

Week: 09 April - 15 April 2007

GLOBAL REALITY: THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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

Threat Summary

	<p>Environment. Lake Michigan in danger. Discarded cell phones are toxic waste. Timber crime.</p> <p>Inter-State Conflict. Iraq now a poisoned chalice. Pakistan says instability too big for gun sights.</p> <p>Proliferation. Pakistan warns of nuclear war. Middle East: power plants yes, weapons no?</p>
	<p>Poverty. Darfur, Chad, Central African Republic now described by UN as being in desperate straits.</p> <p>Infectious Disease. Resistant gonorrhea in US jumps from 1% to 13%. AIDS drug prices down.</p> <p>Civil War. Somalia another Iraq? Zimbabwe starving. Ivory Coast & Sri Lanka improved.</p> <p>Genocide. Finland imprisons Rwandan pastor for genocide. All genocides but one (17) still ignored.</p> <p>Transnational Crime. Mexico, Colombia, Guatemala all reeling, police ineffective and not trusted.</p>
	<p>Other Atrocities. Minsk center to train against human trafficking. Civilians in Iraq lack protection.</p> <p>Terrorism. Youth bulge among Islamics. Algeria and Morocco destabilizing. Plague weaponized.</p>

Policy Summary

	<p>Diplomacy. Pakistan declines joint operations. US raising defense ties with Israel.</p> <p>Security. US Army stretched to breaking point. US intelligence expanding, but is it more intelligent?</p> <p>Society. Paul Wolfowitz, poster boy for white collar prostitution—jump in subordinate’s pay, for sex.</p>
	<p>Education. Nine US states adopt common standards for Algebra II. One third still do not graduate.</p> <p>Health. .See Infectious Disease. Best book still Laurie Garrett’s <i>BETRAYAL OF TRUST</i>, see reviews.</p> <p>Immigration. Eleven million undocumented illegal immigrants and rising.</p> <p>Water. New York State killing its water quality with two update projects. Africa going dry faster.</p>
	<p>Agriculture. Nothing new. Bees still dying, US agricultural catastrophe could be around the corner.</p> <p>Economy. Nothing hot in the news, but predatory lending and number of “maxed out” growing.</p> <p>Energy. Hybrids from locomotives to tugboats—finally going commercial. Solar panels better.</p> <p>Family. Archdiocese of San Diego attempts to conceal assets from child molestation lawsuits.</p> <p>Justice. Karl Rove’s emails deleted—compared to the Nixon Watergate tapes.</p>

Major Player Summary

	Iran. .Nuclear plants, war games, visiting Members of Congress ire the imperial White House.
	Venezuela. Will provide fuel to Latin America for 100 years. Many trying to depose him. US losing.
	<p>Brazil. Land reform too slow. Rio Governor asks for armed forces to fight crime. 1000 paid murders.</p> <p>China. Major military advances could be inflated for budget reasons, but US unlikely to win there.</p> <p>India. Drug product breakthroughs from India (and global price arbitrage) could save Medicare.</p> <p>Indonesia. .Bomb-making and firearms training by rebels. World’s biggest producer of drug ecstasy.</p> <p>Wild Cards. Climate wars, Asia space race. Union of Central Asian States proposed. Turkey worried.</p>
	Russia. Chechnya resistance largely eliminated. Billionaire plans violent coup. US pouts.

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

↗	Alert	Nigeria, Timor-Leste, Zimbabwe
↓	Deteriorated	DR Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe
↑	Improved	Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Israel/Occupied Territories, Mauritania, Nepal, Northern Ireland [UK]

↓ deteriorated
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↑ improved
↗ ALERT

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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"> • The patchwork of various lists around the world of proscribed "terrorist organizations" is presenting aid agencies with a new bureaucratic burden that diverts attention from humanitarian tasks. <p>A brief survey of land-cover imagery systems around the world used in early famine warning -- US Uses Landsat Satellite Data to Fight Hunger, Poverty.</p> <p>Africa has contributed least to climate change but will be the continent most badly impacted -- only regional planning can tackle <u>threats that do not respect boundaries</u>.</p> <p>The UN warns that conditions in parts of Sudan (Darfur), Chad, and Central African Republic are now -- this minute -- <i>desperate</i>.</p>
Infectious Disease news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug-resistant gonorrhea is spreading in the US; a pox upon the misuse of antibiotics -- resistant cases has jumped from less than 1% to more than <u>13%</u> in less than five years. <p>The pharmaceutical giant Abbott said it will cut the price of AIDS drugs in some poor countries -- "<i>Abbott said it would offer its drug Kaletra at a price of <u>\$1,000 per patient per year</u> -- a price lower than generic versions -- to governments of more than 40 countries ...</i>" [In the face of threats by some countries to blatantly break patents, this is as much <i>enlightened self-interest</i> as generosity.]</p> <p>A comprehensive survey of dengue in Latin American, where it arrived as recently as the <u>1960s</u> -- South American arms race against dengue.</p>
Environment news list forecast	<p>↓ The EPA has relaxed air pollution rules for US ethanol producers -- the EPA is now an agent of a political oil-substitution policy, not emission reduction. [What is wrong with this picture?] The first US Renewable Fuel Standard has been promulgated -- "<i>the RFS program requires American refiners, blenders, and importers to use a minimum volume of renewable fuel each year between 2007 and 2012.</i>"</p> <p>Drug levels seeping into Lake Michigan are increasing -- "<i>the fish are constantly exposed to hormones.</i>" A study shows retired cell phones are growing into a mountain of a hazardous waste; lead, nickel, antimony, zinc, copper ... and more.</p> <p>A number of retired US generals have urged appreciation of climate change at a strategic level -- "<i>there will be conflicts over water resources, as well as increased instability resulting from rising sea levels and global warming-related refugees.</i>" Symbolically important, and perhaps of practical value, the UN Security Council is about to hold its first discussion of Climate Change as a global security issue.</p> <p>In the outlying jungles of Malaysia, timber-men are poisoning farmers' crops to get them to leave the area -- the big money in tropical forestry attracts criminals.</p> <p>Friends of the Earth International calls on the World Bank to halt funding for projects contributing to climate change -- World Bank Still Fuelling Climate Change.</p>
Inter-State Conflict news list forecast	<p>↓ A UPI analyst says the worst mistake in Iraq may be yet to be made -- the present 26,000 US casualties may pale into insignificance if the Neocon Pentagon is allowed to make open war on the Shi'ites. In Iraq, a bombing in the center of the Green Zone, and destruction of a major bridge on the same day give a glimpse of the strategic leverage that asymmetric actions can attain. From left field emerges another element of Iraq's rich tapestry -- "<i>some 10,000 Baghdad residents packed a sports stadium March 31 to celebrate the <u>73rd anniversary of the Iraqi Communist</u></i>"</p>

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Party. Presidential contender John McCain says he sees '*no Plan B*' for the war in Iraq -- "*if I had a good alternative, maybe we could consider it now*". [A "no plan B" approach assumes the present *world-view* and all *presuppositions* are correct; a god-like (or child-like) position.] The **Iraqi intelligence community** is more divided than that of the US -- "*If no critical compromise is reached, the security services are going to fall apart on ethnic, sectarian and party lines.*" On 20070415, the **Sadr** bloc announced it is withdrawing support again from the **Maliki** government.

A retired **Pakistan** Brig-General says the key to success in **Afghanistan** is to treat with **Pushtoon** and non-Pushtoon groups equally, favoring neither. **Australia** is doubling its modest but important *special forces* deployment to **Afghanistan**. The **Emergency** organization has left **Afghanistan** after the head of the **Afghan Intelligence Service** said it "*supports terrorists and Al Qaeda men in Afghanistan*".

Three retired generals have so far declined the proposed position of '**War Czar**', to coordinate both **Iraq** and **Afghanistan** -- one said "*they don't know where the hell they're going*". [No-one said *poisoned chalice*.]

UNHCR says there are about 100,000 refugees in **Yemen**, most of whom are **Somalis**, living in squalid conditions.

The **Pakistani** Prime Minister **Aziz** says world instability is bigger than what can be seen through a gun-sight -- *Pakistani premier for "holistic approach" to end world conflicts*.

Civil War
[news list|forecast](#)

↓ More than 100,000 have now fled sporadic but deadly *fighting* in the **Somali** capital, **Mogadishu**. Somalia is at risk of becoming '*another Iraq*' -- deputy prime minister Hussein **Aidid** says "*Ethiopian troops must leave from Somali territory to let the Somalis decide their own fate*". **Islamic Courts** leader **Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys** says from hiding there is no difference between **Ethiopian** forces and **Ugandan peacekeepers**.

Last announced at 1,800% in February 2007, **Zimbabwe's inflation rate** will now not be announced until further notice. Zimbabwe urgently needs massive *food imports* following the butchering of its *farm sector*, and has very little *foreign currency*. Zimbabwe's politics goes back to the basics with the government likely to use *food* as an electoral weapon -- "*using food aid to lure the electorate, while cracking down on donor agencies it alleges to be supportive of the opposition.*"

Ivory Coast has passed a law giving **amnesty** to all parties involved in recent bitter conflict -- "*a 'home-grown' peace deal ... may succeed where internationally brokered accords have failed to reunite a country split in two for over four years.*"

The **Sri Lankan** government believes it is in the final phase of a push against **Tamil separatists (LTTE)** -- "*This is the climax. The LTTE are desperate. It's a matter of time.*"

Genocide
[news list|forecast](#)

• A former pastor in the Baptist Church in **Rwanda** has been imprisoned in **Finland** on charges of genocide.

Why resolutely say "*Never Again*" when there is no intention to do anything? -- *From Rwanda to Darfur - Never Again? Or Never Say Never Again?*. Another "agreement" between the **UN**, **African Union** and **Sudan** in the fatally-slow game to halt slaughter in **Darfur** may bear fruit only after many more deaths. [Are Darfurians paying the cost of not being Jewish?] **China** makes its first comment on Darfur in urging Sudan to be "flexible" on a peace plan -- China's suggestions may have more

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<p>Other Atrocities news list forecast</p>	<p>weight with Sudan than years of loud and failed diplomacy. [The <i>Olympiad</i> looms?]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "<i>They knew we were refugees</i>": the deliberate slaughter of <i>civilian refugees</i> by the US in 1950 in Korea confirms no nation has claim to the moral high ground -- '<i>Forgotten War</i>' Yields Another Secret. <p>Russia claims the arrest of the head of a <i>human trafficking</i> group -- "<i>a criminal group, involved in human trafficking and illegal immigration from South East Asian and CIS countries to Western Europe through Russia</i>."</p> <p>The title of the latest ICRC report on Iraq says it all: "<i>Civilians Without Protection - The Ever-Worsening Humanitarian Crisis in Iraq</i>".</p> <p>Brazilian authorities have again found and released hundreds of <i>slave laborers</i> -- "<i>from the beginning of the year till the end of March, 583 Brazilians who were working as slaves were released by the Brazilian government's Mobile Inspection Group ...</i>"</p> <p>A center to train <i>anti-human trafficking</i> specialists will be opened in Minsk [capital of the CIS] -- "... <i>it would be the only such centre in the world which would operate on a permanent basis</i>."</p> <p>Peru's former army chief says former president Fujimori (1990-2000) knew about political <i>massacres</i>; Peru is trying to extradite Fujimori.</p> <p>Up to 400 are thought to have been killed in Chad by Sudanese militias striking across the border -- "... <i>the new estimate followed a visit by a group of U.N. agencies to the remote area ... where they found a situation which one UNHCR official described as "apocalyptic</i>."</p>
<p>Proliferation news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of the IAEA visited to discuss Jordan's hopes for a nuclear plant by 2015 for <i>electricity</i> and <i>water desalination</i>, and for <i>nuclear technology in education</i>. After the meeting, Mohamed EI Baradei expressed the hope that the <i>Middle East</i> could be made <i>free of nuclear weapons</i> -- "<i>this is the last chance to build a security system in the Middle East based on cooperation and trust and not the possession of nuclear weapons</i>." <p>DPRK claims it is ready to close its nuclear reactor/s on receipt of <i>funds</i> presently frozen in Macau. [The deadlock lasting weeks is inexplicable given money transfers usually take one-millisecond.]</p> <p>Pakistan says the danger of a <i>nuclear weapons exchange</i> is as high today as during the <i>cold war</i> -- there is a need for "<i>a new consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation</i>".</p>
<p>Terrorism news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ Brief outline of the Symposium "<i>Common Security and the Global War on Terrorism</i>" jointly organized by the Pakistan Army and US Central Command -- Land Forces Symposium in Pakistan for Evolving Universal Definition of "Terrorism". Addressing the <i>Symposium</i>, Pakistan's High Commissioner to the UK observes that realizing "terrorism" can not be defeated solely by <i>military force</i> does not of itself translate into an <i>adequate multidimensional response</i>.</p> <p>The Saudi government promises a crackdown on <i>extremist clerics</i>, at least those that threaten Saudi Arabia -- "<i>without efficient and positive action from Saudi scholars, clerics, mosque imams, thinkers, newspapers and television channels, we cannot develop and strengthen an ideological security</i>."</p> <p>Controversially, a German (female) researcher claims <i>women</i> play a major role in the</p>

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survival of **terror groups**; "women are ensuring the survival of Islamic terror organisations such as *al-Qa'ida* and *Jemaah Islamiah* by passing on extreme ideologies to their children and relatives" -- [Women ensure survival of terror groups](#). In **Iraq**, 16 killed by a **female** bomber is a reminder of the gradually increase in participation by women [not to mention men disguised as women] in **asymmetric** conflicts. [The *Tamil* separatists of **Sri Lanka** first brought equal opportunity to suicide bombing.] An argument in the *Jerusalem Post* so simple it may be valid: **Islamic militantism** is driven in major part by **demographics** of a "youth bulge"; of the 27 nations with a "youth-bulge", 13 are Muslim -- ['Youth bulge' violence](#).

One of several **bombings** in **Casablanca** [**Morocco**] seems to have targeted **US** assets; by week's end, Moroccan police arrested the alleged 'mastermind' and had found where the bombs were made. The **al Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb** claimed responsibility for bombings in **Algiers** [**Algeria**]; one roadside bomb seemed aimed at a subsidiary of **Halliburton** – this newly-focussed "*lethal and talented group*" on Europe's doorstep opens a new virtual front; two summaries of the situation in **North Africa** and its relevance to **Europe** -- [Al-Qaida in the Maghreb \[Analysis\]](#) and [Algeria could provide springboard for European terror \[Analysis\]](#). **NATO** promised all assistance to **Algeria** [and NATO special ally **Morocco**] to counter terrorism -- fighting "global terrorism" has now been identified as a new priority for 26-nation **NATO**.

Italy suggests there should be **NATO** or **UN** guidelines on **ransoms** but "*kidnapping cases were too sensitive to create a blanket no-negotiation rule.*"

The **US Domestic Nuclear Detection Office** hopes to deploy next-generation **nuclear detectors**, at \$350,000 per unit, by July 2007.

A medical journal confirmed **the plague** [the *pneumonic* rather than the more romantic *bubonic* version] would be a quite efficient **biological weapon** -- "*it is now possible to harness the ability of the plague to spread by respiratory droplets, and make aerosol-based weapons capable of causing widespread pneumonic plague outbreak.*" -- [The Plague As A Weapon?](#)

A reminder of **bin Laden's** "bleed until bankrupt" strategy -- [Al-Qaeda focuses on economic targets](#). [Is it working?]

Transnational Crime
[news list|forecast](#)

- In **Colombia**, about 50,000 (or more), weary of **crime-related violence**, have marched in **Cali** protesting a **car-bombing** at police headquarters.
[The Government and the Drug lords: Who Rules Mexico?](#) -- "*the good news is that there are more capos in jail; the bad news is that it doesn't change anything*".
- A survey reveals 90% of **Guatemalans** distrust the **police**, which they described as one of the most **corrupt** institutions in the country.

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

Agriculture
[news list|forecast](#)

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

Diplomacy
[news list|forecast](#)

- President **Musharraf** of **Pakistan** has utterly rejected suggestion of **joint counter-terror operations** with the **US** -- "*the whole population of Pakistan will rise against it*".
 Following a brief disagreement over **Israel's** supply of **UAVs** to **China** in 2004, the **US** now agrees to "*raise defense ties*" with **Israel**.

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Economy news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]
Education news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nine US states have taken a small step towards <i>common standards</i> with a <i>shared curriculum and test</i> for <i>Algebra II</i>.
Energy news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A \$30B barrage harnessing the <i>tidal flow</i> of the <i>Severn Estuary</i> may supply <u>5%</u> of the UK's energy needs but may destroy <i>unique habitats</i>. A quick overview on <i>hybrids</i> from <i>locomotives</i> to <i>tugboats</i> -- Hybrid vehicle technology goes commercial. A new design for <i>solar panels</i> improves <i>efficiency</i> – “<i>an array of nano-towers, like microscopic blades of grass, that add surface area and trap more sunlight</i>”. Fears of a world <i>gas cartel</i> eased after major gas producers Iran, Qatar, Russia, Venezuela had met, but they took the necessary first step towards such a cartel by establishing the Gas Exporting Countries Forum.
Family news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God moves (money) in mysterious ways – the <i>Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego</i> is facing <i>contempt of court</i> in attempting to shield <i>assets</i> from settlements with victims of <i>clergy sexual abuse</i>.
Health news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [nothing significant to summarize but see links to stories in this topical area]
Immigration news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President Bush is seeking again to “renew” the “<i>immigration debate</i>” but little renewal seems possible in what is more a contradiction and impasse -- “<i>how to resolve the status of undocumented immigrants already living in America [around 11 million] is but one of several sticking points for lawmakers on Capitol Hill ...</i>”
Justice news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karl Rove assumed the <i>e-mails</i> wanted by an enquiry into (prejudicial) dismissal of US attorneys were stored, but they seem to have been deleted. [Someone said “<i>Nixon tapes</i>”.]
Security news list forecast	<p>↓ It is still obvious there is no <i>long-term strategy</i> behind Katrina reconstruction -- “<i>over the coming years, perhaps decades, significant and complex challenges lie ahead...</i>”.</p> <p>A Congressional committee has recommended legislation requiring agencies to report <i>data mining</i> activities; classified, sensitive details would be put into a separate non-public annex.</p> <p>An army already “stretched thin by four years of war” extended Iraq tours to 15 months. The US Army is now paying around \$1B to <i>recruit and retain soldiers</i> -- the amount spent on bonuses in 2006 is roughly equal to what the Pentagon spent on <i>electronic jamming devices</i> to disable <i>roadside bombs</i>. <i>Overseas wars</i> have brought a boom in armaments -- the price of <i>ammunition</i> in the US risen <u>four-fold</u> in two years, and <i>police</i> are experiencing supply shortages.</p> <p>A summary of EU terrorism-related police work, as well as EUROPOL's bid to have its powers widened -- 700 arrests for terror-related offenses in EU last year, Europol says.</p> <p>The US plans to broaden foreign <i>intelligence cooperation</i>-- “<i>an environment to enhance collaboration between our national agencies while providing a venue to share more information with our coalition partners.</i>” The DNI is changing the way spies will be <i>hired, assigned, evaluated and paid</i> and is seeking to establish <i>community-wide standards</i>; for instance, <i>clarity in intelligence reports and</i></p>

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	<p>assessment of source reliability. The Department of Defense will establish a training center at <i>Fort Huachuca</i> (Arizona) for <i>human intelligence (HUMINT)</i>. The DNI is seeking <i>expanded powers</i> under the <i>Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA)</i>.</p> <p>The <i>Federal Information Security Management Act 2006</i> report says the government receives "<i>an overall grade of C-minus when it comes to safekeeping information on government computer systems</i>". A "disk" with <i>private identifying data</i> on 2.9 million Georgians was lost by a <i>private contractor</i>.</p> <p>The <i>Miami Herald</i> suggests the assessment of Fidel Castro's imminent death is an indictment of US on-ground intelligence in Cuba.</p>
<p>Society news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impunity of the moral high ground: a tale of the World Bank, Paul Wolfowitz, a "friend" on a stupendous salary, and the US State Department -- <i>Wolfowitz in World Bank Web of Sex and Scandal</i>.
<p>Water news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits to Growth -- without exponentially-better <i>water management</i>, it will be <u>impossible</u> to achieve <i>Africa's Millennium Development Goals</i>. <p>Three upstate projects threaten <i>New York's water quality</i> with "dying a thousand deaths".</p>
<p>Challengers <i>see daily items with links to full stories on the web at PDB-Challengers</i></p>	
<p>Brazil news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brazilian <i>landless farmers</i> plan to celebrate "Red April" with a number of peaceful mass actions to protest the slow pace of <i>land reform</i>. <p>The Rio governor wants more help from the <i>armed forces</i> to fight <i>crime</i> -- "<i>the military and civil police are extremely overworked. I think that all law enforcement agencies can help in this struggle.</i>"</p> <p>At least 20 people including police suspected of carrying out about 1,000 <i>contract killings</i> in five years were arrested in the north-eastern state of Pernambuco.</p>
<p>China news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The US is said to be getting slightly nervous about China's <i>military</i> advances -- "<i>the Chinese tests indicate that China is gaining a much more powerful ability to militarily deter the US or attack US soil or assets such as aircraft carriers at sea ...</i>" <p>"It's time now, to begin shaming China" say some -- <i>Darfur Collides With Olympics, and China Yields</i>.</p> <p>Police in <i>Shanghai</i> detained more than 200 <i>protestors</i> complaining about the lack of response to complaints -- "<i>most of the protestors were released [that evening] but several were kept in custody because they complained about their treatment by the police ...</i>"</p> <p>In <i>Shanghai</i> 29 <i>coal power plants</i> will be shut down by 2010 -- China is building one coal-fired plant about <u>every three days</u>, replacing older, smaller ones with larger, more efficient plants.</p>
<p>India news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "<i>It isn't a question of if, but when drug product breakthroughs will start arriving from India.</i>" -- <i>India: Biotech world innovator and competitor</i>. <p>The US-India nuclear agreement is still far from settled -- "<i>a fair degree of frustration in Washington that the Indian government has not engaged seriously enough or quickly enough with both the United States and the IAEA</i>"</p> <p>India successfully test fired its indigenous <i>nuclear capable Agni -III missile</i>. [China has missiles with a longer reach than Agni-III.] Following an MoU last year, India and China enact some important symbolism in a <i>joint naval exercise</i>.</p>

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<p>Indonesia news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indonesian police set the stage for an imminent announcement on the case of an activist, Munir, whom many think was murdered by poison by state security (BIN). Indonesian authorities say that JI has sets up new operations unit -- "<i>the wing, called the Sariyah or military company, has held training exercises to teach its operatives bomb making and firearm assembly skills ...</i>" The Indonesian navy has foiled an attempt to smuggle timber out of Papua; [approx \$440,000] in illegal tropical logs would be worth many times that in made-up product. Indonesia is the world's biggest producer of ecstasy, followed by Germany, the Netherlands and India.
<p>Iran news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IAEA predicts Iran could make a nuclear bomb within <u>four to six years</u>. [Not six months as some say.] Iran will soon request tenders for two further 1GW+ nuclear plants in Bushehr. Moscow (and others) are 'confused' at Iranian war-games near the Bushehr nuclear plant which Russia is helping build. The White House has said members of Congress should not visit Iran -- "<i>Members of Congress are not simply potted plants, though the White House would like them to be</i>" says chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Tom Lantos.
<p>Russia news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Chechnya, almost 140 militants have been detained since January 2007 -- pro-Kremlin Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov, a one-time warlord, says all illegal armed groups will be eliminated within two months. Secretary of State Rice has "warned" Russia against helping separatists in Georgia. [Conversely, it is bad if Russia opposes separatists in Kosovo.] Russia sees the Ukraine joining NATO as a strategic challenge-- <i>Bush Signs NATO Bill</i>. Police and OMON special forces broke up an unauthorized rally before it began. A second day of protests without a permit was also broken up. Elsewhere in Moscow there was also an authorized pro-government rally said to number 15,000. Russia's working population is dying out -- the Russian population has been <u>falling</u> since 2006, bringing a future aged care burden as in the West, but more so. Billionaire tax-evader in-exile Boris Berezovsky says he is plotting new Russian "revolution" -- "<i>we need to use force to change this regime</i>".
<p>Venezuela news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carlos Ortega, who was imprisoned for the rebellion of 2002/2003 and escaped in August 2006, has confirmed his determination to bring down Chávez in a video-taped address. Venezuela is seeking the extradition from Colombia of the leader of the 2002 coup Pedro Carmona -- he is accused of the crime of civil rebellion. Still burned by the coup five years ago backed by the US and led by Opus Dei saviors, President Chávez now tells the military to support Venezuela's socialism or leave. President Chávez says detente with the US is 'impossible' -- "<i>a thirst for oil motivated both the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and a failed 2002 coup against him.</i>" President Chávez has guaranteed a Latin American energy supply for "a 100 years" - - "<i>All energy Latin America needs is here in Venezuela</i>"; Chavez also ridicules the Bush ethanol revolution - "<i>corn or sugar cane -- not to feed people, but to feed the cars of the US empire</i>". President Chávez has not blinked yet in his ultimatums to foreign oil companies -- "<i>Chávez is playing a game of chicken with the largest oil companies in the world.</i>"

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Wild Cards

[news list|forecast](#)

- “*Climate wars*” is a new shorthand embracing *water wars*, *population displacement* and other consequences of climate change – the “cake-walks” of **Iraq** and **Afghanistan** have stretched resources to limits; so how equipped is the world to take on challenges of a truly continental scale?-- *Climate wars*.

There is a *space race* underway in *Asia* -- **India**, **South Korea**, **Malaysia**, **Taiwan** all have *satellites* in orbit, **North Korea** claims to have sent one up, and all have further ambitions.

An excellent backgrounder on the conflict between **Pakistan tribal groups** and **Uzbeks** in **South Waziristan** -- *Why Is There So Much Anti-Uzbek Anger?* Pakistani *tribesmen* killed 300 militants and seized ground from “foreigners” that was then secured by government troops -- feeling vindicated, and slightly pissed off, President **Musharraf** says “*If Pakistan is bluffing, if I am bluffing and the ISI is bluffing, I think we should be out of the coalition*”. Pakistan reiterates, this time with feeling, there is now no *cross-border* movement of Afghans -- “*if someone proves [any cross-border movement] through satellite imagery, I am responsible*,” Major Gen Gul Muhammad said.

The **Kazakh** leader has proposed a *Union of Central Asian States* which would comprise 55 million people and be *energy-rich*.

Turkey again urged **Iraq** to stop Kurdish rebels operating across the border into Turkey. [Turkey would also prefer never to hear northern Iraq described as “*Kurdistan*”.] **Turkish special forces** penetrated up to 40km into **Iraq** to disrupt **PKK** activity. *The Jamestown Foundation* sees further conflict between **Turkey** and the **PKK** now ensconced in northern **Iraq** but believe ultimately the **PKK** will exchange greater autonomy in eastern Turkey for sovereignty -- *Turkey’s Coming Offensive Against the Iraqi-based PKK*. A woman alleged to have been trained by **PKK** Kurdish separatists was arrested with 5.3 kg of *plastic explosives* in **Istanbul**. 200,000 have marched in **Turkey** in support keeping the nation *secular* -- protesters called on the government to resign and chanted slogans including, “*We don’t want an imam as president*.”

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