

Week: 19 – 25 February 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. Muslim Foreign Ministers talking on Middle East. Iraq a repeat of Colombia?</p> <p>Proliferation. Russians helping Namibia produce uranium. No energy <i>instead of</i> weapons strategy.</p> <p>Terrorism. Al Qaeda & Taliban stronger; Pakistan implores US to talk to Taliban. US brain dead.</p>
	<p>Poverty. India developing legal framework for micro-finance. Gates putting \$5.4M into this in Africa.</p> <p>Infectious Disease. India leading on healthcare. China selling fake drugs. Extreme drug-resistance up.</p> <p>Environment. Japan vandalizing Antarctic. Bangkok a model.. 9 US states suing EPA over mercury.</p> <p>Civil War. Somali pirates hijack UN ship. Ugandan rebels moving to Chad. E. Congo, Kosovo bad.</p> <p>Genocide. <i>Janjaweed</i> massing in Sudan. Rwanda releases 8,000 genocide convicts. Serbia reluctant.</p> <p>Transnational Crime. FBI teaching public about organized crime, but moribund in actually reducing.</p>
	<p>Other Atrocities. 117K Ukrainians victims. Major powers refuse cluster bomb controls.</p>

Policy Summary

	<p>Diplomacy. Screwed up beyond belief—on Syria, on Russia, on forced democracy. India taking lead.</p> <p>Security. US five years behind in homeland security plans; FBI witless; Army keeps M-16 toy rifle.</p> <p>Society. Most have no leisure; local criminals using assault weapons; returning wounded badly treated.</p>
	<p>Immigration. Hot button issue—Mexico has way too much influence in US, need to roll them back.</p> <p>Water. China reducing already low per capita ration by 20%. Australia may lose 60% crops..</p>
	<p>Debt. Nothing glaring, but as this goes to press, Alan Greenspan talks about possible recession in US.</p> <p>Economy. Nothing significant—off the record, Wall Street is divided—some now favor responsibility.</p> <p>Education. Mass confusion, adherence to old methods. Losing an entire generation of young minds.</p> <p>Energy. Cuba, and Sunni Iraq, may have oil access. US falling on solar. Hydrogen stores well.</p> <p>Justice. As in the USA, Canada's high court finds executive branch violated fundamental rights.</p>
	<p>Agriculture. See India. Farmers aided in registering seed, predatory US companies to be turned back.</p> <p>Family. Nothing significant noted this week.</p>

Major Player Summary

	<p>Iran. US generals prepared to resign rather than attack. US funding terrorist-like insurgents.</p>
	<p>Venezuela. Largest arms purchaser in Latin America. Solid long-term oil deals with Japan and UK.</p>
	<p>Brazil. Making nice with Uruguay. Poor English in air traffic control? Shootings and swindles.</p> <p>China. Stock market crash looming. Russian oil up toward 46% via rail. Global warming understood.</p> <p>India. Air base in Tajikistan shared with Russia and host. Building arms industry. Electricity crisis.</p> <p>Indonesia. Under pressure from clerics, seeking to educate population on secular non-violent jihad.</p> <p>Wild Cards. Nigerian kidnappings, Zimbabwe economic collapse. Waziristan a Pashtun haven.</p>
	<p>Russia. Ivanov is Putin's heir-apparent. Creating precision-munitions. Angry over E Eur missile def.</p>

World Crises (extracted from **monthly** assessments by *International Crisis Group*)

↗ Alert	[none]
↘ Deteriorated	Guinea, India (non-Kashmir), Israel/Occupied Territories, Lebanon, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Uganda
↕ Improved	North Korea, Northern Ireland (UK)

[International Crisis Group](http://www.icg.org)

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Threats	see daily items with links to full stories on the web at PDB-Threats
Poverty news list forecast	<p>↑ India will soon introduce enabling laws on <i>micro-finance</i> -- "a legal framework for the entities engaged in micro financing". The Gates Foundation has granted \$5.4 Million to start <i>microfinance banks</i> in five <i>African</i> nations -- the millions of micro-loans the initiative will make possible may do more good than many times the money being invested.</p> <p>"<i>Hunger in a land of plenty</i>" -- Guinea-Bissau is a case study in disaster wrought by a little bit of bad luck and an immense amount of <i>incompetence</i>.</p> <p>In an example of <i>South-South</i> technology exchange, India and <i>East African</i> countries have established cooperation arrangements on agriculture.</p> <p>The Indian Government is assisting <i>farmers</i> to register seeds they have bred -- "India is the trend-setter in the world as no other country has legally covered farmers' rights to this extent."</p>
Infectious Disease news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A global <i>healthcare</i> conference in <i>New Delhi</i> [India] hopes to improve healthcare quality in India, and elsewhere. <p>The inaugural meeting of <i>Friends of the Global Fund Africa</i> resolves to take responsibility and achieve results in the fight against <i>AIDS</i>, <i>TB</i> and <i>malaria</i>. The first <i>death</i> from <i>extreme drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB)</i> has occurred in the Cape Town area -- XDR-TB has already killed 180 in South Africa. Cameroon is the latest country to join UNITAID, a buying cartel that negotiates low prices on <i>medications</i> and the transport of medications.</p> <p>As the range of <i>life-saving drugs</i> increases, so do deadly <i>fakes</i> -- "<i>China is the source of most of the world's fake drugs, experts say.</i>"</p>
Environment news list forecast	<p>↓ New Zealand's Prime Minister "implored" Japan to move a damaged <i>whaling vessel</i> from pristine <i>Antarctic</i> water before it causes damage -- Japan, the country they gave <i>Pearl Harbor</i>, unforgivable <i>war-crimes</i>, criminal lies about "scientific" motives in <i>whaling</i>, now shows it is <i>callous environmental vandal</i>.</p> <p>In 30 years Thailand has turned <i>Bangkok</i> from an icon of <i>smog</i> into a model for Asia's pollution-choked capitals, <i>Beijing</i>, <i>Jakarta</i>, <i>New Delhi</i>, <i>Shanghai</i>.</p> <p>Nine US states are suing the EPA over <i>mercury</i> emissions -- "<i>the states contend a rule issued by the EPA in December does not comply with the federal Clean Air Act.</i>"</p> <p>Australia plans to phase out <i>incandescent light bulbs</i> over the next three years to save energy. [<u>But with no regard to up/down-stream impacts.</u>] Converting to <i>low-power light globes</i> will save electricity but will disperse vast quantities of <i>neurotoxic mercury</i> when they are disposed of. [<i>Ecology is a science of inputs and outputs.</i>]</p> <p>EU officials agreed to cut <i>carbon dioxide</i> emissions 20% by 2020 -- "<i>But the EU's 27 nations are still to agree what each should do to meet a 20% target for the entire bloc ...</i>"</p> <p>Some observers think the US is nearing the tipping point on <i>global warming</i> -- "<i>The White House has recently been on the defensive ...</i>"</p>
Inter-State Conflict news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim Foreign Ministers held talks in Pakistan on a solution to the <i>Mideast impasse</i> -- "<i>to discuss a joint strategy for the Middle East ahead of a proposed leaders' summit in Saudi Arabia.</i>"

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	<p>There were reports of sporadic heavy fighting in Mogadishu [Somalia] -- "A resident said the gunmen hit the defence ministry with mortars and rockets."</p> <p>As a former US ambassador to Colombia assumes duties in Afghanistan, some see a pattern; Colombia and Afghanistan have commonalities -- asymmetric insurgencies, major drug industries -- <u>and there are concerns the same mistakes will be made.</u></p> <p>A savage view by <i>The Independent</i> [UK] of Britain's part in the Iraq adventure -- <i>The retreat from Basra</i>.</p> <p>The Lebanese Army fired at Israeli aircraft doing "aggressive" reconnaissance over Lebanon -- UN French forces had already repeatedly warned Israel to cease aggressive flights over Lebanon.</p> <p>The Pakistani Foreign Minister says <i>the West</i> has a share of blame for the situation in Afghanistan – afterall, who armed the Taliban?</p> <p>Has a geophysical answer to Iraq presented itself – an uncorroborated report says there has been an oil find in the Sunni "third" of Iraq comparable to resources in Kurd and Shiite areas. [Important but uncorroborated]</p> <p>Iraqi insurgents made a "<u>brazen and highly unusual attack</u>" on a US base north of Baghdad on 20070219, less asymmetric than most.</p>
<p>Civil War news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ Pirates have hijacked a UN-leased food aid ship off Somalia -- "the bandits target both passenger and cargo vessels for ransom or loot, using the money to buy weapons." Documentation of some "dirty secrets" behind the Ugandan peace-keeping deployment to Somalia -- <i>Troop Deployment Not Genuine</i>.</p> <p>Sudan says large numbers of Ugandan rebels are moving towards Central African Republic, threatening more turmoil in central Africa.</p> <p>Dozens were killed in clashes in eastern Congo -- "bands of foreign and Congolese militia still terrorize the country's east, despite the presence of <u>the world's largest UN peacekeeping mission</u>."</p> <p>The balkanization of the Balkans continues as NATO and Russia act out a <i>Cold War</i> in miniature over Kosovo -- "Belgrade hopes <i>Russia</i> will veto the document when it reaches the U.N. Security Council".</p>
<p>Genocide news list forecast</p>	<p>↗ War Crimes officials say Serbia's secret services must be purged before there is any chance of capturing Mladic -- the relevant agencies are "not able" to deliver Mladic to the UN War Crimes Tribunal in <i>The Hague</i>.</p> <p>A Darfur rebel splinter group says it was not invited to talks in Libya, the basis of continuing instability -- "they should have informed us and invited us. ... We wouldn't have refused." Janjaweed militias were reported to be massing in Sudan -- the Jawaweed are massing to leave the area says the government, but observers are not sure.</p> <p>Rwanda released 8,000 genocide convicts – "the group that has been released excludes key masterminds of the genocide."</p>
<p>Other Atrocities news list forecast</p>	<p>• The US Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Bill [Feinstein / Leahy] would control the specification and distribution of munitions already in the hands of over 20 countries. 46 of 49 nations met to agree to the ban on cluster bombs -- arms-makers US, Russia, Israel, China refused to attend; Poland, Romania, Japan declined to</p>
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	<p>sign.</p> <p>It is estimated 117,000 Ukrainians have been victims of <i>human trafficking</i> -- "<i>more people from Ukraine have been trafficked abroad for forced labor and prostitution than from any other former Communist country...</i>".</p> <p>The UN says the Army is responsible for many of the "<i>political</i>" killings in the Philippines -- "<i>the impact of even a limited number of killings of the type alleged is corrosive in many ways.</i>"</p> <p>Military tribunals in DR Congo have sentenced 17 soldiers and others for <i>war crimes</i> during the war that killed some 4 million people.</p>
Proliferation news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Russian companies are forming a joint-venture to produce <i>uranium</i> in Namibia -- "<i>We are ready to produce electric power together and sell it together.</i>"
Terrorism news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governor of Pakistan's Balochistan implores the West to talk to Taliban says "<i>You can't slaughter all of them. There has to be, eventually, some sort of a political accommodation ...</i>" [It must be remembered the West was able to converse with the Taliban when they were allies against the Russians.] <p>An overview of <i>terrorist websites</i> -- How Modern Terrorism Uses the Internet. Elsewhere, another overview -- Islamist Websites as an Integral Part of Jihad: A General Overview.</p> <p>An <i>Islamist</i> zealot killed a Pakistani woman government minister -- "<i>he revealed during interrogation that he is against the involvement of women in politics and government affairs.</i>"</p> <p>Three Explanations for al-Qaeda's Lack of a CBRN Attack -- Jamestown says ... <i>Disrupted; Deterred; Waiting their opportunity.</i></p> <p>Algeria's Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) continues to be of interest -- "<i>al Qaeda's aim is for the GSPC to become a regional force, not solely an Algerian one.</i>" Clashes between the Yemeni army and followers of a Shiite rebel leader in the north of the country have caused at least a 100 deaths.</p>
Transnational Crime news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FBI embarks on a public education program on <i>organized crime</i> -- Organized crime today: The New Cast of Characters
Policy <i>see daily items with links to full stories on the web at PDB-Policy</i>	
Agriculture news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]
Debt news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]
Diplomacy news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President Berdymukhammedov of Turkmenistan says <i>democracy</i> can not be <u>imported</u> -- "<i>any attempt to solve a sociopolitical or economic problem immediately and forever only brings chaos and instability.</i>" Remarkably, Voice of America is closing its Uzbek and other services -- "<i>cutbacks are being made in an effort to shift resources to new technology and 'critical audiences' in the Middle East, North Korea, Somalia and Cuba.</i>" <p>Leader of a powerful Kenyan union grouping says <i>aid</i> is just a stalking horse for a new generation of <i>exploitation</i> of Africa – all the <i>conflict</i> in Africa needs to be understood in the context of the <i>colonial past</i>. Two bills before Congress reveal the US sees the Horn of Africa as a key constituent in its strategic geo-political interests.</p>

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Although US *Middle East policy* is usually formed in *Tel Aviv*, Washington now adds its own fear and loathing of **Syria**, reportedly forbidding **Israel** to negotiate with Syria.

The **German Foreign Minister** has called for civilized dialogue on **Russia's** objection to the **US missile shield** in **Europe** -- "*the third missile defense ring in Poland will have missile silos that are similar to those built for launches of ballistic missiles.*" "*The point is that we can't do without the Europeans ...*" -- [Losing/ Europe in the War on Terror](#)

A good analysis of the ancestry of "*an imperial foreign policy that envisions the United States forever at war.*" -- [America's crusaders](#)

Newly opened archives files reveal Japanese *war criminal* Colonel Masanobu **Tsuji**, mobster Yoshio **Kodama** and others were forgiven all in the **US** religious fervor against *communist* thought -- [CIA files show how postwar 'spies' snookered U.S. intelligence](#)

The **Indian Army** is hosting a global conference on the emerging world order -- the Centre for Land Warfare Studies is hosting "*Emerging World Order: Implications for the Security Calculus of the extended South Asian Region*"

Economy

[news list](#)|[forecast](#)

- [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]

Education

[news list](#)|[forecast](#)

- Some schools are considering *extending school hours* and/or the *school year* -- one solution for schools that fail to meet **NCLB** goals may be to extend their contact hours. Schools in **Fairfax** are defying requirements under **NCLB** and could lose millions in grants. The **Miami-Dade** school board has approved the **STAR teacher bonus** plan -- "*under this plan, it will be testing, testing, testing ... It's a punishment, not an incentive.*"

Energy

[news list](#)|[forecast](#)

- The long lead-time of oil *infrastructure investment*, price *volatility*, manipulation of *supply*, and rumors of *alternatives* will combine to bring a *prolonged energy crunch*.
The U.S. share of global *solar panel* construction has fallen from 20-25% about four years ago to about 8% now. "*US researchers have successfully demonstrated the thermoelectric effect in an organic molecule.*" -- [Organic electricity generator is hot stuff](#) Glib confidence in an *ethanol* energy future is quite unjustified -- [Ethanol's critics doubt results](#)
A tale of necessity and invention; a home *hydroelectric* generator for around \$1,400 - [Homemade Hydro Power Lights Up Tajikistan](#) **Sri Lanka** is building a large *garbage-driven* thermal power plant -- "*the power plant expects to generate electricity using 1000 metric tonne of garbage a day.*" **Egypt** has plans to build a 150 MW combined *solar* and *gas-powered* electric plant near Cairo using *concentrated* solar technology. *Thin photo-voltaic film* will be the future of solar and **China** is at the front of development that will drive prices down.
Cuba is on the verge of tapping its own *oil* deposit in the **Gulf of Mexico**-- "*we are going to continue with our programs — with American companies or without American companies.*"

Family

[news list](#)|[forecast](#)

- [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]

Immigration

- Advocacy groups say the **Texas immigration detention facility** is inhumane and

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should be shut down. The new **Mexican** ambassador says he will lobby hard in the US for "immigration reform" -- "*there are few matters so important to the future of this country*".

Justice

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- **Canada's** top court ruled unanimously that the government had broken the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* by issuing *security [detention] certificates*.

Security

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- Before departure as **DNI John D. Negroponte** issued a directive reminding agencies of basic intelligence principles.

The security scanner that can "see through clothes" has started public trials -- the *backscatter scanner* is a compromise between *prudishness*, *prurience*, and *effective detection of weapons*. U.S. *airline security* programs are said to be 5 years behind schedule -- even the "no fly" list system [which is unlikely to be highly effective] is five years behind target. The states say implementation of the *Real ID Act* may not happen -- "*without adequate assistance from the federal government ... state driver's license security is at a stand still*." About three **UK passports** go *missing* in the post each day.

The **FBI** has made progress in *translation* capability and is now translating over 1,000 wiretap conversations each day, but of most concern are 3,240 hours of audio from "*very obscure languages and dialects*". The **FBI** is still seeking extra capability in *Arabic* and other *Eastern languages*.

Death by incompetence: The Army is sticking to acquisition of the [problematic] *M4/M16*, an excellent choice providing life doesn't depend on it in a *dusty* environment. The unrelenting pressures on the *National Guard* is concerning state *governors* -- "*how much equipment have we sent abroad, how much has returned, how much is usable?*"

Sweden has criminalized *Denial-of-Service* attacks. In the **UK** a Bank has be fined [\$1.9M] for losing a *laptop computer* -- the fine was levied for "*failing to have effective systems and controls*" in connection with theft of a computer holding *personal customer information*.

The expert opinion is that the **US** is not prepared for the *next "big one"*, be it *terrorist* or *natural disaster* -- "*the key is being willing to invest in things that are not particularly sexy, such as public health, emergency planning and community preparedness*." New federal rules for *chemical plants* have been criticized -- "*The regulations are seriously flawed and could have a very harmful impact*." The **White House** ran an *exercise* testing readiness for "*Iraq-Style*" attacks [truck bombs, etc] -- "[the] *scenario envisioned requests pouring in from state and local authorities, and assumed many local abilities would be diminished by the large scale of the disaster*."

Society

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- ↓ *National Center for Policy Analysis* asks *Where did all the leisure go?* -- *leisure* per capita is the same as it was in 1900 but is cruelly redistributed -- none to some [the "24-7"s], much to others [the unemployed]. Also, *National Center for Policy Analysis* publishes a view [The *free-market* zealot's view] on US national health care -- the "monopolistic buying power" of government does not lower the real cost of health care, it only shifts it - *Health Spending Report Debated* Some **US** states report that they are running out of *health funds* -- "*many states have nearly used up their annual federal subsidy for child health care, and it is not even midway through the fiscal year ...*"

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New **Secretary of Defense Gates** says the quality of *out-patient medical care for wounded US troops* is "unacceptable" -- "*they battled our foreign enemies -- they should not have to battle an American bureaucracy.*"

US police say they need *heavier weapons* in their daily work -- deputies are now "frequently" encountering *assault weapons* in local robberies and during simple traffic stops. Persistently high *crime* rates is turning *New Orleans* into the "Big Uneasy" -- "*it doesn't matter how much money they get from the federal government, nobody's going to stay.*"

Small town America is hard hit by *war casualties* -- nearly half of the 3,100 deaths have come from towns where fewer than 25,000 people live; 20% come from towns with less than 5,000.

Water
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

- **China** is requiring the population to reduce its already low per-capita *consumption* by another 20% by 2010.

Famine and rumors of famine -- **Australia's** key agricultural research agency predicts the *grain crop* will be 60% less this year due to *drought* and reduced *irrigation* water.

A philosophical look at *water disputes*; "*Realists, Liberals and Marxists each have their own explanations for water conflicts*" -- *States should plan for water tiff resolution in good years*

Challengers

Brazil
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- Brazil's President **Lula** has made a fence-building visit to **Uruguay** which is torn between continued involvement in *Mercosur* and the **US FTA**.

A news item *9 Killed in Massacres in São Paulo, Brazil, This Weekend* gave a recap of recent similar incidents such a drive-by shooting of a three and a four year old. A widespread *kidnapping* swindle is now often run by *mobile phone* from inside Brazilian *prisons*.

Investigation of Brazil's recent worst *air crash* suggest that a better command of *English* may have prevented the collision. [English is the internationally-agreed language of *air traffic control*.]

China
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- The Director of the *Institute of Chinese Historical Geography* utters an inconvenient truth that **Tibet** is not historically part of China -- *Tibet wasn't ours, says Chinese scholar*

China gave **Zimbabwe's** President Mugabe a *luxury coach* for a birthday present -- "*Mugabe's government last year said it will import more than 250 buses from China.*"

Russian *oil* deliveries via the *Trans-Siberian railroad* increased 34% in 2006, and is set to increase 46% in 2007.

The *China Meteorological Administration* warns that *global warming* will have a range of *severe consequences* for China.

China's *Stock Market Bubble* -- the 130% rise in prices in 2006 is more to do with *retail dabbling* in equities than fundamentals and the coming *correction*, or *crash*, may reflect badly on the government.

India
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↓ Indicative of several *insurgencies* across India, an ambush in remote northeastern *Manipur* state, presumably by separatists, killed fourteen *police*.

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The *Samjhauta Express* [a regular train between **Delhi** and **Lahore**] was struck by crude **fire-bombs** that killed over 66; critics blamed a failure in basic security at New Delhi station. "It was the blaze that killed... scores of people can be killed even without using sophisticated explosives." To the probable *chagrin* of the perpetrators, India and **Pakistan** were quick to say the bombing would not derail the **peace process** between the two countries.

There is an **electricity crisis** in the **Punjab** -- due to reduction in generation of **hydro power** at the *Bhakra dam*, the Punjab is being forced to shed **400MW** of demand. **Gas shortages** have also hit India's power sector -- India's 43 gas-fired power plants projects are running below capacity or lying idle due to lack of gas. [This highlights India's interest in the *Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline* project.] India finds industrial **growth** brings the same problems it has brought to **China** and elsewhere -- 150,000 tonnes of **electronic waste** each year.

India punctually banned relevant exports to **Iran** in compliance with UN Security Council sanctions arrangements. A senior army commander confirmed that India is working to build an indigenous **military-industrial base** -- *the aims of the armed forces and industry are co-terminus*. A **strategic air-base** at **Ayni** in **Tajikistan** is now ready for use -- "Under the trilateral agreement, India, **Russia** and **Tajikistan** will have command and control of the air base by rotation ... "

Indonesia
news list|forecast

- A persistent minority of **Islamist** clerics continue to pressure Indonesia's president to follow **Islamic law** in the constitutionally-secular country -- "We warn the president as a Muslim he has the obligation to govern this country and its people using Islamic laws." In cooperation with countries like **Kuwait**, **Jordan** and **Saudi Arabia**, Indonesia is seeking to re-**educate** Islamic populations in the true meaning of (non-violent) **jihad**.

Partly to ensure territorial claim, Indonesia hopes to complete naming over **6,000 un-named islands** in 2007 -- the team will also verify which of the 1unnamed islands are truly islands for purposes of the **Law of the Sea**.

Indonesia confirmed, with few other specifics, that the country's first **nuclear power** plant will be built at **Mt. Muria** in **Central Java**. "

Iran
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- *The Times* [UK] says several **US generals** have sworn they will resign if the **Bush** administration orders an attack on Iran -- "There is simply no stomach for it in the Pentagon, and a lot of people question whether such an attack would be effective or even possible." *The Telegraph* [UK] says the **US** is funding **dissident groups** to sow chaos in Iran -- "controversial because they involve dealing with movements that resort to **terrorist** methods in pursuit of their grievances against the Iranian regime." Justice expedited: A man who obligingly confessed to involvement in a **bombing** in **Zahedan** a mere week ago has been **hanged** at the site of the incident.

Iran successfully launched its first rocket into **space**.

The **UK** has recently doubled its **naval** presence in the **Persian Gulf** -- 45 naval vessels are now fanned out from the southern coast of **Pakistan** to the east coast of **Africa**, but none of this is intended as an intimidation against Iran. Iranian **patrol boats** were reported to be "probing" **Iraqi** waters -- "The assessment is that the probes are part of an Iranian effort to raise its military presence in the gulf."

The explosively formed projectiles (**EFPs**) now use in **Iraq** are possibly (probably)

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	<p>made in Iran but this is not beyond doubt because they are now off-the-shelf technology.</p> <p>The interest in <i>al Quds</i> continues -- Secretive force at center of tensions between U.S., Iran</p> <p>The Assembly of Experts -- the arcane group of Islamic scholars that elects the Supreme Leader and resolves differences between branches of government – began a new session.</p>
<p>Russia news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ Russia is highly peeved at US unilateral plans to install <i>missiles</i> on the Russian border -- "<i>Imbalances that have emerged ... are going over the top in terms of a sensible equilibrium.</i>" [Nobody say "Cuban missile crisis".]</p> <p>Sergei Ivanov has been installed as one of four <i>first deputy prime ministers</i> and given responsibilities for <i>defense</i> and other leading policy areas – the appointment indicates Ivanov is Putin's preference as his <i>successor</i>. Elsewhere Ivanov says Russia will now make "state-of-the-art <i>precision-guided weapons</i>" a major priority"</p>
<p>Venezuela news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A recent raft of <i>military purchases</i> makes Venezuela "<i>Latin America's largest weapons buyer placing it ahead of other major purchasers in international arms markets like Pakistan and Iran.</i>" <p>Japan signed a 15-year <i>oil</i> deal with Venezuela -- a 15-year loan will fund <i>development</i> of petroleum reserves to which Japan will have preferential access. Venezuela has signed an attractive long-term <i>oil</i> deal with London Lord Mayor Ken ["Red Ken"] Livingstone.</p>
<p>Wild Cards news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reuters</i> published a chronology of the dozen or so <i>kidnappings</i> and other incidents in Nigeria's delta region so far during 2007 -- Nigerian militant attacks on oil, gas industries <p>There are mounting signs that Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe is reaching a crunch-point -- Mugabe has destroyed the once successful Rhodesian colonial <i>economy</i> and is now at war with own country, and his eventual passing will bring further turmoil in a <i>succession</i> battle.</p> <p>The governor of Waziristan reports that 50 <i>foreign</i> families [non-<i>Pashtun</i>] are leaving the area which may be a sign the must-scorned <i>pact</i> between Pakistan and Waziri tribal groups is bearing fruit.</p>

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