreign policy advisers to shake their heads in wonderment.

"We should not negotiate with the Taliban," the former Massachusetts governor declared, just as diplomats dispatched by the president were in Qatar trying to get those negotiations going. "We should defeat the Taliban." In case anyone missed his meaning, he drove home the point, saying the best strategy was, "We go anywhere they are and we kill them."

Set aside for the moment that many of Mr. Romney's supporters and foreign policy advisers argue that after a decade at war, the only option is a political settlement, which means talking to some elements of the Taliban. Stephen Hadley, the former national security adviser to George W. Bush, has argued this "would not — as some have suggested — constitute 'surrender' to America's enemies." A co-chairman of Mr. Romney's

working group on Afghanistan and Pakistan, James Shinn, who also served Mr. Bush, was co-author of perhaps the best single unclassified document on the complexities of those negotiations, entitled "Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer." It argued that a negotiated deal would "obviously be desirable" if elements of the Taliban could be persuaded to renounce violence and take "some role in Afghan governance short of total control."

It was just one example of what Mr. Romney's advisers call a perplexing pattern: Dozens of subtle position papers flow through the candidate's policy shop and yet seem to have little influence on Mr. Romney's hawkish-sounding pronouncements, on everything from war to nuclear proliferation to the trade-offs in dealing with China. In the Afghanistan case, "none of us could quite figure out what he was advocating," one of Mr. Romney's advisers said. He insisted on anonymity — as did a half-dozen others interviewed over the past two weeks — because the Romney campaign has banned any discussion of the process by which the candidate formulates his positions.

"It begged the obvious question," the adviser added. "Do we stay another decade? How many forces, and how long, does that take? Do we really want to go into the general election telling Americans that we should stay a few more years to eradicate the whole Taliban movement?" In phase one of a long presidential campaign, Mr. Romney could duck those questions: the spotlight moved to the wisdom of the economic stimulus and the auto-industry bailout, contraception and, now, same-sex marriage and high school bullying.

But in the long stretch before the Republican convention in August, the battle for Mr. Romney's mind on the key foreign policy questions that have defined the past few decades will have to be joined: When is a threat to America so urgent that the United States should intervene unilaterally? Is it worth the cost and casualties to rebuild broken societies? Should America feel it must always be in the lead — as Mr. Romney seems to argue — or let other powers play that role when their interests are more directly affected?

On these questions, Mr. Romney's own advisers, judging by their public writing and comments, possess widely differing views — often a result of the scar tissue they developed in Iraq, Afghanistan and other Bush-era experiments in the exercise of American power. But what has struck both his advisers and outside Republicans is that in his effort to secure the nomination, Mr. Romney's public comments have usually rejected mainstream Republican orthodoxy. They sound more like the talking points of the neoconservatives — the "Bolton faction," as insiders call the group led by John Bolton, the former ambassador to the United Nations. In a stormy tenure in the Bush administration, Mr. Bolton was often arguing that international institutions, the United Nations included, should be routed around because they so often frustrate American interests.

Curiously for a Republican candidate with virtually no foreign policy record, Mr. Romney has made little effort to court the old-timers of Republican internationalism, from the former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft to the former

secretaries of state James A. Baker III, George P. Shultz and even the grandmaster of realism, Henry A. Kissinger. And in seeking to define himself in opposition to President Obama, Mr. Romney has openly rejected positions that George W. Bush came around to in his humbler second term.

This may change as the arrival of the general election requires Mr. Romney to grapple with the question of how to attack a Democratic president whose affection for unilateral use of force — from drones over Pakistan and Yemen to a far greater role for the Special Operations command — has immunized him a bit from the traditional claim that Democrats can't stand the sight of hard power. So far Mr. Romney's most nuanced line of attack was laid out in the introduction to a campaign white paper last fall written by Eliot Cohen, a historian and security expert who worked for Condoleezza Rice in the State Department, that the "high council of the Obama administration" views the "United States as a power in decline," a "condition that can and should be managed for the global good rather than reversed." It also alleged a "torrent of criticism, unprecedented for an American president, that Barack Obama has directed at his own country."

But in a campaign likely to be dominated by a slow-burning nuclear crisis with Iran, the likelihood of a North Korean nuclear test, the kind of eruptions with China that have dominated headlines for the past two weeks and the end of the surge in Afghanistan come September, the internal struggles between the various factions within the Romney campaign are likely to become evident.

Iran may be a first test. Mr. Romney put it pretty bluntly, in another line that caused some of his advisers to cringe and others to celebrate, when he declared late in 2011: "If we re-elect Barack Obama, Iran will have a nuclear weapon. If you elect me as president, Iran will not have a nuclear weapon."

BUT when pressed on how, exactly, his strategy would differ from Mr. Obama's, Mr. Romney had a hard time responding. The economic sanctions Mr. Obama has imposed have been far more crippling to the Iranian economy than anything President Bush did between the public revelation of Iran's nuclear enrichment facilities in 2003 and the end of Mr. Bush's term in early 2009. Covert action has been stepped up, too. Mr. Bolton has called efforts to negotiate with Iran "delusional," but other advisers — mostly those who dealt with the issue during the Bush administration — say they are a critical step in holding together the European allies and, if conflict looms, proving to Russia and China that every effort was made to come to a peaceful resolution. Several e-mails to the campaign asking for Mr. Romney's position on the talks yielded no response.

"There are two very different worldviews in this campaign," said one adviser who aligns more often with Mr. Bolton. "But as in any campaign, there are outer circles, inner circles and inner-inner circles, and I'm not sure that anyone knows if the candidate has a strong view of his own on this." Another adviser, saying he would be "cashiered" if the campaign caught him talking to a reporter without approval, said the real answer was that "Romney doesn't want to really engage these issues until he is in office"

and for now was "just happy to leave the impression that when Obama says he'll stop an Iranian bomb he doesn't mean it, and Mitt does."

On some issues, Mr. Romney clearly does have his own views: He drafted an op-ed opposing the ratification of the New Start treaty with Russia, which cut in half the two countries' nuclear launchers but left huge stockpiles of non-deployed nuclear weapons largely untouched — without much input from his staff. In recent days, Mr. Romney's advisers argued that the candidate's declaration that Russia is "our No. 1 geopolitical foe" looks less out of touch now that President Vladimir V. Putin reclaimed his office with a brutal crackdown on dissent. Mr. Romney's best line: He will "reset the reset."

More complicated for Mr. Romney, given his business credentials, is his position on China. He argues for more arms to Taiwan and much tougher use of trade sanctions to respond to China's currency and market manipulations.

In the past, such actions have frozen Chinese cooperation with the United States, but, the white paper insists, "Romney will work to persuade China to commit to North Korea's disarmament," as if the last three presidents have not.

Such trade-offs are, of course, a bit too subtle for any presidential campaign. Yet so far this year Mr. Romney has spent little time on foreign policy, understandable given the length of the primary battles. The Romney strategy for now may simply be to portray Mr. Obama as a weak apologizer and figure out the details later.

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and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power."

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45. Harming The Troops

Republican lawmakers love to say they are protective of religious freedom and supportive of the military. Last week, Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee passed two measures that undermine both in an effort to deny equal rights to gay men and lesbians.

It was particularly disturbing to see this implacable campaign of intolerance at work during a week in which President Obama announced his support for the expansion of the right to marry to all Americans.

Just hours after Mr. Obama tried to lead the nation forward, the House Armed Services Committee was turning the clock back. On a 37-to-24 party-line vote, the committee approved an amendment to the annual military budget bill that would bar the use of a "military installation or other property owned or rented by, or otherwise under the jurisdiction or control of the Department of Defense" for a same-sex marriage or "marriage-like ceremony."

This measure is a flagrant violation of the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of religion — a right that conservatives champion when it suits their political agenda. If, for example, a Navy chaplain wanted to perform a same-sex wedding, he would be prohibited from doing so in his chapel — even if it is in a state that recognizes same-sex marriages.

Supporters of this measure call it a "conscience protection"

and claim to be shielding chaplains from being compelled to perform weddings between two men or two women. There is no merit to the argument; military policy already says that cannot happen.

Military policy says private ceremonies on military bases cannot be restricted on the basis of sexual orientation, but it permits the use of military property for same-sex weddings only in states where they are legally recognized. That should have erased any concern about states that ban same-sex marriage, but that was not the real motivation for this measure.

It was intended to undermine the law that lifted "don't ask, don't tell," and to interfere with the laws in states that allow same-sex marriage. So much for the supposed ideology of small government that does not meddle with the rights of states.

The other amendment, which passed by a 36-to-25 vote, says the military must accommodate "the conscience and sincerely held moral principles and religious beliefs of the members of the Armed Forces concerning the appropriate and inappropriate expression of human sexuality."

It also says that no officer may "direct, order or require a chaplain to perform any duty" that contradicts his "conscience, moral principles or religious beliefs." Note that this does not say any "religious duty," but merely any duty at all.

The measure is an outrageous interference in the military chain of command. Among other things, it would create a loophole for military chaplains to evade their duty to minister to all soldiers seeking spiritual guidance while in service to their country. It would also invite harassment of gay soldiers

by comrades who might feel empowered by Congress to verbalize their antipathy to them under the cover of supposed moral principles, knowing there would be no consequences.

It could even be used as cover by those refusing to serve with gay soldiers, or even service members in interracial relationships, which, after all, could be considered by some intolerant people as an "inappropriate expression of human sexuality." It certainly has been in the past.

The sponsor of this measure was Representative Todd Akin, a Missouri Republican who is competing in a three-way primary to run against the state's incumbent Democratic senator, Claire McCaskill, in the fall.

Mr. Obama said his support for same-sex marriage was motivated in part by his recognition of the injustice of not recognizing the right of gay soldiers, airmen, Marines or sailors fighting for their country to marry the people they love. It is sad that Mr. Akin and his colleagues share no similar feeling.

The Senate needs to strip the two offensive amendments from the final bill.