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Wall Street Journal
OCTOBER 31, 2008

Security Should be the Deciding Issue

By FREDERICK W. KAGAN

As the scale of the economic crisis becomes clear and comparisons to the Great Depression of the 1930s are tossed around, there is a very real danger that America could succumb to the feeling that we no longer have the luxury of worrying about distant lands, now that we are confronted with a "real" problem that actually affects the lives of all Americans. As we consider whether various bailout plans help Main Street as well as Wall Street, the subtext is that both are much more important to Americans than Haifa Street.

One problem with this emotion is that it ignores the sequel to the Great Depression -- the rise of militaristic Japan marked by the 1931 invasion of Manchuria, and Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, both of which resulted in part from economic dislocations spreading outward from the U.S. The inward-focus of the U.S. and the leading Western powers (Great Britain and France) throughout the 1930s allowed these problems to metastasize, ultimately leading to World War II. Is it possible that American inattention to the world in the coming years could lead to a similarly devastating result? You betcha.

When Franklin Roosevelt replaced Herbert Hoover in the White House, the country's economy was in shambles but its security was not threatened. No American forces were engaged in significant military conflict; America faced no threats. The U.S. was largely disarmed militarily and disengaged internationally. Yet within a decade, American territory had been attacked for the first time in 130 years, a massive rearmament program was underway, and the U.S. was fighting a desperate struggle that spanned the globe and ultimately cost the lives of nearly half a million American service members. The seeds of that global conflict, unimaginable in 1933 given the relative weakness of Germany and Japan, were planted in the first years of the Roosevelt administration as FDR focused on the American economy. Hoover had the distinction of being the last American president who did not command American troops in important conflicts. After FDR, Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower led the war in Korea that ended up shaping East Asia and the global economy profoundly.

John F. Kennedy's ill-fated efforts in Cuba shape Central America and the Caribbean to this day. He also made key decisions regarding Vietnam, followed, of course, by Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. These decisions had major effects on American security and also helped launch a social revolution within the U.S. Jimmy Carter's disastrous hostage rescue operation in Iran had profound implications for the U.S. there and throughout the region, as did his reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Ronald Reagan's failed policies in Lebanon in the early 1980s, leading to the Marine barracks bombing in Beirut in 1983, shaped the nature of American involvement in that key region, and also the perception of the U.S., for two decades. His attack on Libya, on the other hand, effectively ended a significant terrorist threat to the U.S. It also laid the basis for the elimination of Libya's WMD program after 9/11.

George H.W. Bush fought in Panama and Iraq. Bill Clinton, who took office promising to focus "like a laser beam" on the economy, led U.S. forces to humiliation in Somalia, ineffective, pinprick responses to al Qaeda terrorism and to Saddam Hussein's provocations, and to large-scale conflict in the Balkans. The current administration inherited ongoing military operations in the Balkans and almost immediately confronted the consequences of President Clinton's policy failures in Afghanistan on 9/11. The next president will not break this string of fighting presidents. He will inherit two ongoing wars involving more than 180,000 troops. He will face two global enemies -- al Qaeda and Iranian terror networks, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps/Quds Force and Hezbollah.

It is important to note here the distinction between an enemy and a threat. Threats are problems to be concerned about in the future; enemies are organizations trying to kill Americans right now. Al Qaeda and Iranian agents are both killing Americans on a regular basis and have proclaimed their determination to kill more. They are enemies, not threats, and they will confront the next president from day one. There are threats too, such as Pakistan's instability, combined with its inability and unwillingness to confront the al Qaeda safe havens on its territory. The growth of al Qaeda organizations in Algeria and Somalia poses another. Russian adventurism on the borders of

states to which the U.S. has already given security guarantees is still another. The dangers of nuclear proliferation if the North Korean regime collapses -- or if it does not -- are still another. Lastly, the next president will almost certainly face Iran's arrival at the threshold of nuclear-weapons capability. This, combined with Iran's efforts to develop long-range (and ultimately intercontinental) ballistic missiles and its global terrorist networks, is a threat to America's allies and to Americans at home.

Whatever the parallels between the current economic situation and that of the early 1930s, the current international environment is by any comparison more dangerous for the U.S. than the one that led to World War II. This is not hyperbole, particularly considering a last factor. When France and Britain ignored developing dangers while handling them would have been possible and relatively inexpensive, America was able to bail them out, if at terrific cost. There is no one to save us if we make similar mistakes in the coming years.

The current economic crisis is extremely grave. It is hurting many Americans today and will hurt many more as it unwinds. It will end, however, as economic crises always do. The question is how long the recovery will take and how bad things will get before it takes hold. This question should be at the forefront of voters' thinking as they consider the economic proposals of the two candidates for president, but not necessarily as they decide whom to vote for. Better policies can speed the recovery; worse ones can slow it -- but none are likely to prevent it.

The presidential impact on foreign-policy problems is much more direct. Skillful approaches can avoid or mitigate conflict; foolish ones can lead to cataclysms. And make no mistake -- mistaken policies will lead to the unnecessary deaths of Americans, and not just our soldiers. Any American who wants to travel outside the U.S. can be directly affected by the wisdom or folly of our foreign policy. Even those who never leave their own state must be concerned, as residents of New York, Alington and Pennsylvania can attest.

The health of our economy rests on its fundamentals, and on the way the entire government -- the president, the Congress, the Federal Reserve, and the courts -- approach the problem. The lives of American citizens rest on the way the president interacts with our enemies. When people feel relatively safe, they vote their pocketbooks. When they feel endangered, they vote for security. The world today offers no reason for Americans to feel safe. If we want safety, we have to be ready to fight for it.

Mr. Kagan is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and co-author of "Ground Truth: The Future of U.S. Land Power" (AEI Press, 2008).

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<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122541445283586623.html#printMode>

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Associated Press /Google News
October 27, 2008

US Considering Implications of Nuclear Decline

By ROBERT BURNS

WASHINGTON (AP) — The mighty U.S. arsenal of nuclear weapons, midwived by World War II and nurtured by the Cold War, is declining in power and purpose while the military's competence in handling the world's most dangerous arms has eroded. At the same time, international efforts to contain the spread of such weapons look ineffective.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates, for one, wants the next president to think about what nuclear middle-age and decline means for national security.

Gates joins a growing debate about the reliability and future credibility of the American arsenal with his first extensive speech on nuclear arms Tuesday. The debate is attracting increasing attention inside the Pentagon even as the military is preoccupied with fighting insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. The unconventional tools of war there include covert commandos, but not nuclear weapons.

Gates is expected to call for increased commitment to preserving the deterrent value of atomic weapons. Their chief function has evolved from first stopping the Nazis and Japanese, then the Soviets. Now the vast U.S. stockpile serves mainly to make any other nation think twice about developing or using even a crude nuclear device of its own.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen, wrote in the current issue of an internal publication, *Joint Force Quarterly*, that the United States is overdue to retool its nuclear strategy. He referred to nuclear deterrence — the idea that the credible threat of U.S. nuclear retaliation is enough by itself to stop a potential enemy from striking first with a weapon of mass destruction.

"Many, if not most, of the individuals who worked deterrence in the 1970s and 1980s — the real experts at this discipline — are not doing it anymore," Mullen wrote. "And we have not even tried to find their replacements."

Gen. Kevin Chilton, commander of U.S. Strategic Command, which is responsible for maintaining the nation's nuclear war plans, told Congress last spring that technical nuclear expertise also is lagging.

"The last nuclear design engineer to participate in the development and testing of a new nuclear weapon is scheduled to retire in the next five years," Chilton said.

Of the two senators competing to succeed President Bush, Democrat Barack Obama is most unequivocally against building new nuclear weapons. Both he and Republican John McCain say in their campaign materials that they support the long-standing U.S. commitment to eventually do away with nuclear arms. Neither says explicitly that the safety or credibility of the arsenal is in question; that's an argument made most frequently by congressional Republicans.

Sen. John Kyl, R-Ariz., for example, said in a speech Sept. 15 that the network of laboratories and industrial plants that produce and maintain U.S. nuclear weapons is, in some cases, "simply falling down from age," and that this amounts to an alarming national "emergency."

Some private experts dispute Kyl's assessment.

"It's completely overblown," said Hans M. Kristensen, who tracks nuclear weapons developments for the Federation of American Scientists. The advocacy group opposes the Bush administration's proposal to develop a new nuclear weapon design.

The number of nuclear weapons in the U.S. arsenal is a state secret. But Kristensen and a fellow expert, Robert S. Norris, estimate that the total stood at nearly 5,400 warheads at the start of this year. That includes an estimated 4,075 ready for potential use and 1,260 in backup status.

In an interview, Kristensen argued that even though the number is declining, the capability of remaining weapons is increasing as older missiles, for example, get new engines, guidance sets and computer software.

Gates takes a different view. He has expressed concern about lack of official attention to the nuclear arsenal.

"Even though the days of hair-trigger superpower confrontation are over, as long as other nations possess the bomb and the means to deliver it, the United States must maintain a credible strategic deterrent," he said Sept. 29 in a speech at the National Defense University.

Gates tied the question of credibility to well-publicized slip-ups in Air Force nuclear operations. In June he fired the Air Force's top general, Michael Moseley, as well as the top civilian, Michael Wynne, after an outside investigation concluded that the Air Force had not adequately heeded warning signs that its nuclear expertise, performance and stewardship were eroding over a period of years.

In August 2007, a B-52 bomber flew from an Air Force base in North Dakota to a base in Louisiana with nuclear warheads that neither the bomber's pilots nor its crew knew were aboard. Then came the revelation that electrical fuses that trigger the detonation of strategic nuclear missiles had been shipped mistakenly to Taiwan — and the mistake was not discovered for months.

Richard Wagner, a physicist who worked in the government's nuclear weapons laboratories for many years, told a conference in Washington this past week that the August 2007 incident was "the worst breach of security of nuclear weapons that the United States has ever had."

http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5hX5GadlcESC58A8Iw_-X3mDd7NzgD9427LJ00

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Carnegie Endowment
October 28, 2008

Gates: Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in the 21st Century

U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, speaking at Carnegie on Tuesday, cautioned that the United States cannot maintain a credible nuclear deterrent without testing or modernizing its aging stockpile. Gates urged the next U.S. president to engage Russia in new arsenal reduction talks and pointed to the loss of top talent in U.S. weapons laboratories as a major source of concern. He stressed that the nuclear weapons complex must be transformed into a "less costly but modern enterprise that can meet our nation's nuclear security needs for the future."

For the full text: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/1028_transcript_gates.pdf

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Air Force News Service
October 24, 2008

Air Force Nuclear Enterprise Roadmap Report Calls for New Command, Headquarters Agency

WASHINGTON (AFNS) -- Establishment of a Global Strike Command and a Headquarters Air Force staff agency to handle Air Force nuclear assets are some of the recommendations found in the Nuclear Enterprise Roadmap released Oct. 24 by senior leaders. The roadmap, titled Reinvigorating the Air Force Nuclear Enterprise, also recommends a nuclear weapons center and a single process for inspections. The roadmap follows an unauthorized transfer of munitions from Minot Air Force Base, N.D., to Barksdale AFB, La., in August 2007 and an inadvertent shipment of sensitive missile components to Taiwan in 2006. The secretary of the Air Force created the Air Force Nuclear Task Force to develop a strategic roadmap to rebuild the service's nuclear enterprise.

"This roadmap will enable the Air Force to effectively secure, maintain, operate and sustain our nation's nuclear capabilities and expertise," said Secretary of the Air Force Michael B. Donley. "It will also correct long-standing systemic and institutional weaknesses in our stewardship of nuclear matters. "This roadmap is our commitment to the nuclear enterprise," Secretary Donley said. "It's the foundation for reinvigorating the Air Force nuclear enterprise to reestablish the confidence in our ability to provide nuclear deterrence to our nation and our allies."

The chief of staff of the Air Force said the roadmap is going back to fundamentals. "This roadmap reflects a back-to-basics approach in accountability, compliance, precision and reliability," said Gen. Norton Schwartz, chief of staff of the Air Force. According to Air Force officials, the roadmap is vital to improving Air Force stewardship of the bomber, missile and associated logistics capabilities that form the foundation of America's strategic nuclear deterrent.

"These changes will be institutionalized across our nuclear enterprise, ensuring our commitment to excellence regardless of changes to our force structure, competing mission requirements or the size of our nuclear arsenal," Secretary Donley said.

To fortify current operations, develop personnel and sustain and modernize current capabilities within the nuclear forces, Air Force officials will undertake a series of action plans to address the root causes of the recent problems.

The action plans implement approximately 100 recommendations grouped into a composite set of major actions that serve as the foundation of the roadmap. These major actions include:

- Increase institutional focus and oversight by establishing an Air Force Global Strike Command, led by a lieutenant general, and a HAF strategic deterrence and nuclear integration staff office, to be known as A10. Both will focus on nuclear enterprise matters.
- Consolidate sustainment functions under Air Force Materiel Command's Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center.
- Implement a centralized Nuclear Surety Inspection process and increase NSI oversight.
- Align strategic deterrent and nuclear operations-based education, training, career development and force development actions.
- Implement a Global Deterrent Force approach for bomber operations that balances current global commitments with dedicated periods for personnel to focus on nuclear operations training and proficiency.
- Consolidate planning, programming, budgeting and execution of nuclear enterprise elements.
- Create Strategic Investment Plans that address long-term nuclear requirements, including those for cruise missiles, bombers, dual-capable aircraft and intercontinental ballistic missiles.
- Establish positive inventory control measures for nuclear weapons-related material.
- Create a coordinated, advocacy-based engagement strategy that enables thoughtful Air Force input to national and joint policy, strategy and planning processes.
- Present roadmap implementation results to oversight committees established by the secretary of defense.

The roadmap incorporates ongoing corrective actions, as well as new initiatives suggested by experts from inside and outside the Air Force. It provides the fundamental guidance to organize, train and equip the Air Force's nuclear forces to ensure effective nuclear deterrence and nuclear surety in an integrated and synchronized manner, Air Force officials said.

As a follow-on to the roadmap, an implementation plan is being developed to identify the appropriate steps and timeline required to stand up the new Global Strike Command. Included in the implementation plan will be details on the criteria to be used for identifying a location for the command headquarters and the realignment of personnel and resources from under their current major command to the newly established AFGSC.

In the past year, Air Force officials identified and funded initiatives that were immediately executable. A total of \$84.7 million was funded in the areas of nuclear sustainment, security, training and facility projects. For fiscal 2009, officials are identifying funds from within the current budget to continue implementation of nuclear enterprise initiatives and addressing emerging requirements with Congress.

<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123121095>

To view the entire roadmap, Reinvigorating the Air Force Nuclear Enterprise:

<http://www.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-081024-073.pdf>

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International Herald Tribune

October 28, 2008

Rate of Nuclear Thefts 'Disturbingly High,' Monitoring Chief Says

By Neil Macfarquhar

UNITED NATIONS: Mohamed ElBaradei, the chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said in a speech on Monday that the number of reports of nuclear or radioactive material stolen around the world last year was "disturbingly high."

ElBaradei, in his annual report to the General Assembly, said nearly 250 such thefts were reported in the year ending in June.

"The possibility of terrorists obtaining nuclear or other radioactive material remains a grave threat," he said. "Equally troubling is the fact that much of this material is not subsequently recovered."

Members of ElBaradei's staff and outside experts cautioned that the amount of missing material remained relatively small. If all the stolen material were lumped together, it would not be enough to build even one nuclear device, they said.

It is also unclear if the rising number of reports of stolen material stems from a growing market for radioactive goods or more vigilant reporting of thefts by member states.

However, the idea that there might be a new market for such material is of concern, they said, especially if some of it were to end up in a dirty bomb.

The threat from such a bomb is less a health risk from radiation than from the panic an attack would probably cause, said Cristina Hansell, a professor at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, in Monterey, California.

Most of the concern about thefts centers on the countries of the former Soviet Union, where nuclear programs were widespread, but they occur everywhere.

In a typical case, Hansell said, an oil company reported last May that a device containing radioactive material that was used in exploration in Sudan was missing.

It would take long exposure to the device to create any health risk, she said. "What will kill you from a dirty bomb is the immediate explosion, not the radioactivity," she said, noting that the main concern was that despite the attention devoted to trying to police such material, the amount disappearing keeps rising. "There still seems to be quite a big problem."

Aside from the issue of thefts, ElBaradei said he hoped that North Korea, which left the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in 2003, would return, and he criticized Iran for impeding the agency's attempts to verify whether it was developing nuclear weapons.

Sin Sang-chol, a North Korean representative to the United Nations, accused the monitoring agency of spying on his country at the behest of Washington and called its position "prejudiced and unfair."

The Iranian ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammad Khazaee, defended his country's nuclear development program as peaceful while lashing out at Israel for its creating a weapons program outside the nonproliferation treaty framework.

It is widely assumed that Israel has nuclear weapons, but the Israeli government has never acknowledged it.

Khazaee called the policy of trying to force Iran to stop nuclear enrichment before starting negotiations on economic and other incentives "an irrational and failed policy."

<http://www.iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=17299463>

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Foreign Policy
October 2008

The Narco State Next Door?

Mexico is fast becoming the central battleground in the war on drugs, but few in the United States seem to notice the worsening violence and corruption across the border.

Beginning late this summer, Mexico's usual simmer of isolated drug slayings boiled over into all-out war. President Felipe Calderón has deployed thousands of soldiers and police to the streets and vowed to purge corrupt police officers and officials who cooperate with the cartels. Since President Calderón's crackdown first began in December

2006, more people have died in Mexico in drug-related violence than from the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Over the past several months, a growing number of civilians have been caught in the crossfire.

Amid the widening chaos, Foreign Policy's Elizabeth Dickinson spoke with observers on both sides of the border. Enrique Krauze is a noted Mexican historian and author who warns of a looming Mexican "narco state." Michael Sanders is a special agent with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

Enrique Krauze

Foreign Policy: More than 4,000 people have died in Mexico's most recent bout of drug violence over the last year and a half—and the past several months have been particularly bloody. Why has the death toll been so high? What's going on?

Enrique Krauze: Mexico did not used to have this kind of problem because we had a centralized political system. In the old times, the president was de facto king. He could be corrupt or not corrupt, but you had a centralized power to deal with the darker sides of Mexican life. One of the paradoxical liabilities of our new democracy [is that it has decentralized the] real powers of the drug traffickers.

FP: President Calderón has launched a military offensive on the streets of Mexico—including 40,000 soldiers and 5,000 police officers. Do you think the military approach will succeed?

EK: This is not a war that can be won soon. It may be a war that cannot be won at all until we have a change [in policy]. I think [Calderón] has been doing well. The fact that [the cartel members] are killing themselves so much is because they are feeling the pain.

One of our great writers, Gabriel Zaid, has suggested that we have to focus on the jails. Some are like the offices or headquarters of crime. We have to control the jails. President Calderón has also lately been focusing on tracking the money and tracking the big policemen and big politicians. It is not one kind of approach.

FP: What is the mood on the streets of Mexico in places where the Army has been deployed? Are people backing President Calderón's efforts?

EK: There is uneasiness and sadness and the feeling that we are under threat. But it is not hysteria. It is not panic. The internal impression is that the president is doing his job. No one considers [it] a mistake for him to have engaged in this war. But at the same time, no one would say that he has been having real success.

FP: Since the escalation of violence, there have been a number of rallies protesting the kidnapping and killing of bystanders with no connection to drug trafficking. What has been the reaction to this rise in violence against civilians?

EK: There has been a very strong [reaction]. For example, when we had a bomb in [the state of] Morelos killing people, everyone talked about terrorism. It was a complete shock. Even other drug cartels said they had nothing to do with that. [Civilian deaths are] the main reason for uneasiness. If one knew they were only killing amongst themselves, people would say, "Go on—finish the job." Instead, people feel helplessness.

FP: Last week in Madrid, you expressed concern about the possibility that Mexico is becoming a "narco state." How close is Mexico to that reality now?

EK: There are already signs [of this] in some states. There are many municipalities that are clearly under the rule of the drug traffickers, and that's frightening because of course they kill the journalists and they corrupt everything. There is a danger [of Mexico becoming a narco state], but it's still an embryo.

FP: You have also said that the war on drugs will last a long time. How long do you foresee? What needs to happen before the conflict can end?

EK: Ten years, maybe 20 years. [Colombian President Álvaro] Uribe said there will be many, many people dying before you learn [how to deal with the problem]. Since 1920, Mexico has been a peaceful country. We had avoided

or dodged all the wars in the world. Every country has its wars; some are religious, ethnic, civil, and nationalistic wars. This is one that destiny had in store for us.

Special Agent Michael Sanders

FP: News organizations have reported on a growing weapons trade across the U.S.-Mexican border. Is that something you have seen?

Michael Sanders: Operation Gunrunner, through the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, is trying to track and trace all the weapons that are seized coming out of the United States. Some of those trafficking are sending individuals to purchase weapons at gun shows, but that's only one part of it, and that's not a very big part of it. The larger thing Operation Gunrunner is going after are the individuals who are purchasing high volumes of automatic weapons and basically bringing them from north to south and then black-marketing them.

FP: As a special agent, how do you see the evolution of this crisis in Mexico?

MS: We've conducted investigations beginning from the time that the Colombians started using the Mexicans to get the cocaine [across the border.] Then at some point in the mid-1990s, we started seeing a shift, where Mexican cartels were purchasing [the cocaine from the Colombians] and then setting up distribution networks in the United States. You started seeing the violence because [the cartels were] fighting amongst each other for routes.

Now, Calderón and his administration have started an active campaign against the traffickers. The cartels are now having to fight against the military as well as each other. Calderón is [also] going after the corrupt police and military and whatever individuals who are taking money from the cartels. He is putting on pressure. And whenever there is pressure, then these organizations are turning towards kidnapping and ransoms and extortions.

If you look at Colombia back in the '80s, it was much like Mexico is today: There were kidnappings, killings of state officials, law enforcement, and judges. Nobody was protected, and there was a lot of corruption. But you look at Colombia now under President Uribe, and you see there's still going to be crime but not like it was. What Uribe has done is to put a law enforcement presence in every county in every administration. Calderón has tried to do the same thing. He's fighting a war, and there's going to be a lot of violence.

FP: If it took Colombia more than 20 years to break that cycle, what does the timeline look like for Mexico?

MS: Colombia's a lot smaller than Mexico. And Colombia, with regard to the drug trafficking, has to get products to the United States. It's easier for the Mexicans: They can walk, swim, or truck it across the border. Colombia had to bring it all the way up either by fast boats or fishing boats, or had to get it across the Caribbean or the Pacific. It was hard. But that's a lot easier for the Mexicans.

Enrique Krauze is editor of the magazine Letras Libres and author of Mexico: Biography of Power (New York: HarperCollins, 1997). Michael Sanders is special agent and spokesperson at the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4542&print=1

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Gov.Exec.com
October 29, 2008

NORTHCOM has 'Fully Come of Age,' According to Outside Assessment

By Katherine McIntire Peters

Six years after it was established to better coordinate military support to civil authorities following catastrophic events on U.S. soil, Northern Command "is effectively providing coordinated and coherent planning and direction to

U.S. air-ground-sea forces in support of homeland defense and civil support," according to a recent assessment by retired Army Gen. Barry McCaffrey, an adjunct professor of international affairs at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.

More must be done, however, to increase the capacity of civilian agencies to respond to threats, McCaffrey wrote in an Oct. 14 memo to academy leaders. He recommended increasing the Border Patrol from 11,000 agents to 45,000, and Coast Guard personnel from 36,000 to 75,000. In addition, he cited a need to revitalize the Public Health Service, make the U.S. Marshals Service a federal law enforcement agency with specialized detention capability, and develop a "true international training and operational capability" at the Drug Enforcement Administration.

McCaffrey, a drug czar during the Clinton administration and a highly decorated combat commander and former commanding general of U.S. Southern Command, said he has made four visits to Northern Command headquarters at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., since it was formed in 2002 after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"The American people rightly demand that civil public institutions, not military forces, exercise primacy in protecting the U.S. domestic population. However, the planning and emergency operational scale and power of the U.S. armed forces simply must be placed at the service of civil authorities when major disaster strikes," something Northern Command finally is in a position to do, McCaffrey said.

Three forces have forged a new sense of "confidence and effectiveness" at the command, according to McCaffrey:

Command leaders were able to exploit the "sad lessons" of Hurricane Katrina, "the most shameful failure of federal, state and local leadership in any national emergency in our history," he said.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates fostered partnerships between Northern Command and the Homeland Security Department, state governors and other international and interagency actors.

Northern Command leaders created a cooperative training and exercise environment to work through responses to scenarios such as pandemic influenza, a cruise missile attack, an attack on commercial aircraft, loss of the power grid, a major earthquake and other potential threats.

"The Byzantine federal-state political and legal difficulties of putting together a coherent national emergency response plan are being overcome by the obvious benefits of cooperating with the massively resourced (comparatively) and extremely effective U.S. armed forces," McCaffrey said. "NORTHCOM has the ability to plan and execute large-muscle complex operations. NORTHCOM can pay the bills."

Among the potential challenges McCaffrey foresees for NORTHCOM is an unstable Cuba. While Cuba represents "little, if any, military threat," he predicts that Raul Castro will lose control of the dictatorship within two to three years after the ailing Fidel Castro's death -- events that could trigger massive migration to the United States.

"We are going to possibly be faced with the most terrible humanitarian disaster in our history in the coming five years when 250,000 to 500,000 Cubans flee at huge personal risk from the chaos of a struggle for power among the security forces of Cuba -- and head for freedom across the 90 miles of treacherous waters to Florida and the U.S. coastal Caribbean states," McCaffrey said.

Terrorism also remains a critical challenge, he said: "There is little question that there will be continuing criminal conspiracies to attack vulnerable U.S. infrastructure and to conduct operations designed to murder masses of the American people."

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=41291&sid=60

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Homeland Security Today (HSToday.us)
October 28, 2008

Pandemic Preparedness Complacency Still a Problem

by Anthony L. Kimery

'An eventual human pandemic at some unknown point in the future is virtually inevitable'

On the heels of the World Bank's recent dire warning that an influenza pandemic would ignite a "major global recession," several UN officials have once again warned about growing complacency toward preparedness for a flu pandemic.

Last Friday, Bernard Vallat, director general of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), warned that the complacency of developing countries where avian flu persists, like Egypt and Indonesia, has hampered efforts to eradicate the virus.

"The problem we have is mainly in the backyards of poor families in Indonesia and Egypt," Vallat said.

Monday, Dr. David Nabarro, the UN's pandemic preparedness czar, said, "things are a lot better now than they were when we started this work in 2005, but they are not good enough. We are still not sufficiently prepared to properly bring a pandemic under control quickly."

It's not a new warning. World Health Organization and other avian flu authorities have been saying for years that too many countries - especially those most at risk - have not been doing enough to monitor and control the virus' spread. But the already developed nations also are said to not be doing enough to assist in adequate global surveillance and monitoring.

HSToday.us also has repeatedly reported on experts' concerns about what they see as global complacency toward pandemic preparedness.

"Now there is fatigue, and the solution is to have new incentives for these people to cooperate with veterinary services in the field of disease policy implementation," Vallat said.

Nearly half of reported deaths from H5N1 have occurred in Indonesia. Egypt has experienced the most deaths outside Asia, with 22 deaths out of 50 reported infections.

With experts predicting that a worst case pandemic would kill hundreds of millions worldwide, the World Bank warned in a report released about a week ago that a pandemic would exact an economic toll in the trillions of dollars and gut global gross domestic product (GDP) by "almost five percent, constituting a major global recession."

"Because such a pandemic would spread very quickly, substantial efforts need to be put into place to develop effective strategies and contingency plans that could be enacted at short notice," the bank concluded.

Vallat said "vaccination is not the solution for the full eradication of the pathogen," which authorities have said may not work because many rural farmers in developing nations are not reporting or are under reporting problems.

Vallat and other experts have said vaccination programs must be accompanied by the culling of birds from infected flocks, farmers compensated and a "ring fence" of targeted vaccinations established. He added that on-going global bird/poultry vaccination programs will take another several years to complete.

Meanwhile, the The Center for Migration and Refugee Studies and the International Organization for Migration reported that refugees and economic migrants from influenza prone areas are a particularly vulnerable group who could spread a pandemic strain of influenza if they are not carefully monitored, quarantined and treated.

Similarly, World Bank economists Andrew Burns, Dominique van der Mensbrugghe and Hans Timmer stated that, "generally speaking, developing countries would be hardest hit, because higher population densities and poverty accentuate the economic impacts."

At the recent Sixth International Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, participating nations were asked to pledge \$500 million towards preparedness and mitigation efforts. That is the annual amount the United Nations says is needed to prepare for a calamitous worldwide pandemic.

More than \$2.7 billion dollars has been promised - and \$1.5 billion delivered - by international donors to supplement the spending by at-risk countries to combat bird flu during the last five years since the lethal virus emerged in Southeast Asia and spread across Asia, Europe and Africa. But even with global preparedness, the

World Bank dismally concluded – as have many pandemic authorities – that “an eventual human pandemic at some unknown point in the future is virtually inevitable.”

<http://www.hstoday.us/content/view/5782/149/>

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New York Times

October 29, 2008

Bio Lab in Galveston Raises Concerns

By JAMES C. MCKINLEY JR

GALVESTON, Tex. — Much of the University of Texas medical school on this island suffered flood damage during Hurricane Ike, except for one gleaming new building, a national biological defense laboratory that will soon house some of the most deadly diseases in the world.

How a laboratory where scientists plan to study viruses like Ebola and Marburg ended up on a barrier island where hurricanes regularly wreak havoc puzzles some environmentalists and community leaders.

“It’s crazy, in my mind,” said Jim Blackburn, an environmental lawyer in Houston. “I just find an amazing willingness among the people on the Texas coast to accept risks that a lot of people in the country would not accept.”

Officials at the laboratory and at the National Institutes of Health, which along with the university is helping to pay for the \$174 million building, say it can withstand any storm the Atlantic hurls at it.

Built atop concrete pylons driven 120 feet into the ground, the seven-floor laboratory was designed to stand up to 140-mile-an-hour winds. Its backup generators and high-security laboratories are 30 feet above sea level.

“The entire island can wash away and this is still going to be here,” Dr. James W. LeDuc, the deputy director of the laboratory, said. “With Hurricane Ike, we had no damage. The only evidence the hurricane occurred was water that was blown under one of the doors and a puddle in the lobby.”

The project enjoyed the strong support of three influential Texas Republicans: President Bush, a former Texas governor; Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison; and the former House majority leader, Tom DeLay, whose district includes part of Galveston County. Officials at the National Institutes of Health, however, say the decision to put the lab here was based purely on the merits. It is to open Nov. 11.

Dr. LeDuc acknowledged that hurricanes would disrupt research. Each time a hurricane approaches the island, scientists will have to stop their experiments and exterminate many of the viruses and bacteria they are studying.

And Hurricane Ike did not provide the worst-case test the laboratory will someday face, some critics say. Ike’s 100-m.p.h. winds were on the low side for a hurricane, yet it still flooded most of the island’s buildings. The university’s teaching hospital, on the same campus as the lab, has been shut down for more than a month.

“The University of Texas should consider locating its biohazards lab away from Galveston Island and out of harm’s way,” Ken Kramer, director of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, said. “As destructive as it was, Hurricane Ike was only a Category 2 storm. A more powerful storm would pose an even greater threat of a biohazards release.”

The laboratory is one of two the Bush administration pushed after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The second is being built at Boston University Medical Center, where it met stiff community resistance.

Not so in Texas, where there was hardly a whimper of protest. For starters, the University of Texas Medical Branch is one of the largest employers on the island of 57,000 people.

In addition, the leaders of the medical school skillfully sold community leaders and politicians on the high-tech safety measures at the lab and on the economic boon to Galveston, an impoverished town in need of the 300 jobs the laboratory would bring.

University leaders met twice a month with community leaders for several years to dispel fears of pathogens escaping. Then they created a permanent advisory committee of residents that included some of their critics.

The campaign to win over residents was effective. In 2004, the university built a small laboratory and won federal approval to study extremely lethal pathogens there. The smaller laboratory — named for Dr. Robert E. Shope, a virus expert — helped persuade federal officials it was feasible to erect the national laboratory next to it.

Nonetheless, some community members remain skeptical about the safety measures.

“It is not a geographically good location, and the safety measures are only as good as the people who work there,” said Jackie Cole, a former City Council member who now serves on a citizen’s advisory board for the laboratory.

Other environmentalists who might have fought the project were bogged down in a battle against a liquid natural gas plant that was to be built in Texas City, a refinery town across a narrow channel from the island.

“It kind of went under the radar,” said Bob Stokes, who heads the Galveston Bay Foundation, a group dedicated to cleaning up water pollution.

Dr. LeDuc and other scientists at the laboratory say it is almost impossible for diseases to escape. The air pressure in the laboratories is kept lower than in surrounding hallways. Even if the double doors into the laboratories are opened accidentally, air rushes in, carrying pathogens up and away through vents to special filters, which are periodically sterilized with formaldehyde and then incinerated.

All the laboratory tables have hoods that suck contaminated air through the vents to the filters, as do the rooms themselves. Liquid waste, feces and urine go to tanks on the first floor, where it is heated to a temperature at which nothing can survive before being put into the sewage system.

Other waste — carcasses of laboratory animals and disposable lab equipment — is sterilized in autoclaves, giant steam-pressure cookers, before being incinerated off site, Dr. LeDuc said.

When hurricanes threaten the island, researchers will shut down their experiments at least 24 hours before landfall, decontaminate the labs and then move the stocks of deadly pathogens into freezers on upper floors, where they are kept at 70 below zero, Dr. Joan Nichols, an associate director of research, said.

Even if the emergency power system were to fail, the freezers can keep the samples of killer diseases dormant for about four days, she said.

The precautions are necessary. The laboratory will do research into some of the nastiest diseases on the planet, among them Ebola, anthrax, tularemia, West Nile virus, drug-resistant tuberculosis, bubonic plague, avian influenza and typhus.

In the top-level secure laboratories, where deadly filoviruses like Ebola are studied, the scientists work in pressurized spacesuits inside rooms with airtight steel doors. Before leaving the secured area, they take a chemical shower for eight minutes in their suits, then a conventional shower, Dr. LeDuc said.

The university’s bid for the laboratory benefited from friends in Washington. Mr. DeLay, who resigned from Congress in 2006, pushed hard to bring the project to his district, as did Mrs. Hutchison, who sits on the Appropriations Committee.

On a visit to Galveston with Mr. Delay in 2005, Mr. Bush said: “This hospital is going to be the Texas center for bioshield research, to help us make sure that our country is well prepared as we engage in the war on terror. No better place, by the way, to do substantial research than right here at the University of Texas.”

Galveston's medical school has long had a top-notch faculty in infectious diseases; the school's proposal beat out bids from the University of California, Davis, the University of Illinois at Chicago and the Wadsworth Center in Albany, among others.

Dr. Rona Hirschberg, a senior program officer at the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases, an agency of the National Institutes of Health, said politics played no role in the decision to build the lab here. The threat of hurricanes was outweighed, she said, by the presence of some of the best virologists in the country, she said.

"You could put it out in the middle of nowhere and it would be a safe, secure facility," Dr. Hirschberg, a molecular biologist, said. "But the research wouldn't get done."

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/29/us/29lab.html?_r=1&th=&emc=th&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin

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Globe and Mail Update

October 29, 2008

Khawaja Guilty on Terror Charges

Colin Freeze

Mohammad Momin Khawaja is a trained terrorist, a terrorist financier and terrorist bomb-builder, a judge ruled this morning, but there was not sufficient evidence to find the suspect knowingly plotted to blow up British targets. Following a landmark legal marathon, Mr. Justice Douglas Rutherford convicted Mr. Khawaja, laying out the reasoning in a 58-page verdict. The Canadian-born al-Qaeda sympathizer was found guilty of the seven terrorist offences he was charged with, though not always to the full extent of what the Crown had alleged.

Mr. Khawaja, a 29-year-old Ottawa resident, was arrested in 2004 while working at his day job of fixing computers for Canada's Foreign Affairs Department. He is only the second man to be convicted under the Anti Terrorism Act, which was passed specifically to cast a wide prosecutorial net after 9/11.

While a young offender was found guilty last month of being a peripheral participant in a terrorist group, it is Mr. Khawaja who can be described a Canada's first true terrorist, as convicted by the 2001 Act.

Ottawa software developer found guilty on five charges of financing and facilitating terrorism. He was also found guilty of two Criminal Code offences related to building a remote-control device intended to trigger bomb blasts. Judging by the ruling, new laws appear to be doing the job they were intended to do, though some crimes remain difficult to prosecute. "Judge Rutherford clearly gives Mr. Khawaja the benefit of the reasonable doubt," said University of Toronto law professor Kent Roach.

For example, while the judge found Mr. Khawaja to be an eager member of a U.K.-based terrorist cell, he also found important distinctions arise from the fact that the Canadian was kept out of the loop on specific plans to kill Londoners by bombing U.K. night clubs and shopping malls.

"One wonders why terrorists like [the British cell members] would share details of such a fertilizer bomb plot with a foreigner like Khawaja, unless it was necessary to do so, and it wasn't," writes Judge Rutherford in his ruling. "He seemed willing to help any way he could. Ask him to send money? He did. Ask him to take supplies to ... Pakistan? He did. Ask him to build a remote detonator device? He did, or was well into a work in progress. "... But his having knowledge of their domestic U.K. bomb plot was not necessary. He wasn't a required link."

The parsing of Mr. Khawaja's mens rea, or "guilty mind" is the most significant part of the verdict. Outside court, defence lawyer Lawrence Greenspon appeared to be upbeat as ever, suggesting it will now be very difficult for prosecutors to seek a life sentence of 25 years at a hearing next month. "What difference does it make? Huge. Huge," Mr. Greenspon, said. "...The charges he was convicted of were far less serious."

Both the Crown and defence said outside court that Mr. Khawaja has likely already served the equivalent of nine years of his eventual penitentiary sentence. Canada generally credits its prisoners two days for every day jailed in pretrial custody, and it's also customary to release most prisoners into halfway houses after they've served two thirds

of their sentence. However Mr. Roach, the law professor, pointed out that terrorist crimes necessarily result in unusually stiff jail sentences. "Parliament seems to be saying they [the counts] shall be served consecutively, rather than concurrently," he said.

Prior to the trial beginning this June, Mr. Greenspon launched a host of legal challenges to Canada's antiterrorism laws and state-secrecy practices. Very little of the actual evidence in the case – which was amassed by Scotland Yard, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, the RCMP and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service – was ever in dispute. As Judge Rutherford pointed out, Mr. Khawaja largely established his mindset with his own words, as written in his intercepted emails (which appear below as they were written).

"I always wanted to be a soldier, cuz when I was like five yrs old me mum and I would read story about Ali radiAlla Anhu and how he chopped off the head of Marhab the kafir [infidel] and about jihad and stuff," reads one of Mr. Khawaja's emails cited by Judge Rutherford.

Another read: "When the kuffar amreekans invaded Afghanistan that was .. the most painful time in my whole life ... it would tear my hear knowing these filthy kaafir dog Americans were bombing our muslim bros and sisters ... Shaykh Usama bin laden is like the most beloved person to me in the whole world, after Allah."

Such emails were exchanged with members of a U.K. terrorist cell whom Mr. Khawaja fell in with first on the Internet, using terms borrowed from Gangsta rap as they expressed common hopes of kicking out what they saw as infidel armies from what they saw as Muslim lands. Mr. Khawaja met his co-conspirators face to face at a Pakistan training camp in 2003, where they had had interactions with "core" al-Qaeda figures.

Judge Rutherford admitted he had trouble following elements of the prosecution's case as the Crown laid out links of a jihadist pipeline that ran recruits from the mosques of London to the mountainous tribal regions of Pakistan. "Abu Muthir was a leader in Pakistan who responded to al-Qaeda higher up, Sheikh Abdul Hadi," reads the verdict. "I have tried to avoid getting lost in the welter of names ..."

In considering the paramilitary training and the shooting of Kalashnikovs at the Malakand, Pakistan, camp in which Mr. Khawaja took part, the judge rejected a defence argument that jihadists are more akin to soldiers than criminals. "There was no such armed conflict in Canada, the United Kingdom or in Pakistan where the acts with which Khawaja is charged, were carried out," Judge Rutherford ruled.

The next year, Mr. Khawaja was spotted by British agents who followed him from the moment he stepped off an Air Canada flight to the moment he got onto his return flight three days later. After meeting up with terrorist ringleaders at Heathrow, Mr. Khawaja was caught on tape making various incriminating remarks, though never implicating himself in knowledge of specific plans or targets.

"There is no direct evidence that Khawaja knew of the ammonium nitrate fertilizer or the consideration of domestic targets," Judge Rutherford ruled. For emphasis he added that "no mention of the fertilizer bomb plot is overheard in Khawaja's presence. Yet there is a lot of talk about it after he returns to Canada."

On March 29, 2004, as British police prepared to raid addresses in the U.K., RCMP officers stormed the Khawaja family home in Orleans, Ont., seizing three assault rifles (one scope and one bayoneted), 640 rounds of ammunition, \$10,000 in cash and literature with titles such as Defence of the Mulsim Lands, Decisive Battles of Islam, and The Martyrs of Bosnia. Also seized was the "Hi-Fi Digimonster" – a prototype circuit-board detonation device built by Mr. Khawaja that was intended to remotely set off a bomb.

The defence immediately sought a publication ban on this evidence, as several members of Mr. Khawaja's family publicly complained the Mounties were racists and that the family was wrongfully targeted simply because they were Muslims.

Eighteen months ago, five members of the British cell were sentenced to life in prison for plotting bombings. During that verdict, it was publicly revealed that Scotland Yard had noted some unarrested co-conspirators, who went on to become the suicide bombers who killed 52 people riding trains and subways in London.

This morning, the seven counts against Mr. Khawaja were weighed. He was found guilty of participating in a terrorist group, because of his paramilitary and weapons training in Pakistan. He was also found guilty of instructing a person to finance terrorism, because he sent thousands of dollars to the U.K. cell through a female friend. He was found guilty of making available property to terrorists, because he encouraged his co-conspirators to make use of his uncle's house in Pakistan. He was found guilty of contributing to a terrorist group, by building the Hi-Fi Digimonster and showing the British cell prototypes of it during his three-day trip to London.

He was also found guilty of what Judge Rutherford called the “basket charge” of facilitating terrorism. Despite all of this, the judge parsed the two counts involving allegations Mr. Khawaja wanted to blow up Londoners. Judge Rutherford found Mr. Khawaja not guilty of the Anti Terrorism Act charge of wanting to cause an explosion at the behest of the U.K. cell, but did find him guilty of the Criminal Code building a detonator intended to cause a deadly explosion.

Similarly, he found Mr. Khawaja not guilty of the Anti Terrorism Act charge of enabling the U.K. cell leader to blow up Londoners, but did find him guilty of Criminal Code charges of keeping an deadly explosive substance.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20081029.wkhawaja1029/BNSStory/National/home>

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NEWSWEEK

October 27, 2008

How to Fight Al Qaeda Now

An ex-CIA analyst talks about the terrorists' power—and their vulnerabilities

John Barry

Bruce Riedel was in the White House Situation Room on 9/11. For 30 years he was one of the CIA's senior analysts of the Middle East, rising to be a special assistant to the President on the National Security Council staff. Now he has written an analysis of Al Qaeda—and a critique of America's strategy in combating it. He outlined his concerns to NEWSWEEK's John Barry. Excerpts:

NEWSWEEK: Why this book now?

Bruce Riedel: I starting writing this book two years when I retired from CIA, because I think Al Qaeda is still the No. 1 threat to America; but there is still much that is misunderstood or not understood about the nature of that threat.

After seven years?

The Bush administration deliberately conflated the Al Qaeda threat with the problem posed by Saddam's Iraq. Then [they] deepened the confusion with the claim that Al Qaeda hated the United States because of our freedoms and our way of life. As [Osama] bin Ladin has said, if that were the case, Al Qaeda would have attacked Sweden. So what is it that motivates AQ and the terrorists that belong to it? A sense that the Islamic world has been under systematic attack by the West for the last century, and that in order to defend itself from Western attack, the Islamic world has to take the war to the United States and its allies in order to drag them into quagmires that will bleed them until they finally admit defeat and leave Islamic world.

By that analysis, Iraq and now Afghanistan suggest Al Qaeda isn ' t doing badly.

Oh, from their standpoint they think they are doing quite well. The world economic financial crisis we are going through now is exactly what Osama bin Ladin predicted would happen when the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began.

Really?

Yes, he warned that the "bleeding wars"—as Al Qaeda refers to them—were going to produce economic chaos in the West. And he pointed specifically to the home-mortgage bubble in the United States. For this he was parodied by many here at the time.

So we've underestimated bin Ladin?

Osama bin Ladin is very bright, however retrograde his analysis. I think it's an evil genius: clever and extraordinarily ruthless, willing to kill thousands to achieve his objective. There is no doubt in my mind that if Al Qaeda could get a nuclear weapon or some other weapon of mass destruction, it would use it. For them, an end has long justified the means.

OK, after seven years of the global war on terror, how stands Al Qaeda now?

Al Qaeda remains the world's first truly global terrorist organization. Think of it as a multinational corporation. It has a CEO and deputy CEO and a propaganda apparatus all headquartered in Pakistan, with franchise operations in Saudi Arabia, in Iraq, another in Yemen, another in North Africa—then with cells throughout the Muslim diaspora in Western Europe, particularly in the U.K. And its tradecraft—its way of doing business, if you like—is very sophisticated. It's a relatively small organization—thousands but not tens of thousands—but one which has been able in the seven years since 2001 to attack literally across the globe, from one end of the Islamic world to another, with "raids," as they call them, into Western Europe. They call 9/11 "the Manhattan Raid." And we know that in August 2006 they came perilously close to another attack in North America, with the attempt to simultaneously blow up 10 jumbo jets en route to North American cities out of Heathrow. That came far nearer to success than most people recognize ... International air travel would have collapsed.

What are Al Qaeda's weaknesses?

Its vulnerabilities are significant. First, its nihilistic resort to violence alienates most Muslims who do not see this as true to Islam. So you begin to see a backlash, with Islamic voices now speaking up. Second, Al Qaeda doesn't have a program. It wants a return to the Caliphate [the Ottoman rule over the Arab world from Constantinople, now Istanbul]. But what would that mean in practice? Al Qaeda points to the Taliban rule in Afghanistan. But by any metric, that was a disaster. And the idea that a complex and sophisticated society like, say, Egypt, could be run like that is nonsense. And everyone knows it.

Some see Al Qaeda's failure to mobilize mass support in the Muslim, and especially Arab, world as a symptom of decline. That's another misunderstanding. Mobilization of the masses is not the objective. Al Qaeda sees itself as a vanguard organization. Its leaders call themselves "The Knights."

So what should we do? Brits like Stella Rimington, the former head of their Security Service, have criticized the U.S. response as overly military.

I think in many respects she is right. We have pursued Al Qaeda by military means—with considerable success. But our war of choice in Iraq has mobilized, I suspect, the next two generations of recruits to Al Qaeda. Meanwhile, we haven't tackled the fundamental challenge, which I call attacking Al Qaeda's narrative—its reading of history. Al Qaeda's anti-Western message gains traction from the belief, widespread among Muslims, that the U.S. doesn't respect the Muslim world. So, of course we must pursue Al Qaeda's leadership and its propaganda apparatus; we must go after the franchises. But we need at the same time to use our diplomatic strength far more effectively and consistently than we have, to settle those issues of importance to Muslims. Top of the list are the Israel-Palestinian dispute and Kashmir. On Palestine, we must enter vigorously into final negotiations for a settlement based on the two-state solution. And I think Kashmir is resolvable: India's reopening of a trade route through Kashmir—after 60 years—is a hopeful sign. I think India shares all our worries about Pakistan.

Pakistan looms as the next big crisis, doesn't it?

Pakistan is crucial. It was a base for Al Qaeda or its adherents even before 9/11. Now Pakistan itself is under attack. It finds itself both patron and victim. But there is hope. Pakistan now has a democratically elected civilian government. The new government is on a learning curve. But its leaders clearly recognize the dimensions of the problem they face. We have to work with them, and give them all the help we can. That will need very sophisticated

handling. Personally, I'd like to see us mount a Marshall Plan for Pakistan and Afghanistan. Not just economic support, but a real effort to bring education and the other basics of a modern society that they desperately need.

Bruce Riedel Is The Author Of "The Search For Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, And Future" (Brookings Institution Press. \$26.95)

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/165952/page/1>

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The Weekly Standard

October 31, 2008

Duplicity in Damascus

The complicated relationship between Syria and al Qaeda.

by David Schenker

When it comes to al Qaeda, Syria gets it coming and going. This past Sunday, U.S. helicopters targeted an al Qaeda operative on Syrian territory who shuttled terrorists into Iraq. Syria condemned the strike as a violation of its sovereignty and a "serious aggression." Earlier in October, a massive car bomb detonated in Damascus, killing 17. Even before the smoke cleared, Syria's Assad regime accused Sunni Muslim fundamentalists from abroad--i.e., al Qaeda--of perpetrating the attack. Meanwhile, regime spokesmen described Syria as a "victim" of international terrorism.

The characterization of Syria as "victim" was ironic not only because Damascus has been a proactive member of the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism since 1979--sponsoring Hamas and Hezbollah, among others--but because just one day before the attack, the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia levied a mammoth civil judgment against Syria for "providing material support and resources to Zarqawi and Al Qaeda in Iraq."

The verdict awarded \$414 million to the families of two U.S. contractors--Jack Armstrong and Jack Hensley--beheaded in Iraq in September 2004.

Due to the opaque nature of the authoritarian Assad regime, it will likely never be clear who was actually responsible for the bombing. Syria routinely engages in conspiracies, so it's no surprise that conspiracy theories have proliferated regarding the culprit, with explanations alternately implicating the Iranians, the Israelis, and even the Assad regime itself. Adding to the uncertainty, some Western-based al Qaeda analysts say the assault lacked many of the organization's signature traits.

Notwithstanding the speculation, let's assume for the moment that al Qaeda did sponsor the attack. If so, it should have come as no surprise to Damascus: As the experiences of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan demonstrate, al Qaeda has a track record of attacking its sponsors.

Since 2002, the Assad regime has facilitated the movement through its territory of al Qaeda fighters bound for Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. It has allowed these insurgents to train in Syria and has provided sanctuary to al Qaeda-affiliated killers of Americans. By and large, this policy purchased Syria immunity from attacks. Along the way, however, these terrorists appear to have planted local roots.

In the lead up to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, when it became clear that Syria was helping shuttle Islamist insurgents to Iraq, Washington warned Damascus of the folly of this policy. U.S. diplomats in Damascus repeatedly told the Syrian government that Islamists posed a threat to the secular nationalist regime.

Damascus's logic was based on its opposition to the establishment of a pro-Western government in Baghdad. As then Foreign Minister Farouq Shara said in 2003, "Syria's interest is to see the invaders defeated in Iraq." But the Assad regime failed to take into account the dynamic of the al Qaeda's relations with its "friends." In Pakistan, for example, the intelligence service long supported al Qaeda, but the state nonetheless remained a high value target of the organization.

In al Qaeda's evolving strategy, targeting is not contingent on a state's political orientation or on the assistance it receives from governments. Basically, the organization has no qualms about biting the hand that feeds it, whether the patron is Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, or Syria. In this regard, if the Syrians are telling the truth about who perpetrated the attack, it is a clear case of the chickens coming home to roost.

Ultimately, Damascus's newfound problem with al Qaeda may change the Assad regime's permissive attitude toward the group, but it's unlikely to have any impact on Syrian support for Hezbollah and Hamas. These longstanding relationships with Islamist terrorist organizations are closely linked to the 30-year strategic alliance between Damascus and Tehran.

For the next U.S. administration, Syrian support for al Qaeda should prove a cautionary tale about the limits of diplomatic engagement in curtailing Syrian support for terrorism. The Assad regime has trucked with Islamist terrorists for decades, and provides no indication that it would be willing to sever these relationships. Senior Israeli officials--including likely incoming prime minister Tzipi Livni--have stated that a peace deal is contingent on Syria's abandoning Tehran, forsaking terror, and joining the Western camp. Syria has responded emphatically and repeatedly that this kind of strategic reorientation is not in the cards.

During the presidential debates, there were sharp disagreements as to how Washington should best treat rogue states. Regardless of whether the next administration is led by Barack Obama or John McCain, however, many observers believe that Washington will look to reengage in high-level diplomacy with Damascus and perhaps even consent to mediate Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations. Indeed, there are some indications that the Bush administration is already pursuing this tack.

Changing Syria's orientation would be of great benefit, but experience suggests it's not a realistic hope. While many excuse Syrian ties to Hamas and Hezbollah as "cards" that will someday be traded during negotiations, the revelations about the ties to al Qaeda highlight just how inimical the Assad regime's worldview is to U.S. interests. Support for terrorism appears to be intrinsic to the regime. Given this dynamic, U.S. diplomacy with Damascus stands little chance of success.

David Schenker is the director of the Program on Arab Politics at the Washington Institute.

http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer_preview.asp?idArticle=15766&R=13C8720FD4

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Washington Times

October 31, 2008

The Counterterror Raid on Sukkariyeh, Syria

Austin Bay

No military operation is riskier than a commando raid. Extreme physical danger and the potentially high payoff if the operation succeeds are two reasons a dramatic raid has box-office appeal in Hollywood.

The U.S. raid last weekend certainly involved immense personal risk by the two-dozen special operations soldiers who entered the Syrian village of Sukkariyeh and shot it out with Abu Ghadiya, believed to be an al Qaeda commander, and his personal cohort. The London Times reported Abu Ghadiya was al Qaeda in Iraq's "commander for Syrian logistics."

The raid also entailed political risks. Syria howled, Russia yelped, even Iraq deplored it - but that is surface political rhetoric. For five years, Iraqis have complained of "foreign fighter" and terrorist infiltration from Syria. Baghdad has no sympathy for a beast like Abu Ghadiya, whose "foreign fighters" murdered thousands of Iraqis.

Special operations missions are by necessity covert operations. High-risk missions like gathering intelligence on enemy ground, resupplying allied guerrilla groups and conducting a raid to seize prisoners require secrecy for success. Covert usually means politically deniable - hence the term "shadow warfare" for these special operations and intelligence missions.

The U.S. raid into Syria was a surprise strike, but there was little denial. The U.S. military confirmed the raid.

So did Syrians living in Sukkariyeh in particular, one man who showed a reporter video of U.S. helicopters buzzing his town. He shot the video using his cell phone. New technology has added light and reduced the shadow for special ops.

Sukkariyeh lies close to the Syria-Iraq border. Abu Ghadiyah was in charge of the "rat line" that moved money, weapons, explosives and the "foreign volunteers" through Syria into Iraq.

Supply lines and infiltration routes run by al Qaeda and members of Saddam's regime have been operating out of Syria since 2004. In 2004, two different people told me that in 2003, after Saddam Hussein's regime collapsed, several of Saddam's former Ba'ath Party subordinates received financial support from confederates or sympathizers in Syria. But iron-clad intelligence connecting thugs to financiers was lacking.

The intelligence now available to U.S. and Iraqi forces is much more certain. As a result, the shade for al Qaeda has also diminished.

The "rat lines" in Iraq have been badly damaged. StrategyPage.com recently reported that in the last six months "U.S. and Iraqi forces have shut down most of the smuggling gangs inside Iraq, at least those that specialize in supporting terrorists."

The Sukkariyeh attack "rolls the rat line up" another notch - a major notch. The London Times quoted an unnamed U.S. official: "As targets present themselves and are identified, they become more and more at risk. Just like in Pakistan, there will be steps taken to deal with it."

U.S. presidential campaign rhetoric to the contrary, the United States is constantly stalking al Qaeda. We hear about it occasionally, with Air Force gunship strikes in Somalia and CIA-operated Predator unmanned aerial vehicles firing missiles in Pakistan. The Sukkariyeh raid is a more explicit statement that al Qaeda remains in the bull's-eye.

It has taken a lot of effort to shrink al Qaeda's shade. People provide the kind of intelligence it takes to make the case for a cross-border raid into an allegedly neutral country.

Again, campaign rhetoric to the contrary, the change in Iraq's political environment has seeded this improvement in intelligence. Iraq offers a new political choice - democracy - in the Arab Muslim Middle East, a region where choice has been limited to either tyranny or terrorism.

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<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/oct/31/the-counterterror-raid-on-sukkariyeh-syria/print/>

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Al-Qaida's Route Though Syria Persists

Investigation finds border smugglers still paving way for attacks inside Iraq

BAGHDAD - For years, he operated along Syria's remote border where donkeys are the only means of travel. He provided young Arabs from as far away as Morocco and the Persian Gulf with passports, guides and weapons as they slipped into Iraq to wage war. But recently, the Iraqi man known as Abu Ghadiyah began doing even more — launching his own armed forays into his homeland, U.S. and Iraqi officials say. Finally the United States lashed out, frustrated it says, after years of vainly pressuring Syria to shut down his network supplying the Sunni insurgency.

The Americans carried out a bold daylight raid Sunday in a dusty farming community of mud and concrete houses known as Abu Kamal, just across the border in Syria. The U.S. says Abu Ghadiyah and several bodyguards were killed. Syria says eight civilians died. At least one villager says U.S. forces seized two men and hauled them away.

Whatever Abu Ghadiyah's fate, the attack targeting him has become a seminal moment — casting rare light on the hidden, complex networks that recruit foreign fighters and then deliver them across Syria to the battlefields of Iraq.

A murky web

Syria has long insisted it monitors the border and does all it can to stop weapons and fighters. "They know full well that we stand against al-Qaida," Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem said Monday in London. "They know full well we are trying to tighten our border with Iraq." But the raid and U.S. documents — recently made public — indicate that insurgents operating in the Syrian border region are still providing the material that enables suicide attacks, bombings and ambushes to continue inside Iraq.

Even as the insurgency has fallen on rough times — battered and bleeding but not yet defeated — the networks themselves have become more organized, the documents indicate. That raises fears the insurgency could someday arise anew. The documents also shed light on the murky web of religious extremists, professional smugglers and corrupt Syrian intelligence officials who run the smuggling networks — some of whom view Syria's government in faraway Damascus with contempt.

Until the raid, Abu Ghadiyah, whose real name was Badran Turki al-Mazidih, was mostly unknown outside a tight circle of Western and Iraqi intelligence officers. They tracked his movements, and the al-Qaida commanders who relied on his services, believing him a senior figure in al-Qaida in Iraq.

Abu Ghadiyah housed his recruits both in Damascus and the Syrian port of Latakia before moving them across the Iraqi border, one senior Iraqi security officer said Tuesday. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to media. Scores of people are involved in the smuggling networks, officials say. But Iraqi police held special disdain for Abu Ghadiyah, a native of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul believed to be in his early 30s.

Last May, Abu Ghadiyah led a dozen gunmen across the border and attacked an Iraqi police station in Qaim, killing 12 policemen, Iraqi police Lt. Col. Falah al-Dulaimi told The Associated Press on Tuesday. Syrian border guards prevented an Iraqi patrol from pursuing the gunmen back into Syria, the police officer said.

Smuggling fighters

Sunday's raid was launched because of intelligence that Abu Ghadiyah was planning another attack inside Iraq, a senior U.S. official told The Associated Press, also speaking anonymously because the information is classified. Much of the publicly known information about networks such as Abu Ghadiyah's comes from documents seized during a U.S. military raid last year on a suspected al-Qaida hideout in the Iraqi city of Sinjar. Those documents include records of about 590 foreign volunteers who entered Iraq from Syria, according to the Combating Terrorism Center at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The center released a report last July based largely on the documents.

According to the documents, nearly 100 Syrian coordinators are involved in transporting foreign fighters through Syria. Some are professional smugglers apparently hired by al-Qaida in purely business deals. Others are motivated by al-Qaida's hardline Islamic ideology. Abu Ghadiyah's real beliefs are unclear, but a U.S. Treasury document says he was appointed as al-Qaida in Iraq's logistics chief for Syria by the group's founder, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. That suggests Abu Ghadiyah was indeed a true believer.

Coordinators' fees

The coordinators worked with the young Arab volunteers recorded in the Sinjar documents — most of whom came from Saudi Arabia and Libya, with others from as far away as Morocco, Algeria and Yemen. The volunteers made their way to Syria — some directly from their home countries and others by way of Egypt or Turkey — where they linked up with the coordinators. Some coordinators charged up to \$2,500 to help the volunteer fighters reach Iraq. Once provided with passports and other documents, the volunteers traveled to border areas, where they entered Iraq on foot along with guides from local tribes. Since 2004, Abu Ghadiyah has organized and supervised much of that traffic, according to U.S. officials.

Interestingly, U.S. officials say they believe that Syria has tried from time to time to crack down on the smugglers and tighten controls along the 350-mile border, bolstering security patrols and erecting sand berms. But Syria has been unable to keep up the pressure, in part because its government needs support from local tribes and revenue from the bribes the smugglers pay to local officials, according to the Combating Terrorism Center study. Those sensitivities are apparent in Abu Kamal, where people wear traditional Iraqi clothing and speak with Iraqi accents. "Most of the inhabitants of the area originally come from areas of Iraq, and there are very strong family ties until this day," said Ahmed al-Khalifa, a lawyer from Abu Kamal. "There is strong sympathy here with whatever happens in Iraq."

New wave

Even before the insurgency began, those feelings of kinship encouraged hundreds of volunteers from eastern Syria to pass through Abu Kamal to Iraq to defend the country against U.S. forces in the 2003 invasion. After Saddam Hussein's regime collapsed, Syria set up new checkpoints around the town to prevent more volunteers from getting to Iraq, the terrorism center report said. But Syrian public outrage over U.S. attacks against Iraqi Sunnis in Fallujah in 2004 prompted the Syrians to relax the restrictions and allow more fighters — this time many of them Saudis — to enter Iraq, the report said.

A third wave of volunteers began in 2006 as fighting between Iraqi Sunnis and Shiites intensified, the report said. The current wave is continuing, although at a lower level because many Iraqi Sunnis have abandoned the insurgency. There may be plenty of others to take Abu Ghadiyah's place, the U.S. says — including a brother Akram, and a cousin Ghazi Fezza al-Mazidih, whom the U.S. described in a February report as his "right hand man." Overall, the number of foreign fighters attracted to Iraq may be down, the West Point study cautioned, "But the logistical network to move them has become more organized."

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