



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, 15 Deteriorated world crises. A proxy war on Iran by Saudi Arabia with the backing of the US Administration but not the US people, and the complete lack of White House understanding of how to utilize sources of national power other than the “big stick” military, or how to work within multinational coalitions, bodes ill for the Middle East, for the USA, and for the rest of the world. Somalia and Darfur are coming to head and US intelligence is failing in both. On a positive note, Absent the withdrawal of foreign forces Taliban will not join the incumbent government of Afghanistan. African Great Lakes region in dialog.</p> <p>Proliferation of both small arms and nuclear power continues to rise. Interestingly, while the AK-47 has long been known as the true “weapon of mass destruction,” China now appears to be winning the low-end arms race, dispersing knives and small arms throughout Africa. The US and NATO continue to use depleted uranium munitions, something they may one day be held to account for as these appear to breach several international treaties and may constitute a war crime [Wikipedia/Depleted Uranium].</p> <p>Terrorism is red not because of its threat to us, but because of our elevation of a tactic to a threat, and our behavior that exacerbates the instability within which terrorism thrives. If we were to address all ten threats with all twelve policies and all eight challengers in a sensible manner, Terrorism would drop to yellow in short order. This week there are two major developments: women are assuming a growing role in terrorism. Women are the single best deterrent against instability—their growing role reflects, in our view, a growing consensus that there is no hope for legitimate action by governments with respect to poverty, infectious disease, and other factors contributing to instability. Virtually every Southeast Asian country considers terrorism to be a significant threat to national security, yet those same countries are not addressing poverty and other factors with the same concern.</p>
	<p>Poverty is perpetuated by US\$1 trillion a year in bribes, and unsound policies on both the left (land reform) and the right (WTO/IMF). Iodized salt is curing iodine deficiency disorders, while malnutrition is very high in Guatemala (where the Native Indians are at the bottom of the food chain, literally).</p> <p>Environment is under siege with or without Al Gore—changes that used to take 10,000 years now take 3—“radical variability” and hence climate instability is the order of the decade. Any nuclear exchange could bring on some form of nuclear winter. Water is vanishing—Dead Sea could be completely dry within 50 years. We note the extinction of the Chinese river dolphin, a 20 million year old species. EU tries to manage chemicals, but Paul Hawke’s concepts of “natural capital” and the “natural designs” that could help are not yet widely known.</p> <p>Civil War this week sees Somalia as a trend setter—troops are deserting to the Islamic Courts, and a “jihad” tax is now being collected in areas governed by the Somali Islamists. It is clear that the entry of foreign troops will accelerate the Islamist movement rather than defeat it. Sri Lanka worsens.</p> <p>Genocide sees the Sudan with Darfur consuming half of all United Nations humanitarian assistance funds, but the government adamant about excluding foreign forces or accepting foreign demands. Burundi may be drifting back toward genocide, and France is being informally charged with having encouraged earlier genocide. One dictator from Ethiopia has been found guilty of genocide but remains free and safe; in Botswana the hundreds of survivors of any earlier genocide are being allowed to return to their homelands.</p> <p>Transnational Crime continues to expand, by 8000%, into online banking fraud. Organized gangs in Mexico and Central America continue to be a major destabilizing factor but also representative of the governments’ failures to achieve legitimacy.</p>
	<p>Infectious Disease this week sees drug resistant tuberculosis on the rise in southern Africa, while in Swaziland, the entire hospital industry is rapidly getting down to one nurse for the entire country.</p>
	<p>Other Atrocities finds Colombia opening a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and Israel denying Archbishop Tutu access to Occupied Palestine.</p>

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



Public Daily Brief



Week: 11 – 17 December 2006

Policy Summary

	<p>Security highlights this week include Lord Carrington suggesting that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) could be dead or dying, with Afghanistan as the stake in its heart. Meanwhile, the tsunami of crime on the Internet is leading to concerns about the lack of a global security architecture for assuring online commerce, while the US, which spends tens of billions of dollars on satellites, now realizes that its entire investment could be wiped out by Chinese lasers.</p> <p>Social Security in the USA includes a complete lack of spare bed and any capability to deal with emergencies.</p>
	<p>Diplomacy this week saw Kofi Annan, perhaps the most talented UN Secretary General since Dag Hammarskjöld, depart with a blast at the US for unilateralism—he might have added, dogmatic uninformed unilateralism. George Soros has declared the war on terror over and lost, while Zoogby confirms that Arab sentiment against the US is over 80% in most countries. Meanwhile, US may finally be recognizing that Cuba merits more respect.</p> <p>Immigration continues to be ignored as a major fissure in national security and prosperity, but Massachusetts is the first state to focus on empowering state police to arrest illegal immigrants. More to follow.</p> <p>Water continues to be a looming disaster and could move to red by 2010 if not sooner. New satellite data paints a much bleaker picture than previously available from government-provided streambed statistics, often misleading. Particularly in Africa, fresh water is dwindling across the major basins, and sure to inspire conflict.</p>
	<p>Debt not featured this week, but could well be a winning issue in 2008 elections—solutions needed.</p> <p>Economy in the USA undermined by 520 Congressional tax breaks inserted under cover of darkness, and the Wall Street feeding frenzy in which tens of billions in bonuses have been given out while the middle class has lost ground on all fronts.</p> <p>Energy is making broad mind-set gains in Asia (China-India focusing on alternative energies, in Indonesia (focus on bio-fuel), and across the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) whose Nigerian president has had the wit to suggest that OPEC broaden its interests to include all energy sources—if they do this, Exxon may finally realize it should be using its wealth to extend sustainable energy instead of paying for deceptive advertisements that simply postpone the day of reckoning. Hydrogen is being criticized, but the critics are ignoring the role that free renewable energies can play in making hydrogen an affordable portable energy.</p> <p>Justice sees US failing to monitor money-laundering (but then, Wall Street would not like it to), while in Iraq, the justice system has collapsed and only street justice—an eye for an eye—remains viable and destabilizing.</p>
	<p>Agriculture not featured this week, but we are mindful of the wasteful subsidies and water waste also.</p> <p>Education has nothing significant this week.</p> <p>Family has nothing significant this week.</p>

Challenger Summary

	<p>Iran is a one-party state intent on dominating the region, but has dissidents and an opposition party.</p> <p>Venezuela is off the front-pages, but the over-all impression is of a regional power emergent.</p>
	<p>Brazil welcomes Russia as a provider of military capabilities, and confirms its “common approach” with Russia to foreign relations.</p> <p>China moves forward on US-based nuclear energy, and establishes first environmental damage evaluation center.</p> <p>India seeks Japanese cooperation on nuclear energy at same time that it talks to China. It is seeking coal from Africa and Indonesia. India lacks US\$60B in urban housing investment, while the rural areas continue to deteriorate. It continues to have water disputes with Pakistan, and internal ethnic and religious strife.</p> <p>Indonesia is moving forward with conciliatory meetings with East Timor leaders, and installing radars to cover up to 330 kilometers (about 206 miles) outward into the most pirate-infested waters on the planet.</p>
	<p>Russia is increasingly not suspected of the poisoning of its former spy, an act that may well have been a parting act of defiance meant to embarrass. Russia’s latest truck-deployable missiles are likely to defeat any existing or planned U.S. intelligence capability, and be the best missiles available for some time. We are reminded that Iran has the super-sonic carrier killer, the Sunburn missile, which can be armed with a nuclear warhead and dispatch a carrier or an amphibious ship carrying 1,000 Marines, by zigzagging at 2.2 Mach (or straight in at 3.0 Mach).</p>



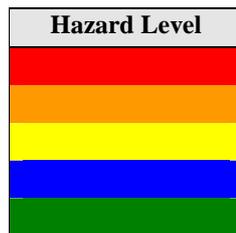
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World Crises [based on monthly assessments by <i>International Crisis Group</i>]	
↗ Alert	Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Fiji, Lebanon, Somalia
↓ Deteriorated	Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, 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"> • Transparency International in its latest <i>Corruption Perception Index</i> estimates that \$1T is paid in <i>bribes</i> throughout the world annually -- that out of the 20 most corrupt countries 10 are in <i>Africa</i>. Kazakhstan is an example of a vast developing nation that can achieve a remarkable public health success and become officially free of iodine deficiency disorders by taking steps to put <i>iodized salt</i> in the diet. In Zimbabwe where professional (white) <i>farmers</i> were evicted and land given to Mugabe loyalists, the new unskilled farmers have dismally failed -- "<i>Land reform</i> was only meant to benefit a few special individuals, and that may lay the ground for future conflicts." UNICEF says Guatemala has the highest rate of <i>malnutrition</i> in <i>Latin America</i> and ranks sixth in the world for chronic malnutrition.
Infectious Disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new study finds India has fewer <i>HIV</i> infections than thought -- "<i>The government method gives a flawed picture.... one reason might be that the clinics are used by the segment of society in which HIV is most prevalent.</i>" Nurses – underpaid (or unpaid) and in a hopeless battle are fleeing the "<i>HIV/AIDS</i> frontline" – a sad note in Swaziland hospital says "<i>Swaziland is dying. Will the last nurse on duty please turn off the lights.</i>" The drug resistant TB recently identified in southern <i>Africa</i> has been found to be <i>more severe</i> than thought -- "<i>We are simply not getting the funding for new drugs and vaccines that is required.</i>" The Gates Foundation will release \$83M for prevention and mitigation of <i>malaria</i>, which kills <i>2,000 children in Africa each day</i>. The US is seeking to join increased efforts by the World Bank and various global funds and has added eight <i>African</i> nations added to US <i>anti-malaria</i> plan. The (four-star) charity Islamic Relief summarized its <i>anti-malaria</i> and other work in <i>Africa</i>.
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climatologists have concluded that extreme <i>drought</i> on several continents and other <i>extreme weather</i> events can only one unsettling description -- "<i>radical variability</i>". A commentator remind a new generation that the ultimate "<i>climate change</i>" would be a regional <i>nuclear</i> exchange that would bring years of "<i>nuclear winter</i>". The 20 million year old <i>river dolphin</i>, one of the world's oldest species, has been declared <i>extinct</i> in China. The most complex and far-reaching regulations anywhere, governing the handling of 30,000 <i>chemicals</i>, has been promulgated in the EU. The <i>Dead Sea</i> will disappear in 50 years if current trends persist -- cooperation between enemies will be necessary to save it.
Inter-State Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the US point of view, developments in Somalia are all bad; the US says <i>al-Qaeda</i> elements are running the Somali <i>Islamist</i> movement. But despite the view from the West, the new regime in Somalia is offering the best chance in years to restart a life; long-term exiles are returning -- "<i>There's been a great change here. I was out late last night and the streets</i>



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	<p>were busy. No guns, no checkpoints, no fear at all. It felt safer than London." It's official: the Taliban have told <i>Reuters</i> by sat-phone from a secret location they receive no aid and comfort from Pakistan -- "We neither have any links with Pakistan nor is the country helping the Taliban,". Speaking also from a "secret location" by sat-phone, a Taliban spokesman says the Taliban will not join tribal jirgas as long as foreign soldiers remain in Afghanistan. Pakistan is trying to find a new position more helpful position on Kashmir -- "<i>First, Pakistan does not claim Kashmir. The dispute is about the aspirations of the Kashmiris.</i>" Some report that despite earlier denials the Saudis are saying that they will arm Sunni insurgents in Iraq - - the possibility of a US-Saudi proxy war against Iran in Iraq is now confirmed. The Saudis seem to be planning to 'clean up' al Qaeda in Iraq's Anbar province -- "<i>Saudi intelligence has already laid out extensive networks in Anbar province, where a Sunni insurgency has gained a stronghold.</i>" A commentator on US Iraq policy (Realpolitik) says "<i>Those who advocate total victory over the insurgency by military means must be listed in the column of recklessly dangerous bordering on criminal.</i>" Iraqi ministries are spending as little as <u>15% of their budgets</u> immobilized by fear of corruption investigations. Former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell has made a rare statement of his views on Iraq, including the view that overstretched US forces are "losing" in Iraq. The Iraqi Prime Minister has called on Baathist officers (without blood on their hands) to return to the army -- "Those who do not come back will be given pensions." Government and rebel accounts are entirely contradictory on the outcome of battles in eastern Chad. A conference on Africa's Great Lakes region started in Kenya -- "If we can stabilize and bring about development here, we can help to build a stronger Africa".</p>
Civil War	<p>↓ The Chairman of the Somali Islamist regime and the Parliament Speaker meet in Yemen, continuing the back-channel talks between elements of the US-backed regime and the Union of Islamic Courts. Sources in Somalia say more government troops are defecting to the Islamic Courts side -- "Around a hundred government forces with five pickup trucks mounted with artillery and anti-aircraft guns have defected from Baidoa". Somalia's senior Islamist has urged the people to be ready to defend the country -- "Somali people should always be geared up for an imminent invasion by foreign troops due to enter the country." [Collector's note: The sense is Ethiopian troops but a subtler sense is that the US is involved in machinations against the Islamists.] Somali Islamists, consistent with governance everywhere, have started a ('jihad') tax collection -- "...a goat trader will pay \$0.07 while a cow trader will pay \$0.14 and a camel trader will pay \$1.05." Thousands of civilians are caught in crossfire in new fierce fighting in northern Sri Lanka -- "... 35,000 persons remain trapped along a sliver of land where the Government forces and the LTTE are engaged in a military campaign." Estimates suggest that at least 50,000 people have been affected in the latest phase of Sri Lanka fighting.</p>
Genocide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A two-year case in Botswana's High Court has decided that hundreds of surviving traditional San ("bushmen") can return to land in the Kalahari the government moved them from. The Sudanese president and a US special envoy have "agreed agree to disagree" on Darfur -- "We have to start thinking of other ideas on how to protect the people." Khartoum despises threats of no-fly zone over Darfur by US and Britain but enforcement of a no-fly zone is perhaps the only threat The Powers can make good on. The UN is seeking \$1.8B for Sudan -- "Operations in Sudan represent more than half of the \$3.7B the U.N. appealed for humanitarian assistance worldwide in 2007." Former Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam (1974 - 1991) has been found guilty of genocide but will probably remain safe from arrest hiding out in Mugabe's Zimbabwe. ✗ Burundi may be drifting backwards into the old chaos -- "The army is still controlled in effect by Tutsi officers." More claims emerge that France was directly culpable in the Burundi genocide -- "They told recruits that the enemy was the Tutsi."
Other Atrocities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colombia has started its version of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission involving years of atrocities by the now disarmed Colombian militias. The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative has called on Gambia for information on 44 Ghanans' brutally killed last year in Gambia. Israel has prevented Archbishop Tutu starting a fact-finding mission in Occupied



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	Palestine --"We saw a situation whereby the human rights mechanism of the U.N. was being cynically exploited to advance an anti-Israel agenda."
Proliferation	<p>↓ Chinese police have destroyed 194 <i>illegal gun factories</i> and shops in a crackdown on illegal weapons -- "Police seized 3,900 tons of explosives, ... 178,000 guns, ... 2.06 million knives." France says it is finding many Chinese arms in Africa -- "... too often we see Chinese arms intervening in conditions that are sometimes contrary to <i>embargoes</i>." Secretary of State Rice questions why Saudi Arabia might need <i>nuclear energy</i>, [Analysis: If Saudi Arabia is called to explain, it will be rightly or wrongly be Iran's explanation – irreplaceable <i>petroleum</i> Resources can be hoarded or used to earn <i>foreign exchange</i>; whereas nuclear is sustainable.] Kazakhstan and Ukraine are discussing cooperation on <i>nuclear</i> projects. ↓ 161 <i>depleted uranium</i> missiles [fragments?] have been found in southern Serbia -- "During its 78-day air strikes on Serbia's predecessor Yugoslavia in 1999, NATO dropped 31,000 missiles and bombs containing [tipped with] depleted uranium." The deadline for the <i>destruction</i> of certain <i>chemical weapons</i> by the US and Russia has been extended to April 30, 2012.</p>
Terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamestown published a more thorough appreciation of the recent report "<i>Militant Ideology Atlas</i>" by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. Egypt is cracking down on the Muslim Brotherhood --"The group is officially banned, but its supporters make up parliament's largest opposition group and it is tolerated." ✎ The FBI warns that if ailing Egyptian Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman dies, it may trigger attacks in US; he is serving a life sentence in the US. A Russian Supreme Court has upheld the conviction of five Islamists in Tatarstan -- the Naberezhniye Chelny-based organization Islamic Jamaat is believed to be responsible for over 30 criminal acts, including several murders. Britain is considering the US approach of a <i>terrorism "Czar"</i> to achieve a promise of "<i>seamless intelligence</i>". There is evidence of a growing role of <i>women in terrorist movements</i> in several places. Eleven Islamic terrorist suspects were arrested in Ceuta, a North African enclave in Spain --"It was an <i>Islamic cell</i> in the process of being formed ..." A poll in <i>southeast Asia</i> shows many see <i>terrorism</i> as a "national threat" -- Indonesia 89%, Thailand 82%, Singapore 78%, Japan 71%, Korea 71%, the Philippines 71%, Vietnam 61%, Malaysia 59%.
Transnational Crime	<p>↓ Mexican federal police are pulling back from Oaxaca seven weeks after they arrived to put an end to months of civil protest. Mexico has launched a crackdown on <i>organized crime drug gangs</i>; feuds between rival cartels have caused 3,000 deaths in the last two years; but there are skeptics -- "When the soldiers leave, the problems will continue This is just for the cameras." <i>Online banking fraud</i> is up year-on-year 8,000% -- the criminals behind "<i>phishing</i>" scams are becoming increasingly "industrialized" in their approach. A UN panel will investigate <i>mob crime</i> in Guatemala -- "Some organized crime groups are believed to be made up of former military members who fought in Guatemala's 36-year civil war that left about 200,000 dead."</p>
<p>↓ deteriorated • steady ↑ improved ✎ ALERT</p>	
Policy Summary	<p>see daily items with links to full stories on the web at http://meta2.com/PDB/pdbDetail.asp?POLICY</p>
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]
Debt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]
Diplomacy	<p>↓ Renowned rich person George Soros wrote that the US has engaged itself in a "<i>self-defeating</i>" war, --"We can escape a vicious circle of escalating violence only if we Americans repudiate the war on terror as a false metaphor." The "War on Terror" is over. Semantically. In the UK. – the term will no longer be used by the UK. A Zogby poll shows the attitudes of Arabic people toward US has become more negative than last year; unfavorables are 90% in Jordan, 82% in Saudi Arabia,....In a parting speech nearing the end of his terms as Secretary-General, Kofi Annan warns against <i>go-it-alone diplomacy</i> and <i>unilateralism</i>, the reasons the UN was formed; he quotes Truman: "<i>no nation can make itself secure by seeking supremacy over all others</i>." US officials have visited Havana -- "We sense that this is an important time, and we hope to be able to meet with officials here and others</p>



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		<i>and hopefully launch a new era in U.S.-Cuba relations."</i>
Economy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the closing hours of the current session, Congress redistributes wealth under cover of darkness, giving 520 <i>tax breaks</i> for select companies.
Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]
Energy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A scientist notes the inconvenient truth that a <i>hydrogen</i> economy doesn't make -- "More energy is needed to isolate hydrogen from natural compounds than can ever be recovered from its use." [Analysis: But wait. The truth is unaffected that hydrogen is an excellent <i>portable fuel</i> if made using "free" energy such as <i>solar</i> and <i>hydro</i>; it is silly as a <i>base load</i> fuel.] An Indian state has made <i>solar water heating</i> <u>mandatory</u> for most buildings, an obvious measure in a sunny climate with energy shortfalls. Indonesia is actively investigating the <i>jatropa</i> shrub, which grows prodigiously as a weed in the area, as <i>biofuel</i> source. [The plant referred to is probably <i>Jatropha curcas</i>.] China assures India it will work for ensuring energy security of the region [not just China] -- the Chinese Premier says "energy efficiency is a <i>strategic</i> issue in China's economic development" and also recommends an Asian strategic oil reserve. Nigerian President Obasanjo makes what may prove to an historic suggestion, that OPEC exploits all sectors of its own <i>oil</i> resources [upstream and downstream], and cooperates in <i>non-oil activities</i>. Egypt says it is ready to strengthen <i>energy cooperation</i> among <i>African</i> states -- "Egypt is keen on gaining access to African markets by providing technical aid in the <i>oil services</i> domain." The <i>International Herald Tribune</i> observes what is obvious from these items -- "Now, the <i>oil</i> market has a new force to reckon with: <i>nationalism</i>."
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"> Federal official have detained many <i>illegal immigrants</i> in <i>workplace</i> raids and have noted that false and stolen identities [<i>identify theft</i>] is an increasing factor; skeptics say the largest-ever workplace crackdown on illegal immigration is just a smokescreen for systematic <i>inaction</i>. Massachusetts has signed a deal with US Immigration allowing State Police troopers to detain <i>illegal immigrants</i>, one day after federal agents arrested nearly 1,300 illegal immigrants in six states.
Justice		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iraq's legal system is not able to cope with the multitude of offences it needs to process -- killing (alleged) miscreants is easy -- doing justice is almost impossible. A new report reminded the US it needs to do better in monitoring <i>money laundering</i>.
Security		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A former secretary general of NATO says Afghanistan could sound the death knell for NATO -- Lord Carrington says "<i>I think we ought to ask ourselves ... what on earth NATO is for?</i>" The US Army chief says US forces will "break" without more troops -- "... some 6,000 to 7,000 soldiers could be added per year." The Defense Intelligence Agency says it has hundreds more staff dedicated to Iraq than the Iraq Study Group reported. [Analysis: Whether that puts DIA in a better light or not is uncertain.] Observers said new Defense Secretary Gates is unlikely to rein in the Pentagon's <i>intelligence</i> industry -- Pentagon intelligence accounts for <u>80% of the overall</u> U.S. intelligence budget. Senator Pelosi has called for a new oversight of intelligence spending -- the Select Intelligence Oversight Panel will comprise members of the House Intelligence and Appropriations committees. When the State Department wanted intelligence on Iran nuclear actors, the CIA information <u>was too good to use</u>, so State had to start with <i>Google</i>. Sixteen Saudis held in Guantanamo are being returned home-- "The returnees will be subject to regulations applied in the kingdom." Authorities have investigated a foreign student training for a commercial HAZMAT truck license -- "But the fact that he only seemed interested in driving <u>forward</u> was the most concerning." [That may be a coloring of the story by <i>Fox News</i>.] Crime surge in <i>internet crime</i> has drawn calls for an "internet Interpol" -- Russian hackers are a growing problem, as well as hackers from China and Latin America. US again mentions a growing threat to its <i>space assets</i>; it says US space infrastructure could be seen as "a highly lucrative target." [Analysis: The frequency of these remarks suggests it is a serious concern, in part at least related to China's reported sportive use of <i>killer lasers</i> against US satellites.]
Social		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ A new report says the US health system is unprepared for a major catastrophic event --



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Security	"... <i>emergency health preparedness</i> remains inadequate five years after the 9/11 and anthrax attacks of 2001 raised fears of <i>bioterrorism</i> ." The latest report by Reporters sans Frontières says North Korea, Turkmenistan, Eritrea are the worst violators of <i>press freedom</i> -- "Unfortunately nothing has changed in the countries that are the worst predators of <i>press freedom</i> ."
Water	↓ Five years data collected by the twin <i>satellites</i> of the <i>Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment</i> (GRACE) show a bleak picture for the world's <i>fresh water</i> not revealed in commonly-available information -- " <i>Stream flow measurements</i> are often <u>not shared</u> among nations for economic, political or national defense reasons." Particularly in <i>Africa</i> , fresh water is dwindling -- "...a drying trend in major African basins such as the <i>Nile, Congo</i> and <i>Zambezi</i> " is certain to lead to cross-border tensions.
↓ deteriorated • steady ↑ improved ✎ ALERT	
Challengers Summary <i>see daily items with links to full stories on the web at</i> http://meta2.com/PDB/pdbDetail.asp?CHALLENGERS	
Brazil	• During a Latin American tour, Russia foreign minister Lavrov discusses sourcing <i>liquid fuel</i> for <i>spacecraft</i> from Brazil and supplying <i>Mi-35</i> combat <i>helicopters</i> and <i>Mi-70</i> transport helicopters. The two nations confirm they have a "common approach" to international problems. <i>Paranaguá</i> is the first port in Brazil to receive <i>International Ship and Port Facility Security</i> accreditation.
China	• <i>Westinghouse AP1000</i> will be the technology basis for four new <i>nuclear</i> power plants to be constructed at the <i>Sanmen</i> and <i>Yangjiang</i> sites. China has established its first <i>environmental damage evaluation center</i> -- "Its evaluations will help solve environmental disputes more effectively." China reports it has arrested 370,000 <i>economic crime</i> suspects over the last 7 years. China somewhat vaguely warns of ' <i>non-traditional</i> ' <i>security threats</i> but China's vague sense of unease, partly with reference to the upcoming <i>Olympiad</i> , almost certainly includes the <i>Uighurs</i> of <i>Xijang</i> among the threats.
India	• Upper castes <i>Hindus</i> have strenuously protested against court orders allowing "outcaste" Hindus -- <i>Dalits</i> -- into a particularly holy temple -- "We will not go to the temple until it is purified through chanting of mantras" [Analysis: This "local" dispute is one that strikes at the heart of Hindu India.] India needs \$60B for <i>housing</i> in <i>urban</i> areas -- "...not much efforts were made in providing services in the past 50 years to enable the nation cope up with growing urbanisation." In releasing the " <i>India Rural Infrastructure Report</i> ", Prime Minister Singh warns that one of India's developmental challenges is the neglected <i>rural</i> sector. India seeks Japan cooperation in <i>nuclear energy</i> -- "Both countries have a stake in promoting economic security and defense cooperation, which could help stabilize the region, Singh said." India is looking to acquire an interest eyes in overseas <i>coal</i> mines -- "We have short listed Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Indonesia and Bangladesh for acquiring coal mines." India is on the US 'major list' for drug trafficking -- countries on the list have "failed demonstrably" to adhere to international <i>counter-narcotics agreements</i> . Pakistan warns that the current independent arbitration on India's damming of the <i>Chenab</i> [major tributary of the <i>Indus</i>] must give a verdict within the scope of <i>Indus Treaty</i> -- the ruling is of <i>strategic</i> importance to Pakistan. India's <i>counter-terror doctrine</i> (still under development) may call for <i>training</i> facilities on uninhabited coastal islands, and a <i>littoral</i> capability. The government is taking steps to coordinate the work of federal and state <i>intelligence</i> agencies. Two <i>Kashmiris</i> are arrested in New Delhi with <i>explosives</i> and cash. <i>Cellular phones</i> are a growing method of choice in detonating <i>IEDs</i> in India.
Indonesia	↑ In a significant show of reconciliation President Gusmao of East Timor has met General Wiranto and other former Indonesian enemies. Indonesia has commissioned a new <i>radar</i> system "The radars, located on [Batam Island], are designed to detect aircraft at a distance of up to 330 kilometers (about 206 miles)".
Iran	• Commentators note that the upcoming Iran elections are a "last stand" for <i>reformists</i> "...for the first time since the <i>Islamic Revolution</i> , one political faction has all the power in Iran."



Public Daily Brief



Week: 11 – 17 December 2006

	<p>[<i>Analysis</i>: A state under attack will gravitate towards simple fundamentals.] Iranian <i>students</i> disrupted a speech by President Ahmadinejad –he reportedly described the troubleshooters as a US-funded "oppressive minority" and continued his speech.</p>
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> President Putin gave a photo opportunity as he inspected Russia's latest truck deployable <i>missiles</i> -- "For the near future, <i>Topol-M</i> will have no rivals in the world." The Whodunit continues over who poisoned Litvinenko – in an interview a KGB veteran said Litvinenko was a traitor but Russia is not killing ex-spies any more; "Professionals don't use <i>polonium</i>," he said. A German radiation expert doubts Russian involvement in the polonium poisoning - - "Secret agents are normally trained to kill without leaving any evidence. [But] they have practically bulldozed a superhighway all the way to Moscow.." A survey revealed 78 % of Russian political elite come from the KGB-FSB – it is Russia's <i>Ivy League</i>.
Venezuela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area] [<i>Analysis</i>: The fact that a nation's issues are <u>not</u> appearing on the "front page" can be just as significant as headlines.]
[Wild-Card]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Arab League and the African Union have signed an MoU on involvement of the <i>Arab Fund</i> for technical assistance to <i>African</i> countries. The Pentagon confirms there will be an Africa Command -- "... the memo to establish Africa Command is on the president's desk." In Mugabe's Zimbabwe inflation is now over <u>1,000%</u> with some items such as paramedical services rising as fast as <u>17,000%</u>. A legal battle to block Islamist ("Taliban") laws in North West Frontier Province is pitting President Musharraf against Islamists in. Chinese troops in Pakistan are a sign of a warming relationship -- "Soldiers wearing the uniform of the Chinese People's Liberation Army are not a usual sight in the Pakistani garrison town of Rawalpindi." International Crisis Group says Pakistan needs to re-establish the rule of law in <i>tribal areas</i> and provide greater political rights to local communities to avoid the creation of Taliban "mini-states". [<i>Analysis</i>: A sensible desire, and the ICG is "never" wrong", but no power on earth has ever been able to establish the rule of law in tribal areas.] The Afghan President has launched a pointedly undiplomatic scathing attack on Pakistan seeming inaction against <i>cross-border insurgents</i>. The US is seeking to supply AWACS systems to India and Pakistan, augmenting deals they have already made respectively with Israel and Sweden. Eastern Bolivians are intensifying movement for <i>autonomy</i> from the central government -- in the biggest march in Santa Cruz, the country's most populous and wealthy city, hundreds of thousands of protesters held banners that read "Autonomy Now." Dead dictator Pinochet's grandson has been discharged from the Army "...for having made a highly political and out of protocol speech during his grandfather's funeral services." Ecuador may pull out of trade alignments with the US and join Mercosur, reflecting the trend in Latin America to realignment <i>trade policy</i> with <i>foreign policy</i>.
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