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New York Times  
October 23, 2008

## **From Beirut to 9/11**

By ROBERT C. McFARLANE

IN the summer of 1983, I became President Ronald Reagan's special representative to the Middle East, with the mission of restoring a measure of calm to Israel's relations with her neighbors, starting with Lebanon. At the time, Lebanon was occupied by Syrian and Israeli forces — Syria since shortly after Lebanon's civil war began in 1975, and Israel since its invasion in June of the previous year.

Scarcely three months into that assignment, however, I was recalled to Washington and named the president's national security adviser. Just after midnight on Friday, Oct. 21, I was awakened by a call from Vice President George H. W. Bush, who reported that several East Caribbean states had asked the United States to send forces to the Caribbean island of Grenada to prevent the Soviet Union and Cuba from establishing a base there. I called the president and Secretary of State George Shultz, who were on a golfing trip in Augusta, Ga., and received approval to have our forces prepare to land within 72 hours.

Then, less than 24 hours later I was awakened again, this time by the duty officer at the White House situation room, who reported that United States Marine barracks in Lebanon had been attacked by Iranian-trained Hezbollah terrorists with heavy losses. Again, I called the president, and he prepared for an immediate return to Washington to deal with both crises.

Today is the 25th anniversary of that bombing, which killed 241 Americans who were part of a multinational peacekeeping force (a simultaneous attack on the French base killed 58 paratroopers). The attack was planned over several months at Hezbollah's training camp in the Bekaa Valley in central Lebanon. Once American intelligence confirmed who was responsible and where the attack had been planned, President Reagan approved a joint French-American air assault on the camp — only to have the mission aborted just before launching by the secretary of defense, Caspar Weinberger. Four months later, all the marines were withdrawn, capping one of the most tragic and costly policy defeats in the brief modern history of American counterterrorism operations.

One could draw several conclusions from this episode. To me the most telling was the one reached by Middle Eastern terrorists, that the United States had neither the will nor the means to respond effectively to a terrorist attack, a conclusion seemingly borne out by our fecklessness toward terrorist attacks in the 1990s: in 1993 on the World Trade Center; on Air Force troops at Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996; on our embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998; on the destroyer Cole in 2000.

There was no effective response from the United States to any of these. It was not until the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, that our country decided to go to war against radical Islam.

A second conclusion concerns the age-old maxim never to deploy a force without giving it a clear military mission. In 1983, the Marine battalion positioned at the Beirut Airport was assigned the mission of "presence"; that is, to lend moral support to the fragile Lebanese government. Secretary of State Shultz and I urged the president to give the marines their traditional role — to deploy, at the invitation of the Lebanese government, into the mountains alongside the newly established Lebanese Army in an effort to secure the evacuation of Syrian and Israeli forces from Lebanon.

Secretary Weinberger disagreed. He felt strongly that American interests in the Middle East lay primarily in the region's oil, and that to assure access to that oil we ought never to undertake military operations that might result in Muslim casualties and put at risk Muslim goodwill.

Cabinet officers often disagree, and rigorous debate and refinement often lead to better policy. What is intolerable, however, is irresolution. In this case the president allowed the refusal by his secretary of defense to carry out a direct order to go by without comment — an event which could have seemed to Mr. Weinberger only a vindication of his judgment. Faced with the persistent refusal of his secretary of defense to countenance a more active role for the marines, the president withdrew them, sending the terrorists a powerful signal of paralysis within our government and missing an early opportunity to counter the Islamist terrorist threat in its infancy.

Since 9/11 we have learned a lot about the threat from radical Islam and how to defeat it. Our commitment to Iraq is now being vindicated and, if sustained, will enable us to establish an example of pluralism in a Muslim state with a flourishing economy.

First, however, we must win in Afghanistan — truly the decisive battleground in this global struggle. Never has there been a greater need for experience and judgment in the White House. Unless our next president understands the complexity of the challenge as well as what it will take to succeed, and can lead his cabinet and our country in resolute execution of that strategy, we will lose this war.

Robert C. McFarlane was the national security adviser from 1983 to 1985.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/23/opinion/23mcfarlane.html?ref=opinion&pagewanted=print>

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New York Times

October 23, 2008

## **Lebanon's Bloody Sunday**

By RANDY GADDO

I REMEMBER that the morning of Oct. 23, 1983, in Beirut was pleasant and sunny; there was a light breeze, and it was very quiet. Sunday was generally a day of rest. We were usually given an extra ration of sleep and then a treat, omelets, at the barracks mess hall. We had no more omelets after Oct. 23.

I had gotten up early because I had work to do. As a Marine staff sergeant and a photographer, I had been sent to Beirut to document the deployment of the troops that were going to try to bring peace to Lebanon after years of civil war. That morning I had eight rolls of film to develop and print before I helped the rest of my unit waterproof our bunker, a necessity because we were heading into the rainy season. I had set up a makeshift photo lab in the only place we could find running water, a third floor bathroom in the barracks, although I didn't sleep in the building.

At 6 a.m. I was halfway over to the barracks from my tent, and I remember the birds were singing louder than I'd ever heard them, maybe because for a change there was no distant sound of artillery in the mountains. I decided I needed a cup of coffee before I went to work, so I turned back to the combat operations center and got a cup and sat down at my little field desk to plan my day.

About 20 minutes later I heard two or three shots from an M-16. Before I had time to wonder, I felt a hot rush of air on my face, like a blast furnace. Then I heard and felt a thunderous thud and was lifted up and tossed back several feet like a rag doll.

I was dazed, but fortunately I had my helmet and flak jacket on, and they absorbed a lot of the shock wave. My first thought was that a rocket or artillery round must have hit close by, so I went outside expecting to see a smoldering hole outside the tent. What I did see is something I'll never forget.

Over in the direction of the barracks, where I'd been headed 20 minutes earlier, I saw a mushroom cloud rising several hundred feet in the air. I took off running toward it, and I remember that as I rounded a corner of a building I

saw that all the leaves had been stripped from every tree and bush in sight. I saw the cover of an ammo can embedded in the trunk of one tree.

Then, when I reached a spot where normally I would have seen the barracks, I saw the control tower of the Beirut International Airport, which was next to our camp. I stopped dead in my tracks — this simply wasn't what I was supposed to be seeing. Then things went into slow motion for a while. A heavy gray dust was drifting down, covering everything like a thick blanket. As my brain started engaging again, I focused and began to see things, human things that snapped me back to reality because, without going into gruesome detail, it was obvious many men had died.

I ran back to the combat operations center to report what I'd seen and get help. I saw my boss, Maj. Bob Jordan, our public affairs officer, covered with dust and looking dazed because he'd been blown out of his rack too. I said — or probably yelled, I don't recall — “The barracks is gone!”

Now, those words in Beirut in 1983 were as impossible to comprehend as the words “the twin towers are gone” were before 9/11. The barracks was a fortress with two-foot-thick reinforced concrete walls. It had served as a headquarters for Israeli troops; it had withstood artillery and heavy naval gunfire with barely a scratch. Yet it was gone. And with it, some 220 marines, 18 sailors and 3 soldiers died. Hundreds more were injured.

Five years ago, at the 20th anniversary remembrance of the bombing at the Beirut Memorial in Jacksonville, N.C., I met one of the many American children who were left fatherless that day. She had been a baby when the terrorists had killed her father, a Marine captain. She had come to find out about her father from the men who had served with him. Her father had written her many letters from Beirut; she had one with her and let me read it.

He had written it in September 1983. In it, he told her that people back home would question why the United States was involved in Beirut and why it was important to let the people there gain their freedom. He told her that it was far better to confront the terrorist enemy there where they lived rather than have to fight them 20 years later in the United States.

It turns out he was right about everything but the time frame — it took only 18 years for the war to come to America. Had we stood our ground 25 years ago instead of pulling out after the bombing, it is possible that 9/11 would not have happened. Likewise, anyone who thinks we can pull back into a shell now and hope terrorism will go away simply isn't looking at the lessons history offers.

People ask if we are accomplishing anything in Iraq and Afghanistan. I say yes. Terrorists no longer have a safe haven in Afghanistan. If we pull out of Iraq before the time is right, guess who moves in: Iran. The same Iran that trained the Hezbollah bombers who killed 241 of my comrades on that October morning in Beirut. Do we want to look back 25 years from now and regret not having stayed the course again?

Randy Gaddo is the director of Parks, Recreation and Library Services for Peachtree City, Ga.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/23/opinion/23gaddo.html?ref=opinion&pagewanted=print>

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Wall Street Journal  
OCTOBER 23, 2008

## **From the Beirut Bombing to 9/11**

Liberal assaults on the executive branch have made us vulnerable.

By ROBERT F. TURNER

Twenty-five years ago today a terrorist truck bomb in Beirut, Lebanon, killed 241 Marines, sailors and soldiers, and wounded more than 100 others. Had it not been for crass political partisanship, and efforts by Sen. Joe Biden and other congressional liberals to usurp the constitutional powers of the president, the loss of life in Beirut may have been avoided. In part because it did, Osama bin Laden concluded that America could not accept casualties and

ordered the 9/11 attacks. Similar congressional usurpation of presidential power over foreign intelligence played an important role in guaranteeing the success of those attacks.

This story goes back at least to November 1973, when congressional liberals pushed through the War Powers Resolution -- which claimed congressional control over all use of military force abroad -- overriding a presidential veto. (All seven American presidents since then have shared the view that that statute is unconstitutional.) President Reagan sent the Marines to Beirut as part of a multinational peacekeeping operation that included forces from Great Britain, Italy and France. The purpose was to help maintain peace while the feuding factions tried to negotiate an end to years of strife. Nevertheless, Democrats -- particularly in the Senate -- decided to turn the deployment into a partisan issue in preparation for the 1984 elections. They demanded under the War Powers Resolution to know exactly when the troops would return home.

Gen. P.X. Kelley, the commandant of the Marine Corps, respectfully cautioned the Foreign Relations Committee that a partisan debate about placing time limits on the deployment would encourage hostile forces inimical to the "life and limb of the Marines." Senior Democrats denounced this warning as a "ludicrous argument" designed to "intimidate the Congress and to frighten the American people."

Referring to the assertion that the Senate debate would encourage attacks on Marines, Sen. Biden said, "My response to that is that may be true . . . but until we . . . invoke the War Powers Act," we are always going to be "beaten over the head by every administration that says 60 days is not enough time." In the end, only two Senate Democrats voted on Sept. 29, 1983, to "authorize" the continued deployment. Syrian Foreign Minister Abdel Halim Khaddam announced during the congressional debate that America was "short of breath." And as reported in U.S. News & World Report, American intelligence intercepted a message between two radical Muslim militia groups that read: "If we kill 15 Marines, the rest will leave." At sunrise on the morning of Oct. 23, 1983, a terrorist truck bomb crashed into the Marine Headquarters in Beirut and exploded. Early the following year, the surviving Marines were withdrawn.

During a 1998 interview with an ABC News reporter in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden declared that this withdrawal proved Americans can't accept casualties. It was obviously a consideration in his decision to order the 9/11 terrorist attacks. But the conventional wisdom, that those deadly attacks resulted from "an intelligence failure," doesn't tell the full story.

A major reason we failed to detect the 9/11 attacks in advance was because, beginning in the 1970s, Congress launched a major public attack on the intelligence community. Mr. Biden, for example, was one of 17 senators to vote on Oct. 2, 1974, to make all covert operations (even espionage in some cases) unlawful. In 1986, he bragged in a New Republic interview that he'd personally blocked planned covert operations during the Reagan administration simply by threatening to leak them. (That statement calls to mind John Jay's observation, in Federalist No. 64, that because Congress could not be trusted to keep secrets, the Constitution left the president "able to manage the business of intelligence as prudence might suggest.")

In 1978, Congress continued its intrusion into presidential powers by enacting the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), making it a felony for intelligence professionals to monitor communications between foreign terrorists abroad and individuals within the U.S. without first getting a special warrant. But in a unanimous opinion, the appellate court established by FISA observed that every court to decide the issue had held the president has "inherent authority" under the Constitution "to conduct warrantless searches to obtain foreign intelligence information," adding: "We take for granted that the President does have that authority . . ."

Congress failed to anticipate in FISA the dangers posed by a terrorist like Zacarias Moussaoui -- which is why FBI agents were unable to examine the contents of Moussaoui's laptop computer and perhaps prevent the 9/11 attacks. Michael Hayden, then Director of the National Security Agency (NSA), later expressed his "professional judgment" that had these legal constraints (FISA) not existed "we would have detected some of the 9/11 al Qaeda operatives in the United States" prior to the attacks, and "we would have identified them as such." As we pause today to honor the memory of the 241 brave young Marines who lost their lives in 1983, Americans should vow that political partisanship should never again be permitted to endanger our country and its armed forces. Mr. Turner is a constitutional scholar who served as acting assistant secretary of state for legislative affairs in 1984-85.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122471885255160613.html#printMode>

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Slate.com

Wednesday, Oct. 22, 2008

## Why Do Terrorists Love to Strike Around Elections?

And what can we expect in the coming weeks?

By Daniel Benjamin

According to the "prediction market" of Rasmussen polls, Barack Obama has an 87 percent chance of winning the presidential election. That's a pretty high number, but if there were a prediction market in which people who've worked in counterterrorism would bet on the likelihood that we'll soon be hearing from Osama Bin Laden, the number would almost certainly be even higher.

A surprise could be of the proverbial October variety, or it could come sometime after the election—perhaps within the six months that Joe Biden said would produce a major test of a President Obama. The record clearly shows that jihadists see the run-up to an election and the months just afterward as an opportune time to act.

Everyone remembers the Bin Laden video that was released days before the 2004 presidential election and the Madrid train-station bombings that occurred 72 hours before Spain's national elections in March of that year. When the conservative government of José María Aznar mistakenly attributed the attacks to Basque separatists, the public punished his party, which was felt to be pretending that its unpopular support for the war in Iraq had nothing to do with the attacks. The socialists, led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, had been trailing in the polls, but after the government's blunder, they thumped the conservatives by a five-point margin.

Those are only the best-known jihadist interventions. Alongside them should be added the first bombing of the World Trade Center on Feb. 26, 1993, a little more than a month after Bill Clinton took office, and the attack on the USS Cole on Oct. 12, 2000, three weeks before that year's Bush-Gore matchup. Last year, radicals attempted multiple car bombings in London and Glasgow, Scotland, three days after Gordon Brown's June 27 installation as Britain's prime minister. And let's not forget the murder of Benazir Bhutto while she was campaigning in Pakistan or the September 2004 bombing of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia, which preceded the Australian elections by a month.

What makes elections and transitions so attractive to terrorists? After the October 2004 Bin Laden video was released, I wrote here about jihadists' need to leave their fingerprints on big events. These are the seam moments, the points of inflection in history, and the terrorists want to demonstrate that they are central players in determining outcomes. They especially want to show their Muslim audience that they are having a powerful impact on the world stage and are the global actors they claim to be. Do they try to tilt events to help preferred candidates or parties? There isn't much evidence to support that—and the terrorists seem to have some regard for the law of unintended consequences, so I don't think they believe they can act with sufficient precision to ensure, for example, a victory for McCain or Obama. (The outcome of the 2004 Spanish election was a freak event; no one could have predicted that Aznar's government would have botched its reaction to the bombings.)

That said, jihadist ideology does suggest that even though they despise all U.S. leaders, they know which leader would be better for their cause. There is a thick vein of Leninist thinking running through radical Islamism—Sayyid Qutb explicitly advocated the creation of a revolutionary vanguard of true believers. Another inheritance from Lenin was the notion that a hard-line enemy was better for mobilizing supporters than one who played down animus.

An appreciation for that kind of thinking underlies the argument Joseph Nye made in the Financial Times recently about why al-Qaida would prefer a belligerent McCain to an Obama who has spoken of improving America's standing in the Muslim world and who "would do wonders to restore the soft power that the Bush administration has squandered over the past eight years. That is why Mr Obama is such a threat to Mr bin Laden." Nye accepts the conventional wisdom that anything that turns the discussion to terrorism helps McCain, so in his view, al-Qaida has an extra incentive to act.

He may be right, though another possibility is that anything that reminds voters that Bin Laden is still out there might hurt the heir apparent to a Republican administration that hasn't caught the world's foremost fugitive. It's also worth noting that terrorism is nothing like the concern it was for voters in 2004, when, as Paul Freedman pointed

out, it was probably the decisive issue in George W. Bush's victory over John Kerry. Of course, that could change. But today it would certainly take a lot more than video of the berobed Saudi to do the trick. (There remains a question about whether that tape made any difference in 2004—Kerry believed it did, but the number crunchers at Pew disputed that.) My Brookings Institution colleague and former CIA officer Bruce Riedel makes the interesting suggestion that we may be treated to one of the as-yet-unreleased martyrdom tapes of one of the Sept. 11 attackers. Ghoulish though that would be, it probably wouldn't change many votes.

A video is the most likely piece of electioneering we will see from al-Qaida, but there are two other types of surprise that ought to be considered. The first, of course, is the reverse surprise. While McCain has objected to Obama talking about attacking Pakistani targets, that is precisely what the U.S. military has been doing for months now with helicopter gunship and Predator drone strikes on targets in the tribal areas. There is no reason to think that the United States has gotten the tip it's been awaiting for the last seven years, but we also shouldn't be surprised that so much of the firepower has been focused on the northern regions of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, such as Bajaur, where Bin Laden was thought to be hiding. No doubt Bush would like nothing better than to finally settle that score—according to intelligence sources, there was a major push four years ago as well. Something tells me that the Saudi has figured this out, too.

The last possibility is the one really worth worrying about: a genuine terrorist attack, here or abroad, now or anytime after the election. It is purely speculative to suggest that the odds of an attack are increasing. Al-Qaida and other jihadists seem to be happily occupied, principally with destabilizing Pakistan and eroding security in Afghanistan. But a big trap has opened up, and one has to imagine that the terrorists will want to spring it. In short, there would be a high premium for them to carry out a significant attack soon, because in an election season, or in the early days of a new administration, there would be irresistible political pressure to carry out an obliterating retaliation. The target for that strike would be the terrorists' safe haven in the FATA, and the result would be exactly the kind of widespread Muslim rage at the United States that the terrorists crave. Few today question that Osama Bin Laden ordered the 9/11 attacks because he wanted to draw the United States into a draining war in Afghanistan. To Bin Laden's surprise, the quagmire scenario didn't materialize there, but in Iraq.

With Pakistan already on the verge of a breakdown and anti-Americanism there sky-high, the attraction of igniting a chain of events like this must be tremendous for the jihadists. I'm not suggesting that we shouldn't strike back if a major attack occurs; great nations don't leave their dead unanswered, though it should go without saying that it's as vital as ever to be discriminate when using force. Still, if the bomber gets through this time, the consequences are likely to be devastating.

Daniel Benjamin is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. He served as director for counterterrorism on the National Security Council staff in 1998-99 and is the co-author of the *The Age of Sacred Terror* and *The Next Attack*.

<http://www.slate.com/id/2202875/>

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The Daily Star (Lebanon)

October 23, 2008

## **Al-Qaeda is Watching the US Election**

By Hady Amr and Ariel Kastner

Most of us are well aware that we Americans are not the only ones caught up in this year's presidential election. The nature of the race, having an African-American and a woman on the major parties' tickets, alongside two wars and an economic crisis of historic proportions, has proven captivating to people throughout the world.

But while our friends across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia are watching the race closely, America's enemies are also watching from the mountain villages where Osama bin Laden's followers are hiding out. Al-Qaeda is following the race intensely because fear and destruction are the principal aims of terrorist groups. It is fear and the resulting chaos on which terrorist groups feed.

The fog following a terrorist attack is thick, and it often leads many to support decisions that may not advance America's security interests. Worse, these decisions often play into the hands of the terrorists who attacked us by increasing their popularity.

Examples of this abound, but the US invasion of Iraq in the wake of 9/11 is perhaps the most pronounced example. The war, the administration's use of torture on captured prisoners, and its disregard for international treaties were fodder for Al-Qaeda. As world opinion of the United States sank, recruiting people became easier.

It is this climate that Al-Qaeda looks to create - a climate that is borne of fear and results in American actions that serve Al-Qaeda's own interests. To strike the greatest amount of fear in civilians, terrorist groups wait to act until an event or time period that will amplify their attack. The tail end of a presidential campaign is one such opportunity.

While this campaign has been the longest in American history, a significant number of Americans are only now deciding on their choice. It is these final weeks of the political campaign that find Americans closely attuned to news and the statements of the candidates.

For this reason, what happens between now until Election Day can have a greater impact on public opinion than during any other period in the campaign.

It was no coincidence that on October 29, 2004 - the final days of the John Kerry and George W. Bush presidential campaign - bin Laden released a video message saying Al-Qaeda was intent on attacking the United States. This period was when large numbers of Americans were watching the news.

The same tactic, with deadlier results, was used earlier that year in Spain, when terrorists attacked Madrid trains only days before that country's elections.

Al-Qaeda may likely look to exploit this year's election by releasing a video message from bin Laden or his deputy Ayman Zawahri, or worse, staging an attack - something some have called an "October surprise."

So what should be done?

The greatest threat to groups like Al-Qaeda is not just vigilance at our borders, ports, and high-risk targets; it is also rational, targeted policies that undermine their recruiting capabilities.

Ending torture, closing Guantanamo Bay, actively engaging in the Middle East peace process, and reaching out to allies are ways the United States can drain the swamp from which Al-Qaeda attracts its members. In short, restoring our standing in the world is a linchpin of US national security.

While this sounds reasonable, and perhaps many Americans agree with it, opinions often change within a climate of fear. The candidate who responds louder, or the one who promises an abundance of military strikes can become most appealing. Some argue this happened in 2004.

Americans should make their decision about whom they want to be the president of the United States by judging which candidate can implement strong policies that address the terrorist threat - policies that not only maintain our military and counter-intelligence vigilance, but also include negotiations, diplomacy, and the end of torture.

This would end a contradiction in American values and undermine - at least partially - the ability of terrorist groups to advance their recruiting.

Hady Amr is the director of the Brookings Doha Center. Ariel Kastner is a research analyst at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy. They wrote this commentary for THE DAILY STAR.

[http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_id=10&categ\\_id=5&article\\_id=97024](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=5&article_id=97024)

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## **On Al-Qaeda Web Sites, Joy Over U.S. Crisis, Support For McCain**

By Joby Warrick and Karen DeYoung, Washington Post Staff Writers

Al-Qaeda is watching the U.S. stock market's downward slide with something akin to jubilation, with its leaders hailing the financial crisis as a vindication of its strategy of crippling America's economy through endless, costly foreign wars against Islamist insurgents.

And at least some of its supporters think Sen. John McCain is the presidential candidate best suited to continue that trend.

"Al-Qaeda will have to support McCain in the coming election," said a commentary posted Monday on the extremist Web site al-Hesbah, which is closely linked to the terrorist group. It said the Arizona Republican would continue the "failing march of his predecessor," President Bush.

The Web commentary was one of several posted by Taliban or al-Qaeda-allied groups in recent days that trumpeted the global financial crisis and predicted further decline for the United States and other Western powers. In language that was by turns mocking and ominous, the newest posting credited al-Qaeda with having lured Washington into a trap that had "exhausted its resources and bankrupted its economy." It further suggested that a terrorist strike might swing the election to McCain and guarantee an expansion of U.S. military commitments in the Islamic world.

"It will push the Americans deliberately to vote for McCain so that he takes revenge for them against al-Qaeda," said the posting, attributed to Muhammad Haafid, a longtime contributor to the password-protected site. "Al-Qaeda then will succeed in exhausting America."

It was unclear how closely the commentary reflected the views of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, who has not issued a public statement since the spring. Some terrorism experts said the support for McCain could be mere bluster by a group that may have more to fear from a McCain presidency. In any event, the comments summarized what has emerged as a consensus view on extremist sites, said Adam Raisman, a senior analyst for the Site Intelligence Group, which monitors Islamist Web pages. Site provided translations of the comments to The Washington Post.

"The idea in the jihadist forums is that McCain would be a faithful 'son of Bush' -- someone they see as a jingoist and a war hawk," Raisman said. "They think that, to succeed in a war of attrition, they need a leader in Washington like McCain."

Islamist militants have generally had less to say about Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois. Leaders of the Iranian-backed group Hezbollah expressed a favorable view of Obama during the primary campaign but later rejected the Democrat after he delivered speeches expressing support for Israel.

In an e-mail response, senior McCain foreign policy adviser Randy Scheunemann noted that al-Qaeda leaders have repeatedly said that America "did not have the stomach to fight them over the long haul," which the Arizona senator has pledged to do. "Whatever musings and bravado on radical websites the Washington Post chooses to quote, the fact remains that only John McCain has the experience, judgment and fortitude to lead a country at war," he said. The Obama campaign declined to comment on the Web postings.

Both the Bush administration and the two major presidential campaigns have rejected any suggestion that the economic downturn will undermine the country's fight against al-Qaeda. Obama and McCain have stepped gingerly around the issue of how they would adjust their priorities in a recession and have spoken of the importance of maintaining a strong defense. Both have advocated expanding the size of the U.S. military overall, but neither has explained in detail how to pay for it.

From shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, al-Qaeda attacks to last year, U.S. defense spending rose from 3 to 4 percent of gross domestic product, but it remains far below the 45-year average of 5.5 percent. The Pentagon's budget for fiscal 2009 is \$527 billion, a figure that does not include Iraq and Afghanistan war costs, which have totaled more than \$800 billion since 2001.

"History shows us that nations that are strong militarily over time have to have a strong economy," McCain said this month. He has said the United States must send more troops to Afghanistan while avoiding a withdrawal timetable from Iraq.

Obama has tied an Iraq withdrawal to increased forces in Afghanistan and the ability to fund domestic programs. The continued fight in Iraq "means we can't provide health care to people who need it," Obama said in his first debate with McCain.

"Nobody is talking about losing this war," Obama said of Iraq. "What we are talking about is recognizing that the next president has to have broader strategic vision."

It is not the first time al-Qaeda and its allies have weighed in on a Western election. Bin Laden released a video message Oct. 29, 2004, days before the U.S. presidential election, warning of plans for further attacks on U.S. targets. Some strategists for Sen. John F. Kerry (Mass.), the Democratic nominee, have said the timing of the message tipped the balance toward Bush, who defined himself as the anti-terrorism candidate.

The deadly train bombings in Spain that year were seen as an attempt by al-Qaeda to bring down then-Prime Minister José María Aznar, who had sent troops to Iraq. Aznar lost his reelection bid three days after the bombing.

Recent polls suggest that Iraq and terrorism are less important to most Americans than the economy. Still, terrorism experts have warned that al-Qaeda may indeed launch a major strike before the U.S. election or shortly afterward.

"The idea of testing a new president or hitting us when we're off-balance is enormously attractive to them," said Bruce Hoffman, a Georgetown University terrorism expert.

*Staff researchers Madonna Lebling and Julie Tate contributed to this report.*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/21/AR2008102102477.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

GovExec.com/National Journal  
October 20, 2008  
Washington Times

## **Terror Websites Downed in Suspected Cyber Counter-Strike**

By Pete Swabey, [pswabey@information-age.com](mailto:pswabey@information-age.com)  
Wednesday, 22nd October 2008

Three websites linked to al-Qaeda have disappeared from the web leading experts to conclude that a state-backed cyber-attack has taken place, according to a report from the Guardian newspaper.

The sites – named al-Ekhlal, al-Buraq and al-Firdaws – are all linked to an organisation called al Fajr, which the newspaper describes as ‘the media distribution arm of al-Qaeda’.

The reason why government involvement is suspected is that a fourth similar site, al-Hesbah, remains intact. That site is known to have been infiltrated by Saudi intelligence officers to spy on suspected terrorists.

"I think it's probably being orchestrated by several governments," William McCants, a military security consultant told The Guardian. "Whoever is doing this knows what they are doing. They are being surgically precise."

"I think the Americans are behind this," the report quotes another expert as saying.

Others, however, questioned why the US and its allies would attack the sites now in particular. Some argued it could simply be a technical fault that the organisations behind the site were too embarrassed to admit.

The significance of online media in terrorism is not trivial. Young men and women that might be dissuaded from drastic action by friends and family can find an online community of fellow dissidents who can encourage and

support them in acts of terrorism.

Last month, the head of US' Homeland Security subcommittee told reporters that he country was building a cyber-defence force to combat online national security threats.

"The best defence is a good offence, and an offensive [cyber-war] capability is essential to our national defence," Jim Langevin said.

<http://www.information-age.com/home/information-age-today/745786/terror-websites-downed-in-suspected-cyber-counterstrike.shtml>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

## **Expert Says Nuclear Terrorism is Not a Major Threat**

By James Kitfield

Seven years after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, experts and presidential candidates continue to put nuclear terrorism atop their lists of the gravest threats to the United States. Yet Brian Michael Jenkins, a longtime terrorism expert with the Rand Corp., says that the threat lies more in the realms of Hollywood dramas and terrorist dreams than in reality. There has never been an act of nuclear terrorism, he notes, yet the threat is so potentially catastrophic that it incites fear -- and that fear fulfills a terrorist's primary goal. National Journal Staff Correspondent James Kitfield interviewed Jenkins about his research into nuclear terrorism for his new book, *Will Terrorists Go Nuclear?* Edited excerpts from the interview follow.

NJ: Why did you decide to delve so deeply into the psychological underpinnings of nuclear terror?

Jenkins: Well, I couldn't write about the history of nuclear terrorism, because at least as of yet there hasn't been any. So that would have been a very short book. Nonetheless, the U.S. government has stated that it is the No. 1 threat to the national security of the United States. In fact, according to public opinion polls, two out of five Americans consider it likely that a terrorist will detonate a nuclear bomb in an American city within the next five years. That struck me as an astonishing level of apprehension.

NJ: To what do you attribute that fear?

Jenkins: I concluded that there is a difference between nuclear terrorism and nuclear terror. Nuclear terrorism is about the possibility that terrorists will acquire and detonate a nuclear weapon. Nuclear terror, on the other hand, concerns our anticipation of such an attack. It's about our imagination. And while there is no history of nuclear terrorism, there is a rich history of nuclear terror. It's deeply embedded in our popular culture and in policy-making circles.

NJ: So the fear of nuclear terrorism is not new?

Jenkins: Almost as soon as the people involved in the Manhattan Project tested an actual atomic bomb they started to wonder about the possibility of someone using it for terrorist purposes. In the 1970s, some talented nuclear weapons designers studied the issue of whether someone outside of a government program could possibly design and build a workable nuclear weapon. They concluded it was possible, and then postulated who might do such a thing -- terrorists! So, in a way, the threat preceded any terrorist actually thinking about the issue. To a certain extent, we educated the terrorists on the subject.

NJ: Hasn't Al Qaeda, in particular, focused considerable energy on nuclear weapons?

Jenkins: Yes, because terror is the use of violence to create an atmosphere of fear that causes people to exaggerate the strength of the terrorists, and they are very good at that. So in Al Qaeda's media jihad there is a recurrent theme of nuclear terrorism. They realize that if they put the words "terrorism" and "nuclear" in proximity to each other it creates added fear. It also excites their constituency, because nothing excites the powerless more than the idea of ultimate power.

NJ: Are you saying that Al Qaeda is interested in nuclear weapons only in the abstract, as a propaganda tool?

Jenkins: No. Al Qaeda has actual nuclear ambitions, there is no doubt about that. When Osama bin Laden was in Sudan, he tried to acquire some nuclear material. The efforts were mostly amateurish, and Al Qaeda was the victim of some scams. Qaeda [leaders] also had meetings with some Pakistani nuclear scientists while in Afghanistan. So, clearly, they were thinking about nuclear weapons. If bin Laden were able to acquire a nuclear weapon, I also suspect that he would use it. My larger point is that Al Qaeda has already become the world's first nonstate nuclear power without even having nuclear weapons.

NJ: Do you mean by its ability to incite fear of nuclear terrorism?

Jenkins: Yes, and we contribute to that fear. The message clearly coming out of Washington for the last seven years has been a relentless message of fear. We've spent the years since 9/11 discussing every conceivable vulnerability of our society. We talk about the next catastrophic attack not as a matter of "if" but "when," implying that it's unavoidable.

NJ: We've created a perfect incubator for terrorist propaganda?

Jenkins: Yes, because the whole dynamic lends itself to sensationalism and overdramatization. In a sense, terrorism is a form of theater anyway, and its message is amplified in America's media-drenched society. I've actually had government officials say to me, "We'll deal with nuclear terrorism the way Jack Bauer does on 24." And I have to remind them that, you know, that's a television show. It's not real life.

NJ: Why do you think nuclear terrorism connects so powerfully with the American psyche?

Jenkins: Because beneath the veneer of our American optimism are layers of anxiety. We as a nation have been fascinated with the theme of decline and doom going back centuries. We worry about losing our pre-eminent place in the world. We worry that our borders cannot protect our culture [against threats] from without, and [we worry] about subversion from within. If you want to write a best-seller, just write a book [such as] *The End of Days* or *The Late, Great Planet Earth*. For the many biblical literalists among us, talk of a nuclear apocalypse and Armageddon just confirms their faith. As the ultimate doomsday scenario, nuclear terrorism condenses a lot of the free-floating anxieties in American society.

NJ: How do you break this chain reaction of fear?

Jenkins: The first thing we have to do is truly understand the threat. Nuclear terrorism is a frightening possibility but it is not inevitable or imminent, and there is no logical progression from truck bombs to nuclear bombs. Some of the steps necessary to a sustainable strategy we've already begun. We do need better intelligence-sharing internationally and enhanced homeland security and civil defense, and we need to secure stockpiles of nuclear materials around the world.

Nations that might consider abetting terrorists in acquiring nuclear weapons should also be made aware that we will hold them fully responsible in the event of an attack. We need to finish the job of eliminating Al Qaeda, not only to prevent another attack but also to send the message to others that if you go down this path, we will hunt you down relentlessly and destroy you.

NJ: What should political leaders tell the American people?

Jenkins: Rather than telling Americans constantly to be very afraid, we should stress that even an event of nuclear terrorism will not bring this Republic to its knees. Some will argue that fear is useful in galvanizing people and concentrating their minds on this threat, but fear is not free. It creates its own orthodoxy and demands obedience to it. A frightened population is intolerant. It trumpets a kind of "lapel pin" patriotism rather than the real thing. A frightened population is also prone both to paralysis -- we're doomed! -- and to dangerous overreaction. I believe that fear gets in the way of addressing the issue of nuclear terrorism in a sustained and sensible way. Instead of spreading fear, our leaders should speak to the American traditions of courage, self-reliance, and resiliency. Heaven forbid that an act of nuclear terrorism ever actually occurs, but if it does, we'll get through it.

NJ: Seven years after the 9/11 attacks, how do you rate the effort to destroy Al Qaeda?

Jenkins: On the negative side of the ledger is the fact that Al Qaeda's top leadership is still intact. The organization has managed to reconstitute itself and find sanctuary inside Pakistan. [Qaeda leaders] remain committed to large-scale acts of violence, and their narrative still has considerable traction with angry young Muslim men, whether in Karachi, Cairo, London, or Paris. Their communications have increased in volume and are increasingly sophisticated.

NJ: What about the positive side of the ledger?

Jenkins: There is no doubt that we have significantly degraded Al Qaeda's operational capability. The leadership is in hiding and on the run, and we've removed some key figures whose talent is not easily replaced. It's much more dangerous and risky for Al Qaeda to operate now. Through an unprecedented level of cooperation among intelligence and law enforcement agencies around the world, we have significantly reduced [its] ability to execute large-scale attacks of the like we saw regularly in the period between 2001 and 2006. The inability to pull off those large terrorist spectacles that acted as recruiting posters, in turn, has slowed the flow of new recruits. Al Qaeda's indiscriminate violence has also provoked a backlash in the Muslim community, putting [it] on the defensive in places such as Iraq.

NJ: What do you consider Al Qaeda's greatest vulnerability?

Jenkins: Irrelevancy. As the world moves on to new issues, these virtual jihadists are locked into a closed-loop discourse on the Internet that is increasingly irrelevant. They are participating in a fantasy. That's the biggest fear of the terrorists: One day Osama bin Laden will issue his 450th proclamation, and no one will really be listening.

[http://www.govexec.com/story\\_page.cfm?articleid=41223&dcn=e\\_hsw](http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=41223&dcn=e_hsw)

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The Guardian (guardian.co.uk)

October 23 2008

## **Is it Really All Over for Al-Qaida?**

Al-Qaida's had its chips. In Iraq, Sunni Muslims, the very people the group says it fights for, kicked its fighters out of their neighbourhoods. And here, in Britain, al-Qaida has notched up an impressive list of failures. The only place Osama Bin Laden's fighters have a serious presence is Pakistan's tribal areas and Afghanistan. But even there, locals unhappy about the presence of foreign troops do most of the fighting.

If we believe this, a good chunk of taxpayers' money has been well spent. In August, the Guardian reported a counter-terrorism unit set up by the government had been trying to persuade media organisations to tell everyone that al-Qaida was losing support. Now that we know the government was trying to sell us a line, you have to wonder whether recent reporting on the demise of al-Qaida's brand of extremism succumbed to the persuasive power of spin doctoring. Is it really safe to turn our concern towards the credit crunch?

There is now a general feeling among analysts and journalists that al-Qaida has come under pressure from former jihadists and respected Islamic theologians who condemn suicide bombings and the killing of civilians. But the basis of this conclusion is faulty for a number of reasons. Much of the comment on the Islamic ideological backlash against al-Qaida is based upon a treatise written by Sayyid Imam al-Sharif aka Dr Fadl from his prison cell in Egypt. Sharif's work has been hailed as devastating to extremist thinking because he was once the head of an Egyptian terrorist organisation that later joined with al-Qaida. He also wrote a book called the "jihadist Bible". (Shouldn't that be "jihadist Quran?") However, as his former deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri pointed out in an internet posting: is the power cord of Sharif's computer the same one they use for the torture equipment? Which is about the level of credence and time any serious radical I've spoken to gives it.

I spent months with a group of radical (but not violent) young British Muslims earlier this year, at about the same time word first started leaking about Sharif's "new" views. The reaction in the study circles of Walthamstow and

Luton was: "And what?" Not only was the credibility of Sharif's position tainted by the fact he was publishing it from prison, but with a little extra digging it doesn't even seem as if his views were all that new in any case.

The pan-Arabic daily newspaper al-Hayat quoted Sharif's son in a 2004 article saying his father had fallen out with Zawahiri over the use of violence as early as 1992. Other sources say Sharif has already printed the views he repeats from the Egyptian prison in a book he had published in London in the early 1990s. The seriously ideologically inspired violent extremists that the analysts thought would be swayed by Sharif's arguments already know this. Also, pinning so much hope on theology to take the wind out of al-Qaida's sails ignores the situation on the ground. Al-Qaida's audience has changed, and is continuing to change.

In the 1990s, when I was a teenager, you could get yourself to a training camp in Afghanistan from my local mosque. A good couple of my friends thought it would be a great laugh to run around doing target practice but that they'd have to figure out a way of avoiding the religion stuff. The only people into the "religion stuff" were seriously dull, as far as we were concerned. The people who could get you into Afghanistan were accessible, but only the most ideologically zealous, or dense, would want to go. Today, the facilitators are not accessible, but the idea has a whole new cachet of cool. Al-Qaida's image has gained credibility on the country's inner-city streets that wasn't there before 2001.

While researching a Dispatches documentary earlier this year, I met vigilantes who had adopted al-Qaida's twisted version of Islam and twisted it even further to justify violent robbery. They raided drug dealers and off licences while going to war with other gangs because, as they said, "we enjoin the good and forbid the evil". When I asked them how they saw al-Qaida, the responses were: "tough, disciplined, principled" and, my favourite description, "shadow warriors".

These young men, several of whom had converted to Islam, didn't care about the ideology of faraway sheikhs. The violence was the attraction.

If the question is: "Yes, but are narcissistic criminals actually going to join al-Qaida's global jihad?" The answer is, it's already happened. For the documentary, I interviewed one young man who had gone from a life of crime and gangs to a training camp in this country. Also, increasing numbers of those arrested in recent terror cases have histories of drug abuse and criminality.

Something similar is happening abroad too. In Ain Al Helwe, a Palestinian camp in Lebanon, I saw young al-Qaida fighters returning from Iraq brimming with confidence after taking on American troops. It wasn't difficult to see the fear and awe they aroused among the middle-aged men with decrepit AK47s and tatty uniforms who represented defunct secular Palestinian organisations.

Challenging ideology does help. I have met people who have become convinced that violence is not the Islamic way to direct their anger. But there's a growing pool of people who don't care about the intricacies of Islamic ideology. They want to fight because violence for a cause enriches their sense of self.

Solving tomorrow's extremism problem, instead of yesterday's, requires dealing with more fundamental issues than playing with perceptions of religion. The longer the delay, the more extremism is going to spread into criminality, gun crime and gang culture. As that process continues, the treatment will become more costly. But as we've learnt from the government's treatment for the credit crunch, you get what you pay for.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/oct/23/alqaida-terrorism/print>

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Daily Telegraph (Telegraph.co.uk)  
21 October 2008

## **Saudi Arabia Puts 1,000 Al-Qaeda Suspects on Trial**

*Saudi Arabia has put almost 1,000 al-Qaeda suspects on trial for participation in a wave of terror that threatened the stability of the oil-rich kingdom.*

by Damien McElroy, Foreign Affairs Correspondent

The bulk of the attacks took place in 2003-4 and most of the 991 on trial had languished in prison since an official crackdown ended the attacks. The Saudi government made exceptional efforts to avoid the trials, hoping that an official rehabilitation programme would provide an alternative system of justice.

Putting the suspects through the Islamic courts means the accused are liable for the death penalty. Leading princes have expressed concern that multiple executions could revive sympathy for the extremist group.

Saudi Arabia's interior minister said the trial would expose acts that had sullied the reputation of Islam by attaching the label of terrorism to its adherents.

"In the past few years, the kingdom has been the target of an organised terrorist campaign linked to networks of strife and sedition overseas," he said. "This campaign targeted the way of life, economy and principles of Saudi society and sought to create chaos. It has direct links to a deviant group that adopts the (mindset) of al-Qaeda."

In the wake of the 2003 Iraq war, al-Qaeda, which is led by the Saudi -born Osama bin Laden, launched a concerted effort to destabilise his homeland. More than 30 attacks took place in which 164 were killed.

A bomb attack on a residential compound killed 18 in the worst single incident. Frank Gardner, the BBC security correspondent was seriously injured and Simon Cumbers, the cameraman was killed, in one attack.

At the height of the violence, expats fled Riyadh and other cities and those left behind were afraid to go outdoors.

For the first time, the authorities detailed the stockpile of weaponry amassed by the group, including more than 25 tons of high explosives.

The last major terrorist incident was a failed attempt to blow up the Abqaiq oil facility, the world's largest refinery complex, in January 2006.

A panel of 12 judges has been established to conduct the trials but many in the Saudi legal profession have refused to get involved with the proceedings, fearing retribution. Khaled Abu Rashed, a prominent lawyer, told a Saudi newspaper he had refused requests to defend the suspects: "I can say that a number of my colleagues have expressed the same view."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/3233354/Al-Qaeda-trials-launched-in-Saudi-Arabia.html>

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Tehran Times

## **Afghanistan, Pakistan Agree on Co-op in Fighting Terrorism**

Thursday, 23 October 2008

ISLAMABAD (APP) -- Pakistan and Afghanistan on Wednesday agreed to collaborate closely to eliminate the scourge of extremism, militancy and terrorism, with regular contacts on political, military, security and intelligence tracks.

The two sides reached this agreement during the talks held here today between Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Afghan Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta, who paid an official visit to Islamabad on the invitation of his Pakistani counterpart.

According to a joint press release issued at the conclusion Dr. Spanta's visit, the two foreign ministers emphasized that extremism and terrorism posed a common threat to the two countries as well as to the regional and international peace.

During the visit, the Afghan Foreign Minister held talks with his counterpart as well as the President, Speaker National Assembly and the National Security Advisor.

The visit took place in the light of understanding reached between Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani and

President Hamid Karzai during their fruitful meeting in Colombo on August 3, in which the two Foreign Ministers were mandated to prepare a framework of constructive engagement across the board.

The talks were very constructive and took place in a warm and cordial atmosphere characteristic of the brotherly relations between the two countries.

In the talks, the Foreign Ministers discussed a wide range of important subjects pertaining to bilateral cooperation, regional and global issues of mutual interest and concern.

In the spirit of a new beginning to the Afghanistan and Pakistan bilateral relations, the two Foreign Ministers exchanged views on ways to articulate a new vision for their bilateral relations as well as for the region.

They highlighted the enormous potential of the region to become the abode of peace, moderation and prosperity for the two countries and the entire region.

Pakistan shared a draft Declaration on Directions of Bilateral Cooperation which will be finalized soon.

Both sides agreed to comprehensively upgrade their bilateral relations and to hold regularly Strategic Dialogue at the level of Foreign Ministers.

The Foreign Ministers will oversee the work of a Specialized Commission in all disciplines notably, political, security and economic sectors.

The two Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the convening of Jirga Gai in Islamabad on October 27-28.

They also expressed satisfaction at the preparatory work for the holding of 7th Joint Economic Commission (JEC) in Kabul in the second half of November and 3rd Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) in January next in Islamabad.

Responding to the serious concern expressed on the abduction of Ambassador-designate of Afghanistan to Pakistan, Abdul Khaleq Farahi, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi expressed deep anguish at the unfortunate abduction of the Ambassador-designate and assured Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta that the Government of Pakistan will leave no stone un-turned for the safe and early recovery of the Ambassador-designate.

On behalf of President Hamid Karzai, Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta extended a warm and cordial invitation to President Zardari to visit Afghanistan in the near future.

The Foreign Minister of Pakistan also accepted the invitation by the Afghan Foreign Minister to visit Kabul at his earliest convenience.

[http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=180705](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=180705)

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New York Times  
October 22, 2008  
Pg. 12

## **2 British Antiterror Experts Say U.S. Takes Wrong Path**

By Raymond Bonner



LONDON — Two prominent British counterterrorism figures have criticized the United States for what they described as its overly militaristic approach to fighting terrorism and warned of a further erosion of civil liberties.

One of the experts, Stella Rimington, a former director general of Britain's domestic intelligence agency, said in an interview published over the weekend that she hoped the next American president "would stop using the phrase 'war on terror.'" She also said there had been a "huge overreaction" to the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

The other official, Ken Macdonald, the top prosecutor for England and Wales, who has overseen terrorism trials for the past several years, on Monday rejected what he called "the Guantánamo model," in which the rights of defendants are severely curtailed or eliminated by governments in search of a response to the terrorism threat.

Differences between the British and American approaches in the fight against terrorism have been expressed before, but rarely by figures of such stature and background.

The British have been critical of Guantánamo Bay, secret detentions and the denial of habeas corpus to terrorism suspects in the United States, but the intrusion on individual privacy here is greater than in America. Surveillance cameras are ubiquitous — in subway stations, in residential neighborhoods, on highways — and their pervasiveness is one reason that the police were able to track within 24 hours the travels of the cars used in the failed bombing attempts in London and on the Glasgow airport in 2007.

The surveillance has probably made the British citizenry the most watched in the world, outside of Singapore.

On Tuesday, the police used the terrorism laws to arrest five men, 29 to 36 years old, in Birmingham. The police did not give details, but said the arrests were not connected to any immediate threat or plot, the BBC reported.

Britain has approached terrorism more as a criminal matter than as a military one. In contrast to the United States, where prosecutions against suspects in the Sept. 11 attacks have lagged, Britain has prosecuted suspects in all the major terrorist attacks in the country since 2005. And it has achieved a 90 percent conviction rate, Mr. Macdonald, head of the Crown Prosecution Service, said in a speech on Monday

The trials, he said, have been "absolutely grounded in due process and pursued with full respect for our historical norms and our liberal Constitution."

"Of course, you can have the Guantánamo model," he said. "You can have the model which says that we cannot afford to give people their rights, that rights are too expensive because of the nature of the threats."

"Or you can say, as I prefer to, that our rights are priceless," he added. "That the best way to face down those threats is to strengthen our institutions rather than to degrade them."

Ms. Rimington, the former head of MI5, Britain's domestic intelligence agency, said that further erosions of civil liberties — including identification cards and a proposal by the Labor government to hold terrorism suspects 42 days without charges — were unnecessary and counterproductive.

The response to Sept. 11 was "a huge overreaction," Ms. Rimington told The Guardian in an interview published Saturday. She said labeling that response a war on terror "got us off on the wrong foot because it made people think terrorism was something you could deal with by force of arms primarily."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/22/world/europe/22britain.html?ref=world>

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McClatchy Newspapers (mcclatchydc.com)  
October 22, 2008

## **The Philippines: America's Other War on Terrorism**

By Warren P. Strobel, McClatchy Newspapers

CAMP BAUTISTA, Philippines — It's movie night at the U.S. military enclave on this Filipino military base, and dozens of giggling young boys and girls jostle their way into a free show in a modest wood-frame building that formerly housed a bar named Rusty's Grill.

Each child's price of admission to the animated film "Robots," plus a bottle of water and a small paper bag of popcorn, is to accept a squirt of hand sanitizer — a brief lesson in basic hygiene.

Welcome to America's other war on terror.

Since the Sept. 11 attacks more than seven years ago, President Bush has waged a worldwide assault on Islamic militants from Iraq to Afghanistan to the Horn of Africa that's relied overwhelmingly on U.S. military force, harsh treatment of detainees and tough talk. Winning "hearts and minds," at least until recently, has been an afterthought.

On a Southeast Asian front that's vital yet largely unfamiliar to most Americans, some 500 U.S. Special Operations Forces and their Filipino counterparts have been fighting a different, unconventional — and seemingly successful — war against Islamic terrorist groups with links to Osama bin Laden's al Qaida.

The lessons of this relatively low-budget effort could be invaluable as the next U.S. president assumes the task of fighting Islamic extremism with a federal Treasury drained by the nation's economic woes and the Army and Marine Corps strained by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

McClatchy was granted permission to cover the activities of the U.S. forces here, the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines, for nine days.

Army Maj. Joseph Mouer, the wiry, youthful-looking commander of the small American military contingent here on Jolo island in the southern Philippines, hopes to expand movie night with visits by local police, modeled after the "Officer Friendly" program he remembers growing up in New Orleans.

"I consider myself a diplomat with a gun," Mouer says, after observing the controlled chaos of movie night.

He and his men dispense lethal violence and the label "terrorist" cautiously. Improving the lives and safety of the populace and, crucially, reversing Filipino Muslims' resentment toward their own Christian-dominated government, constitute as much as 85 percent of the effort. That's classic counter-insurgency doctrine, which the U.S. began to implement in Iraq only last year.

The southern Philippines is far from pacified. Mindanao, as the region is known, has been the scene of the worst fighting in five years between the government and the rebels of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which is seeking an autonomous Muslim state. The fighters, staking their claim in advance of a hoped-for peace deal, seized a half-dozen villages, prompting a Filipino government counter-offensive. The fighting, which began in August, has displaced an estimated half-million people, and the government suspended peace talks.

The front isn't a terrorist group, hasn't targeted Americans and has no global objectives, seeking only local autonomy. But some of its more militant commanders have provided shelter to a violent al Qaida-linked movement known as Abu Sayyaf.

The U.S. military mission here is targeted against Abu Sayyaf and other trans-national terrorist groups.

American and Filipino commanders, senior U.S. officials and private counter-terrorism experts all say the operation has been an apparent success. Military and civil operations have destroyed or squeezed out much of Abu Sayyaf, and the group has lost most of its former lifeline to the region's most feared terrorist group, Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiyah, they say.

Southeast Asia has spawned many of the decade's worst terrorism plots. A key meeting in the 9/11 plot took place in Malaysia. An aborted plan, code-named Bojinka, to blow up 10 trans-Pacific airliners, was hatched in the Philippines, and is believed to have been one precursor to the 9/11 attacks. The 2002 and 2005 Bali resort bombings, which killed more than 230 combined, were the deadliest of a series of attacks in Indonesia.

"The way I tell people at home, is, 'Have you ever heard of terrorist groups coming from the Philippines? No? That's because we're doing our jobs'," said a U.S. Army Special Forces officer on Jolo. Under military ground rules, only American commanders here can be identified by name.

He spoke at a beachside encampment where children splashed in the water within sight of bamboo huts, giving the place the flavor of a laid-back tropical resort — if it weren't for all the weaponry.

The conflict is filled with other head-spinning contradictions.

U.S. soldiers here are barred from combat, except in self-defense. They maintain a low profile by operating from inside Filipino military bases. During August's clashes, they were confined to their enclaves at the request of the Manila government, to avoid any perception that Americans were involved in the fighting — which could be a propaganda coup for the insurgents.

Secret military hardware shares cargo space on helicopters with gifts of plastic sandals emblazoned "Honor in Peace." The Filipino military uses U.S. intelligence from unmanned drones and other devices to pinpoint the enemy in a land of mountainside jungles and vast flooded marshes. Sometimes it holds its fire to avoid civilian casualties that would undermine the effort.

One recent afternoon on the nearby island of Mindanao, uniformed U.S. and Filipino military officers listened, some curious and some perplexed, as a U.S. Agency for International Development contractor briefed them on the agency's \$80-million-a-year aid program for the region. He talked about taking steps to boost the local seaweed-farming industry and to help create an off-season mango harvest.

The other apparent lesson from the U.S. mission here is this: Counter-insurgency takes time, and there are no quick victories such as those that President Bush claimed after the initial military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"Not decisive in any way, like a good military operation. Long-term patience," said Army Lt. Col. Brian Petit, the commander of the U.S. task force on the island of Mindanao.

Said one soldier with long experience in the Philippines: "This is a 50- (to) 100-year mission." He referred to how long it might take to reshape Mindanao, not to the potential tenure of U.S. troops here.

The far-flung islands and volcanic mountains of the southern Philippines have vast unrealized potential, with their pristine beaches and agricultural riches.

The south is the Philippines' poorest region, however, ignored or exploited for decades by the governments and elites in Manila. It remains awash in guns — there are Christian militias, too — and mired in poverty.

"Justice, poverty, disease. If you do not solve those, the insurgency will continue," said Rear Adm. Emilio Marayag, the commander of Filipino naval forces in the area.

During the time a McClatchy reporter was covering the U.S. task force, the fighting between the government and the Moro militants erupted — the latest installment in a 40-year conflict that some call the world's longest-running insurgency.

Defining the difference between local insurgent and international terrorist can be nearly impossible at times. Hardcore jihadist groups such as Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah put down roots through inter-marriage, and sometimes share training and camps with the Moro fighters.

"There's no clean, neat lines on how this goes," said Army Col. Bill Coultrup, 45, overall commander of the U.S. joint task force.

Still, there seems little doubt that the Islamic terrorists' plans for the Philippines have been frustrated.

In the late 1990s, Jemaah Islamiyah, which seeks an Islamic state across Southeast Asia, designated Mindanao as a training ground and haven, one of the group's mantiqis, or regional commands. The group established terrorist training camps here. Islamic fighters who were veterans of Afghanistan's war with the Soviet Union founded Abu Sayyaf with funding from bin Laden's brother-in-law. It had hundreds of fighters entrenched on Basilan island, staged deadly bombings and kidnapped tourists.

U.S. troops deployed in 2002, with little fanfare back home. U.S. diplomats and military officers said the mission benefited from not being a top priority of then-Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld or the White House.

"It was a kind of benign neglect," said a knowledgeable U.S. diplomat, who requested anonymity to speak more frankly. "We could carve our own niche."

U.S.-backed Filipino military operations ejected Abu Sayyaf's core of fighters from Basilan to the main island of Mindanao. They eventually ended up here on Jolo, where they're said to be largely isolated, along with two senior Jemaah Islamiyah operatives wanted in Indonesia for their role in the Bali bombings. Abu Sayyaf leader Khaddafy Janjalani, whose brother founded the group, was killed in a firefight with the Philippine military in October 2006.

Al Qaida's network in Southeast Asia "has been degraded to such a point that their ability to operate trans-regionally is (harmed) significantly," Petit said. "That's just a fact."

There are reports of defections and purges within Abu Sayyaf.

Lt. Col. Jimmy Larida, the commander of a Filipino Marine battalion on Jolo, said that an Abu Sayyaf member recently defected with his M-16 rifle. The defector's friend had been killed in an internal purge, and he feared that he was next.

Larida spoke in an impromptu interview on the veranda of his hilltop residence, overlooking a dense jungle and Jolo City in the distance. It's the foliage and the crowded cities, along with kinship ties, that allow Abu Sayyaf to survive.

While this mission could provide lessons for other global arenas, it's also unique in many ways. The Philippines is a majority Catholic country with a functioning central government; a long, if checkered, relationship with the U.S.; and leaders willing to fight terrorism.

"There is no cookie-cutter approach. . . . Are there lessons to be learned here? I would say, yes," Mouer said. "Do they apply (elsewhere) one-to-one? Probably not."

Every Special Operations soldier here has served in Iraq or Afghanistan, or both, as well as in other danger zones.

They don't openly pass judgment on U.S. strategies elsewhere. But some note with satisfaction that counter-insurgency tactics are now a mainstay of U.S. efforts in Iraq, and most seem to think that this mission is succeeding.

"People aren't trying to kill you every day," said the Special Forces officer on Jolo. Referring to phone-triggered roadside bombs in Iraq, he said: "It took us about a week . . . to stop looking at people with cell phones."

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/227/story/54611.html>

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New York Times  
October 22, 2008  
Pg. 32

## **A Safer Nuclear Stockpile**

To the Editor:

Re "New and Unnecessary" (editorial, Oct. 13):

I was pleased to read that you believe that America's nuclear weapons stockpile needs to remain safe, secure and reliable. But it is important to clarify our efforts to do just that. The United States is not looking at producing a "new" weapon. Rather, we are looking at a way to make the stockpile more secure and safer to handle and maintain — all without adding any new military capabilities. The decision has been made that the United States will have a nuclear weapons stockpile. As administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, I have the responsibility to ensure that these weapons are safe, secure and reliable. And while they are today, thanks to some very smart and dedicated scientists and engineers, I also need to think about the future. Our weapons are aging well beyond their intended life, and in ways that are getting harder and harder to predict. It would be irresponsible of me to wait until there is a major problem to begin to act.

**Thomas D'Agostino, Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration, Washington, Oct. 15, 2008**

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/22/opinion/1web22nuclear.html>

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October 13, 2008  
EDITORIAL

## **New and Unnecessary**

Page A28

With the Bush administration, no bad idea ever dies. So it should be no surprise that the Pentagon and the Department of Energy have released a new policy paper — pitched to the next president — arguing the case for a new nuclear warhead. Nearly two decades after this country stopped building nuclear weapons, it should not get back into the business. As the paper signed by Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman acknowledges, the current stockpile remains “safe, secure and reliable.”

Any decision to build a new weapon would feed already deep suspicions about America’s judgment and motives and further undercut efforts to contain the dangerous nuclear ambitions of North Korea, Iran and other wannabes. The administration’s pitch sounds seductive. The proposed Reliable Replacement Warhead (how’s that for branding?) is supposed to be sturdy, reliable, secure from terrorists and not really new, just improved. And, oh yes, it’s supposed to contain fewer toxic materials. Officials also claim that if they get the new warheads, the government probably won’t have to keep as many backup warheads in the stockpile to hedge against technical failure — although nobody is making any promises. Officials also insist there will be no need to test the new warheads — computers can model it all.

The United States has not tested a nuclear weapon since 1992, one of the few arms controls taboos President Bush hasn’t broken. But Mr. Bush also rejected the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, so any promises about not testing the R.R.W. have always been suspect. The Pentagon became concerned about “aging” warheads only after it could not persuade Congress to finance a new “bunker buster” weapon to go after deeply buried targets. The nation’s nuclear weapons labs have long been lobbying for a new challenge to lure a new generation of nuclear scientists. But nuclear weapons cannot be a jobs project. Congress has wisely delayed financing a new warhead at least until a blue-ribbon study on nuclear weapons policy — led by two former defense secretaries, William Perry and James Schlesinger — is completed in December. Neither presidential candidate has categorically ruled out a new weapon. They both should. If the existing stockpile is “safe, secure and reliable,” there is no reason to build a new nuclear weapon.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/13/opinion/13mon3.html?\\_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/13/opinion/13mon3.html?_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin)

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The Miami Herald  
October 22, 2008

## **Official Describes Secret Uranium Shipment**

By H. Josef Hebert, Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- Enough processed uranium to make six nuclear weapons was secretly transported thousands of miles by truck, rail and ship on a monthlong trip from a research reactor in Budapest, Hungary, to a facility in Russia so it could be more closely protected against theft, U.S. officials revealed Wednesday. The shipment, conducted under tight secrecy and security, included a three-week trip by cargo ship through the Mediterranean, up the English Channel and the North Sea to Russia's Arctic seaport of Murmansk, the only port Russia allows for handling nuclear material. The 13 radiation-proof casks, each weighing 17,000 pounds, arrived by rail at the secure nuclear material facility at Mayak in Siberia on Wednesday, carrying 341 pounds of weapons usable uranium, said Kenneth Baker, a National Nuclear Security Administration official who oversaw the complex project.

It is the largest recovery to date of highly enriched uranium provided either by the former Soviet Union or the United States under a program, begun in the 1950s, aimed at spreading the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The two countries have been working to return the spent fuel from reactors around the world because at many of the

facilities, including the one in Budapest, security is lax, raising the possibility of the material being stolen by terrorists.

"It was a big shipment, the biggest one we've ever done," Baker said in an interview with The Associated Press hours after he received word that the shipment had arrived at its final destination in Russia. "It was basically enough to make six nuclear weapons."

Under the U.S.-Russian program, the NNSA, which is part of the Energy Department, has completed 15 recoveries of U.S.-origin highly enriched uranium from research reactors in more than a dozen countries since 2005. The agency also was involved in three earlier shipments of Russian-origin highly enriched uranium that were removed from the Czech Republic, Latvia and Bulgaria and returned to Russia.

But the project targeting the 341 pounds of highly radioactive used fuel from the Budapest research reactor was particularly complex and challenging, said Baker, the NNSA's assistant deputy administrator for defense nuclear nonproliferation.

It began at 3 a.m. in Budapest in late September and ended early Wednesday, Washington time, at the nuclear facility at Mayak in Russian Siberia. In between the shipment moved without notice aboard truck and rail to the port of Koper in Slovenia and then by special cargo ship through the ocean shipping lanes that encircle Europe, always staying in international waters at least 12 miles from shore, according to Baker.

The unusual roundabout route was needed because "we couldn't ship it through Ukraine" even though that would have been a more direct route to Russia, Baker said.

So in the early hours in late September, the 13 casks were secretly loaded onto trucks at the Budapest facility and taken to the city's train station, where it was transported onto a special train -- one cask per car -- for an eight-hour trip to the port of Koper in Slovenia on the Adriatic Sea.

The shipments then moved through the Mediterranean, through the Strait of Gibraltar, up the Atlantic and into the English Channel, the North and Norwegian seas and then on to Murmansk by Saturday. From there the shipment was loaded on a train for the long trip to Siberia.

"It was the most complicated trip we've ever taken by far," said Baker, who oversaw the loading and early part of the shipment but did not accompany the shipment after it went to sea, instead returning to Washington.

Early Wednesday, he received notice that the shipment had arrived at Mayak, where security is far tighter than in Budapest.

In Budapest "they had a fence and a guard," said Baker, although some security improvements have been made with U.S. help over the past year. Still, Baker added, "you don't want to leave it there."

The Hungarian reactor now is being converted to use low-enriched uranium that can't be used in a weapon and won't be a potential terrorist target.

So far, including the shipment from Budapest, 1,685 pounds of Russian-origin uranium has been retrieved from 11 countries. But there are still a significant number of reactors that have either U.S. or Russian highly enriched uranium, including some with security far less than what is desirable, according to nuclear nonproliferation activists.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics/AP/story/737260.html>

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Christian Science Monitor  
October 23, 2008  
Pg. 3

## **Air Force Seeks to Fix Nuke Mission**

*Part of its plan is to create a new command to help refocus on its nuclear responsibilities*

By Gordon Lubold, Staff writer

Washington - The Air Force is moving forward with a "get-well plan" to restore its historic reputation for nuclear stewardship and create more accountability with the creation of a new command to oversee its nuclear mission.

High-profile blunders in recent years have shown that the service has been distracted from its nuclear operations, say senior officials, in part by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as senior leaders encouraged airmen to contribute overseas.

"The price we paid for that is we took our eye off our nuclear mission," says Maj. Gen. Donald Alston, director of nuclear operations, plans and requirements for the Air Force at the Pentagon.

This week, the Air Force is expected to release a plan to refocus on its nuclear mission.

The new command, to be created within a year, will centralize all the Air Force's nuclear operations under one commander. Currently, nuclear weaponry and other "nuclear activity" falls under five separate commands. A new headquarters to oversee it all will be put in place within weeks, Air Force officials say.

Top Air Force officials may also revamp personnel policies to emphasize the importance of its custodianship of nuclear weapons and materials, which has been a traditionally important role for the service since the end of the World War II.

### **High-profile mistakes**

Nuclear-related incidents led to the unprecedented firings of the service's two top officials earlier this year. In 2006, the Air Force mistakenly shipped nuclear missile nose cone fuses to Taiwan instead of helicopter batteries. And last year, a B-52 bomber flew from a base in North Dakota to one in Louisiana loaded with nuclear cruise missiles instead of conventional munitions.

Last month, the service announced that it had taken disciplinary action against 15 officers, including six generals and nine colonels, based on the findings of an investigation launched by Defense Secretary Robert Gates after the shipments of the nose cone fuse assemblies to Taiwan.

The service has retained three officers who were part of the process that led to the failures because they are in the best position to help fix the problems, said Gen. Norton Schwartz, the new Air Force chief of staff.

Top of the agenda is reinstilling the importance of nuclear deterrence within Air Force culture and once again making the nuclear mission something the service can be proud of.

### **Once, the face of nuclear deterrence**

Fifty years ago, no one would have imagined the service's reputation as a nuclear custodian would be where it is now.

In the wake of World War II, soon after the Air Force itself was established, the Air Force's Strategic Air Command became the overseer of a large swath of US nuclear capability, from intercontinental ballistic missiles to bombers. The command was essentially the face of US nuclear deterrence and became a model of American military discipline and excellence.

"Readiness inspections" were taken very seriously and one small mistake could cost a commander his job. "If you were a wing commanding officer and busted during the [inspection], you were done," says C.R. "Dick" Anderegg, an Air Force historian and former fighter pilot. "It was very strictly controlled."

With the end of the cold war, the Air Force shuttered the command.

Subsequently, with little public focus on nuclear issues, the service's stewardship of nuclear materials "atrophied," according to the report by former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger on the recent nuclear blunders.

Such stewardship requires constant vigilance. "It's not as if it's something that is on the shelf, it actually requires fantastic physical exertion to deliver deterrence on Tuesday and then wake up on Wednesday and deliver deterrence again," General Alston says.

Another reason for the dilution in the nuclear mission's importance in recent years are the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, says the Schlesinger report.

As tens of thousands of service members deployed to war zones, Air Force leaders, eager to give airmen an opportunity to contribute and show the public that the Air Force, too, was vital to the war effort, encouraged its force to deploy.

The report, released last month, recommended that the Air Force "review its deployment, assignment and promotion policies To ensure that it develops personnel and future leaders who are nuclear qualified and that nuclear-focused careers provide opportunities for professional development and promotion to senior ranks."

Air Force officials say about 7 percent of the personnel from four bases where nuclear activities occur deployed to Iraq in December 2007. In addition to the monetary and career incentives for airmen to deploy to a war zone, there are numerous "intangibles," like the experience of going overseas, that may lure them.

"Even I am conflicted in the sense that I appreciate how much we need to respect the [nuclear] mission ... at the same time, I know the professional and personal benefits to pitching into the fight," says Alston.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/1023/p03s05-usmi.html>

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Technology Review

Wednesday, October 22, 2008

## Reactors for the Middle East

*New designs could decrease the chances that nuclear materials will fall into the hands of terrorists.*

By Kevin Bullis

Novel designs for nuclear reactors, being drawn up by researchers at MIT and a new research institute in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), could decrease the risk that nuclear fuel could be diverted for use in nuclear weapons.

When nuclear materials are in use inside a nuclear reactor, they're too hot to steal, says Youssef Shatilla, a professor at the Masdar Institute, in the UAE. The greatest danger comes when fuel is being manufactured, when enrichment facilities can be used to make weapons-grade materials, or when nuclear materials are in transit, during either delivery or waste removal. To lessen the first danger, the government of the UAE plans to lease its fuel from other countries rather than making its own fuel. As a result, it won't have the technology to enrich uranium for making nuclear weapons.

The MIT and Masdar researchers are working on the second problem. They're designing new reactors that would need to be refueled far less often than conventional ones--once every 15 to 30 years rather than every 5 years. This would decrease the frequency of deliveries and the chances that the materials could fall into the wrong hands. "If you look at how you can divert nuclear material so it can be used in a weapons program, it is when the nuclear fuel is outside of the reactor core, when it's relatively cool and people can manipulate it," Shatilla says. "Our strategy is to keep the fuel inside the core as long as we can." The new reactors would have the added benefit of producing at least one-third of the waste of existing plants.

The new designs are part of an effort by the UAE to convince the international community to approve its plans to build nuclear reactors to generate electricity. The UAE and other Middle Eastern countries want to build nuclear power plants as a way to meet fast-growing domestic electricity demand. This would let them export oil and gas rather than burning it to generate electricity. "You cannot stay on course burning your own precious resources to generate electricity," Shatilla says. "In 30 to 40 years, oil and gas will be very expensive commodities--too expensive to burn."

To decrease the frequency of refueling, the researchers at MIT and Masdar are investigating ways to get more energy out of a given amount of fuel. One way to do this, says Mujid Kazimi, a professor of nuclear engineering at MIT, is to increase the concentration of uranium-235, the isotope of uranium that undergoes fission to create the heat that drives nuclear power plants. Currently, nuclear fuels contain less than 5 percent uranium-235, but this can be enriched to about 20 percent without making the material suitable for use in weapons. However, increasing the enrichment level poses a couple of challenges. Manufacturing plants that make fuel pellets from enriched uranium



will require new safety precautions, Kazimi says. What's more, the fuel will need to be modified to ensure that the reactions don't proceed too quickly. The presence of so much "fissionable material," Kazimi says, could lead to a relatively quick chain reaction that would use up fuel too quickly. By incorporating materials known as burnable poison that absorb neutrons emitted during fission to slow down the reactions, the fuel could slowly generate heat over 15 years or more, he says.

Another way to increase the amount of energy that can be extracted from nuclear fuel is to promote the creation of more fissionable material within the reactor itself. In ordinary nuclear power plants, some of the neutrons released during fission are absorbed by uranium-238, a material that does not undergo the process. When this happens, it triggers a series of reactions that produce other types of fissionable material that can generate heat in a nuclear reactor. Essentially, these reactions turn uranium-238 into fuel, allowing the plant to operate longer between refueling. Researchers have long known how to increase this fuel production within the reactor, even to the point that certain reactors can produce more fuel than they consume. But again, the danger is that creating too much new fuel could provide materials for nuclear weapons. So the researchers are investigating ways to increase fuel production, but not so much that it becomes a nuclear proliferation risk. The result would still be both more energy from a given amount of fuel and less waste.

Finally, Kazimi and Shatilla are designing the new plants to operate at higher temperatures than conventional reactors, thereby increasing the efficiency with which they convert heat energy into electricity. This would also make nuclear plants more useful as a source of heat for chemical reactions, such as hydrogen generation. Toward this end, the pair is investigating unconventional materials for coolants, such as molten salts, which are less corrosive at high temperatures than the water that is commonly used. The researchers are also studying the use of superheated steam, which involves boiling water to create steam, and then heating the steam to yet higher temperatures. The higher temperatures yielded will also require new materials in the core, such as a silicon carbide ceramic that Kazimi has been developing. This silicon carbide is made in the form of a mesh that can stretch without breaking as the reactor heats up and cools down.

Kazimi notes that the research project is still only one year old and that final designs could be several years away. Ultimately, Shatilla says, the goal is to produce designs in which "there is no possible pathway to divert nuclear material into a weapons track, and then at the same time produce nuclear power with the environment in mind." If the project is successful, he says, the designs could be useful in many more places than just the Middle East.

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<http://www.technologyreview.com/energy/21586/?nlid=1448>

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Washington Post  
October 23, 2008; A19

## **Stopping a Nuclear Tehran**

By Daniel R. Coats and Charles S. Robb

It is likely that the first and most pressing national security issue the next president will face is the growing prospect of a nuclear-weapons-capable Iran. After co-chairing a recently concluded, high-level task force on Iranian nuclear development, we have come to believe that five principles must serve as the foundation of any reasonable, bipartisan and comprehensive Iranian policy.

First, an Islamic Republic of Iran with nuclear weapons capability would be strategically untenable. It would threaten U.S. national security, regional peace and stability, energy security, the efficacy of multilateralism, and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime. While a nuclear attack is the worst-case scenario, Iran would not need to employ a nuclear arsenal to threaten U.S. interests.

Simply obtaining the ability to quickly assemble a nuclear weapon would effectively give Iran a nuclear deterrent and drastically multiply its influence in Iraq and the region. While we would welcome cooperation from a democratic Iran, allowing the Middle East to fall under the dominance of a radical clerical regime that supports terrorism should not be considered a viable option.

Second, we believe the only acceptable end state is the complete cessation of enrichment activities inside Iran. We foresee no combination of international inspections or co-ownership of enrichment facilities that would provide sufficient assurances that Iran is not producing weapons-grade fissile material.

Indeed, the enrichment facility at Natanz is already technically capable -- once Iran has a sufficient stockpile of low-enriched uranium -- of producing enough highly enriched uranium for a nuclear device in four weeks. That is more than fast enough to elude detection by international inspectors.

Furthermore, the U.N. Security Council on three occasions has called for the cessation of enrichment in Iran, and the International Atomic Energy Agency found Iran to be noncompliant with the NPT. The failure to enforce these mandates could be a fatal blow to the fragile international regime.

Third, while a diplomatic resolution is still possible, it can succeed only if we negotiate from a position of strength. This will require better coordination with our international partners and much stricter sanctions. Negotiations with Iran would probably be ineffective unless our European allies sever commercial relations with Tehran.

In addition to constructing alliances, it will be important to build leverage. Much could be done to strengthen U.S. financial sanctions -- whether by closing loopholes or using more powerful instruments, such as Section 311 of the Patriot Act, to deny Iranian banks access to the U.S. financial system.

If such a strategy succeeds in bringing Iran to the table, it is important that the United States and its allies set a timetable for negotiations. Otherwise, the Iranians may seek to delay until they achieve a nuclear weapons capability.

Fourth, so that Israel does not feel compelled to take unilateral action, the next president must credibly convince Jerusalem that the United States will not allow Iran to achieve nuclear weapons capability.

Fifth, while military action against Iran is feasible, it must remain an option of last resort. If all other approaches fail, the new president would have to weigh the risks of a failure to impede Iran's nuclear program sufficiently against the risks of a military strike. The U.S. military is capable of launching a devastating strike on Iran's nuclear and military infrastructure -- probably with more decisive results than the Iranian leadership realizes.

An initial air campaign would probably last up to several weeks and would require vigilance for years to come. Military action would incur significant risks, including the possibility of U.S. and allied losses, wide-scale terrorist reprisals against Israel and other nations, and heightened unrest in the region.

Both to increase our leverage over Iran and to prepare for a military strike, if one were required, the next president will need to begin building up military assets in the region from day one.

These principles are all supported unanimously by a politically diverse task force that was assembled by the Bipartisan Policy Center. The group, which includes former senior Democratic and Republican officials, retired four-star generals and admirals, and experts in nuclear proliferation and energy markets, offers a clear path for constructing an enduring, bipartisan consensus behind an effective U.S. policy on Iran.

It is crucial that, immediately after Election Day, Congress and the president-elect begin to work on the exceedingly difficult policy measures that will be required if the United States is to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons capability. Time may be shorter than many imagine, and failure could carry a catastrophic cost to the national interest.

Daniel R. Coats, a former Republican senator from Indiana, and Charles S. Robb, a former Democratic senator from Virginia, are co-chairmen of the Bipartisan Policy Center's national security task force on Iran.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/22/AR2008102203005\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/22/AR2008102203005_pf.html)

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New York Times  
October 23, 2008

## Iran is Job One

By ROGER COHEN

Until he retired from the State Department earlier this year, Nicholas Burns was, as under secretary of state for political affairs, the lead U.S. negotiator on Iran. And how many times, during his three years in this role, did he meet with an Iranian? Not once. Burns wasn't allowed to. His presence was supposed to be the reward if the Iranians suspended uranium enrichment and sat down at the table.

Burns, now 52, joined the State Department in 1980. He's among a generation of U.S. diplomats who have never set foot in Iran, the rising power of the Middle East, even with oil at \$70 rather than double that.

Let me put this bluntly: If we're serious about the Middle East, this has got to change.

Wall Street has marginalized foreign policy in the U.S. election campaign, but it will return to center stage on Nov. 5. The in-box of the next president will include two intractable wars (Iraq and Afghanistan) and a tight timetable, of perhaps two years, for preventing Iran from securing nuclear weapons capability.

That's an Iran-dominated agenda. Apart from the nuclear issue, which has tended to override everything, long-term stability in both Iraq and Afghanistan is inconceivable without some Iranian cooperation, as is peace in Lebanon and a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

On Iran, Barack Obama and John McCain could scarcely be further apart. Obama has said of Iran that, "For us not to be in a conversation with them doesn't make sense."

McCain has sung "Bomb bomb bomb, bomb bomb Iran" to the tune of a Beach Boys number — a joke, no doubt, but one reflective of the confrontational tone of his foreign policy pronouncements.

"Country first," the McCain campaign slogan, seems to mean "Rest of the world last." Certainly that's where Sarah Palin, his running mate with a taste for "pro-America" parts of the country, places it.

Burns, like Obama, believes it's time to talk to Iran. "The U.S. needs to commit to a more ambitious diplomatic strategy," he told me. "We have a responsibility, after Iraq, before we consider the use of force, to demonstrate that every diplomatic avenue has been explored. If they come to the table and balk, we have more leverage over the Chinese and Russians to press for much tougher sanctions."

It's time to drop the condition that Iran suspend enrichment before we talk. The condition serves little purpose — Iran can always resume enrichment — and has given the mullahs an alibi.

It's also time — next year will mark the 30th anniversary of the Iranian revolution — to rethink the whole U.S. approach to Iran. A good place to start would be getting inside the head of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme Iranian religious leader.

The Iranian revolution was a religious uprising, but also a nationalist one against U.S. meddling in the country, including the C.I.A.-engineered 1953 coup and support for the shah. Khamenei knows that identification still underwrites his power, and that Iran's leadership of an anti-American front still counts on the Muslim street.

He also knows how much Iranian power has grown in recent years, through the U.S. removal of its arch-enemy Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the ushering of fellow Shiites to power in Baghdad. He knows that Iranian-backed Hezbollah and Hamas are now entrenched forces. He knows how stretched the U.S. is militarily. He knows how popular the nuclear program is domestically as a symbol of Iran's regional ambitions. And he knows that Israel has the bomb.

These are realities. They may be unpalatable, but if there's a lesson to the Bush years, it's that dealing in illusions is unhelpful. The cost to Khamenei of a handshake with America is high.

But Iran also has some shared interests with America — in preventing a breakup of Iraq, in preventing the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan, in avoiding a violent confrontation of the Sunni and Shia worlds. It wants security, more economic access and, eventually, restored diplomatic relations with the United States.

All of this says to me: think big. Don't obsess about the nuclear issue, critical as it is. Get everything on the table. Be realistic, as in: We have interests. You have interests. Are there areas in which they coincide?

Don't lecture. Don't moralize. Don't demand everything — an end to the nuclear program and terrorism and Lebanese and Gazan interference — without the means to back such demands. That's been the Bush failure.

I can already hear the outrage. But Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president at least until elections next year, wants to wipe Israel off the map! He denies the Holocaust! Sunni powers like Saudi Arabia will race for their own bomb unless we take out the Iranian centrifuges!

To which I say: Focus on today's reality, coldly. Iran does not have nuclear capacity yet. It's time to talk.

And it's time to find the greatest Americans, irrespective of party, to get that talking going. As Obama has noted: "We negotiated with Stalin. We negotiated with Mao."

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/23/opinion/23Cohen.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin&ref=opinion&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/23/opinion/23Cohen.html?_r=1&oref=slogin&ref=opinion&pagewanted=print)

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Washington Post  
October 23, 2008  
Pg. B1

## **Huge New Biodefense Lab is Dedicated at Fort Detrick**

By Nelson Hernandez, Washington Post Staff Writer

The Department of Homeland Security dedicated a massive biodefense laboratory in Frederick yesterday, moving toward the facility's opening despite questions raised about the risks of deadly pathogens to be studied there.

When the National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasures Center at Fort Detrick is fully operational in March, about 150 scientists in the lab will be tasked with protecting the country from a bioterrorist attack through prevention or containment. Another goal is to allow investigators to fingerprint biological agents such as viruses and bacteria, quickly tracing their source and catching the offender.

But critics cite the case of Bruce E. Ivins, a researcher at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, also at Fort Detrick, as evidence that such installations might help bioterrorists get access to lethal agents. FBI investigators think Ivins, who committed suicide in July, was responsible for the 2001 anthrax attacks.

Construction began in June 2006 on the \$143 million, 160,000-square-foot facility inside the fort, the Army's sprawling medical research post in Frederick. The ship-shaped building will be divided between the lab's major divisions: a forensic testing center, which aims to identify the culprits in biological attacks; and the Biothreat Characterization Center, which seeks to predict what such attacks will look like and guide the development of countermeasures.

Scientists affiliated with the lab have been working in leased space at Fort Detrick, but officials who spoke at the dedication yesterday said they were anxious to move into the new center.

"This is a great day. Many of us have been waiting for this day for a long time," said Jamie Johnson, director of the Office of National Laboratories of the Science and Technology Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security. "I feel very passionately about this facility, and I feel even more passionately about its mission. This is state-of-the-art, cutting-edge bio-forensics."

Barry Kissin, a Frederick lawyer who has strongly opposed the lab's construction, said he fears the facility would be used to create biological weapons even though the government said its mission is defensive.

"It's not only a huge threat to local public health and safety, it is in the forefront of the instigation of a brand-new arms race in the realm of bioweapons," he said. "Here we are, expanding by about 20 times the size of the program that we're now being told generated the only bioattack in our history."

Rep. Roscoe G. Bartlett (R-Md.), who has a PhD in human physiology, said the closure of the U.S. bioweapons program in 1969 had perhaps placed the country a step behind other nations that continued to operate secret programs.

"As a scientist, I knew how important it was to be at the cutting edge," Bartlett said. "I don't have complete confidence that our intelligence community will be able to tell us what's going on at the cutting edge." The scientists at the new Detrick lab, he said, are "going to have to divine what's happening." But he said he has "great confidence that this organization will indeed be able to protect us."

Democrat Jennifer Dougherty, a former Frederick mayor who faces Bartlett in the 6th District race, said relations between the city and Fort Detrick have gradually improved.

"I think it's essential that we make sure there's a level of transparency and a level of trust between residents, the city and the post," Dougherty said.

The directors of the campus were eager to demonstrate the facility's security, leading guests and reporters through a tour of the lab. Construction required everyone to wear hard hats and protective glasses.

The facility was clean and bright, with large windows allowing most scientists in sealed labs a view of the outdoors. About 40,000 square feet will be taken up by Biosafety Level 3 labs, which handle agents such as anthrax. In addition, 10,000 will be dedicated to the Level 4 labs, which handle agents such as the Ebola virus.

Next to the windows, digital monitors displayed air pressure, ensuring that air would flow from the outside into the lab. The air is constantly filtered, and three large pressure cookers sterilize contaminated waste. To get into the Level 4 labs, workers must pass through a chemical shower that cleanses their suits.

The thick, reinforced concrete walls were painted white. The rooms were empty of the testing equipment, animals and biological supplies that the scientists will use for their work. Exposed wires and pipes were in evidence, and sheeting was taped to parts of the floor.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2008/10/22/ST2008102203102.html>

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## **NATO Warships to Battle Piracy**

By Slobodan Lekic, Associated Press

BRUSSELS -- A NATO flotilla sailing toward the Somali coast will begin operations against piracy within the next few days, but officials said Wednesday that the alliance was still working out the rules of engagement for the seven ships.

The NATO warships will escort cargo ships carrying U.N. food aid to Somalia and will patrol the pirate-plagued shipping lanes off the Somali coast, where 30 ships have been hijacked this year and more than 70 have been attacked.

"They will have the rules of engagement that they need, the operational plan that they need. I would not be surprised to see all of this complete in the next two days," said alliance spokesman James Appathurai.

The seizure Sept. 25 of the Ukrainian cargo ship MV Faina, laden with 33 battle tanks and heavy weaponry, has focused international attention on the pirate menace.

U.S. warships have surrounded the Faina for weeks to prevent the pirates from trying to offload the ship's weapons, and a Russian guided-missile frigate is sailing to the area.

The NATO naval group is made up of destroyers from Italy and the United States, frigates from Germany, Greece, Turkey and Britain, plus a German auxiliary vessel.

"There will be a number of very competent and very effective military ships ... to provide presence, deterrence and, where necessary and possible, to intervene to prevent acts of piracy and to escort ships," Mr. Appathurai said.

Details of which tasks each ship will take on, and the rules for how they will handle the pirates, are still being worked out.

"This is obviously a very, very complicated thing they are trying to do," Mr. Appathurai said. "There are a host of pirates, but they don't identify themselves with eye patches and hook hands that they are pirates."

Experts predict that the NATO crews will find it difficult to distinguish between normal Somali fishing boats and pirate vessels on the prowl.

Somalia, caught up in an Islamic insurgency, has not had a functioning government since 1991, thus cannot guard its coastline.

Gunmen in Somalia's semiautonomous region, Puntland, freed a hijacked Indian vessel and its 13 crew members Tuesday after a shootout with pirates in the Gulf of Aden. Four pirates were captured and four others escaped. No crewmen were wounded.

About 20,000 ships pass annually through the Gulf of Aden, a strategic body of water between the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea.

The operators of the Faina said Wednesday that they had failed to raise enough money to meet the bandits' multimillion-dollar ransom demand.

Viktor Murenko, head of operator Tomex Team, said the firm has amassed only \$1 million toward the ransom. He said the bandits were demanding \$20 million, even though the pirates themselves have lowered the ransom demand to \$8 million.

Mr. Murenko said the Faina's acting captain, Viktor Nikolsky, told him by telephone Wednesday that the crew had received food and water and were in satisfactory condition.

The ship's captain died shortly after the seizure, apparently of a heart condition.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/oct/23/nato-warships-to-battle-piracy/>

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Middle East Times  
October 21, 2008

## **Somali Piracy Shakes Confidence in Suez Canal Route**

By JOSEPH MAYTON

CAIRO -- The rise in piracy off the coasts of Somalia has shaken confidence in the Suez Canal as a safe passage linking the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea and has prompted shipping companies to seek out alternative routes that avoid the dangerous East African Horn waters.

The Egyptian government privately fears a downturn in revenues from the canal, which along with tourism, oil and gas receipts, is a hefty foreign currency spinner.

Analysts at the London-based Chatham House foreign policy think tank have warned that if strong measures are not immediately taken, safe shipping through the Suez Canal could effectively be cut off. They called for further maritime reinforcements to be deployed in the seas around the Horn of Africa in order to preempt piracy, which has risen to record levels.

Egypt earns up to \$500 million a month from ships passing through the water corridor that links the Indian Ocean with European markets via the Red Sea and Mediterranean.

If the piracy problem deteriorates further, analysts say, the Cape Horn route – a 20-day voyage around the southern tip of Africa – could become the main passageway for cargo.

Somali pirates have hijacked more than 30 vessels since the beginning of this year. However, September has been particularly bad for shipping, with 17 vessels attacked near the Gulf of Aden in the first two weeks of the month alone.

Still, the number is small when considering that more than 16,000 ships pass through the Gulf of Aden annually, with nearly 2,000 in August.

The bounty collected by pirates is high, though: a total of \$30 million in ransom payments has been handed out so far this year.

And ransom demands are rising. Pirates who took a Ukrainian vessel, the MV Faina, hostage three weeks ago are demanding no less than \$20 million for its release along with the 20-man crew. One crew member is dead.

A U.S. naval destroyer, the USS Howard, is now stationed nearby, along with other NATO naval ships and aircraft to monitor the situation.

The pirates are heavily armed with an impressive arsenal of weapons, which includes rocket-propelled grenades and sniper rifles.

The Chatham House report said insurance premiums for shipping through the Gulf of Aden have increased tenfold, and the combined danger and cost, it said, could "mean that shipping could be forced to avoid the Gulf of Aden/Suez Canal and divert around the Cape of Good Hope."

"This would add considerably to the costs of manufactured goods and oil from Asia and the Middle East," the report said.

It also warned that serious damage to an oil tanker in a pirate attack could result in a "major environmental disaster."

The Gulf of Aden/Suez Canal route for international transport trade is the leading choice for European companies who want to get their products quickly through to Middle Eastern and Asian markets. But the dizzying increase in premiums is prohibitive to some companies and is newly adding to Cairo's frustration – although public officials are loathe to admit it.

Head of the Suez Canal Authority Captain Ahmed Fadl has denied the effects of the new dangers and high costs, saying they have no bearing on Suez Canal business.

"The Somali piracy does not and will not affect navigation in the Suez Canal," he recently told the state-run newspaper Akhbar al-Youm.

Fadl justified his confidence by saying, "most passing ships are the big vessels that are committed to the safe navigation course, and the pirates with their small boats can't board them ... they are too weak."

However, the Ukrainian vessel, a roll-on/roll-off cargo ship is carrying tanks and other armored vehicles and weapons and is not small by anyone's standards. And according to various reports it was stormed by between 50 and 100 pirates.

Reports also say that shortly after the boarding three pirates were killed in a shootout over what to do with the ship's cargo. Since then, they have tried to transport some of the goods to land in small boats via the port of Eyl.

Somali authorities say they are powerless to confront the pirates. The war-torn country has been without a functioning government since 1991.

Contrary to Fadl's assertions, a high-ranking source close to the Suez Canal Authority told the Middle East Times that the threat from pirates is directly linked to the volume of traffic which uses the canal.

"Of course the government wants to play down the threat to the canal, because they have to express confidence to companies that use it. The canal brings in that much money to the country," the official said, alluding to the nearly 10 percent of Egypt's foreign currency income it attracts.

He added: "It is clear that we are worrying about the status of the canal, especially in light of the statistics that are showing that some [companies] are already diverting their routes."

A little fewer than 2,000 ships pass through the canal every month carrying a variety of goods from the Middle East and Asia to markets in Europe and the United States.

But statistics show a drop in canal revenues in the last two months, from \$504.5 million in August to \$469.6 million in September; whereas the number of ships slipped from 1,993 in August to 1,872 in September.

With the future of the canal uncertain, everyone agrees that security in the Gulf of Aden and the seas off the Horn of Africa is essential. And although worries are high, Cairo is placing its hope that international efforts will find a swift solution to the very tense situation.

"I have heard that the government is optimistic that the international forces will help bring an end to these despicable acts of piracy and all will resume as normal," the source said. "We are waiting."

[http://www.metimes.com/International/2008/10/21/somali\\_piracy\\_shakes\\_confidence\\_in\\_suez\\_canal\\_route/4707/](http://www.metimes.com/International/2008/10/21/somali_piracy_shakes_confidence_in_suez_canal_route/4707/)

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