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MaximsNews Network
15 December 2008

The Official Obama-Biden U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda for Security and U.S. Standing in the World:

The Obama-Biden Plan: Foreign Policy Agenda

Barack Obama and Joe Biden will renew America's security and standing in the world through a new era of American leadership. The Obama-Biden foreign policy will end the war in Iraq responsibly, finish the fight against the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan, secure nuclear weapons and loose nuclear materials from terrorists, and renew American diplomacy to support strong alliances and to seek a lasting peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Afghanistan and Pakistan

- **Afghanistan:** Obama and Biden will refocus American resources on the greatest threat to our security -- the resurgence of al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan. They will increase our troop levels in Afghanistan, press our allies in NATO to do the same, and dedicate more resources to revitalize Afghanistan's economic development. Obama and Biden will demand the Afghan government do more, including cracking down on corruption and the illicit opium trade.
- **Pakistan:** Obama and Biden will increase nonmilitary aid to Pakistan and hold them accountable for security in the border region with Afghanistan.

Nuclear Weapons

- **A Record of Results:** The gravest danger to the American people is the threat of a terrorist attack with a nuclear weapon and the spread of nuclear weapons to dangerous regimes. Obama has taken bipartisan action to secure nuclear weapons and materials:
 - He joined Senator Dick Lugar (R-In) in passing a law to help the United States and our allies detect and stop the smuggling of weapons of mass destruction throughout the world.
 - He joined Senator Chuck Hagel (R-Ne) to introduce a bill that seeks to prevent nuclear terrorism, reduce global nuclear arsenals, and stop the spread of nuclear weapons.
- **Secure Loose Nuclear Materials from Terrorists:** Obama and Biden will secure all loose nuclear materials in the world within four years. While working to secure existing stockpiles of nuclear material, Obama and Biden will negotiate a verifiable global ban on the production of new nuclear weapons material. This will deny terrorists the ability to steal or buy loose nuclear materials.
- **Strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty:** Obama and Biden will crack down on nuclear proliferation by strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty so that countries like North Korea and Iran that break the rules will automatically face strong international sanctions.
- **Move Toward a Nuclear Free World:** Obama and Biden will set a goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and pursue it. Obama and Biden will always maintain a strong deterrent as long as nuclear

weapons exist. But they will take several steps down the long road toward eliminating nuclear weapons. They will stop the development of new nuclear weapons; work with Russia to take U.S. and Russian ballistic missiles off hair trigger alert; seek dramatic reductions in U.S. and Russian stockpiles of nuclear weapons and material; and set a goal to expand the U.S.-Russian ban on intermediate-range missiles so that the agreement is global.

Iran

- **Diplomacy:** Barack Obama supports tough and direct diplomacy with Iran without preconditions. Now is the time to use the power of American diplomacy to pressure Iran to stop their illicit nuclear program, support for terrorism, and threats toward Israel. Obama and Biden will offer the Iranian regime a choice. If Iran abandons its nuclear program and support for terrorism, we will offer incentives like membership in the World Trade Organization, economic investments, and a move toward normal diplomatic relations. If Iran continues its troubling behavior, we will step up our economic pressure and political isolation. In carrying out this diplomacy, we will coordinate closely with our allies and proceed with careful preparation. Seeking this kind of comprehensive settlement with Iran is our best way to make progress.

Energy Security

- **Achieving Energy Security:** Obama will put America on a path to energy independence by investing \$150 billion in renewable and alternative energy over the next ten years -- an investment that will create millions of jobs along the way. He'll also make the U.S. a leader in the global effort to combat climate change by leading a new international global warming partnership.

Renewing American Diplomacy

- **Renew our Alliances:** Obama and Biden will rebuild our alliances to meet the common challenges of the 21st century. America is strongest when we act alongside strong partners. Now is the time for a new era of international cooperation that strengthens old partnerships and builds new ones to confront the common challenges of the 21st century -- terrorism and nuclear weapons; climate change and poverty; genocide and disease.
- **Talk to our Foes and Friends:** Obama and Biden will pursue tough, direct diplomacy without preconditions with all nations, friend and foe. They will do the careful preparation necessary, but will signal that America is ready to come to the table and is willing to lead. And if America is willing to come to the table, the world will be more willing to rally behind American leadership to deal with challenges like confronting terrorism and Iran and North Korea's nuclear programs.
- **Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:** Obama and Biden will make progress on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a key diplomatic priority from day one. They will make a sustained push -- working with Israelis and Palestinians -- to achieve the goal of two states, a Jewish state in Israel and a Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security.
- **Expand our Diplomatic Presence:** To make diplomacy a priority, Obama and Biden will stop shuttering consulates and start opening them in difficult corners of the world -- particularly in Africa. They will expand our foreign service, and develop our civilian capacity to work alongside the military.
- **Fight Global Poverty:** Obama and Biden will embrace the Millennium Development Goal of cutting extreme poverty around the world in half by 2015, and they will double our foreign assistance to achieve that goal. This will help the world's weakest states build healthy and educated communities, reduce poverty, develop markets, and generate wealth.
- **Seek New Partnerships in Asia:** Obama and Biden will forge a more effective framework in Asia that goes beyond bilateral agreements, occasional summits, and ad hoc arrangements, such as the six-party talks on North Korea. They will maintain strong ties with allies like Japan, South Korea and Australia; work to build an infrastructure with countries in East Asia that can promote stability and prosperity; and work to ensure that China plays by international rules.

Israel

- **Ensure a Strong U.S.-Israel Partnership:** Barack Obama and Joe Biden strongly support the U.S.-Israel relationship, and believe that our first and incontrovertible commitment in the Middle East must be to the security of Israel, America's strongest ally in the region. They support this closeness, and have stated that the United States will never distance itself from Israel.
- **Support Israel's Right to Self Defense:** During the July 2006 Lebanon war, Barack Obama stood up strongly for Israel's right to defend itself from Hezbollah raids and rocket attacks, cosponsoring a Senate resolution against Iran and Syria's involvement in the war, and insisting that Israel should not be pressured into a ceasefire that did not deal with the threat of Hezbollah missiles. He and Joe Biden believe strongly in Israel's right to protect its citizens.
- **Support Foreign Assistance to Israel:** Barack Obama and Joe Biden have consistently supported foreign assistance to Israel. They defend and support the annual foreign aid package that involves both military and economic assistance to Israel and have advocated increased foreign aid budgets to ensure that these funding priorities are met. They have called for continuing U.S. cooperation with Israel in the development of missile defense systems.

Bipartisanship and Openness

- **A Record of Bringing People Together:** In the Senate, Obama has worked with Republicans and Democrats to advance important policy initiatives on securing weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, increasing funding for nonproliferation, and countering instability in Congo.
- **Consultative Group:** Obama and Biden will convene a bipartisan Consultative Group of leading members of Congress to foster better executive-legislative relations and bipartisan unity on foreign policy. This group will be comprised of the congressional leadership of both political parties, and the chair and ranking members of the Armed Services, Foreign Relations, Intelligence, and Appropriations Committees. This group will meet with the president once a month to review foreign policy priorities, and will be consulted in advance of military action.
- **Getting Politics out of Intelligence:** Obama will insulate the Director of National Intelligence from political pressure by giving the DNI a fixed term, like the Chairman of the Federal Reserve. Obama and Biden will seek consistency and integrity at the top of our intelligence community -- not just a political ally.
- **Change the Culture of Secrecy:** Obama will institute a National Declassification Center to make declassification secure but routine, efficient, and cost-effective.
- **Engaging the American People on Foreign Policy:** Obama and Biden will bring foreign policy decisions directly to the people by requiring their national security officials to have periodic national broadband town hall meetings to discuss foreign policy. Obama will personally deliver Your Weekly Address via webcast.

<http://www.maximsnews.com/news20081215obamaforeignpolicystatement10812150102.htm>

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World Politics Review
08 Dec 2008

The Pakistan Problem: Adviser's Views Provide Clues to Obama Approach

Seth McLaughlin

Ten years ago, Bruce Riedel sent a memo to his boss, then-President Bill Clinton. In it, he called Pakistan the most dangerous country in the world. A ticking time bomb.

Riedel's reasons were many. Armed with nuclear weapons, Pakistan sponsored terrorists, was awash in drugs and consistently teetered on the verge of war with neighboring India, its nuclear rival. Later, he called it a "hothouse of terror."

Today, little has changed and Riedel, reportedly tapped as President-elect Barack Obama's Pakistan adviser, continues to bristle at the problems the nation of 165 million people poses for the United States.

"All of the nightmares of the 21st century come together in Pakistan: nuclear proliferation, drug smuggling, military dictatorship, and above all, international terrorism," [he recently wrote](#). "For the next American president, there is no issue or country more critical to get right."

Following the terrorist attacks last week in India that killed at least 160 people, Riedel, who could not be reached for comment, provided another glimpse into his global thinking. While it may be too early to pin blame for the attacks, [he wrote](#), "the most dangerous terror menace comes from Kashmiri groups based in Pakistan with long and intimate connections to al Qaeda and bin Laden."

Like many other analysts, Riedel maintained that the attacks are part of a global jihad and that Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) -- a terrorist group created in the late 1980s by Kashmiri activists with the assistance of the Pakistani intelligence service (ISI) -- could be responsible for them. That possibility has increased tensions between Pakistan and India and fueled speculation that Pakistan will shift thousands of troops from its Afghan border to its border with India, making life harder for the 34,000 American troops stationed in Afghanistan.

Described as a careful, calm, and thorough person, Riedel, a career government bureaucrat with a resume that includes stints at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the National Security Council (NSC), started advising Obama during the presidential race. So it's not surprising that a careful look at Obama's campaign speeches and debate answers suggests that the next president's plans for Pakistan are plucked directly from Riedel's writings.

But, in recent weeks, Riedel hasn't been the only high-ranking official now talking about Pakistan as a tripwire for global conflict. On Nov. 13, [CIA Director Michael Hayden gave a blunt assessment](#) of the country, saying that an al-Qaida operating in Pakistan's tribal belt "remains the most clear and present danger to the safety of the United States."

The point was driven home in a report released this week by the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism, a congressional task force. "Were one to map terrorism and weapons of mass destruction today, all roads would intersect in Pakistan," the report stated.

"Pakistan is our ally, but there is a grave danger it could also be an unwitting source of a terrorist attack on the United States -- possibly with weapons of mass destruction," the commission warned.

Still, as Obama gears up for his new job and the lame duck Bush administration cobbles together a revised road map for dealing with the regional puzzle, Pakistan's future remains a complicated, potentially bloody, mess.

Even U.S. Army Gen. David Petraeus -- fresh from directing the surge in Iraq and installed as commander of Central Command -- has had to pause, turning to authors and journalists, including Shuja Nawaz and Ahmed Rashid, for tips on devising a winning strategy for Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Asked about his conversations with Petraeus, Nawaz, the author of "Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army, and the Wars Within," respectfully declined to comment. But he did tell World Politics Review, "My guess is that [the Obama administration] may change the tenor of the conversation with Pakistan. This is an important development if it occurs."

What Riedel, Nawaz and Rashid have maintained is that many of the country's chronic problems are anchored along the country's 1,500-mile border with Afghanistan and in its largely lawless tribal belt, known as the

Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Seven years after U.S.-led forces toppled the Afghanistan Taliban, the FATA has become a beehive for Taliban and al-Qaida fighters. Also, it is the likely lair of Osama bin Laden.

An assortment of extremist groups use the area as a mountainous headquarters from which to plan and launch attacks against American troops in Afghanistan, as well as Pakistani army and civilian targets, including 56 suicide bombings last year.

Militants based in the FATA were also likely involved in the December 2007 murder of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, as well as the deadly attacks last week in Mumbai and previous clashes in Kashmir. Recently, they have reached deeper into Pakistan's more settled regions -- notably the September bombing of the Marriott hotel in Islamabad.

The numbers tell a frightening tale. By Riedel's count, there were 1,300 terrorist incidents in Pakistan in 2007, compared to 657 in 2006.

Pakistani forces responded this summer with military operations in Bajaur, a region considered a hub for al-Qaida's operations in northeastern Afghanistan. Hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis have fled their homes, and military officials have said more than 1,500 rebels, at least 73 soldiers, and nearly 100 civilians have died.

Pakistan, however, continues to be criticized for not stepping up its efforts to root out the terrorist groups that threaten their country and the region. The skepticism about Pakistan's commitment is fueled in part by the historical hand Pakistan's ISI has had in providing Islamic militants with operational and financial support.

Given the volatile situation, it comes as no surprise that Obama would tap Riedel early on and that Petraeus made Pakistan the first stop on his inaugural foreign tour since becoming head of U.S. Central Command.

During Petraeus' trip, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari warned the general that the next U.S. president must stop the unpopular missile attacks on insurgents in Pakistan, or risk losing the battle against extremism. The strikes, Zardari argued, kill civilians, undercutting the government's ability to get the public behind the war against militants. Recently, Pakistani military officials hinted they would shoot down unmanned U.S. drones.

But many, including Obama, suggest that as long as Pakistan is either unwilling or unable to control its territory and take out al-Qaida leaders, the U.S. must consider continued attacks on extremists hiding in Pakistan.

Things could get worse thanks to a suspected U.S. drone attack on Nov. 20, which marked the first such attack outside the Tribal areas. The attack, like those before it, fanned anti-American sentiment and left Rashid, author of "Taliban" and "Descent into Chaos," [wondering aloud on NPR](#), "Does this now mean missile strikes will continue wherever these militants move?"

Meanwhile, Pakistan's history suggests it's just a matter of time before the military overthrows the civilian government that swept into power in the February elections.

"The military is still very much the single most important component of power in Pakistan," Simon Henderson, of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, told WPR. "It is just not claiming the top position at the moment. They are happy in the current position of letting Zardari notionally have the strings of power and let him make his own mistakes."

The 62-year-old country has been under authoritarian rule for more than half of its existence. Riedel attributes many of Pakistan's problems -- the influence of jihadi extremists and difficult relations with Afghanistan and India -- to an army that "has defined the national security agenda since partition in terms of the threat posed by India."

Former-President Pervez Musharraf, who was steadfastly backed by the Bush administration, resigned in

August, seven months after his party's resounding defeat at the ballot box foreshadowed his downfall. Despite his military rule and a on-again, off-again commitment to counterterrorism, Musharaff received nearly \$12 billion in aid from the Bush administration and Congress after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

While many political observers continue to wonder where all the money went, many Pakistanis blame Musharraf's friendly ties to the United States for increased terrorist activity inside their country. Nawaz said that has put the new civilian government in the awkward position of fighting violent extremists while trying not to be "labeled as American puppets or stooges."

Walter Andersen, director of South Asia Studies at John Hopkins University, shares Nawaz's view. He told WPR that anti-American sentiment has forced the democratically elected government "to adopt a very cautious policy toward militant Islam and the activities of the U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan."

In fact, [a recent poll by the International Republican Institute](http://www.iri.org/mena/pakistan/pdfs/2008_July_17_Survey_of_Pakistan_Public_Opinion_June_1-15_2008.pdf)http://www.iri.org/mena/pakistan/pdfs/2008_July_17_Survey_of_Pakistan_Public_Opinion_June_1-15_2008.pdf (.pdf) says only 15 percent of Pakistanis think their country should cooperate with the U.S. "on its war against terror."

The new government has made some positive baby-steps, including the parliament's passage of a resolution in October that vaguely declared that Pakistani territory will not be used for attacks against any neighboring state. Before the attacks in Mumbai, Pakistan also appeared to be improving relations with India by pledging to adhere to a "no first use" nuclear weapons doctrine and opening trade in parts of Kashmir. Now it has vowed to help India investigate the Mumbai attacks.

Still, [Riedel last month wrote](http://www.currenthistory.com/Article.php?ID=617)<http://www.currenthistory.com/Article.php?ID=617>, "Many in Pakistan worry that as Pakistan transitions from Musharaff's decade of dictatorship to civilian elected rule, the army and the ISI will deliberately provoke India in order to underscore their importance to Pakistan's national security."

In an attempt to erase doubts about the military encroaching on government affairs, new Army chief Gen. Ashfaq Kiyani has expressed his intention to return the army to its professional roots and leave governing up to elected officials.

Kiyani appears to have lived up to his promise of not allowing the army to interfere with the February election. He also won kudos for replacing the head of the ISI under Musharaff with an army general thought to be more responsive to elected officials and less hostile toward America.

But the skepticism remains. "In a country that has seen too many army chiefs change their minds about this relationship with the civilians, many still believe that he may either change his stance or be forced to do so by deteriorating circumstances in the country," Nawaz said.

It also remains to be seen whether the moves will change the ISI, which has a reputation for supporting Taliban fighters in Afghanistan and jihadist groups fighting India in Kashmir. More recently, the ISI is alleged to have been involved in an assassination attempt of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, an Indian ally, and the July 7 car bombing of the India embassy in Kabul that killed two senior Indian officials. It also has been accused of having a hand in attacks in Northeast India.

The scenario has left U.S. officials hesitant to share information on cross-border or drone attacks because they fear sympathetic members of Pakistan's intelligent service will tip off extremist targets.

Obama's foreign policy views, following the terrorist attacks in Mumbai, are moving out of the shadows of the economic crisis and onto the front burner. While it is unclear how the new administration will act, the president-elect provided some insight on the campaign trail and Riedel has a long paper trail.

"We can't coddle, as we did, a dictator, give him billions of dollars and then he's making peace treaties with the Taliban and militants," Obama said in the second presidential debate in October, referring to the Bush administration's ties to Musharraf. "We're going to encourage democracy in Pakistan, expand our nonmilitary

aid to Pakistan so that they have more of a stake in working with us, but insisting that they go after these militants."

The comments suggest that the president-elect, like Riedel, wants a multipronged policy toward Pakistan that includes diplomatic talks with neighboring countries, even moderate elements of the Taliban; a larger aid package, perhaps in the form of the \$1.5 billion-a-year Biden-Lugar plan; and more troops in Afghanistan.

"At the same time," Obama wrote last year in *Foreign Affairs*, "I will encourage dialogue between Pakistan and India to work toward resolving their dispute over Kashmir."

That's smart, Nawaz told WPR prior to the attacks in India. "No one is focusing on Pakistan-India relations," he said. "The possibility of peace or war is huge between India and Pakistan. It's a very fine balance."

To bolster the case for a larger international force in Afghanistan, Rashid, who has met with Obama, said in a recent NPR interview that he expects Vice President-elect Joe Biden to travel to Europe to speak with NATO allies shortly after the new president is sworn in on Jan. 20. And, at least during the new president's honeymoon period, Rashid predicted Obama's overseas appeal will make Biden's request hard to turn down.

Riedel, meanwhile, argues additional civilian aid to Pakistan should be earmarked for schools, highways and transportation infrastructure -- part of an effort to improve the country's poor literacy rate and struggling economy. And any additional military aid, Riedel says, must require a shift in the "current focus on fighting a war with India, along the lines of the past four wars, and toward a focus on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism." The "army needs to stay in the barracks and out of politics," and "the ISI needs to be entirely on the side of fighting terror, not both sides," he said.

The attacks in India served as a reminder that resolving the conflict in Kashmir is arguably the most delicate, dangerous and important issue in the region.

Accordingly, Riedel says any possible U.S. involvement must be "quiet and discreet."

"In this new-era of U.S.-Indian strategic partnership, Washington should be prepared to be more flexible on Kashmir," Riedel says. "It is clearly in the American interest to try to defuse a lingering conflict that has generated global terrorism and repeatedly threatened to spark a full scale military confrontation on the subcontinent."

Solving Kashmir could help Pakistan move away from its paranoia about India and focus on the terrorists along its border. In turn, Riedel believes it would encourage Pakistan to cut all its ties to terrorist organizations, including LeT, the group possibly behind the Mumbai attacks. Ten years after Riedel warned President Clinton that Pakistan could explode, it's Obama's turn to try to defuse the ticking time bomb.

<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articlePrint.aspx?ID=3011>

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World Politics Review
16 Dec 2008

Global Insights: Gates' Pentagon War

Richard Weitz

Earlier this month, the [Pentagon issued a directive](#) raising "irregular warfare" (IW) to the same level of importance as conventional battles. The December 2008 directive defines IW as operations to fight terrorists and insurgents, enhance the defense capacity of foreign governments, and promote stability in conflict-prone regions. It asserts that it is now Department of Defense policy "to recognize that IW is as strategically important as traditional warfare."

Although the U.S. armed forces have long performed these tasks, most recently in Afghanistan and Iraq, the military has often done so only with great reluctance.

The Pentagon developed considerable expertise in fighting guerrillas during the Vietnam War. When the U.S. military role in the conflict ended, however, senior commanders reverted to their longstanding focus on preparing to win major conventional wars in Europe and Asia. This neglect of low-intensity warfare has contributed to the difficulties the armed forces have experienced in Afghanistan and Iraq in converting initial battlefield victories into enduring political successes.

Since becoming Secretary of Defense in late 2006, Robert Gates has sought, in his speeches and authoritative defense documents, to institutionalize a more balanced orientation that gives due consideration for fighting irregular as well as conventional wars.

The July 2008 [National Defense Strategy](#), for instance, affirms that "improving the U.S. Armed Forces' proficiency in irregular warfare is the Defense Department's top priority." In a September 2008 [speech at the National Defense University](#), Gates cautioned that, "The most likely catastrophic threats to the U.S. homeland are more likely to emanate from failing states than from aggressor states."

Gates believes that, for at least the next few years, the American armed forces are considerably more likely to fight non-state actors such as insurgents and terrorists than wage another large-scale, state-on-state conflict like the 1990-91 Desert Storm War. Even state adversaries, he repeatedly notes, will seek to circumvent U.S. conventional superiority through asymmetric tactics and technologies (e.g., using ballistic missiles or cyber attacks).

Gates has sought to ensure that this new perspective shapes the Pentagon's evolving war plans, budgetary decisions, and career choices, but he has encountered substantial resistance to this IW-focus within the defense establishment.

At the same time that the Pentagon promulgated the new directive, the U.S. Joint Forces Command released a report that, while acknowledging the importance of irregular warfare, warned that the armed forces must prepare for a wide range of potential conflicts during the next two decades. This ["Joint Operating Environment 2030" study](#), along with other reports and statements issued by military leaders, affirms the goal of achieving full-spectrum dominance in all types of conflicts, ranging from large-scale conventional actions to counterinsurgency operations to humanitarian missions to nuclear wars. But if every mission remains a declared priority, then in practice none is.

Budgetary considerations partly motivate this resistance. [While the Army](#) and Marine Corps have adopted new doctrines and tactics to fight unconventional wars better, Navy and Air Force commanders continue to call for even more sophisticated advanced warships and warplanes to deter and defeat more conventional adversaries. The U.S. military services are now competing for post-Iraq roles, missions, and funding. Although useful for countering potential great power rivals, aircraft carriers and long-range bombers have limited value for fighting terrorists and insurgents.

Many members of Congress, motivated by defense industry considerations as well as important defense employers in their districts, have continued to direct Pentagon funding towards buying more of certain conventional major weapons systems than requested by the Bush administration.

The practice of funding the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars through supplementary appropriations rather than within the core annual Defense Dept. budget has also lessened pressure on the military to curtail funding on programs, policies, and personnel minimally related to irregular warfare. In an [article in the current issue of Foreign Affairs](#), Gates explicitly complains that "the base budget for fiscal year 2009, for example, contains more than \$180 billion for procurement, research, and development, the overwhelming preponderance of which is for conventional systems."

Disagreements over the most likely future adversaries of the United States have also prompted some opposition to an IW focus. Opponents of such an approach argue that a preoccupation with irregular warfare may leave the United States vulnerable to traditional threats such as an armed confrontation with Iran or China.

The new administration will need to resolve these differences by clarifying its vision for America's future military. Does it expect major engagements in additional counterinsurgencies after withdrawing from Iraq and reinforcing Afghanistan, or do Russia's strategic revival and China's growing military might require a renewed focus on deterring great power adversaries?

Perhaps even more important will be how the next administration addresses the most serious problem identified by Gates and others concerned about improving the U.S. national security toolkit: the perennial underfunding of U.S. civilian agencies, such as the State Department. The final report of the non-partisan [Project on National Security Reform](#) and other studies have also stressed the need to bolster America's non-military instruments.

Despite its massive capabilities and earnest desires, the military alone cannot establish functioning governments and prosperous economies in countries susceptible to militant extremism. Enhancing the assistance of other U.S. government agencies, as well as their international counterparts, is essential for converting battlefield victories into war-winning strategies. and other studies have also stressed the need to bolster America's non-military instruments.

Despite its massive capabilities and earnest desires, the military alone cannot establish functioning governments and prosperous economies in countries susceptible to militant extremism. Enhancing the assistance of other U.S. government agencies, as well as their international counterparts, is essential for converting battlefield victories into war-winning strategies.

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International Herald Tribune
Monday, December 15, 2008

Obama's First Trip

By Michael Fullilove

WASHINGTON: During the presidential campaign, Barack Obama promised that in the first 100 days of his administration he would "travel to a major Islamic forum and deliver an address to redefine our struggle."

Egypt, Turkey and Qatar have been suggested as possible sites for such a speech. But the best candidate is the country in which Obama lived as a child: Indonesia.

Choosing Indonesia would throw light on the diversity and richness of Islam, which is not, contrary to lingering perceptions, practiced solely by Arabs or only in the Middle East. Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, does a reasonable job of managing its considerable religious heterogeneity. An Indonesian setting would help Obama to reframe the debate in the West about Islam and terrorism.

Indonesians have been both victims and perpetrators of terrorist attacks, including the deadly Bali bombings. The government in Jakarta is an important partner in the effort against terrorism.

Selecting Indonesia would demonstrate that Obama takes democracy seriously, given that Indonesia is the third-largest democracy in the world. It would show that President George W. Bush's misshapen democratization agenda has not turned his successor into an icy realist.

Reminding the world of Obama's origins could help counter anti-Americanism. Who would have thought the United States would elect a president with memories of wandering barefoot through rice paddies and "the muezzin's call at night"?

Finally, picking Indonesia would indicate that Obama is serious about rebalancing America's foreign policy. It would show that he understands the shift of global power eastward, and telegraph that Washington is finally going to take Indonesia - the linchpin of Southeast Asia - seriously.

Obama was criticized in the campaign as offering speeches rather than solutions. But there is no better way to make an argument than with a speech - and for this speech, there is no better place to make that argument than Indonesia.

Michael Fullilove, the program director for global issues at the Lowy Institute in Sydney, Australia, is a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

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The Weekly Standard

12/22/2008, Volume 014, Issue 14

Our Pakistan Problem

Could its holy warriors be the most dangerous?

by Reuel Marc Gerecht

The attack on Mumbai was in a way a primitive terrorist operation--individuals using machine guns and grenades. There were no high explosives, use of chemical weapons, or the like. The difference between ordinary terrorists, who kill at most hundreds, and mass-casualty ones, who aspire to kill thousands, is the coupling of fearless, wicked intelligence to firepower. If al Qaeda had access to nuclear weapons, the organization would surely melt New York City. If Iran's clerical regime, which blew up 19 American airmen at Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996 (and has allowed al Qaeda to transit its borders) gets a nuke, its virulent anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism could translate into tens or hundreds of thousands of American and Israeli fatalities. Iran has the scientific intelligence that al Qaeda lacks. Al Qaeda has the single-minded will, unfazed by the possibility of earthly losses.

Which brings up the question of whether Pakistan's holy warriors have the ability to marry al Qaeda's sanguinary zeal with greater technical accomplishment?

Looking at Lashkar-e-Taiba ("the Army of the Good"), which likely conducted the attack on Mumbai, the answer would seem to be no. If the Lashkar still had real friends in the Pakistani military and in the Inter-Services Intelligence Agency--the most Islamist-friendly Muslim intelligence service in the world--its attacks in Mumbai would have been more murderous. So these holy warriors, widely feared in Kashmir and Pakistan for their savagery and their disciplined organization, are not yet the missing link for the jihadists who aspire to kill "the enemies of God" in huge numbers.

What is perhaps most encouraging about our struggle with al Qaeda since 9/11 is that the organization has so far been unable to develop real scientific resources. Al Qaeda obviously can learn from its mistakes. Think of the bungled attempt on the USS *The Sullivans* in the port of Aden in 2000, where the terrorists sank their own skiff. Ten months later, al Qaeda nearly sank the USS *Cole* in Aden using shaped charges successfully molded into the second boat. Islamic terrorist organizations, if they evolve and learn, can be much more lethal than the sum of their sloppy operational parts. But learning how to use plastique is much easier than deploying some kind of chemical, biological, or uranium-based device.

A principal reason al Qaeda has been unable to develop truly terrifying weaponry is the extremely poor quality

of Arab higher education. The Arab Middle East produces thousands of graduates in engineering each year, but most of these young men and women possess only a rudimentary understanding of their field. The last 50 years have been devastating for preparatory schools, colleges, and universities in the region. The serious study of hard sciences and mathematics is for all practical purposes dead through much of the region. (Clerical Iran would not be on the threshold of a nuclear weapon if it were not for its Western-educated experts.) And of those who do study science in the West, how many want to become holy warriors? Evidence so far suggests none. There are no doubt many reasons why scientists have not become holy warriors. *Mutatis mutandis*, today's faithful Muslim scientists may find it very hard to join up with organizations that rigidly interpret God's will into orders to kill large numbers of human beings.

But Pakistan might be different. Its school system, at both preparatory and university levels, has not been as badly damaged by the ideological whirlwinds that have wreaked so much of the Middle East. British rule created educational institutions and, more important, an educational ethic that have weathered the political chaos and the increasingly religious militarism. And Pakistan sends a large number of first-rate minds abroad to receive the best Western educations. Could well-educated Pakistanis be subject to the clarion call of militant Islam?

Although founded by men of an overwhelmingly secular orientation, Pakistan can seem as religious as Egypt in the streets at prayer time. Secularism, though deeply embedded into the Pakistani elites, doesn't have a non-religious national identity to lock onto. At heart, Pakistan is just the Muslim alternative to Hindu India. Secular Pakistanis really only have the remnants of British culture to fall back on. The Turks, who are in a somewhat similar situation, have developed a tough nationalist identity by creating a largely fictional history marrying modern-day Turkey to the "historic" Turkic peoples of Anatolia. The Ottomans, Islam's most redoubtable soldiers, and their faith are making their way back into the modern Turkish identity, but the Turks, who have been absorbing European ideas and culture for several hundred years, have still probably produced the smallest number of holy warriors allied with al Qaeda.

It was a fool's errand to believe that Pakistan, a nation built exclusively on religious identity and which has regularly lost wars to its stronger, reviled Hindu (read polytheist) neighbor, would not become an Islamist-friendly society. From the beginning one of Pakistan's most influential figures was the great Islamist Sayyid Abu al-Ala Mawdudi (1903-79), who firmly established on the Indian subcontinent a very modern conception of spiritual renewal through holy war. Mawdudi was never wild about the idea of Pakistan, seeing it as a physical and spiritual restriction on Islam's borderless community of believers. With less overt viciousness than Sayyid Qutb, a better-known lodestar of Islamic radicalism, Mawdudi laid the intellectual groundwork that allowed others to see slaughter as divinely sanctioned.

Pakistani intellectuals, but especially Pakistani scientists and engineers, may be more susceptible to Islamist organizations than their Arab counterparts because their national identity is so soft and is challenged by a strong and successfully politicized religious identity. This is exaggerated by the continued defeats at the hands of Indians, who increasingly resemble Westerners (the ultimate Islamist enemy). Hindu India is by the decade becoming exponentially richer and more powerful while Islamic Pakistan continues its long slide into irrelevance. Pakistanis, especially the many educated in the West, have the brain power to turn al Qaeda and its allies into much more lethal organizations. Can al Qaeda or Lashkar-e-Taiba develop an appeal to highly educated men who have so far, elsewhere remained resistant to the call?

Pakistani militant groups have grown up in a philosophically sophisticated environment of Islamic militancy. Where once Lashkar was, more or less, a region-specific terrorist organization (focused on Jammu and Kashmir), its appetite for action is growing. All Islamic fundamentalist organizations, if they turn toward jihad, have the potential for a global mission. (Western-imposed borders on the historic Islamic community, the *umma*, are an insult to God; the enemy, the Judeo-Christian West, is everywhere and thus can be struck everywhere.)

It's a good bet that Lashkar and other Pakistani holy-warrior organizations will in the not too distant future operationally reach beyond the Indian subcontinent. With al Qaeda now permanently headquartered in Pakistan, it's not hard to imagine the organization and its Arab Sunni core being absorbed by a group like Lashkar. Britain's domestic intelligence service, MI5, which is America's best frontline defense against

Pakistani jihadists who carry British passports--and tens, if not hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis, at home and abroad, carry such passports, which make travel to the United States easy--gives the impression that we may have already reached the absorption point. These Pakistani jihadist groups are larger than al Qaeda ever was, and their size is a distinct intelligence vulnerability, especially if the Pakistani intelligence agency is ever willing to move aggressively against them and the larger religious movements that they feed on.

Nonetheless, it seems that al Qaeda may be on the verge of a big growth spurt in the subcontinent. In the Arab world, the birthplace of modern Islamic holy war, al Qaeda's prospects have dimmed. Odds are Osama bin Laden has lost the "decisive battle" in Mesopotamia, and with it, eventually, the battle for hearts and minds among Arabs.

Operations inevitably follow philosophy. As the jihadist philosophy expands in Pakistan and likely into India's 150 million-strong Muslim population, so will operations. Hezbollah became an extremely deadly organization precisely because it drank so deeply from revolutionary Iran's global call to rally the world's Muslims against the United States. The Egyptian Islamic Jihad Organization of Ayman al-Zawahiri became something to fear when its objectives transcended the Nile valley. Operational competence goes up as Islamic holy warriors look over the horizon. Global missions draw global talent. Even without weapons of mass destruction, these terrorists could bring on a terrible clash between India and Pakistan.

We will have to wait anxiously to discover whether Pakistan's Islamist intellectuals and holy warriors can go where an Arab-run al Qaeda has been unable to reach--into the laboratories and minds of men with sky-high IQs. European and American intelligence and security services ought to be increasingly attentive to the possibility that the Pakistani jihadist call will have more appeal and try to monitor those Pakistanis who could make all the difference in the acquisition of nuclear and chemical weapons.

Still, Pakistan may follow the examples of Iraq, Egypt, and Algeria, where all the Islamist savagery finally undid the sympathy of large parts of the population for holy warriors. Jihadists inevitably become infatuated with killing, making their understanding of God's wrath just a bit too much to swallow, even for Muslims who loathe the West. Until that happens, though, we will have to strengthen our intelligence capacities and continue to act preemptively against terrorist plots, and to hope that the Pakistani military, a forceful, proud, and hierarchical institution, will itself act against men who don't recognize its authority--and who blow up women and children.

<http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/015/908tjppw.asp>

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Washington Post.com

Nuclear Crossroads

By Jim Hoagland

Sunday, December 14, 2008; B07

The power of the presidential jawbone atrophied under his two immediate predecessors. But [Barack Obama](#) has shown that he will employ subtle threats, brazen promises and words at large as his ambassadors in pursuit of personal and national goals.

It is not a matter of being good at speechifying, which Obama certainly is. It is a matter of calculating -- at which Obama also excels -- the precise effect of words unleashed in presidential addresses, news conferences and on-the-hoof occasions. They all shape the battlegrounds on which a national leader must fight.

As president-elect, Obama concentrates on the immediate economic challenges overwhelming Washington. For an example of his skillful alternation of verbal persuasion and coercion, check out a video [clip](#) or [text](#) of his admonitions to U.S. automakers on last weekend's "[Meet the Press](#)."

In office, he should exercise this talent in foreign affairs, and quickly. He should schedule a major address that will demonstrate American willingness to take the lead in achieving two related goals: reducing the dangers that nuclear weapons pose for all nations and improving U.S. relations with Russia.

Both are long-term and uncertain projects that must be handled with great care. But making clear his intentions to pursue them from the outset will enable Obama to gain increased international support and understanding for more immediate goals such as dealing with Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan and the turbulent area on Russia's borders known as the "Near Abroad."

[George W. Bush](#) never cottoned to that approach. He habitually painted opponents into corners from which he offered no escape, and he treated allies on "take it or leave it" terms. [Bill Clinton](#)'s ability to jawbone opponents and supporters alike suffered from an imbalance in the other direction and from the impaired credibility that dogged his presidency.

But an excellent model -- and a promising vehicle -- is available to Obama to change this state of affairs: [John F. Kennedy](#)'s much-heralded commencement address at [American University](#) in June 1963. It is worth rereading, and rewriting, for our times.

Kennedy's endorsement of "general and complete disarmament designed to take place by stages" provided impetus to a partial ban on nuclear testing. And he went on, speaking as if in sorrow and not in anger, to advise Americans not to overreact to a spate of hostile actions and paranoia by [the Kremlin](#). "It is discouraging," he continued, "to think that their leaders may actually believe what their propagandists write."

It is advice worth emphasizing anew as [Vladimir Putin](#) blusters on in rancid tones about American perfidy in Georgia and the supposedly threatening missile defenses in Europe. Challenging Putin to join the United States in scaling back the deployment, development and size of nuclear arsenals -- to commit to "general and complete disarmament designed to take place by stages" -- should be an early policy step by the incoming Obama administration.

Appropriate vehicles for such an Obama effort include the Nuclear Security Project, proposed in 2007 by [George Shultz](#), [Sam Nunn](#), Bill Perry and [Henry Kissinger](#), and the parallel Global Zero initiative, which aspires to become a worldwide movement.

Shultz and Nunn have been particularly active in pressing world leaders on the idea of abandoning nuclear weapons -- with admittedly mixed results. When they tried out the idea on Putin in a private meeting in July 2007, the Russian scoffed at the proposal as just another U.S. trick to weaken his country, according to two accounts of the meeting.

And in his welcome to the Global Zero meeting in Paris last week, Gérard Errera, the secretary general of France's foreign ministry, elegantly coupled his country's commendable record of downsizing its nuclear arsenal to a clear intention not to give it up totally for a long time -- if ever.

So Obama has much room for maneuver in taking on leadership of the nuclear disarmament movement and perhaps much to gain in fortifying the U.S. position on limiting Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions. The room for a multilateral solution to the Iranian deadlock may have increased last week with a decision by the [European Union](#) to join the funding of a nuclear fuel bank to be administered by the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#).

This idea, which had already attracted funding from the United States, is a promising brainchild of Nunn's Nuclear Threat Initiative and is also backed financially by billionaire investor [Warren Buffett](#) -- a man who calculates his dollars as carefully as Obama calculates words. Timing is everything. Seize the day, Mr. President-elect.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/12/AR2008121203269_pf.html

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International Herald Tribune

6 Terror Suspects Charged in Belgium

By Steven Erlanger

Friday, December 12, 2008

PARIS: The authorities in Belgium charged six suspected extremists Friday with membership in a terrorist group, a spokeswoman for the federal prosecutor's office said in Brussels. They were among 14 people arrested in raids early Thursday, including a woman who writes jihadist screeds on the Internet and three men the Belgian authorities said had just returned from training camps along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. One had "said goodbye to his loved ones," according to the Belgian federal prosecutor, Johan Delmulle, leading to fears of an imminent suicide attack around the time that European Union leaders were meeting in Brussels.

Lieve Pellens, spokeswoman for the prosecutor's office, said by telephone that the six suspects charged Friday included the woman, Malika El Aroud. She said the eight others had been released because a judge had determined that there was not enough evidence to press charges.

The six suspects are all Belgian nationals and most are of Moroccan origin, Pellens said. She said they should be arraigned within five days. Under rules to preserve the secrecy of the investigation, Pellens could not give out more detailed information on the charges. Though the possible target was not clear, the arrests Thursday came on a day when European leaders began a two-day summit meeting in Brussels.

"We don't know where the suicide attack was to take place," Delmulle said in Brussels. "It could have been an operation in Pakistan or Afghanistan, but it can't be ruled out that Belgium or Europe could have been the target." An investigation into the suspects had been under way for a year. But given the EU meeting, Delmulle said, the authorities felt they had "no choice but to take action" or to sharply raise security around the meeting.

The police carried out 16 raids in Brussels and one in Liège. Those arrested included El Aroud, 49, who accompanied her husband to Afghanistan in 2001, where he trained in a camp run by Al Qaeda and then, days before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, helped kill the anti-Taliban resistance leader, Ahmed Shah Massoud. El Aroud, whose husband was eventually killed, writes online as Oum Obeyda.

Basil Katz contributed reporting.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/12/12/europe/belgium.php>

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guardian.co.uk

Monday, 15 December 2008

What is Gordon Brown's 'Line of Terror'?

The British PM's new term for explaining foreign policy is more nuanced than George Bush's 'axis of evil'

Gaby Hinsliff

Gordon Brown's repeated references at the weekend to what he calls "a line of terror" through the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan, via Europe to Britain, is his latest formula for explaining why his foreign policy focus is increasingly moving east. Critically, unlike George Bush's "axis of evil", Brown's line or chain of terror – a process he describes stretching from the training camps of Pakistan, from where jihadis flow across the porous border into Afghanistan to fight British troops, and potentially through Europe to commit terrorist atrocities closer to home – incorporates states he regards as potential allies as well as threats, chiefly Pakistan.

The recent Mumbai terror attacks exposed the complex interconnectedness of the fate of the three countries Brown is visiting on this whirlwind tour: Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. The Pakistani group suspected of being behind the atrocities, Lashkar-e-Taiba, were originally formed in Afghanistan but cultivated and funded by the Pakistani intelligence services. So the latest attacks severely strained what had been improving relations between Delhi and

Islamabad – raising the possibility that Pakistan will now be distracted from its battle with the Taliban along the Afghan border as it turns to tackle a potential threat from its old foe, India.

The higher the tensions between these two countries, the less likely Pakistan – once judged by Washington its most important ally in the war on terror, above Britain – is to assist the western battle with the Taliban. Barack Obama's suggestion that resolving the conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir – a festering grievance which has helped radicalise some southeast Asian Muslims – will be one of his key foreign policy priorities suggests he also recognises the dangers now erupting in this region. And Brown has an extra strategic interest given concerns over the number of young radicalised British Muslims travelling to Pakistan to train in jihad.

Add in a global recession which requires a stable and prosperous India to bolster flagging western economies, and a Pakistani economy that has teetered on the edge of bankruptcy in recent months, and it is not hard to see why this region is suddenly of intense interest to Brown. His visit will be portrayed a recognition that no one side of this toxic triangle of countries can be tackled in isolation and that political and economic as well as military solutions will be required. It is also an attempt to bolster support for the military operation in Afghanistan by arguing that containing the Taliban there will disrupt the so-called line of terror and benefit other links in the chain, including Britons fearing domestic terrorist attack.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/dec/15/gordonbrown>

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Times.co.uk
December 15, 2008

Blacklist Terror Charity Still Open in Pakistan

JEREMY PAGE IN MURIDKE

The main complex of Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), the Pakistani charity linked to last month's attack on Mumbai, is still open four days after the UN Security Council placed the group on a terrorist list, The Times has learnt.

Pakistan claims that it ordered the closure of JuD's facilities on Thursday under pressure from India and the United States, which consider the group a front for Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) — the militant group blamed for the Mumbai attack.

But when The Times visited the complex in Muridke, 30 miles from the eastern city of Lahore, over the weekend it was functioning normally with no sign of any police presence.

Most of the 1,600 students at the complex were away for last week's Eid holidays, but a dozen or so staff and about 40 others were moving freely around the buildings, none of which was sealed. Mohammed Abbas, 34, also known as Abu Ahsan, the administrator of the complex, said: "We've not had any official communication about closing. A lot of parents have been calling, afraid that it will be closed or there could be some violence, but we are telling them to send their children back."

He said that about 80 armed police had visited the complex on Wednesday night but had left after 30 minutes when the guards told them that the students were away for the holidays. The half-hearted raid is certain to feed scepticism about Pakistan's supposed crackdown on the movement, which is led by Hafiz Mohammed Saeed, the founder of LeT.

Police placed him under house arrest on Thursday after he was added to the UN terrorist list. They have shut down JuD's offices in Lahore and other cities and raided one of its complexes in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. However, Pakistani authorities fear that they could spark a public backlash by closing down JuD's 153 healthcare centres, eight hospitals, 160 schools and 50 madrassas.

The group, founded in 1986 to spread the Wahhabi school of Islam, claims to treat 6,000 patients a day, to teach more than 35,000 students and to provide disaster relief for thousands of others. Its showcase centre, Markaz-e-Taiba, has a boys' school, a girls' school, an Islamic university, a mosque, a hospital, a swimming pool and 20 horses. JuD denies any link to LeT and any involvement in the Mumbai attacks, and has pledged to fight to stay open through Pakistani and international courts.

Mr Abbas also warned the Government that closing Markaz-e-Taiba could anger locals, many of whom donate money, attend the mosque and send their children there for education.

He said: "You can't record a single incident where we've blocked roads or burnt tyres, but if this complex is closed, parents of our students may well come on the roads and do such things."

The complex was still open when The Times checked again last night. Government officials declined to comment officially but said privately that they did not plan to close the complex as they had no evidence that it was a security threat. They were, however, considering taking it over to comply with the UN while continuing its social work.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5340567.ece>

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The Economic Times
15 December 2008

Pakistan Not to Ban Jamaat-ud-Dawa

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan government has decided not to dismantle the vast infrastructure of the Jamaat-ud-Dawa, front for the Lashkar-e-Taiba, despite the UN security councils ban on the outfit in the wake of last months terrorist strike on Mumbai.

The Security Council had on December 10 imposed sanctions on the Jamaat and branded four of its top commanders terrorists, including JuD chief Hafiz Mohammad Saeed and LeT operations commander Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, alleged mastermind of the Mumbai attacks.

This forced Islamabad to crack down on the Jamaat. Saeed was placed under house arrest and the JuDs offices were sealed and bank accounts frozen. But all this appears to have been an eyewash as the interior ministry has told all four provincial governments not to take any action against any of the Jamaat's 500 seminaries and Dawa model schools — often described by the Western media as training camps and indoctrination centres.

Pakistan's Foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi confirmed in Paris that Jamaat-run seminaries and schools would continue to function as usual, claiming that there was no evidence to suggest that the outfit was promoting extremism or violence there.

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Pakistan_not_to_ban_Jamaat-ud-Dawa/articleshow/3839069.cms

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Sunday Times
December 14, 2008

UK May Help Find Pakistani General's Killers

CAREY SCHOFIELD

The brother-in-law of VS Naipaul, the British novelist and Nobel laureate, was murdered last month after threatening to expose Pakistani army generals who had made deals with Taliban militants. Major-General Faisal Alavi, a former head of Pakistan's special forces, whose sister Nadira is Lady Naipaul, named two generals in a letter to the head of the army. He warned that he would "furnish all relevant proof".

Aware that he was risking his life, he gave a copy to me and asked me to publish it if he was killed. Soon afterwards he told me that he had received no reply. "It hasn't worked," he said. "They'll shoot me." Four days later, he was driving through Islamabad when his car was halted by another vehicle. At least two gunmen opened fire from either side, shooting him eight times. His driver was also killed.

This weekend, as demands grew for a full investigation into Alavi's murder on November 18, Lady Naipaul described her brother as "a soldier to his toes". She said: "He was an honourable man and the world was a better place when he was in it." It was in Talkingfish, his favourite Islamabad restaurant, that the general handed me his letter two months ago. "Read this," he said. Alavi had been his usual flamboyant self until that moment, smoking half a dozen cigarettes as he rattled off jokes and gossip and fielded calls on two mobile phones.

Three years earlier this feted general, who was highly regarded by the SAS, had been mysteriously sacked as head of its Pakistani equivalent, the Special Services Group, for "conduct unbecoming". The letter, addressed to General Ashfaq Kayani, the chief of army staff, was a final attempt to have his honour restored. Alavi believed he had been forced out because he was openly critical of deals that senior generals had done with the Taliban. He disparaged them for their failure to fight the war on terror wholeheartedly and for allowing Taliban forces based in Pakistan to operate with impunity against British and other Nato troops across the border in Afghanistan.

Alavi, who had dual British and Pakistani nationality, named the generals he accused. He told Kayani that the men had cooked up a "mischievous and deceitful plot" to have him sacked because they knew he would expose them. "The entire purpose of this plot by these general officers was to hide their own involvement in a matter they knew I was privy to," he wrote. He wanted an inquiry, at which "I will furnish all relevant proof/ information, which is readily available with me".

I folded up the letter and handed it back to him. "Don't send it," I said. He replied that he had known I would talk him out of it so he had sent it already. "But", he added, "I want you to keep this and publish it if anything happens to me." I told him he was a fool to have sent the letter: it would force his enemies into a corner. He said he had to act and could not leave it any longer: "I want justice. And I want my honour restored. And you know what? I [don't] give a damn what they do to me now. They did their worst three years ago." We agreed soon afterwards that it would be prudent for him to avoid mountain roads and driving late at night. He knew the letter might prove to be his death warrant. Four days after I last saw him, I was in South Waziristan, a region bordering Afghanistan, to see a unit from the Punjab Regiment. It was early evening when I returned to divisional headquarters and switched on the television. It took me a moment to absorb the horror of the breaking news running across the screen: "Retired Major General Faisal Alavi and driver shot dead on way to work."

The reports blamed militants, although the gunmen used 9mm pistols, a standard army issue, and the killings were far more clinical than a normal militant attack. The scene at the army graveyard in Rawalpindi a few days after that was grim. Soldiers had come from all over the country to bury the general with military honours. Their grief was palpable. Wreaths were laid on behalf of Kayani and most of the country's military leadership. Friends and family members were taken aback to be told by serving and retired officers alike that "this was not the militants; this was the army". A great many people believed the general had been murdered to shut him up.

I first met Alavi in April 2005 at the Pakistan special forces' mountain home at Cherat, in the North West Frontier Province, while working on a book about the Pakistani army. He told me he had been born British in Kenya, and that his older brother had fought against the Mau Mau. His affection for Britain was touching and his patriotism striking. In August 2005 he was visiting Hereford, the home of the SAS, keen to revive the SSG's relationship with British special forces and deeply unhappy about the way some elements of Pakistan's army were behaving. He told me how one general had done an astonishing deal with Baitullah Mehsud, the 35-year-old Taliban leader, now seen by many analysts as an even greater terrorist threat than Osama Bin Laden.

Mehsud, the main suspect in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto late last year, is also believed to have been behind a plot to bomb transport networks in several European countries including Britain, which came to light earlier this year when 14 alleged conspirators were arrested in Barcelona. Yet, according to Alavi, a senior Pakistani general came to an arrangement with Mehsud "whereby – in return for a large sum of money – Mehsud's 3,000 armed fighters would not attack the army".

The two senior generals named in Alavi's letter to Kayani were in effect complicit in giving the militants free rein in return for refraining from attacks on the Pakistani army, he said. At Hereford, Alavi was brutally frank about the situation, said the commanding officer of the SAS at that time.

“Alavi was a straight-talking soldier and some pretty robust conversations took place in the mess,” he said. “He wanted kit, skills and training from the UK. But he was asked, pretty bluntly, why the Pakistani army should be given all this help if nothing came of it in terms of getting the Al-Qaeda leadership.” Alavi’s response was typically candid, the SAS commander said: “He knew that Pakistan was not pulling its weight in the war on terror.”

It seemed to Alavi that, with the SAS on his side, he might win the battle, but he was about to lose everything. His enemies were weaving a Byzantine plot, using an affair with a divorced Pakistani woman to discredit him. Challenged on the issue, Alavi made a remark considered disrespectful to General Pervez Musharraf, then the president. His enemies played a recording of it to Musharraf and Alavi was instantly sacked.

His efforts to clear his name began with a request that he be awarded the Crescent of Excellence, a medal he would have been given had he not been dismissed. Only after this was denied did he write the letter that appears to many to have sealed his fate. It was an action that the SAS chief understands: “Every soldier, in the moment before death, craves to be recognised. It seems reasonable to me that he staked everything on his honour. The idea that it is better to be dead than dishonoured does run deep in soldiers.”

Alavi’s loyalty to Musharraf never faltered. Until his dying day he wanted his old boss to understand that. He also trusted Kayani implicitly, believing him to be a straight and honourable officer. If investigations eventually prove that Alavi was murdered at the behest of those he feared within the military, it may prove a fatal blow to the integrity of the army he loved. Britain and the United States need to know where Pakistan stands. Will its army and intelligence agencies ever be dependable partners in the war against men such as Mehsud?

James Arbuthnot, chairman of the defence select committee, and Lord Guthrie, former chief of the defence staff, were among those who expressed support this weekend for British help to be offered in the murder investigation.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5337881.ece>

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Telegraph.co.uk
December 14, 3008

The Route from Pakistan to Terrorism in Britain

It is symptomatic of the problems in Pakistan that Gordon Brown did not announce his arrival in advance for security reasons.

By Duncan Gardham, Security Correspondent

Large swathes of the country are out of the control of the central government and terrorism has spread to the heart of the capital Islamabad.

Mr Brown has a difficult balancing act to play because President Zardari may agree with his fight against terrorism but elements of the powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency almost certainly do not. The ISI has actively supported fighters in Kashmir in the north east and the tribal areas of the north west in an attempt to create a proxy-army to protect Pakistan's borders and it is unwilling to change its approach.

Mr Brown wanted to drive home that three quarters of the groups watched by MI5 in Britain have links to Pakistan, and while they need his money for their troubled economy, he needs their help. Many terrorists have made the journey from the ISI-backed training camps in Kashmir, to the al-Qaeda-backed camps in the lawless tribal areas, and from there back to Britain.

Hundreds are under surveillance, some have succeeded in launching attacks. Almost every major terrorist plot investigated by the police in Britain in the last four years can be traced back to al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The clearest example is that of the leader of the July 7 bombers, Mohammed Sidique Khan, who made a total of three trips to training camps in Pakistan, first in Kashmir then in the tribal areas. The leader of the failed July 21 bombers, Muktar Ibrahim, probably attended the last camp at the same time as Sidique Khan when both men were sent back by al-Qaeda to attack the London transport system. They were preceded by Omar Khyam, who led a gang arrested with half a ton of fertiliser planning to blow up the Bluewater shopping Centre in Kent or the Ministry of Sound nightclub in central London.

Khyam also began in camps in Kashmir and then moved over to the tribal areas where he met al-Qa'eda leaders, making a total of four trips. Dhiren Barot, who fought in Kashmir, wrote a book about his experiences as inspiration for other terrorists before travelling to the tribal areas to meet al-Qa'eda leaders and present his plans for the "gas limos" attacks using car bombs to attack hotels.

Parviz Kahn, who pleaded guilty in February to plotting to kidnap and execute a British soldier in Birmingham, made a number of trips to supply equipment to al-Qa'eda in Pakistan before returning to set about his attack. Only this year investigators found Nicky Reilly, who tried to blow himself up in a shopping centre restaurant in Exeter in May, had been groomed from Pakistan over the internet. The police have also smashed at least two groups grooming teenagers to go to Pakistan, with the intention that they should return as terrorists, and that trend is almost certain to continue.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/politics/defence/3759006/The-route-from-Pakistan-to-terrorism-in-Britain.html>

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The New York Times
December 16, 2008

Britain Adds 300 Soldiers to Support Afghan Force

By [JOHN F. BURNS](#)

LONDON — In a measure of how hard President-elect [Barack Obama](#) may find it to persuade the United States' [NATO](#) allies to increase troop commitments in [Afghanistan](#), Prime Minister [Gordon Brown](#) of [Britain](#) announced on Monday that the government had authorized an increase in the British troop presence of just 300 soldiers.

The soldiers have already been deployed. Reporting to the House of Commons on a weekend visit to British troops in Helmand Province in the southwest of Afghanistan, one of the most hotly contested battle zones in the country, Mr. Brown said he had agreed to British commanders' recommendations that 300 troops recently sent to Helmand from a strategic reserve based in Cyprus remain there through at least August.

Mr. Brown gave no indication of what Britain would decide about troop levels beyond August. But he noted that the 8,300 British soldiers now deployed in Afghanistan were the second largest contingent of any of the 41 nations that have contributed to the coalition force there, after 34,000 American troops. The Pentagon has said that it plans to increase American troop levels by 20,000 in coming months, and has urged other coalition members to follow suit.

Mr. Obama has said he plans to make Afghanistan the focus of American military efforts in the struggle with Islamic terrorists, building up troop levels there as he draws down the United States military presence in Iraq. But in Britain, the United States' closest ally in Iraq and Afghanistan, growing skepticism about the prospects in Afghanistan and a general election Mr. Brown must call by June 2010 have combined to constrain the government's willingness to step up its long-term commitment.

Mr. Brown told the Commons, as he told British troops in Helmand during his visit there, that "a chain of terror" linked bases for the [Taliban](#) and [Al Qaeda](#) in the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan to British streets. He followed his weekend visit to Afghanistan with a stopover in Pakistan, where he said that three-quarters of the Islamic terrorist plots being investigated in Britain had links there, the ancestral homeland of a majority of Britain's population of at least 1.5 million Muslims.

In the Commons, Mr. Brown also spoke of what he said was the progress coalition forces had made in Helmand, which produces more than half of Afghanistan's opium crop — a source of financing for a rampant Taliban insurgency. His visit on Saturday came 24 hours after three royal marines on foot patrol in the Sangin area of Helmand were killed by what British officers said was a 13-year-old boy pushing a wheelbarrow loaded with concealed explosives. The attack was front-page news here over the weekend.

Though 2008 has been a hard year for coalition troops, Mr. Brown told lawmakers that it was “a much harder year for our enemies, who have found that they cannot defeat us.” His optimism was rejected by the opposition Conservative leader, [David Cameron](#), who questioned the commitment to what he called “an unrealistic objective of completely transforming a society thousands of miles away.” Instead, Mr. Cameron suggested that Britain concentrate on disrupting the “terrorist training” that sustained the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

Outside the Commons, the government announced it was doubling, to \$850,000, the maximum compensation paid to Britain's most severely wounded soldiers since 2005, and details of the defence budget for 2009 showed that its outlays in Afghanistan will increase by more than 50 per cent, to \$3.5-billion. But Mr. Brown indicated the government's response to pressures from Washington for further British troop increases will have to wait at least until a NATO summit meeting in April at which Washington's calls for troop increases from its NATO partners will be reviewed.

British officials said last week that they expect most of Britain's 4,100 troops in Iraq to be withdrawn by next summer, and the Pentagon has pressed the Brown government to make a proportionate increase of British troop levels in Afghanistan. But Mr. Brown said Britain's decision would hinge on the willingness of other NATO countries to take up a larger share of the fighting. Previously, British officials have named France, Germany and Italy among the nations that should contribute more. “It is vital that all members of the coalition contribute fairly”, Mr. Brown said.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/16/world/europe/16britain.html?_r=2&ref=world&pagewanted=print

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Washington Post.com

The Other Front

By Sarah Chayes

Sunday, December 14, 2008; B01

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

Nurallah strode into our workshop shaking with rage. His mood shattered ours. “This is no government,” he stormed. “The police are like animals.”

The story gushed out of him: There'd been a fender-bender in the Kandahar bazaar, a taxi and a bicycle among wooden-wheeled vegetable carts. Wrenching around to avoid the knot, another cart touched one of the green open-backed trucks the police drive. In seconds, the officers were dragging the man to the chalky dust, beating him -- blow after blow to the head, neck, hips, kidneys. Shopkeepers in the nearby stalls began shouting, “What do you want to do, kill him?” The police slung the man into the back of their truck and roared away.

“So he made a mistake,” concluded Nurallah, one of the 13 Afghan men and women who make up my cooperative. “We don't have a traffic court? They had to beat him?”

In the seven years I've lived in this stronghold of the Afghan south -- the erstwhile capital of the [Taliban](#) and the focus of their renewed assault on the country -- most of my conversations with locals about what's going wrong have centered on corruption and abuse of power. “More than roads, more than schools or wells or electricity, we need good governance,” said Nurallah during yet another discussion a couple of weeks ago.

He had put his finger on the heart of the problem. We and our friends in Kandahar are thunderstruck at recent suggestions that the solution to the hair-raising situation in this country must include a political settlement with “relevant parties” -- read, the Taliban. Negotiating with them wouldn't solve Afghanistan's problems; it would only exacerbate them. Ask any Afghan what's really needed, what would render the Taliban irrelevant, and they'll tell you: improving the behavior of the officials whom the United States and its allies ushered into power after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

I write this by flickering light, a fat candle at my right elbow and a kerosene lamp on my left. We get only three or four hours of electricity every couple of days, often from 1 to 5 a.m. Still, the bill has to be paid. To do that, you must wait in a total of eight lines in two different buildings. You almost never get through the whole process without hearing an uncouth bark as your turn comes up: "This desk is closing; come back tomorrow." Due to the electricity shortage, the power department won't open new accounts. Officially. But for \$600 -- 15 times the normal fee and a fortune to Afghans -- you can get a meter installed anyway.

A friend recently visited the jail in Urozgan Province, north of Kandahar, where he found 54 prisoners. All but six were untried and uncharged and had been languishing there for months or years. A Kandahar public prosecutor told him how a defendant had once offered him the key to a [Lexus](#) if he would just refrain from interfering in a case the man had fixed.

Across the street from my cooperative there used to be a medical clinic. When it moved to a new facility, gunmen in police uniforms set up a checkpoint outside the empty building. Our inquiries revealed that they were the private guards of a senior government official. Their purpose? To serve as a graphic warning to the building's owners not to interfere in what would follow. A few days later, some friends of the official's moved in. The owners had no say in the matter, no recourse. This government official is one of the men the United States helped put in power in 2001 and whom the international community has maintained and supported, no questions asked, ever since.

This is why the Taliban are making headway in Afghanistan -- not because anyone loves them, even here in their former heartland, or longs for a return to their punishing rule. I arrived in Kandahar in December 2001, just days after Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar was chased out. After a moment of holding its breath, the city erupted in joy. Kites danced on the air for the first time in six years. Buyers flocked to stalls selling music cassettes. I listened to opium dealers discuss which of them would donate the roof of his house for use as a neighborhood school. I, a barefaced American woman, encountered no hostility at all. Curiosity, plenty. But no hostility. Enthusiasm for the nascent government of [Hamid Karzai](#) and its international backers was absolutely universal.

Since then, the hopes expressed by every Afghan I have encountered -- to be ruled by a responsive and respectful government run by educated people -- have been dashed. Now, Afghans are suffering so acutely that they hardly feel the difference between Taliban depredations and those of their own government. "We're like a man trying to stand on two watermelons," one of the women in my cooperative complains. "The Taliban shake us down at night, and the government shakes us down in the daytime."

I hear from Westerners that corruption is intrinsic to Afghan culture, that we should not hold Afghans up to our standards. I hear that Afghanistan is a tribal place, that it has never been, and can't be, governed.

But that's not what I hear from Afghans.

Afghans remember the reign in the 1960s and '70s of King Zahir Shah and his cousin Daoud Khan, when Afghan cities were among the most developed and cosmopolitan in the Muslim world, when [Peace Corps](#) volunteers conducted vaccination campaigns on foot through a welcoming countryside, and when, my friends here tell me, a lone, unarmed policeman could detain a criminal suspect in a far-flung village without obstruction. Kandaharis -- even those who lost a brother or father in the 1980s war against Soviet occupation -- praise the communist-backed government of former president Najibullah. "His officials weren't building marble-clad mansions with the money they extorted," says Fayzullah, another member of my cooperative.

One day I asked three of my colleagues -- villagers with almost no formal education -- what jobs they would choose if we were the municipal government of Kandahar. They spoke right up. "I would want to be in charge of public hygiene," said Karim. "The garbage piling up on our streets is a disgusting health hazard." Abd al-Ahad wanted to be the registrar of public deeds, "so the big people can't just take land and pass it out to their cronies." Nurallah wanted to be the equivalent of the [FDA](#): the man responsible for weights and measures and the quality of merchandise in the bazaar.

After the Soviet invasion, which cost a million Afghan lives over the course of the 1980s, followed by five years of gut-wrenching civil war and another six of rule by the Taliban, who twisted religious injunctions into instruments of social control, Afghans looked to the United States -- a nation famous for its rule of law -- to help them build a responsive, accountable government.

Instead, we gave power back to corrupt gunslingers who had been repudiated years before. If they helped us chase [al-Qaeda](#), we didn't look too hard at their governing style. Often we helped them monopolize the new opportunities for gain. A friend of mine, one of the beneficiaries, was astounded at the blank check. "What are we warlords doing still in power?" police precinct captain Mahmad Anwar asked me in 2002. "I vowed on the Holy Koran that I would fight the Taliban in order to bring an educated, competent government to Afghanistan. And now people like me are running the place?" I had to laugh at his candor.

Into the context of the white-hot frustration that has been building since then, insert the Taliban. Since 2001, they have been armed, financed, trained and coordinated in Pakistan, whose military intelligence agency -- the [ISI](#) -- first helped create them in 1994.

What I've witnessed in Kandahar since late 2002 has amounted to an invasion by proxy, with the [Pakistani military](#) once again using the Taliban to gain a foothold in Afghanistan. The only reason this invasion has made progress is the appalling behavior of Afghan officials. Why would anyone defend officials who pillage them? If the Taliban gouge out the eyes of people they accuse of colluding with the Afghan government, as they did recently in Kandahar, while the government treats those same citizens like rubbish, why should anyone take the risk that allegiance to Kabul entails?

More and more Kandaharis are not. More and more are severing contact with the Karzai regime and all it stands for, rejecting even development assistance. When Taliban thugs come to their mosques demanding money or food, they pay up. Many actively collaborate, as a means of protest.

The solution to this problem is not to bring the perpetrators of the daily horrors we suffer in Kandahar to the table to carve up the Afghan pie. (For no matter how we package the idea of negotiating with the Taliban, that's what Afghans are sure it will amount to: cutting a power-sharing deal.)

The solution is to call to account the officials we installed here beginning in 2001 -- to reach beyond the power brokers to ordinary Afghan citizens and give their grievances a fair hearing. If the complaints prove to be well founded, Western officials should press for redress, using some of their enormous leverage. The successful mentoring program under which military personnel work side-by-side with [Afghan National Army](#) officers should be expanded to the civilian administration. Western governments should send experienced former mayors, district commissioners and water and health department officials to mentor Afghans in those roles.

If the United States and its allies had fulfilled their initial promise and pushed the Afghan government to become an institution its people could be proud of, the "reconcilable" Taliban would come into the fold of their own accord. The Afghans would take care of the rest.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/12/AR2008121203290_pf.html

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The Washington Times
Monday, December 15, 2008

Alexander/Damiani: Mumbai's Theological Terror

Yonah Alexander and Aaron Damiani

COMMENTARY:

The history of mankind is filled with brutal evidence that fighting between enemy adversaries in the name of religion is not unnatural. Among the numerous precedents frequently highlighted are the assassinations by the Muslim radical Hashasheen of the Christian "infidels" in the Middle East between the 11th and 13th centuries.

The latest carnage in Mumbai perpetrated by Pakistani jihadists, killing in cold blood nearly 200 people, including 22 foreigners, and wounding hundreds more, has underscored once again the depressing reality that individuals, groups, and states have used religion as a violent tool by calculated cruel design, not by accident.

More specifically, malformed theological manifestations were at the root of the Mumbai attack. In the name of Islamic purity, extremists have aggravated interfaith suspicion with hateful propaganda, distortions, and specious references to a divinely-ordained "sacred war." Religiously inspired terrorism benefits from the long history of religious tension in India, which is both internal and external.

The first nourishment for psychological and physical violence is internal. India is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multicultural society with more than six decades of communal and ethnic confrontations. Terrorism has unfortunately claimed more victims in states like Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Tripura, Manipur, Nagaland, and Assam than anywhere else around the world.

One of the challenges facing the world's largest democracy is the stark reality that some local incidents evolve into intensified religious tensions with major factional conflagrations that engulf the vast country and its neighboring states. A case in point is the Dec. 6, 1992, Muslim-Hindu clashes triggered by destruction of the 16th century Muslim mosque at the Ayodhya in India's Uttar Pradesh state.

Hindus insisted the mosque was built on the birth site of the Hindu God Rama, a claim disputed by Muslims. This bitter controversy inflamed deep-seeded religious passions, resulting in widespread rioting and the deaths of more than 1,000 in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other countries.

External states, such as Pakistan, are also complicit in exploiting Islam in the service of a political agenda. That is, in its political conflict with the Hindu majority nation over the ultimate control of the Kashmir region now under India's rule, the Islamic neighbor has brazenly sponsored and supported anti-Indian terrorism.

Reportedly, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and other government agencies have provided logistical support to a variety of Islamic "liberation" and "revolutionary" movements, including military training, supply of weapons and operational help.

The most notorious is Lashkar-e-Taiba (LT), also known as the Army of the Pure and Righteous, that mounted the spectacular Mumbai operation. Pakistani-based, it is one of the largest and best-trained groups fighting to "free" Kashmir for Islamdom. For instance, in December 2001, the group assaulted the Indian Parliament building, and in July 2006, it carried out the costly train attack in Mumbai.

Members of LT are recruited from the graduates of the madrasses in Pakistan, where education in religious hatred is indoctrinating future Islamic "martyrs." Funding and other support for LT are solicited from the large Pakistani Muslim diaspora in the Middle East, Europe and North America.

Globalization of the Islamic dimension of the Mumbai incident is further evident when the attackers selected non-Hindu hostages, such as Westerners (especially Americans, British and Canadians), as well as Jews and Israelis. According to the autopsies conducted on the victims in the Chabad Jewish center, they were tortured before being killed.

Indeed, Pakistan's news channel, One Television, even provided "legitimacy" to the assertion that the Mumbai siege was planned and executed by "Hindu Zionists" and "Western Zionists." Other views in the Arab world have also claimed the "Zionists" are exploiting the Mumbai incident as an incentive for the United States to invade Pakistan.

Ironically, Muslim countries themselves face constant threats of instability from religiously motivated violence. Even Pakistan itself is not immune from Islamic radicalism. For example, after the Mumbai incident, clashes between two ethnic groups in Karachi killed 28 people and injured 150.

Furthermore, the deteriorating security situation in South Asia and, indeed, throughout the world, is linked to Osama bin Laden's loosely knit network of various affiliated terrorist groups, including LT. The theological-political foundation of al Qaeda, (a group also known as "the International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders") is crystal clear: to unite all Muslims and establish a government under the rule of a "divinely ordained" Caliph. Bin Laden's "holy" doctrine declares that in order for Islam to realize its former glory, "it is the duty of Muslims to prepare as much force as necessary (including weapons of mass destruction) to attack the enemies of God."

In sum, the spread of "sacred Islamic violence" is rapidly becoming one of the most serious challenges to regional and global stability. That threat, however, does not necessarily come from traditional Islam, nor from the majority of the Muslim population, which is dedicated to the search for social, political and economic progress. The threat comes from the distorted theological narrative spun by Islamic extremists who fancy themselves as jihadists.

Religion, and the concomitant beliefs of the world population, will always play a significant role in the affairs of state. The key question, then, is can Islam, and religion in general, ever serve as an effective instrument for advancing the cause of peace with justice? The short answer is definitely yes - if we have the will. Responsible religious leaders in India, Pakistan and beyond should actively seek both political and doctrinal dialogue.

A recent encouraging step in this direction is the Nov. 11-12, 2008, high-level conference on "culture and peace" held at the United Nations General Assembly. Though the role of "religion" was avoided in the dialogue among "faiths and civilizations," the gathering brought together adversaries such as Saudi Arabia and Israel. Clearly, religious tolerance and understanding are critical in defusing negative theological components in future political conflicts.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/dec/15/mumbais-theological-terror/print/>

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Fars News Agency
12 December 2008

Speaker Calls Obama's Remarks on Iran "Cowboy" Talks

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani on Thursday branded US president-elect Barack Obama's comments on Tehran's nuclear activities as "cowboy" talk.

"These comments resemble those of old American cowboys. If you have something to say about (Iran's) nuclear issue, just say so. Why wave a stick," asked Larijani, in a speech in Qazvin province.

"It is naive to think that with the transition of power from George W. Bush to Barack Obama the situation will change," he said

Larijani stated that the US' strategy is to increase the economic pressures on Iran.

"US President-elect Barack Obama said that he will get tough on Iran because of Iran's nuclear program and its support for the Islamic movements Hamas and Hezbollah," he said.

"We are proud of supporting Hezbollah since they are defending their homeland and you are wrong in calling them terrorists," Larijani added.

He further pointed out, "The Americans intended to attack Iran after the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and after Israel's 33-day war with Lebanon's Hezbollah. However, after they were caught in Iraq' quagmire and Israel was defeated in the 33-day war, the US backed off."

Saying that Obama's motto of change seems to be nothing but continuation of Bush's policies, the Iranian parliament speaker warned against any new adventurism by the US and Israel in the Middle East region.

In an interview broadcast on Sunday, Obama vowed "tough but direct diplomacy" with Iran, offering incentives along with the threat of tougher sanctions over its atomic program.

As president from January 20, Obama said he would make clear to Tehran that the nuclear program was "unacceptable," along with support of Hamas and Hezbollah and its "threats against Israel."

Obama, whose offer of direct talks with Iran represents a break with three decades of US foreign policy, promised a "set of carrots and sticks in changing their calculus about how they want to operate."

Three days ago, Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hassan Qashqavi said, "The carrot and stick approach has proven to be useless."

And two days ago, influential former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani accused Obama of mimicking predecessor George W. Bush's tough stance on Tehran's nuclear drive.

The United States and Iran broke diplomatic relations in April 1980, after Iranian students seized the United States' espionage center at its embassy in Tehran. The two countries have had tense relations ever since.

But the two countries' relations specially deteriorated following Tehran's progress in the field of civilian nuclear technology. Washington and its Western allies accuse Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons under the cover of a civilian nuclear program, while they have never presented any corroborative evidence to substantiate their allegations. Iran denies the charges and insists that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.

Tehran stresses that the country has always pursued a civilian path to provide power to the growing number of Iranian population, whose fossil fuel would eventually run dry.

Despite the rules enshrined in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) entitling every member state, including Iran, to the right of uranium enrichment, Tehran is now under three rounds of UN Security Council sanctions for turning down West's illegitimate calls to give up its right of uranium enrichment.

Tehran has dismissed West's demands as politically tainted and illogical, stressing that sanctions and pressures merely consolidate Iranians' national resolve to continue the path.

Iran insists that it should continue enriching uranium because it needs to provide fuel to a 300-megawatt light-water reactor it is building in the southwestern town of Darkhovayn as well as its first nuclear power plant in the southern port city of Bushehr.

Iran currently suffers from an electricity shortage that has forced the country into adopting a rationing program by scheduling power outages - of up to two hours a day - across both urban and rural areas.

Iran plans to construct additional nuclear power plants to provide for the electricity needs of its growing population.

The Islamic Republic says that it considers its nuclear case closed as it has come clean of IAEA's questions and

suspicions about its past nuclear activities.

Political observers believe that the United States has remained at loggerheads with Iran mainly over the independent and home-grown nature of Tehran's nuclear technology, which gives the Islamic Republic the potential to turn into a world power and a role model for other third-world countries. Washington has laid much pressure on Iran to make it give up the most sensitive and advanced part of the technology, which is uranium enrichment, a process used for producing nuclear fuel for power plants.

Washington's push for additional UN penalties contradicts a recent report by 16 US intelligence bodies that endorsed the civilian nature of Iran's programs. Following the US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) and similar reports by the IAEA head - one in November and the other one in February - which praised Iran's truthfulness about key aspects of its past nuclear activities and announced settlement of outstanding issues with Tehran, any effort to impose further sanctions on Iran seems to be completely irrational.

The February report by the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, praised Iran's cooperation in clearing up all of the past questions over its nuclear program, vindicating Iran's nuclear program and leaving no justification for any new UN sanctions.

The UN nuclear watchdog has so far carried out at least 14 surprise inspections of Iran's nuclear sites so far, but found nothing to support West's allegations.

Also in another report to the 35-nation Board of Governors, IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei confirmed "the non-diversion" of nuclear material in Iran and added that the agency had found no "components of a nuclear weapon" or "related nuclear physics studies" in the country.

The IAEA report confirmed that Iran has managed to enrich uranium-235 to a level "less than 5 percent". Such a rate is consistent with the construction of a nuclear power plant. Nuclear arms production, meanwhile, requires an enrichment level of above 90 percent.

The Vienna-based UN nuclear watchdog continues snap inspections of Iranian nuclear sites and has reported that all "declared nuclear material in Iran has been accounted for, and therefore such material is not diverted to prohibited activities."

Mohammed ElBaradei, chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency, recently said that Iran remains far from acquiring capabilities to develop nuclear weapons as it is still lacking the key components to produce an atomic weapon.

"They do not have even the nuclear material, the raw unenriched uranium to develop one nuclear weapon if they decide to do so," said the head of the UN nuclear watchdog agency.

Many world nations have called the UN Security Council pressure against Iran unjustified, especially in the wake of recent IAEA reports, stressing that Tehran's case should be normalized and returned to the UN nuclear watchdog due to the Islamic Republic's increased cooperation with the agency.

Observers believe that the shift of policy by the White House to send William Burns - the third highest-ranking diplomat in the US - to the latest round of Iran-West talks happened after Bush's attempt to rally international pressure against Iran lost steam due to the growing international vigilance.

US President George W. Bush finished a tour of the Middle East in winter to gain the consensus of his Arab allies to unite against Iran.

But hosting officials of the regional nations dismissed Bush's allegations, describing Tehran as a good friend of their countries.

Also in an apparent reference to Washington's Middle East policy, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said earlier this year that Isolating Iran and Syria is a misguided strategy.

"Dialogue between countries in the region is better than pressure from outside," he said, delivering an opening speech at the World Economic Forum on Europe and Central Asia.

Nations in the region could likely find solutions to Middle East conflict and tensions in Iraq by working together and without external pressure, Erdogan said.

In August, Turkish President Abdullah Gul said that Ankara would not be influenced by others in its relations with neighbors. Gul described the expansion of regional ties as natural, saying that "for Turkey what other countries think is of no importance."

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8709221105>

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Los Angeles Times

Tehran Diplomat says Nuclear Sanctions have United Iran

By Borzou Daragahi

December 13, 2008

Reporting from Vienna -- Almost five years ago, Iran unilaterally stopped its uranium enrichment program. The West described it as a diplomatic breakthrough; Tehran called it a temporary suspension. Regardless, the world breathed a sigh of relief.

The respite didn't last. A resentful Iran restarted its sensitive processing and enrichment program in 2005, shortly after the election of hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, arguing that the West had insulted the country.

In an interview in his finely decorated quarters in Vienna this month, Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, described a "confidence deficit" on both sides.

Tehran is often critical of Western media accounts of the nuclear issue. How would you characterize the Western media's portrayal?

Western countries are selectively taking the parts of [IAEA] Director-General Mohamed El Baradei's reports. The whole issue is this: whether there is a diversion or not to military purpose. They just totally ignore this and they say, "OK, why has Iran not suspended?"

What are the consequences of the United Nations resolutions against Iran?

The people became more and more united and supportive of the government's stand. The American administration hoped and dreamed that as a result of these resolutions, and sanctions, the Iranian government would make a hasty mistake by withdrawing from the [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty] and expelling the inspectors from Iran. We didn't make that mistake.

Why not?

We would have given an excuse to Americans to mobilize or convince the other countries to either impose sanctions or stringent or punitive actions. Apart from that, we have not withdrawn from NPT, or we have not stopped the cooperation with the agency, because of some principles. If we wanted to withdraw from NPT, we could have done it after the [1979] revolution. But, in general, weapons of mass destruction are contrary to the very principles enshrined in our constitution.

If the U.N. Security Council says, "Stop enriching," why not play good global citizen?

We have taken such steps [in 2003]. We agreed to give a chance to suspend temporarily and voluntarily for a short time, until the agency made a technical analysis [of highly enriched components found in Iran]. In June 2004, El Baradei reported that it is now proved that Iran's assertion is correct, and the source of contamination is from outside.

But we found out that when they started by asking and talking of temporary suspension, they had in mind cessation. . . . They said Iran should also suspend research and development in enrichment and processing and all related activities. It means everything. It means the Iranian nation, with thousands of years of civilization, now has to be deprived of research and development. I have to tell you that we lost all trust. Then we decided we cannot continue anymore.

What should they have done, what could they have done, to build trust instead of build suspicion?

They should have studied Iranian culture. We have maybe five or six types of phrases to tell somebody to sit down. One of them is very friendly. The other one is something unacceptable. . . .

There is a confidence deficit from our side too. We have suspicions too. They should have sat down at the negotiation table, and just reviewed both sides in a very pragmatic, realistic and equal footing.

As soon as they use the notion of preconditions, it's destined to failure, because we would never accept such preconditions. This is again part of our culture, because it is humiliation. I will never accept the Americans as a superpower. We made a revolution in order not to accept anybody as a superpower; this is the crux of the matter.

Some say that the negotiations are just a way for Iran to gain time.

This claim is obsolete now. Now we are there. We are masters of enrichment technology. From now on, everything is the same, just adding new machines. We have already done it. We don't need to buy time now.

It looks like, in Iran, suddenly the sanctions are starting to really affect everyday life. So is the population ready to suffer so much for nuclear technology?

Yes. Have you ever analyzed to what extent Iranians have in fact continued their defense during the [1980s Iran-Iraq] war? They never, ever could give up one inch of their land to Saddam [Hussein].

That was a totally different situation. Iran was under attack.

There, we didn't want to give up one inch of our homeland; here, it's our identity. They were passing a red line by trying to deprive Iranians of research and development. This was total humiliation to our identity.

Daragahi is a Times staff writer.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/asection/la-fg-iranqa13-2008dec13,0,1522414.story>

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Washington Post

Tuesday, December 16, 2008

Iran's Khatami Mulls Run for Presidency

In Speech, Former Leader Says Nation's Problems Cannot Be Solved Immediately

By Thomas Erdbrink

Washington Post Foreign Service

TEHRAN, Dec. 15 -- Former Iranian president [Mohammad Khatami](#), an opponent of current President [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#)'s policies, said Monday that he is still pondering a bid for the country's highest political office directly elected by the people.

During a speech before hundreds of Tehran University students, who chanted slogans in support of his potential candidacy, Khatami said, "I'm not saying I won't run, I'm just saying that I'm still thinking it over."

"Khatami forever, future president," the students, some of whom demonstrated last week against Ahmadinejad, shouted several times, according to the Iranian Students News Agency.

The former president, who during two terms spanning 1997 to 2005 clashed with several of the country's powerful unelected political institutions, told the students that [Iran's](#) "problems" couldn't be solved in one day.

"People's expectations are very high. They want everything to be solved in one night," he told the students, who broke into the auditorium hours before the speech to prevent government supporters from taking their seats, eyewitnesses said. Foreign journalists were banned from entering university grounds.

Ahmadinejad hasn't registered yet as a candidate, but he is expected to run for a second term. If Khatami becomes a candidate, Ahmadinejad, whose management of Iran's oil-dependent economy has come under sometimes harsh criticism, would face a serious competitor.

Ahmadinejad and Khatami are on opposite sides of the Iranian political spectrum -- with the president representing a socially conservative, economically populist wing and the former president favoring more personal freedoms and a stronger civil society within the Islamic republic.

"If Khatami would run, it would mean that the elections will be between only two main candidates," said Iraj Jamshidi, a journalist with the newspaper Donya Eghtesad, which is critical of Ahmadinejad's policies.

Khatami, a Shiite Muslim cleric, was elected twice by large majorities of the popular vote. In addition to promising more civil liberties and political freedoms, he pledged to end Iran's isolation in world affairs. By the end of his administration, many of his supporters were disappointed with his inability to fulfill those pledges. Some of his political appointees were suspected of corruption.

During his campaign, Ahmadinejad promised to spend Iran's oil income on programs directly helping the poor. But inflation and unemployment have risen sharply, and in many urban areas, his popularity seems to have dropped.

"Those promises were made for getting votes," said Amir Mohebbian, an analyst who once supported Ahmadinejad's political faction. "They both promised gigantic changes which were not doable."

Only Mehdi Karroubi, a centrist cleric who finished third in the 2005 presidential election, has officially announced his candidacy.

The mayor of Tehran, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, a former [Revolutionary Guard](#) commander who presents himself as a technocrat, is contemplating a run. So is Mostafa Pourmohammadi, Ahmadinejad's former interior minister.

During his years as president, Khatami battled several powerful state institutions, including the 12-member Guardian Council, which has the right to disqualify candidates running for office and veto laws proposed by

the elected government and parliament. Even presidential candidates must be vetted by the Guardian Council, whose members are appointed by Iran's supreme leader, [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#).

In 2004, the council blocked almost all of Khatami's parliamentary supporters from participating in elections. Their seats were won by the faction affiliated with Ahmadinejad.

"In my time, it was said by state television that there is poverty, corruption, high prices and unemployment, but today -- thank God -- everything is great," Khatami told the students in apparent sarcasm.

According to Iran's central bank, inflation is at historic highs, reaching nearly 30 percent on a month-to-month basis.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/15/AR2008121502724_pf.html

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World Politics Review
16 Dec 2008

Overhauling the Iran Sanctions Act

Peter Doran

As President-elect Barack Obama's national security team prepares to take office in January, the Turkish government is readying to outflank the U.S.'s Iran policy on a vast scale, having signed a milestone agreement in November to invest \$12 billion in Iran's energy sector. The move presents an immediate conflict between Washington's efforts to contain Iran's nuclear ambitions and its desire to wean Europe from Russian energy dependence. As a result, the Obama administration will be forced to choose between overhauling American efforts to isolate Iran or inviting a sour demonstration of America's waning influence among close allies.

As part of the announced deal, Turkey will expand Iran's production capacity and ultimately gain access to 13 billion cubic meters a year of Iranian natural gas -- enough to cover the current imports of Greece, Romania and Bulgaria combined. The deal advances Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan's efforts to transform his country into a vital energy hub for Europe and sends an alarming signal to Washington: the old diplomatic tools are not working.

The Turkey-Iran agreement comes at a time when many EU members, particularly in Central Europe, grow wary of their dependence on Russian energy imports. This vulnerability became apparent in July 2008, when Russia halved its oil deliveries to the Czech Republic on the day it signed a key missile defense agreement with the United States. Unfortunately, most EU members lack immediate alternatives to Russian energy. This has led countries like Germany to accept the uncertainty of a devil's bargain with the Kremlin rather than risk expected gas shortages in the future.

In response, the United States and EU have supported alternatives to Russia's energy monopoly, with particular interest focusing on the multinational Nabucco pipeline. On paper, Nabucco could undercut Moscow's ability to use energy as a weapon by diversifying Europe's supply of natural gas. To date, however, Nabucco is largely a political pipeline without the patronage of a high-profile commercial champion or secure access to upstream supplies.

Despite its strong support for the project, Washington is partly to blame for this shortfall. Currently, America's Iran policy creates barriers to that country's vast supplies of natural gas -- the largest outside Russia -- and stifles commercial efforts to bring this non-Russian gas to Europe. The Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) directly links foreign investment in Iran's energy sector with Tehran's ability to support terrorism and WMD proliferation. While America remains tied to the mast of the ISA, a resurgent Russia has used the sanctions regime to lock in European customers and force Central Asian producers to use Kremlin-controlled pipelines. As a result, the U.S.'s Iran policy has inadvertently strengthened Russia's leverage over Europe, at a time when the Kremlin is increasingly in conflict with America's security objectives in the region.

Worse yet, the ISA may not even work. A December 2007 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, for example, noted that the effectiveness of Iran sanctions was "difficult to determine," since "State, Treasury, and Commerce officials said that they do not measure the overall impact of [the Iran] sanctions they implement."

When Turkey signed an earlier energy deal with Iran in 1998, the Clinton White House declined to impose sanctions against Ankara, on the grounds that any imported gas would really originate from Turkmenistan. When Turkey began to import gas directly from Iran in 2001, the Bush White House did nothing, since the alternative would have been to punish a long-standing NATO ally for sponsoring terrorism and WMD proliferation in Iran, as required under law.

Thus, policy-makers in Washington have given the State Department the worst of all the possible tools -- a muddled policy -- with which it might discourage allies from engaging Iran on energy. If this approach fails, as in the case of Turkey, Washington lacks an effective alternative in its diplomatic arsenal with which to dissuade them. This sends dangerously conflicting signals to allies, limits incentives for them to bandwagon with America, and undermines Europe's attempts to lighten the Russian energy yoke.

The Obama administration has a unique political moment in which to push through an ambitious overhaul of the well-intentioned ISA. If that fails, it can still issue waivers to the ISA on a case-by-case basis, which would allow European allies access to a massive reserve of non-Russian gas in Iran, invite a parade of commercial champions to Nabucco and offer Central Asian gas producers an alternative to Moscow's transport monopoly - all steps needed to diversify Europe's supply of energy away from Russian control.

A revision or repeal of the ISA also offers the new administration an attractive incentive to offer Iran in exchange for a breakthrough on nuclear nonproliferation. However, in order for the new president to approach engagement with Tehran from a position of strength, the offer must include tough penalties for inaction. Practical options include a more robust ban on Iran's international banking transactions, a broader freeze on its foreign financial assets, expanded limits on foreign travel for state officials, and a sweeping ban on international insurance for Iranian-owned or contracted tankers.

The net effect of these measures would dramatically increase Tehran's transaction costs, severely cripple the regime's ability to convert foreign currency, and limit its efforts to move money, personnel, or oil tankers around the globe. Moreover, it would make the ISA overhaul incentive all the more attractive, particularly if the threat of military intervention remains on the table.

European support for these measures will be key. In recent years, the German government, in particular, has been reluctant to pursue multilateral action against Iran without United Nations' approval. When the incoming administration meets with German officials, it must push for their support for tougher penalties against Tehran, even if Berlin cannot deliver on other White House priorities such as an expanded troop commitment in Afghanistan.

Clearly, Barack Obama's historic election does not ensure an equally historic presidency. But by rationalizing the Iran sanctions regime to allow increased access to Iran's critical energy reserves, the incoming president has the opportunity get ahead of the Iran dilemma and begin the restoration of America's global influence. The alternative is to preside over its hazardous drift.

<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articlePrint.aspx?ID=3048>

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Washington Post
Friday, December 12, 2008

N. Korea Doesn't Agree to Written Nuclear Pact

Earlier Assurances Contradicted, U.S. Says

By Glenn Kessler

Washington Post Staff Writer

North Korea balked yesterday at agreeing to a written plan for verifying its nuclear claims, handing President Bush a diplomatic defeat and the incoming Obama administration a new diplomatic headache.

Bush took a gamble two months ago when he agreed to remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, based on spoken assurances from Pyongyang that it had agreed to a verification plan. At the time, there were signs North Korea was planning to restart its shuttered nuclear plant or even conduct a nuclear test, and administration officials were desperate to avoid a crisis in the final months of Bush's presidency.

U.S. officials at the time asserted that North Korea had privately bent on two key issues: potential access to facilities not included in Pyongyang's nuclear declaration and permission for inspectors to take environmental samples from facilities to determine how much plutonium had been produced. The State Department publicly distributed a statement titled "U.S.-North Korean Understandings on Verification" that listed six key points, but it declined to release the text of the claimed agreement.

Yesterday, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher R. Hill told reporters in Beijing that four days of talks this week had failed because North Korea "was not ready to reach a verification protocol with all the standards that are required." But U.S. officials acknowledge now that most of the purported agreements announced two months ago were simply oral understandings between Hill and his North Korean counterparts.

Before Bush announced he was taking North Korea off the state sponsors of terrorism list -- a significant diplomatic carrot for Pyongyang -- Hill submitted a memorandum to North Korea's mission to the United Nations outlining his understanding of the oral agreements. The North Korean officials did not object to Hill's summary, U.S. officials said, but they would not commit to it in writing.

Hill's gambit was controversial among senior Bush administration officials. But in the end, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice persuaded Bush to lift the sanctions based on Hill's claims of a spoken deal with Pyongyang.

"We got a commitment," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said yesterday. "And we have very, very precise notes about those commitments. And we committed those to paper and also in the form of a memorandum, for the record, if you will." McCormack added that North Korea also privately confirmed its deal with Hill to other nations participating in the disarmament talks.

But after the sanctions were lifted, North Korea very quickly denied that it had made any such agreement, particularly on the issue of taking samples from nuclear sites. The Korean Central News Agency, the official North Korean news service, last week issued a commentary on the debate, noting that "the agreement includes no paragraph referring to the collection of samples. . . . To demand what is not mentioned in the written agreement . . . is an infringement upon sovereignty as it is little short of seeking a house search."

Many experts believe North Korea has refused to commit to a written verification plan because it can renegotiate the whole issue with the incoming Obama administration, allowing Pyongyang to seek more concessions. It is also possible that North Korea may never openly admit that it will permit the taking of samples but that it may become amenable to allowing it once the verification process begins. (Last year, North Korea unexpectedly gave aluminum tube samples to U.S. officials, who carried them back in their suitcases.)

"There is no precedent in the history of negotiations with North Korea to suggest that a deferred problem will be fulfilled," said Michael J. Green, a former Asia adviser to Bush. "They will hold on to this card, probably to drive up the price for the next administration."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/11/AR2008121103706.html?hpid=sec-nation>

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AFP

12 December 2008

US Says No More Fuel Shipments to N Korea until Nuke Verification

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States said Friday that there would be no more fuel aid shipments to energy-strapped North Korea until Pyongyang agrees to a written plan to verify its nuclear disarmament.

The United States had warned that it would "rethink" its approach to North Korean nuclear disarmament after the latest round of six-country negotiations collapsed in Beijing on Thursday.

"The North Koreans have not come through and signed on to the verification protocol, which all other parties have agreed to," said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack.

"Future fuel shipments will not go forward absent a verification regime," McCormack told reporters after what he called an "understanding" among the United States, South Korea, Japan, China and Russia.

McCormack said one fuel shipment from Russia to North Korea was apparently already en route, but would be the last if Pyongyang did not accept nuclear disarmament verification procedures agreed earlier in the six-party talks.

"I think it's very difficult to turn off," he told the daily news briefing.

The six parties struck a landmark deal in February 2007 that promised diplomatic and economic incentives -- including energy aid -- to North Korea in return for giving up the nuclear programs it spent decades developing.

McCormack said the impasse has also put in limbo discussions to find an alternative supplier to Japan to ship fuel to North Korea as Tokyo insists that Pyongyang first clear up the cases of Japanese abducted during the Cold War.

"There were efforts to perhaps solicit donations of fuel oil from other parties not involved in the six-party talks ... And I don't see those going forward without agreement on a verification protocol," he added.

The failure of the talks in Beijing all but dashed the hopes of US President George W. Bush's administration to make progress on North Korean disarmament before Barack Obama moves into the White House.

The Bush administration had made solving the North Korean nuclear impasse a key foreign policy priority.

McCormack said that US negotiator Christopher Hill had returned from Beijing to give Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice "a more full briefing" about his discussions with the other parties.

Hill, the assistant secretary for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, will continue consultations with his counterparts from South Korea, Japan, Russia and China who have all returned to their capitals, he added.

McCormack did not rule out the risk that North Korea would resume steps it took months ago to restart its nuclear plants as it pressed demands to be taken off a US terrorism blacklist.

"Throughout (the negotiations) there have been stops and starts and various kinds of fits," McCormack said when asked about such a risk.

The negotiations that began in 2003 have been mired in countless setbacks, and did not prevent Pyongyang from testing its first atomic bomb in 2006.

And although the North made its declaration of its atomic activities in June, the next step in the process was working out a way to determine if it had been telling the truth.

In October, the United States struck North Korea from a blacklist of countries supporting terrorism after saying Pyongyang agreed to steps to verify its nuclear disarmament and pledged to resume disabling its atomic plants.

But the five other parties were unable in Beijing this week to get North Korea to commit all of those steps to paper.

McCormack said "this is an absolute matter of principle" for North Korea to sign up to a verification protocol because it is an "action-for-action negotiation."

He added: "The ball is in the North Koreans' court."

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hpqe3DNcr4uC4Eb-nOk9Mgnu4PLA>

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Al Jazeera

Saturday, December 13, 2008

US Suspends N Korea Fuel Aid

The United States has said that it will suspend fuel aid shipments to energy-strapped North Korea until Pyongyang agrees to a written plan to verify its nuclear disarmament.

The announcement on Friday follows the US's earlier threat to place the shipments "under review" after the latest round of six-country negotiations collapsed in Beijing.

"Future fuel shipments will not go forward absent a verification regime," Sean McCormack, the US state department spokesman, said following what he called an "understanding" among the US, South Korea, Japan, China and Russia.

He said that the North Koreans also understood this.

In response, Pyongyang threatened to slow down the process of disabling its nuclear programme.

"We will probably adjust the pace of pace disablement at nuclear facilities if [the aid] is suspended," said Kim Kye-gwan, North Korea's vice-foreign minister, the Kyodo news agency reported.

Incentives

The six parties involved in the talks struck a landmark deal in February 2007 that promised diplomatic and economic incentives - including energy aid - to North Korea in return for giving up the nuclear programmes it spent decades developing.

But North Korea has refused to allow outside inspectors to take samples at its Yongbyon complex for verification of its declared nuclear activities.

The US state department said later that a Russian shipment of heavy fuel oil had arrived in North Korea and "will finish being off-loaded next week", even though Russia had been party to the so-called understanding.

McCormack said that for technical reasons the Russian shipment would be the last until the impasse is broken.

The failure of the talks in Beijing all but dashed the hopes of George Bush, the US president, and his administration that they could make progress on North Korean disarmament before Barack Obama takes over as president.

The Bush administration had made solving the North Korean nuclear impasse a key foreign policy priority.

The leaders of South Korea and Japan condemned Pyongyang for its uncooperative stance in the talks in Beijing.

"Both leaders from the two countries expressed their regret that North Korea showed an uncooperative attitude toward joint efforts by the other participating countries [in the talks]," South Korea's presidential office said in a statement.

US 'blacklist'

The negotiations have suffered countless setbacks since they began in 2003 and did not stop Pyongyang from testing its first atomic bomb in 2006.

The US had announced plans to drop North Korea from the "terrorism blacklist" after reaching an apparent deal on earlier nuclear inspection demands.

That is part of the six-nation pact in 2007 promising North Korea diplomatic concessions and economic incentives, including energy aid, in exchange for total disarmament.

Under the terms of the 2007 deal, North Korea was to receive one million tonnes of fuel oil or equivalent energy aid in return for disabling and dismantling its main plutonium-producing plants in Yongbyon.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia-pacific/2008/12/200812132740240913.html>

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Washington Post
Saturday, December 13, 2008

N. Korea Threatens to Slow Nuclear Disablement

By Yoo Choonsik
Reuters

FUKUOKA, Japan (Reuters) - North Korea threatened on Saturday to slow disablement of its main nuclear plant after Washington said energy aid to the state had been suspended due to failed talks on verifying the North's operations.

The leaders of China, Japan and South Korea expressed regret the North had failed to agree to specific steps on verifying its nuclear activities at multilateral talks in Beijing this week.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said all five countries negotiating with North Korea -- Japan, Russia, China, the United States and South Korea -- had agreed that future fuel shipments would not go forward until there was progress on a so-called verification protocol with Pyongyang.

"This is an action-for-action process," McCormack told reporters in Washington. "Future fuel shipments aren't going to move forward absent a verification regime ... they (the North Koreans) understand that."

But Russia said there had been no agreement about suspending fuel shipments.

"The U.S. State Department's recent statement ... surprised us," deputy foreign minister and Russian envoy to the six party talks, Alexei Borodavkin, told RIA Novosti news agency.

He said the Russian delegation "had not agreed upon any joint arrangements with the United States about a delay or suspension of fuel oil shipments to North Korea as an offset against dismantling of the Yongbyon Nuclear Research Center."

North Korea's nuclear envoy Kim Kye-gwan was quoted by Kyodo news agency as telling reporters in Beijing that Pyongyang would "probably adjust the pace of disablement at nuclear facilities if (the aid) is suspended."

North Korea has been in negotiations with the United States over its nuclear arms programme for more than a decade and the issue took on extra urgency after Pyongyang held its first nuclear test explosion in October 2006.

Two months ago, the Bush administration said it was removing North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, based on Pyongyang's oral commitment to a verification plan.

Experts believe Pyongyang is holding out on a verification protocol until the Obama administration takes over next month.

NORTH "UNCOOPERATIVE"

Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak criticized Pyongyang for its "uncooperative attitude" at the talks in Beijing, South Korea's presidential office said in a statement..

Aso and Lee met in southern Japan ahead of a rare trilateral summit with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao at which the global financial crisis topped the agenda.

In a statement, the three countries said the six-party talks remained an important mechanism for maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and in North Asia at large.

Aso and Lee reaffirmed their stance toward North Korea, with Lee telling a joint news conference that dismantling Pyongyang's nuclear programme "will surely and should be achieved in the end," although he said it might take a long time.

U.S. nuclear envoy Christopher Hill returned to Washington after the failed Beijing talks and briefed U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Friday, said McCormack, adding that Hill would continue trying to get a deal.

"There's the opportunity for North Korea to sign onto this verification protocol," he said. "That still exists. We'll see. The ball is in their court."

Under an agreement last year, up to 1 million tonnes of heavy fuel aid was promised to North Korea as a reward for progress on denuclearization. Countries outside the five-nation group also have volunteered to supply North Korea with energy.

By mid-November, North Korea had received about half of the amount promised by the five and the United States has provided about 200,000 tons of that, the State Department said.

An unspecified amount of fuel was delivered this month by Russia and will finish being offloaded in North Korea next week, State Department spokesman Robert McInturff told Reuters.

But McCormack said Russia had made clear in this week's talks in Beijing that any future shipments would not be made until North Korea agreed to the verification protocol.

(Additional reporting by Sue Fleming in Washington, Tetsushi Kajimoto in Fukuoka and Maria Kiselyova in Moscow; Writing by Jeremy Laurence; Editing by Elizabeth Piper)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/13/AR2008121300468.html>

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Strait Times, Singapore
Dec 15, 2008

N. Korea Energy Aid to Continue

SEOUL - NATIONS negotiating nuclear disarmament with North Korea will continue providing energy aid in coming weeks despite the failure of the latest round of multilateral talks, South Korea said on Monday.

Russia is pushing to provide 50,000 tonnes of fuel oil and China plans to deliver 99,000 tonnes by the end of January to complete their shares of the assistance, said foreign ministry spokesman Moon Tae-Young.

His comments appeared to contradict the US State Department, which said on Friday there would be no more shipments by the five negotiating countries until North Korea agreed to a written plan to verify its nuclear disarmament.

The five in February 2007 reached a deal offering the energy-starved North one million tonnes of fuel oil - or energy aid of equivalent value - in return for the disablement of its nuclear plants and a declaration of nuclear activities.

The equivalent of about 600,000 tonnes has been provided so far.

The six-nation talks in Beijing failed last week to reach agreement on ways to verify the North's declaration, with the US and others pressing for the right to take soil and air samples in the secretive communist state.

North Korea refuses to allow this.

'Future fuel shipments will not go forward absent a verification regime,' State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said, following what he called an 'understanding' among the US, South Korea, Japan, China and Russia.

But Russia announced on Saturday it would furnish its entire fuel aid quota.

'We hope to complete shortly all of our quota of 200,000 tonnes' of fuel, deputy Russian foreign minister Alexei Borodavkin told Ria Novosti news agency, describing himself as 'surprised' by Washington's stance.

Mr Moon said South Korea had 3,000 tonnes of steel plate ready for delivery to repair the North's power stations. 'The timing for the delivery will be reviewed in consideration of various factors including the disablement,' he said.

He said South Korea, which chairs a working group on energy aid, would convene a meeting 'at an appropriate date' to coordinate positions on the aid.

South Korean officials said the US had already completed delivery of its share of the aid. -- AFP

http://www.straitstimes.com/Breaking%2BNews/Asia/Story/STIStory_314667.html

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The New York Times

December 16, 2008

Pirates Outmaneuver Warships off Somalia

By [JEFFREY GETTLEMAN](#)

ON THE ARABIAN SEA — Rear Adm. Giovanni Gumiero is going on a pirate hunt.

From the deck of an Italian destroyer cruising the pirate-infested waters off [Somalia](#)'s coast, he has all the modern tools at his fingertips — radar, sonar, infrared cameras, helicopters, a cannon that can sink a ship 10 miles away — to take on a centuries-old problem that harks back to the days of schooners and eye patches. "Our presence will deter them," the admiral said confidently.

But the wily buccaneers of Somalia's seas do not seem especially deterred — instead, they seem to be getting only wilier. More than a dozen warships from Italy, Greece, Turkey, India, Denmark, Saudi Arabia, France, Russia, Britain, Malaysia and the United States have joined the hunt.

And yet, in the past two months alone, the [pirates](#) have attacked more than 30 vessels, eluding the naval patrols, going farther out to sea and seeking bigger, more lucrative game, including an American cruise ship and a 1,000-foot Saudi oil tanker.

The pirates are recalibrating their tactics, attacking ships in beelike swarms of 20 to 30 skiffs, and threatening to choke off one of the busiest shipping arteries in the world, at the mouth of the Red Sea. [United Nations](#) officials recently estimated that Somali pirates had netted as much as \$120 million this year in ransom payments — an astronomical sum for a country whose economy has been gutted by 17 years of chaos and war. Some shipping companies are now rerouting their vessels to avoid Somalia's waters, detouring thousands of miles around the Cape of Good Hope, at the southern tip of Africa.

The pirates are totally outgunned. They continue to cruise around in fiberglass skiffs with assault rifles and at best a few rocket-propelled grenades. One Italian officer said that going after them in a 485-foot-long destroyer, bristling with surface-to-air missiles and torpedoes, was like "going after someone on a bicycle with a truck."

But the pirates — true to form — remain unfazed. "They can't stop us," said Jama Ali, one of the pirates aboard a Ukrainian freighter packed with weapons that was hijacked in September and was still being held. He explained how he and his men hid out on a rock near the narrow mouth of the Red Sea and waited for the big gray ships with the guns to pass before pouncing on slow-moving tankers. Even if foreign navies nab some

members of his crew, Mr. Jama said, he is not worried. He said his men would probably get no more punishment than a free ride back to the beach, which has happened several times. “We know international law,” Mr. Jama said. Western diplomats have said that maritime law can be as murky as the seas. Several times this year, the Danish Navy captured men they suspected to be pirates, only to dump them on shore after the Danish government decided it did not have jurisdiction.

The American warships surrounding the hijacked Ukrainian freighter have intercepted several small skiffs going to the freighter, but let the men aboard go because American officials said they did not want to put the freighter’s crew in danger. This seeming impunity is especially infuriating to the new cadre of private security guards, fresh from the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, hired to tag along on merchant voyages to add a layer of protection. Burly men with tattooed forearms and shaved heads sipping Heineken and checking their watches are now common sights on the beaches of Oman, Kenya and Djibouti. They have their own ideas for dealing with seafaring outlaws. “We should make ’em walk the plank,” one British security guard said. Despite tough talk, the guards are unarmed (because most countries do not allow them to bring weapons into port), so they are often forced to confront machine-gun-toting pirates with fire hoses.

Or worse. There was even a recent case, according to several security contractors, in which Filipino crew members pelted pirates with tomatoes in an attempt to stop them from scaling the hull of their ship. It did not work. The Italian naval officers say the piracy patrols are helping — already the Italians have rescued several merchant vessels surrounded by pirate skiffs. The Italian destroyer is part of a [NATO](#) mission that began in October. “But the answer is to have a good, strong government on land,” Admiral Gumiero said. “That’s the only way to end this, for sure.” That said, strong government is nowhere to be found. The piracy epidemic is not so much a separate problem as a symptom of the failed state of Somalia — a place crawling with guns, gangs and criminals that has not had a functioning central government since 1991.

Many Somalia analysts think that it is about to get even worse. The Ethiopian military, which has been shoring up a weak and unpopular transitional Somali government, says it will pull out within a month. The transitional government, split by poisonous infighting, seems on the brink of collapse. Islamic militants with links to [Al Qaeda](#) are poised to take over. Famine is steadily creeping toward millions of people, many withering away in plastic huts that are no match for the intense sun or the drenching rains.

United Nations officials are swinging into crisis mode, calling high-level meetings in East Africa and New York to address piracy and the greater Somali mess. Some United Nations officials are pushing to send in peacekeepers, but no countries are rushing to offer troops. Some American officials have proposed chasing the pirates on the shore and raiding their dens, which are well known but so far untouched. Somalia’s transitional leaders, anxious for any help, said they would welcome that.

“This is a cancer and it’s growing,” said Abdi Awaleh Jama, an ambassador at large for the transitional federal government. “We have to extract it once and for all.” More than 100 ships have been attacked off Somalia’s coast in 2008, far more than in any previous year on record. The economic costs are piling up, with higher insurance payments for shippers, higher fuel costs because of detours and new private security bills, not to mention the million-dollar ransom payments. The cash-starved Egyptian government is poised to lose billions of dollars if ships from the Middle East and Asia stop using the Suez Canal, one of Egypt’s biggest foreign-exchange earners, and go around Africa instead. But the end of piracy could be an economic catastrophe — for many Somalis. Their country exports almost nothing these days, and more legitimate forms of business have largely died off.

Entire clans and coastal villages now survive off piracy, with women baking bread for pirates, men and boys guarding hostages, and others serving as scouts, gunmen, mechanics, accountants and skiff builders. Traders make a nice cut off the water, fuel and cigarettes needed to sustain such oceangoing voyages. Pirates are known as the best customers of all.

“They pay \$20 for a \$5 bottle of perfume,” said Leyla Ahmed, a shopkeeper in Xarardheere, a notorious pirate den on the Somali coast. Maritime experts say that the naval efforts will take time. “Let’s wait and see,” said

Pottengal Mukundan, director of the International Maritime Bureau in London. "You must appreciate it's a very large stretch of water, a massive area," he said, referring to the several hundred thousand square miles of sea where the naval ships are patrolling. Then there is the nettlesome question of what to do with the pirates. Italian officers on pirate patrol seemed uncomfortable at the thought of actually capturing a real live pirate. There is not even a brig or place to hold the pirates on the destroyer. "Our main goal is providing safe passage," said Fabrizio Simoncini, the destroyer's captain.

So far, they have done a decent job at that, escorting at least eight humanitarian ships, with 30,000 tons of badly needed aid for Somalia. The Indian Navy recently announced that it had arrested 23 pirates, though it is not clear where the suspects would be prosecuted. Last week in Nairobi, Kenya, at an antipiracy conference, British officials outlined a plan for their navy to capture Somali pirates and hand them over to Kenyan courts. But according to Kenneth Randall, dean of the [University of Alabama](#) School of Law and an international law scholar, "Any country can arrest these guys and prosecute them at home, under domestic laws that apply. "I'm actually surprised people think it's unclear," he said. "The law on piracy is 100 percent clear." He said that international customary law going back hundreds of years had defined pirates as criminals who robbed and stole on the high seas. Because the crimes were committed in international waters, he said, all countries had not only the authority but also the obligation to apprehend and prosecute them.

The Italians clearly have the resources. Out on the front lines, or front waves, beefy Italian marines prowl the decks with machine guns. Radar screens blip and beep. Sailors make announcements over the destroyer's radio, telling nearby cargo ships to put out an S O S with their position as soon as they spot any pirates. The Italians said that, deep down, pirates were creatures of the sea, no matter how many navy ships were hot on their tail. "When the sea is calm, the moon is bright, the weather is good, it's easy to see how the pirates are encouraged," said Enrico Vignola, a lieutenant on the ship.

For visitors on board, lunchtime was the highlight. The officers summoned up from the oily bowels of the destroyer a banquet of homemade pasta, marinated eggplant sliced paper thin, prosciutto-wrapped dates and tiramisu, finished off with cool glasses of spumante.

It seems that when Italians hunt for pirates, they hunt in style.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/16/world/africa/16pirate.html?_r=1&ref=world&pagewanted=print

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The Moscow Times Issue 4053

16 December 2008

Fighting Pirates Instead of the United States

By Rose Gottemoeller

Two hundred years ago, the fledgling United States of America was struggling to make its mark on the world. The European powers weren't giving it much respect, and the threat of new conquest in the Americas was ever present -- and not only from the direction of Europe. Russia was pressing south from its imperial outposts in Alaska, and Spain was pressing north out of Mexico.

U.S. leaders wrestled these problems in two ways. The first was to project power abroad, and the second was to insist on a sphere of influence in the Americas. President Thomas Jefferson drove decisions to build a U.S. navy capable of taking on threats to U.S. commerce, and the worst threats of the day were the Barbary pirates off North Africa. President James Monroe declared a policy defying European countries to colonize or meddle in either North or South America -- the Monroe Doctrine.

Today, pirates and the Monroe Doctrine are in the news again, and it seems like we haven't progressed much in 200 years. This time, though, it is Russia that is struggling to make its mark on the world. After the August incursion into Georgia, the Kremlin declared that it would challenge any country that questioned its sphere of influence in the region. Following visits by U.S. Navy ships to Georgia, Moscow threw down the gauntlet to

Washington, first sending bombers and then its own ships for exercises with the Venezuelan Navy. The Russians are calling it a challenge to the Monroe Doctrine, although the United States has so far either ignored or ridiculed the effort.

Across the world, modern-day Barbary pirates -- this time operating out of Somalia -- are threatening commerce by escalating attacks on maritime trade in the Gulf of Aden. This affects Russia's interests. When the Ukrainian ship *Faina*, which had Soviet-designed military equipment on board, was seized in late September, Moscow dispatched the frigate *Neustrashimy* to the region, to work with the U.S. 5th Fleet and a European Union task force that includes ships from the British, French and Spanish navies.

The contrast with the Venezuelan escapade could not be greater. Although Russia has not officially joined the task force, it is working with the other navies in a kind of division of labor. U.S. ships have surrounded the *Faina* to keep its cargo of weapons from being offloaded and, possibly, sold on to Islamist terrorist groups. The *Neustrashimy*, meanwhile, has joined the British Navy in escorting merchant ships and preventing pirate attacks. In mid-November, the *Neustrashimy*, together with the British frigate *HMS Cumberland*, thwarted two attacks on a Danish vessel.

Russia's partners have praised Moscow's efforts. As the spokesman for the 5th Fleet commented, "Just the fact that the *Neustrashimy* is ... supporting the counterpiracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden ... helps to counter the destabilizing impact on all of our international trade." Russia has responded by promising to increase its contribution. On Nov. 20, the commander-in-chief of the Navy, Admiral Vladimir Vysotsky, announced that the country would deploy warships on a regular basis to prevent pirate attacks.

What a contrast in Russian policies. In the Western hemisphere, Moscow conjures up the great power politics of the 19th century and attempts to replay Cold War games. Mercifully, the United States has responded with a light touch so far. Off the coast of Africa, however, Russia has joined with the navies of the United States, EU countries and India to confront a dire threat to the international order.

The Kremlin needs to decide which model to pursue, because it has painfully few resources available to defend its national interests. Should those scarce resources chase an ephemeral challenge to the United States, or should they concentrate on really tough problems that threaten the country's economic health and security? The answer is not difficult, especially since the tough problems allow Russia to develop a new way of working with its former adversaries from the Cold War.

Russia is in on the ground floor of international efforts to confront Somali piracy. If it plays its cards right, Russia's fleet could find its NATO counterparts, in effect, blessing Moscow's new interest in projecting naval power. They need help, and the Russian navy can provide it.

Dmitry Medvedev, who returned not long ago from Venezuela, has a serious choice to make. He can choose the Barbary pirates or the Monroe Doctrine. If I were him, I'd go with the pirates.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/articles/detail.php?ID=373198&print=Y>

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Somaliland Offers Port to Fight Pirates

Geoff Hill THE WASHINGTON TIMES

JOHANNESBURG

A breakaway region of Somalia with a name that is bound to confuse outsiders - Somaliland - plans to offer its harbor on the Gulf of Aden as a base for U.S., British and Indian warships to battle pirates.

In the process, Somaliland hopes to raise its international profile and ultimately advance its campaign to become an independent nation that is recognized worldwide.

"This crisis is not going to go away by itself, but we can solve it," Somaliland President Dahir Rayale Kahin told The Washington Times by telephone.

"We will place the deep-water port of Berbera at the disposal of the U.S., British, Indian and other navies, but our [proposal] goes well beyond that," Mr. Kahin said.

Somaliland consists of the northern leg of Somalia, which was cobbled together from former British and Italian colonies.

Somaliland declared independence from a dysfunctional Somali government in 1991. Since then, it has stayed out of the international spotlight.

It avoided the famine and violence that first made Somalia a household name with the 1992-93 U.S. invasion. It also remained unaffected by the near-takeover by the rest of the country by Islamic militants, which prompted an invasion by Ethiopian troops in 2006.

Mr Kahin said now is not the time to discuss sovereignty for Somaliland.

"The piracy problem is far greater in the short term than any talk of flags and embassies," he said.

He said he has no doubt that recognition will eventually come to Somaliland, as it did for Kosovo, the Balkan enclave that gained independence earlier this year.

"But unless we are bold in our approach to this undeclared war at sea, sooner or later we will have a tragedy," Mr. Kahin said.

The proposal being developed by the government of Somaliland will recommend cooperation among key stakeholders, including the United States, and will center on the port of Berbera on the Gulf of Aden's coast at the entrance to the Red Sea.

Mr. Kahin said his government had yet to finalize the strategy and make a formal submission to other countries, but that preliminary plans include five main points:

- Berbera would be the hub of operations, given that it is close to the affected area and large enough to host the vessels being used to fight the pirates.
- The port would be available as a "safe house" to any vessel - merchant, military or private - whose captain believed his ship was vulnerable to attack. Naval vessels would be welcome to escort these craft in and out of the harbor.
- Somaliland would help set up a pool of shared intelligence with other nations whose ships were at risk.
- Somaliland would receive and hold captured pirates pending their prosecution or extradition. International prosecutors, human rights groups and lawyers to defend the pirates would have access to the prisoners.
- Somaliland would seek help in setting up a 24-hour early warning system that would alert all shipping in the area when pirates were active.

A U.S. State Department official declined to comment on the proposal. The official, who was not authorized to speak for attribution, said the United States continues to search for the most effective way to end pirate attacks.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is set to urge the U.N. Security Council this week to approve a U.S.-backed resolution that would authorize attacks on pirate bases on land and air, as well as by sea.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates told a regional security forum in Bahrain on Saturday that the commercial shipping industry could do more to protect itself.

"Companies and ships must be more vigilant about staying within approved traffic corridors," he said.

Commercial ships also should "speed up" and try to outrun pirates and "pull up the ladders," so pirates cannot board. "This is not rocket science," Mr. Gates said.

At the same time, Mr. Gates said, the United States does not have enough intelligence to pinpoint and attack the "two or three families or clans in Somalia that account for most of this activity."

Pirates have attacked about 100 ships this year and captured about half, including a Saudi supertanker loaded with \$100 million worth of oil. The pirates, estimated to number about 1,500, are thought to have made more than \$30 million in ransom payments, according to an estimate by the Associated Press.

On Saturday, the Indian navy said it captured 23 pirates who threatened one freighter, and a German military helicopter chased away pirate speedboats threatening to attack another freighter.

Mr. Kahin stressed that the plan would be in addition to operations already in place across the region.

"We are not taking anything away from the huge effort already made by our friends in Kenya, India, the European Union and the U.S., along with some of our neighbors," he said. "But we have unique advantages in Somaliland, notably that of language and location. We speak the same Somali language as the pirates and they operate in our back yard."

Most of the pirates are based in another Somali enclave known as Puntland, which lies between Somaliland and the war-ravaged south - where Ethiopian troops prop up a pro-Western government in Baidoa, and Islamic militants control just about everything else, including the nominal capital of Mogadishu.

In colonial times, Berbera was a vital link in a chain of ports that allowed the British Royal Navy to dominate the sea route to India. Somaliland has 450 miles of coast facing the Gulf of Aden.

In the 1970s, the Soviet Union developed close ties with the region and used Berbera as a naval and missile base. The runway - one of the longest in the world - was built by the United States as an emergency landing strip for the space shuttle.

After independence in 1960, the former British Somaliland joined voluntarily the Italian-ruled Somali territory to the south, creating the republic of Somalia. In 1991, after years of civil war, an interim administration revoked the union and declared itself the Republic of Somaliland.

No country has formally recognized the new nation, but most nations in Africa, along with the U.S. and much of Europe, offer standard diplomatic courtesy to visiting members of the government based in its capital, Hargeisa.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/dec/14/somaliland-offers-port-to-fight-pirates/print/>

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