



Public Daily Brief



Week: 04 – 10 December 2006

GLOBAL REALITY: THE WEEK IN REVIEW

You may not be interested in reality, but reality is interested in you.

Threat Summary

	<p>Inter-State Conflict 7 ICG Alerts, 14 Deteriorated world crises. Iraq now multi-party conflict with Iran and Syria active internally, Saudi Arabia planning intervention. Afghanistan close to collapse while warlords and resident's brother prospers from drug production also enriching Pakistan leaders.</p> <p>Proliferation Russia and Australia planning to proliferate uranium while Israel may still attack Iranian nuclear facilities and expanding its own. Absent global energy alternatives, proliferation is certain.</p> <p>Terrorism internationalizing, innovating e.g. coated CD that explode when inserted, new plans for helicopter attacks, new discussion of US port vulnerabilities. US not generating useful intelligence.</p>
	<p>Poverty could be addressed by Venezuela-South Africa axis focused on South-South. Populism and nationalization of property acquired by bribing past officials could break back of 1% owning 40%. In US 19% of urban dwellers, 9% of rural in poverty while Wall Street pays tens of billions in bonuses.</p> <p>Environment sees India losing crop production to pollution, very worried about water. Peru has signed away half its share of the Amazon to oil companies</p> <p>Civil War continues to destabilize Africa and produce refugees, crime, and instability.</p> <p>Genocide in Darfur "in freefall" but US has no intelligence on all the players, nor 1:50 combat charts. Important to note that there are 16 other genocides being ignored, poverty continues to inflame hatreds.</p> <p>Transnational Crime known to be \$2 trillion versus \$7 trillion legal economy, is exploding in two new areas: spamming and cyber-fraud, and home brew drug production (e.g. crystal meth). International collaboration against transnational crime is inept to non-existent while education-values sidelined.</p>
	<p>Infectious Disease continues to feature malaria with Africa having 90% of the cases but no one having a "malaria map." Malaria is fueling AIDS. Ebola has killed a quarter of the gorillas on the planet.</p>
	<p>Other Atrocities finds increasing interest in prosecuting past war crimes, while Pinochet dies in time.</p>

Policy Summary

	<p>Security sees US intelligence as failing at the sub-state level while unable to make sense of all that it acquires. Pentagon considering an Africa Command, a really bad idea since CENTCOM is both fully capable and the only actually combatant command that is both competent and engaged. US refurbishes 8 patrol boats for \$88M only to find them not seaworthy, while UK paratroopers refuse to go on patrol due to failing ammunition—shades of Viet-Nam and the Mattel-toy M-16 with bad ammunition, troops found dead with their jammed weapons broken down by their side. Complete vacuum in online verification (identity, access by system or document, audit trail), and complete lack of spare capacity in public health, both beginning to play heavily in the total security picture—its not just force of arms!</p> <p>Social Security sees growing concern about food contamination. We would add obesity & stupidity.</p>
	<p>Diplomacy is dead in USA—Rice sidelined, Bolton gone, Iraq Study Group clueless on presence of 100,000 contractors in Iraq (one per uniform), America era over according to one Asian study, saying that the neo-conservatives have finished what the Viet Cong started. US peacekeeping not wanted as US not trusted, seen as using peacekeeping to penetrate; US funds in Afghanistan going to Taliban.</p> <p>Immigration is not featured this week, but states and localities continue to make proper laws where the federal government fails to do so. Identify theft sweep was an eye-opener but all caught were <i>working</i>.</p> <p>Water is a looming global disaster—this week, we note Lake Chad now 2% of its 1960's size, Lake Victoria dropped six feet in three years; US has an idiot water policy, which is say, none at all except for isolated bad ideas like blocking border watercourse to Mexico, which will increase illegal crossings. Water now officially a national security issue in the Philippines. We have not been covering the oceans, vastly more important than the Amazon, and rapidly turning into an economic cesspool.</p>
	<p>Debt not featured this week, but could well be a winning issue in 2008 elections—solutions needed.</p> <p>Economy not featured this week, but economic populism is resurgent in North and South America.</p> <p>Energy is positive in part because Venezuela-Brazil may successfully force the issue of sustainable energy for South America and begin shutting out US draw on Venezuelan oil to force conservation. In fits and starts, solar</p>



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	and wind energy emergent, but US government not at all serious about anything other than Dick Cheney's commitment to more drilling and more use of force to gain cheap oil at the expense of blood, spirit, and treasure. 2008 could benefit from a solid strategic plan for energy. Justice not featured this week, but the prison industry continues to prosper with its virtual slaves.
	Agriculture not featured this week, but we are mindful of the wasteful subsidies and water waste also. Education has some good prospects, including Islamic schools focusing on literacy, TIME cover-story on the student of the 21 st Century, and an internal US intelligence paper on the need to dump the old mind-sets and realize that Digital Natives (the entering cadre) know how to do modern intelligence, the old school managers do not. Free online education is exploding, when it gets translated automatically or by volunteers, it should make a huge difference. On the negative side, illiterate UK graduates costing \$4 billion, cost to US of one third not graduating from high school at least ten times that. Thomas Jefferson said it, next President has to get it: "An educated citizenry is a nation's best defense." Family not featured this week, but remaining the fundamental building block of civilization. Families teach children to read, teach children values that help them avoid home-brew drugs and random crime.

Challenger Summary

	Wild Card: The Middle East is a bloody mess. US prevaricating on withdrawal and petulant over dealing with Iran and Syria while ignoring the decrepitude of Saudis now planning intervention. Turkey acutely conscious that US withdrawal could Balkanize their conflict with Kurds who are more independent every day. On a positive note, Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf could be linked in time.
	Iran is perceived to have won its strategic gamble in using Ahmed Chalabi to lure the neo-cons into destabilizing Iraq, and will gain a theocracy in Iraq or in a separated Shi'ite State, as well as new influence over the Caspian Sea states eager to link to the Persian Gulf. US widely perceived to be out. Venezuela has had an election and is moving aggressively to join with Brazil and with South Africa in creating South-South prosperity as well as immunization against Northern exploitation. Both nations could be over-reaching, and have instability inherent, but for now, both are advancing. NOTE: These two nations are orange rather than blue mostly because of US ineptness in recognizing their long-term strategic importance and choosing confrontation rather than collaboration as a policy.
	Brazil continues to have major issues with crime including combination of forced labor and illegal burning of the Amazon to create charcoal. High level military visit to Kashmir could be a hint of interest in India, but we cannot ignore possibility of continuing Chinese strategy to leverage former Portuguese colonies as Chinese proxies in pursuing its ambitions across the South and with India. China is grappling with increased social unrest across the board, while expanding into the Southern Hemisphere with trade, emigrants, and political influence, triads to follow. Its military power continues to develop inclusive of advanced submarines and its first aircraft carrier battle group. India is exploring thorium as an alternative to uranium, this is abundantly available internally. It continues to deal with social unrest on many fronts, with the untouchables now demanding access to temples. Within its military, it is focusing on creating uniformed knowledge workers able to leverage a full gamut of cyberspace and networked tools including tactical night vision and awareness devices. Indonesia was once described by Ralph Peters as "ours to lose" and continues to be the stabilization prize of the South Pacific. Russia is making substantial inroads, by invitation, in the sale of arms, as Indonesia follows the Venezuelan strategy of diversification away from US dependence. It has joined with South Korea in a joint nuclear program that has a distinctly military weapons and mobility aspect.
	Russia remains a major power, finding new ways to embrace Central Asia and especially Kazakhstan . It is creating an international fuel cycle service with the help of France .

NOTE: For each Threat, Policy, and Challenger we also provide a Forecast that is followed by the individual weekly summaries in reverse chronological order. This allows a rapid sense of both prognosis and week-by-week recent history. Click here for all Forecast and Histories —each has a persistent URL for bookmarking if desired.
http://meta2.com/PDB/pdb_WeeklySummaryList.htm



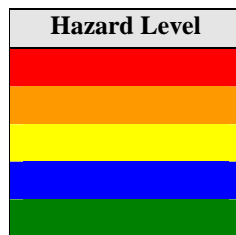
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World Crises [based on monthly assessments by <i>International Crisis Group</i>]	
↗ Alert	Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Fiji, Lebanon, Somalia
↓ Deteriorated	Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Fiji, India (non-Kashmir), Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia, Sudan, Tonga
↑ Improved	Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Senegal

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4557>



Change Codes
↓ Deteriorated
• Steady
↑ Improved
↗ Alert

Threats Summary	see daily items with links to full stories on the web at http://meta2.com/PDB/pdbDetail.asp?THREATS
Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some characterized the inaugural <i>South America-Africa Summit</i> as "the missing link in <i>South-South</i> co-operation"; the 2nd Summit will be in Caracas [Venezuela] in 2009. An insight into Nicaragua's grinding poverty – the annual value of Nicaragua's goods and services of about \$5 billion is roughly equal to the revenue of <i>Radio Shack Corp.</i> Aggregate poverty in <i>Latin America</i> continues to decrease for the third consecutive year and this year saw the best performance in 25 years in economic and social terms, but 209 million still live in poverty in Latin America and Caribbean. The international aid community says <i>West Africa</i> needs \$309M of aid in 2007; 16 West African countries are among the poorest in the world. The UN reports that the world's richest 1% own 40% of all wealth; Oxfam says "<i>Global levels of inequality are grotesque</i>". In the US, 19% of <i>urban</i>-dwellers live in poverty; poverty in the <i>suburbs</i> is a lesser portion (9%) but of a larger population and represents 20 million people.
Infectious Disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 90% of <i>malaria</i> infections are in <i>Africa</i>; but about 40% of the world's population, mostly people living in poor countries, are at. There is a minor outbreak of <i>malaria</i> in Jamaica. The <i>White House Summit on Malaria</i> will be held on 20061214. An international effort aims to produce a "Malaria map" in <i>Africa</i>, Ebola has killed 5,000 gorillas; Ebola hemorrhagic fever is one of the most virulent viruses ever seen -- "A quarter of the gorillas in the world have died from Ebola in the last 12 years." Scientists say <i>malaria</i> fuels the spread of <i>AIDS</i> in <i>Africa</i> -- "The way the two diseases interact greatly expands the prevalence of both among people in sub-Saharan Africa." Former President Clinton holds up Cambodia's <i>AIDS</i> effort as model -- "There is a hope that Cambodia can be a model for the rest of Asia and perhaps for the rest of the world."
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ Researchers have shown India's <i>rice</i> harvest has been curtailed as much as 11% by <i>air pollution</i>; but India says it is even more worried about water. Peru is signing so many contracts with multinational oil companies that half the rainforest of the Peruvian <i>Amazon</i> is now covered with oil leases. Uruguay says will not negotiate a <i>paper mill</i> dispute with Argentina until the border is unblocked -- "Uruguay failed to abide by a treaty calling for prior consultation and mutual agreement between the two countries on any action that could affect the border river."
Inter-State Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↗ A fierce continuation of the conflict in western Sudan has spread to eastern Chad. <i>Islamist</i> forces in Somalia have already had battles with Ethiopian troops and both sides seem preparing for full-scale war. With <i>roads</i> again passable for military vehicles in about two



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	<p>weeks, war seems inevitable. Morocco says it has come up with an autonomy arrangement that meets demands of Western Sahara's Polisario independence movement in one of the longest-standing and least-reported of world conflicts. In Lebanon, France deployed UAVs -- the French in UNIFIL hope UAV surveillance will obviate the need for Israel's flights over Lebanon, and some say it is also to show their UAVs are better than Israel's. In Iraq, now 22,000 US troops have been injured -- "<i>The insurgents in Iraq have not lost any of their capabilities to inflict relatively low but significant and continuing levels of attrition on U.S. forces.</i>" The Iraq Study Group (ISG) yielded the unsurprising but authoritative conclusion that the Iraq situation is "grave and deteriorating"; a cornerstone of their recommendations is full political and diplomatic engagement with Syria and Iran. The White House was quick to say it will not accept all ISG proposals and was particularly clear there would be no engagement with the key Sunni and Shi'ite neighbors who hold the key. Iraq and Syria raised flags on reopened embassies and will exchange ambassadors within days. Pakistan announced it would give up its claim on Kashmir if India accepts [a] four-point solution, which includes demilitarization and "self-governance with joint supervision mechanism". In Afghanistan, the war nears a "tipping point" and the West is yet closer to clutching defeat from the jaws of victory; even optimists admit "<i>government support is flagging, NATO is split on strategy, and Taliban fighters are revitalized.</i>"</p>
Civil War	<p>↗ Palestinian police stormed the parliament precinct in protest over unpaid wages -- choking off Palestinian finances have increased the chances of civil war between factions. In the wake of the bloodless coup in Fiji – the fourth coup in twenty years -- the country has been suspended from The Commonwealth. Some of the influential traditional chiefs have told their people serving in the army to lay down their arms, leave barracks and return home. Former Mozambican president Chissano was appointed UN Envoy to Northern Uganda to broker a peace between the Ugandan government and rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). With the outbreak of fierce fighting again, at least 12,000 people from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have entered neighboring Uganda. An informed commentator observes Ethiopian sympathies split the US-backed transitional government; leading to the Speaker's "Mogadishu Group" to link with the Islamists.</p>
Genocide	<p>↓ The Kalahari San ("Bushmen") say the new film "<i>Blood Diamonds</i>" resonates precisely with their eviction from traditional land for mining in Botswana. Jan Egeland, retiring UN envoy to Darfur says the situation is in 'free fall' -- "it's more than sad to see that grown men sit and quarrel over what is a 'hybrid force' while women and children are dying". President Bush says the Darfur situation is "dire". [But the world's most powerful state is helpless.]</p>
Other Atrocities	<p>• Former Chilean dictator Pinochet died, escaping punishment for the thousands of Disappeared under his brutal Opus Dei regime. Amnesty International USA welcomed the indictment of Charles 'Chuckie' Taylor Jr., head of the Anti Terrorist Unit (ATU) of Liberia, a special forces group created during the presidency of the his father, Charles Taylor.</p>
Proliferation	<p>↓ It may bode well that new secretary of defense Gates has cleared the air on the dangerous Don't Ask-Don't Tell policy on Israel's unlawful nuclear capability. Inaugurating a joint uranium venture, the head of Russia's atomic-energy agency (Rusatom) said Kazakhstan and Russia hope to lead "the world's nuclear market." A hearsay report on Syria's secret nuclear activity says the program is quite advanced. As expected by many, an Australian advisory committee says it is "conceivable" that Australian uranium sales to India would "not undermine the non-proliferation regime." UK Prime Minister Blair pushes to revamp Britain's nuclear submarines -- "...unstable, ... antidemocratic states ... having a nuclear capability is a distinct and novel reason for Britain not to give up its capacity to deter." Poisoned Alexander Litvinenko had not only smuggled radioactive material from Russia to Switzerland in 2000, but had also converted to Islam shortly before his death. Under auspices of the IAEA, Argentine state-owned Invap will refurbish a Libyan nuclear reactor.</p>



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	<p>and remittances to Cuba. Yemen arrests gunman after shooting at US embassy -- the gunman opened fire with an AK-47 semi-automatic rifle at the fortified compound. Supporters of the Somali Islamic Courts Council made a protest against a US peace-keeper plan; they [and others] are certain US-backed peacekeeping is a cover for wider involvement. Some US funds for Afghan water projects are going to the Taliban : "American money is <i>haram</i> [forbidden, unclean]," said an elder in one village. "We could not use it to improve our lives. So we decided to give it to the Taliban". [Lessons learned?]</p>
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A study by the KPMG Foundation finds the cost of UK children leaving elementary school unable to read is around \$4B; extrapolation to the US is probably valid, and alarming. In Mali [indicative of numerous places throughout the world] Islamic schools are meeting a hunger for literacy; and standards are high -- "<i>We always beat the state schools in exams.</i>"
Energy	<p>↑ Congress approved offshore petroleum drilling in the Gulf of Mexico ending a 25-year ban on drilling in some deep waters, but extends a moratorium on drilling in other Florida waters until 2022. President Chavez arrived in Brazil for energy discussions, to promote his vision of "the energy matrix of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and all of South America." Russia seeks to deflect pressure it is receiving from Europe on energy issues by allying with SCO to the East, but SCO may not need Russia. The head of the European Commission said "Kazakhstan will play an important part in the EU's evolving energy security strategy". With DoE funding, Boeing-Spectrolab has demonstrated a concentrator solar cell with a record-breaking 40.7% efficiency rating.</p>
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]
Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]
Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security at Dubai-operated Dominican Republic port has been praised as world standard. The International Telecommunications Union has called for standards in online verification to replace the present multitude of ad hoc password systems that endanger personal electronic security. Congress passes an eleventh-hour bill to increase medical surge capacity, strengthen public health infrastructure, and clarify responsibilities of federal officials. A Los Alamos executive has been nominated (subject to confirmation) to the Pentagon WMD job (<i>Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Chemical and Biological Defense Programs</i>). In New York City, the first permanent home for the Office of Emergency Management since 9/11 has opened, replacing the one that was on the 23rd floor of the WTC. Long-foreshadowed X-ray scanners for airports sees through clothes but not skin -- TSA hastens to add that a modification will ensure certain areas of the body are blurred. Waste, glorious waste ... eight 123-foot patrol boats were found to be not seaworthy after an \$88 million refurbishment. The US Air Force's Active Denial System -- which causes intolerable non-lethal pain in 3 seconds in a range of 500m -- has been certified for use in Iraq. The Iraq Study Group says intelligence agencies "must do better" in acquiring information on the insurgency and militias. A news item on the National Counterterrorism Center said "<i>The data flow here is enormous: more than 6,000 reports come through every day from satellite, electronic and human intelligence sources.</i>" [How many of these reports are analyzed and appreciated each day is not stated.] Next Secretary of Defense Gates says he expects intelligence analysts "<i>to call the shots as they see them and not try and shape their answers to meet a policy need.</i>" The Pentagon is weighing the need for an Africa Command -- "The different circumstances and threats have caused us to take a step back and look at the way we're doing business." The Pentagon has been an early-adopter of the new (high quality) Al Jazeera English Service -- "<i>That makes DOD one of the few places Al-Jazeera English is broadcast on television in the United States.</i>" In Afghanistan, angry paras [UK Special Forces] have attacked MoD over shipping them faulty ammunition -- "<i>At one point a platoon of Paras refused to go on patrol because they said the jamming would endanger their lives. ... The idiots in the MoD just don't think.</i>"



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Social Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent outbreaks of dangerous <i>contamination</i> in fresh food reveal holes in <i>food safety</i> -- "there is little consistency because the government guidelines aren't specific enough" and "produce growers balk at calls for <i>regulation</i>". [Better Dead than Regulated?]
Water	<p>↓ In <i>Africa</i>, <i>Lake Victoria</i>, second only to <i>Lake Superior</i>, has dropped at least six feet in three years; <i>Lake Chad</i> has shrunk to 2% of its 1960s size. US plans to <i>seal</i> border watercourses may cause dire problems in Mexico -- Mexican wells would become polluted without the seepage and migratory birds would be threatened if wetlands disappeared. President Arroyo of the Philippines urges better <i>water management</i> in face of a crisis -- Manila residents pay 5 to 10 times as much as New York residents and there are waterless hours each day; it is a national security issue.</p>

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Challengers Summary	see <i>daily items with links to full stories on the web at</i> http://meta2.com/PDB/pdbDetail.asp?CHALLENGERS
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Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brazilian police have arrested the masters of <i>forced laborers</i> -- there are an estimated 25,000 forced laborers in Brazil; many are <i>charcoal-makers</i> in the Amazon region; <i>illegal wood</i> and illegal labor means big profits. The Brazilian Army chief has visited <i>Jammu and Kashmir</i> and had discussions with General Sapru [GOC 16 Corps, Jammu] on "varying subjects of mutual interests".
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nobel Peace Prize nominee, Rebiya Kadeer, is publicizing the cause of the "persecuted" Muslim minority of East Turkistan - Xinjiang ("New Territory") -- which was <i>annexed</i> by China in 1949. There are increasing reports of <i>social unrest</i> that challenges Communist rule - a state news report indicates one part of the <i>Politburo</i> is stressing "prudence" in handling the "social conflicts and problems coming up at this crucial stage of our reforms". Chinese engagement with <i>Africa</i> (and its resources) could bring in its wake "shady Chinese businessmen and no-questions-asked aid policies". Analysts ask about "<i>Congagement</i>" [Containment-Engagement] -- do US and China have converging interests or irreconcilable differences? China is quickly developing advanced <i>submarines</i> -- "China could have its first aircraft carrier <i>battle group</i> composed of 11 warships in place by 2020." A parliamentary committee has cleared the way for Australian uranium to be sold to China; an opponent says "I don't think you can trust any nuclear power." China is importing increasing amounts of cheap "multinational" <i>soybean</i>, depressing the local industry and raising the spectre of a threat to national <i>grain security</i>. The world's largest two autocracies -- China and the Vatican -- continue to argue over who has the power to make <i>bishops</i>.
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future soldiers need to be <i>knowledge workers</i> -- India acknowledges the new soldier enters a <i>network centric warfare</i>, a whole war environment from deep sea to space to cyberspace. India plans 300 new battalions -- "To combat <i>terrorism</i> and <i>Naxalism</i> [Marxist insurgents], the government intends to provide para-military forces with modern weapons and night-vision facilities." The opposition Hindu nationalist BJP Party has rejected the provisions of the US-India nuclear bill that seriously curtails Indian sovereignty. An Indian expert favors <i>thorium</i> for producing electricity -- thorium is abundantly available in India and would make India independent of <i>uranium</i> supplies. Reflecting Indian concern over recent <i>dalit</i> ["Untouchables"] riots, authorities in Orissa state are using the law to force a key temple to allow entry to out-castes. India says the death toll in Kashmir is now over 41,000 other sources put the death toll as high as 100,000. It took 13 years to try those accused of the 1993 Mumbai bombings; 12 died waiting; now 100 have been found guilty.
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amnesty Intl. welcomes decriminalization of <i>insulting the President or the Vice-President</i> as a significant step towards <i>freedom of expression</i>. As foreshadowed several months ago, the Regional Intelligence Community Agency (Kominda) -- a feared arm of Suharto autocracy - will be reactivated to coordinate the work of the local intelligence offices in battling <i>terrorism</i>. Indonesia again says it will diversify the source of its <i>weaponry</i> to prevent the possibility of <i>embargo</i> from any one country. [I.e. the US.] With Russian financing,



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	Indonesia continues to buy substantial armaments and expects to operate a <i>Sukhoi</i> squadron by 2008. Indonesia and South Korea have agreed on a joint <i>nuclear</i> program -- "We explore possibilities of joint production in weapons and military equipment."
Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One commentator said Iran looks to be the winner of the Iraq war -- "<i>Far from spreading democracy through the region, the Iraq war has strengthened a theocracy in which unelected religious figures make many of the crucial decisions.</i>" The US protests Iran's conference for <i>holocaust</i>-deniers. Despite US pressure opposing the deal, India says the proposed <i>Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline</i> "is expected to take shape very soon". The <i>Six Powers</i>, mainly due to the Russian position, still fail to reach agreement on actions on Iran's <i>nuclear</i> position. In case of an attack on Iran [presumably by the US or Israel], Iran's Revolutionary Guard says "the 200,000 US troops in their 33 bases are highly vulnerable".
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> President Putin has again stressed the importance of <i>Central Asia</i> for much including <i>space</i> launches -- "Without any exaggeration, Kazakhstan is one of the leaders in the integration processes taking place in the post-Soviet space." Russia will create an international <i>nuclear fuel cycle</i> services center with the help of France.
Venezuela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated commentators say Hezbollah is active in the <i>Tri-Border Area</i> (for fund-raising) and has the nominal goal to "convert Latin America to Islam through Jihad". <i>Citigroup</i> says Venezuela may have to <i>devalue currency</i> -- "The rise in spending has spurred demand for <i>imports</i> and threatens to erode Venezuela's trade surplus," The OAS Observation Mission thinks all is well with the Venezuelan <i>vote</i>. Made yet more modest by re-election, President Chávez says "We've taught a lesson in dignity to North American <i>imperialism</i>". Brazilian think-tank CEBRI says of Hugo Chavez "<i>From Nicaragua to Bolivia he's already taken on obligations that will be hard to fulfill ... There are limitations to his petro-populism</i>". Venezuela is considering building its own <i>military helicopters</i> -- "... according to the initial studies, it [the factory] would be located near San Carlos, the capital city of western Cojedes state."
[Wild-Card]	<p>↓ The <i>Middle East</i> is a "Powder Keg" -- the Saudi King states the obvious at a meeting of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE in Riyadh. Analysts said Lebanon is on the brink -- but of what? -- Lebanon's precarious situation is only dangerous because of the instability surrounding it in all directions. Kazakhstan seems keen to share experience with Iran on <i>ports</i> -- "<i>the Kazakh ambassador called on Caspian Sea littoral states to discuss and review ways of linking Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf.</i>" Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the London School of Economics Asia Forum says India and China will alter global income balance -- the world needs "new global rules of the game that can facilitate the peaceful rise of new nations in Asia". The EU says Turkey's late offer to trade with Cyprus is "... not enough but that it was a positive signal". Turkey is very nervous about a power vacuum or division of Iraq, saying it is "<i>of the utmost importance for Turkey to strengthen the Iraqi government and maintain order. A division of Iraq would be akin to the Balkan civil wars.</i>" [i.e. Kurdish homeland] "<i>Crouching Nukes, Hidden Opportunities</i>" said it all for an in depth assessment of the meaning of <i>Central Asia</i> and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for the US. Pakistan is considering <i>mining</i> part of the <i>Pakistan-Afghan border</i>. In Bangladesh, after widespread Awami League protest against alleged unfair electoral process, the interim government has ordered <i>troops</i> to maintain order until new elections in Jan 2007. On current civil strife over elections in Bangladesh, the UK High Commissioner says "<i>If this country 'falls over' it could cause trouble with consequences far beyond Bangladesh's borders.</i>"</p>

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