

**GLOBAL CHALLENGES: THE WEEK IN REVIEW**

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

**Threat Summary**

**Environment.** Plastic needs to be phased out. Melting of glaciers is a continental-level threat.  
**Inter-State Conflict.** Humanitarian crisis critical—US has lost advantage. Taliban asymmetric.  
**Proliferation.** Nothing significant. Editorial note: US remains greatest proliferator of all.

**Poverty.** Could go to RED soon. Food crisis leading to riots and broad unrest.  
**Infectious Disease.** Bad sanitation kills 2 million a year. TB killed 1.7M in 2006. H5NI and TB loom.  
**Civil War.** Serbia-Kosovo, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Myanmar/Burma, Niger  
**Genocide.** China continues its cultural genocide in Tibet. UN declares Darfur not genocide.  
**Transnational Crime.** First coca crop found in Brazilian rain forest.

**Other Atrocities.** Human traffickers rule, especially Angola. 14,200 rapes in one Congo province  
**Terrorism.** Bin Laden house arrest in Pakistan? Suicide bomber in Germany. US clueless as ever.

**Policy Summary**

**Diplomacy.** Israel *carte blanche* from Cheney. World consensus: limits of military laid bare in Iraq.  
**Economy.** Commodity bubble possible. US crisis—Wall Street and Fed appear stupid on top of inept.  
**Security.** US still cannot achieve “fusion” and has 900,000 on terrorist watch list—Idiocy!!!  
**Society.** Pope baptizes Italian Muslim. Editorial Note: US knows nothing of religion as a Wild Card.  
**Water.** Global water wars loom—a third of global population short of water, two million almost out.

**Agriculture.** Transgenetic maze in Mexico but no word on Monsanto’s death seed being part of it.  
**Education.** California’s educational system may collapse. Editorial Note: time for creative destruction.  
**Energy.** Bangladesh in red zone (rising costs of food, water, energy). Intelligent grid in Colorado.  
**Health.** Marketing of food to children a major concern. US NIH flat budgets. Home gene tests.  
**Immigration.** Court blocks effort to screen immigrants by checking social security numbers.

**Family.** No major stories, other than the continuing death of both the middle class and labor in US.  
**Justice.** Election of judges nurtures serious corruption and miscarriage of justice (as do appointments).

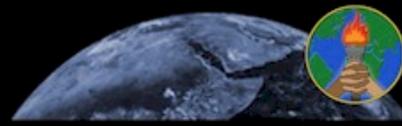
**Major Player Summary**

**Brazil.** Death squads include police; police bar press from monitoring “less than tidy” actions.  
**China.** SCO as tool for Central Asia. Manipulating pollution statistics? Tibet as first domino?  
**India.** 13 new border posts, high-tech equipment on borders. Religious violence looms again.  
**Indonesia.** Working with South Africa on assistance for Palestine. Police to Lebanon, Sudan.  
**Iran.** Energy deal with Switzerland. Key player in Nabucco energy deal (Central Asia to Europe)  
**Russia.** Working with China in overseeing Central Asia. NATO and WTO deals in air.  
**Venezuela.** Trail of evidence points to US covert air operations. US denounced for Posada refuge.  
**Wild Cards.** Four FBI injured in Pakistani blast. Editorial Note: Americans can expect more of this.

**World Crises - monthly assessment by [International Crisis Group](#) - 01 March 2008**

-  **Alert:** Armenia, Comoros Islands, Kenya
-  **Deteriorated:** Armenia, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros Islands, DR Congo, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Israel/Occupied Territories, Philippines, Serbia, Somalia, Sudan, Timor-Leste
-  **Improved:** Cyprus, Kenya, Kosovo, Pakistan
-  **Conflict Resolution Opportunity:** Cyprus, Pakistan, Timor-Leste, Uganda
- **Unchanged:** Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Basque Country (Spain), Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chechnya (Russia), Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Myanmar/Burma, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Caucasus (non-Chechnya), North Korea, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, Sri Lanka, Syria, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

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**Threats** see *daily* items with *links to full stories* on the web at **PDB-Threats**

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

↓ *Expert warns of unrest as rice price soars* -- "Key producers **India** and **Vietnam** have both curtailed exports, sending some of the world's largest rice importers including the **Philippines** scrambling to procure supplies for their people." [Comment: Spot prices have tripled.]  
*Experts warn of food crisis* -- "The experts from **East Africa**, at a regional seminar in Mwanza, Tanzania, said that massive dilapidation of the **environment** could increase **poverty** to more than 65 per cent."  
 In **Egypt** *army bakeries* are mobilized: *Egypt army to tackle bread crisis* -- "**Rising prices** and alleged **corruption** have sparked recent **clashes** at bakeries in poorer neighbourhoods, leading to several **deaths**. **Hosni Mubarak** said eradicating bread queues was 'imperative.'  
*Gaddafi says Africans must reject conditional aid* -- "They give you their aid and dictate that one should adopt **electoral democracy**, that one must adopt multiparty systems. All these work in the **West**, but not in Africa." [Comment: Conditional aid – "**tyed grants**" – is also often a vehicle for the **donor** country to offload unneeded, useless, or dangerous goods.]

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

• *Lack of toilets putting millions at risk: UN* -- "In the world today, there are 15 million deaths caused by infectious diseases. If we had good **sanitation** today, and **good water supplies**, we could decrease that immediately by two million."  
 No disaster, but a heads-up: *CDC says progress against TB slows in U.S.* -- "Since 1992, we've seen a steady improvement in the rates of TB in the United States but since 2000, we've documented the fact that the rate of decline has slowed".  
 It's still out there: *Bird flu [H5N1] may mutate to human form in Indonesia: FAO* -- "Bird flu [H5N1] has hit 31 out of 33 provinces of **Indonesia** with an **endemic virus** in **Java, Sumatra, Bali** and **southern Sulawesi** and sporadic outbreaks reported in other areas ... "  
*TB killed 1.7 million globally in 2006, WHO says* -- "... 9.2 million new cases and the disease killed 1.7 million people.... more **money** is needed to fight TB, which trails only **AIDS** as the world's leading killer among infectious diseases."

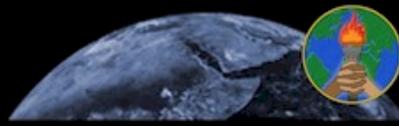
**Environment**  
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• *Prudence calls for gradual plastic phase out* -- "Because of its **resistance to degradation**, improper plastic disposal can have a particularly serious effect in the environment, leading to **clogged sewers** and the constant outbreak of various **diseases**". [Comment: Apart from killing **wildlife**, the other downsides of plastic bags remain many.]  
 Repetition of a continent-level threat: *World's glaciers melting at record rate says UN* -- "... between the years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, the average rate of melting and thinning more than doubled".  
 see: **Poverty** (*Experts warn of food crisis*)

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

↓ *Same game, new rules in Afghanistan* -- "... the **Taliban** plan to open **new fronts** as they are aware they cannot win head-on against the might of the **US-led war machine**. "  
*War Launched to Protect Israel - Bush Adviser* [Comment: That which can not be said finally gets an airing.]  
*No more troops 'without plan to win'* -- "**Australia** won't consider sending more **troops** or **resources** to **Afghanistan** until **NATO** adopted a winning strategy and all

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*NATO countries started pulling their weight ...* [Comment: No-one said **Germany**.]

*Paul Bremer blamed for Iraq mistakes* -- "First-hand accounts provided to The Daily Telegraph depict an egotist whose go-it-alone style led to a series of bold but disastrous decisions." [Comment: Never have so Few caused so Much damage to so Many.]

Another tribute to the **Occupying Power**: "Five years after the outbreak of the war in Iraq, the humanitarian situation in most of the country remains among the most critical in the world" -- *Millions of Iraqis lack water, healthcare: Red Cross.*

**Civil War**  
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Note: 'Civil War' here includes **internal instability**.

**SERBIA-KOSOVO**

*Kosovo: Worst still to come* -- "It is in the interest of Serbian authorities to show to the world that Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs cannot coexist peacefully; while it is now in the interest of Kosovo Albanian authorities to prove the opposite".

Laws are for others: *Moscow attacks Washington's plans to arm Kosovo* -- "... Washington's decision violated a United Nations resolution that allowed arms to be supplied only to UN forces in Kosovo".

**SRI LANKA**

*Russia to sell five Mig-29 fighter jets to Sri Lanka's Air Force* -- "Believed to be used in the final assault on the **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)**, the modern Russian aircraft is widely used by the Russian and **Indian Air forces**".

*Sri Lanka rights group says TV being militarised* -- "The appointment of a **retired general** to help run a **Sri Lankan state television station** is a sign of media militarisation not seen for decades ..."

*Sri Lanka launches bilingual training to ease rising ethnic tension* -- "It is seen as a bold step to ease tension between the country's **ruling Sinhala** and **[dissident] Tamil ethnic groups**".

**BHUTAN**

*Bhutan fears terror strikes ahead of historic vote* -- "Now an estimated **100,000** people are sheltered in **relief camps**".

**MYANMAR / BURMA**

*Thailand commits to Burma junta cooperation* -- "Thailand will discuss taking part in Burmese plans to build a **deep sea port** at **Tavoey** opposite Thailand's **Andaman Sea coast** [and other measures ...]" Also: *Burmese Military Intelligence arrested Kyaw Ko Ko, Leader of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions.*

**NIGER**

*2 killed in Tuareg attack in Niger* -- "Niger's government has been involved in a tense standoff with Tuareg rebels in the country's **northern desert**".

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



*Darfur not genocide case, says UN special panel* -- technically not genocide because it's more complex than that; an intelligent discussion of **Rwanda** (56% of world **niobium / tantalum** reserves) and **Darfur** (**oil** and **Lebensraum**).

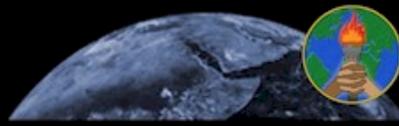
Just so much good news: so little bandwidth: *China tries to thwart news reports from Tibet* -- "... **CNN, the BBC, Google News, Yahoo and YouTube** have been blocked or have faced temporary **blackouts** or service **disruptions** in some parts of China."

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



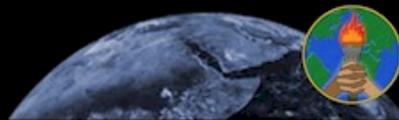
*Free rein for human traffickers* -- "There is little awareness on the problem of **trafficking in persons, mainly women and children, in Angola**, and no laws for

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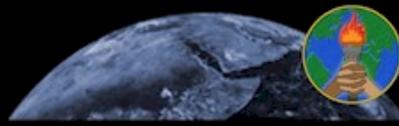
	<p><i>cracking down on the growing phenomenon".</i></p> <p><i>14,200 cases of rape registered from 2005 to 2007 -- UN Human Rights Council's Independent Expert cites massive rates of rape in <u>one province alone</u> in Democratic Republic of the Congo as the triumph of <i>impunity</i> over any degree of <i>governance</i>.</i></p>
<p><b>Proliferation</b> news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [nothing significant to summarize -- see <i>News List</i>]</li> </ul>
<p><b>Terrorism</b> news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bavarian Cueneyt Ciftci is Germany's first suicide bomber</i> -- "He was a brave Turk who came from Germany and exchanged his life of luxury for paradise".</li> <li>• <b>Pakistan: Jihadis prefer khanqahs to madrassas</b> -- "The jihadis of the country are increasingly turning to khanqahs (<i>Sufi monasteries</i>) for sanctuary ...". [Comment: The "jihadis" mentioned are unlikely to be <i>Salifi al-Qaeda</i> types who detest Sufism.]</li> <li>• <i>Osama likely in custody, says 'Father of Taliban'</i> -- "Osama bin Laden is most likely alive and in the custody of <i>intelligence agencies</i> in the <b>border areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan</b> ..."</li> <li>• <i>U.S. adapts cold-war idea to fight terrorists</i> -- "A new <i>deterrence calculus</i> combines the need to <b>deter terrorists</b> and supporters from <i>contemplating</i> a <i>W.M.D.</i> attack and, failing that, to <i>dissuade</i> them from actually <i>conducting</i> an attack."</li> <li>• <i>Re-thinking counter-terrorism</i> -- "Although citizens of rich countries regard terrorism as one of the <b>world's greatest threats</b>, <b>trans-national terrorists</b> take, on average, just <u>420 lives each year</u>". [Comment: Less than the <i>road toll</i> in most countries.]</li> </ul> <p><i>see: Security (Flu pandemic bigger threat than terrorism, government says)</i></p>
<p><b>Transnational Crime</b> news list forecast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>First coca crop found in Brazilian rainforest</i> -- "Drug cartels have moved into Brazil's <b>Amazon</b> and are producing cocaine deep in the rainforest, opening a new <i>frontier</i> in South America's <i>narcotics</i> trade." [Comment; At last a reason to <i>paraquat</i> the Amazon.]</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy</b>      <i>see daily items with links to full stories on the web at <b>PDB-Policy</b></i></p>	
<p><b>Agriculture</b> news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ <b>Mexico: New rules pave the way for transgenic crops</b> -- "f the deadlines are met, by the end of <u>2008 trials</u> of transgenic maize will be under way, which is good news, <i>Monsanto</i> spokesman David Carpintero told the <i>Reforma</i> newspaper".</p>
<p><b>Diplomacy</b> news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ Israel's <i>carte blanche</i> is renewed: <b>Cheney backs Israel over security</b>: "Mr Cheney said the <b>US would never put any pressure</b> on Israel over issues he said would threaten its security".</p> <p><i>see: Inter-State Conflict (War Launched to Protect Israel - Bush Adviser)</i></p> <p>A growing World consensus: <b>The Iraq experience has laid bare the limits of raw military power</b> -- "The next <b>US president</b> must reject the juvenile <i>Bush</i> vision, reach out to <b>Iran</b> and seek justice for the <i>Palestinian</i> people".</p>
<p><b>Economy</b> news list forecast</p>	<p>↓ <b>NAFTA's Economic Impact</b> -- an objective backgrounder by <i>Council on Foreign Relations</i> on the highly politicized NAFTA.</p> <p><b>US ponders: how deep is economic abyss?</b> -- "They are peering over the edge and asking: How far down? And the scariest part of all? No one can say for sure".</p> <p><b>Subprime crisis can fuel commodity bubble: UNDP official</b> -- "I will not be surprised that 2-3 years from now, we realise that the liquidity and macro boost generated to fight the sub prime housing crisis ended up fuelling a commodity bubble; ...the <b>Emerging South</b> must weigh in to change the nature of <b>global</b></p>

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	<p><i>governance.</i>" [Comment: <b>India</b> is saying the world needs some <i>adult supervision.</i>]</p>
<p><b>Education</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<p>↓ <i>California's fiscal crisis hits schools</i> -- "<i>California, home to 1 in 9 American schoolchildren, is on the brink of what may be the biggest public education crisis in state history.</i>" [Comment: Education, one of the biggest ticket items of modern government, is one of the first to suffer when the grown-ups are delinquent.]</p>
<p><b>Energy</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i> Dirtier, cheaper and ever more popular</i> -- In the <i>developing world</i> there is no thought of shutting off <i>coal</i>; "<i>Coal will continue to be king in India. There is no way out</i>".</li> <li>• <i>Bangladesh energy security – entering red zone</i> -- a detailed look at Bangladesh's perfect storm of <i>rising food, water, and energy costs</i>.</li> <li>• <i>A power grid smartens up</i> -- an important trial of the future "<i>intelligent grid</i>" starts in <i>Boulder CO</i> -- via <i>intelligent meters</i>, consumers control their demand based on <i>price</i> and <i>source</i> of energy being distributed throughout the day.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Family</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [nothing significant to summarize -- see <i>News List</i>]</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Health insurers limit advanced scans</i> -- <i>X-rays, CT scans</i> are one of the major quagmires of fully <i>privatised medicine</i> with issues ranging from <i>over-servicing</i> for profit, to "<i>defensive medicine</i>" to protect against lawsuits", to and <i>risk</i> to patients from faulty equipment.</li> <li>• <i>Home bipolar disorder test causes stirs</i> -- "<i>more than 1,000 at-home gene tests have burst onto the market in the past few years. ...The tests receive almost no government oversight, even though many of them are being sold as tools for making serious medical decisions.</i>"</li> <li>• <i>No way to run health research [NYT Editorial]</i> -- "<i>For the past five years, the [National Institutes of Health] budget has been essentially flat. ... Congress needs to provide the N.I.H. with enough money to keep up with biomedical inflation and preferably somewhat more.</i>"</li> <li>• <i>Food industry advertising draws fire from children's health advocates</i> -- <i>The International Obesity Task Force</i> propose a "<i>global code</i>" to govern the <i>marketing of food to children</i>; "<i>the consumer groups have no mandate to present this,</i>" says the <i>World Federation of Advertisers</i>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Immigration</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>U.S. tweaks proposal on illegal workers</i> -- the administration has clarified its initiative on employers responsibilities to check <i>Social Security numbers</i> -- the '<i>No-Match Rule</i>' -- after being blocked by a court <i>injunction</i>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Justice</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<p>↓ <i>Justice for Sale</i> -- <i>election of judges</i> is a quaint tradition but one now redolent with the most <i>serious corruption</i> and <i>miscarriage of justice</i>.</p>
<p><b>Security</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Inside the Cyber Defense Group</i> -- "<i>there is a large amount of funding that is being budgeted for this effort. Inside sources believe in this current year the budget is \$6 billion</i>".</li> <li>• <i>Fusion centers to improve integration</i> -- "<i>The National Fusion Center Conference, held in San Francisco, brought together more than 900 top law enforcement and homeland security officials to discuss integrating fusion centers located in urban areas around the United States with national security initiatives to improve communication for emergency response to terrorism and other threats</i>".</li> <li>• <i>Flu pandemic bigger threat than terrorism, government says</i> -- "<i>a [UK] National Security Strategy drawn up by the Cabinet Office says such an outbreak is the biggest</i></li> </ul>

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*danger to the country, alongside nuclear attack".*

***Bush names new homeland security adviser** -- President **Bush** clings to the myth that being a former **Federal Prosecutor** equips one for a real job, least of all an important job.*

***Report finds flaws in terrorist watch list** -- "... the **inspector general's report** identified **flaws** throughout the process ..."*

**Society**  
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• A provocation?: ***Pope baptizes prominent Italian Muslim** -- "He titled one book '**Long Live Israel**' ... If Allam truly was compelled by a strong spiritual inspiration, perhaps it would have been better to do it delicately, maybe with a priest from Viterbo where he lives".*

**Water**  
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↓ ***Africa at risk of losing water supply to two million people** -- "... Africa is at risk of losing the central African glaciers that feed the Nile and supply water to two million people".*

***The Imminent Threat of Global Water Wars** -- "already, a third of the global population is said to be **short of water**, sparking fears of **social fallout** and **violence**, especially among the **world's poorest** and most **malnourished** people".*

**Challengers**

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

• ***Task force takes on Brazilian death squads** -- "'The Thundercats'. If you want someone killed in this **working-class district**, that's the name to remember.... the rosters of those squads routinely include **police officers** and other **prominent residents** ..."*

***Brazilian police bar press from doing its work** -- the actions by **military police** were less than tidy when removing members of **Via Campesina** [international peasant movement for **family farm-based production** and **decentralized food production**] protesting **land acquisitions** by Finnish-Swedish paper manufacturer **Stora Enso**, in the south of Brazil.*

**China**  
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↓ ***Is Beijing manipulating air pollution statistics?** -- "... allegations that the city stopped including the results from certain **air monitoring stations** to increase **blue-sky days** ..."*

***The Gendarmes of Eurasia** -- "China and **Russia** have already used the **SCO [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation]** to prepare for several possible contingencies".*

***Number of Chinese political prisoners in 2007 "highest since 1999"** -- "... arrests in China for '**endangering state security**' rose from 561 in 2006 to 742 in 2007. In the Chinese legal system, this category of crime ... includes **subversion**, **espionage**, and so-called '**splittism**' and the **incitement** thereof".*

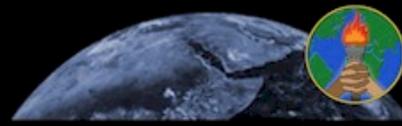
***Why China cannot let go of Tibet** -- "'If Tibet were to be lost, the **Communist Party** would also be seen as unable to keep the country intact. It is really important for the party to keep that'".*

***Chinese security deployed in Nepal after Tibet unrest** -- "**plain-clothes Chinese officers** could be seen yesterday on the Nepali side of the border with Tibet, and even blocked an AFP correspondent and photographer from working on Nepali soil near the main border crossing ..."*

**India**  
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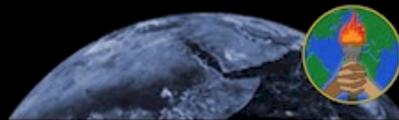
• ***India to set up 13 border posts** -- "... the Cabinet Committee on Security approved the move along India's borders with **Pakistan**, **Bangladesh**, **Bhutan**, **Nepal** and **Myanmar**".*

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	<p><i>India installs <b>radar system to curb LTTE infiltration and smugglings</b> -- "... the main objective of installing this surveillance system is to prevent smuggling and infiltration operations of the LTTE exploiting the <b>Gulf of Mannar to Sri Lanka</b>".</i></p> <p><i>India places <b>high-tech equipment at border</b> -- "India will deploy <b>high-tech electronic surveillance equipment</b> along its borders with <b>Pakistan</b> and <b>Bangladesh</b> ... [technologies: <b>HHTI, LORROS, BFSR</b>]"</i></p> <p><i>Ex-armyman with <b>ISI [Pakistan intelligence] links held</b> -- "... part of an <b>espionage ring</b>, operating in Delhi and UP for the past several years".</i></p> <p><i>Rebel kill <b>eight migrants in northeast India, police</b> -- "... a long-running <b>separatist</b> movement has periodically targeted <b>non-ethnic Assamese</b> who come to the state for work".</i></p> <p><i>India reviews <b>anti-Maoist group [Analysis]</b> -- "... raising of <b>local resistance groups [pro-government militia]</b> has <u>not helped</u> the security situation in the region ..."</i></p> <p><i>More <b>capacity building in Naxal areas: CM</b> -- "... the plan includes strengthening of the <b>intelligence wing</b> and <b>special operation group</b> ..."</i></p> <p><i>UN envoy warns of more <b>Gujarats if justice delayed</b> -- "... India risks more <b>religious violence</b>, like Gujarat's <u>2002 [anti-Muslim] riots</u> that killed <u>3,000 people</u>, as delays to bring justice encouraged an atmosphere of <b>impunity</b>".</i></p>
<p><b>Indonesia</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i><b>Nine in court for waving 'Free Papua' flag</b> -- "Indonesia, a sprawling <b>archipelago</b>, has long been sensitive about <b>separatist movements</b>".</i></li> <li><i>Indonesia to send more <b>peacekeepers to Lebanon, Sudan</b> -- "Indonesia will send at least 90 <b>military police</b> personnel to Lebanon and 140 <b>civilian police</b> to Sudan to help maintain peace in <b>Darfur</b>".</i></li> <li><i>Indonesia, S Africa formulating <b>capacity-building assistance for Palestine</b> -- [President Susilo Bambang <b>Yudhoyono</b>] also said the "<b>Bandung Spirit</b>" ignited by <b>Asian-African nations</b> in <u>1955</u> was still relevant to the problems being faced by Asian-African countries now.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Iran</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i><b>Iran, Switzerland energy deal infuriates US</b> -- despite US objections, the gas contract between <b>National Iranian Gas Export Company</b> and <b>Elektrizitaetsgesellschaft Laufenburg</b> involves <u>5.5 billion cubic meters</u> of <b>natural gas</b> annually.</i></li> <li><i><b>Iran Is Fundamental for Nabucco Project</b> -- "the <u>3,300-kilometer</u> <b>Nabucco</b> is due to connect the <b>European Union</b> to gas deposits in <b>Central Asia</b> and the <b>Middle East</b>. It is planned to start the construction of the line between <b>Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary</b> and <b>Austria</b> in <u>2010</u>". [Comment: Like it or not, Iran is a <b>global energy player</b>.]</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Russia</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i><b>Medvedev holds key to WTO</b> -- "... Medvedev may be more ready than his predecessor to steer the <b>Russian economy</b> towards <b>market liberalization</b> and <b>globalization</b> ..."</i></li> </ul> <p>A significant and complex posture: <b>Russian territory could be used for NATO supplies to Afghanistan</b> -- "a decision is expected soon".</p> <p>see: <b>China (The Gendarmes of Eurasia)</b></p>
<p><b>Venezuela</b>  <a href="#">news list forecast</a></p>	<p>↓ <i><b>Venezuela slams US in UN Terrorism debate</b> -- "The case of the terrorist <b>Luis Posada Carriles</b> is an example that shows and confirms the <b>double standards</b> of a government which says it fights against terrorism but endorses terrorist methods," says Venezuela's Deputy Ambassador to the UN before the <b>UN Security Council</b>. [Posada, a <b>Cuban-born Venezuelan</b> citizen who has been described as the "Bin</i></p>

↓ deteriorated	• steady	↑ improved	↗ ALERT
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Laden of Latin America," is wanted in Venezuela on 73 counts of first-degree murder in connection to the **bombing** of a **Cuban airliner** in 1976.]

*Venezuela's navy plans to build torpedoes, miness* -- "the Venezuelan navy said on its Web site it was developing a project to design and build **heavy torpedoes** for two **submarines** and **lighter missiles** for its **frigates**".

*U.S. cocaine-plane invasion spooking Latin America* -- Mystery aircraft: "trail of evidence points to major **covert operation** targeting Venezuela".

**Wild Cards**  
 news list|forecast

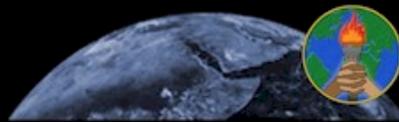
- The decade of the UAV [*unmanned aerial vehicle*] comes to Pakistan: **Pakistan successfully tests indigenous UAV 'Uqaab'** -- "The performance of the UAV 'Uqaab' can be compared to any of modern state-of-the-art UAV in its category ..."  
**Four FBI agents injured in Pak restaurant blast** -- "Multiple sources said that the attack was under investigation to see whether it was based on the **terrorists** having learned in advance of the agents' presence."

see: **China** (*The Gendarmes of Eurasia*)

see: **Indonesia** (*Indonesia, S Africa formulating capacity-building assistance for Palestine*)

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