



## GLOBAL REALITY: THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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

### Threat Summary

**Environment.** Loss of bees means loss of fruits & vegetables. Surge in plankton could save mankind.  
**Inter-State Conflict.** Afghanistan and Iraq untenable for US. Sudan-Chad gets even worse.  
**Proliferation.** Iran quite reasonably asks others to disarm. US finally realizes Bahrain is toasty target.  
**Poverty.** German Pope slams liberation theology. 10.4M/year child deaths. World Bank loses ground.  
**Infectious Disease.** Mosquito most dangerous; malaria kills 1 child every 30 seconds in Africa.  
**Civil War.** Horn of Africa worsens with Somali uprising inside of Ethiopia. Zimbabwe worsens.  
**Genocide.** Ethiopia accused of genocide in Somalia. Meanwhile, US silent on all 18 current genocides.  
**Transnational Crime.** Mexico & Colombia continue to infect US with drugs—or is US behind it?  
**Other Atrocities.** North Korea, Sudan, Uzbekistan most repressive. Trade in African women grows.  
**Terrorism.** Hezbollah building up in Tri-Border Region, US-based radicals threaten military bases.

### Policy Summary

**Diplomacy.** AFRICOM Dead on Arrival. US pardons its terrorist. ASEAN-US summit 30 years late.  
**Security.** Pentagon continues to flail, National Guard hollowed out, DHS advances US as police state.  
**Society.** Army brutalizing recruits.  
**Education.** Secretary of Education in USA remains completely naked and oblivious to his condition.  
**Health.** Chinese drug counterfeiters killing thousands with anti-freeze passed off as glycerin, *ia*.  
**Immigration.** Texas makes it illegal to rent to illegals. 27 secessionist movements as USG fails them.  
**Water.** Chinese unable to provide safe clean water for Olympics. Chinese dam threatens Bangladesh.  
**Agriculture.** Melamine food contamination scandal hits aquaculture fish feed—US fails to anger.  
**Economy.** US has no solution for Medicare while Republicans prevent USG from negotiating prices.  
**Energy.** Sunlight and water power could save us. Russia-India-Pakistan-China pipeline deal in works.  
**Family.** Nothing significant, see link library.  
**Justice.** Nothing significant, see link library.

### Major Player Summary

**Iran.** Offers US exit strategy but questions US integrity in honoring agreements. Dick Cheney lives.  
**Venezuela.** Socialization and nationalization continue. May prove USG is business of running drugs.  
**Brazil.** Liberation Theology alive and well, what-ever the Nazi-era Pope might have to say.  
**China.** Punishing thousands of industrial polluters. Token spending on US technology. Insurgency.  
**India.** Missile arms race with Pakistan continues. Water desperate by 2020. Maoists target cities.  
**Indonesia.** Three nuclear plants continue to operate safely. Bird flue centre opened.  
**Russia.** Compares US with Third Reich re genocide then and now. US more or less loses Central Asia.  
**Wild Cards.** Algeria, Botswana, Kosovo, Pakistan, Kosovo. UK reduced to stealth submarines.

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

- Alert:** [nil]
- Deteriorated:** Chad, Nigeria, Philippines, Somalia, Turkey
- Improved:** Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti, Uganda

- **Unchanged:** Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Basque Country (Spain), Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia & 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

deteriorated      • steady      improved      ALERT



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

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

- It's an old trick, and much used -- "aid" is often not money but pressured purchases of goods from the "donor" that may be of little real benefit -- [Poor Could Lose 67 Billion Dollars](#).

The **Bishop of Rome** promises that no-one is going to get "*real conditions of a just life*" anytime soon on his watch -- [Pope slams liberation theology during flight](#).

"*About 10.2 million children under five die each year around the world*" -- [94% of child deaths take place in just 60 countries, says study](#).

[Population: NGOs Warn of World Bank "Fundamentalists"](#) -- a **Wolfowitz** appointee "*obviously working in line with the ultra-conservative forces in the United States and abroad tried to impose his own fundamentalist religious agenda on women worldwide.*"

**Infectious Disease**  
[news list|forecast](#)

↑ **UNICEF** has commended negotiations by the **Clinton Foundation** to reduce prices of *second-line AIDS medications*.

**Malaria** is the leading cause of death for children under the age of five in Africa -- one dies every 30 seconds. [In terms of deaths caused, the **mosquito** is the *world's most dangerous creature*, responsible for more deaths than all others together.]

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

- **DNI** concurs with the **House** that a *National Intelligence Estimate on global climate change* is "appropriate", but insists on input by National Academy of Sciences and others.

[Dirtiest 30 Power Plants Spew 10 Percent of Europe's Carbon](#) -- some power stations are so bad that the room for *improvement* (by replacement) is a cause for hope. "*It is India's first land use and land use change and forestry project to sell emission reductions earned through carbon sequestration ...*" -- [World Bank to buy carbon credits from Indian farmers](#). The UN articulates the misgivings of many -- rash action may bring a cure that is worse than the disease -- [U.N. raises possible negative impact of biofuels on environment, food security](#). "*It's time to move forward on regulating greenhouse gases and here's a regulatory plan that makes sense*" -- [Global-Warming Myths](#).

[LEDs Emerge to Fight Fluorescents](#) -- a good introduction to why no-one should bet everything on the low-energy but nasty *compact fluorescent bulb* -- the **LEDs** are coming.

Whatever is killing *bees* in the **US** is still a mystery and it's getting worse; "*no honeybees equals no fruit and vegetables*" -- possible reasons range from *global warming* to *cell-phone towers* ....

 [How surge in plankton may be the saviour of mankind](#) -- "*Tons of powdered iron will be poured into the Pacific to induce the growth of [plankton] blooms big enough to be seen from space*" - the first planet-scale attack on *carbon emissions*.

**Inter-State Conflict**  
[news list|forecast](#)

↓ A **Taliban** leader observed that the **Afghan** insurgency can continue for a long time - at these prices, the Taliban could go on "forever", not something that can be said of **NATO**. Confronted with this naked reality, and with naked anger at recent **US/NATO "collateral" damage**, the **Afghan Senate** has called for *direct talks* with the Taliban and to take back ownership of the conflict -- "*if the need arises for an operation, it should be carried out with coordination of the national army and police and with the consultation of the government of Afghanistan.*" [Civilian Deaths Undermine Allies' War on Taliban](#) -- if *hearts and minds* is the objective, "collateral

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damage" is the same as losing a battle, or a war -- "*Afghan patience is wearing dangerously thin, officials warn*". As in Iraq, the insurgents show *military* acumen in striking the weak spots of a high-tech enemy-- the loss of 44,000 litre of fuel on the Pakistan border was the fifth attack on NATO's Afghanistan *fuel supplies* in four months. But Afghans are not just out of patience with NATO; in some places "*Afghan civilians are exhausted by the death and destruction Taliban fighters represent and have risen up against the enemy*" -- *Tribal elders stand up against enemy fighters*.

It may all be a typing error, or someone has been stealing a lot of *oil* in **Iraq** for four years -- *US study finds billions of Iraqi oil missing*. In **Iraq**, any lessening -- if any -- of activity in **Baghdad** is now matched by a surge in insurgent activity in northern **Diyala** province.

"Vice President Dick **Cheney** was in the Middle East Wednesday trying to put Humpty Dumpty back together" writes estranged CIA officer Robert **Baer** -- *What Cheney Needs to Tell the Saudis*.

Fortunately it was not in the middle of an address on *reconstruction*; the **Iraqi Parliament** was plunged into a prolonged *blackout* causing that day's session to be adjourned -- "*it was unclear what caused the blackout. The building has also had little or no water for months.*"

Brotherly Leader and Guide of the Libyan Revolution **Gaddafi** says the latest "*Darfur agreement*" is "laughable" -- signed between **Chad** and **Sudan** in **Riyadh** on 03 May under the auspices of **Saudi King Abdullah**, it is the same as the agreement signed in **Tripoli [Libya]** in April -- "*They told us they tried to explain to the Saudis that they had already signed a similar agreement but they signed the new one anyway.*" [Cynical "photo opportunities" count for more than real progress.]

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

- The **Yemeni** government believe the *al Houthi* rebels seeking restoration of the **Zaidi Imamate** in **Sanaa**, northern Yemen are supported by **Libya** and **Iran** and has recalled ambassadors from both countries.

A **Somali** uprising in the **Ogaden** region of **Ethiopia** would complicate the *Horn of Africa* beyond even the current situation; "*food here costs three times what it does in the rest of Ethiopia. The only thing that comes cheap are guns*" -- *Ethiopia region faces ethnic Somali uprising. see also: Genocide*

On **Darfur [Sudan]**, words are stiffer, even **China** pretends concern, but several *aggrieved factions* are not included in hasty photo-opportunity agreements and nothing will happen without Sudan's political will.

An appreciation of the **LTTE [Tamil Tigers]** air capability by a former head of intelligence of the *Indian Peace Keeping Force* in **Sri Lanka** -- *Winged terror*.

Many sources report that *beatings* and *abductions* continue in **Zimbabwe**, but not the authorities -- "*There is nobody who is being beaten. Please do not make me angry,*" says the *state security minister*. A seven-fold increase in the price of Zimbabwe's main staple, *maize*, will not improve the temper of the population. President **Mugabe** denies the 20-hour daily electricity cuts for households across the country are a sign of mismanagement. The **Australian** Government banned its national cricket team's tour of **Zimbabwe** later in the year because the tour would provide an enormous propaganda boost for Robert **Mugabe**.

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

- The *deputy prime minister* of **Somalia's** transitional government., Hussein Mohamed Farah **Aideed**, has accused **Ethiopian** troops of committing "genocide" against the



	<p>Somali people during the recent conflict -- "<i>Such an accusation coming from a high-ranking Somali official ... could create pressure for a formal international investigation into the recent death and destruction in Mogadishu.</i>"</p>
<p><b>Other Atrocities</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>US soldiers</b> have been reminded to fight by the <b>rules of war</b> [and common human decency] – "<i>Beyond the basic fact that such actions [atrocities] are illegal, history shows that they also are frequently neither useful or necessary</i>" says General <b>Petraeus</b>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Trafficking of African women</b> is reported to be thriving -- "<i>African governments have not yet faced up to the multi-million dollar phenomenon</i>".</p> <p><b>Chad</b> has signed an agreement to demobilize <b>child soldiers</b>; "there are clearly a considerable number of children under arms in Chad". [Such agreements have been signed, and ignored, before.]</p> <p><b>Freedom House</b> says <b>North Korea, Sudan and Uzbekistan</b> stand out among the world's most overtly <b>repressive regimes</b>.</p>
<p><b>Proliferation</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Russia and Kazakhstan</b> will build a <b>uranium enrichment</b> plant in <b>Siberia</b> with <b>IAEA</b> advice -- "<i>The plan will allow other nations to avoid building a similar plant themselves</i>". [<b>Iran</b>, for example.]</li> </ul> <p>In the interminable exchanges between <b>Iran</b> and others on <b>uranium enrichment</b>, Iran has put the <b>second arm</b> of the <b>NPT</b> back on the table -- that obligates the <b>original five nuclear powers</b> to <b>dismantle arsenals</b>.</p> <p><b>Bahrain</b>, headquarters of the <b>US Fifth Fleet</b>, is seeking international help "<i>to ensure that Bahrain is protected from any nuclear danger</i>" [from <b>Iran</b>].</p> <p>"<i>At least some of Khan's associates appear to have escaped law enforcement attention and could, after a period of lying low, resume their black market business</i>" -- <i>CIA did not focus enough on Khan network: researcher</i>.</p>
<p><b>Terrorism</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>UN</b> has launched a <b>database</b> to assist member states in <b>counter-terrorism</b> endeavors -- "<i>the technical assistance matrix provides potential donors with a snapshot of where assistance is still needed by states in implementing Security Council resolution 1373 ...</i>"</li> </ul> <p>Bombings at two <b>bridges</b> in <b>Baghdad</b> killed 23 -- flush with success of demolishing the <b>Sarafiyah bridge</b> <u>exactly one month ago</u>, these bombings may have been aimed specifically at the bridges.</p> <p>"<i>Operating out of the Tri-border [Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina], Hezbollah is accused of killing more than 100 people in attacks in nearby Buenos Aires ...</i>" -- <i>Hezbollah builds a Western base</i>.</p> <p>One of the <b>Fort Dix Six</b> routinely <b>delivered pizzas</b> to the base -- "<i>my intent is to hit a heavy concentration of soldiers ... You hit four, five or six Humvees and light the whole place [up] and retreat completely without any losses.</i>" A sensible brief survey of <b>Islamic militantism</b> in the <b>US</b> by the <b>Council on Foreign Relations</b> -- <i>American Muslims and the Threat of Homegrown Terrorism</i>.</p>
<p><b>Transnational Crime</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mexican drug cartels</b> are offering direct provocations to the military in dropping a <b>severed head</b> at an army base; also <b>Michoacan</b> state <b>police chief</b> was arrested for cartel links.</li> </ul> <p><b>Colombia</b>, hitherto the largest recipient of <b>US</b> aid outside the <b>Middle East</b>, and the <b>US</b> administration await the next move by the <b>US Congress</b> -- <i>Colombia May Re-Evaluate Its U.S. Ties</i>.</p>



**Policy**

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

- The *melamine food contamination* scandal has now widened to aquaculture fish feed. [If caused by 'terrorists', rather than big business greed and negligent officials, this would be a round-the-clock news story.]

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

- Both **Cuba** and **Venezuela** continue to demand the **US** extradite Luis **Posada Carriles** for the 1976 *bombing* of a Cuban airliner, but the US refuses [possibly against international law] to send him to either country.  
 Comment continues on **US AFRICOM** -- "*after generations of betrayal and abuse by more powerful blocs, Africa needs to carefully choose and judge its covenants carefully ...*"  
**Warring clans** that can't agree on **Iraq's** future ... that is, the **State Department** and the **Pentagon Neocon** faction -- *Cheney follows Rice to Middle East*.  
 Anglican Archbishop Desmond **Tutu** has criticized African leaders for their cowardice on **Zimbabwe** – he says Africa is "*so reluctant just to call a spade a spade. Human rights violations are human rights violations*".  
 After 30 years, the first **ASEAN-US** summit will take place in September 2007.

**Economy**  
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- Review of *Wall Street Journal* article by the *National Center for Policy Analysis*; "*Medicare and Social Security combined are on track to eat up the entire federal budget*" -- *Medicare Meltdown*.

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

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

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

- *see also: India*  
 Driving "passive" collectors more energetically with *concentrated light* is now the new direction -- *Solar Power at Half the Cost*.  
 More on the *cost/benefit* approach to *bio-fuels* from *Christian Science Monitor* -- *Biofuels show promise, but also present problems*.  
*Africa faces energy crisis - report* -- "*most of the commercial energy it produces is consumed elsewhere*."  
 A 14 meter (46 foot) twin-hull boat has completed a *fuel-free* crossing of the *Atlantic* -- 2,000 kilowatt hours of *solar energy* during a journey of six months and some 13,000 kilometers.  
 A **US Senate** panel has set a 35 miles-per-gallon auto *fuel consumption* target by 2020 -- "*But senior Republicans said the plan was unfair to struggling U.S.-based auto companies that depend on sales of less efficient sport utility vehicles and pickups*." [Your point being ...?]  
**Russia's** involvement with the **Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline**, with its **Gazprom** expertise, may see the pipeline extended on to **China**.  
 **Daniel Nocera**, professor of chemistry at MIT, says that basic research into the chemical processes of *photosynthesis* could lead to a society powered by *water* and *sunlight* -- *Supplying the World's Energy Needs with Light and Water*.

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

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

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

- **Chinese drug counterfeiters** are using *diethylene glycol* [anti-freeze] instead of *glycerin* and other ingredients in *fake drugs* appearing throughout the *developing world*, and killing thousands -- *From China to Panama, a Trail of Poisoned Medicine*.

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

- *Texas* has passed a law prohibiting landlords from renting to **illegal immigrants** -- "it says especially to Congress that we're tired of the out-of-control illegal immigration problem. That if Congress doesn't do something about it, cities will."

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

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

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

- A retired general joins those who warn that **Iraq** has stretched the **National Guard** beyond breaking point -- "*crucial equipment used by the Guard for disaster relief is now in Iraq instead of standing ready to respond to crises here at home.*" A **USAF** general says the **air fleet** is wearing down -- "*The average Air Force warplane is 23.5 years old compared with 8.5 years in 1967.*"

The **Pentagon** has established a **civilian foreign language corps**; "*a cadre of some 1,000 foreign-language speakers who can help the government in times of war and national emergencies.*" The US is finding it difficult to meet goals of **recruiting** officers of some **ethnic backgrounds** -- "*America has a need for their skill sets. But a lot of them are mistrustful of the government's intentions (and) how their skills would be used*" -- *U.S. spies face uphill battle in ethnic recruitment.*

In what seems to be an unending series of such initiatives, DoD has outlined a new strategy for **Information Sharing** -- "*Delivering the power of information to ensure mission success through an agile enterprise with freedom of maneuverability across the information environment.*" [A plan, or a prayer?]

**Hackers**, using IP addresses from **China** and **Australia**, stole over 22,000 **social security numbers** from a US university.

**DHS** has awarded \$445M in **grants** for projects to secure **critical infrastructure** -- "*These grants will help to protect our nation's critical infrastructure from threats and hazards that could cause major loss of life, economic impact, and disruption of services.*"

The director of the **National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency** says the US will always retain "some control" over **satellite imagery** -- "*I could certainly foresee circumstances in which we would not want imagery to be openly disseminated of a **sensitive site** of any type, whether it is here or overseas.*"

**DHS** will now use **biometric checks** to track departures of foreign visitors.

A new **continuity plan** to be used in event of a **decapitation attack** has been promulgated -- *Bush Changes Continuity Plan.*

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

- How much **brutality** is really necessary to produce a sane, well-trained **war-fighter**? - *Army Training Regimen Brutal in US, Needs Overhauling.*

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

- **Chinese** authorities warn there will be no reticulated drinking water outside the Games Village at the **Beijing Olympics** -- "*The billions spent on cleaning and modernizing the Chinese capital have been many but not enough to make water potable.*"

"A [Chinese] **dam on the Brahmaputra river in Tibet** will lead to a **major ecological disaster for Bangladesh** within the next few years"

**Challengers**

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

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

- Pope **Benedict** visits **Latin America** where few traces of **Liberation Theology** have escaped extirpation; *Benedict to confront a vast theological divide in Brazil* -- "*I'd rather not use [the term] 'Liberation Theology': There's no use provoking people*" says the jeans-clad Irish priest ... where the front office bears a photograph of Che



	<p><b>Guevara ...</b></p>
<p><b>China</b>  <a href="#">news list</a><a href="#">forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A native of <i>Xinjiang Autonomous Region</i> in the far-northwest defaced the iconic <b>Mao</b> portrait on the <i>Forbidden City</i> adjoining <i>Tiananmen Square</i> – the significance of the attack on the symbolic heart of China for the authorities, or for reluctant <i>Xinjiang</i>, remains to be seen.</li> </ul> <p>Chinese business leaders have agreed to buy \$4.3B in <i>US technology</i> "hoping to soften a political backlash to the massive <i>trade imbalance</i> dividing two of the world's economic powers" – but some in the US say it is just cynical tokenism that represents no <i>structural</i> adjustment.</p> <p>China has of late punished 3,176 <i>industrial polluters</i>; "an official said the campaign targeted industrial parks that could threaten the environment."</p> <p><i>see also: Water</i></p>
<p><b>India</b>  <a href="#">news list</a><a href="#">forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Indian Army plans to induct the <i>BrahMos missile</i> ahead of schedule – this coincides with "American <i>satellite images</i> showed that Pakistan was in the process of deploying its next generation <i>Shaheen II missiles</i> ..."</li> </ul> <p>In north-west <i>Rajasthan</i>, <i>water scarcity</i> is forcing people to drink <i>dirty water</i>; but this is only a sad portent -- by 2020 availability will be reduced to <u>a third</u> from the current level of <u>6,500 cubic meters of water per person per annum</u>.</p> <p>State authorities say there is a <i>Naxalite [Maoist insurgent]</i> game plan to penetrate major cities like <i>Mumbai, Pune, and Nashik</i> and have asked the <i>federal</i> authority for assistance.</p> <p>"It is possible to put up with the shortage of <i>petrol</i> and <i>diesel</i> for some time, with some inconvenience. But it is impossible to do without <i>LPG</i> or <i>kerosene</i>." -- <i>Geopolitics and oil supply disruption: Is India prepared?</i>. [LPG and kerosene are the staple <i>cooking</i> (and lighting) fuels of village India.]</p> <p>Following surprise air attacks by the <i>LTTE [Tamil Tigers]</i> on a <i>Sri Lanka</i> oil facility, India has reviewed its preparedness for attacks on <i>nuclear installations</i>.</p>
<p><b>Indonesia</b>  <a href="#">news list</a><a href="#">forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Countering critics, Indonesia's nuclear agency notes that three <i>nuclear reactors</i> have already operated in Indonesia for several years without accident, even during the <i>Yogyakarta earthquake</i>.</li> </ul> <p>Indonesia has inaugurated the first integrated <i>bird flu centre</i> -- "The centre is a pilot project located in <i>Banten</i> province in <i>West Java</i>, the worst-affected region. If it is successful, additional centres would be opened in other regions ..."</p>
<p><b>Iran</b>  <a href="#">news list</a><a href="#">forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iran says it can offer the <i>US</i> an <i>exit strategy</i> for <i>Iraq</i> but is skeptical of Washington's good faith given its relationship with "<i>terrorist</i>" groups hostile to Iran. During the week, Iran announced the arrest of ten at the <i>Sistan-Baluchestan</i> border with "<i>spying equipment</i>".</li> </ul> <p>The <i>Mayor</i> of <i>Tehran</i> has been re-appointed -- "<i>Brigadier General Qalibaf commanded the IRGC Air Force until his appointment as commander of the para-military police, the State Security Forces</i> ..."</p> <p>Shoot the <i>violinist in red</i>, or should everyone just be sent to bed without dinner? -- <i>Talking (or Not) to the Iranians</i>.</p>
<p><b>Russia</b>  <a href="#">news list</a><a href="#">forecast</a></p>	<p>↑ During the <i>Victory over Fascism</i> remembrances, President <b>Putin</b> noted the world is today threatened by "<i>the same disrespect for human life claims to global exclusiveness and diktat, just as it was in the Third Reich</i>." Russia has updated its estimate of <i>Soviet WWII losses</i> to <u>8.9 million</u> – with or without the <i>US</i> the war in</p>

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*Europe* would not have been won without the **Red Army**.

President **Putin's** visit to **Kazakhstan** and other **Central Asian** centers was aimed "to strike a blow to Western energy interests in the ex-Soviet region" and seems to have ended in victory in the rivalry for access to the region's vast energy resources -- [Russia to Control Gas Out of Central Asia](#).

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

- With a new **Cuba-like** motto -- *Patria, socialismo o muerte* -- the Venezuelan **military** now declares loyalty to specifically a **socialistic** nation.

**Nationalization** continues with the Venezuelan **state oil company** buying 93% of **Electricidad de Caracas** for \$836M. President **Chavez**, under veiled threat of **nationalization**, is pressuring a major **steelmaker** to supply local needs -- "the company ... mainly exports its steel, leaving Venezuelans to import the product from as far away as China. "

The **US** has (again) urged **European** nations to use their influence with Venezuela's President Hugo **Chávez** to help curb what he called an increasing flow of **cocaine** to the US. But Venezuela says the **DEA** has a side-job -- "We were able to determine the presence of a new drug cartel in which the United States Drug Enforcement Agency was monopolizing the shipment of drugs" alleges Interior Minister **Carreño**.

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

- ✓ In **Algeria**, lethal clashes continue between government troops and **Islamists** in the lead-up to **elections** -- "The election campaign has aroused little interest as the parliament is widely seen to be powerless." [Algeria's current unrest started when the military over-turned the popular election of an **Islamist** government.]

**Pakistan** has completed an "anti-Taliban" fence along a few miles of its border with **Afghanistan** -- "This is that difficult part where most militants reportedly were crossing over." But **Afghan** and **Pakistani** troops have clashed again "in the most serious incident in years" at the north-west border, with the death of at least seven Afghan personnel.

✓ Scores were killed in **Karachi [Pakistan]** in clashes between **anti-Musharraf** and **pro-Musharraf** groups triggered by the visit by the dismissed **Chief Justice** -- the situation was so volatile, the judge did not leave the airport.

The now tiny **British navy** hopes, to some extent, to rule the waves with its new **stealth submarines** -- a new \$2.5B Royal Navy submarine from the Channel will be able to detect the **QE2** cruise liner leaving New York.

✓ Following an impasse over selection of a **president**, the **Turkish** parliament has proposed a major constitutional reforms allowing **popular** election of the head of state -- ostensibly a pro-democratic move but also one that may lead to an **Islamist** Turkey. The **US** will sell 105 **Sidewinder air-to-air missiles** to **Turkey** -- "It is vital to the US national interest to assist our **NATO** ally in developing and maintaining a strong and ready self-defence capability ..."

**Botswana no longer a beacon of democracy** -- "There is unease over the way the government conducts its business and that it no longer cares to consult the masses"; double-dealing the **Kalahari Bushmen** is one example.

As **Kosovo** quietly brews as nasty **Balkan** dispute in the **Cold War** tradition, **Indonesia**, a non-permanent member of the **Security Council**, declares support for **Russia's** position opposing a breakaway Kosovo -- [Indonesia's position on the Kosovo question](#). [An excellent tutorial on the Kosovo issue. Note **regional separatism** is a hot issue in Indonesia.]

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