

GLOBAL REALITY: THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Destabilizing Threats, Stabilizing Policies, and Global Powers at a Glance

Threat Summary

	<p>Environment. Cities and states taking lead in anti-global warming. Federal government in gridlock? Inter-State Conflict. US and NATO killing more innocent civilians than the insurgents. Iraq hosed. Proliferation. Russia providing nuclear plant to Myanmar. Nuclear arms cuts not happening.</p>
	<p>Poverty. Africa Rice Center creates new rice. African wealth gap grows. Famine expected in south. Infectious Disease. Dengue up 39% in Thailand. Tiny decline of HIV in pregnant South Africans. Civil War. Zimbabwe leadership brain-dead. Somalia and Ethiopia continue to have problems. Genocide. Darfur mission not happening. Other seventeen genocides being ignored.</p>
	<p>Transnational Crime. Afghan drug trade at \$3.1 billion/year. US bank role in laundering ignored. Other Atrocities. Brazil frees 1,000 slaves. Colombian labor leaders continue to die. Terrorism. UK proposes international register (EIN proposes all countries bond their travelers).</p>

Policy Summary

	<p>Diplomacy. Secretary of Defense blows off Latin America, cannot do his job when traveling. Security. US lacks languages. UK radios hosed. Lasers on planes. Cell battery explodes, kills owner. Society. UNESCO criticizes US “vote” on seven wonders of humanity.</p>
	<p>Education. Schools are central to the culture war playing out in US. Health. 3 of 10 Americans are alcoholics (see TIME for other additions). Nutrition education, not.. Immigration. EU asking source countries to help patrol against their own illegals to Europe. Water. 75-250 million in Africa expected to face greater water shortages by 2020.</p>
	<p>Agriculture. FAO calls for African green revolution (EIN suggests free cell phones for everyone). Economy. Sub-prime mortgage vultures active again. Energy. India joining thermonuclear consortium (see Diplomacy on Russian Central Asian group). Family. Catholic Pope matches the US Christian fundamentalists in decisions splitting the church. Justice. Scooter Libby walks. EIN view is that Presidents should not be able to pardon their own staff.</p>

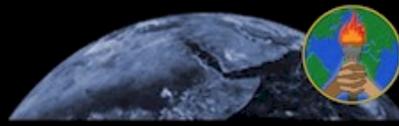
Major Player Summary

	<p>Iran. Cultural crack-down? Venezuela will supply with gasoline. English TV channel started.</p>
	<p>Venezuela. Iran building 7000 houses. DEA accused of letting suspicious flights go unintercepted.</p>
	<p>Brazil. Forms strategic partnership with EU. Slum reformation projects, services, seek to drop crime. China. Funding \$1B dam in Guinea (bauxite). Pollution kills 750K each year. Digital camouflage. India. Seeking to export super-sonic missile (Iran has Russian Sunburn), become solar-industry hub. Indonesia. 2 million no longer among the poor. Russia. Asymmetric response against US interceptor rockets in Poland. Wild Cards. European Security Council. African Union not flying. Pakistan a real mess.</p>

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

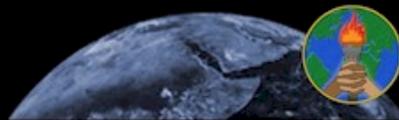
↗	<p>Alert: Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Pakistan</p>
↓	<p>Deteriorated: Afghanistan, Basque Country (Spain), Comoros Islands, Israel/Occupied Territories, Lebanon, Niger, Pakistan, Somalia, United Kingdom</p>
↑	<p>Improved: Burundi, North Korea, Yemen</p>
	<p>• Unchanged: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Chechnya (Russia), Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Fiji, Georgia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India (non-Kashmir), Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Liberia, Macedonia, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Myanmar/Burma, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), Nepal, Nigeria, North Caucasus (non-Chechnya), Northern Ireland (UK), Philippines, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somaliland (Somalia), Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Western Sahara, Zimbabwe</p>

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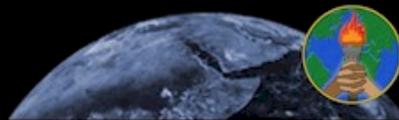
Threats	
<i>see daily items with links to full stories on the web at PDB-Threats</i>	
Poverty news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An unrelenting scientist at the Africa Rice Centre in Benin has developed NERICA (<i>New Rice for Africa</i>), an "impossible" cross-breed of prolific <i>Asian</i> rice with hardy <i>African</i> species. <p>A rising tide helps only those who can afford a boat -- <i>Africa's</i> super-rich grew <u>14% richer</u> last year (second highest growth after Latin America); most others in Africa did not.</p> <p>Southern Africa is facing a severe food shortage -- "<i>southern Africa was expected to experience a shortage of 4,35 million metric tons of maize due to drought ...</i>" but Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia were expected to record cereal surpluses.</p>
Infectious Disease news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dengue fever cases are up 36% in Thailand -- "<i>The outbreak has killed 17 people in Thailand and affected more than <u>21,000</u> since the beginning of the year ...</i>". <p>It's not hopeless, just serious: South Africa notes the first-ever decline in HIV infection rates – "<i>prevalence among pregnant women had dropped to 29.1% from 30.2% the previous year</i>".</p>
Environment news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey has enacted its own anti-global warming law; Al Gore said "<i>state governments are beginning to take the lead, cities are beginning to take the lead, and citizens of this country are beginning to take the lead</i>".
Inter-State Conflict news list forecast	<p>↓ An Afghan tribal chief said that a NATO airstrike killed 108 Civilians in <i>Farah</i> province; a provincial governor denied the claim, but others confirmed it. [If true, it is yet another failure of multi-million dollar intelligence systems; and whatever happens to the Taliban, Afghanistan will be lost to the West.] The Iranian strategy in Afghanistan today may best be characterized as a "<i>hedging strategy</i>" -- <i>Afghan problem is regional</i>.</p> <p>A forthcoming report will show that that Iraq has fallen short of key US goals -- "<i>The security progress we're making in Iraq is real but it's only in part of the country and there's not enough political progress to get us over the line in September.</i>" In Iraq, 13th MEU found more than 17 tonne of explosives --- a find such as this every day would eventually reduce IED production in Iraq. Insurgents attacked all British military targets in southern Iraq almost simultaneously -- "<i>All British bases and positions in the Basra region were attacked with artillery shells and rockets over the past 24 hours.</i>" Scholars at <i>Johns Hopkins</i> recommend a "soft" partition of Iraq; a federation of three states, harking back to the three Ottoman provinces that were artificially conflated into Iraq by the British in the <u>1920s</u>.</p> <p>Dennis Ross, the former US envoy and senior negotiator to the Middle East has rather vague fears that the Hamas ascendancy in Palestine may embolden Syria. Syria is reported to have removed checkpoints in place for <u>40 years</u>, ever since the <i>Six Day War</i> -- Syria says it is preparing for an attack by Israel.</p> <p>A UN report on Western Sahara has been seen to backpedal from the earlier draft -- "<i>The revised report without the final recommendations section was issued late Monday.</i>"</p>
Civil War news list forecast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "<i>For a long time the profiteers of the Somali civil war ... conditioned the people to accept the erroneous notion that a sustainable reconciliation is attainable <u>without addressing what is at issue</u> ...</i>" -- <i>The Monkey-See-Monkey-Do of the Somali Political Saga</i>. <p>The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) says it ambushed a convoy</p>

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	<p>consisting of over 20 armed vehicles and trucks supplying regime forces in Shilaabo and killed 43 Ethiopian troops.</p> <p>International Crisis Group concludes "<i>none of the causes of Zimbabwe's current discontents seem to have roots so deep that the situation cannot be quickly turned round once some decent leadership is restored.</i>"</p>
<p>Genocide news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ The Darfur peace mission isn't -- "<i>It seems unlikely they will be able to have talks in August... given the lack of progress on the rebel unification front.</i>"; even the envoys are <u>not based in-country</u> -- Darfur peace mission stumbles, envoys criticised [Analysis].</p> <p>A Rwandan has been sentenced to 20 years jail Belgium "<i>for the murder of 10 Belgian peacekeepers and an undetermined number of Rwandan civilians at the start of the 1994 genocide.</i>"</p> <p>"<i>Del Ponte repeated her plea to the EU not to sign an agreement on close relations with Serbia ... before Mladic was handed over to the Hague International Criminal Tribunal.</i>"</p>
<p>Other Atrocities news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For lack of cash, Tajikistan is much behind schedule to clear the country of landmines by 2010. <p>In Brazil, police freed 1,000 "ethanol slaves" in the biggest raid to date against debt slavery -- the plantation owner, <i>Para Pastoril e Agricola SA</i>, <u>one of the biggest ethanol producers in Brazil</u>, denies fault.</p> <p>Uganda says it is setting up special courts "<i>to deal with war crimes allegedly committed by northern rebels during a 20-year conflict, but that it would not handle charges of abuse by the Ugandan army.</i>"</p> <p>The UN is concerned that acquittal of military and foreign mine employees by a DR Congo war crimes court for a massacre of civilians in Kilwa in 2004 is at <u>variance with the evidence</u>.</p> <p>In Ethiopia, the prosecutor demands the death penalty for former Marxist dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam, who is but is in exile in Zimbabwe and is <u>unlikely to be extradited</u>.</p> <p>Amnesty International reports that labor leaders continue to be killed, disappeared or threatened in Colombia</p> <p>Amnesty International has called on the Thai authorities to halt forcible return of asylum seekers to Laos who have not yet had access to a "<i>fair and satisfactory asylum determination procedure</i>".</p>
<p>Proliferation news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ Burma [Myanmar] is set to have a nuclear power plant built by Russia; do they have weapons ambitions -- "<i>so what have they to lose save for an invasion which few believe that the West has the energy or inclination to conduct</i>" -- A Burmese Bomb [Analysis].</p> <p>The AQ Khan 'network' may be finished by unanswered questions remain -- "<i>Khan network no longer exists</i>".</p> <p>"... a substantial portion of the depleted uranium in the DU weapons used by the US in Afghanistan came from Canadian uranium" -- Canada's role in depleted uranium weapons worldwide.</p> <p>The US and Russia have agreed to further cuts in nuclear arms, but executive director of the Arms Control Association called the statement "<i>extremely disappointing</i>". Elsewhere: <u>Both sides still maintain more than twice the total agreed</u></p>

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in 2002 of around 2,000 warheads each. Elsewhere: **Los Alamos** lab delivered the first **bomb-ready nuclear trigger** in 18 years "*certified pits have not been made since 1989 ...*"

Brazilian ambassador Sergio de Queiroz **Duarte** has been named as the **United Nations High Representative for Disarmament**.

An **Israeli** Court has sent "**nuclear whistleblower**", Mordechai **Vanunu**, back to jail for violating the terms of his release from 18 years jail -- "*convicted the former nuclear technician of 14 violations of his parole, including maintaining **foreign media** contacts ...*"

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

↓ **Special forces** and **MI5** have **disinterred** four bodies at a bombed **Somali training camp** on the Indian Ocean island of **Lamu** [Kenya] for **DNA** samples -- "*The four terrorists were born and raised in a Muslim enclave in Leeds. They left their homes a year ago, ostensibly to visit relatives in Islamabad ...*"

Websites giving **bomb-making** information are to outlawed across **Europe** -- "*Arguments about **freedom of expression** will not be allowed to stand in the way of criminalising the publication of bomb-making information that could be used by terrorists.*" New **UK** Prime Minister **Brown** wants an international terrorist register to be established -- "*If there is information in one country about the potential recruitment or the actual recruitment of someone to a terrorist group then that should be information that is flowing to other countries.*" Elsewhere, the head of **Interpol** agreed -- "*As hard as it may be to believe, the world still does not have a **global database of convicted terrorists.***" In the **UK**, a "**hoarder of terror manuals**" has been jailed for nine years on six counts of **possessing material for the purpose of terrorism**. **Jamayetul Mujahideen** of **Bangladesh** and **Tehreek Nifaz-e-Shariat Mohammadi** [TNSM] will be added to the list of organizations proscribed under the [UK] **Terrorism Act**.

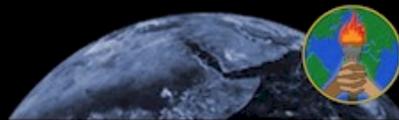
New York City says it has been stiffed again in federal **counter-terror funding** -- "*It's a disgrace. It's confounding. ... It's once again unfair to New York. Our needs are different than any other city.*"

French President Nicolas **Sarkozy** has cancelled his trip to **Morocco** scheduled for next week at the request of the Moroccan authorities who have placed the country on the **highest level of terror alert**.

As the botched **UK bomb plot** unfolded, six **medical doctors** were among eight held in custody, confirming that jihadis are more likely mobile, educated and **middle-class** than desperate cave-dwellers. [The reasons for the extreme **incompetence** in this case are not yet clear.] It was reported that the **London car bomb** was to be detonated from Australia by phone -- "*the plot to set off the fuel-packed [car] outside the capital's Tiger Tiger nightclub from Australia was intended to cause a spectacular show of **global terrorism** - but it failed.*" It was revealed that the suspects in the bomb attack on **Glasgow** airport were known to **MI5** -- "*The problem with intelligence isn't a lack of information, it's too much. You have all these pieces of information, but how can you tell which are **significant** and which are not? Sometimes you can only see the full picture afterwards.*" Elsewhere: "*it was 'definitely spooky' that the use of doctors for terrorist purposes was being discussed in jihadi terrorist circles up to three years ago*"; '**Spooky** website calls doctors to jihad -- "*The first target which will be penetrated by nine brothers is the naval base which gives shelter to the ship Kennedy*".

Russian Intelligence observes, as others have before them, that the **internet** is a

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Pandora's Box in every sense, certainly more of an aid to **terrorism** than a hindrance -- "We have a common headache and misfortune. That's the Internet ..." Elsewhere: the "*Electronic Jihad Program*" available from *al-Jinan* is not very advanced, but it's the thought that counts.

A thoughtful piece from *Le Monde Diplomatique* says the West may need to find itself negotiating moderate **Taliban** and others opposed to Islam's evangelicals, the followers of **Takfirism**; *Al-Qaida: the unwanted guests* -- "But in this battle for competing visions between the US and al-Qaida, the Sunni resistance is now opposing al-Qaida in Iraq, as are the Taliban in Afghanistan."

[My name is (name withheld) and I'm a terrorist.] -- an ex-**jihadi** **British Muslim** says there is a need for "**rehabilitation centres**" to lead extremists to understand the values of **traditional Islam**.

Hezbollah hard to define as it grows in power -- a good backgrounder on **Hezbollah**.

A **suicide bomber** blew himself up at the site of an ancient temple popular with tourists in **Yemen** killing seven **Spaniards**. Yemen, accustomed to its own brand of **Islamist** conflict, was disturbed at the arrival of **al-Qaida** style terrorism -- "This is new to Yemen and disturbing."

'Ours is a Global Struggle': an interview with **Taliban** military chief **Mansoor Dadullah** -- "While we were in power the **Afghans** enjoyed something that the occupying forces from 42 countries have not been able to provide them since: security".

Transnational Crime
[news list|forecast](#)

- The **Afghan Counter-narcotics Minister** has resigned after another huge **poppy harvest** -- "Much of the profit from the country's **\$3.1 billion** drug trade is believed to fund **Taliban** fighters waging a violent campaign against the government."

Senegalese authorities confiscated more than **1.2 tonne** of **cocaine** only four days after the seizure of almost the same amount.

Deaths related to **organised crime** in **Mexico** have hit a new record -- "Murders related to organized crime in Mexico averaged **249 a month this year** ... "

Policy

Agriculture
[news list|forecast](#)

- **FAO's** Director-General says "**nothing less than an African Green Revolution**" is an urgent necessity. [Whether this Revolution will be **real and sustainable** or eternal vassalage to **Monsanto** is yet to be seen.]

Diplomacy
[news list|forecast](#)

- Defense Secretary **Gates** has canceled a long-planned, four-country trip to **Latin America** less than 24 hours before departure to help prepare a report for **Congress** on **Iraq**.

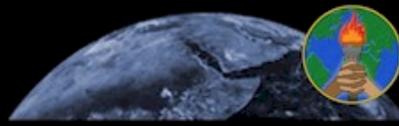
Houston-based **KBR**, formerly known as *Kellogg, Brown & Root*, has signed a **\$2.88 billion gas industry** deal with **Algeria**.

Questioning AFRICOM's intentions -- "**perceptions** that the base's *raison d'être* is to gain control over regional **oil assets** and counter growing **Chinese** influence are growing."

"The U.S. is losing its ability to exercise leverage against **Bolivia** by denying **economic aid** to La Paz, as **Morales** has been strengthening his ties with his fellow **leftist** leaders ..."

The **Shanghai Cooperation Organization** (**Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan**) is an **anti-US fortress**, or a golden opportunity for the **US**; depending on how the US plays it -- *Eyeing the Shanghai group*.

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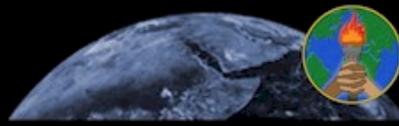


<p>Economy news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ That <i>Invisible Hand in the Market</i> has taken to thieving again; fortunes are to be made from the vulnerable in the sub-prime mortgage market -- <i>Mortgage vultures swoop on US housing crisis.</i></p>
<p>Education news list forecast</p>	<p>• Again schools -- in this case the fabric of a deserted school on a Sunday -- are playthings in an American culture war -- <i>Appeals Panel Splits Three Ways on Church-State Suit.</i></p>
<p>Energy news list forecast</p>	<p>• India will join the ITER [<i>International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor</i>] consortium -- "<i>India's joining ITER is a recognition of its scientific and technical capability in fusion energy ...</i>" <i>"The oil card is good for only a few rounds in the long-term game of international diplomacy"</i> -- <i>The Rising and Falling Power of Hydrocarbon States.</i></p>
<p>Family news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ The Pope's <i>de facto</i> encouragement of the <i>pre-Vatican II mass</i> has drawn warnings from within the church -- although the indult will gladden the Roman hard-liners who abhor Vatican II, such as <i>Opus Dei</i>, some fear the makings of a schism.</p>
<p>Health news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ Nutrition education in the US has so far proven to be futile -- "<i>It's true, it didn't change what they actually eat. But the program really made a difference in how kids were feeling about fruits and vegetables.</i>" [But they are still fat and lazy.] Alcohol abuse or addiction hits <u>3 of 10</u> Americans at some time -- "<i>Alcohol dependence was significantly more prevalent among men, whites, Native Americans, younger and unmarried adults and those with lower incomes.</i>"</p>
<p>Immigration news list forecast</p>	<p>• The EU wants the three Maghreb countries -- Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia -- to send experts, aircraft and ships to assist EU Frontex patrols against illegal immigration.</p>
<p>Justice news list forecast</p>	<p>• Scooter gets a break -- the White House says it has better judgment than the Courts.</p>
<p>Security news list forecast</p>	<p>• The UK too is having problems with emergency service radios; a 2002 £3B [\$6B] supply contract is said to be "seriously flawed" -- "<i>These are inherent problems that should have been identified from the beginning.... Five years later the world has changed ... but there is no flexibility on the contract to accommodate that.</i>" <i>"... the [US] intelligence community is still in need of speakers of Arabic, Pashtu, Farsi and other languages common in the Islamic world."</i> A study of laser interference with pilots has been launched -- "<i>The company said the flight simulator development will lead to improvements in cockpit procedures so commercial and military pilots can safely fly aircraft if a laser is pointed at them.</i>" <i>In outsourced U.S. wars, contractor deaths top 1,000</i> -- "<i>A further 13,000 contractors have been wounded in the two separate wars ...</i>" In China, a 22-year-old worker died when a mobile phone battery exploded in his pocket -- "<i>... the death was believed to be the first in China caused by a cell phone battery.... broke a rib and drove it into the man's heart ...</i>"</p>
<p>Society news list forecast</p>	<p>• UNESCO has criticized the vapid "Seven Wonders" American-Idol style vote on humanity's treasures.</p>
<p>Water news list forecast</p>	<p>• "<i>Between 75 million and 250 million people in Africa are expected to face greater water shortages by 2020 as a result of climate change.</i>"</p>

Challengers

<p>Brazil news list forecast</p>	<p>• Brazil and the EU are to enter a strategic partnership -- "<i>These closer ties between Europe and Brazil, powered by Portugal, are going to take place after a new impasse</i></p>
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*in negotiations of the **WTO Doha Rounds...**"*

In the face of serious **crime wars** in **Rio**, Brazil has launched **slum reformation** projects -- "**President Lula da Silva** said that investing in **running water** and other **basic services** was the best way to beat **organised crime**" -- 18.7% of the city's 5.8m population live in favelas.

China
[news list|forecast](#)

- China will fund a \$1B **hydro dam** in **Guinea** -- "**Guinea is the world's top bauxite exporter** but most of the population survive on less than \$1 a day."

China's **roads**, the world's deadliest, have claimed 12% fewer than for the same period last year -- but still claim over 200 lives a day (37,000 per year).

Another acute **pollution** incident has left 200,000 without **water** -- "*The residential water supply from the Xinyi River had an unusual smell and was found to have levels of ammonia nitrogen far above national standards ...*". The **World Bank** bowed to Beijing pressure to **suppress** one-third of a report on **pollution** in China, including the fact "pollution kills 7,50,000 in China each year" -- due to fear of public "unrest".

Following a serious of numerous **food**, **drug** and other **quality** scandals China is making outward signs of reform -- "*The state-run media has been given unusual latitude to expose **shoddy goods**. One of the most popular shows on China Central Television, 'Weekly Quality Report,' investigates accidents, poisonings and cheap fakes.*" Another Chinese **drug official** has been given a **death sentence** for **corruption** -- the accused was secretary to an **agency head** sentenced to death in May 2007 for taking **bribes** to approve **substandard medicines**. [In these types of cases, death sentences are often **commuted**.]

China will now allow **foreign investment** in the **defense sector**, except in "key strategic enterprises". China's field military will get smart "**digital camouflage**" -- "*The camouflage pattern resembles a big bunch of flowers from a distance and crushed gravel from close up.*" As observers have long said, "not if but when": China is making contractual and technical noises consistent with plans to build its first **aircraft carrier** -- "*This indicates that the decision on construction of the aircraft carrier has been made, and its characteristics have been outlined.*" The director of the **Nuclear Information Project** has pointed out what is believed to be China's **new missile submarine** on **Google-Earth** in an image taken by **Quickbird** in late 2006.

[Unsurprisingly:] China's **State Security Bureau** is **recruiting** "*politically reliable*" college students headed off to study in the **US** -- "*Every month the state security agents receive reports about the students' activities from each academic department.*"

India
[news list|forecast](#)

- **Maoists** in pursuit of some convoluted strategy in **Chattisgarh** State [north-east Deccan] have ordered **farmers** to stay away from **cultivation** -- "*at least three farmers, who went against the dictates, were killed this week...*"

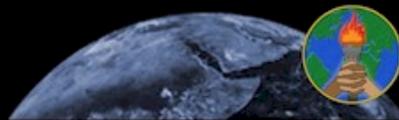
India is awaiting **inter-governmental agreement** to allow **export** of the recently commissioned **BrahMos** joint venture **supersonic cruise missile**.

India hopes quickly to become a "**solar-industry hub**" -- solar is a sensible augmentation for the decrepit **grid** and a means for **remote areas** to get electricity for the first time.

India claims 2,000 "**ultras**" [Islamic militants] are waiting to cross over to **Jammu and Kashmir** -- "*the terror infrastructure across the **LoC** [Line-of-Control] is intact and around 52 militant training camps are fully functional on the other side of LoC.*"

Indonesia ↑ Not a lot but in the right direction: the number of Indonesians in **poverty** dropped by

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news list|forecast

just over 2 million in March 2007, 5.4% less year-on-year -- "**depth-of-poverty index and the intensity-of-poverty index showed a downward trend**"

Iran
news list|forecast

- The **Ahmadinejad** regime is said to be tightening down on **critics** -- "*in what activists claim is a 'cultural revolution' reminiscent of the Islamic Republic's turbulent birth in 1979, the regime has turned on its critics in all walks of life ...*"

Venezuela will supply Iran with **gasoline** -- "*Iran, a major oil exporter, imports 40% of its gasoline because of high consumption and limited refining capacity*". A **mortar** seems to have been fired towards a **gas station in Tehran** but failed to explode -- "*a delayed gasoline rationing scheme, sparking chaotic and sometimes violent scenes. One Iranian report last week said 19 petrol stations were set alight in the capital.*"

Iran has launched an **English TV channel** as an "antidote to **Fox**" -- "*most of 30 journalists working for the station are non-Iranian, including Britons and Americans*". [<http://www.presstv.ir>]

The **US** has shredded derelict **F-14s** to keep **spare parts** away from "*the bad guys*" -- "*Iran is the only country trying to keep Tomcats airworthy. The United States let Iran buy the F-14s in the 1970s when it was an ally*".

Russia
news list|forecast

- First Deputy Prime Minister **Ivanov** says [as **Putin** and **Bush** met] Russia has "**an asymmetrical and effective response**" to the **US** project for **interceptor rockets in Poland** -- placing rockets in **Kaliningrad**.

The **FSB** has lodged more serious **charges** against billionaire tax-evader-in-exile Berezovsky.

Venezuela
news list|forecast

- **Iran** will build 7,000 houses in Venezuela -- "*Attending the 4th Iran-Venezuela Joint Economic Commission meeting, Alireza Tahmasbi and Venezuelan Minister of Basic Industries and Mining Jose Khan signed 11 documents.*"

see also: **Iran**

[Weapons and oil](#) – a more detailed look at **Venezuela-Russia** relations.

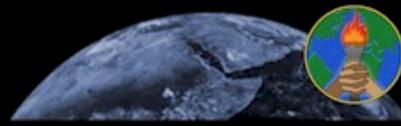
Continuing the venomous exchange with the **US**, Venezuela says the **US** alters **narcotics** data to reflect badly on Venezuela -- "*Attention is also called by the US non-interception of 'suspicious' flights in the Caribbean after the US DEA detected them, given its power to act under regional accords.*"

President **Chavez** says Venezuela will withdraw its bid to join **Mercosur** if the respective lawmakers don't approve membership soon -- "*Mercosur member countries appear unwilling to break with U.S.-style capitalism*". This places President **Lula** of **Brazil** in a dilemma-- "*Lula relies on Congress but doesn't want to offend Chavez, so he'll let the deadline pass without intervening, it could be a divorce by default between the two*".

President **Chavez** continues not to hide his contempt for the **church establishment** -- "*Chavez ... has repeatedly clashed with church leaders, and recently lambasted the Catholic leadership as 'liars' and 'perverts'*".

A brief analysis of what **oil nationalization** may mean for Venezuela -- [Experts see repercussions from oil giants' Venezuela pullout](#). Another piece says "*with little experience in heavy crude production and upgrading, they would likely struggle to meet the technical and commercial challenges of maximizing resources in the Orinoco.*" [The bottom-line seems to learning curve rather than apocalypse.] **Gas** seems to be next on the nationalist agenda -- "*... likely to nationalise gas production*"

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by the end of the year, continuing an effort that has already reached oil companies and utilities ... "

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

- **Pakistan's** courts are distinctly ruffled at the dismissal of the **Chief Justice** and perceived ongoing interference -- the 13-judge **Full Bench** of Pakistan's **Supreme Court** reprimanded the government, banned **intelligence agents** from hearings, and ordered a thorough sweep for **listening devices**. **Pakistan** has its **Waco** siege ... On 03 July 2007, after five-month-long stand-off, Pakistan **security forces** move in on the defiant **Lal Masjid (Red Mosque)** -- "*As the firing continued, a loudspeaker in the mosque broadcast a message calling for suicide attacks*". By 05 July, a total of 1,200 male and female religious students **surrendered** to authorities. Attributed to passions raised by the mosque battle, President Musharraf's aircraft was fired on as he toured the **flood-ravaged south** -- "*We have recovered two anti-aircraft guns fixed at the rooftop of a suspected house.*" Militants remaining in **Lal Masjid** -- some alleged to be "foreigners" involved in the murder of Daniel **Pearl** -- continue fighting fiercely, and refuse unconditional surrender. A Pakistani special forces **Lieutenant General** is killed. On the night of 08 July, security forces make breaches in the walls surrounding the mosque compound; the mosque's cleric says the demolitions killed over 300 students -- a claim universally rejected as rubbish. The standoff continued. From **London**, former Pakistan prime minister Nawaz **Sharif** proposed forming a **coalition of opposition parties** to oust President Pervez **Musharraf** from power. But, one of the bottom-lines for Pakistan: "*Islamist parties have never scored higher than 12% in a general election.*"

A good summary of how **African political union** -- a "**United States of Africa**" -- fared in the **9th African Union Summit**, including **US** views: *United States of Africa? [Analysis]*. Also: *Why We Oppose Gaddafi, by Yar'Adua* -- "*the continent was confronted with "greater challenges" which need immediate tackling, rather than setting up a union government.*"

Serious proposals are circulating on the creation of a **European Security Council** -- "*a distinct institution, sending out a signal of European determination to be a major global power, would allow the EU to engage with other like-minded countries in countering shared security challenges.*"

A **US missile** sale to **Turkey** has cleared **Congress** -- "*The Turkish Navy will use the missiles to augment its present Harpoon inventory and enhance its anti-ship warfare capability.*"

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