

CURRENT NEWS

EARLY BIRD

October 18, 2012

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Item numbers indicate order of appearance only.

MIDEAST

1. **American Troops Arrive In Israel For Defense Drill**

(New York Times)....Isabel Kershner

The first of 1,000 United States troops have begun to arrive in Israel to take part in a joint missile-defense exercise, which the lead American planner described on Wednesday as the largest in the history of the two countries' relationship and a testament to the strength of their military ties..

2. **Yemen: Suspected US Drone Strikes Kill 7 Militants**

(Yahoo.com)....Ahmed Al-Haj, Associated Press

Yemeni security officials say suspected U.S. drone strikes have killed at least seven al-Qaida-linked militants in the country's south..

3. **Syrian Rebels Get Missiles**

(Wall Street Journal)....Nour Malas

Some Syrian rebel factions have obtained advanced portable anti-aircraft weapons, according to rebels and regional officials, a development that could alter the Syrian war's trajectory and fan U.S. concerns that such weapons could end up in the hands of anti-Western Islamist militias..

4. **Denial Slipping Away As War Rattles Damascus**

(New York Times)....Janine Di Giovanni

...The reality of war has crept into daily life, and there is a sense of inevitability. Even supporters of the government talk about what comes next, and rebels speak of tightening the noose around this city, their ultimate goal..

5. **Alawite Strains May Test Assad**

(Washington Post)....Liz Sly

Rumblings of discontent within Syria's Alawite minority are presenting a new challenge to President Bashar al-Assad's efforts to retain power in the face of an expanding armed rebellion, calling into question the loyalties even of his own sect in the conflict ravaging the country.

LEGAL AFFAIRS

6. **Alleged 9/11 Mastermind Criticizes U.S. At Hearing**

(Washington Post)....Julie Tate and Ernesto Londono

Wearing a camouflage hunting vest, the alleged mastermind of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, issued a blistering critique of U.S. defense policy during a court hearing at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, on Wednesday, saying Washington has wantonly used national security as a pretext to murder and torture..

7. **Man Is Charged With Plotting To Bomb Federal Reserve Bank In Manhattan**
(*New York Times*)....Mosi Secret and William K. Rashbaum
Federal prosecutors in Brooklyn charged a 21-year-old Bangladeshi man with conspiring to blow up the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, saying he tried to remotely detonate what he believed was a 1,000-pound bomb in a van he parked outside the building in Lower Manhattan on Wednesday..
8. **US To Hand Over Emails In WikiLeaks Soldier Case**
(*Agence France-Presse*)....Dan De Luce, Agence France-Presse
A US judge ordered prosecutors Wednesday to hand over hundreds of emails by officers overseeing the detention of WikiLeaks suspect Bradley Manning, who has alleged he suffered mistreatment at a Marine Corps brig..

ASIA/PACIFIC

9. **In Japan, Anger Over Alleged U.S. Rape Case**
(*Washington Post*)....Chico Harlan
Japan lodged a protest with the United States on Wednesday over the alleged rape of a Japanese woman by two U.S. sailors on Okinawa, an island that long has bristled about the heavy American military presence there..
10. **White House Review Finds No Evidence Of Spying By Huawei: Sources**
(*Reuters.com*)....Joseph Menn, Reuters
A White House-ordered review of security risks posed by suppliers to U.S. telecommunications companies found no clear evidence that Huawei Technologies Ltd had spied for China, two people familiar with the probe told Reuters..
11. **Besieged S. Korean Military Chief Replaces U.S. Visit With Video Conference**
(*Yonhap News Agency*)....Yonhap
South Korea's military chief under siege for serious border security loopholes has decided to cancel his planned trip to the United States for annual defense talks, officials said Thursday..

AFGHANISTAN

12. **Questions Raised In Deaths Of Afghan Children In Coalition Strike**
(*New York Times*)....Alissa J. Rubin
The international military coalition in Afghanistan has confirmed that three children were killed in a coalition artillery strike in Helmand Province, expressing regret over the deaths and calling them "tragic," but also raising the possibility that the Taliban had been using the children to place roadside bombs for them..
13. **NATO: Afghanistan Drawdown Plans Unchanged**
(*Yahoo.com*)....Associated Press
NATO's top official said Thursday the alliance remains committed to help enable Afghan forces assume full responsibility for the country's security after 2014, when coalition troops are due to end their combat mission..
14. **ANSF Leaders Pull No Punches In The Pentagon**
(*The E-Ring (e-ring.foreignpolicy.com)*)....Kevin Baron
Afghan National Security Forces leaders from Helmand and Kandahar provinces visiting the Pentagon on Wednesday said they understand the seriousness of green-on-blue and insider attacks on coalition forces. But in an exclusive interview with the iE-Ring/i, the Afghan officers also indicated there are two things worrying them more about the future of security in their region..
15. **Afghanistan: The Taliban's Dangerous New Munitions**
(*TheDailyBeast.com*)....Sami Yousafzai
The insurgents' truck bombs are using military-grade explosives now, not just homemade stuff. Some suggest Pakistan is the source -- and some say Iran. Sami Yousafzai reports..
16. **Video Shows Drunk, Stoned US Defense Contractors**
(*ABCNews.com*)....Cindy Galli, Rhonda Schwartz and Brian Ross

Cellphone video recorded earlier this year at an operations center of a U.S. defense contractor in Kabul, Afghanistan appears to show key personnel staggeringly drunk or high on narcotics, in what former employees say was a pattern of outrageous behavior that put American lives at risk and went undetected by U.S. military officials who are supposed to oversee such contractors..

CYBER SECURITY

17. Iran Renews Internet Attacks On U.S. Banks

(Wall Street Journal)....Siobhan Gorman

Iranian hackers renewed a campaign of cyberattacks against U.S. banks this week, targeting Capital One Financial Corp. and BB&T Corp. and openly defying U.S. warnings to halt, U.S. officials and others involved in the investigation into the attacks said..

18. Canada To Beef Up Its Cyber Defenses

(Wall Street Journal)....Alistair MacDonald and Paul Vieira

Canada said it will more than double spending on defense against cyberattacks, amid heightened global worries over cyber warfare..

PAKISTAN

19. In Swat, Shadows Of 'Mullah Radio'

(Washington Post)....Dana Priest

The Taliban leader who apparently ordered the assassination of a Pakistani schoolgirl last week may not be well-known outside the remote, picturesque Swat Valley. But there he is infamous for his long campaign against female education.

20. Pakistanis Remain Split Over Assaulting Taliban

(Philadelphia Inquirer)....Sebastian Abbot, Associated Press

Despite widespread outrage over the Taliban shooting of a female teenage activist, Pakistani leaders and opinion makers are divided over whether the government should respond by targeting the militants' last major sanctuary along the Afghan border..

LIBYA

21. Libya Singles Out Islamist As A Commander In Consulate Attack, Libyans Say

(New York Times)....David D. Kirkpatrick

Libyan authorities have singled out Ahmed Abu Khattala, a leader of the Benghazi-based Islamist group Ansar al-Shariah, as a commander in the attack that killed the American ambassador to Libya, J. Christopher Stevens, last month, Libyans involved in the investigation said Wednesday..

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

22. Panetta Wants Proof Voting Offices Are Working

(ArmyTimes.com)....Karen Jowers

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has directed military officials to provide him a report by Oct. 19 verifying that each of the 221 installation voting assistance offices is appropriately staffed to meet the needs of troops..

23. Personnel Chief Takes Leave For Health Reasons

(ArmyTimes.com)....Andrew Tilghman

The Pentagon's top personnel official is taking a leave of absence for health reasons..

24. IEDs Replace Artillery As Battlefield's Biggest Killer, JIEDDO General Says

(AOL Defense (defense.aol.com))....Otto Kreisher

In almost every war of the modern era, artillery has played a decisive role. But the lowly IED, cobbled together explosives ignited by cobbled together detonators, has now replaced artillery as the greatest killer on the modern battlefield, according to Lt. Gen. Michael D. Barbero, head of the Joint IED Defeat Organization..

NAVY

25. **New Littoral Ship Due To Arrive On Thursday**
(*UTSanDiego.com*)....Jeanette Steele
A blown fuse in a communications system meant the Navy helicopter had to find the Fort Worth, the U.S. fleet's newest littoral combat ship, by sight in the ocean off San Diego on Wednesday..
26. **Navy Medicine Fights Rising Costs**
(*UTSanDiego.com*)....Gretel C. Kovach
As health care costs threaten to overwhelm the defense budget, the Navy is increasing efficiency through Web-based care, preventive medicine, joint operations across services and fewer referrals to civilian providers, the service's top doctor said Wednesday during a visit to San Diego..
27. **Navy Secretary Won't Back Off From Renewable Energy Goals**
(*National Defense Blog (ndia.org)*)....Dan Parsons
Almost three years to the day after he laid out plans to achieve energy security for his service, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus on Oct. 17 doubled down on that promise..

AIR FORCE

28. **Crash Drives Air Force To Restart CV-22 Pilot Formation Training**
(*AOL Defense (defense.aol.com)*)....Richard Whittle
The Air Force plans to reinstate substantial formation flight training for CV-22 Osprey pilots that it eliminated four years ago, AOL Defense has learned. Reinstatement of the training four years after the service ended it is an implicit admission, V-22 aviators said, that better training might have prevented the June 13 crash of a CV-22B in Florida..
29. **Airman Killed In Training**
(*Northwest Florida Daily News*)....Wendy Victoria
An airman who was killed Oct. 11 during a four-day parachuting and water survival course will be buried Saturday in his hometown of Jackson, Mo..

DEFENSE BUDGET

30. **Former Defense Official Calls Congressional Paralysis A Threat**
(*GovExec.com*)....Kedar Pavgi
...In an event at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, Michèle Flournoy, the undersecretary of Defense for policy from 2009 to 2012, said that Congress' inability to pass a budget and set long term policy goals was detrimental to the government, especially in an "incredibly complex and dynamic security environment worldwide."

COMMENTARY

31. **No Medal For Veterans Affairs**
(*Wall Street Journal*)....Pete Hegseth and Paul Rieckhoff
Boasting about 'access' to services doesn't count. Veterans around Los Angeles wait an average of 377 days for a response to their claims..
32. **Rethinking Syria Policy**
(*Washington Post*)....David Ignatius
Left on its current course, America's sensibly cautious policy toward Syria is unfortunately going to come to an unhappy end: The jihadist wing of the opposition will just get stronger and gain more power to shape Syria's future.

33. **US Army Motto: See No (Islamist) Evil**

(New York Post)....Arthur Herman

"Know your enemy" is an old military adage. Now our Army wants to dump that invaluable advice when it comes to Islamic radicalism..

34. **Brave Teenager, Cowardly Taliban**

(Chicago Tribune)....Clarence Page

Did the Taliban overplay their hand when their gunmen shot a 14-year-old Pakistani girl simply because she wanted to go to school? We can only hope..

35. **Mr. Putin's Gift To Terrorists**

(New York Times)....Editorial

There will be plenty of losers from Russia's recent decision to end two decades of cooperation with Washington on cleaning up nuclear and chemical weapons sites left over from the cold war. Russia will now have to pay for such efforts on its own. The United States will lose the most cost-effective way yet found for reducing nuclear dangers. And the world must watch as Russia's unsecured weapons and materials remain a temptation for terrorists of all varieties to buy or steal for use in future attacks..

36. **Served In Afghanistan?**

(Boston Globe)....Editorial

As a member of the Massachusetts National Guard, Scott Brown spent two weeks in Afghanistan in 2011 as part of his voluntary guard training. That time may have given him a better sense of the war effort, but he did not face the Taliban. So he was wrong to state, in last week's debate against challenger Elizabeth Warren, that he "served in Afghanistan." It might have been excused as a slip of the tongue, except that Brown himself has sought to make it a crime to exaggerate claims of military service..

New York Times
October 18, 2012

1. American Troops Arrive In Israel For Defense Drill

By Isabel Kershner

JERUSALEM — The first of 1,000 United States troops have begun to arrive in Israel to take part in a joint missile-defense exercise, which the lead American planner described on Wednesday as the largest in the history of the two countries' relationship and a testament to the strength of their military ties.

The planner, Lt. Gen. Craig A. Franklin of the Air Force, said the three-week drill, called Austere Challenge 2012, would be the sixth in a series of large-scale joint exercises and had been planned for more than two years. He called it a purely defensive drill unrelated to any specific developments in the region.

But it comes against the backdrop of tensions with Iran and persistent questions about whether Israel might strike the country's disputed nuclear program. In addition, Republicans have sharply questioned the Obama administration's commitment to Israel's security during the presidential campaign.

Briefing reporters during a conference call from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, the headquarters of the United States air forces in Europe, General Franklin and his Israeli counterpart, Brig. Gen. Nitzan Nuriel, said at least 3,500 Americans in Israel and Europe and about 1,000 Israeli troops in various locations across the country would work as a team to prepare for the possibility of rockets, mortar rounds, and short-range and long-range ballistic missiles fired from multiple fronts.

According to the United States European Command,

Patriot air defense batteries, an Aegis ballistic missile defense ship and related air defense systems will be deployed and integrated with Israeli equipment as part of an overall air defense network.

Israel's Arrow 2 and Iron Dome missile-defense systems, developed with financing from the United States, will also play a role in the exercise, as will David's Sling, a newer interceptor designed to tackle medium-range rockets and missiles. The exercise will mostly be based on computer simulations, but it will also include a live-fire exercise. The cost to the United States will total about \$30 million; Israel's total will be about a quarter of that.

Austere Challenge 2012 was originally scheduled for the spring, but General Franklin said it was postponed at Israel's request. The Israeli foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, said in January that both sides had agreed to the postponement for "diplomatic and regional reasons," citing regional tensions and instability.

The exercise has been modified to reduce the number of American forces in Israel, though General Franklin said that the scale of the exercise and total number of participants was essentially unchanged.

General Franklin said the drill was "not meant to send a particular message." But General Nuriel said that "anyone who wants can get any message he wants from this exercise," and that the fact that it was joint training mission was a strong message.

Israel has recently had to deal with new local threats. This month, it shot down a drone aircraft that entered Israeli airspace and flew 35 miles across the southern part of the country. Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, the

Lebanese militant group and political party, boasted that his fighters had assembled and piloted the drone, which had been designed in Iran.

In addition, Israeli defense officials said that Palestinian militants from Gaza had, for the first time, fired an antiaircraft missile at Israeli aircraft during cross-border violence last week. Officials said the missile, which missed, was probably a Strela shoulder-fired missile that most likely came from Libya.

Yossi Kuperwasser, who directs the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs, said that weapons had been flowing into Gaza since the Libyan revolution toppled the government of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi. Speaking to reporters in Jerusalem on Wednesday, he said that Israel had assumed for the last few years that Gaza's militants had acquired a few antiaircraft missiles, but he said they had never been used before.

Mr. Kuperwasser said that he did not know which group in Gaza fired the missile, but assumed that a buildup of such arms there would ease any policies restricting their use.

In a rare sign of reassurance amid the regional tumult, Israel's president, Shimon Peres, welcomed new ambassadors from Egypt and Jordan on Wednesday. Jordan has not had an ambassador in Israel in two years.

With Israeli-Egyptian relations all the more delicate since the election of the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate, Mohamed Morsi, as president, Mr. Peres used the occasion to send a message: "I wish to convey to President Morsi my very best wishes for his success, for the success of Egypt and for the success of the Middle East."

Yahoo.com

October 18, 2012

2. Yemen: Suspected US Drone Strikes Kill 7 Militants

By Ahmed Al-Haj, Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen -- Yemeni security officials say suspected U.S. drone strikes have killed at least seven al-Qaida-linked militants in the country's south.

The officials say at least three strikes targeted a gathering of militants on a farm outside the town of Jaar, a one-time al-Qaida stronghold.

The officials say the strikes early Thursday followed tips from locals of an imminent al-Qaida attack on the town.

Resident of the area who came to the site after the attack said they saw two vehicles on fire and several bodies. They declined to be identified, fearing reprisals. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to speak to the media.

A US-backed Yemeni military offensive in June pushed out al-Qaida from many southern areas the militants seized during last year's uprising.

Wall Street Journal
October 18, 2012
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3. Syrian Rebels Get Missiles

Fears Rise That Portable Antiaircraft Weapons Could Wind Up With Terrorists

By Nour Malas

ANTAKYA, Turkey—Some Syrian rebel factions have obtained advanced portable antiaircraft weapons, according to rebels and regional officials, a development that could alter the Syrian war's trajectory and fan U.S. concerns that such weapons could end up in the

hands of anti-Western Islamist militias.

Video footage uploaded to the Internet earlier this week appears to show rebels in Aleppo using weapons that military experts and rebels say are heat-seeking, shoulder-fired missiles, the first documented instance in the conflict. Versions of the weapons—also known as man-portable air defense systems, or Manpads—have been smuggled into the country over the past two months through Turkey and to a lesser extent Lebanon, according to Syrian rebels and those who supply them arms through an "operations room" coordinated by regional governments.

"Northern Syria is awash with advanced antitank and antiaircraft weapons. The situation has changed very quickly," a Syrian involved in coordinating weapons procurement with regional states said. The Manpad transfers weren't sanctioned by the regional states that have armed and financed Syria's rebels since early this year, he added.

On Wednesday, fighters said they downed a military helicopter in the town of Maarat al-Nouman, in the northern Idlib province, one of at least four helicopters and jets they say they have brought down across Syria this week. It couldn't be determined how the craft were brought down. But the reported incidents, three of which are documented on videos but couldn't be independently verified, appear to mark an increased pace over the roughly weekly downings reported in Syria since the summer.

U.S. officials oppose the introduction of such weapons in Syria, citing long-standing fears that they could wind up in the hands of anti-

Western militias that could eventually use them against the U.S. and its allies, or sell them to terrorists. "Obviously, we are concerned about the proliferation of Manpads," said a U.S. official.

The rebels in Aleppo who are depicted in the footage uploaded to the Internet this week are identified as members of the al-Salam and Hamza battalions, two of the relatively unknown divisions in a mushrooming insurgency. Rebels with the two largest fighting factions in Aleppo couldn't identify the battalions in the videos, though they confirmed that Manpads acquired over the past two weeks had made their way into the city.

Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have delivered arms and funds to rebel groups in Syria in a covert alliance since this spring. Further behind the scenes, the U.S. and European countries have provided logistics and intelligence aid. U.S. officials and others say they don't believe the official sponsors are providing the controversial weapons, but rather that they are arriving through private smuggling and arms procurement networks.

"The way the money and supplies flow to these militias goes through so many channels," said Malik al-Abdeh, an independent Syrian activist and writer, who has tracked the arms pipeline in hopes of developing a more accountable rebel structure. "It's not like supplying one supermarket; its like supplying 100 million corner stores."

For rebels locked in a three-month battle with regime forces in Aleppo, airstrikes have been the major setback. Syria's regime forces had relatively free passage in the skies until this summer, and

helicopter gunship attacks on rebel positions continue to be common. Antiaircraft weapons have the potential to give the rebels a decisive boost against regime air power, just as they did for fighters in Afghanistan who defeated the Soviet Union's occupying army there in the 1980s. It could force the Syrian air force to work from higher altitudes, with implications for collateral casualties.

"Bashar al-Assad has gone further in violence by using MiG jets and now drops barrels filled with TNT," French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said Wednesday ahead of a meeting with Syrian opposition representatives in Paris. "The strikes are less accurate, since there are now weapons forcing them to fly higher."

Most of the shoulder-fired missiles in rebel arsenals have come from Libya, smuggled into the country through the Turkish border without the official blessing of regional states or their Western backers, several rebel coordinators said.

Other shoulder-fired, surface-to-air missiles, which these rebels identified as Russian-made Strela systems, have been supplied by militant Palestinian factions now supporting the Syrian uprising and smuggled in through the Lebanese border, they said. Syrian military defectors also say they have been able to buy some SA-7's—a Russian-designed Manpad—from regime forces since the summer.

Lebanon's government has said it cracked down on smuggling through its borders, which rebels concede have been sealed to weapons transfers for months, making the recent deliveries a rarity. Turkey has repeatedly denied any involvement in supplying or

facilitating weapons transfers to rebels in Syria.

Though rebels say the systems had started arriving in the summer, it remains unclear exactly how many have reached Syria. U.S. officials say probably no more than a handful have slipped through over the past few months.

U.S. officials say they are most worried about Russian-designed Manpads provided to Libya making their way to Syria. The U.S. intensified efforts to track and collect man-portable missiles after the 2011 fall of the country's longtime strongman leader, Moammar Gadhafi.

To keep control of the flow of weapons to the Syrian rebels, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar formed a joint operations room early this year in a covert project U.S. officials watched from afar.

The U.S. has limited its support of the rebels to communications equipment, logistics and intelligence. But U.S. officials have coordinated with the trio of countries sending arms and munitions to the rebels. The Pentagon and CIA ramped up their presence on Turkey's southern border as the weapons began to flow to the rebels in two to three shipments every week.

In July, the U.S. effectively halted the delivery of at least 18 Manpads sourced from Libya, even as the rebels pleaded for more effective antiaircraft missiles to counter regime airstrikes in Aleppo, people familiar with that delivery said.

"We were told that we need to get our house in order on the ground, and that it wasn't time yet," said a rebel representative involved in the delivery.

—*Julian E. Barnes in Washington, Inti Landauro in Paris and Rima Abushakra in Beirut contributed to this article.*

New York Times
October 18, 2012
Pg. 1

4. Denial Slipping Away As War Rattles Damascus

By Janine Di Giovanni

DAMASCUS, Syria — Rifa was growing frantic. Her husband had called to say that he and her brother were stuck on their way home from work outside the Syrian capital, normally a 25-minute drive. There was fighting in a northern suburb, he said, and traffic was frozen.

Tensions rose as the hours passed. It is never good to be out after dark in Damascus now, especially trapped in a traffic jam, unable to flee. Finally, Rifa's husband called again. They had escaped and returned to their workplace to pass the night, another concession to their changing world.

War has come to Damascus. Not on the scale of Aleppo or Homs, at least not yet. But the difference from just a few months ago is unmistakable. With sandbagged checkpoints every half-mile and soldiers methodically searching vehicles for weapons, simple movement is becoming impossible.

"Where is Damascus headed? Are we the next Aleppo?" Rifa asked a few days later. "How soon before our city, our markets, are destroyed?"

This is the center of Bashar al-Assad's power, the stronghold he tried for months to shield from a popular uprising that has inexorably been transformed into a bloody civil war. As his troops battled insurgents all around the country, Mr. Assad was determined that here, at least, he would preserve an air of normalcy, of routine, of

certainty that life would go on, as it had before.

Such illusions are no longer possible. The reality of war has crept into daily life, and there is a sense of inevitability. Even supporters of the government talk about what comes next, and rebels speak of tightening the noose around this city, their ultimate goal.

Damascus was once known for its all-night party scene. Now, few people venture out after dark, and kidnappings are rampant. Gasoline is increasingly scarce, and as winter approaches, people are worried about shortages of food and heating oil. Streets are closed at a moment's notice, traffic diverted, bridges shut down. Even longtime residents and taxi drivers get lost and have to weave in and out of parking lots to avoid barriers and dead-end streets. Shelling and machine-gun fire are so commonplace, children no longer react.

As recently as summer, while war raged in various neighborhoods surrounding the city, Damascus existed in a bubble of denial. War, people seemed to feel, was happening elsewhere — and the residents of Mr. Assad's stronghold were determined to live their lives as if nothing had changed. There were garden parties and fashion shoots, and the Opera House hosted Italian tenors. There were elegant dinners at embassies — before the ambassadors fled, that is.

But as summer faded, the strangulation of Damascus began. More checkpoints appeared. The shabiha — Arabic for ghosts — progovernment paramilitary forces who are often held responsible for the most violent crimes, were defiantly visible in foreign hotels.

Now, suicide bombings are more frequent, and the

rebels of the Free Syrian Army say they are slowly establishing control of the suburbs that ring the city, with the aim of slowly strangling the government. Some families say they are taking their children out of school and teaching them at home, because the drive to school is too dangerous.

Discussions among friends are no longer "of the real world," as one writer put it. Talk turns more naturally to the fate of the homeless in the city's parks, or the traumatization of the children.

"People," one woman said, "talk of death."

To a reporter based in Paris who has been granted three visas in recent months to report freely in the country, Damascus seems now like a city under siege, where for most people danger is a wearying companion — so much so that the last names of those interviewed for this article are being withheld for their protection.

Kidnapping of wealthy Syrians is on the rise, sowing fear in the city's finest precincts. In Mezze, a politically and ethnically mixed neighborhood once known as the Beverly Hills of Damascus, people talk of the daughter of a local businessman who was kidnapped three weeks ago and ransomed for about \$395,000. She was returned to her family, according to local residents, sexually abused, tortured and traumatized.

Residents say the kidnappers are from either the Free Syrian Army or renegade offshoots of radical groups or are, in the government's catchall phrase, "foreign terrorists."

One man, an Armenian Christian — "a minority within a minority," he joked — said he was wary of laying blame on any one group.

"I am not aware of a unified opposition," he said. "People call themselves groups — F.S.A., Salafists." In the past, he added, neighbors lived so close together — Druze, Christians, Muslims — that "when something happened, we all offered condolences."

"We went to each other's funerals," he said. "We did not have a feeling that one was different than the others." Now, the man, a professor of linguistics, says, "I have a lump in my throat when I think about it."

While people will openly complain of government corruption — even in Alawite pro-Assad regions like Latakia — they also fear what will come if and when Mr. Assad falls. Many are painfully aware that the breakdown of society into sectarian groups has echoes of earlier tragedies, in Bosnia and neighboring Iraq. As Samir, a resident of a Christian neighborhood, Baba Touma, said, "No one knows who is who anymore — what side they are on."

Rifa supports the government and is the only one in her family who is pro-Assad. In her affluent Sunni clan, the political persuasions run from a brother who supports the opposition to a sister who simply wants to keep her 10-year-old son in school and run her business. A third sister said she was slowly "waking up to the reality of what is happening here — though I tried to deny it."

In addition to growing shortages, cash flow is a problem. The sanctions have made it impossible to wire money into the country, and the price of food has risen drastically. "A kilo of tomatoes has doubled in price in six months," one of Rifa's sisters said.

It is common to go to at least four gas stations before finding one that is open; at night, groups of men come selling “bootleg” gasoline in tin canisters.

Abu Khalil, a Free Syrian Army commander in Douma, a suburb south of Damascus that saw heavy fighting and is now controlled by the rebels, said the “dream plan” was to eventually encircle Damascus, throttling commerce and disrupting utilities. His “office” was littered with shards of broken glass, weapons, mattresses on the floor and a group of “shabab” — young fighters — loitering around, smoking.

While he said the opposition forces do not have enough weapons — “The government has MIGs and howitzers, which we fear the most” — it does have the manpower “to squeeze Damascus from neighborhoods like Midan.”

“We take orders from ourselves,” he said, “not like the Aleppo fighters, who take orders from Turkey.”

For the future, said Abu Khalil, a former shop owner, there must be free and fair elections. “But we must have a Sunni leader,” he says, “a guy who knows about God. And everyone now who is carrying a gun must throw it away.”

Still, he added optimistically, “It won’t become Sarajevo.”

Friday, the Muslim day of prayer, is dreaded for its outbreaks of bloody violence, and even more roadblocks go up. Even one month ago, people escaped to the countryside to relax, or went out to smoke water pipes and watch soccer on large-screen televisions. Now people stay home. Shops are shuttered. The Old City is closed.

In Baba Touma, a shopkeeper in the popular Ted Lapidus boutique said business was down by 50 percent. “Maybe someone buys a suit for a wedding or a special party,” he said. “That’s it. No impulse spending.”

Tarik, a lawyer, was buying cologne at an ancient perfumery. “People only buy the absolute necessary,” he said. “In my profession, I have to smell good.” But even with that, he said, his business is down 40 percent. “Even the biggest lawyers in Damascus are suffering,” he said.

Last week, an impromptu Saturday salsa evening was organized by a group of young people. “It’s our attempt to keep living normally,” said Roni, a 27-year-old marketing executive. But the dance floor was clear before midnight — in a country where the people usually stay up till dawn.

“We used to dance till 5 or 6,” Roni said. “But everyone is worried about driving at night. And there are very few taxis going around that late.”

Roni said that for her generation, life had frozen. Relationships are breaking down under stress. University degrees have been put off. People cannot afford the elaborate weddings Syrians love to host.

“My fiancé and I were together for three years, but he lost his job — no money — and has left for America,” she said. “I refused to go because I support my own family.”

Even so, Roni’s salary has been cut by 10 percent. A few months ago, her rent went up: “The landlady just called and apologized that this is war and everything is so expensive.”

She sits at her desk every day in the Kafersouseh district of Damascus hearing guns and explosions. “What can I do?” she said. “I get up and take a taxi

to work and pray one doesn’t hit me.”

For many Damascenes, what is most difficult is coming to terms with the harsh reality of a civil war, of Syrians against Syrians. Under the law, Syrians are required to donate blood when they graduate from high school or college, or receive a driver’s license.

“It means we all shared the same blood in some ways,” Roni said. “Now when these guys kill each other, they might be killing someone whose very blood is in their veins. It’s crazy.”

But perhaps the thing that everyone fears most is expressed in graffiti in the Old City rebel stronghold of Zabadani: “We don’t like you,” it reads. “Soon we will be in the middle of Damascus.”

Washington Post

October 18, 2012

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5. Alawite Strains May Test Assad

Clan shootout, arrest of activist hint at tensions

By Liz Sly

BEIRUT — Rumbblings of discontent within Syria’s Alawite minority are presenting a new challenge to President Bashar al-Assad’s efforts to retain power in the face of an expanding armed rebellion, calling into question the loyalties even of his own sect in the conflict ravaging the country.

Assad has increasingly come to rely on the 2.5 million-strong Alawite community for support as Syria’s Sunni majority has flocked to join the rebellion, sharpening the sectarian dimensions of an uprising that began as a largely spontaneous quest for greater freedoms inspired by the revolts sweeping the Arab world.

Alawites, in turn, have rallied behind Assad’s leadership, spurred by fears for their future in a Syria they would no longer run and in which Sunni Islamists may play a major role should the rebels win.

But now, from the Alawite heartland of Syria’s northern coastal region, come whispers of intrigue and strains within the Assad clan itself. A shootout between members of the extended Assad family in the president’s ancestral home town of Qardaha late last month and the detention of a prominent Alawite activist by the regime offer hints of unease within the one segment of the population whose unwavering support for Assad has hitherto not been in question.

There is no indication that Alawites are on the verge of switching sides to join the fragmented and leaderless opposition, which has made little effort to welcome them. Indeed, many Alawites who initially welcomed demands for political reform fell silent long ago or lined up behind the Assad regime once the revolutionaries took up arms and Sunni extremists began to play a more prominent role, according to Alawite activists and residents of the Latakia region, where the minority community is concentrated.

As members of an obscure and little-understood offshoot of Shiite Islam, the Alawites endured centuries of persecution under Sunni rule before Assad’s father, Hafez, seized power in 1970 and propelled them into the ranks of the elite. Many fear being relegated again to second-class status or, worse, being killed by Sunnis exacting revenge for the months of bloodshed inflicted by the Alawite-dominated security forces, Alawites say.

The signs of tension within the community suggest at a minimum, however, that the pressures of the 19-month-old revolt are taking a toll on the cohesion of the Alawites.

“The Alawites are critical for Assad’s survival. He wouldn’t survive a day without their complete support, so the fact that we are seeing tensions is significant,” said Hilal Khashan, a professor of political science at the American University of Beirut. “Most Alawites are upset with the regime, and they feel Assad is dragging their sect into a conflict they can’t eventually win.”

Shootout in Qardaha

Exactly what happened in Qardaha over the last weekend of September is unclear, and accounts differ over whether the dispute was rooted in political or personal rivalries. But all agree that there was an exchange of fire between two members of the Assad family in a cafe in the mountainous town where Hafez al-

Assad was born and where his body is buried in a vast marble tomb.

One of the men, local strongman Mohammed al-Assad, pulled his gun after being insulted by another Assad relative, Sakher Osman, the accounts say. Both men were injured in the ensuing shootout, along with as many as six others.

Syria scholar Joshua Landis, who maintains close contact with the community through his Alawite wife, says the gun battle occurred only because Osman insulted Mohammed al-Assad, known locally as the “Sheik of the Mountain” for his role as the Assad family’s premier enforcer in the town. An e-mail from a relative in the area described how Bashar al-Assad intervened in the dispute,

calmed tempers and restored order, said Landis, a professor of political science at the University of Oklahoma.

Mohammed al-Saleh, an Alawite activist in Syria, said the fight was over the lucrative smuggling trade in cigarettes, weapons and other contraband that has thrived among the coastal Alawite clans under the Assad family rule. Attempts to read more into the incident are “nonsense,” he said.

But suspicions that the quarrel reflected deeper political differences within the community were fueled by the fact that the shootout took place in a cafe owned by the prominent al-Khayer family, a longtime rival of the Assads; that one of those injured was a Khayer; and that the fight came days after the arrest of a prominent member of the family and a veteran dissident, Abdul Aziz al-Khayer.

Khayer was detained in Damascus upon his return from a trip to Russia and then China as a representative of the opposition National Coordination Board, the Damascus-based grouping that is tolerated by the regime for its relatively moderate stance.

The arrest came amid widespread speculation in the capital that Khayer was being groomed by Moscow for a potential role in a future government, according to a Damascus analyst who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he fears for his safety. Activists who believe the gunfight signaled the emergence of a political split within the ruling Alawite clans say Osman was meeting with representatives of the Khayer family to mull a response to the arrest when Mohammed al-Assad strode into the cafe to break them up.

The specter of a full-blooded Alawite feud seems remote, if only because the challenges to their survival are so immense that most Alawite clans understand they have to stick together, Landis said. A split within the ruling family would “be totally new, a paradigm shift” in the narrative of Syria’s revolt, he said.

“I don’t believe it’s happening,” he said. “But it’s clear there’s a dynamic in Qardaha that is not in favor of Assad. There’s just so many tensions.”

Exploiting fears

Indeed, assumptions of Alawite loyalty to the regime mask a far more complex reality in which traditional clan rivalries are becoming tangled in deep frustrations among the many members of the community who have misgivings about the direction in which Assad is leading them, according to Alawite residents of the coastal region and exiled activists.

A steady stream of coffins arrives daily in Alawite loyalist villages, containing the bodies of Alawite men killed in the fight against the rebels. Women wearing black are a common sight on streets festooned with Assad’s portraits. The government has not released casualty figures for its security forces, but if the widely touted number of at least 10,000 Alawite deaths is true, it would mean that Alawite loyalists are dying at a greater rate than Sunnis.

A story, perhaps apocryphal but told often enough to lend it an air of authenticity, goes that a mother, upon being presented with the body of her third and last son to die fighting the rebels, asked the officer: “Are you going to kill every one of us just so that one man may survive?”

Complaints that Alawite fears are being exploited by the regime to protect Assad and his family are growing steadily louder as the death toll mounts, according to an Alawite doctor from Latakia, who spoke on the condition of anonymity while on a trip to Beirut because he fears for his safety.

“Assad is not representing the Alawites; he is using them,” he said. “If Alawites are prepared to die for Assad, it is because they fear for themselves, not because they love him.”

Most impoverished Alawite communities benefited little from the ascent of the Assads, and they have historically formed an important component of the opposition to Assad’s rule, said an Alawite activist in Latakia who spent a decade in jail in the 1990s and did not want to be identified.

But they were heavily recruited into the security services, and they have since been propelled onto the front lines as the accelerating defections of Sunni soldiers call into question the reliability of Sunni units, military experts say. The army is also increasingly relying on groups of armed irregulars known as the shabiha, drawn mostly from the Alawite community, and has been organizing them into local militias.

Sunnis also serve in the shabiha in predominantly Sunni parts of the country such as Aleppo, Daraa and Deir al-Zour, confounding simple interpretations of the conflict as sectarian, Alawite and Sunni activists note.

Many of the large-scale massacres of civilians known to have taken place, such as those in the villages of Houla and Qubair this summer, were blamed on Alawite shabiha, however. And though there

have not been any recorded retaliatory massacres of Alawite civilians by the rebels, “the danger of widespread sectarian reprisals . . . is frighteningly real,” the International Crisis Group said in a recent report.

Those fears, above all, are likely to continue to bind Alawites to Assad in what they have come to see as a fight for their survival, said Khashan, the professor.

“He has left them with no option but to stay with him,” Khashan said. “He has succeeded in linking the fate of the Alawites to the fate of the regime.”

Washington Post
October 18, 2012
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6. Alleged 9/11 Mastermind Criticizes U.S. At Hearing

National security is used to justify murder and torture, he says

By Julie Tate and Ernesto Londono

Wearing a camouflage hunting vest, the alleged mastermind of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, issued a blistering critique of U.S. defense policy during a court hearing at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, on Wednesday, saying Washington has wantonly used national security as a pretext to murder and torture.

“The president can take someone and throw him in the sea under the name of national security,” Khalid Sheikh Mohammed said in an apparent reference to the killing of al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden, speaking at a pretrial motions hearing. “He can legislate the killings under the name of national security for American citizens.”

The remarks, which alluded to the drone-strike killings of Anwar al-Awlaki

and Samir Khan, both U.S. citizens who were members of al-Qaeda’s branch in Yemen, indicated that Mohammed is being kept abreast of current events. The tone of his intervention suggested that he intends to use this trial as a forum to convey that his time in captivity has hardened his vitriol against the United States.

“The government is using the name of national security as it chooses,” Mohammed argued at the end of the third day of motions. He warned: “Don’t get affected by crocodile tears, because your blood is not made of gold and ours is made of water. We are all human beings.”

The terrorism suspect’s remarks followed a lengthy debate before Judge James L. Pohl, an Army colonel, over a prosecution request that the public be prevented from hearing information that might be discussed during the trial concerning the CIA’s rendition and interrogation tactics.

“The government label of classified information does not turn third-party knowledge, experience and memories into something the government can suppress,” argued Hina Shamsi of the American Civil Liberties Union, which filed a motion seeking unfettered public access to the proceedings.

The Washington Post is among 14 media organizations that are supporting the ACLU’s position. David Schulz, an attorney representing the organizations, argued that keeping significant portions of the trial classified would undermine the legitimacy of the controversial war court.

“No one will believe justice was done if things are conducted in secret,” he said.

Joanna Baltes, a Justice Department prosecutor, said the protective order the government is seeking is similar to others

that have been granted in the past in federal court to prevent disclosure of classified information. She noted that the judge will have the ultimate say over whether sessions ought to be closed to the public.

Reporters and relatives of victims of the Sept. 11 attacks may watch the proceedings remotely on a video feed that is delayed to give censors time to halt it. Pohl is expected to rule on the ACLU motion on Thursday.

New York Times
October 18, 2012

7. Man Is Charged With Plotting To Bomb Federal Reserve Bank In Manhattan

By Mosi Secret and William K. Rashbaum

Federal prosecutors in Brooklyn charged a 21-year-old Bangladeshi man with conspiring to blow up the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, saying he tried to remotely detonate what he believed was a 1,000-pound bomb in a van he parked outside the building in Lower Manhattan on Wednesday.

But the entire plot played out under the surveillance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New York Police Department as part of an elaborate sting operation, according to court papers.

The man, Quazi Mohammad Rezwanul Ahsan Nafis, who arrived in the United States in January on a student visa, tried to make contacts and recruit people to form a terrorist cell to help him carry out an attack, according to a criminal complaint in the case. But one of these recruits was an F.B.I. informer, who later introduced him to an undercover F.B.I. agent who helped him with the plot.

In addition, the complaint said, Mr. Nafis spoke of a desire to “attack and kill” a high-ranking government official. A senior law enforcement official said Wednesday night that the official was President Obama, but that Mr. Nafis’s desire never got past the talking stage.

Mr. Nafis was charged with conspiring to use weapons of mass destruction and providing material support to Al Qaeda. He could face up to life in prison if convicted.

Mr. Nafis arrived at Federal District Court in Brooklyn, looking boyish despite his trim beard. He spoke quietly when answering the questions of the magistrate judge, Roanne L. Mann.

The case appears to be the latest to fit a model in which, in the process of flushing out people they believe present a risk of terrorism, federal law enforcement officials have played the role of enabler. Agents and informers have provided suspects with encouragement, guidance, money and even, the subjects of the sting operations are led to believe, the materials needed to carry out an attack. Though these operations have almost always held up in court, they have come under increasing criticism from those who believe that many of the subjects, even some who openly espoused violence, would have been unable to execute such plots without substantial assistance from the government.

Both F.B.I. leaders and federal prosecutors have defended the approach as valuable in finding and stopping people predisposed to commit terrorism.

In a prominent case in 2009, several men, urged by an unusually persistent government informer, planted what they believed to be

homemade bombs in front of synagogues in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. Four men were convicted, but the judge who oversaw the trial also criticized the law enforcement agents who helped push the plot forward: "The government made them terrorists."

The court papers describe Mr. Nafis as a man of persistence, who wanted to be respected by Al Qaeda leaders.

The undercover agent began meeting with Mr. Nafis in July, first in Central Park and later in hotels in Queens, secretly recording Mr. Nafis's statements. Mr. Nafis had grand but vague plans, according to the indictment. "I don't want something that's like, small. I just want something big," he said, according to the complaint. "Very, very, very, very big, that will shake the whole country."

He settled on the financial district as a target, hoping to shake the American economy. The original plan was for a suicide mission but that changed when Mr. Nafis said he wanted to go home to Bangladesh first to put his affairs in order. The undercover agent told Mr. Nafis that he could use a remote-control device, so that he could stage the attack and then return to Bangladesh.

On Wednesday morning, they drove to a warehouse and assembled the fake bomb, placing supposedly explosive material in trash bins they had bought, then putting the bins in a van, according to the complaint. They assembled a fake detonator that was to be triggered by a cellphone and drove to the fortresslike Federal Reserve Bank of New York, the largest bank structure in the world when it was completed in 1924, about two blocks from Wall Street.

Mr. Nafis and the undercover agent parked the van outside the bank and walked to a nearby hotel, where Mr. Nafis recorded a video statement addressed to the American people, which he planned to publicize after the attack. In the statement, he said, "We will not stop until we attain victory or martyrdom."

Then he tried again and again to detonate the bomb, dialing the cellphone repeatedly until agents arrested him.

Eric Schmitt contributed reporting.

Agence France-Presse
October 17, 2012

8. US To Hand Over Emails In WikiLeaks Soldier Case

By Dan De Luce, Agence France-Presse

A US judge ordered prosecutors Wednesday to hand over hundreds of emails by officers overseeing the detention of WikiLeaks suspect Bradley Manning, who has alleged he suffered mistreatment at a Marine Corps brig.

Lawyers for Manning, a US Army private accused of passing a trove of secret government documents to the WikiLeaks website, had asked for the emails to bolster their argument that the soldier suffered illegal treatment when he was held at the Quantico Marine base in Virginia starting in 2010.

At a pre-trial hearing at Fort Meade, Maryland, Judge Denise Lind said more than 600 emails withheld by prosecutors should be handed over to the defense, though she did not explain the reason behind her decision.

The emails discuss the military's plans to respond to queries from reporters about Manning's detention,

preparing for protests, changes to Manning's list of visitors and other details, according to the judge.

Wednesday's decision means the defense will have access to a total of about 1,300 emails, including those the judge ordered released. Judge Lind said that only 12 of about 600-700 emails did not have to be handed over.

The defense had argued the emails were potentially pertinent for their motion contending Manning was subjected to unlawful pre-trial punishment, but prosecutors had said the emails were irrelevant.

The ruling, read out by the judge during the hearing, marked the latest tug-of-war between prosecutors and defense lawyers over the release of official correspondence, reports, or other information related to Manning's case.

The judge has previously pushed military prosecutors to hand over other documents in the case, saying they had to ensure Manning's lawyers had access to information that could help with their client's defense.

Manning, who attended Wednesday's hearing wearing a blue dress uniform, is scheduled to go on trial on February 4 over an array of charges, including that he "aided the enemy" by handing classified military and State Department documents to WikiLeaks.

He faces a possible life sentence if convicted.

Manning's treatment at Quantico sparked protests from his supporters, as well as human rights groups.

During his stay there, he was held under maximum security conditions in a solitary cell, where he was stripped naked and made to wear only a suicide-proof smock to bed at night.

The 24-year-old soldier was later transferred to an army prison at Fort Leavenworth, a more modern, medium-security facility where he is subjected to less strict conditions.

Wednesday's hearing also saw defense lawyers and prosecutors argue over a book by a Washington Post reporter that quotes from a classified video of a US Apache helicopter attack in Iraq, a video that Manning is accused of leaking.

The cockpit video grabbed headlines when it was released in 2010 by WikiLeaks, which titled the footage "Collateral Murder." The video captures radio chatter from the Apache chopper along with other helicopters in a 2007 assault, as they open fire with heavy guns on a group of men on a Baghdad street.

The Americans suspected the men were insurgents but the attack killed a journalist and driver from the Reuters news agency, prompting an international outcry.

Lead defense lawyer David Coombs told the court the book by David Finkel contains extensive quotes and details from the video, which he said can only mean the author had access to the cockpit video.

Manning's lawyers hope to prove that their client cannot be charged with leaking the video if the contents were already revealed in a book published in 2009, before the video was outed by WikiLeaks.

"The only way for the author to get that information would be to have got that video," Coombs said. "He describes what the crew is seeing and saying."

The government argued that some quotes in the book were not totally accurate, and that it was unclear if the author obtained the video.

"In our opinion it (the book's account) was not

verbatim," said Captain James Morrow, a member of the prosecution team.

As a result, it was not possible to assume that Finkel got his hands on the video, he added.

Washington Post
October 18, 2012
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9. In Japan, Anger Over Alleged U.S. Rape Case

Tokyo lodges formal protest; incident could snarl efforts to build new base on Okinawa

By Chico Harlan

TOKYO — Japan lodged a protest with the United States on Wednesday over the alleged rape of a Japanese woman by two U.S. sailors on Okinawa, an island that long has bristled about the heavy American military presence there.

The sailors, identified as Seaman Christopher Browning and Petty Officer 3rd Class Skyler Dozierwalker, both 23, of the Fort Worth Naval Air Station in Texas, were arrested Tuesday.

The woman, in her 20s, was allegedly attacked while walking home early Tuesday. The men had been drinking beforehand, Japanese media reported.

The allegation, described by Japanese Defense Minister Satoshi Morimoto as "very serious," appears likely to complicate the long-standing efforts by Tokyo and Washington to build a new U.S. Marine base on Okinawa, a step that island residents have fiercely resisted.

With the two sailors in the custody of Okinawan police, a Japanese Foreign Ministry official summoned U.S. Ambassador John V. Roos to a meeting and asked for stricter discipline of American military personnel on the island. The incident recalls the 1995

rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl by three American servicemen, which prompted mass protests and remains a source of bitterness on the southern island.

"I understand — I do understand the anger that many people feel with respect to this reported incident," Roos said Wednesday in a statement, adding that he shared some of that anger.

The ambassador promised "full and complete and unequivocal cooperation to the Japanese authorities in their investigation of this matter."

Okinawa hosts many of the almost 50,000 U.S. military personnel stationed in Japan. Washington has tried for years to close the base there and relocate it in a less populated northern area of the island, but Okinawans oppose the construction of any new bases and have blocked those efforts. Some of the islanders' resentment is also directed at the central government in Tokyo, which they think uses the island as a far-flung dumping ground for American troops.

Okinawans staged a number of protests recently over the deployment of 12 MV-22 Osprey aircraft at a Marine base in the middle of a densely packed city on the island. The hybrid aircraft, which take off like helicopters but fly like planes, have a spotty safety record.

In another meeting Wednesday, Morimoto, the defense minister, told Okinawan Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima that the alleged rape incident is "extremely heinous and despicable," according to Japan's Kyodo news agency.

"It hurts the Japan-U.S. security arrangements and the Okinawa people's trust in the U.S. military," Morimoto said.

Reuters.com

October 17, 2012

Exclusive

10. White House Review Finds No Evidence Of Spying By Huawei: Sources

By Joseph Menn, Reuters

SAN FRANCISCO -- A White House-ordered review of security risks posed by suppliers to U.S. telecommunications companies found no clear evidence that Huawei Technologies Ltd had spied for China, two people familiar with the probe told Reuters.

Instead, those leading the 18-month review concluded early this year that relying on Huawei, the world's second-largest maker of networking gear, was risky for other reasons, such as the presence of vulnerabilities that hackers could exploit.

These previously unreported findings support parts of a landmark U.S. congressional report last week that warned against allowing Chinese companies Huawei and ZTE Corp to supply critical telecom infrastructure.

But it may douse speculation that Huawei has been caught spying for China.

Some questions remain unanswered. For example, it is unclear if security vulnerabilities found in Huawei equipment were placed there deliberately. It is also not clear whether any critical new intelligence emerged after the inquiry ended.

Aided by intelligence agencies and other departments, those conducting the largely classified White House inquiry delved into reports of suspicious activity and asked detailed questions of nearly 1,000 telecom equipment buyers, according to the people familiar with the probe.

"We knew certain parts of government really wanted"

evidence of active spying, said one of the people, who requested anonymity. "We would have found it if it were there."

White House National Security Council spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden declined to comment on the review. A spokesman for Huawei said the company was not familiar with the review but it was not surprised that no evidence of Huawei espionage was found.

Last week's report from the Republican and Democratic leaders of the House Intelligence Committee noted the potential for spying through Huawei gear installed to manage traffic on wireless networks. The committee also criticized Huawei's leadership for failing to provide details about its relationships with Chinese government agencies.

Huawei, whose chief executive officer, Ren Zhengfei, founded it 25 years ago after he was laid off by the Chinese army, has rejected the House report as unfair and inaccurate. China's Commerce Ministry has also called the accusations "groundless."

"Huawei is a \$32 billion independent multinational that would not jeopardize its success or the integrity of its customers' networks for any government or third party. Ever," the company's U.S. spokesman Bill Plummer said on Wednesday.

The House Intelligence Committee's report did not present concrete evidence that either Huawei or ZTE have stolen U.S. data, although it said a classified annex provided "significantly more information adding to the committee's concerns" about the risk to the United States.

Speculation has swirled about the contents of the secret annex, and both committee Chairman Mike Rogers and some intelligence officials have

hinted at evidence that Huawei has participated in espionage.

Rogers, the report's lead author, stoked concerns by saying some customers had seen routers sending off "very valuable data" to China.

But in the one case a committee staff member pointed out to Reuters, the victim - Leap Wireless International Inc - said that while some of its computers were infected with viruses earlier this year, an investigation found no evidence that the infection was deliberate or that confidential data had been stolen.

Pressed about why the White House review and unclassified version of the House Intelligence Committee report had not turned up a "smoking gun," two officials familiar with intelligence assessments said U.S. agencies were most concerned about the capability for future spying or sabotage.

Similarly, Chris Johnson, a former CIA analyst on China, said he had been told that the White House review had come up empty on past malicious acts. Nonetheless, officials emerged from the review with "a general sense of foreboding" about what would happen if China asked Huawei for assistance in gathering intelligence from U.S. customers, he said.

"If the Chinese government approached them, why would they say no, given their system?" Johnson said.

Preventing state spying through technology is a high priority for U.S. President Barack Obama's administration, which is lobbying for legislation to raise private-sector security standards and readying a more limited executive order along those lines.

Reuters interviews with more than a dozen current and former U.S. government

officials and contractors found nearly unanimous agreement that Huawei's equipment poses risks: The company could send software updates that siphon off vast amounts of communications data or shut them down in times of conflict.

More than anything else, cyber experts complained about what they said was poor programming that left Huawei equipment more open than that of rivals to hacking by government agents or third parties.

"We found it riddled with holes," said one of the people familiar with the White House review.

At a conference in Kuala Lumpur last week, Felix Lindner, a leading expert in network equipment security, said he had discovered multiple vulnerabilities in Huawei's routers.

"I'd say it was five times easier to find one in a Huawei router than in a Cisco one," Lindner said.

Lindner, who spent months investigating Huawei code, said the vulnerabilities appeared to be the result of sloppy coding and poor procedures, rather than any deliberate attempt at espionage. Huawei is looking into his findings, he said.

Some in the U.S. government, however, have said the alleged poor security practices at Huawei could be a deliberate cover for future attacks.

One computer scientist, who helped conduct classified U.S. government research on Huawei routers and switches four to six years ago, told Reuters that he had found "back doors" that his team believed were inserted with care.

He said these back doors could enable attackers to install malicious software that would make critical government networks inoperable, allow

hackers to gain entry into highly classified systems and enable them to spy on all traffic. He requested anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the research.

Huawei has denied the existence of these back doors. Plummer also noted that any vendor's gear could be targeted by hackers, and the company would address any vulnerabilities it finds.

The United States' closest allies have rendered a split verdict on Huawei. Earlier this year, Australia barred Huawei from becoming a contractor on the country's National Broadband Network, and Canada said last week that Huawei could not bid to help build a secure national network. In Britain, however, a spokesman for the Cabinet Office said Huawei's products were fully vetted and did not represent a security concern.

Dutch Ruppertsberger, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee and co-author of the report, told Reuters that the burden of proof had been on Huawei and ZTE, which cited Chinese government restrictions in limiting their responses.

"China has the means, opportunity, and motive to use telecommunications companies for malicious purposes," Ruppertsberger said.

Republican Rogers' staff did not respond to questions about the contents of the classified annex or the White House review.

Reporting by Joseph Menn in San Francisco, Jim Finkle in Boston, and Mark Hosenball in Washington; Additional reporting by Paul Eckert and Jim Wolf in Washington and Jeremy Wagstaff in Kuala Lumpur.

11. Besieged S. Korean Military Chief Replaces U.S. Visit With Video Conference

SEOUL (Yonhap) -- South Korea's military chief under siege for serious border security loopholes has decided to cancel his planned trip to the United States for annual defense talks, officials said Thursday.

Gen. Jung Seung-jo, the chairman of South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), will instead be involved in the crucial defense talks slated for next week in Washington via a video conference at his office in Seoul in a rare move in the history of the bilateral military talks, the JCS said.

Jung had initially planned to visit Washington to jointly preside over the Military Committee Meeting (MCM) with his American counterpart Gen. Martin Dempsey, which is slated for Oct. 23.

The senior-level military meeting will be held ahead of the South Korea-U.S. defense ministerial meeting on Oct. 24, which is expected to coordinate policy on North Korea and draft follow-up measures for a revised bilateral missile pact that extended Seoul's missile range.

Instead of a trip to the U.S., Jung will concentrate on handling border security issues after a North Korean soldier crossed the heavily fortified border earlier this month undetected.

"The two sides agreed that Jung will participate in the meeting here through a video conference system," JCS spokesman Lee Boong-woo said. "The decision was made because (the JCS chairman) thought it is very important to maintain joint combat posture of the Army, Navy and Air Force to cope with situations related to the North Korean soldier's defection."

Other senior officials at the JCS will visit Washington as planned, Lee added.

It is the first time that a JCS chairman will not attend the defense talks since it was first held in 1978 to bolster defense cooperation between the two allies.

During the video conference, the two sides will review the security situations in the Asia Pacific Region and reaffirm a strong joint defense posture for stability in the region. The results of the meeting will be reflected in the Security Consultative Meeting, scheduled on Oct. 24, the JCS said.

The four-star general has been in an embarrassing situation since he mistakenly told lawmakers during parliamentary sessions that a North Korean soldier who crossed the land border for defection was captured by South Korean soldiers in a front-line unit after he was detected by a surveillance camera on Oct. 2.

Jung, however, later faced perjury charges raised by opposition lawmakers, as it was later revealed that the South Korean guards were unaware of the defector until he arrived at their barracks building and knocked on the door and the surveillance camera was not recording at the time. The defense ministry said Jung made the remarks based on incorrect reporting by his subordinate.

New York Times
October 18, 2012

12. Questions Raised In Deaths Of Afghan Children In Coalition Strike

By Alissa J. Rubin

KABUL, Afghanistan — The international military coalition in Afghanistan has

confirmed that three children were killed in a coalition artillery strike in Helmand Province, expressing regret over the deaths and calling them “tragic,” but also raising the possibility that the Taliban had been using the children to place roadside bombs for them.

The artillery strike occurred Sunday afternoon after aerial images showed people laying bombs on a road frequently used by military vehicles in Nawa District, according to an official with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, commonly referred to as ISAF. The images first showed five people on the road, with two then moving away, presumably to act as an “early warning” for those digging the holes for the bombs in case someone came along, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss military operational details.

A guided rocket strike was approved against those digging the holes after ensuring that no civilian homes were in the immediate area, according to the ISAF official. A few minutes later, Afghans from the area arrived at the scene and loaded the bodies onto their truck, and minutes later the coalition forces stopped the vehicle as police officers and others arrived.

“All three diggers were identified as coming from the same family and were 12, 10 and 8 years old,” the ISAF official said.

Describing the strike, a spokesman for the regional military command, Lt. Col. Stewart Upton, said Wednesday, “It appears the Taliban were using the children to emplace the I.E.D., as they know the risks with such activity.” He was referring to improvised explosive devices.

In a formal statement released Tuesday, the international coalition said: “The coalition extends its deep regret for this tragic incident. We also extend our sympathies to the families and loved ones of those who died, and we take full responsibility for what occurred.”

Coalition officials said they planned to visit the families who had lost children to express their condolences.

Those family members, however, gave a different explanation earlier this week.

They said the children had been sent to gather dung, which farmers in the area dry and use for fuel. The children were near where the Taliban were laying the bombs, and the militants were killed as well as the children, who died from shrapnel wounds.

However, no one reached by The New York Times described seeing the bodies of the Taliban members who were killed. Hajji Hayatullah, a member of the district tribal council, arrived soon after he heard of the episode and said he saw the dung-filled bags, one covered with blood. But he said he did not see the bodies of militants.

“I saw three to four holes in the area that it seems the insurgents were digging for planting mines. I did not see any dead bodies of the men that the officials claimed were the I.E.D. planters,” Mr. Hayatullah said.

“Later, the people from the area told me that the Taliban were planting mines, but I did not see the bodies or any sign of someone having been killed; there were only the three dead bodies of the children.”

The district governor of Nawa, Hajji Abdul Manaf Khan, reported that two Taliban militants had been killed in the strike.

One possibility is that the children did go out to gather dung, but were then asked by locals with the Taliban to help them dig the bomb holes, and they complied, unaware of the danger. The area is considered insecure and is used by insurgents, Mr. Hayatullah said.

Civilian casualties caused by ISAF operations have been a continuing source of tension between Western and Afghan officials. Under new ground rules issued this year by the NATO commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John R. Allen, there are sharp limitations on the use of airstrikes, which in the past had caused many of the civilian deaths. He called for additional changes in June after a strike in which the coalition took responsibility for civilian deaths — 18, according to the Afghan government.

After that General Allen ordered coalition forces to avoid using airstrikes against Afghan homes except in self-defense.

Though at the time some saw the changes as being relatively narrow in scope, they appear to have had some effect. Recent data released by the United Nations found that civilian casualties caused by international and Afghan troops who supported the government now represented less than 10 percent of all coalition casualties. In 2010, the international forces and Afghan troops were responsible for 16 percent of the civilian casualties, and in 2011 for 14 percent. Through all those years, Taliban attacks still were a more prevalent cause of Afghan deaths, the figures show.

Taimoor Shah contributed reporting.

Yahoo.com
October 18, 2012

13. NATO: Afghanistan Drawdown Plans Unchanged

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — NATO's top official said Thursday the alliance remains committed to help enable Afghan forces assume full responsibility for the country's security after 2014, when coalition troops are due to end their combat mission.

The statement by visiting Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen comes amid speculation that the U.S.-led alliance could accelerate its withdrawal plans.

"Our goal is that Afghanistan will be able to stand on its own feet, but Afghanistan will not stand alone," Fogh Rasmussen said.

NATO's governing body, the North Atlantic Council, was visiting Kabul for meetings with President Hamid Karzai, coalition military commander Gen. John Allen and commanders of the Afghan government's forces.

The military alliance has also agreed to offer a smaller, post-2014 mission to help the Afghan forces with training, advice and assistance.

The strategy agreed between NATO, its partners and Karzai's government is to enable the Afghans to take over the war against the Taliban and other insurgents by the end of 2014.

NATO started drawing down its forces earlier this year. It currently has 104,000 troops in Afghanistan — 68,000 of them Americans — down from 140,000 the alliance had here in 2011.

Polls show that the 11-year war remains deeply unpopular among NATO's 28 member states, most of which are cutting defense budgets at a time of austerity caused by financial crises. There have been calls in the United States and elsewhere

to accelerate the drawdown plan.

The E-Ring (e-ring.foreignpolicy.com) October 17, 2012

14. ANSF Leaders Pull No Punches In The Pentagon

By Kevin Baron

Afghan National Security Forces leaders from Helmand and Kandahar provinces visiting the Pentagon on Wednesday said they understand the seriousness of green-on-blue and insider attacks on coalition forces. But in an exclusive interview with the *E-Ring*, the Afghan officers also indicated there are two things worrying them more about the future of security in their region.

Their first concern is getting enough equipment, logistics and intelligence support to carry on the security mission as tens of thousands of international forces pull out. Their second worry: Pakistan.

Through a translator, Maj. Gen. Sayed Malook Akbari, commanding general of the 215th Corps Afghan National Army, said he understood the recent concern over insider attacks, conceding they are having a negative effect in his ranks. But he also argued that the actual insider attacks conducted by enemies were a fraction of the total green-on-blue incidents and should not be taken to represent wider Afghan attitudes.

"There were mistakes made by coalition forces by the other side -- for example burning of Quran and also pissing on the bodies of Taliban," Akbari said. "People are not very educated. When they see one person doing this, they hold it against all of the whole society."

"I do not deny also that the enemy infiltrates among us

and they do recruiting of our soldiers and they turn them against us," he said. But Akbari claimed that such infiltration was behind only three or four out of 38 attacks in his area, with the rest being private fights or disgruntled troops.

Still, he admitted they are effective.

"It's creating a very untrustworthy type of environment among us and coalition forces."

Akbari said to counter the problem, his troops and other security forces are being trained with religious counter-argument instructions that explain murder is against the teachings of Islam.

"We are trying very hard," he said. "We didn't just leave it to mullahs." The security leaders have traveled into many local communities to challenge the mullahs directly. "We are getting real positive results out of that, too."

But the officers also said they recognize that they are fighting an enemy who is doing "everything against the laws of human beings," added Maj. Gen. Esmatullah Dawlatzai, the white-haired commanding general of the 707th Zone Uniform Border Police.

Dawlatzai chalked some of the incidents up to depression among some soldiers in his ranks, but he gave assurances that issue is being addressed and that insider attacks will not succeed to drive apart the coalition.

"They [the Taliban?] are trying to separate us from the coalition forces. But we want to tell them that all of these tactics that they are using, these green against blue, all that it's going to do is bring coalition forces, Afghan forces altogether, much closer," he said.

The group was making their now annual visit with the command elements of

the next batch of Marines slated to be deployed to their region -- this time being the II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward). The group also included Brig. Gen. Ghulam Nabi Tutakhil, director of operations, Coordination Center - Regional; Col. Mohammad Aslam Hashmi, director of operations, 215th Corps Afghan National Army; and Col. Sultan Mahmood, commanding officer of the 6th Zone Afghan Border Police.

After 30 years of war, Afghans know how to fight, they said. They just need proper equipment and more training. But with insider attacks driving down American public support for the war, the officers said they still need U.S. military support for years to come, and they pointed to agreements already signed allowing for a continued presence beyond 2014. Additionally, they argued that the international community has committed to fighting terrorists from their region that affect security far beyond its borders.

"Coalition forces? I see the need for them until Afghan forces are on their feet and they are capable of taking over security. As long as it takes," said Dawlatzai. After 2014, he added, "We still need logistical and air support and other support from coalition forces... as long as it takes."

But he sympathized with the parents of fallen U.S. troops angry over insider attacks, saying, "I really don't blame them."

Akbari, however, growing defensive, said that Afghans understand that one American soldier killing Afghans in a shooting spree does not represent all American soldiers. Afghans, he argued, are aggressively prosecuting the attackers they catch.

Since the surge saw most of its fighting in Helmand and Kandahar provinces to halt the flow of terrorists and insurgents coming in from Pakistan, the *E-Ring* asked the regional officers how much of a lingering concern to them was the terrorist threat in Pakistan.

"I really have no words, because you just asked us if the sun is bright or not," said Dawlatzai. "The fact is they are making Taliban, and if we're not going to stop this...it's just going to get bigger, just making Taliban."

Dawlatzai wryly noted that Osama bin Laden was found hiding in Pakistan and said that last week he heard Ayman al-Zawahiri "might be in Pakistan as well."

"I hope that answers your question."

To that, Akbari added Mullah Omar also is believed to be in Pakistan.

TheDailyBeast.com

October 18, 2012

15. Afghanistan: The Taliban's Dangerous New Munitions

The insurgents' truck bombs are using military-grade explosives now, not just homemade stuff. Some suggest Pakistan is the source -- and some say Iran. Sami Yousafzai reports.

Taliban sources tell The Daily Beast that the Afghan insurgents now have a new, far more devastating explosive for attacks on U.S. and NATO facilities in Afghanistan. Today's massive Taliban truck-bomb explosion at a military base in Paktia province appears to have been only the latest such attack. "The new explosive is so destructive and powerful that the leadership council has been advised to prevent civilian casualties by ordering the evacuation of all

homes within 15 kilometers [roughly 10 miles] of U.S. and NATO bases," says a well-placed source in the Taliban's military council for southern Afghanistan. The decision was taken at a meeting about a month ago, he says.

Speaking to The Daily Beast not far from the Pakistani-Afghan border, the council member said the insurgents have used the explosives in other recent bombings. One such attack was the suicide bombing this past June in Khost province at the gates of Camp Salerno, America's third-largest base in Afghanistan, where two U.S. service members reportedly died. Another was the insurgents' high-profile September assault in Helmand province at Camp Bastion, where Britain's Prince Harry is stationed as a helicopter pilot. Two U.S. Marines were killed, and millions of dollars worth of aircraft and other equipment were destroyed.

A Taliban intelligence official declines to say just where the insurgents are getting the new explosives, but he contends that everyone in the region is opposed to a permanent U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. "The primary aim of the attacks is to send a message to the Americans that remaining in their bases after 2014 won't be an easy deal," says the council member.

It's not a pretty picture, says an Afghan government intelligence official. "We know the Taliban are using new munitions against Afghan and NATO bases," he says. "The reason is clear: Pakistan is warning the U.S. and Afghan governments not to let the Americans remain in Afghanistan. The attacks on U.S. camps in Khost and Helmand—and today in Paktia

—are clear messages from Pakistan and perhaps even Iran as well. Pakistan wants to push a new phase of the insurgency with attacks on big bases to undermine U.S.-Afghan ties after 2014."

The Taliban's recent moves have made it hard for the Afghan government's uniformed forces to think so far into the future. A few years ago, military patrols used to find caches of only 20 or 30 kgs of explosives, says an Afghan security officer and explosive expert in the southern city of Kandahar. "Nowadays," he says, "each cache is between 50 and 500 kgs. It worries us. We've caught trucks loaded with as much as 1,000 kgs."

Military bases are built in such a way that only the outer gates can be damaged by an initial blast, the security officer says. Nevertheless, he says, the stuff the insurgents are using now is so powerful that a bomb can cause real damage inside a base even if the blast is set off well outside the gates. "Some of what we see is small in quantity but huge in quality," he says. "We're pretty sure it's not homemade." In fact, he says, it appears to be coming from military ordnance factories in neighboring Pakistan and maybe Iran—and the supply seems to be unlimited.

Sami Yousafzai is Newsweek's correspondent in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where he has covered militancy, al Qaeda, and the Taliban for the magazine since 9/11. He was born in Afghanistan but moved to Pakistan with his family after the Russian invasion in 1979. He began his career as a sports journalist but switched to war reporting in 1997.

ABCNews.com

October 17, 2012

Exclusive

16. Video Shows Drunk, Stoned US Defense Contractors

By Cindy Galli, Rhonda Schwartz and Brian Ross, ABC Nightline

Cellphone video recorded earlier this year at an operations center of a U.S. defense contractor in Kabul, Afghanistan appears to show key personnel staggeringly drunk or high on narcotics, in what former employees say was a pattern of outrageous behavior that put American lives at risk and went undetected by U.S. military officials who are supposed to oversee such contractors.

The video, provided to ABC News by two former employees, is scheduled to be broadcast in a report this evening on "ABC World News with Diane Sawyer" and "Nightline."

Asked if a response to an attack by terrorists would have been possible during the events seen on the video, one of the former employees, Kenny Smith, told ABC News Chief Investigative Correspondent Brian Ross, "No, sir."

Questions posed by ABC News to the Pentagon have sparked a criminal investigation by the U.S. Army, a spokesman says.

The contractor, Virginia-based Jorge Scientific, has won almost \$1 billion in U.S. government contracts.

The company says it has taken "decisive action to correct the unacceptable behavior of a limited number of employees" and that several of them seen on the video are no longer employed by Jorge Scientific.

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs by U.S. contractors in Afghanistan is prohibited by the military under what is known as General Order Number One.

Yet the former employees told ABC News they saw no evidence of oversight of the company by American military officials and that at least one U.S. Army major, a female, was a regular visitor to drunken parties at the facility, often using a room for sexual encounters.

The two former employees, John Melson and Kenny Smith, say the video documents allegations they have made in a lawsuit against Jorge Scientific.

"They endangered Jorge employees, the U.S. mission, and U.S. military personnel," claims the lawsuit.

Melson and Smith worked as armed security officers for three and five months, respectively, in Kabul as part of a \$47 million contract Jorge Scientific had under the U.S. Legacy Program to train the Afghan National Police in counter-insurgency efforts.

Both men say they quit the company in disgust and out of concern that their own safety was being compromised by the behavior they describe.

"It was going against everything that we were trying to do over there," said Melson.

The video shows the security manager for the company staggering about the operations center late one evening after taking large gulps of vodka and then engaging another employee in a half-naked wrestling match.

"It was like a frat house for adults," said Melson. "Some of them to the point where they were passing out, there's firearms laying around, some of them still carrying the firearms on them."

Another portion of the video shows the company's medical officer with glassy eyes and unable to respond to a request for help after shooting up with a prescription anesthetic, Ketamine.

Told of the existence of the video, the medical officer, Kevin Carlson, admitted to ABC News that he frequently injected himself with narcotics.

"It was getting to be such a nightmare, just living in that place, I needed to get away," said Carlson, who was among the employees dismissed by the company earlier this year.

Now living in Germany, Carlson said there was "massive drug and alcohol abuse" at that Jorge Scientific facility, involving executives, armed security personnel and himself.

"If I try to hide what I did, it doesn't make me look very good anyway," he said. "So I'd rather just be honest about what happened."

The whistleblowers say the company's senior on-site executive, Chris Sullivan, often organized and led the heavy drinking gatherings, with a loaded pistol tucked into his pants.

Smith says Sullivan pushed hard for everyone to join in the excessive drinking, and said those who would not were cowards. "He called us a bunch of pussies," said Smith.

The video shows Sullivan at a blazing bonfire in an outdoor patio of the operations center whose location was supposed to be covert because of the sensitivity of the mission.

"There was nothing covert with bringing all that added attention," said Melson, the former employee. "Afghanistan is not the time or the place to be carrying on like that."

Sullivan no longer works at Jorge Scientific, according to the company statement. He declined to speak with ABC News.

The whistleblowers say that the drunken and stoned security personnel would often throw live ammunition rounds and fire extinguishers into the flames and watch as they

exploded, often sounding like a real bomb explosion.

"It wasn't every night," said Kenny Smith. "It was every other night."

The company's operations manual describes a "zero-tolerance for alcohol and drug use" and says all personnel must be on alert 24/7 for a possible terror attack.

"Anybody who uses alcohol or drugs around armed weapons is putting themselves and others in a tremendous amount of danger, said former Army vice-chief of staff General Peter Chiarelli, an ABC News consultant who oversaw contractors when he served in Iraq.

"All indications from what I've been able to read and see so far indicate somebody missed something," said General Chiarelli after viewing video clips and the whistleblower lawsuit in the Jorge Scientific case.

In a statement to ABC News, Colonel Tom Collins, a U.S. Army spokesperson for the International Security Assistance Force, said, "Clearly, behavior such as that described by ABC News is not indicative of the outstanding work that thousands of contractors and service members perform every day in Afghanistan."

Col. Collins said he could not comment substantively on the allegations because of the on-going criminal investigation.

As American troops continue to withdraw from Afghanistan, there are now more private contractors in the country than uniformed U.S. military personnel and the new video is certain to raise more questions about the role and oversight of private companies performing many of the same jobs that once were carried out only by the military.

"We are relying more and more on contractors in Afghanistan," said Danielle Brian of the Project on Government Oversight.

"It has got to be that there is more of a sense of oversight on the part of the military and the U.S. government to make sure these contractors are not actually undermining the diplomatic mission with their behavior," she said.

A Pentagon spokesman said the military was unaware of the video and the allegations in the lawsuit until contacted by ABC News last month.

The lawsuit by the two former employees was originally filed under seal as part of the False Claims Act, designed to give the government an opportunity to join the legal effort to see if the government was defrauded. In this case, the Department of Justice declined to become part of the fraud lawsuit and apparently did not notify the U.S. Army of the allegations.

After ABC News first asked questions of the Pentagon, agents of the Army's Criminal Investigations Division have sought to interview the two men, according to their lawyer, David Scher, a principal at the Employment Law Group in Washington, D.C.

"I think the company's conduct far exceeds that of a mere drunken brawl, and drunken activities," said Scher. "It leads to a very severe security risk in Afghanistan when that is the last thing that we need."

In its statement to ABC News, Jorge said it made management changes in Afghanistan even before the two former employees filed their lawsuit.

"These individuals are seeking monetary damages by mischaracterizing these actions

as 'fraud,'" the company said of the behavior at the facility.

Jorge said its board of directors hired an "outside and independent investigative team headed by a former federal prosecutor to conduct a thorough investigation."

"The company remains confident that the personal misconduct did not impact the company's contract performance," the statement read.

A senior U.S. official in Afghanistan told ABC News that if the allegations prove to be true, the company "should be kicked out of here fast" given concerns that such behavior could add to rage over perceived U.S. disrespect for local values.

"This arrogant image that Americans have worldwide, this was feeding right into it," said one of the whistleblowers, John Melson, a National Guard sergeant who served in uniform in Iraq and Afghanistan before working for Jorge Scientific.

Wall Street Journal
October 18, 2012
Pg. 11

17. Iran Renews Internet Attacks On U.S. Banks

Officials Blame Tehran for Sophisticated Disruptions of Capital One and BB&T Websites; More Strikes Planned Thursday

By Siobhan Gorman

WASHINGTON—Iranian hackers renewed a campaign of cyberattacks against U.S. banks this week, targeting Capital One Financial Corp. and BB&T Corp. and openly defying U.S. warnings to halt, U.S. officials and others involved in the investigation into the attacks said.

The attacks, which disrupted the banks' websites, showed the ability of the Iranian group to sustain its cyberassault

on the nation's largest banks for a fifth week, even as it announced its plans to attack in advance.

U.S. officials said the attacks against banks, and others against Middle Eastern energy companies, were sponsored by the Iranian government and approved at high levels as part of a low-grade cyberwar that officials warned could lead to retaliation.

Unclear is at what point attacks on individual banks constitute an assault on the overall financial system that would call for a forceful response from the U.S. military, which has formed a "Cyber Command" to help defend government computers and critical civilian networks.

"It is a fair question," said a senior U.S. official. "I am not sure I have the answer to it."

Iranian officials didn't respond to requests to comment.

BB&T worked Wednesday to restore the bank's website, and Capital One was adding new security to its website, which was attacked on Tuesday, the banks said. BB&T operates the 11th biggest U.S. bank, and Capital One runs the 13th largest, according to a Federal Reserve ranking by consolidated assets.

In previous weeks, the group had stated which banks it would target, but its announcement posted on the Internet this week didn't say which banks it planned to attack. The hacker group, which calls itself Qassam Cyber Fighters, said it planned further attacks Thursday.

The announcement, posted Tuesday, took a swipe at Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, who last week issued a veiled warning to Iran to stop its cyberattacks and announced that the Pentagon spends \$3 billion a year on cyber defenses.

The Qassam Cyber Fighters says it is retaliating for the anti-Islamic video made in America that has caused protests in Muslim countries. U.S. officials, however, say the hackers claim privately to be attacking U.S. financial institutions and energy companies in the Persian Gulf in response to crippling sanctions that have cut oil production in half and sent the Iranian currency tumbling.

"We have a suggestion for Mr. Panetta," the group wrote in garbled English in their announcement on the Internet. It said that instead of "spending several billions that won't be good for you, tell your henchmen on YouTube" to remove the anti-Islamic video.

The hacking group's statement Tuesday also said it believed that U.S. banks were "howling under pressure from the attacks."

"They clearly specialize in computers and not Shakespearean prose—in English or Persian," said a senior defense official, after reading the announcement. "We take all cyberthreats seriously and believe that we need to do all we can as a country to defend ourselves against them."

The Iranian attacks started at the beginning of this year when a few U.S. banks were pounded with unusually potent so-called denial-of-service attacks, which bombard websites to try to knock them off-line.

Iranian hackers turned this summer to some oil-and-gas companies in the Middle East, where they also destroyed company data, U.S. officials said.

Last month, they renewed their cyberassaults on the U.S. financial sector, announcing plans to target specific banks on specific days.

These latest attacks, which investigators say are at least 10 times as potent as the types of denial-of-service attacks hackers have mounted in the past, have disrupted service at even the largest U.S. banks. The highly sophisticated computer attack is using a new cyberweapon called "itsoknoproblembro," according to the computer-security firm Prolexic Technologies.

The group has now attacked at least nine different U.S. banks, in some cases knocking websites offline and slowing the performance of others.

Banks were on edge early this week in anticipation of another cyber onslaught, according to people familiar with the investigation into the Iranian hacking campaign.

Tuesday's attack on Capital One blocked access to the bank's website for a number of hours.

"We experienced some disruption yesterday," said Capital One spokeswoman Tatiana Stead. "There was minimal impact to the vast majority of our customers. All of our systems are fully operational."

She added that after "the recent events," the bank has "taken a number of precautions which may inadvertently cause some challenges for a small number of customers visiting our website."

A small group of Capital One customers were also unable to access the bank's website on Wednesday as it took additional security measures to block future cyberattacks, a Capital One official said, noting that customers could still access their accounts over the phone, on mobile devices, or in person at a bank branch.

At BB&T, spokeswoman Cynthia Williams said

Wednesday that the bank was experiencing "intermittent outages" on its website "due to a denial-of-service' event."

She emphasized that these attacks don't target an individual accounts or the bank's internal computer systems. Instead they cause website disruptions that delay customers' abilities to access their accounts.

—Julian E. Barnes
contributed to this article.

Wall Street Journal
October 18, 2012
Pg. 11

18. Canada To Beef Up Its Cyber Defenses

By Alistair MacDonald and Paul Vieira

OTTAWA—Canada said it will more than double spending on defense against cyberattacks, amid heightened global worries over cyber warfare.

Vic Toews, Canada's public-safety minister, said his department would spend an additional 155 million Canadian dollars (US\$158 million) over five years on cyber security, underscoring a recent call to arms among Western allies, from the U.S. to Britain, over the threat. The new Canadian commitment is on top of C\$90 million already allocated for cyber security over the same period.

The move came a week after a scathing U.S. congressional report designated Huawei Technologies Inc., a Chinese technology-equipment firm that has made big inroads in Canada, as a potential national-security threat.

U.S. intelligence officials voiced concern to Canadian officials in Washington earlier this year about Canada's potential susceptibility to cyber espionage and attacks, said a person familiar with the matter. Parts of northern U.S. states are supplied with utilities, such

as water and electricity, from across the Canadian border, leading some U.S. officials to worry that an attack could affect these supply, the person said.

The new spending comes amid criticism among security experts that Canada spends too little on cyber defense compared to its Western allies. Even with the big increase, Canada is committing to spend much less than some other Western governments plan.

The U.K., for instance, said last year it will put an extra £650 million (\$1.05 billion) into cyber security over five years. In 2008, the U.S. began its Comprehensive National Cybersecurity Initiative, under which it plans to plow more than \$10 billion into cyber defense, and has since announced other cyber programs with multibillion-dollar budgets.

"Everyone is ramping up their budgets as fast as they can, but the U.S. and U.K. see more clearly that the cyber threat is an offensive," said David Skillicorn, an expert in cyber security at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

Mr. Toews said the new money would be used to strengthen government computer networks, raise public awareness of cyber threats and boost the Canadian Cyber Incident Response Centre, which monitors threats and coordinates response.

A representative for the ministry wasn't immediately available to comment on criticism over Canada's approach.

Cyber-defense experts have said Chinese-based hackers have broken into the networks of Canadian companies in a bid to siphon off information and technology.

Last month, the CCIRC said it was aware of an attack against Telvent, the Canadian arm of French firm Schneider

Electric SA, a company that designs software for the energy industry. The CCIRC didn't say where the attack had originated; some experts said it came from China.

A representative for the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa wasn't available to comment. A statement on the embassy's website says allegations of Chinese government support for hacking are "groundless."

Telvent acknowledged the breach, and a spokesman said Wednesday that the company is continuing to work with its customers to ensure it has been contained.

The Canadian announcement comes a week after the U.S. report on Huawei. Huawei has called the report misleading and an exercise in China-bashing.

While the telecom-equipment company hasn't built a big business in the U.S., it has grown quickly in Canada, working with two of the country's biggest telecom providers. Days after the U.S. report, Ottawa signaled it might bar Huawei from bidding on a contract to build a new Canadian government email system. Mr. Toews declined to comment Wednesday on whether the Chinese firm would be excluded from that bidding.

Washington Post
October 18, 2012
Pg. 11

19. In Swat, Shadows Of 'Mullah Radio'

Fugitive Taliban leader, linked to attack on teen, has history of repression

By Dana Priest

The Taliban leader who apparently ordered the assassination of a Pakistani schoolgirl last week may not be well-known outside the remote, picturesque Swat Valley. But there he is infamous for his

long campaign against female education.

Mullah Fazlullah, the 30-something leader of a local Taliban branch, is also well-known to a very different set of people: U.S. troops who have been gunning for him since he fled into neighboring Konar province in Afghanistan three years ago.

Because of his long record of violence and civilian executions, he is considered a priority target for NATO forces, according to analysts.

"He's on everyone's target list," said Jeff Dressler, senior research analyst at the Institute for the Study of War, who has assisted the U.S. military in Afghanistan. Dressler's assessment was shared by U.S. officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Fazlullah is also known as "Mullah Radio" for his use of a roving transmitter to broadcast lyrical rants against the central government in Pakistan, music, education and the polio vaccine.

He married into militancy when he wed the daughter of the founder of the Swat-based branch of the Taliban, known as the Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Sharia, or TNSM, its Urdu acronym. After the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, he led his men there to fight American troops. But he rose to prominence only in the mid-2000s, through his broadcasts.

Fazlullah is considered a charismatic preacher, recruiting not only suicide bombers but also village women, who have donated their precious jewels and other valuables to his cause, experts say.

Fazlullah formed an alliance with other Taliban factions, and together they laid siege to the Swat Valley between 2007 and 2009. His fighters blew up hundreds of

schools, beheaded villagers, flogged women, killed dozens of soldiers and policemen, forced the exodus of more than a million residents and advanced to within 60 miles of the capital, Islamabad.

His followers ultimately grew to 10,000 and used their strength to force the Pakistani government into three peace deals. Fazlullah and his men established training camps and allowed al-Qaeda members to join them in battle.

"He could marshal thousands of troops," said Bill Roggio, editor of the Long War Journal, who has been following Fazlullah for years.

But by 2009, the Pakistani army had had enough and pushed the TNSM out of the valley.

Since then, the group's members have floated across the ill-defined border between Konar in Afghanistan and the Bajaur tribal area in Pakistan, according to counterterrorism experts.

Fazlullah is no longer able to conduct paramilitary operations and may not be in day-to-day command of much. He has tried to maintain his stature and public standing by attacking those most vulnerable and least likely to resist: schoolchildren and their parents, experts say.

Last month, in what analysts see as a bid to maintain his fading presence in the region, Fazlullah began planning the execution of 15-year-old Malala Yousafzai. She had once made the case for more security in girls' schools at a sit-down with U.S. envoy Richard C. Holbrooke. Through a diary about life under the Taliban that was published by the BBC, she had become the face of Pakistani girls who yearned for an education in a country where many still lack access.

According to statements by Ehsanullah Ehsan, a spokesman for Fazlullah, the TNSM leader selected four assailants, who spent weeks gathering information about Yousafzai's travels and planning the attack. The group also sent the teen and her father warnings to stop speaking out against TNSM and in favor of Westerners such as President Obama.

She ignored them.

On Oct. 9, two gunmen stopped a rickety, open-backed truck carrying a dozen girls to school in Mingora, Swat's largest town. The gunmen asked for Yousafzai by name, jumped into the back of the vehicle and shot her twice, point-blank.

"Let this be a lesson," Ehsan lectured the media afterward.

The attack on Yousafzai is meant to draw attention to Fazlullah, said experts who have followed his career. "It is what they thrive on," said Shuja Nawaz, director of the South Asia Center at the Atlantic Council in Washington. "This gives them a new lease on life. It can revive his support system."

Nawaz said that until there is strong, community-based policing, "these guys will continue to scare and intimidate people."

Yousafzai's shooting has outraged Pakistanis, prompting demonstrations in support of girls' education. Pakistani officials have said that they have made several arrests in the case, but Fazlullah remains at large and may still be across the border, in Afghanistan.

Philadelphia Inquirer
October 18, 2012
Pg. 6

20. Pakistanis Remain Split Over Assaulting Taliban

By Sebastian Abbot,
Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan - Despite widespread outrage over the Taliban shooting of a female teenage activist, Pakistani leaders and opinion makers are divided over whether the government should respond by targeting the militants' last major sanctuary along the Afghan border.

The United States has long pressed Pakistan to launch an operation in the remote and mountainous North Waziristan tribal area, home to enemies of Islamabad as well as to militants fighting U.S. troops in Afghanistan. The recent attack on 14-year-old Malala Yousufzai has given new momentum to the debate.

One side argues that the government should harness anger over the shooting to build public support for a push into North Waziristan. The other claims that more fighting isn't the answer and would trigger a violent backlash. It recommends peace negotiations and ending Pakistani support for the U.S. war in Afghanistan.

A Taliban gunman shot and critically wounded Malala on Oct. 9 as she was returning home from school in Pakistan's northwest. The militant group targeted her because of her vocal support for girls' education and criticism of the insurgents' behavior when they took over the scenic Swat Valley where she lived several years ago.

Pakistan's powerful army chief strongly criticized the attack shortly after it occurred, raising expectations that the military might be laying the groundwork for an operation in North Waziristan. The army conducted a concerted public relations campaign before it launched an offensive in Swat in 2009 by seizing on anger over a video showing a Taliban fighter flogging a woman who allegedly committed adultery.

"We refuse to bow before terror," Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani said the day after Malala was attacked. "We will fight, regardless of the cost."

A prominent Pakistani politician urged the military to take on the Taliban in North Waziristan while addressing tens of thousands of people rallying support for Malala in the southern city of Karachi on Sunday.

"Move ahead and crush the Taliban, and 180 million people will be standing behind you," the head of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, Altaf Hussain, told the crowd by telephone from London.

Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik said last week that the government was considering a military operation in North Waziristan, although he backtracked a few days later.

The military has long recognized the threat posed by Pakistani Taliban militants holed up in North Waziristan but has been reluctant to launch an offensive there for several reasons.

The army has said its troops are stretched too thin by operations in other parts of the tribal region. But many analysts believe Pakistan does not want to cross other militant groups with whom it has historical ties and could be useful proxies in Afghanistan after foreign forces withdraw. These groups, also located in North Waziristan, have primarily focused their fighting on Afghanistan, and any operation that upsets them could prompt them to turn their guns on Pakistan.

Islamabad has also faced the challenge of launching an operation in North Waziristan without looking like it was simply doing the bidding of the United States, which is extremely unpopular in the country.

New York Times
October 18, 2012

21. Libya Singles Out Islamist As A Commander In Consulate Attack, Libyans Say

By David D. Kirkpatrick

CAIRO — Libyan authorities have singled out Ahmed Abu Khattala, a leader of the Benghazi-based Islamist group Ansar al-Shariah, as a commander in the attack that killed the American ambassador to Libya, J. Christopher Stevens, last month, Libyans involved in the investigation said Wednesday.

Witnesses at the scene of the attack on the American Mission in Benghazi have said they saw Mr. Abu Khattala leading the assault, and his personal involvement is the latest link between the attack and his brigade, Ansar al-Shariah, a puritanical militant group that wants to advance Islamic law in Libya.

The identity and motivation of the assailants have become an intense point of contention in the American presidential campaign. Republicans have sought to tie the attack to Al Qaeda to counter President Obama's assertion that by killing Osama bin Laden and other leaders his administration had crippled the group; Mr. Abu Khattala and Ansar al-Shariah share Al Qaeda's puritanism and militancy, but operate independently and focus only on Libya rather than on a global jihad against the West.

But Mr. Abu Khattala's exact role, or how much of the leadership he shared with others, is not yet clear. His leadership would not rule out participation or encouragement by militants connected to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, an Algerian Islamic insurgency that adopted the name of Bin

Laden's group a few years ago to bolster its image, but has so far avoided attacks on Western interests.

Like the other leaders of the brigade or fighters seen in the attack, Mr. Abu Khattala remains at large and has not yet been questioned.

The authorities in Tripoli do not yet command an effective army or police force, and members of the recently elected Parliament have acknowledged with frustration that their government's limited power has shackled their ability to pursue the attackers.

The government typically relies on self-formed local militias to act as law enforcement, and the Benghazi-area militias appear reluctant to enter a potentially bloody fight against another local group, like Ansar al-Shariah, to track down Mr. Abu Khattala.

Asked last week about Mr. Abu Khattala's role, an American official involved in a separate United States investigation declined to comment on any particular suspects, but he indicated that the United States was tracking Mr. Abu Khattala and cautioned that the leadership of the attack might have been broader than a single man.

"Ansar al-Shariah is not only a shadowy group, it's also quite factionalized," the official said. "There isn't necessarily one overall military commander of the group."

It was not immediately clear if that assessment might have changed with new information from Libyan witnesses. The New York Times reported Tuesday that Mr. Abu Khattala was a leader of the brigade, but withheld accounts of his specific role in the attack to protect witnesses. On Wednesday, The Wall Street Journal reported that three witnesses had seen him during

the Sept. 11 attack on the mission and that the Libyan authorities were focused on his role.

The Journal reported that Mr. Abu Khattala had been seen at large in the Leithi neighborhood of Benghazi, known for a high concentration of Islamists. But his exact whereabouts is unclear. Libyan border security is loose, so it is possible that he will flee or has already left the country.

Mr. Abu Khattala was a member of the Islamist opposition under Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi and was imprisoned in his notorious Abu Salim prison. Unlike most of the other Islamist prisoners, however, Mr. Abu Khattala never renounced violence as a means for seeking political change. He was let out of prison only last year, along with a batch of other political prisoners released in a futile bid by the government to appease the nascent uprising.

Mr. Abu Khattala fought Colonel Qaddafi along with the rest of the Libyan opposition and the current leaders of the big militias in eastern Libya. But as those groups lined up behind the transitional government and the democratic process, Mr. Abu Khattala and a small core of like-minded Islamists formed Ansar al-Shariah, which now includes 100 to 200 fighters. Its name means "supporters of Islamic law," and it opposes electoral democracy as a substitute.

It has staged displays of armed might intended to deter Western-style secular liberals whom it suspects of moving to liberalize Libya, where alcohol is currently banned, polygamy is legal and a vast majority of women wear an Islamic head covering.

But Ansar al-Shariah also guarded a local hospital and engaged in preaching and

charitable work, before popular anger at the group for its role in the mission attack forced it to scatter and hide out of sight.

Suliman Ali Zway contributed reporting from Tripoli, Libya, and Eric Schmitt from Washington.

ArmyTimes.com
October 17, 2012

22. Panetta Wants Proof Voting Offices Are Working

By Karen Jowers, Staff writer

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has directed military officials to provide him a report by Oct. 19 verifying that each of the 221 installation voting assistance offices is appropriately staffed to meet the needs of troops.

He gave officials three days to get it done; the memo was issued Oct. 16 to the service secretaries, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, and chiefs of the combatant commands.

"We must do all we can to ensure that service members know the steps necessary to vote, particularly those service members deployed or based away from home. This issue must be addressed immediately," he wrote.

Panetta responded to a report issued by the Defense Department Inspector General on Aug. 31 that stated that auditors could not reach about half of the installation voting assistance offices by phone after repeated attempts. He noted that DoD recently has received similar reports from congressional sources.

Panetta noted that DoD's internal research "indicates that we were able to reach the overwhelming majority of voter assistance offices by phone."

He said DoD is also encouraging troops to vote

through emails and with worldwide messages from Panetta, Joint Chiefs Chairman Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, and Dempsey's senior enlisted adviser, Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Bryan Battaglia.

ArmyTimes.com
October 17, 2012

23. Personnel Chief Takes Leave For Health Reasons

By Andrew Tilghman, Staff writer

The Pentagon's top personnel official is taking a leave of absence for health reasons.

Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Erin Conaton, who took office just four months ago, "is going on a temporary leave of absence to address personal health matters," Pentagon spokesman George Little said Wednesday.

For now, Conaton's job will be filled by Jessica Wright, who has been serving as assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs. Wright, a retired major general in the Army National Guard, came to the Pentagon earlier this year after serving as Pennsylvania's state adjutant general.

Conaton's leave comes after a spate of turnover in the Personnel and Readiness directorate, which oversees the massive Pentagon personnel apparatus and policies related to recruiting, retention, pay and benefits and more.

Last year, retired Marine Maj. Gen. Clifford Stanley resigned from the same post amid staff turmoil and allegations that he was an ineffective manager, neglected programs for wounded warriors and spent lavishly on a new Pentagon conference room.

Little said Panetta "and the entire leadership of the Department of Defense wishes

Secretary Conaton a speedy recovery and looks forward to her returning to the department soon," Little said.

Conaton, 42, previously served as undersecretary of the Air Force.

AOL Defense
(defense.aol.com)
October 17, 2012

24. IEDs Replace Artillery As Battlefield's Biggest Killer, JIEDDO General Says

By Otto Kreisher

WASHINGTON: In almost every war of the modern era, artillery has played a decisive role. But the lowly IED, cobbled together explosives ignited by cobbled together detonators, has now replaced artillery as the greatest killer on the modern battlefield, according to Lt. Gen. Michael D. Barbero, head of the Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO)

The Army general in charge of the multi-billion-dollar effort said the IED was a "global and enduring threat" that the U.S. military would have to deal with long after it ends its combat involvement in Afghanistan, now slated for 2014.

Barbero noted that improvised explosives also are showing up in domestic settings. He cited the multitude of deadly explosive devices rigged to go off in the apartment of the gunman who killed 12 people and wounded 58 in Aurora, Colo., in July.

He mentioned the bomb planted by a terrorist in the truck of a car left in New York's Times Square in 2010 and a long list of improvised explosives and suicide bomber attacks in Africa, Latin America and Europe.

In Afghanistan, Barbero said at a briefing held by the Atlantic Council, that IEDs

caused 60 percent of the casualties suffered by U.S. and coalition forces. This past June recorded the highest number of "IED incidents" ever in the 11-year involvement in Afghanistan but the number of incidents on an annual basis have been dropping, he said.

The good news, the general said, was that the rate of IEDs being found and cleared before they explode is growing and the number of casualties is declining. That means the "effective rate" of the improvised weapons -- those that cause casualties -- this year is 55 percent less than last year, he said.

But that is not enough, he said, describing the fight against the crude but deadly IEDs as a constant cycle of responses to new types of devices or to new tactics. Because of that cycle, the general said JIEDDO's most important feature was its ability to rapidly field new systems to counter the evolving threat.

Barbero, who has the authority to spend up to \$25 million without having to go to Congress or higher command and can get rapid approval to spend more from Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, pointed to the fielding of thousands of sets of the ballistic underwear intended to reduce injuries to the groin and intestines on troops stepping on IEDs and small, throwable unmanned ground vehicles requested by Marines.

The protective garments were fielded in four months by adopting a British design, while the mini-robots took eight months to develop and field.

That ability to respond quickly must be preserved, he said. And he noted that JIEDDO is moving from land to sea in its efforts to address new areas of threats from improvised explosives. His office is funding several Navy programs aimed at

countering underwater threats, including IEDs that might be attached to docked ships or to piers or planted on harbor bottoms. It also is supporting programs to detect swimmers trying to plant an explosive, as well as to find ways to counter swarms of small, fast motorboats, such as those being used by Iran's Republican Guard Navy in the Persian Gulf.

JIEDDO received \$2.4 billion last year and requested \$1.9 billion for fiscal 2013.

UTSanDiego.com
October 17, 2012

25. New Littoral Ship Due To Arrive On Thursday

By Jeanette Steele

ABOARD THE FORT WORTH — A blown fuse in a communications system meant the Navy helicopter had to find the Fort Worth, the U.S. fleet's newest littoral combat ship, by sight in the ocean off San Diego on Wednesday.

The helicopter passed over a destroyer, a big, bulky warship, all squared-off angles. Nope, not that one.

When the helicopter found the Fort Worth, it was obvious at a glance that the small, sleek ship was a different creature all together.

The Fort Worth, the third in the Navy's new littoral combat ship line, is bound for San Diego, its new home port. The ship is scheduled to sail past Ballast Point and into the bay, arriving at its San Diego Naval Base pier at 9:30 a.m. Thursday.

The core crew of 40 sailors — the result of a concept called "minimal manning" — has taken custody of the vessel from a Wisconsin shipyard and delivered it to San Diego in roughly four months. The ship stopped in Galveston, Texas, for commissioning on Sept. 22 before heading through the

Panama Canal en route to its new home.

On the flight deck Wednesday evening, against a pink sunset sky, the skipper told the assembled crew that he thought it had to be a record.

“You guys have really done something special,” Cmdr. Randy Blankenship said.

The Navy is still finding its way with the controversial littoral ship class, just as Fort Worth’s occupants had to learn to be “hybrid” sailors on the trip from Wisconsin.

Because of the small crew, each member does his or her assigned job and also helps out with three or four other tasks, such as securing a helicopter when it lands or acting as a rescue swimmer.

The Navy has faced criticism about the small crew size and many other aspects of this groundbreaking vessel.

The first two ships in the line — the Freedom and Independence, both based in San Diego — came in at three times over budget and experienced early problems with cracks and corrosion. Some analysts say the ships don’t have enough firepower and can’t survive a fight.

The Navy staunchly defends the ship class, saying its speed and nimbleness are needed for close-to-shore patrolling.

As the ship arrives in San Diego today, naval officials are betting on the Fort Worth to show that the lessons of the first two littoral vessels were learned, and heeded.

UTSanDiego.com
October 17, 2012

26. Navy Medicine Fights Rising Costs

Surgeon general visits SD as department grapples with chronic disease, budget

By Gretel C. Kovach

As health care costs threaten to overwhelm the defense budget, the Navy is increasing efficiency through Web-based care, preventive medicine, joint operations across services and fewer referrals to civilian providers, the service’s top doctor said Wednesday during a visit to San Diego.

The Defense Department spent about \$19 billion on health care in 2001. Last year, the figure climbed to \$52 billion.

“We’re on this trajectory that is non-sustainable,” said Vice Adm. Matthew Nathan, U.S. Navy surgeon general.

If the trend continues, by 2020 health care costs will consume the budget for discretionary spending, such as infrastructure, Nathan told the San Diego Military Advisory Council.

“We can’t provide all medical care at any cost anymore. We can’t afford it, we can’t sustain it,” he said, but neither can the Navy simply stop paying the bill.

“We have to figure out, Navy medicine and military medicine, how we can maintain health and do it at lower cost.”

The Navy cares for sailors and Marines with a budget of about \$6 billion and 65,000 workers. That budget will undoubtedly shrink in coming years as the Corps downsizes by about 20,000, Nathan said. But the needs of wounded service members will continue after the last return home from the war.

“If all hostilities ended tomorrow, my current need for trauma support would diminish pretty quickly. But my current need for emotional, psychological support will be a tail that exists for quite awhile,” he told San Diego reporters.

To become solvent and sustainable, Navy medicine is adopting a “patient-

centered medical home” model, assigning active duty, retirees and dependents it serves to a cluster of providers and encouraging electronic communication.

Like the invention of antibiotics and anesthesia, “I believe the next great panacea of medicine is going to be virtual medicine, the ability to take care of you at your homes,” where you can use a smartphone or computer to make appointments, get test results and consult with your doctor, he said. “The only time you’ll have to go see a doctor is when you’re really sick and they need to either listen to you, see you or feel what’s going on with you.”

Another big push is to reduce redundancies across services, for instance by consolidating pharmacies. Last year, the Navy merged its schoolhouse for training hospital corpsmen with the one used to train Army and Air Force medics in San Antonio. Some classes are integrated and some broken down by service, but the goal is to have all basic medical training standardized, Nathan said.

During his previous assignment, Nathan presided over the consolidation of Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda, Md.

The Government Accountability Office found that collocating cost \$1.7 billion more than the Pentagon budgeted in 2005.

Integrating Army and Navy culture was another challenge, Nathan recalled, but examples like Joint Special Operations Command illustrate the benefits.

“They maintain their traditions but they are all one team, one fight, saving money, finding efficiencies. ... We need to do that in military medicine.”

A strain affecting military and civilian medical systems is the rising epidemic of obesity in American and chronic diseases such as diabetes.

To cut costs, “I’ve got to get people healthier,” Nathan said. “Once you start getting diabetes it causes heart disease, it causes renal disease, it causes eye problems, it causes neurological problems. It’s horrendously expensive.

“If I can keep that person healthy into 70 or 80, vice getting this stuff at 50 or 60, I’ve made a huge paradigm change in my cost.”

Another cost-saving measure is drawing care back to military facilities instead of referring patients to civilian care, Nathan said. As war zone deployments wind down, about 5 percent of Navy medical personnel are deployed, down from 15 percent, making it easier to fully staff military facilities and handle patient flow.

National Defense Blog
(ndia.org)

October 17, 2012

27. Navy Secretary Won't Back Off From Renewable Energy Goals

By Dan Parsons

Almost three years to the day after he laid out plans to achieve energy security for his service, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus on Oct. 17 doubled down on that promise.

Mabus praised the progress the Navy has made and assured attendees at an industry conference that the goals he laid out in 2009 would be achieved within or ahead of the ambitious self-prescribed timeline.

“We have initiated, we have advanced and we have achieved many of the objectives we set,” Mabus said at the National Defense Industrial

Association's annual Naval Energy Forum. "We are not there yet, but we are far further along. We're doing what we're doing and we're leading at what we're doing because it increases national security and, I would say, it increases international stability."

Mabus said he was "absolutely confident" that the service will meet the prescribed goal that by 2020 half its energy will come from sources other than petroleum.

He has also called for half of all shore-based power to come from renewable sources by 2020 and for half of the Navy's installations to be net-zero — meaning they create as much power as they consume — by the same year. Both are efforts to make the Navy's infrastructure sustainable, "independent of what happens to the commercial electrical grid," Mabus said. By 2015, all of the Navy's ground vehicles will cut petroleum-based fuel consumption in half, he has vowed.

Meanwhile, each one-dollar increase in the price of a barrel of crude oil costs the Navy \$30 million, Mabus said, echoing an oft-cited statistical grievance.

Sen. Jeanne Sheehan, D-N.H., member of both the Senate Armed Services and Energy and Natural Resources committees, said that same dollar increase costs the Defense Department a total of \$130 million.

For the U.S. economy as a whole, a volatile and fragile global oil market can have "significant and dangerous impacts," Mabus added.

For the Navy, which consumes enormous amounts of fuel each day steaming around the globe, the constantly fluctuating price of oil can cause budgetary migraines. In fiscal year 2012, the service was

forced to find an extra \$500 million to cover unforeseen growth in fuel costs, Mabus said. Fuel use also has direct impacts on global operations for both the Navy and Marine Corps. The Navy spends \$84 billion per year protecting maritime oil transit routes around the world, he said.

In an era marked by fiscal austerity and looming budget cuts, "there are only two places to get money like this," he said. Without further funding, it must either come from operations or from the acquisition budget.

"I think those are simply choices we shouldn't have to make," he said. "I think there is another way to do this, but the only way is to think and act big."

Sheehan said politics should not be allowed to get in the way of achieving energy security, regardless of controversial subjects like climate change. "As a policy, we need to make sure our military leaders can continue their historic tradition of identifying long-term challenges," she said. "We cannot let energy security become a proxy debate for other issues surrounding renewable energy."

The Navy is set to cut the ribbon Oct. 18 on a 1-kilowatt solar array at Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Calif. The following day, a similar photovoltaic array will be unveiled at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Calif. Each will save the Navy \$13 million to \$20 million over their 20-year lifespans, Mabus said.

These kinds of projects have practical impacts on the economic health of the nation and its security, Sheehan said.

"Energy has always been directly related to our economy, our national security and our combat effectiveness," she said.

"It is imperative to the success of today's military. Energy security is national security."

In Hawaii, where fuel prices are the highest in the nation, plans are under way to generate 56 megawatts annually at various Navy installations by relying on "the strength of the Hawaiian sun," Mabus said. At Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, a power-generating wave is already pumping electricity into the local electrical grid.

Perhaps the most ambitious effort Mabus has undertaken to achieve energy security is the search for a drop-in bio-fuel that burns cleaner and more efficiently than traditional petroleum based jet fuel. During the recent Rim of the Pacific international military exercises in Hawaii, Mabus' Great Green Fleet demonstrated that it could be done.

With the exception of the USS Nimitz, which is nuclear powered, every aircraft and ship in that carrier's strike group burned only a 50/50 mix of bio-diesel and traditional fuel. When he visited the exercises, Mabus' own helicopter ran on the same mixture.

The only difference seems to be that bio-fuels seem to burn a little bit cleaner, he said. "Engines may last longer when you're burning these because you don't gunk them up."

A major obstacle — politically and fiscally — is the price of bio-fuels relative to petroleum-based fuels. Though the cost of bio-fuels has dropped by half since the initiative was first announced, they remain magnitudes of order more expensive than fossil fuels. But Mabus and Sheehan agreed the Navy could help build a mass market.

"If there is an industry that the military needs that isn't available ... we can help spur it along," Mabus said. He cited

the steel and nuclear industries as success stories.

"Bio-fuels do still cost more, for now, but that cost is dropping dramatically," Sheehan said. "The government is the biggest user of energy in the country and the military uses 95 percent of that."

Mabus' plans have taken hard knocks from budget hawks and skeptics of renewable energy. But he was careful to couch his quest for energy security as a practical necessity for future national security.

"Every change we've made has made the Navy and the Marine Corps stronger and better able to keep sea lanes open and the global commons safe," he said. "We not only have the opportunity, we have an obligation to create a new energy future. There is absolutely clear and overwhelmingly compelling evidence that these efforts are vital to our national security."

AOL Defense
(defense.aol.com)
October 17, 2012

Exclusive
28. Crash Drives Air Force To Restart CV-22 Pilot Formation Training

By Richard Whittle

The Air Force plans to reinstate substantial formation flight training for CV-22 Osprey pilots that it eliminated four years ago, AOL Defense has learned. Reinstatement of the training four years after the service ended it is an implicit admission, V-22 aviators said, that better training might have prevented the June 13 crash of a CV-22B in Florida.

From now on, Air Force pilots going through initial Osprey flight training with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Training Squadron 204 (VMMT-204) at Marine Corps

Air Station New River, N.C., will take a classroom course in formation flight, fly two formation flights of two hours each in a V-22 simulator, and fly one actual two-hour formation flight in the tiltrotor troop transport.

The decision to increase formation flight training for Air Force pilots at VMNT-204 is "an acknowledgement that our V-22 formation training was lacking," said an AFSOC member who spoke without authorization. "Obviously, in hindsight, the decision removing it is questionable at best."

Marine Corps pilots have received such formation flight training for years and regularly fly in two- and three-ship sections. The Air Force, though, whose CV-22Bs are flown solely by Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) pilots, directed VMNT-204 four years ago to exempt AFSOC students from most formation flight instruction and remove it from the syllabus for Air Force students, Air Force and Marine Corps sources said. Air Force pilots instead were given more training in using the CV-22B's inertial navigation system and terrain following/terrain avoidance radar, the sources said. The Air Force also streamlined its training at VMNT-204 to get pilots into the field more quickly, the sources said, holding each student's total flight hours at the training squadron to about 28 to 29 hours compared to 33 or more for Marine student pilots.

The June accident near Eglin Air Force Base injured all five crew aboard, destroyed their \$78.5 million aircraft and cost their squadron commander his job. The CV-22B crashed after its pilot flew through the rotor wake of an Osprey he was following in formation. The

mishap Osprey went into a sudden, uncommanded roll to the left, and while the pilot and copilot were able to regain control, their aircraft hit some tall pine trees and slammed to the ground upright.

"To ensure this doesn't happen again, we have instituted additional training procedures highlighting this hazard," AFSOC spokeswoman Capt. Kristen Duncan said in an email. She said she was unable to provide details. A spokesman for the Air Education and Training Command declined this week to describe the changes in CV-22 training, citing undescribed "sensitivities."

Aside from what may be a reluctance on AFSOC's part to admit having made a mistake by curtailing formation flight training, Osprey-related "sensitivities" include concerns the Japanese government has expressed in the face of protests by activists opposed to the Marine Corps's deployment of 12 MV-22Bs on Okinawa. Japanese critics of the Marine presence on Okinawa have questioned the Osprey's safety and the adequacy of pilot training in the wake of the June CV-22B crash and an MV-22B crash in Morocco last April also attributed to pilot error.

An Accident Investigation Board (AIB) suggested the pilots in the June AFSOC crash failed to recognize they were flying in the other Osprey's wake partly because "CV-22 wake modeling is inadequate for a trailing aircraft to make accurate estimations of safe separation from the preceding aircraft." V-22 pilots and other experts agree that more testing is warranted, and the Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) V-22 program office will conduct more starting this spring. NAVAIR officials said those tests have long been

planned, however, and Osprey pilots said the danger area behind a V-22 is sufficiently well known to avoid – provided a pilot gets enough formation flight experience to be able to judge the distances and angles involved accurately.

Lack of awareness of how dangerous the Osprey's rotor wake can be in helicopter mode is illustrated by a popular photo, taken from the rear ramp of one CV-22B, that shows three other Ospreys as the four AFSOC aircraft took off in dangerously close formation, one behind the other, from a Kirtland Air Force Base, N.M., taxiway on May 1, 2007. The photo was made prior to a 2008 incident in which a senior Marine Corps Osprey pilot nearly lost his aircraft in an uncommanded roll off that occurred during a formation flight near New River.

Since that near-disaster in 2008, the Marine Corps has placed "great emphasis on the hazardous areas to avoid while flying formation," one veteran V-22 pilot noted.

The hazard stems from the peculiar configuration of the helicopter-airplane hybrid Osprey. Built in a 50-50 partnership by Bell Helicopter Textron Inc. and Boeing Co., the Osprey tilts two 38-foot-diameter "proprotors" on its wingtips upward to take off and land like a helicopter and swivels them forward to fly with the speed and range of a fixed-wing turboprop airplane. The Osprey's proprotors are undersized for the aircraft's bulk – a design compromise dictated by the need to fly V-22s from amphibious assault ships for Marine Corps missions – and consequently have to generate a relatively large amount of thrust for each square foot of area the V-22's rotor disks describe. As a result, when the Osprey flies like a helicopter, its

proprotors leave behind a wake of turbulent air so powerful and persistent some V-22 pilots call it "Superman's Cape."

You don't tug on Superman's cape

You don't spit into the wind

You don't pull the mask off that old Lone Ranger

And you don't mess around with Jim

By Jim Croce, from the song, "You Don't Mess Around With Jim"

All Osprey pilots are taught that flying through Superman's Cape can knock the lift out from under one of their rotors, causing an uncommanded roll. They are also instructed to avoid that danger by keeping at least 250 feet of separation between their cockpit and the cockpit of a V-22 ahead of them, staying out of the lead aircraft's 5 to 7 o'clock position, flying at least 25 feet higher than the lead Osprey, increasing that vertical "step up" to at least 50 feet when crossing the lead aircraft's path and never crossing the lead's path in a descending turn.

Those restrictions appear in both the Marine Corps and Air Force flight manuals, along with illustrations of the Osprey's rotor wake, and the AIB report on the CV-22B crash said the pilot "did not maintain the required 25 feet of vertical separation" from the lead aircraft. The AIB report also said, however, that the pilot was flying two to three times farther back from the lead than the 250 feet stipulated in the CV-22B flight manual. "Specification of a minimum of 250 feet cockpit-to-cockpit separation between aircraft in formation and charts depicting aircraft wake effects extending only to 375 feet can potentially give a false sense of security to aircrews flying at significantly greater distances in trail," the AIB said.

Arthur "Rex" Rivolo, who in the 1990s monitored the Osprey's development program for a federally funded think tank, issued a statement – and posted it on AOL Defense under the screen name "Icon" – declaring that the AIB report on the June crash was a "total distortion of the facts and a blatant attempt to blame the pilots for a very serious design flaw in the V-22 aircraft." Rivolo, a former fighter pilot who argues that the Osprey's side-by-side rotor configuration creates insurmountable aerodynamic hazards, recalled that after a Marine Corps Osprey crashed due to an uncommanded roll at Marana, Ariz., in April 2000, killing 19 Marines, he filed an official request that NAVAIR "evaluate proprotor wake interactions in the V-22" but the tests were never completed.

Don Byrne, Bell-Boeing V-22 flight test director at NAVAIR, said in an interview that some of Rivolo's 23 pages of test requests were performed as part of a series done to satisfy the recommendations of a special panel that examined the Osprey in 2001. The Defense Department convened the panel because of the Marana crash and another caused by a hydraulic leak and a flight control anomaly that killed four more Marines at New River on Dec. 11, 2000.

"We did do testing that defined the current envelope, that said the 250 foot cockpit to cockpit separation and 25 foot step up is safe for the fleet to use," Byrne said. The bulk of the tests Rivolo requested weren't done, however, because he wanted test pilots to "get fully involved in the vortex of another aircraft and experience a complete roll off – an out of control roll off – of the aircraft. That's just not a smart thing to

do and no other aircraft goes out and tests to those extremes, either." Byrne added that the additional testing to be done isn't of that nature.

"We already know where the 'avoid' regions are, as documented in the NATOPS," Byrne said, referring by its acronym to the Marine Corps flight manual for the V-22, the Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization manual. The point of the new testing, he said, is to "see if there's any way to reduce the limitations that are currently in the NATOPS. We've been requested 'can you fly any closer than that?' So we're going to do it, but we're only going to do it to the point where we start to feel the vortex interaction."

A different NAVAIR expert involved in the issue, speaking on condition of anonymity, described the additional rotor wake testing as part of the routine work by a program office to expand knowledge about any military aircraft to improve safety and performance rather than a search for some way to alter the Osprey to prevent rotor wake roll offs.

"The answer is in training, not in a change to the aircraft," this official said.

Experienced V-22 pilots agreed. All aircraft leave turbulence in their wake, several noted, and air traffic control towers routinely caution pilots of other aircraft to keep their distance from planes ahead of them.

"As a test pilot, I always want to do more tests," said Bill Leonard, a former Bell V-22 test pilot who now teaches an aerodynamics course to incoming Osprey pilots at VMMA-204. "I think it's warranted it be considered and looked at in a technical manner and then come up with an

envelope, much as we have a wind envelope for operating aboard the boat. If there is such an envelope out there, the fleet needs to know about it."

At the same time, Leonard said, mapping the Osprey's rotor wake in greater detail may be of little help to a pilot flying a combat mission at night, when it can be hard to judge distances between aircraft and precise altitudes despite markings on other V-22s visible through night vision goggles. "In the heat of battle, people get behind the power curve and they get in trouble by losing situational awareness," Leonard said. "If they know where the (rotor wake) boundaries are – if we tell them it is 247 feet on an azimuth of 9.7 degrees off of the aft nacelle, if we tell them exactly where it is -- it won't do any good. They have no way in the airplane to know where that is. They can't read that in the cockpit. All they know is, it's a lot of wind and don't get in the wrong place."

An AFSOC aviator agreed, saying: "The problem you have with spacing is, the further you get away from that aircraft, the harder it is to find those landmarks and references that will tell you 'I am not in the five to seven o'clock,' or, 'I'm 25 feet up.'"

An operational Osprey pilot who wished to remain unidentified said V-22 crews can measure their distance to another aircraft to within one tenth of a nautical mile, or about 600 feet, using their TACAN (Tactical Airborne Navigation) receiver-transmitter but have no device on board that can measure their separation from a lead aircraft precisely. Even so, this pilot agreed with Leonard's view that while more data about the Osprey's rotor wake would be welcome, it would not necessarily prove vital to operational pilots.

"The data we have is very clear about the wake turbulence out to 350 feet aft of the aircraft," this pilot said. "I'd be happy to have additional data. My opinion, as a professional V-22 pilot and taxpayer is, spend the money on something else. I have enough testing data to fly this aircraft safely. These (AFSOC) pilots were neither adequately trained nor adequately proficient with formation flying."

The AFSOC member quoted above agreed, noting that in addition to reinstating formation flight training for its pilots at VMMA-204, since the June crash, the Air Force has required all CV-22 pilots – including those returning from deployments to Afghanistan -- to go through new classroom instruction about Superman's Cape, fly for an hour or two with an instructor to be shown "bad places to be" when flying formation, then take the controls during a formation flight with an instructor as copilot as well.

"What we've instituted in training after the crash is a pretty big flag to say, 'If they'd had the training that we're getting now, the June crash doesn't happen,'" this source said. "It's a pretty explosive acknowledgement that the training wasn't adequate before."

Northwest Florida Daily News
October 18, 2012

Pg. 1

29. Airman Killed In Training

Eglin's Maj. Garrett Knowlan was taking a survival course at Pensacola NAS

By Wendy Victora

EGLIN AFB — An airman who was killed Oct. 11 during a four-day parachuting and water survival course will be buried

Saturday in his hometown of Jackson, Mo.

Although Maj. Garrett Knowlan died last week at Pensacola Naval Air Station, the Air Force did not release the news until Wednesday morning.

His family declined to be interviewed.

Knowlan was struck by a boat in Pensacola Bay, according to Maj. Carla Gleason, chief of operations for Air Education and Training Command public affairs at Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

"They parachute into the water and then survive that way," Gleason said of the basic premise of the course offered to air crews.

An accident investigation board has been convened, Gleason said.

Knowlan lived in Shalimar with his wife, Megan Knowlan, and their two sons, Beckett and Levi, according to an obituary published in the Southeast Missouri newspaper.

His parents, Jack and Bonnie Knowlan, live in Missouri.

Knowlan, who was assigned to the 96th Test Wing at Eglin Air Force Base, was participating in Air Force Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape training.

The four-day course includes instruction on signaling rescue aircraft and procuring food and water, as well as training on hazardous water life, medical aspects of water survival and life raft procedures, according to an Air Force fact sheet.

The 32-year-old Knowlan was the executive officer for Brig. Gen. David Harris, commander of the 96th Test Wing.

"This is a tragic loss which has been felt throughout Team Eglin," Harris said in a prepared statement. "Garrett

was an outstanding officer and test engineer respected through the wing. He was dedicated to the United States Air Force and, as my executive officer, served as my right-hand man.

"It's a tragic loss to me personally and the entire 96th Test Wing," he added in the statement. "We all sympathize with, support and pray for him, his family and those who knew him."

During Knowlan's years in the Air Force, he received numerous commendations. He had served at McChord Air Force Base, Los Angeles Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field and Eglin.

He was a 2002 graduate of the Air Force Academy and a 2010 graduate of the Air Force's Test Pilot School.

In his obituary, Knowlan was described as a hardworking, outstanding young Christian man who was a "life force" for his wife and young sons.

"Garrett's death is an unfathomable loss to his family, his friends and his country," the obituary read. "His death raises many difficult questions that seem impossible to answer."

The obituary cites two verses Knowlan had outlined in his Bible.

One was Philippians 1:10-21: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," reads a portion of the verse.

The second, believed to be a message to his wife and sons, was 1 Peter 4:12.

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you," the verse begins.

"But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed."

GovExec.com

October 17, 2012

30. Former Defense Official Calls Congressional Paralysis A Threat

By Kedar Pavgi

Political paralysis on Capitol Hill constrains the United States' ability to act as a global leader and prevents the government from transforming itself and addressing major issues, a former Defense Department official said Tuesday evening.

In an event at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, Michèle Flournoy, the undersecretary of Defense for policy from 2009 to 2012, said that Congress' inability to pass a budget and set long term policy goals was detrimental to the government, especially in an "incredibly complex and dynamic security environment worldwide."

"When the Congress is not able to pass appropriations bills, it locks [agencies] into the approach of the past and restricts the ability to manage changing facets of global security environment," Flournoy said. Quickly evolving situations such as the Arab Spring and the rise of cyber warfare require long-term planning, she said.

Flournoy added that operating on continuing resolutions prevents the executive branch from modernizing outdated and inefficient systems, including information technology and health care infrastructure. She gave the example of the military service branches' individual medical systems, which she said could be combined with adequate direction.

"There are a lot of these areas, where if we had congressional support, we could improve performance," Flournoy said

In addition, the acquisitions process needs serious reform to speed up delivery and deliver better results, she said, referencing the government's "bifurcated system" for acquisitions -- one for wartime needs and the second for general government demands. She said that taking elements from the quicker wartime process into the general acquisitions process would increase responsiveness and lower costs. Flournoy also said that buying broad platforms for defense was inefficient, and a smarter future would involve procuring smaller elements to place upon a wider foundation.

"We tend to over specify our requirements, and we tend to want everything to be Lamborghinis, when the truth is that there are a lot of good solid Fords that would do the job," she said.

Sequestration was another major issue, and Flournoy said that the automatic cuts set to kick in on Jan. 2, 2013, would be devastating for the Defense Department, and would be extremely detrimental for current wartime priorities. Flournoy said that cutting the budget rationally would avoid hollowing out the force and leaving the United States constrained for future challenges.

"Trying to implement sequestration would be a disaster for our national security accounts, especially when you have 60,000 troops in Afghanistan," she said.

Wall Street Journal
October 18, 2012
Pg. 15

31. No Medal For Veterans Affairs

Boasting about 'access' to services doesn't count. Veterans around Los Angeles wait an average of 377 days for a response to their claims.

By Pete Hegseth and Paul Rieckhoff

In a famous sequence in Joseph Heller's satirical war novel "Catch-22," the protagonist—bombardier Yossarian—makes an unauthorized call during an aerial bombing raid to take out a bridge by going in for a second run at the target. He scores a hit, destroying the bridge, but his decision inadvertently results in the death of a flight crew in another plane.

His superiors, embarrassed by the loss, try to figure out how to save face. Yossarian suggests they give him a medal. "You know, that might be the answer—to act boastfully about something we ought to be ashamed of," Col. Korn responds. "That's a trick that never seems to fail."

In the novel, the scene skewers the bureaucratic misdirection of a military at war. But misdirection is a tactic that's alive and well today at the Department of Veterans Affairs, where officials boast about things they should be ashamed of.

Case in point: In July, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki addressed the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Reno, Nev., where he trumpeted the VA's accomplishments over the past four years in handling claims and providing services and support to veterans in need. Gen. Shinseki noted that when he took the helm in 2009, the VA inventory of pending claims was about 400,000. Today it is about 880,000.

He went on to say that the backlog of claims older than 125 days has grown by nearly 150%, to 580,000 today from 135,000 in 2009. To quote Gen. Shinseki, the "increased ... number of compensation claims [is] good news." Growth in these numbers "is what happens

when we increase access. But it was the right thing to do."

As the old military saying goes, however, failing to plan is planning to fail—and nothing can hide the painful truth that the leadership and bureaucracy were not ready for the surge of claimants. Gen. Shinseki has pledged to solve the backlog by 2015, and the VA has added 4,000 new employees since 2008. But the numbers already suggest we're headed in the wrong direction. And as more Iraq and Afghanistan veterans return home in the months and years to come, the gap between claims and services will likely grow. That the problem has not even been mentioned in the presidential debates this fall is shameful, and a failure of leadership on the part of both candidates.

One organization doing yeoman work on this is the California-based Center for Investigative Reporting, which has found that, particularly in more densely populated areas, wait times for VA services are increasing. According to the CIR, veterans in the Los Angeles area wait an average of 377 days for a response to their claims. In New York City, the average wait is 373 days. In Waco, Texas, the average wait is 413 days.

The backlog in claims processing represents real men and women with serious needs who aren't being served, after they have fought and sacrificed on behalf of our nation. Their stories are heartbreaking. For example, the CIR reports on a Marine veteran who suffered three concussions in combat and now experiences short-term memory loss so severe that he gets in the car and forgets where he's going. He has been waiting for the VA to process his disability claim since November 2010.

Numbers spun by the department to feign change aren't going to fix the VA's endemic failures. Only urgent and dynamic transformation will.

Transformation like moving all disability claims to an electronic, customer-service-based model that processes claims quickly, efficiently and accurately. Today's tech-savvy vets are returning home from combat to a bureaucracy still struggling to get out of the pencil-and-paper age.

Transformation like ensuring that the VA and the Department of Defense work together to seamlessly transition members from the DOD into the VA benefits system, rather than having a completely separate registration process.

Transformation like conducting a targeted outreach campaign that maximizes the use of modern technology, to make sure that veterans fully understand the benefits available to them at the VA.

Pilot programs have been launched in some of these areas, namely digital processing and VA-DOD integration. A new processing system is being used at 16 regional offices, with launches scheduled for 40 regional offices in 2013. The formal case transfer from the DOD to the VA system now happens automatically for those with disability ratings and medical discharges.

This is a good start. But for those waiting in line, and for Iraq and Afghanistan vets who have yet to file a claim, transformation cannot happen soon enough. The VA culture needs to adapt to the 21st-century needs of those it serves—by using 21st-century technology and solutions. Until that happens for everyone, and a veteran in New York or Texas doesn't have to wait more than a year for services, the Veterans

Administration has nothing to boast about.

Mr. Hegseth is CEO of Concerned Veterans for America and an infantry officer who served in Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay. Mr. Rieckhoff is founder and CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America and served as an infantry officer in Iraq.

Washington Post
October 18, 2012
Pg. 17

32. Rethinking Syria Policy

By David Ignatius

Left on its current course, America's sensibly cautious policy toward Syria is unfortunately going to come to an unhappy end: The jihadist wing of the opposition will just get stronger and gain more power to shape Syria's future.

But what's the right alternative? How can the United States help the Syrian opposition while avoiding another costly military intervention in the Muslim world?

I've been puzzling over this dilemma since traveling into Syria two weeks ago with the Free Syrian Army. "Be careful" still seems like the right watchword for U.S. policy in an unstable, revolutionary situation where order could collapse like a Levantine version of "pick-up sticks." But caution doesn't mean inaction, and some modest changes in U.S. policy could make a big difference in outcome.

The bedrock of U.S. interests in Syria is preventing any use or spread of its chemical weapons. President Bashar al-Assad is said to have relocated some of the weapons, and it won't be easy monitoring them — or keeping them out of the hands of al-Qaeda terrorists, who would love to

grab some free weapons of mass destruction if Assad should fall.

To deal with this problem, the United States needs better intelligence on the ground. And that's where the hard calculus of U.S. interests meshes with the quixotic challenge of helping the Syrian rebels. Right now, the United States reportedly has a limited program to supply nonlethal assistance. This program should be tweaked so the rebels get more help building a stronger chain of command.

If the United States helped coordinate funding, the Free Syrian Army would have several advantages: A better-organized opposition might defeat the regime, it would be better able to govern a post-Assad Syria and it could help the United States control Syria's chemical weapons. That's a trifecta — three good things in one.

The Obama administration took a small step in this direction last summer by authorizing the Syrian Support Group to help the rebels. Leaders of the group fanned out inside Syria, looking for army defectors who could establish new military councils to coordinate the flow of weapons and money. When I was inside the country, I met the councils' commanders for Aleppo, Hama and Idlib, who seemed like solid military leaders. They just didn't have enough guns or money to distribute.

Closer links with the rebels have helped fill the intelligence gap. For example, a Free Syrian Army representative sent a report to the State Department in late September that warned: "What we were worried about a few months ago is in the process of happening right now; extremists are more visible. . . . This is due to lack of support to moderate groups."

The funding situation has improved slightly this month. About two weeks ago, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are said to have created a small "Gulf Fund," to be disbursed by the military councils. The commanders will be paid \$150 for each named fighter (including the serial number of his weapon). Col. Abdul-Jabbar Akidi in Aleppo is receiving about \$2.5 million under this program; Col. Afif Suleiman in Idlib is getting about \$4.5 million. The United States should consider adding money for nonlethal assistance, including training, communications and intelligence.

Syrian jihadist battalions continue to raise their own money directly from wealthy Saudis, Kuwaitis and Qataris. The report to the State Department explains how this works. "The battalion rep or commander travels to Turkey, where he meets Gulf individuals or Syrians who live in the Gulf. The battalion presents 'projects' that need sponsorship, for example: targeting a checkpoint costs \$20-30K, while targeting an airport cost \$200-300K. . . . A video taping. . . is required to provide evidence of the operation."

How can the United States break this downward cycle? The right next step is to gather into one pot all the official contributions, lethal and nonlethal, from the United States and its Arab and European allies. Then let the Free Syrian Army commanders distribute the money and weapons to fighters, in ways that will build discipline.

The Free Syrian Army has a long shopping list. It claims "minimum" needs of 1,000 rocket-propelled grenades to attack tanks, 500 SAM-7 surface-to-air missiles to destroy Syrian helicopters

and jets, 750 machine guns, 50,000 gas masks, 250 vehicles. . . .

Commanders claimed they are forming special units that would operate the anti-aircraft missiles, perhaps under supervision by contractors from the Gulf countries.

You don't have to sign off on this whole war chest to agree that it's time for the United States to experiment with strategies that could produce something other than the bad outcome that's now ahead.

New York Post
October 17, 2012
Pg. 33

33. US Army Motto: See No (Islamist) Evil

By Arthur Herman

"Know your enemy" is an old military adage. Now our Army wants to dump that invaluable advice when it comes to Islamic radicalism.

That's the only possible conclusion from the Army's treatment of one of the most respected and popular professors at the Joint Forces Staff College — after Muslim groups, including two with links to the Muslim Brotherhood, complained about his course on Perspectives on Islam and Islamic Radicals.

We didn't have the GermanAmerican Bund approving how we taught our soldiers about Nazism during World War II. But Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Martin Dempsey and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta are in effect giving that power to the Committee on American Islamic Relations, the Islamic Society of North America and other pressure groups when it comes to what and how our warfighters learn about Islamist terrorism.

The pressure groups' target since this spring has been Lt.

Col. Matt Dooley, a West Point-trained, 20-year Army veteran who did six operational and combat tours in the Middle East (including Iraq) before coming to teach at the Joint Forces Staff College, where he was a graduate himself.

Hiring Dooley for the JFSC shows the Army at its best: letting those with experience in the field teach those without. And by every report, his course on Islamic radicalism became one of the most popular in the college — as well as being, by JFSC's own standards, both academically rigorous and intellectually stimulating. Officer Evaluation Reports called him "clearly the best of our new instructors" with "unsurpassed potential for future promotion and service."

Unsurpassed, that is, until CAIR & Co., abetted by Wired magazine, weighed in — and Dempsey and Panetta fell for their deliberate distortion of what Dooley was teaching.

Wired's Spencer Ackerman quoted a guest lecturer, a former FBI agent, suggesting that as Islam increases in strength, so will the violence. The article also cited a slide from a Dooley lecture as supposedly advocating "total war" against Islam, with the atomic attack on Hiroshima as historical precedent.

What Ackerman failed to mention was that the slide arguing for nuclear strikes was part of a fictional scenario, in which terrorists had grabbed Pakistan's nukes and were using them against American cities — and that Dooley had made it clear that none of his lectures, or those of guest speakers, reflected official US policy.

Exploring "what if" scenarios is a standard part of military training; so should be examining the full range of informed opinions on a vital issue like the War on Terror.

But evidently not for a Pentagon whose new role model is Dr. Phil, and an administration that won't use the word "terrorist" and dubbed the Fort Hood massacre "workplace violence" — and whose first instinct was to blame the murders in Libya on a USmade YouTube video rather than on al Qaeda.

So even though JFSC administrators had vetted Dooley's course and found nothing objectionable, Dempsey and Panetta told a press conference this May that it was "academically irresponsible" and ordered it suspended.

A month later, Dempsey ordered Dooley fired "for cause" (knowing that as an officer in uniform he couldn't publicly defend himself), and in August made sure his Officer Evaluation Report turned negative — a career-ender.

But that still isn't enough. Now the critics want Dooley's former students' minds scrubbed of any lingering damage the course and its "encouragement of killing civilians" might have done to their view of Muslims.

Two guesses what form that "retraining" would look like, and what the underlying message would be: Middle East radicalism has nothing to do with Islam, and everything to do with Israel and Americans like Dooley.

Will Dempsey and the Army give in? Sadly, it's hard to say. In one lecture, Dooley had complained, "Political correctness is killing us." It's certainly killed his career.

The worst is, the PC police may be about to kill our military's ability to see its foes whole and clear, and to defend our country without worrying about giving offense to those who want to destroy it.

Arthur Herman's latest book is "Freedom's Forge: How American Business Produced Victory in World War II."

Chicago Tribune

October 17, 2012

Pg. 25

34. Brave Teenager, Cowardly Taliban

By Clarence Page

Did the Taliban overplay their hand when their gunmen shot a 14-year-old Pakistani girl simply because she wanted to go to school? We can only hope.

Just when you think the militant Islamic Taliban movement can't sink any lower, you hear another story as deplorable and cowardly as the shooting of Malala Yousufzai. As the world knows by now, Taliban gunmen shot and critically wounded her in a recent assassination attempt as she was coming home from school in Pakistan's battle-scarred Swat Valley.

Before she was transferred in critical condition this week to a British hospital that specializes in battle injuries, spokesmen for the Pakistan Taliban boldly announced that if she survives, they will try to kill her again.

Her crime? Public advocacy of education for girls. Questioning the Taliban's sexist reading of Shariah law, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan organization told the media in an Oct. 10 letter that Malala was guilty of leading a "campaign against Islam."

In fact, she led no such thing, but the Taliban are too fanatical to see the difference. The letter accuses Malala, who gained global fame through an online diary she wrote for the BBC, of being "pro-West," promoting Western culture and "inviting Muslims to hate

mujahedeen," the Taliban term for holy warriors.

In fact, the Taliban, which helped give birth to al-Qaida next door in Afghanistan, have made it easy for the world to hate the movement. This time, one hopes, the Taliban have gone too far for their own good. Even the usually timid, indifferent and corruption-riddled Pakistani national government has been shaken out of its usual lethargy toward Taliban encroachments in the Swat Valley.

Thousands of young people and families have poured into the streets of Pakistan and elsewhere around the globe, some of them wearing "I am Malala" T-shirts and holding up photos of the girl.

She was a very special girl, even at age 11, when Taliban fighters swept into her town in northwestern Pakistan in 2009. As documentaries by The New York Times and other media show, Malala came out against the Taliban's ban against the education of girls. Her father ran one of the last schools to defy the Taliban orders. He eventually was forced to close the school, and Malala was forced to flee to Abbottabad, better known to Americans as the town where Osama bin Laden was killed.

Soon she was writing an anonymous blog for the BBC and receiving honors, including a National Youth Peace Prize from Pakistan's then-Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani.

The Taliban warned her to hush up. She refused. So in early October, masked gunmen approached her school bus and asked for her by name. Then they shot her in the head and neck.

Did the Taliban go too far this time? The shooting of this one bright, articulate teenager captures our attention and the

Taliban's cowardice in ways that thousands of other Taliban atrocities do not. As Frida Ghitis, author of "The End of Revolution: A Changing World in the Age of Live Television," recently wrote, the Taliban are afraid of Malala "because she is not afraid of them."

In the past, this sort of media-driven outrage sometimes has shaken the Pakistani government into taking productive action. Three years ago, a chilling cellphone video of a woman being held down and flogged more than 30 times by the Taliban in the Swat Valley made international news. Her crime: being seen in public talking to a man to whom she was not married. Just talking.

That video was shocking enough to spur widespread outrage and military action that pushed the Taliban out of the valley, some all the way to rural Afghanistan.

Now Pakistani authorities are on the move again, making more than 100 arrests related to the attack on Malala, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar told CNN last weekend.

Khar, the first woman to hold the job, called Malala's shooting a "wake-up call." Pakistan's government apparently needs awakening. Even as the country's top general rushed to Malala's bedside, Pakistan continued to harbor Afghan Taliban leaders who want to take over Afghanistan after U.S. troops leave.

Malala's problem, the Taliban, is our problem too.

Clarence Page is a member of the Tribune's editorial board and blogs at chicagotribune.com/pagespage.

New York Times
October 18, 2012

35. Mr. Putin's Gift To Terrorists

There will be plenty of losers from Russia's recent decision to end two decades of cooperation with Washington on cleaning up nuclear and chemical weapons sites left over from the cold war. Russia will now have to pay for such efforts on its own. The United States will lose the most cost-effective way yet found for reducing nuclear dangers. And the world must watch as Russia's unsecured weapons and materials remain a temptation for terrorists of all varieties to buy or steal for use in future attacks.

The cooperative threat reduction program Russia wants to walk away from next spring is the heart of the so-called Nunn-Lugar initiative, which was passed by Congress in 1991. This range of programs provides American money and expertise to countries of the former Soviet Union to help them eliminate or secure vulnerable nuclear and chemical weapons, materials and sites.

Over the past two decades, they have helped deactivate more than 7,600 nuclear warheads, destroy more than 2,000 nuclear capable missiles, convert more than 400 metric tons of highly enriched uranium bomb fuel into low-enriched reactor fuel and destroyed large stockpiles of chemical weapons. This has cost the American taxpayer less than \$15 billion over the 20-year life of the program, far less than the Pentagon spends each year for defense and deterrence against nuclear attack.

But the job remains barely half-done. Cutting off this successful program now is perverse and reckless — and all too typical of President Vladimir Putin's sour, xenophobic and self-

isolating worldview. Last month, he expelled the United States Agency for International Development, which has sponsored human rights, civil society and public health programs since the fall of communism. Perhaps those civil society programs proved too successful — and too threatening to Mr. Putin — for their own survival. But the nuclear cleanup program affects everyone's survival.

The official explanation for ending them is based on national pride — the wish to proclaim that Russia can take care of these issues by itself, without American help. Another may be Moscow's reflexive desire to be shielded from foreign eyes that might see things President Putin and his military commanders do not want them to see. Paranoia and xenophobia in the Kremlin predates communism and has now outlasted it by more than two decades.

If Moscow lets the cooperative program lapse, it needs to replace it with adequately financed Russian programs. The continuing cleanup must be transparent enough to earn the world's trust. Currently, that confidence comes from the participation of American contractors in the cleanup work. Maintaining it without them will not be easy. But Mr. Putin, having created that problem, must now solve it.

Boston Globe
October 18, 2012
Pg. 14

36. Served In Afghanistan?

Brown should clarify

As a member of the Massachusetts National Guard, Scott Brown spent two weeks in Afghanistan in 2011 as part of his voluntary guard training. That time may have given him

a better sense of the war effort, but he did not face the Taliban. So he was wrong to state, in last week's debate against challenger Elizabeth Warren, that he "served in Afghanistan." It might have been excused as a slip of the tongue, except that Brown himself has sought to make it a crime to exaggerate claims of military service.

Earlier this year, the Supreme Court ruled against the 2006 Stolen Valor Act, which made it a crime to lie about military awards or service. The court said the act was too broadly written, and infringed on free-speech rights. At the same time, the justices suggested that a more carefully crafted statute would pass constitutional muster. So Brown introduced, last month, a law that would penalize the "faux-fighter" who lies to "obtain money, property, or other tangible benefit." The purpose is to protect those who have sacrificed, and penalize those who would use war to buttress their resumes.

Whether or not one thinks it should be a crime to lie about time in the military, Brown is surely right that exaggerating the extent of one's service is an insult to those who put their lives on the line. Brown's words may have been technically accurate -- he did, in fact, spend a brief time in Afghanistan -- but they gave the impression that he was a combat veteran. Candidate Brown should clarify his statement out of respect for those who have fought there. Senator Brown would probably agree.