



## GLOBAL REALITY: THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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

### Threat Summary

**Environment.** Bacteria solutions emerging. Brazil, China, India urge attention to climate change.  
**Inter-State Conflict.** Cheney singled out by United Kingdom as the most serious negative factor.  
**Proliferation.** Jordan commits to being model for peaceful nuclear development. Putin loses nukes.  
**Poverty.** South America and Arab countries forming new block focused on Millennium Goals.  
**Infectious Disease.** Malaria epidemic in Assam. Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) affect 1 billion.  
**Civil War.** Yemen, Chad, Sudan, Sri Lanka (suicide boats), Zimbabwe.  
**Genocide.** UN continues to fail in stopping genocide.  
**Transnational Crime.** 2006: US Treasury sanctions 527 countries, 815 individuals, 21 drug cartels.  
**Other Atrocities.** UK and India focusing in human trafficking.  
**Terrorism.** Terrorists have beaten the shit out of America in the realm of ideas.

### Policy Summary

**Diplomacy.** Anti-Cuban terrorist may have been trained by USA.  
**Security.** USAF stands up unmanned wing. TSA loses data on 100K personnel. WH out of control.  
**Society.** Clinton says big picture strategic planning non-existent.  
**Education.** Nothing significant. Best and brightest blowing off high-school as silly rote learning.  
**Health.** One third of US troops have mental health issues according to Navy's Surgeon General.  
**Immigration.** Nothing significant. See Other Atrocities.  
**Water.** Nothing significant.  
**Agriculture.** GM crop product declared illegal.  
**Economy.** Nothing significant.  
**Energy.** 80% of all material imported to a battlefield is fuel.  
**Family.** Vatican loses its mind, calls an attack on the Church that molests children "terrorism."  
**Justice.** Paris Hilton found guilty on felony chargers.

### Major Player Summary

**Iran.** US finally engaging with Iran, despite Dick Cheney's efforts to stifle talks.  
**Venezuela.** Writes off the IMF and World Bank (both organizations long overdue for decapitation).  
**Brazil.** Breaking AIDS patents to save lives. Spearheading rapprochement with Arab nations.  
**China.** 7 billion barrels of oil discovered. Officially bans trade in human organs. Water critical.  
**India.** Focus on asymmetrical warfare, light water reactors.  
**Indonesia.** Strident evangelical Christians pushed back, Islamic terrorists still active.  
**Russia.** \$2.2B in weapons to Libya. Poor seaports.  
**Wild Cards.** Pakistan and Afghanistan trying hard to heal.

### World Crises - from monthly assessments by *International Crisis Group* - MAY 2007

	<b>Alert:</b> [nil]
	<b>Deteriorated:</b> Chad, Nigeria, Philippines, Somalia, Turkey
	<b>Improved:</b> Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti, Uganda
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Unchanged:</b> Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Basque Country (Spain), Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chechnya, Colombia, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Fiji, Georgia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, India (non-Kashmir), Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel/Occupied Territories, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Maldives, Mauritania, Moldova, Morocco, Myanmar/Burma, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), Nepal, Niger, North Caucasus (non-Chechnya), North Korea, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, Peru, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Syria, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Western Sahara, Yemen, Zimbabwe</li> </ul>

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<b>Threats</b>		<i>see daily items with links to full stories on the web at <a href="#">PDB-Threats</a></i>
<b>Poverty</b> <a href="#">news list forecast</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <i>Summit of South American-Arab Countries</i> has produced resolutions for ongoing technical exchanges to achieve <i>Millennium Development Goals</i>.</li> <li><b>Queen Rania of Jordan</b> has launched a <i>micro-finance</i> system that will operate initially in the <i>Middle East</i>.</li> <li><i>United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)</i> commends investigation of <i>bio-fuels</i> but in the context of <i>food supply, water scarcity, and deforestation</i>.</li> </ul>	
<b>Infectious Disease</b> <a href="#">news list forecast</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More on the <i>NTDs (Neglected Tropical Diseases)</i> that affect at least 1 billion people in the world -- <i>Forgotten Diseases</i>.</li> <li>"<i>Assam Tuesday [01 May 2007] sounded a health alert following a malaria epidemic that claimed 25 lives and is affecting about 10,000 people.</i>"</li> </ul>	
<b>Environment</b> <a href="#">news list forecast</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>400 experts met at the <b>IPCC</b> third session in <i>Bangkok</i> to prepare a report on <i>climate change counter-measures</i>. <b>China, India, Brazil</b> insist "<i>If the countries with high per capita emissions do not reduce their emissions significantly, it will be difficult to make substantial global progress ...</i>". The theme of the <b>IPCC</b> third session report was <i>Beating global warming need not cost the earth</i> -- "<i>keeping the rise in temperatures to within 2 degrees Celsius would cost only 0.12 percent of annual gross domestic product.</i>". <i>The Arctic's ice cover is retreating more rapidly than estimated by any of the 18 computer models used by the IPCC in preparing its 2007 assessments.</i></li> <li><b>Prince Charles</b> says that tackling <i>climate change</i> should be mounted like war against <i>Nazis</i> -- "<i>The crisis of climate change is far too urgent and discussion simply isn't enough.</i>" [More important even than a 'war on terror' perhaps.]</li> <li>The <b>House Intelligence Committee</b> wants the House to request a <i>National Intelligence Estimate</i> on <i>climate change</i>. It's bad news for <b>US environmental satellites</b> -- "<i>budget cuts will mean that some existing satellites won't be replaced ... and some other planned satellite launches have been canceled.</i>" <i>Reign of Bush Fish and Wildlife Official Ends in Disgrace</i> -- [On 30 Oct 2006, <b>Public Daily Brief</b> said "<i>Julie MacDonald is an idiot.</i>" Say no more.]</li> <li><i>Bacteria</i> have been identified that can provide relatively quick <i>bioremediation in situ</i> to areas contaminated with highly toxic <i>PCBs</i>. [This is important, but equally important is the <u>general approach</u> – bacteria working at a <i>molecular</i> level -- for other difficult problems such as the <u>fixing of greenhouse gases</u>.]</li> </ul>	
<b>Inter-State Conflict</b> <a href="#">news list forecast</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↓ The <b>UK defence minister</b> in the lead-up to <b>Iraq</b> says "<i>And you think: What did we miss? I think we missed Cheney</i>" -- <i>Cheney Iraq role reviewed in Britain</i>. UK Gen Sir Michael <b>Rose</b> says the <b>US</b> and the <b>UK</b> must "<i>admit defeat</i>" and stop fighting "<i>a hopeless war</i>" in <b>Iraq</b> -- <i>Insurgents 'right to take on US'</i>. There have now been 65 attacks on <b>US</b> forces using highly lethal <i>EFPs</i>; although the munitions originate in <b>Iran</b> there is no evidence of state-level involvement. The death of the reputed leader of <i>al Qaeda</i> in <b>Iraq</b>, <b>Abu Ayyub al-Masri</b>, in a <i>factional</i> fight – if true -- may, or may not, change the nature of the <b>Iraq</b> insurgency. Senators <b>Clinton</b> and <b>Byrd</b> say they will seek a vote to <i>rescind the authority</i> Congress granted Bush to use force in <b>Iraq</b> in October 2002. All is revealed -- "<i>Slam Dunk? What were you thinking?</i>" -- <i>George Tenet [Interview]</i>.</li> <li>The new <b>Iraq Oil Laws</b> are a battle waiting to happen, between the <b>Iraqi state</b> and the self-reliant <b>Kurds</b> -- "<i>The Kurdistan autonomous region backed the draft law ... but</i></li> </ul>	

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has disputed annexes to it that would give control of oilfields to a new state-run oil company."

How to win against an *insurgency* -- *Ten counterinsurgency commandments from Afghanistan*. The correct strategic position to take on **Afghan opium** is still far from clear; "NGOs have suggested several alternative crops, such as fruits, medicinal herbs or saffron, but each has its drawbacks" --  *Holding Fire in the Opium War?*.

**Civil War**  
[news list|forecast](#)

- *Aid convoys* have been attacked in north **Yemen**, hampering humanitarian work -- Yemeni government forces have not been able to suppress a rebellion despite recruiting thousands of *tribesmen* in the mountainous areas of **Sa'ada**.

**Chadian** rebels say agreements between **Chad** and **Sudan** are irrelevant to the *Union of Forces for Democracy and Development* that opposes the Chadian regime. [And civilians remain caught in the middle.]

A powerful **Somali** clan has started to *surrender weapons* to the interim government -- "Businessmen from the powerful *Hawiye* clan turned over crates of ammunition, rifles and heavy weapons at a ceremony in *Mogadishu* ..."

In **Sri Lanka**, the *Sea Tigers* looted 14,000 tons of *rice* and all other removable equipment from a Jordanian ship -- "stripped their ship of every thing that could be removed including *electric lights*". The **Sri Lanka** Navy destroyed *Sea Tiger* boats in the north-east killing twelve *Tamil Tigers* -- "Naval patrol crafts had detected a cluster of 26 *Tiger* boats consisting of ten large boats, four suicide boats and twelve smaller boats ..." The *Tamil Flying Tigers* have conducted small but psychologically momentous *bombing attacks* -- *Flying Tamil Tigers hold Sri Lanka to ransom*. [The *Tamil's* use of Czech-built *Zlin Z-143* aircraft is an interesting example of asymmetry.]

Feeling the need to grow his base of loyalists, **Zimbabwe** president **Mugabe** has declared the rag-tag mass of unemployed former soldiers of the *1970s independence conflict* to be a *reserve force*.

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

↓ Explanation of the involvement of **International Crisis Group** in the *ENOUGH project*; wholly worthy but also an admission that no UN mechanisms can yet stop *intrastate crimes against humanity* -- *The International Crisis Group and the ENOUGH Project: A Complementary Relationship*. Also: *The ENOUGH project web site*

The **Rwanda** president has 'rung an alarm bell' on *Darfur* -- "there are three components -- the UN the AU and the government of **Sudan**. These three are to blame for the situation. ... They need to get together and find a solution."

The **International Criminal Court** has issued *arrest warrants* for a *Sudanese government minister* and a *Janjaweed militia leader* -- "As the territorial state, the government of the Sudan has a legal duty to arrest *Ahmad Harun* and *Ali Kushayb*."

**Other Atrocities**  
[news list|forecast](#)

- The **UK** has undertaken to assist **India** in checking *human trafficking* [from enlightened self-interest] -- "we welcome people in the UK coming through proper process. But those coming illegally are not entitled to be there".

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

- King **Abdullah** pledged that **Jordan**, which has *uranium* reserves and imports nearly all of its *oil*, would be a model in the peaceful development of *nuclear energy*. "The connection between *Khan* and the *Pakistani* government does not lend itself to easy delineation" -- *Pakistan may still be involved in N-smuggling: IISS*.

The new **George Tenet** book brings a reminder that not all former *Soviet nuclear*



material can be accounted for -- [Putin not able to track all nukes](#).

**Stockholm International Peace Research Institute** notes **Australia's uranium** reserves and its possession of classified **laser enrichment** technology make it a "concern".

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

- The **Homeland Security Policy Institute** at *George Washington Univ* adds to the observations that the **internet** is important, if not an **enabling technology**, for '**global terrorism**' -- "*a nation that gave rise to Silicon Valley, Hollywood and Madison Avenue has been outplayed in the realm of ideas, effectively communicated in the new media. ... We've created this global village — the Internet — without a police department.*" The **Combating Terrorism Centre** associated with *West Point* says "*It is not possible to capture, kill, or incarcerate ideas ... [but] ... we can sabotage them by infiltrating their networks and flooding the web with bogus information*".

A suggestion that some forms of **CBRN** detection be incorporated cheaply into mass-market **cell phones** would be a "game changer" changing the paradigm for chemical, biological and radiation detection; low cost, low quality ubiquity would augment high-cost, thinly deployed devices.

The slums of **Casablanca** do not necessarily create **suicide bombers** but the conditions can be exploited by outsiders -- [Casablanca breeds new wave of bombers](#).

More evidence that **Taliban** and **al-Qaeda** are distinct, and sometimes warring, entities -- [How Pakistan settled an al-Qaeda score](#). Investigations in 10 of the 27 **suicide bombings** in different parts of **Pakistan** since 2002 have stalled because authorities are *not able to identify* the bombers.

By historical accident, local, state and federal authorities cooperate well in **Los Angeles** and the **LA Joint Terrorism Task Force** has come together better than others -- "*eighteen million people, trying to self-evacuate out of here, will collapse this place.*"

Some elements of the **US** establishment are readily admitting things are not going well; "*the military component of national power plays only a supporting role in this effort; the primary focus is on non-military influence*" says the **State Department** -- [War on terrorism going badly, US admits](#). **US** intervention in **Iraq** has been the driver and force multiplier for suicide bombers elsewhere, but nothing worthy of the term '**sleeper cell**' has yet been found in the **US** -- [The missing sleeper cells](#).

An Old Bailey judge sentenced five who plotted **bomb attacks** in the **UK** to *life imprisonment* -- "*you have received and taken advantage of the benefits that this society offered you, yet you sought to destroy it.*" The actors in the lethal **7/7 London bombings** met these five several times but security services chose not to widen the investigation to include them, bringing lingering recrimination that they failed in their duty -- [How secret service failed to stop bombers](#). Also, the **Pakistan** intelligence service, **ISI**, is adamant that **UK** authorities had enough information to stop the 7/7 bombings -- "*There is no question that 7/7 could have and should have been stopped. British agencies did not follow some of the information we gave to them*". The 7/7 London bomb plotters were typical of those that the group **al-Muhajiroun** recruited but in the 1990s these groups were ignored, thought a risk only to **foreign governments** -- [The network](#).

The **US** has designated **Harkat ul-Mujaheddin** (HuM), **Jaish-e-Mohammed** (JeM) and **Lashkar-e-Taiba** (LeT), operating mainly in the **Indian** sub-continent, as **foreign terrorist organisations**.



There was an expert observation that the demolition of the *Sarafiya Bridge* in *Baghdad* [Iraq] on 12 Apr 2007 displayed *sophisticated skills* (or superb luck) -- "*Bridges are notoriously difficult to destroy, so the triggered collapse of the bridge marks a new level of sophistication in engineering analysis for bomb placement.*"

Demolition of an important *highway ramp* in *Oakland* [CA. US] by a negligent *gasoline tanker* demonstrated the relative ease with which cities can be put to great cost by a single unstoppable incident.

**Transnational Crime**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

↑ In *Mexico*, *drug dealers* are not loath to engage with the *army* brought in to assist police -- five soldiers were ambushed and killed during an anti-drug operation.

Interdiction of 25 tonne of *cocaine*, valued at around \$0.5B, is the largest seizure in Colombian history. As of the end of 2006, the **US Treasury** had imposed sanctions on 527 companies and 815 individuals involved in 21 **Colombian drug cartels**, involving about \$1B in illegal assets. [These two stories indicate even an amount such as \$1B needs to be viewed in context.]

The **Australian** government says it will strengthen laws on the *bribery* of foreign nationals following disclosure of the **Australian Wheat Board's** payment of massive bribes to **Iraq** in breach of **UN sanctions**. [What was in fact a concealed **crime** that readily escaped attention of Australia's indolent *Foreign Affairs* department was rationalized as a "cost of doing business".]

**Policy**

**Agriculture**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

• A federal judge has declared a **GM** crop project illegal -- "*The USDA's role with respect to regulating transgenic crops should be that of watch dog, not lap dog*" says an activist.

**Diplomacy**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

• **San Salvador's Front for National Liberation** alleges that alleged anti-Cuban terrorist Luis **Posada** Carriles was trained at "*a center of anti-Cuba terrorist operations in El Salvador*" sponsored by the **US**.

**Economy**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

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

**Education**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

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

**Energy**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

• A look at some of the *strategic pipelines* of *Central Asia* -- *Energy-Central Asia: Wrangling Over Pipelines Wrecks Early Prospects [Analysis]*.

"*About 80 percent of all material transported on the battlefield is fuel*" -- as a strategic imperative the **US military** is reviewing its *energy assumptions and practices*.

**Family**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

• The **Vatican** has called a verbal attack on the **Pope terrorism**; "*this, too, is terrorism. It's terrorism to launch attacks on the Church.*" [Showing perhaps that invoking 'terrorism', like *patriotism*, is the last refuge of the scoundrel.]

**Health**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

↓ According to the **Defense Department's Task Force on Mental Health** chaired by Navy **Surgeon General** one-third of US troops are suffering from *mental health problems*.

Jose **Ramos-Horta**, the current prime minister of **East Timor** says he will [with an eye on the *Fretilin* electorate] consolidate ties with *communist states* -- "*collaboration with **Cuba** is very important to us, especially in relation to the **health system***".

**Immigration**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

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

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**Justice**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

• Paris **Hilton** has been found guilty of *felony-first-degree vapid* -- "No one in Los Angeles is above the law," said Los Angeles city attorney Rocky Delgadillo.

**Security**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

↓ If a "**War Czar**" is now needed "it begs the question of who has been coordinating **US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan** the past four years".

More discussion of the fact that arms is an art, not a machine -- *Military Matters: General incompetence.*

"Army researchers 'looked under every rock, and what they found was not always easy to look at'" -- *Troops at Odds With Ethics Standards.*

The **TSA** joins the ranks of agencies with unacceptable **data handling** practices, losing a *hard-disk* with **personnel details** of 100,000 employees -- if stolen purposefully it may be a serious problem.

The **USAF** has stood up the first **unmanned aircraft** wing -- "The new wing is an evolution in the Air Force's UAS program and provides the next step forward in medium- and high-altitude unmanned air systems."

A *Novosti* view on the US **anti-missile shield** venture in **Europe**, dangerously like the *Pershing* crisis of the 1970s -- *ABM: uncooperative Russia or scheming America?*. Rep. **Wexler**, chair of the **House Subcommittee on Europe**, now thinks some adult supervision is needed on the increasingly divisive missile defense plan.

Better than any terrorist, **human error** led to a **dangerous overdose** of caustic soda in a town **water supply** -- "a system that should have alerted other operators was apparently not working.... About 100 people sought medical treatment with minor burns or rashes."

**Society**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

↓ Former President **Clinton** sees **disasters** looming and government not equipped to handle them -- "governments fail to act even when disasters are anticipated because leaders are distracted by ... **immediate emergencies**.... Big-picture planning gets crowded out. "

Would Jefferson agree? -- *NRA: Terror Suspects Have Gun Rights, Too.*

Presidential contender Sen. Barack **Obama** has been given **Secret Service** protection, nine months before the election, the earliest ever for a presidential candidate.

An unsavory clash during a protest march on **immigration** policy in LA's *MacArthur Park* has advanced neither the immigration debate nor admiration for the people skills of **LA's police**.

The rat race is getting faster; walking speeds of **urban-dwellers** have increased globally by 10% over the last decade; **Singaporeans** are fastest, followed by **Copenhagen** and **Madrid**.

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

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

**Challengers**

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

**Brazil**  
[news list](#)[forecast](#)

• Brazil has broken the **patent** on a **Merck AIDS** drug when price negotiations broke down and has threatened to break more *patents* if prices are not reduced on needed drugs -- "the '**compulsory licensing**', as the *Brazilian government calls the patent breaking, might occur every time prices are 'far from the Brazilian reality'*".

**Farmers** in *Santa Catarina* are threatening violence against return of lands to **indigenous peoples**.

Brazilian officials visited **Egypt** for a South American and Arab ministerial meeting

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	<p>to share Brazil's experience in <i>social development</i> programs.</p> <p>10 million or 45% of Brazil's <i>Amazon</i> population live on less than <u>\$2 a day</u> and Brazil's ability to reach <i>Millennium Development Goals</i> in aggregate depends on improvements in this region.</p>
<p><b>China</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New <i>oil reserves</i> of <u>7 billion barrels</u> discovered in the <i>Yellow Sea</i> will make China less dependent on its array of suppliers. A proposed <i>gas pipeline</i> will bring <u>half</u> of <i>Uzbekistan's</i> gas production to China.</li> </ul> <p>China has officially <i>banned</i> trade in <i>human organs</i> -- "<i>Hospitals have also been regularly accused of secretly taking organs from road accident victims and other dead patients without telling family members.</i>" <b>Amnesty</b> asks the <b>IOC</b> to raise with China increasing incidences of <i>forced evictions, arrests, and media clampdowns</i> ahead of the <i>Olympiad</i>.</p> <p>An embarrassment of riches: despite claimed efforts to curb a raging <i>trade surplus</i>, it will increase <u>43%</u> this year to reach \$254B; by contrast China's demand for <i>imported oil</i> is increasing at only <u>5%</u> year-on-year.</p> <p>A reiteration of the <i>critical water situation</i> in China, home to <u>three of the world's ten most at-risk rivers</u> -- <i>Yangtze's Decline Highlights China's Growing Water Problems</i>.</p> <p>The <b>PLA</b> is recruiting commanding officers for <i>informationalised wars</i> and scientists and technicians for key <i>cyberwar</i> technologies -- <i>Chinese military training personnel to fight IT-based war</i>.</p>
<p><b>India</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work has begun on two 1GW <i>light water reactors</i> in Jaitapur (<i>Maharashtra</i>); several more will follow.</li> </ul> <p>"If we do not modify our strategy to <i>asymmetrical</i> challenges, we will end up like other countries who recently suffered setbacks. [meaning the US] " -- <i>Indian Army Ready for Counter Terrorism, Asymmetrical Warfare Challenges: General J.J. Singh</i>.</p> <p>India is the <u>biggest arms buyer in the developing world</u>, \$15B in the last 3 years, but some doubt it is getting the best bang for the bucks -- <i>India buying arms but with no long-term vision [opinion]</i>.</p>
<p><b>Indonesia</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experts say that Indonesia's <b>JJ</b> is still a credible threat; "<i>even members who have been out of contact for years are likely to respond to calls to action from their JJ leaders.</i>" -- <i>JJ network still an active security threat: analyst</i>.</li> </ul> <p>41 <i>Christians</i> have been arrested for <i>blasphemy</i> against Islam in <i>East Java</i> -- as often-strident Christian <i>evangelists</i> push into Indonesia, Indonesia pushes back.</p>
<p><b>Iran</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>America prepares to talk with Iran after 28 years of silence</i> -- "<i>This isn't an opportunity to talk about US-Iran issues. This is really an opportunity for all of Iraq's neighbours to talk about how to stabilise Iraq.</i>" [Or not.]</li> </ul>
<p><b>Russia</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<p>↓ Russia will supply over <u>\$2.2B</u> in weapons, mainly <i>air defense systems</i>, to <b>Libya</b>.</p> <p>One consequence of <b>US missile shield plans in Europe</b>, Russia's suspension of the <i>Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe</i>, means diminished <i>transparency</i> – Russia will stop sharing <i>troop data</i> with <b>NATO</b>.</p> <p>President <b>Putin</b> has called for improvement in Russia's <i>port facilities</i> -- Russia has <u>62 seaports</u> but due to poor facilities most Russian cargo uses <i>foreign ports</i>.</p>
<p><b>Venezuela</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• President <b>Chavez</b> says Venezuela will pull out of the <b>IMF</b> and <b>World Bank</b>, "<i>a largely symbolic move because the nation has already paid off its debts to the lending institutions</i>" says <b>Associated Press</b> -- <i>Chavez: Venezuela to pull out of IMF, World Bank</i></li> </ul>

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*Bank*. But **Reuters** says President **Chavez** is ahead of himself; Venezuela cannot leave the IMF until it repaid the \$21B remaining of its debts -- **Chavez IMF bombshell sows Venezuela debt confusion**. [I.e., the reports are contradictory.]

A handy brief analysis of Venezuela's *security* posture -- *Memorandum to the Press: Venezuela's Security Factors and Policy Goals*.

As foreshadowed, the May Day take-over of Venezuela's *oil-assets* has been effected; now only some heavily-negotiated paperwork remains. "From **Mexico to China**, more than 75% of the world's oil reserves are controlled by national oil companies", but both **Chavez** and **Bush** are spinning the move as highly radical -- *Chavez's Not-So-Radical Oil Move*. President **Chavez** envisions a *Latin American refineries network* -- "Venezuela hopes to gradually sell off its refineries in the United States and build a new network of refineries in Latin America".

For May Day, President **Chavez** announced *minimum wage increase* to \$286/month, three times that of Latin America's lowest, and a move towards a 36-hour week.

A discussion contrasting the Mexican-initiated *Plan Puebla Panama* and *Alternativa Bolivariana para las Américas (ALBA)* comprising **Bolivia**, **Cuba**, **Nicaragua** and **Venezuela** -- *Activists Back Venezuela-Driven Alternative Integration*.

**Wild Cards**  
[news list|forecast](#)

- Presidents **Musharraf** [**Pakistan**] and **Karzai** [**Afghanistan**] once again vow constructive relations -- "We've decided to overcome the basic differences together and that this would be useful for both countries... We've not yet talked about the details" -- but, under impossible demands in an impossible situation from the **US** and others, they quickly revert to blaming each other for what happens in the ungovernable *border regions*. The recent attack on President **Musharraf's** ally, his **Interior Minister**, and the fizzled **Taliban** spring offensive, may indicate **Pakistan's** strategy is hurting the foreign insurgents -- *Tribal Pakistan: Complexity, fragility*. A new *jirga* comprising about 350 tribal *elders, parliamentarians* and *scholars* from **Pakistan** and **Afghanistan** may prove be the first entity to have legitimate authority in the border areas. The **Chief Justice** that President **Musharraf** suspended for good reason -- or narrow political reason -- is now the focus of anti-Musharraf forces that are gathering against him.

With Nicolas **Sarkozy France** heads *right*, pro-**US**, pro-**Israel**, and at war with unspecified 'scum' he vows to purge from French society; a helpful thumbnail portrait: *Immigrant son reaches French presidency*.

If the **US Congress** attributes *Armenian* deaths to **Turkey**, transit of the 60% of supplies to US forces in **Iraq** may be disrupted. With a **Turkish** court blocking an attempt by the government to advance allegedly "*Islamist*" candidates to the *presidency*, Turkey is in stalemate ... between government, half the population, and the *army* - *Political crisis as Turkish election annulled*.

"In **Bosnia**, the success of the **Wahhabis'** puritanical form of Islam is often explained by the desolate conditions in the country" -- *Wahhabi Rules: Islamic Extremism Comes to Bosnia*.

**Blackwater**, like the *crusaders* of old, is an army-for-hire ... providing the cause is holy; "Blackwater has now leapfrogged the other mercenary corporations, apparently through its ties ... to the *religious right*" -- *Blackwater: America's condottieri?*.

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