

Week: 22 – 28 January 2007

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. Cheney in denial, Army War College got it right on Iraq in 2003 forecast.</p> <p>Proliferation. Hans Blix says Global Warming more dangerous than nuclear weapons.</p> <p>Terrorism. Pakistan says poverty and lack of education fuel terrorism, not religion. We agree.</p>
	<p>Poverty. Poorly targeted food aid destroys local alternatives. Remote areas need wireless broadband.</p> <p>Environment. UN IPPC reports “wrenching change” in climate. Australia creates Cabinet position.</p> <p>Civil War. Sri Lanka bombs needed 5 tons of ball bearings. Central African Republic collapsing.</p> <p>Genocide. Rwanda releasing 8,000 genocide prisoners, Darfur aid being gutted by attacks.</p> <p>Transnational Crime. Afghanistan now producing 90% of the world’s heroin, Mexico imploding.</p>
	<p>Infectious Disease. Virulent tuberculosis (XDR-TB) from South Africa may imperil millions.</p> <p>Other Atrocities. Italy arrests 2000 in human trafficking. Children abducted for combat in Sri Lanka.</p>

Policy Summary

	<p>Diplomacy. World view of US now sharply negative across the board—US is “mainly negative.”</p> <p>Security. Entire Internet at risk from crime, US Intelligence still blind to value of open sources.</p> <p>Society. Universal health care is an idea receiving support now from both sides of the aisle.</p>
	<p>Immigration. 37 mile wall going up, thousands of criminal aliens being swept up across the USA.</p> <p>Water. Australia running out of water, no management plan. Zimbabwe blocking water to punish.</p>
	<p>Debt. Senator Rockefeller says Iraq starving education, health-care, environment, & Home. Security.</p> <p>Economy. Over one-third US defense budget goes to contractors now. [Total real DoD costs hidden.]</p> <p>Education. Both Bush & H. Clinton muddle education—neither understand need for draconian shift.</p> <p>Energy. US lacks energy strategy, still not serious about wind, solar, and portable hydrogen.</p> <p>Justice. UK bitterly attacks US practices (rendition, terror), declares there is no “War of Terror.”</p>
	<p>Agriculture. US corn and wheat subsidies opposed by Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, & EU.</p> <p>Family.</p>

Major Player Summary

	<p>Iran. US carriers approach a possible Iranian nuclear ambush, while Russia strengthens ties with Iran.</p>
	<p>Venezuela. Nationalization, joint projects with Cuba, and explicit support to Syria & Iran.</p>
	<p>Brazil. River-diversion project likely to cause widespread environmental damage.</p> <p>China. President’s second tour of Africa encountering some resistance to Chinese cultural invasion.</p> <p>India. Russia extends ties with India. Both interested in exporting cruise missiles, and space presence.</p> <p>Indonesia. For the first time, military banned from participation in politics.</p> <p>Wild Cards. Pakistan demolished two dangerous mosques. More oil discovered in Angola.</p>
	<p>Russia. OECD raises Russia’s risk rank from fourth to third degree. Varied ethic & border issues.</p>

World Crises (extracted from monthly assessments by <i>International Crisis Group</i>)	
↗ Alert	Lebanon
↘ Deteriorated	Basque Country (Spain), Bolivia, Egypt, Fiji, Iran, Israel/Occupied Territories, Kyrgyzstan, Somalia, Sudan, Turkmenistan
↗ Improved	Guinea
↘ deteriorated	• steady
↗ improved	↗ ALERT



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International Crisis Group

Threats	<i>see daily items with links to full stories on the web at PDB-Threats</i>
Poverty news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorly targeted food aid often depresses and destroys local market prices and local producers -- alternative measures, such as cash or vouchers, could be more effective. The Davos Forum will consider the strategic importance to development of radio-based broadband access in the remotest areas.
Infectious Disease news list forecast	<p>↓ The virulent strain of TB detected in South Africa may imperil millions -- "<i>South Africa's sluggish response ... could prove hugely expensive to contain and could threaten millions across sub-Saharan Africa.</i>" "XDR-TB represents a major threat to public health. If the only way to manage it is to <u>forcibly</u> confine then it needs to be done."</p> <p>The virus H5NI was reported in new locations such as Japan.</p> <p>The US Armed Forces Institute of Pathology has recorded seven deaths caused by rare bacteria in US hospitals along the evacuation chain."</p> <p>A forum of scientists has again voted for sanitation as the greatest medical advance ever -- the past is a guide for the future: sanitation is the best first investment.</p>
Environment news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Chinese report, prepared by academics and government experts, ranked the country 100th out of 118 countries surveyed for responses to climate change. <i>Reuters</i> listed the World's 10 most polluted places <p>The Australian Prime Minister has merged several functions into a new Cabinet level ministry of Environment and Water Resources.</p> <p>The fourth report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), due for release in days, is tipped to forecast "wrenching change" – the consensus of 2,500 scientists will say greenhouse gases are at highest levels for 650,000 years,</p>
Inter-State Conflict news list forecast	<p>↓ African Union leaders are meeting to discuss conflicts in Chad, Sudan, Somalia – Sudanese President, Omar al-Bashir, is scheduled to become chair of the African Union (AU) this year.</p> <p>The US military reports that Afghan leaders have appropriated about half of all direct aid given -- "<i>tribal leaders had to be persuaded that the aid was not intended for them alone</i>"</p> <p>Vice president Cheney said that talk of blunders in Iraq is 'hogwash' -- "<i>The world is much safer today because of it</i>". Elsewhere, vice president Cheney said that a Senate resolution against a surge "<i>Won't stop us.</i>" Another think tank joined calls for an Iraq pull-out -- "<i>Iraq will continue to need substantial external assistance, but a new multinational framework is essential.</i>" <i>UPI</i> reveals that an Army War College assessment on Iraq in 2003 made stunningly-accurate forecasts of the risks of invading Iraq. <i>see US Army report got Iraq right</i> Historians offered a dismal forecast for Iraq -- no amount of <i>schlock-and-awe</i> is a match for history -- only a political miracle can bring any good outcome to the "jerry-built nation" of Iraq. [Built by The Powers from three Ottoman provinces.]</p> <p>Several sporadic shootings and bombings continued across Mogadishu [Somalia]. A civilian said "It is a pity that the government and Ethiopian forces are operating like insurgents." US troops were seen in the Somali south -- "<i>He saw about 30 white men</i>"</p>

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	<p><i>in military dress, some showing US Marine insignia, with Ethiopian counterparts at the village of Kuldio".</i></p> <p>The Taliban expressed the intention of opening (Islamic) <i>schools</i> in Afghanistan -- as elsewhere in the Islamic world; the school is seen as a cornerstone of a Muslim society.</p>
<p>Civil War news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following on from an Egyptian plan, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia will host talks between the Palestinian <i>Fatah</i> and <i>Hamas</i> groups. <p>Thousands of <i>displaced</i> urgently need protection and humanitarian aid in the Central African Republic -- there are too few aid <i>professionals</i> in the conflict areas and <i>funding</i> has yet to match the needs on the ground.</p> <p>Five tonne of <i>ball bearings</i> have been intercepted on the way to Sri Lanka for use in <i>bombs</i>.</p> <p>There is a complex rearrangement of factions and alliances in Sri Lanka following a major Tamil defeat in the east -- "<i>This is a new development in Tamil politics.</i>"</p>
<p>Genocide news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attacks on aid workers and vehicle hijackings are crippling relief efforts in Darfur. <p>To reduce overcrowding in prisons, Rwanda will release 8,000 more <i>genocide prisoners</i> -- "<i>This group will exclude key masterminds of the genocide.</i>"</p>
<p>Other Atrocities news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ A Philippines Commission finds that the <i>military</i> is involved in some of the many <i>political killings</i> over recent years -- "<i>We have identified that there are killings really perpetrated by the military</i>" said Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos</p> <p>Israel may have violated agreements with Washington when it fired US-supplied cluster munitions into Lebanon.</p> <p>Italy has arrested 2,000 in <i>human trafficking</i>. Brazil Efforts to End Slavery Not Enough, Says the US has a detailed summary of <i>human trafficking</i> situation in Latin American nations.</p> <p>UN has urged Nepal to hold <i>war crimes</i> trials -- "more than 600 people who disappeared during the insurgency are still missing..."</p> <p>H.H. the Dalai Lama accepts Chinese dominion over Tibet -- but China must cease <i>cultural genocide</i>.</p> <p>The Karuna faction of the Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger rebels have again been accused of <i>abducting children for combat</i> -- "<i>with the complicity or willful blindness of the Sri Lankan government ...</i>"</p> <p>Former Panamanian dictator Noriega is to be released from US prison in September [2007] -- will he return to Panama to faces <i>charges</i> of corruption, torture and murder?</p>
<p>Proliferation news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hans Blix, former head of IAEA, says <i>global warming</i> is more dangerous than <i>nuclear weapons</i> -- "<i>The [NPT] is under strain, but I think it is an exaggeration to say it is falling apart.</i>" <p>Russia will send <i>nuclear fuel</i> to an Indian plant -- "<i>During the second quarter of this year, we expect to deliver fuel to the first reactor at the Kudankulam.</i>"</p> <p>Seven Cambodian de-miners were killed by a Khmer Rouge booby trap -- "It was an old Khmer Rouge set-up," he said - <i>three anti-tank mines wired together</i>. A new technology allows detection of <i>land mines</i> with <i>sound</i> -- "<i>They were able to detect</i></p>

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	<p><i>both metal and plastic mines ..."</i></p>
<p>Terrorism news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Algeria, the <i>Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat</i> (GSPC) is said to be adopting the name <i>Al Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb</i>. An Egyptian state paper has attacked Iranian confrontational policies on nuclear development -- The Ottomans (<i>Sunnis</i>) still fear the return of the (<i>Shi'ite</i>) Persian Safavids (1501 to 1760). At the <i>Davos WEF</i>, Pakistan's prime minister Shaukat Aziz said that <i>education</i> and <i>poverty</i>, not <i>religion</i>, are the roots of <i>terrorism</i>. A new <i>Australian Crime Commission</i> task force will investigate the possibility that <i>motorcycle gangs</i> are selling <i>weapons</i> to terrorists. The Greek leftist guerrilla group <i>Revolutionary Struggle</i> has belatedly claimed responsibility for the RPG attack on the <i>US Embassy</i> in <i>Athens</i>. In a worrying tactic, Iraqi insurgents <i>disguised</i> themselves as US troops to mount an attack -- "...the men wore what appeared to be legitimate US military uniforms and badges, and drove cars commonly used by foreigners..." <i>Kidnapping</i> is now big business in <i>Baghdad</i> -- "<i>They kidnap 10 Sunnis, they get ransom on five, and kill them all, in each big kidnap operation they make at least \$50,000, it's the best business in Baghdad.</i>" The UK has [belatedly] established an <i>information unit</i> to counter <i>al Qaeda</i> propaganda -- "<i>The unit will be modeled on the "public information office" set up by the British Army as part of the campaign to defeat the IRA in Northern Ireland.</i>" [It should better be modeled on the <i>Malay Emergency</i>.] Now 103 agents are proscribed under the UK Anti-terrorism Act (2001), including 45 <i>viruses</i>, 21 <i>bacteria</i>, 18 <i>animal pathogens</i>, 13 <i>toxins</i>, and two <i>fungi</i>.
<p>Transnational Crime news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ 1.5 tons of <i>cocaine</i> was seized in the western coastal state of <i>Falcón</i> [Venezuela] was seized awaiting shipment Netherlands Antilles, thence to the Netherlands.</p> <p>The Army alone won't stop Mexico drug violence says the UN -- coordinator of a UN study described the murky rules and infrastructure of Mexico's <i>criminal justice system</i> as "an invitation to corruption." <i>Drug use</i> in Mexico increasing is now at "truly alarming rates" -- disruption of trafficking to the US has "<i>focused organized criminal groups more toward the domestic market</i>". A <i>journalist</i> is missing (again) in Mexico after writing a story of local drug identities.</p> <p>Afghanistan produces 90% of the world's <i>diamorphine</i> (heroin) and the government is refusing, this year at least, to <i>spray</i> the crops with <i>herbicides</i>. The National Health Service in UK says it could use some of the production from Afghan poppies -- junkies can get all they want, but the UK health system can not get enough <i>diamorphine</i> (otherwise known as <i>heroin</i>). [Why is this? <i>Qui bono?</i>]</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>see daily items with links to full stories on the web at PDB-Policy</p>
<p>Agriculture news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ Australia, the European Union, Argentina and Brazil have joined Canada in the WTO complaint over US corn [wheat] <i>subsidies</i>.</p>
<p>Debt news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ The new chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee says <i>education</i>, <i>health-care</i>, the <i>environment</i> and <i>homeland security</i> -- and <i>intelligence</i> on DPRK and Iran -- are all being starved by the costs of Iraq.</p>
<p>Diplomacy</p>	<p>↓ Views on the US have dropped sharply in a new worldwide <i>opinion poll</i> -- nearly</p>
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news list forecast	<p>half of those polled in Europe, Africa, Asia, South America and the Middle East said the US is now playing a “<u>mainly negative</u>” role in the world.</p>
<p>Economy news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than <u>one-third</u> of the <i>defense budget</i> now goes to <i>outside contractors</i> but GAO reserves judgment on the advantages of this.
<p>Education news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President Bush has proposes adding <i>private school vouchers</i> to the ‘<i>No Child</i>’ law -- “<i>What do we do for kids trapped in schools that continue to under-perform?</i>”
<p>Energy news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President Bush’s State of the Union address remarks on energy mirrors <i>public opinion</i> that <i>biofuels</i> -- <u>somehow</u> -- hold the answer. What happened to the President’s call in 2006 for <i>switch grass</i> as a <i>biofuel</i> source? – it did a lot for switch grass futures but not for <i>cellulosic technologies</i>. President Bush wants to double US emergency oil stockpile -- “<i>the move would give U.S. consumers an insurance policy equivalent to about 97 days worth of imports ...</i>” Wind provides only 1% of US energy but is growing faster than any other form [from this very low base] -- <i>biofuels</i> are <i>transport</i> energy sources and a distraction from the need to develop <i>base-load</i> sources. <p>President Putin calls for global <i>nuclear energy</i> based on centralized (secure) <i>enrichment</i> -- “<i>it is necessary to establish a network of international centers for nuclear fuel enrichment under the control of international organizations.</i>”</p> <p>Brazil will export 3 billion litre of <i>sugar-cane ethanol</i> this year -- Sudan has expressed interest in Brazilian equipment and technology for alcohol production at the <i>International Ethanol Workshop</i> in Sudan.</p>
<p>Family news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]
<p>Immigration news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The US has started construction of the <i>US-Mexico Barrier</i> -- in a modest way, with a 37-mile stretch including five miles to the west of the <i>Goldwater Range</i>. <p>US Immigration continued swoops on <i>criminal aliens</i> -- “<i>It is one of the largest crackdowns on criminal aliens ever carried out in the United States.</i>”</p>
<p>Justice news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ It’s official, in the UK -- the UK Director of Public Prosecutions has said there is no “<u>War on Terror</u>” and has made a bitter attack on US practices in a speech to the <i>Criminal Bar Association</i>.</p>
<p>Security news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ With the rising use of <i>radioisotopes</i> in medicine and the growing use of more sensitive <i>radiation detectors</i> for security there will be more and more false alarms. Only about a quarter of U.S. citizens hold valid <i>passports</i> but will now need them to travel to (and return from) neighboring countries such Mexico and Canada.</p> <p>“Gates’s Glasnost at the Pentagon?” -- “<i>It’s not only the media whom Gates is treating as adults. One senior officer said the top brass feel like they can now get a hearing ...</i>”</p> <p><i>Criminal activity</i> on the <i>web</i> may simply overwhelm it -- “<i>It’s as bad as you can imagine, it puts the whole internet at risk.</i>” “<i>In addition to hosting the largest number of malicious websites, the US continues to top the list of worst spam-relaying nations.</i>”</p> <p>Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Collection says US intelligence does not enjoy the same “<i>global reach</i>” in intelligence gathering that it had in the past. The Information-Sharing Environment (ISE) program is attempting to simplify a</p>

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	<p>“Byzantine terror-alert system” – it must harmonize 108 handling markers such as “<i>Information Related to a Continuity of Operations Plan</i>”. <i>New York’s emergency headquarters</i> has been relocated -- “... <i>having it so close to the Twin Towers ... was a serious mistake.</i>” Designating one <i>assistant US attorney</i> in each of 93 offices throughout the US as <i>Crisis Management Coordinator</i> (CMC) is not working; they are lawyers, not crisis professionals.</p> <p>The US military reports [the well-known issue] that their <i>bomb-jammers</i> are knocking out nearby troops’ <i>voice and data radio transmissions</i>. The <i>New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority</i> cannot use their new \$140M <i>radio system</i> intended for communication in the <i>subway</i> “<i>the Police Department refuses to use it, saying the new system is hobbled by widespread interference that garbles communication</i>”.</p>
<p>Society news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Democratic Senator, and Presidential pre-selection candidate, Barack Obama has called for <i>universal health care</i> -- “<i>We can’t afford another disappointing charade in 2008, 2009 and 2010.</i>” President Bush has proposed a new <i>health insurance</i> plan -- “<i>This is a dangerous policy that ultimately shifts cost and risk from employers to employees and could result in a higher number of uninsured.</i>” <i>California</i> has announced a <i>State Marketing Agreement for Food Safety</i> -- “<i>The action is the first of a series of steps to be taken by the industry and the state in response to [recent fresh food poisoning outbreaks]</i>” <i>Trojans</i> represent the majority of <i>malware</i> but <i>spyware</i> infects the most computers. 20% of <i>Trojan viruses</i> that infected computers during 2006 were designed to steal <i>bank details</i>. The FBI has been called on to assist with the response to ‘race’ gang violence -- “<i>A 14% increase in gang-related crime over the past year is the first since 2003...</i>”
<p>Water news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Bulawayo</i> in <i>Zimbabwe’s Matabeleland</i>, a bastion of opposition to President Mugabe, has been denied a <i>pipeline</i> from the Zambezi and now has about two weeks water supply remaining. The Australian federal government has pledged billions to water resources “<i>Australia’s water use is unsustainable and its water management system needs radical and permanent change.</i>”

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Challengers see daily items with links to full stories on the web at [PDB-Challengers](#)

<p>Brazil news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A \$2M <i>river-diversion project</i> on the <i>Sao Francisco River</i> meant to benefit millions in the <i>Sertao</i> region will probably cause widespread <i>environmental damage</i>. A \$70M bank robbery and a body of one suspect in a well was possibly the work of crime gang <i>First Capital Command</i>. Rio’s <i>drug lords</i> are helping their comrades in crime by <i>leasing</i> them the expensive <i>weapons</i> they cannot afford.
<p>China news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ President Hu Jintao’s second tour of <i>Africa</i> in a year is probably to turn fraternal niceties of the first tour into hard deals but Africa in the meantime has been alerted to Chinese “<i>colonialism</i>” and the dangers of remaining a supplier of just <i>raw materials</i>.</p> <p>Ten were arrested in a protest by <i>farmers</i> against <i>pollution</i> -- “<i>The rice here is black. The fruit is either black or white. Rice and fruit are our main industries -- it’s</i></p>

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horrible." China's economy is growing at the fastest pace in 11 years, but uncertainties are appearing that will impact economic fundamentals – the deferred cost of *environmental damage*, and looming *energy* and *water* shortages.

The *one child policy* has led to a preponderance of *male* children, as high as 130 to 100 in some regions – the government says it will takes 15 years or more to correct the imbalance. The government has – because it can -- put restrictions on *prime time TV*, banning "vulgar reality shows" and encouraging "ethically-inspiring TV series". In banning all images of *pigs* from advertisements (in this Year of the Pig) to avoid offending *Muslim* minorities, China shows it feels vulnerable to Islamic discontent.

For some time China has been worried over unauthorized *surveys and mapping* -- "*Chinese partners or translators will be fined if they fail to stop illegal mapping activities.*" [There was recently such an incident in sensitive *Xinjiang Autonomous Region*.]

India
[news list|forecast](#)

- *NewKerala.com* published a backgrounder on [Assam's ULFA "Hindu terrorists"](#) *Punjab* police on high alert after the identity cards of 90 *army* officers disappeared under mysterious circumstances. Police used teargas to end a procession by Shi'ites in Kashmir and detained over 100.

At the start of a week of high-level cooperation announcements culminating in a visit by President **Putin, Russia** said it backs India bid for permanent **Security Council** seat -- "*We are natural allies. We have serious, long-term plans in major sectors, including high technology.*" *India Times / Economic Times* wrote about why "*the US sees itself as the international advocate for India*" -- [Making sense of US tilt towards India](#)

India has received \$45.4M from the **World Bank** for rehabilitation of *coal-fired power generation plants* in a move towards *cleaner energy* generation; also – under **GEF** (*Global Environment Facility*) – India has received \$29.6M development of *biodiversity* and \$74.9 million for projects under *climate change* initiatives.

As the first deal with the **US** for *military aircraft*, India will buy six *C-130J Super Hercules* transport planes for its *Special Forces*.

India is ready to test the *BrahMos* missile from *undersea* launch, possibly in **Russian** waters on a Russian naval platform – India and Russia expect to expect .to export 1,000 *BrahMos* cruise missiles in the coming decade for about \$10B but are yet to agree on *suitable clients*. India has made clear it has a strategic interest in *space* -- "*We are an aerospace power having trans-oceanic reach and we have started training a core group of people for the aerospace command.*"

Indonesia
[news list|forecast](#)

- After seven years in the making, the Indonesian *military* has revised its doctrine to bar the military from participation in *politics*. [TNI's role in Indonesian politics had origins in the crucial part it played in the war of independence against the **Dutch**.]

Indonesian special forces raided a location in *Poso (Sulawesi)* killing 14 Islamic militants in a firefight and arresting 25 others. -- "*I don't want to speculate whether they were members of **Jemaah Islamiyah**. But they are part of a dangerous, armed group...*" The action was quickly seen as "anti-Muslim" and Abu Bakar Bashir threatened *holy war* against Indonesian police -- "*There is an attempt in Poso to eliminate the Muslims so the unbelievers will control the town*". *International Crisis Group* updated its analysis of the *Sulawesi* conflicts as a complex mix of tension

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	<p>arising from <i>transmigrasi</i> , <i>Muslim-Christian</i> jealousies, and JI jihadism -- <i>Jihadism in Indonesia: Poso on the Edge</i></p>
<p>Iran news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ Iran's development of a <i>launch vehicle</i> for a <i>satellite</i> program is seen as a cover for an ICBM program -- "<i>the Iranian political leadership seems to have moved beyond the needs of self-defense and is now talking about global power projection</i>".</p> <p>The Secretary of the Russian Security Council visited Iran -- "<i>the visit is aimed at leading the course of the nuclear dispute towards negotiations again</i>."</p> <p>The John C. Stennis Carrier Strike Group has been deployed to the Gulf -- "<i>the purpose of the deployment is to put a substantial dollop of military capability closer to Iran in a way that they'll notice</i>". Mine countermeasures have also been upgraded -- two new Avenger-class mine-hunters have been moved to Bahrain's Mina Salman port. In the face of these war-like gestures, the head of IAEA says that an attack on Iran over its alleged nuclear weapons program would be "a catastrophe" -- "<i>the consequence will be 10 times worse</i>."</p>
<p>Russia news list forecast</p>	<p>↑ Far Right groups have held rallies in Moscow and several other cities – the mix of Communists and Nationalists called for the elimination of prison sentences for the crime of inciting ethnic hatred: "<i>We have a right to hatred</i>"</p> <p>Ukrainian bailiffs have attempted to seize radio beacon facilities leased by the Russian Black Sea Fleet in the Azov Sea-Black Sea over a contractual disagreement. Russia again says that Chechnya rebels are holed up in Georgia -- "<i>We have information that a certain number of members of illegal armed groups are still present in the Pankisi Gorge</i>." Belarus has for the moment rejected any chance of union with Russia -- "<i>Relations between the two countries hit their lowest point when Belarus tried to impose a transit levy on Russian oil ...</i>"</p> <p>The OECD has raised Russia's risk rating from fourth rank to third rank [an improvement].</p> <p>Svobodny space center towards the Chinese border will be closed in 2007, leaving Baikonur in Kazakhstan, which will be phased out next, and Plesetsk in northwest Russia which will developed as the sole facility.</p>
<p>Venezuela news list forecast</p>	<p>• President Chavez has reminded the US envoy in Venezuela that his comments on the proposed nationalization of telecommunications and other industries violate diplomatic forms and could earn him expulsion.</p> <p>Venezuela has given Cuba use of its Simon Bolivar Satellite and made agreements on fiber-optic cable projects and a joint-owned stainless steel factory. The plan by Lula and Chavez to build a \$20+ billion pipeline in over 8 years as the core of a Latin American energy grid may be a pipe dream; at minimum it will be difficult.</p> <p>Venezuela confirmed it will "<i>always back Syria, Iran against US madmen</i>" – the US "is an empire of madmen" said Chavez in his weekly radio television show "<i>Hello President</i>".</p>
<p>Wild Cards news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ In a remarkable counter-terrorism move, Pakistan authorities demolished two mosques they saw as security threats along a VIP route. At least 15 were killed, mainly police, in a bombing in Peshawar, capital of Northwest Frontier province. Another bombing at the Marriott in Islamabad came amid already high security in anticipation of possible Sunni-Shi'ite sectarian violence during Ashoura, a Shi'ite religious festival. Pakistan is on guard for any sectarian spillover from Iraq -- Sunni-</p>
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Shi'ite conflict would be disastrous for Pakistan. *The Daily Times* [**Pakistan**] said *Weakness in Waziristan can no longer be concealed* -- the reality is that the people of *Waziristan* are economically and ethnically integrated with **Afghanistan** and have little loyalty to Pakistan.

Syria and **Yemen** signed cooperation agreements. **Egypt** arrested seven more members of the *Muslim Brotherhood* bringing the number now held to more than 270.

Following weeks of instability, **Bangladesh** cracked down on media.

Doomed **Zimbabwe** warns the remaining *European farmers* to not resist being dispossessed of their land -- "*We will bite*" says the government. Following discovery of more *oil* deposits in **Angola**, production is expected to increase by 90% from 2005 levels by 2010. [**China** already has oil interests in Angola.]

Brazil observed that a landmark *Mercosur Summit* ended on a positive note -- "*The higher goal is integration for the benefit of our peoples, and trade is but a tool.*"

The *Kurds* say **Turkey** is "sowing dissent" in **Iraq** -- "*Iraqi Turkmen have aligned themselves with Arab inhabitants of Taameem to oppose any move by the Kurds...*" For its part, **Turkey** warns that there will be a "very big civil war" in *Kirkuk* if the Kurds are favored -- "*Kirkuk belongs to all Iraqis It would be wrong to give the city to only one ethnic group.*"

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