C U R R E N T N E W S

E A R L Y B I R D

October 13, 2012

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Item numbers indicate order of appearance only.

CYBER SECURITY

1. **Iran Blamed For Cyberattacks**
   (Wall Street Journal)....Siobhan Gorman and Julian E. Barnes
   Iranian hackers with government ties have mounted cyberattacks against American targets in recent months, escalating a low-grade cyberwar, U.S. officials say.

2. **US Warning Reflects Fears Of Iranian Cyberattack**
   (Yahoo.com)....Lolita C. Baldor, Associated Press
   Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's pointed warning that the U.S. will strike back against a cyberattack underscores the Obama administration's growing concern that Iran could be the first country to unleash cyberterrorism on America.

3. **Cyber Security**
   (NPR; FNC; CBS; NBC)....Larry Abramson; Jennifer Griffin; David Martin; Jim Miklaszewski
   Four news reports on Defense Secretary Panetta's remarks on cyber security.

AFGHANISTAN

4. **Smaller U.S. Force Finds Itself At An Afghan Crossroads**
   (Los Angeles Times)....Ned Parker
   ...The daily fight right beyond the wire is bitter and unwelcome evidence of the stalemate that exists in southern and eastern Afghanistan. U.S. officers commend their forces for fighting bravely and they praise the growing strength of their Afghan counterparts, who they say will be able to take on the Taliban when the last of the U.S.-led coalition forces leave Afghanistan in 2014.

5. **In Afghan Zone, Poppies Fog Military Mission**
   (Wall Street Journal)....Yaroslav Trofimov
   One after another, lumbering jets taking off from Camp Bastion, the giant coalition base in Afghanistan's most violent province of Helmand, flew over the heads of Marines patrolling this village of mud compounds and poppy fields.

6. **Troops Prepare To Leave Oruzgan**
   (Sydney Morning Herald)....Dylan Welch
   EVERY patrol and forward operating base in Oruzgan will be emptied of Australian soldiers by the new year according to the Defence Department, providing yet more evidence that Australia's combat role in Afghanistan is all but over.

7. **Moves To Speed Up Afghan Pull-Out**

(London Daily Telegraph)....James Kirkup
DEFENCE chiefs are drawing up plans for a faster withdrawal from Afghanistan, after George Osborne challenged their strategy and suggested that all troops should come home immediately.

8. **Camp Bastion Attack**
(CBS)....Kelly Cobiella
...We are learning more tonight about the most costly enemy attack ever in Afghanistan. It was about a month ago, that two U.S. Marines were killed and six Marine attack jets were destroyed in a raid on Camp Bastion. The jets cost between $20 and $30 million each. The base is one of the most heavily defended in the war, so we asked Kelly Cobiella to tell us about the attack through the words of the Marines who were there.

MIDEAST

9. **On Edge As Syria's War Knocks Ever Harder On The Door To Turkey**
(New York Times)....Tim Arango
...Here, amid the quiet rhythms of rural life, people are witnessing what for 19 months had been one of the gravest concerns about the war next door: that it would spill over the border, draw in neighboring nations and, in a flash, become a regional conflagration. War, it becomes clearer by the day, is inching closer to home.

10. **Russia Says Syria Jet Held Radar Gear**
(Wall Street Journal)....Joe Parkinson, Alan Cullison and Ayla Albayrak
Russia said the Syrian plane forced to land in Turkey was legally carrying radar parts in the latest salvo of a deepening diplomatic row between the countries, as Turkey scrambled two fighter jets to the Syrian border for the first time since July.

11. **Syrian Rebels Overrun Missile Base**
(Los Angeles Times)....Times Staff
Syrian rebels seized a government missile defense base near the northern city of Aleppo on Friday that had been the source of regular attacks on surrounding villages, activists said.

12. **Iraq: Deal To Buy Czech Planes**
(New York Times)....Associated Press
Iraq has agreed to buy 28 Czech-made military airplanes in a deal worth $1 billion, part of a broader Iraqi effort to rebuild military capabilities destroyed during the American-led invasion of the country, officials said Friday.

LIBYA

13. **Focus Was On Tripoli In Requests For Security In Libya**
(New York Times)....Eric Schmitt and Mark Landler
In the weeks leading up to the attack last month on the American diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya, that killed Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans, diplomats on the ground sounded increasingly urgent alarms. In a stream of diplomatic cables, embassy security officers warned their superiors at the State Department of a worsening threat from Islamic extremists, and requested that the teams of military personnel and State Department security guards who were already on duty be kept in service.

14. **Libya Leadership Is In Disarray**
(Washington Post)....Michael Birnbaum
Political chaos hampers probe of attack on U.S. mission in Benghazi.

15. **U.S. Intelligence Hurt When Libya Base Was Abandoned**
(Reuters.com)....Mark Hosenball, Reuters
U.S. intelligence efforts in Libya have suffered a significant setback due to the abandonment and exposure of a facility in Benghazi, Libya identified by a newspaper as a "CIA base" following a congressional hearing this week, according to U.S. government sources.

16. **Charges Sharpen In Libya Debate**
(Washington Post)....Anne Gearan
GOP intensifies security criticism; White House continues to defend its actions.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

17. **Inside The CAG: Dempsey's Inner Circle**
(The E-Ring (e-ring.foreignpolicy.com))....Kevin Baron
Walking around the Joint Chiefs of Staff hallways in the Pentagon, one often hears of a mystical and powerful force known simply as "the CAG."

18. **Pentagon's Plan X: How It Could Change Cyberwarfare**
(Christian Science Monitor (csmonitor.com))....Anna Mulrine
The same Pentagon futurologists who helped create the Internet are about to begin a new era of cyberwarfare.

19. **Darpa's New Director Wants To Keep The Skies Under U.S. Control**
(Danger Room (Wired.com))....Spencer Ackerman
The U.S. has total dominance of the skies above planet Earth, a defense budget five times as large as its nearest competitor, and a fleet of robotic aircraft and advanced manned planes. The newest leader of the Pentagon's blue-sky researchers says the U.S. is more vulnerable than it thinks in the skies.

20. **DARPA To Shift Away From Applied Battlefield Tech**
(NextGov.com)....Joseph Marks
As the U.S. commitment in Afghanistan winds down, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency should focus less on responding to immediate conflicts and more on tackling obstacles the United States could face years or decades in the future, the agency's director said Friday.

ARMY

21. **A Transition Fraught With New Challenges**
(Washington Post)....Ernesto Londono
...The new army, senior military leaders say, must become more nimble, its officers more savvy, its engagements more nuanced and almost certainly shorter. The lessons of the Arab Spring weigh heavily on war planners, with an array of threats looming in the Middle East and elsewhere. A high premium is being placed on devising the proper use of Special Forces, drones and cyber capabilities.

22. **Some JBLM Soldiers To Stay Here As Reserves Amid Afghan Mission**
(Tacoma News Tribune)....Adam Ashton
The next Joint Base Lewis-McChord Stryker brigade to fight in Afghanistan plans to leave 1,000 of its soldiers at home as a "readiness reserve" in case its mission advising Afghan partners changes during its deployment.

23. **U.S. Hearing On Kandahar Massacre To Include Video Testimony From Afghans**
(Reuters.com)....Laura L. Myers, Reuters
The preliminary court hearing next month in Washington state for the U.S. Army soldier charged with killing 16 Afghan civilians in a March rampage will include live video testimony from witnesses including villagers and Afghan soldiers.

ASIA/PACIFIC

24. **South Korean Official Warns Of 'Existential Threat' From North**
(New York Times)....Choe Sang-Hun
A senior South Korean policy maker on North Korea said on Friday that it must be assumed that the North has the capacity to mount a nuclear device on a ballistic missile, adding that such a capability would pose "an existential threat" to South Korea.

25. **China And Japan Say They Held Talks About Island Dispute That Has Frayed Relations**
(New York Times)....Martin Fackler
A senior Chinese diplomat made a secret visit to Tokyo this week to hold talks aimed at defusing tensions between Japan and China over a group of disputed islands, Japan's top government spokesman said Friday.

AFRICA

26. **Security Council Seeks To Aid Mali**
(New York Times)....Rick Gladstone
The Security Council unanimously passed a resolution on Friday authorizing the use of military force to assist Mali's government in reclaiming the northern half of the country.

AMERICAS

27. **U.S. Rethinks A Drug War After Deaths In Honduras**
(New York Times)....Damien Cave and Ginger Thompson
...Fearful that Central America was becoming overrun by organized crime, perhaps worse than in the worst parts of Mexico, the State Department, the D.E.A. and the Pentagon rushed ahead this year with a muscular antidrug program with several Latin American nations, hoping to protect Honduras and use it as a chokepoint to cut off the flow of drugs heading north. Then the series of fatal enforcement actions — some by the Honduran military, others involving shootings by American agents — quickly turned the antidrug cooperation, often promoted as a model of international teamwork, into a case study of what can go wrong when the tactics of war are used to fight a crime problem that goes well beyond drugs.

STATE DEPARTMENT

28. **Private Security Hovers As Issue After Benghazi**
(New York Times)....James Risen
Lost amid the election-year wrangling over the militants' attack on the United States Mission in Benghazi, Libya, is a complex back story involving growing regional resentment against heavily armed American private security contractors, increased demands on State Department resources and mounting frustration among diplomats over ever-tighter protections that they say make it more difficult to do their jobs.

LEGAL AFFAIRS

29. **2 Terror Trials Separated By More Than A Subway Ride**
(MiamiHerald.com)....Carol Rosenberg
From logistics to the law, the latest New York City terror proceedings offer a stark contrast to the challenges of mounting the Sept. 11 trial at Guantanamo.

BUSINESS

30. **Russia-Lithuania Contractors Face U.S. Army Suspension Threat**
(Bloomberg Government (bgov.com))....Tony Capaccio, Bloomberg News
U.S. Army officials will review a Lithuanian-Russian team for possible suspension or debarment from American military work over delays and cost increases on a contract to overhaul helicopters.

COMMENTARY

31. **Ready Player One**
(ForeignPolicy.com)....James Andrew Lewis
...Given the feeble state of U.S. cyberdefenses, an astute antagonist could use cyberattacks to disrupt critical services and information. This is a standard military doctrine for America's likely opponents. An expanded role for the DOD

makes sense when the United States is so vulnerable -- not only from sophisticated opponents but, surprisingly, from less advanced countries that may be more aggressive and less able to calculate risk.

32. **Taliban Likely To Weather Storm In Pakistan**
(Los Angeles Times)....Alex Rodriguez
Nation is outraged over a schoolgirl's shooting, but there's little chance of a push against militants.

33. **U.S., Allies Girding For Worst-Case Scenario With Syria's WMD**
(LATimes.com)....Carol J. Williams
During a week that witnessed deadly artillery exchanges between Syria and Turkey and a tense showdown over a plane purportedly ferrying munitions from Russia, the arrival of 150 U.S. troops in Jordan was likely to be viewed as token support for an ally coping with a refugee influx from Syria's civil war. The deployment, though, may be a response to mounting concerns at the Pentagon and among European and Middle East allies that Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons could fall into the hands of hostile forces if the embattled regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad is eventually toppled.

34. **The Morality Of War From The Sky**
(Bloomberg Businessweek)....Jeffrey Goldberg
...In the short term, drone campaigns have done quantifiable damage to al-Qaeda and like-minded groups. Long term, the effects of this campaign—making it so much easier for presidents to kill people, making the U.S. open to blowback from countries that feel they're entitled to fly drones over U.S. territory—are not understood.

35. **Beating The Retreat In Afghanistan**
(Sydney Morning Herald)....Editorial
...So after the small Australian force is withdrawn from Oruzgan province at the end of this year, and most of the US and European contingents in 2014, we should be asking what will be left, whether a job has been left unfinished and whether it could ever be finished by staying any longer.

36. **Unfinished Business**
(Washington Post)....Editorial
A new pact on securing weapons is needed to succeed Nunn-Lugar.

37. **State Dept. Erred In Benghazi, But GOP Posturing Won't Help**
(Boston Globe)....Editorial
...But one thing is clear: Politics have pushed aside the real questions US voters should be asking: What kind of presence should United States have in the world, and how much are Americans willing to pay for it?

CORRECTIONS

38. **Corrections**
(New York Times)....The New York Times
An article on Thursday about Russia's refusal to renew the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, a hugely successful 20-year partnership with the United States to safeguard and dismantle nuclear and chemical weapons in the former Soviet Union, misspelled the surname of a deputy foreign minister who announced the Russian position. He is Sergey Ryabkov, not Ruabkov.

Wall Street Journal
October 13, 2012
Pg. 1

1. Iran Blamed For Cyberattacks

U.S. Officials Say Iranian Hackers Behind Electronic Assaults on U.S. Banks, Foreign Energy Firms

By Siobhan Gorman and Julian E. Barnes

WASHINGTON—Iranian hackers with government ties have mounted cyberattacks against American targets in recent months, escalating a low-grade cyberwar, U.S. officials say.

The Iranian effort culminated in a series of recent attacks against U.S. banks as well as electronic assaults this year on energy companies in the Persian Gulf. The attacks bore "signatures" that allowed U.S. investigators to trace them to the Iranian government, the officials said.

The hackers appear to be a network of fewer than 100 Iranian computer-security specialists at universities and network security companies in Iran, investigators said.

Iranian officials didn't return a call seeking comment.

U.S. officials said detailed evidence linking the attacks to Tehran is classified. But Iranian hackers don't have the resources to mount major attacks without the support and technical expertise of the government, the officials said.

"These are not ordinary Iranians," one senior U.S. official said.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta alluded to the Iranian cyberattacks in a policy announcement this week on U.S. efforts to counter the threat. He didn't directly finger Iran in these attacks, but said they mark "a significant escalation." Mr. Panetta, in an address in New York, outlined procedures being put into place to block such attacks, identify attackers and retaliate, if necessary.

"They have been going after everyone—financial services, Wall Street," said a senior defense official. "Is there a cyberwar going on? It depends on how you define 'war.'"

The attacks against U.S. banks were so-called denial of service attacks, in which computers are programmed to bombard a particular website and knock it off line. But investigators fear that they represent a first step to more destructive electronic assaults, which already had been mounted on a Saudi oil company.

The attacks began early this year in what some officials surmised was retaliation for harsh sanctions on Iran's oil and financial sectors, imposed as part of an effort by the U.S. and its allies to halt Tehran's nuclear program. Tehran denies Western charges that it is seeking to use the nuclear program to develop atomic weapons.

The Iranian effort may also be payback for a high-tech campaign against Iran that involved the U.S., including the cybersabotage project known as Stuxnet. That project targeted Iran's Natanz nuclear plant with cyberattacks that caused a large proportion of its centrifuges to spin out of control beginning in 2008.

U.S. officials have long considered Iran as a second-tier cyberpower, behind China, Russia, France, Israel and the United States. They now are debating the extent to which Iran has the capability to damage the financial system and other U.S. infrastructure.

Iran has stepped up its cyber capabilities in recent years, spending at least $1 billion on them since the beginning of this year, said Ilan Berman, a Middle East expert at the American Foreign Policy Council. The Pentagon spends about $3 billion a year on cyberdefenses.

Iran's strategy has shifted from fortifying its cyberdefenses to developing offensive cyberweapons, said Mr. Berman.

Defense officials see the cyberattacks as part of a larger effort by Iran. U.S. investigators allege Iran was behind an attack in July on Israeli tourists in Bulgaria, the killing of a Saudi diplomat in May in Pakistan, and the attempted assassination last year of the Saudi ambassador in Washington. Iran has denied involvement in all the incidents.

U.S. banks were the first targets of attacks that were comparatively small in scale, according to former U.S. officials.

The attacks expanded to oil and gas companies in the Persian Gulf and Middle East over the summer, then returned to U.S. banks with far more potent attacks in recent weeks.

Three more banks were hit this week, and each of those actions was preceded by an Internet warning of an imminent attack.

"In the last year, there's been a cyberwar going on in the Middle East, and it's spilled over now" into America, a former U.S. official said.

The attacks began shortly after approval last December of a U.S. defense bill that stepped up punitive sanctions. Iranian hackers initially mounted potent, but smaller-scale denial of service attacks on a group of U.S. banks in January, investigators say. The attackers were testing the banks' responses to each assault and adjusting their tactics to penetrate banks' defenses.

The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange and the website of Israeli airline El Al also came under attack that month, each suffering website outages. Although an unknown hacker who claimed to be a Saudi took credit, investigators are examining a possible Iranian role. The stock exchange and airline acknowledged the attack at the time and said they quickly recovered from it.

The Iranian hackers re-emerged in July with an attack on the Saudi Arabian Oil Co., known as Saudi Aramco, investigators believe. That attack, wielding a virus called "Shamoon," destroyed data on 30,000 computers. A group calling itself "Cutting Sword of Justice" claimed responsibility for the attack, which U.S. investigators believe was tied to Iran.

Aramco acknowledged then that its computers had been taken down by an electronic attack and said it expected more attacks in the future. It said that it quickly recovered.

The Aramco attacks set off alarms within the U.S. government as a shift in tactics from stealing information to destroying it.

In August, the target was Rasgas, a Qatari natural gas company that is a leading global provider of liquefied natural gas. The attack, which U.S. officials believe was carried out by the same Iranian network, shut down its website and internal email servers. Rasgas also acknowledged the attack and said it had no impact on operations.

In September, the group redoubled its attacks on the U.S. financial sector. It announced its plans in advance under the moniker "Qassam Cyber Fighters," a previously unknown group.

On Sept. 18, the group announced it would target Bank of America Corp. It followed with several more attacks,

including J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., U.S. Bancorp, PNC Financial Services Corp., and Wells Fargo & Co.

This past week, the pre-announced attacks continued with Capital One Financial Corp., SunTrust Banks Inc., and Regions Financial Corp. Following the announcements, the attacks bombarded computers that run bank websites, slowing website performance of some and taking others offline temporarily.

Bank of America declined to comment and J.P. Morgan wouldn't confirm an attack but acknowledged some customers had difficulty accessing its website. PNC's president wrote an open letter to customers about the attacks, which lasted about 31 hours. Wells Fargo and U.S. Bancorp also acknowledged they had been hit.

With this week's attacks, a Capital One spokeswoman said that some customers were intermittently unable to log on to their accounts on Oct. 9 due to a large volume of traffic. A SunTrust spokesman said the company experienced increased traffic Oct. 10 that led to service outages. A Regions spokesman said the company experienced intermittent Internet service disruption on Oct. 11.

--*Suzanne Kapner, Jessica Holtzer and Devlin Barrett contributed to this article.*

Yahoo.com
October 12, 2012

2. US Warning Reflects Fears Of Iranian Cyberattack

By Lolita C. Baldor,
Associated Press

WASHINGTON--Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's pointed warning that the U.S. will strike back against a cyberattack underscores the Obama administration's growing concern that Iran could be the first country to unleash cyberterrorism on America.

Panetta's unusually strong comments Thursday came as former U.S. government officials and cybersecurity experts said the U.S. believes Iranian-based hackers were responsible for cyberattacks that devastated computer systems of Persian Gulf oil and gas companies.

Unencumbered by diplomatic or economic ties that restrain other nations from direct conflict with the U.S., Iran is an unpredictable foe that national security experts contend is not only capable but willing to use a sophisticated computer-based attack.

Panetta made it clear that the military is ready to retaliate — though he didn't say how — if it believes the nation is threatened by a cyberattack, and he made it evident that the U.S. would consider a preemptive strike.

"Iran is a country for whom terror has simply been another tool in their foreign policy toolbox, and they are a country that feels it has less and less to lose by breaking the norms of the rest of the world," said Stewart Baker, former assistant secretary at the Department of Homeland Security and now in private law practice. "If anybody is going to release irresponsible unlimited attacks, you'd expect it to be Iran."

National security experts have long complained that the administration needs to be much more open about what the military could and would do if the U.S. were to be the victim of cyberattacks. They argue that such deterrence worked in the Cold War with Russia and would help convince would-be attackers that an assault on America would have dire results.

Panetta took the first steps toward answering those critics in a speech analysts said was a thinly veiled warning to Iran, and the opening salvo in the campaign to convince Tehran that any cyberattack against America would trigger a swift and deadly response.

"Potential aggressors should be aware that the United States has the capacity to locate them and hold them accountable for actions that harm America or its interests," Panetta said in a speech in New York City to the Business Executives for National Security.

And while he did not directly connect Iran to the Gulf cyberattacks, he warned that Iran's abilities were growing.

Security analysts agree.

The presumed Iranian cyberattacks hit the Saudi Arabian state oil company Aramco and Qatari natural gas producer RasGas using a virus, known as Shamoon, which can spread through networked computers and ultimately wipes out files by overwriting them.

In his speech, Panetta said the Shamoon virus replaced crucial system files at Aramco with the image of a burning U.S. flag, and also overwrote all data, rendering more than 30,000 computers useless and forcing them to be replaced. He said the Qatar attack was similar.

"This one worries me," said Richard Bejtlich, chief security officer for the Virginia-based cybersecurity firm Mandiant. "I'm not an alarmist, but when I saw that 30,000 computers at Saudi Aramco got just deleted, that was a big deal. You don't see the Chinese government, you don't see the Russian government, or even their patriotic hackers go out and delete anything for the most part."

From the Iranians' point of view, however, attacks against the U.S. may be justified because American sanctions leveled on the country for refusing to cooperate with international norms on its nuclear program have hit Iran hard. Tehran also believes that the U.S. and Israel were behind the Stuxnet cyberattack that forced the temporary shutdown of thousands of centrifuges at a nuclear facility there in 2010.

As a result, said Bejtlich, Iran already believes it is at war with the U.S.

Frank Cilluffo, , a former special assistant for homeland security to President George W. Bush, said U.S. authorities have suspected Iran of trying to plot cyberattacks against American targets, including nuclear plants. And he said that Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps appears to now be trying to bring some of the patriotic hacker groups under its control, so it can draw on their abilities.

"Iran has been doing a lot of cyber saber-rattling," said Cilluffo, now director of George Washington University's Homeland Security Policy Institute. "What they lack in capabilities, they more than make up for in intent."

Tehran has not made any public comment on Panetta's comments, but the Iranians routinely report the discovery of viruses and other malicious programs in government, nuclear, oil and industrial networks, blaming Israel and the United States.

While Panetta's warnings received high marks from security experts, those people also were quick to say that much more needs to be done.

The U.S., said former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, must lay out the rules of the road and figure out what kind of proof authorities would need before taking action.

"We still have work to do," said Chertoff, who is now chairman of the Chertoff Group, a global security firm. "Will we take action to preempt something rather than simply retaliate, and how early and how much warning will we need before we take that action?"

He noted that most conflicts arise over misunderstandings, when one side doesn't realize what the other will do if provoked.

The administration has repeatedly warned of the cybersecurity threats, particularly against critical infrastructure such as financial networks, transportation systems and utility companies. More recently, the White House has been considering using the president's executive power to encourage critical industries to better protect their networks because legislation to do so stalled in Congress.

"While the message has been sent over and over again it doesn't seem to have acquired urgency across the board," said Chertoff. "We need to make it clear that this is not just background noise you have to deal with, but that it really strikes at the fundamentals of our national security."

NPR; FNC; CBS; NBC
October 12, 2012

3. Cyber Security

Morning Edition (NPR), 7:10 A.M.

STEVE INSKEEP, NPR HOST: NPR's business news starts with rules of engagement.

INSKEEP: Last night, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta issued these words of warning: foreign cyber actors - he said - are probing America's critical infrastructure networks.

As NPR's Larry Abramson reports, Panetta says the Pentagon is revising its cyber rules of engagement, so it can respond to those attacks.

LARRY ABRAMSON, NPR CORRESPONDENT: In a speech to a business group in New York, Panetta said the threat posed by cyber attacks is no longer theoretical. The Shamoon virus disabled thousand of computers used by the energy industry in Saudi Arabia earlier this year. And Panetta said, computer attackers have already gained access to the systems that control America's chemical and water plants, and that control transportation systems.

LEON PANETTA, U.S. DEFENSE SECRETARY: We also know that they are seeking to create advanced tools to attack these systems and cause panic, destruction, and even loss of life.

ABRAMSON: Panetta did not cite any damage caused by access to U.S. networks. The point of Panetta's speech was to explain that the Pentagon is working to respond to this threat. He did not explain whether the military envisions using offensive measures, such as the Stuxnet worm used against Iran's nuclear industry.

But Panetta did say the Pentagon is developing rules to determine when and how to respond to cyber attacks. Another point is to urge Congress to pass legislation requiring higher computer security standards for industry. Panetta said if Congress does not act, the president should issue an executive order.

Larry Abramson, NPR News.

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America Live (FNC), 1:00 P.M.

MEGYN KELLY, FNC ANCHOR: Just incredible tape, isn't it? Pearl Harbor. It and 9/11 marked two prime examples as to how this country was caught off guard by an enemy attack. And today, Leon Panetta is warning of what he calls a similar threat.

We reported in recent days how Iranian-based hackers are suspected of targeting a whole series of some of America's biggest banks. And Secretary Panetta says the United States is increasingly vulnerable to these foreign hackers. Jennifer Griffin has more, live from the Pentagon. Jennifer?

JENNIFER GRIFFIN, FNC CORRESPONDENT: Hi, Megyn. Well, Secretary Panetta believes that we are in a pre-9/11 moment. But his warning and his message last night appeared to be for Iran.

LEON PANETTA, U.S. DEFENSE SECRETARY: Potential aggressors should be aware that the United States has the capacity to locate them and to hold them accountable for their actions that may try to harm America.

GRIFFIN: Secretary Panetta is the first U.S. official to publicly confirm two recent cyber-attacks on the oil and gas industry, details of which were declassified for his speech last night. Allies in Saudia Arabia and Qatar were hit by a virus known as Shamoon that wiped out 30,000 computers, replacing files with an icon of a burning American flag. Panetta didn't name the perpetrator of those attacks but telegraphed what the Pentagon knows.

PANETTA: Iran has also undertaken a concerted effort to use cyberspace to its advantage.

GRIFFIN: Current U.S. officials tell Fox the recent denial of service attack on Bank of America was a response from Iran to recent sanctions against its oil industry. Panetta also referenced the cyber-attacks that struck Aramco, Saudia Arabia's state oil company and similarly struck Qatar's natural gas producer, Rasgas, which former U.S. cyber officials say are believed to have emanated from Iran.

The Pentagon spends $3 billion a year on cyber-security, but Panetta's message went a step further, suggesting that the Pentagon would not necessarily wait to be attacked, that it had offensive weapons in place. This speech, Megyn, was to put America's enemies on notice.

KELLY: Wow. The battle today takes place on very different fronts. Jennifer Griffin, thanks so much.

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Evening News (CBS), 6:30 P.M.

SCOTT PELLEY, CBS ANCHOR: Good evening. The United States is facing an attack threat equivalent to 9/11, an attack that would be carried out by computer. That was the stark warning from Defense Secretary Leon Panetta. He described a cyber Pearl Harbor, in which attackers could take over computers that control the transportation system or a utility, with deadly consequences.

Panetta's dire prediction comes after a massive computer attack on the world's largest oil company. So we asked David Martin to tell us more.

DAVID MARTIN, CBS CORRESPONDENT: U.S. officials say a cyber attack against Aramco, the world's largest oil producer, has been traced to hackers inside Iran. Another volley in an increasingly high stakes war going on in cyberspace. And Defense Secretary Panetta warns potential enemies, including Iran, are developing the capability to launch devastating attacks.

PANETTA: The collective result of these kinds of attacks could be a cyber Pearl Harbor. An attack that would cause physical destruction and the loss of life. An attack that would paralyze and shock the nation

and create a new profound sense of vulnerability.

MARTIN: Iran does not have that kind of capability yet, but U.S. officials say several recent cyber attacks have been traced to hackers inside Iran. Panetta stopped short of blaming Iran, but in a speech last night described the cyber attack against Aramco, which occurred two months ago.

PANETTA: More than 30,000 computers that it infected were rendered useless and had to be replaced.

MARTIN: The attack--using a virus called Shamoon--did not disrupt oil production. But a couple of days later, Shamoon struck again, this time against the world's second-largest producer of liquefied natural gas.

PANETTA: The Shamoon virus was probably the most destructive attack that the private sector has seen to date. These attacks mark a significant escalation of the cyber threat.

MARTIN: They could be in retaliation for cyber attacks against Iran's nuclear program. Also, recent attacks on the web sites of American financial institutions, including Bank of America and J.P. Morgan Chase, could be Iran's way of fighting back against economic sanctions. The attacks overwhelmed the sites with e-mails denying service to legitimate customers. That would be a minor disruption compared to what would happen if, as in this test on an industrial turbine, hackers took over the computer controls of critical infrastructure.

MARTIN: Panetta also said the Pentagon has made significant advances in determining where attacks are coming from. And he warned the U.S. is prepared to strike back.

PELLEY: David, thanks very much.

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Nightly News (NBC), 7:00 P.M.

BRIAN WILLIAMS, NBC ANCHOR: When the secretary of defense warns of a possible impending attack, it gets our attention. And this one just did. The new warning about the consequences of a cyber attack by Iran that could create trouble havoc in this area.

Our report tonight from our Pentagon correspondent, Jim Miklaszewski.

JIM MIKLASZEWSKI, NBC NEWS PENTAGON CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): It is predicted that cyber space will be the world's next major battlefield. But in a national call to arms, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta warned that the threat of a significant cyber attack against America is already here.

LEON PANETTA, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: The collective result of these kinds of attacks could be a cyber Pearl Harbor.

MIKLASZEWSKI: Panetta warned that cyber attackers have tried to shut down America's critical infrastructure -- power, water, transportation and major financial institutions.

PANETTA: Such a destructive cyber terrorist attack could virtually paralyze the nation.

MIKLASZEWSKI: While Russia and China are prime suspects, for the first time, U.S. officials blame Iran for the recent jump in cyber attacks. Defense officials tell NBC's News, Iran was behind a recent series of attempts to disable the web sites of several major U.S. banks. Those attacks failed, but another Iranian cyber attack nearly shut down Saudi Arabia's state oil company. Using a sophisticated virus, called Shamoo, the Iranians stole critical data and destroyed 30,000 computers.

Experts say this complex attack should be a warning to the U.S.

ROGER CRESSEY, NBC NEWS TERRORISM ANALYST: We do not have the proper level of security within the financial sector or the oil and gas sector, or any of our critical infrastructures.

MIKLASZEWSKI (on camera): Officials here say if Iran poses any threat, the U.S. could launch its own cyber attack to shut down Iran's entire electrical system.

Panetta warns, however, the Internet is a battlefield filled with many enemies, and that the U.S. government and industry must do more to combat this growing threat.

Jim Miklaszewski, NBC News, the Pentagon.

Los Angeles Times
October 13, 2012
Pg. 1

4. Smaller U.S. Force Finds Itself At An Afghan Crossroads

By Ned Parker

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan--The sun pounds down on the U.S. Marine sergeant and the tribal elder in this faceless, bone-colored plain.

"We haven't seen any Taliban," the silk-bearded Afghan says, with a grin too large. The sergeant, broiling in his bulletproof vest, anticipates crackling gunfire at any minute. He knows the man is lying and he expects him to lie.

This barren, anonymous-feeling landscape matters because it sits outside the biggest U.S. military and coalition base in Helmand province, known as Camp Leatherneck, a miniature city built in the middle of nowhere. The camp has served as the restive province's command center for American forces during their two-year troop buildup aimed at disrupting the Islamist militants.

Now, with those additional troops having departed, American forces cannot leave Camp Leatherneck without getting fired at or bombed on any given day. An unprecedented assault on an adjoining base in mid-September saw 15 Taliban fighters enter, blow up six Harrier jets and three refueling stations and kill two Marines before they were stopped.

The daily fight right beyond the wire is bitter and unwelcome evidence of the stalemate that exists in southern and eastern Afghanistan. U.S. officers commend their forces for fighting bravely and they praise the growing strength of their Afghan counterparts, who they say will be able to take on the Taliban when the last of the U.S.-led coalition forces leave Afghanistan in 2014.

'A province at war'

"We are still a province at war, there is no doubt about that. We have been for a while and it will continue to be, but it is a province where things have improved a lot over the course of three, four years," said Marine Maj. Gen. Mark Gurganus, the commanding U.S. officer in Helmand. "I am watching these young [Afghan] guys step up and take the fight."

But today, the Americans confront an enemy still capable of absorbing punishing hits and then turning around to attack when it suits them, including the assassination of Afghan politicians and security officials. If the Americans hope another year of training will result in Afghan security forces strong enough to push the Taliban back, the militants

appear to believe today belongs to them, and tomorrow, without the Americans, does so even more.

It is in this atmosphere that the Marines patrol Boldak, the current name of this no-man's land, home to as many as 20,000 people scattered across dry ravines and gulches about five miles from Camp Leatherneck. As the armored trucks chug down the road, children in white and brown robes spot the Americans and rush after them, trying to strike the convoy with stones, a daily ritual the Marines have become used to. In Iraq, even in the worst of days, children would see a U.S. convoy and chase it in hope of receiving a soccer ball or candy. Here, youngsters use the American vehicles for target practice.

The convoy stops in the middle of Boldak's brown igloo-like huts dotted across the ghostly hills that encircle Camp Leatherneck.

The Marines are relieved to be here and not stuck on the road for hours, lest a 60-pound bomb explode beneath one of their armored vehicles.

As the Marines walk into the narrow alleys between compounds, some of them stand poised with M-16s aimed toward the horizon. They expect sniper fire, or a rocket shot off by a fighter hidden from view, who will then speed away on a motorcycle. At the same time, battle casualties are rare on either side.

The sergeant and an Afghan interpreter wade through a sea of tiny boys, and the elder, with his white robe and cane, approaches. The dry terrain is home to Bedouin hamlets, where people settle during the cooler months to cultivate poppies, then move away in the withering summer heat. The U.S. military has opted to tolerate it rather than infuriate the local population by destroying lucrative crop so close to their base.

The elder shakes the sergeant's hand, seemingly happy to welcome him.

The sergeant breaks the ice by asking, through the interpreter, what the villagers are growing. The interpreter, unrecognizable in sunglasses and armor, afraid of allowing his identity becoming known to the Taliban, stands between them.

The elder says they are cultivating wheat, but the sergeant sees dried-out poppies that look like small garlic bulbs scattered on the ground. He chooses not to mention it.

"Ask him if he wants to help us out at all," the Marine tells the interpreter.

"Sure, why not? I'll help you as much as I can," the elder wheezes. "We know you guys. We can't be friends with the Taliban."

Like all villagers here, the sergeant thinks, the elder's primary concern is to remain safe while waiting to see who wins the war.

The sergeant says he is going to speak with other villagers.

The elder smiles again. "If you want to speak to someone, tell me," he says, addressing the interpreter. "I can bring him anywhere you want. If you go to the houses, people will be scared. The kids will be scared."

The sergeant walks up the narrow, dry brown pathway. He comes up to another old man and his middle-aged son. The elder trails behind with the help of his cane.

The son says they are just poor people in desperate need of work and have never seen the Taliban. The father, frail and exhausted, lets his son do all the talking.

In the dirt is a pile of rusty bullet shells. The sergeant asks where they came from. "These aren't American bullet casings," he says to his interpreter.

The elder has caught up with them and answers cheerfully that they can only be the U.S. military's. "Nobody else is here," he adds. "For seven years, I haven't seen anything happen in this village."

A warning

A friend in a black turban, who is chewing a brown tobacco product from a tin, distracts the elder, and the two disappear together.

The sergeant circles back to the father and middle-aged son. A fly buzzes. The sergeant informs the son that the Marines are watching Boldak from the sky with surveillance cameras. "If we see any Taliban in this village, we're coming back for you. I have your name."

The interpreter tells him, the son nods.

"At the same time, if he sees Taliban any time, feel free to come to the base and ask for Sgt. Matt. Do you have kids?"

"Yes," the son says.

"Feel free to come over to the base for medical attention."

The sergeant moves on. He takes a child to the side and whispers to him confidentially about letting the Americans know if he sees the Taliban and gives him a pen he has been eyeing.

The Marines decide they will come back again to this hamlet in a week. But for now, they say, they'd better leave before taking gunfire or allowing time for a bomb to be planted on the road. The next village will be no different.

"They'll tell you all kinds of ridiculous stuff," a Marine lieutenant says. "They'll lie to us, and then they'll lie to the Taliban. They are caught between two sides."

Wall Street Journal
October 13, 2012

Pg. 9

5. In Afghan Zone, Poppies Fog Military Mission

By Yaroslav Trofimov

BOLDAK, Afghanistan—One after another, lumbering jets taking off from Camp Bastion, the giant coalition base in Afghanistan's most violent province of Helmand, flew over the heads of Marines patrolling this village of mud compounds and poppy fields.

This area was largely uninhabited desert when Camp Bastion was established in 2006, a location that allowed the troops to spot hostile intruders from miles away. Not anymore: when the Taliban breached the base's defenses last month, they blended in among the thousands of farmers who have flocked to this part of Helmand as an unintended consequence of Afghanistan's opium-eradication campaign.

The population influx facilitated the attack, and highlighted the old conflict between the war's aims of combating the Taliban and the narrower goal of fighting narcotics. The U.S. and allies have to weigh the necessity of eradicating opium—Afghanistan's main export and one of the Taliban's main sources of income—against the need to win the cooperation of villagers in Taliban-infested areas, many of them dependent on poppy farming for their livelihoods.

The Sept. 14 attack on Camp Bastion, home to thousands of U.S. Marines and British troops, was one of the most daring Taliban operations since the war began 11 years ago. Dressed in American uniforms, the 16 insurgents cut through three lines of barbed wires to sneak onto Camp Bastion, where they destroyed more than $200 million worth of U.S. combat aircraft, killed the

Marine Harrier jet squadron's commander, and incinerated the camp's jet-fuel tanks.

"This was well-planned and well-executed," said Marine Maj. Gen. Charles M. Gurganus, the commander of coalition forces in Helmand. "They had pretty good knowledge of where they were going."

Before launching the attack, the Taliban—who Gen. Gurganus said may have benefited from insider help—carried out "a very detailed study of the terrain," which enabled them to move right under the view of observation towers on the perimeter of the camp. Military officials say the insurgents used a dry riverbed on the eastern side of the camp, after gathering in the area in the guise of farmers before the attack.

There were no such farmers to hide among in this part of Helmand until the last couple of years. Until recently, most of the province's main crop, opium, was grown in the more fertile "green zone" around the Helmand River farther south. It was the coalition military offensives there during President Barack Obama's troop surge in 2010 and 2011, coupled with the Afghan government's poppy-eradication drive, that pushed opium cultivation further into the desert.

With the poppy came thousands of migrant farmers who are now plowing the fields in Camp Bastion's vicinity under the baking sun, using tractors and electricity-powered irrigation wells alongside camels. Afghanistan accounts for some 90% of the world's illicit opiates, and most Afghan production comes from Helmand.

Many of the poppy farmers' new villages here in the desert don't yet have names. On military maps, they are named after New York City boroughs, with one collection of mud-hovels dubbed Manhattan and another labeled Queens.

"Around here, it's the Taliban trying to protect the crops—and it's money growing in the ground," said Capt. Chris Polidora, commander of Bravo company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines that is tasked with securing the camp's vicinity. He and his men—who are regularly targeted by roadside bombs and potshots—recently walked by freshly plowed fields in Boldak, under Camp Bastion's flight path.

Dried poppy pods, bearing the scratch marks used to collect the narcotic gum and then emptied to plant the fresh crop, littered the roadside.

"Everything here, all that now looks just like fields of rocks, will be turned into poppy fields," said Lt. Mark Mencik, commander of the platoon that patrols the area. "These people came here to plant poppy, and that's all they do." Afghan security forces seldom venture into the area, and there is no Afghan government presence, he said. The area under opium cultivation has actually increased in recent years, according to United Nations surveys, despite the Afghan government's policy of destroying poppy fields.

In contrast, the U.S.-led coalition doesn't interfere with the opium cultivation. Trying not to antagonize the villagers whose livelihoods depend on the illicit crops, the U.S. and allies instead focus their efforts on drug labs and high-level narcotics dealers.

Here around Camp Bastion, Marines take pains not to damage the poppy fields as they drive through, even if this involves a higher chance of being hit by roadside bombs. "The Americans are not here to tell people they can't grow poppies. They have to hear it from the Afghans—who are not here," Lt. Mencik said, referring to the government.

As Marines and coalition troops from Jordan entered a neighborhood of Boldak on a recent day, the white-bearded village elder, Allah Nazar, ran toward the patrol. "The police would come here to destroy our poppy fields. Thanks for protecting our village, and our fields from the police," he told Sgt. Matt Brunnemann, nodding vigorously.

"That's what we're here for," the sergeant said, matter-of-factly. "Looking after their best interests."

The Taliban, the elder assured the Marines, never come to the village, and have no local support. A few minutes later, the Marines picked up a spent AK-47 round among dry poppy pods. "They play both sides," Lt. Mencik said as the troops moved on. "Every single one of them."

Sydney Morning Herald
October 13, 2012
Pg. 3

6. Troops Prepare To Leave Oruzgan

By Dylan Welch, National Security Correspondent

EVERY patrol and forward operating base in Oruzgan will be emptied of Australian soldiers by the new year according to the Defence Department, providing yet more evidence that Australia's combat role in Afghanistan is all but over.

While special forces – commandos and the SAS – will continue to undertake missions, a Defence spokeswoman confirmed that all Australian regular troops are preparing to vacate the many small bases they have occupied, and in many cases built, in recent years.

The Defence Minister, Stephen Smith, revealed the plan earlier this week from a NATO conference in Brussels. He announced that all four of the Afghan National Army 4th Brigade's infantry kandaks, the Afghan name for battalions, will be operating independently ''by the end of the year''.

The 4th Brigade is the ANA force in Oruzgan. ''Once all of the ... kandaks are operating independently it is envisioned that most [Australian troops] will operate from Tarin Kowt, however [we] will maintain the capability to operate across Oruzgan as required by the situation,'' a Defence spokeswoman said.

It is expected that once the patrol bases have been emptied of Australians the only troops who will leave Tarin Kowt will be special forces, a small quick reaction force and advisors assisting the 4th Brigade's leadership.

Earlier this week Australian soldiers officially handed over control of Patrol Base Wali in the Mirabad Valley to the first of the four kandaks to be declared independent and, returned to Tarin Kowt. Wali was previously the only patrol base in Oruzgan where Australians and Afghans lived together in an unsegregated camp.

In July the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, announced that Afghan forces in Oruzgan would begin taking control of security, allowing Australian troops to gradually reduce their presence prior to a complete withdrawal between July and December next year.

But the reality is that much of Australia's presence in Oruzgan will have left well before that date. That will be a move welcomed by the Labor government, who ahead of next

year's federal election wish to show progress towards leaving Afghanistan.

Australia has lost 38 soldiers in Afghanistan since 2001.

London Daily Telegraph
October 13, 2012
Pg. 1

7. Moves To Speed Up Afghan Pull-Out

Chancellor questions purpose of keeping British troops there for another two years

By James Kirkup, Deputy Political Editor

DEFENCE chiefs are drawing up plans for a faster withdrawal from Afghanistan, after George Osborne challenged their strategy and suggested that all troops should come home immediately.

The Daily Telegraph has learnt that at a recent Whitehall meeting on withdrawal, the Chancellor questioned the purpose of continuing Britain's Afghan mission for another two years.

David Cameron has promised that British combat operations will be over by the end of 2014.

Ministers and military commanders are in discussions over how quickly to reduce troop numbers as the deadline approaches, with Armed Forces chiefs having to draw up new options for a bigger withdrawal next year than was being considered.

No decisions about withdrawals in 2013 are now expected to be made until the new year.

The Chancellor challenged the Army's presence in Afghanistan at a meeting of the National Security Council last month, attended by senior ministers, military commanders and intelligence chiefs.

At the meeting, commanders briefed ministers on the operations that will involve thousands of troops over the next two years.

Mr Osborne is understood to have responded to the military presentation by calling into question the proposed plan for withdrawal, asking why British forces should not come home now.

One source described the Chancellor's response to the defence chiefs as "deliberately provocative". A second witness to the exchange said the intervention was characteristic of Mr Osborne's style in security council meetings. "He likes to challenge, to provoke debate," the source said.

Ministers and military chiefs are debating the timetable for removing the last 9,000 British troops from Afghanistan. Mr Osborne's scepticism is helping to prolong the decision-making process on how many to withdraw next year.

An initial security council meeting on the decision is not expected to be held until December, as new options are drawn up for discussion.

The final decision may not be made until February.

The Prime Minister this week promised that "nearly all" troops would be home by the time combat operations are completed at the end of 2014.

A total of 433 British service personnel have died in Afghanistan since the 2001 operation that toppled the Taliban. Despite receiving billions of pounds in international aid, Afghanistan remains desperately poor and its government is regarded as fragile and prone to corruption.

The Nato strategy for withdrawing from Afghanistan rests on the ability of Afghan security forces to police the country and prevent the spread of the same extremists who were behind the September 11 attacks on the US. The competence and reliability of the Afghan forces has been called into question by a series of incidents in which Afghan personnel have killed Western troops working alongside them.

At the security council meeting, Mr Osborne is said to have asked how the British deployment can be justified to the the public for the next two years, amid continuing casualties and doubts about the Afghan government.

A source close to the Chancellor said his question was largely rhetorical, a "debating point" meant to test the strategy, and not a serious suggestion of an immediate withdrawal.

Mr Osborne does not want an immediate withdrawal and "totally supports the position of the Prime Minister and the Government," the source said.

The intervention is not Mr Osborne's first challenge to Afghan policy, as he has pushed previously for the withdrawal to be hastened.

In the talks that led to the decision to withdraw 500 troops over this year, Mr Osborne is said to have pressed for more to come home.

Nor is he the only minister advocating a faster pull-out. Oliver Letwin, the Cabinet Office minister who is in charge of government policy, is also said be sceptical about continuing the Afghan mission.

Mr Osborne's latest contribution to the Afghan debate has increased speculation that he is worried about the financial cost of the deployment. By the end of March this year, Afghan operations had cost taxpayers a total of £17.3 billion, on top of the core defence budget.

Philip Hammond, the Defence Secretary, last month raised speculation about a major withdrawal next year when he said that defence chiefs could see "more flexibility" for removing troops and said that commanders' "view of force levels is evolving".

Downing Street declined to expand on details of the discussion at the September meeting of the security council, but insisted that Mr Cameron's 2014 deadline was unchanged.

A spokesman said: "At their last discussion of Afghanistan in September, all members of the National Security Council agreed that our strategy in Afghanistan is the right one and reaffirmed our commitment to work alongside Afghan forces in a combat role until the end of 2014."

CBS
October 12, 2012

8. Camp Bastion Attack

Evening News (CBS), 6:30 P.M.

SCOTT PELLEY, CBS ANCHOR: Nancy, thank you. We are learning more tonight about the most costly enemy attack ever in Afghanistan. It was about a month ago, that two U.S. Marines were killed and six Marine attack jets were destroyed in a raid on Camp Bastion. The jets cost between $20 and $30 million each. The base is one of the most heavily defended in the war, so we asked Kelly Cobiella to tell us about the attack through the words of the Marines who were there.

KELLY COBIELLA, CBS CORRESPONDENT: The attack seemed to come from out of nowhere. A rocket-propelled grenade set the fuel storage tanks on fire. The base turned into a battlefield. Lieutenant Commander Heather Tracy (ph) was off duty reading when it started.

What was your first sign that something was going on?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I could hear gunfire, multiple different loud noises. I wasn't exactly sure where they were coming from or what direction initially.

COBIELLA: Staff Sergeant Gustavo Delgado (ph), a logistics specialist by day, grabbed his handgun and ran toward the sound of fighting.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I couldn't really see anything. We could just see shadows and smoke. And as I started getting closer, that's when you could hear the rounds whizzing by.

COBIELLA: Fifteen insurgents were carrying rocket-propelled grenade launchers, assault rifles, and suicide vests. They split into three teams, going after Harrier jets and attack helicopters. Major General Mark Gurganus is the top Marine commander on the base.

Do you know how they got through all of the defenses?

MAJ. GEN. MARK GURGANUS, U.S. MARINE CORPS: I can tell you exactly how they got in. There's really no mystery to it. There were no suicide bombers, there were no tunnels. It was a tool about this big, and it cuts wire.

COBIELLA: That's it. A wire cutter.

GURGANUS: That's it. That's it. That's how they got in.

COBIELLA: The Taliban released a video days later. It showed them practicing with wire cutters. Investigators say they had detailed knowledge of the layout of the base.

GURGANUS: There are guard towers with guards in them. We have more sophisticated surveillance equipment, but it can't see everywhere all the time.

COBIELLA: Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Raible, a fighter pilot and commanding officer, died defending the base, along with Sergeant Bradley Atwell, an aircraft technician.

PELLEY: And Kelly Cobiella is back from Camp Bastion and is reporting from our bureau in Kabul, Afghanistan. Kelly, how did the U.S. put an end to the attack, and what happened to the attackers?

COBIELLA: Well, it finally ended, Scott, when helicopter pilots in the middle of this gunfight got into their helicopters, off the ground, and were guided to the insurgents on the ground by the Marines on the ground who were fighting them. They killed all but one. The final insurgent was injured and is being held at the base.

PELLEY: Kelly, thanks very much.

New York Times
October 13, 2012
Pg. 4

9. On Edge As Syria's War Knocks Ever Harder On The Door To Turkey

By Tim Arango

HACIPASA, Turkey — The men stood at the road's edge and watched the war that is inching ever closer to home. Amid the rumble of explosions, workers picked cotton and red peppers in this nook of Turkey's fertile southwest.

"Since 6 this morning, they have been pounding that village," Enver Elmas, a 46-year-old farmer, said as Syrian government forces battled with rebels in the village of Azmerin, just across the narrow Orontes River. "We're scared. Our village is right by the border."

Turkey and Syria share a meandering border over 500 miles long, where in places the villages seem to merge, families share their names and pedigrees, if not their passports, and twisted olive trees roll out over the hillsides. Here, amid the quiet rhythms of rural life, people are witnessing what for 19 months had been one of the gravest concerns about the war next door: that it would spill over the border, draw in neighboring nations and, in a flash, become a regional conflagration.

War, it becomes clearer by the day, is inching closer to home.

Cross-border tensions were particularly high on Friday, when Turkey scrambled two fighter planes here after reports that Syrian helicopters were attacking Azmerin, raising fears of another incursion in Turkish territory.

In a village on the outskirts of Akcakale, a five-hour drive from here through hilly farmland carpeted with cotton fields, mourners continued to fill a funeral tent this week for five civilians killed a week earlier by a Syrian mortar shell, the first time the civil war brought death inside Turkey, and the first time Turkey's military fired back into Syria. Turkey's top military officer, Gen. Necdet Ozel, visited the mourners on Wednesday and, within earshot of television cameras, leaned in toward a family member and promised an even stronger military response should the cross-border attacks from Syria persist.

A journey through these borderlands reveals a region increasingly on edge. As Turkey's leaders show less willingness to play only a behind-the-scenes role in aiding Syria's rebels, it is here where people are feeling the heat. From the start, there has been a slow-boiling resentment over the tens of thousands of refugees, the economic hardships and the ethnic tensions wrought by the Syrian conflict.

But those burdens now feel like a troublesome prologue to the real danger that lies ahead. Turkey has intensified security measures in military zones, deploying artillery and antiaircraft batteries aimed at Syria. It has stationed F-16 fighter jets near the border, ready to carry out airstrikes, should it come to that.

"It's messed up now," said Mehmet Ali Mutafoglu, who runs his family's multimillion-dollar textile business in Gaziantep, a border city known for pistachios and shopping centers that used to attract busloads of Syrians.

"People from Istanbul, from Ankara, they don't know what's going on here," he said, echoing a familiar complaint up and down the region.

Before the war, Mr. Mutafoglu invested $40 million in two factories in Syria that he said generated $25 million in annual revenue. Now he fears his investment will be lost, along with the ties that bound the two nations and brought opportunity to both.

He said that he fully expected Turkey to be dragged deeper into the fight, and that the country should have done more from the start to mediate the dispute. He now pays 25 Syrian men to guard his empty factories, and he relies on connections with rebels and Syrian government officials to ensure that they are not destroyed in the fighting. He said his brother was planning a dangerous journey to Aleppo, with the help of smugglers, to check on the facilities.

"It's a $40 million investment," he said. "I can't just let it go."

This region benefited from the commercial and cultural openings to Syria under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose Justice and Development Party rose to power in 2002 and began orienting the country away from

the West and toward the Arab world. The opening to Syria was the centerpiece of that strategy. But now, with no swift resolution to the conflict at hand, few — not the local residents, not the rebels — seem supportive of Turkey's approach to Syria.

In another border city, Kilis, Mr. Mutafoglu said that the price of food and apartment rents had risen sharply and that the local hospital was so full of Syrians that there was sometimes no room for residents.

No single road links these cities, towns and villages stretching east and west over such a vast area. But the crossings are the common denominator, the portal to the challenges this region shares.

At one crossing just outside Kilis, next to a refugee camp that houses thousands of Syrians, a rebel fighter who gave his name as Abu Bashir was busy trying to get a taxi driver to take him and some friends back into Syria, back to the fight. His wife and three children were to stay behind, in a camp, and he said he was grateful for that help from Turkey.

As he negotiated with the taxi driver, a farmer, Davut Bayramoglu, stood nearby, selling tea and biscuits and cigarettes, and nursing his own discontent.

"I don't like this, because these people are going to be here forever, and they will cause problems," said Mr. Bayramoglu, who added that his farm was picked bare of grapes and cherries by Syrian refugees and that he now earned only 10 Turkish lira, or $5.50, a day from his tea stand. "We keep saying that they are Muslim and we have to help them, but are there no other Muslims to help them?"

In the city's center, at a park with a tea shop, men played backgammon and worried about war. They said the social fabric was fraying with the arrival of so many Syrians. Apartment rents are rising, and residents cannot get adequate health care. There seemed no end to their complaints.

"Our state hospital is one of the best in Turkey, but it can no longer serve its own people," said Osman Altinoymak, a retired banker. "It is full of Arabs."

At the hospital, a desk attendant said that was true. "There are so many Syrians coming each day for treatment because it is free," said the attendant, who declined to give her name after her boss walked over and said workers were not allowed to speak to reporters. "There is no room for locals. It is a big problem for Turkey."

But this region is also the most important staging area for rebel fighters and a hub for Syrian opposition figures. That was, initially, how the government seemed to want it, giving the rebels a haven, letting them plot, plan, rest and arm, all while safely in Turkish territory. The rebels would then cross back into Syria.

But that strategy, or tactic, has now frayed, as war inches closer to home.

Just outside Akcakale, where the civilians were killed by a Syrian mortar, a Turkish tank was positioned next to the border outpost, its gun aimed at Syria. Snipers could be seen atop a grain silo, as the flag of the Free Syrian Army fluttered on the other side.

"They have to feel the weight of Turkey," said Mehmet Toktimur, 24, who used to earn money driving a taxi back and forth across the border. "The retaliation is good."

In a valley outside Hacipasa, Turkish soldiers watch Syrians freely cross the little river, and white vans driven by Turks maneuver down a narrow dirt road to the river's edge, where they collect the wounded and take them to hospitals.

On Wednesday, at a busy intersection, a man driving a white Renault was injured when he crashed into another vehicle. A half-hour later he was still lying on the pavement, suffering from chest injuries, as he waited for an ambulance that took longer than usual because of the number of Syrians needing medical attention, a police officer said.

At the same time, men were gathered for another reason. A farmer said that a shell had just landed in his field nearby but had not detonated.

"I called the military," said the farmer, Ahmet Pehlivan. "Now we are expecting the bomb squad."

Sebnem Arsu contributed reporting from Antakya, Turkey.

Wall Street Journal
October 13, 2012
Pg. 9

10. Russia Says Syria Jet Held Radar Gear

By Joe Parkinson, Alan Cullison and Ayla Albayrak

ISTANBUL—Russia said the Syrian plane forced to land in Turkey was legally carrying radar parts in the latest salvo of a deepening diplomatic row between the countries, as Turkey scrambled two fighter jets to the Syrian border for the first time since July.

Adding to Turkey's frustrations with the simmering conflict along its Syrian border, Russia contradicted Ankara's claims that the Syrian A320 airliner that was forced to land in Ankara Wednesday was carrying weapons.

Speaking to reporters in Moscow after a meeting with President Vladimir Putin, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that electric equipment for radars was "legitimate cargo. Mr. Lavrov also said the cargo was of "dual-use," meaning it could have civilian and military applications and that it wasn't banned by any international conventions.

"The plane carried a cargo that a legitimate Russian shipper was sending entirely legally to a legitimate buyer," Mr. Lavrov said, without identifying either of the parties.

Mr. Lavrov, considered the public face of the Kremlin's staunch support of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, added that shipping such cargoes on civilian flights was "absolutely routine" and that the pilot had agreed to land "because he knew that he wasn't doing anything illegal."

The testimony of the foreign minister, the first official Russian comment on the nature of the plane's cargo since it was intercepted en route from Moscow to Damascus, puts the Kremlin at odds with parts of a Thursday statement from Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Mr. Erdogan said the plane was carrying illegal military materials and ammunition.

A Turkish official said late Friday authorities are still continuing their investigation.

The U.S. State Department said Friday that it had "grave concern" that Russia is continuing to supply the Syrian regime with "serious military equipment," particularly because it is a member of the U.N. Security Council with presumed responsibilities for maintaining global security.

The diplomatic spat between Moscow and Ankara is unlikely to trigger a full-blown crisis because of the crucial commercial and strategic relationship between Moscow and Ankara. Russia is Turkey's second-largest trading partner after Germany, thanks to the rising amount of gas Ankara buys from Moscow.

"What Turkey has done is up the ante with Syria and Russia—showing President Assad that it can make life difficult for him by putting in an embargo in a gray area of international legality," said Soner Cagaptay, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute, a think-tank. "But the relationship overall is too important to risk; Turkey is dependent on Russian gas and fearful of Russian power."

Military analysts say that the radar equipment could include components for a BUK M2 or a Pantsyr-S1 surface-to-air missile system that the Russian arms export agency, Rosoboronexport, has provided to Syria in the past. Though ammunition and entire weapons systems are generally too bulky for flights, Russia has lately been air shipping components of various surface-to-air missile systems, such as the Buk, that is designed to shoot down cruise missiles, airplanes and drones.

"Whatever they were sending on that aircraft had to be small, because you can't fit much into a cargo hold of a passenger plane," said Hugh Griffiths, an arms-trafficking expert at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. He noted that the Russians shipped components for a Buk missile system in a 2011 flight that was relatively compact, and weighed 17.5 kilograms, [about 38.5 lbs.].

Strengthening antiaircraft systems would be imperative for President Assad to defend Syria against possible airstrikes. Amid heightened tensions along Turkey's 565-mile border with Syria, Turkey last week moved 25 Turkish F-16 fighter jets closer to the Syrian border, to a base in the south eastern city of Diyarbakir.

Two of those jets were briefly called into action on Friday as Turkey dispatched the fighters along the Syrian border shortly after 2 p.m. local time, following heavy fighting between rebels and Syrian government forces accompanied by an attack helicopter in Azmarin, a Syrian border town opposed to Mr. Assad's rule.

Booming explosions and the rattle of machine guns around Azmarin could be heard Friday morning from the small Turkish border town of Hacipasa. The Syrian region close to this border has seen heavy clashes for the past week, with scores of wounded Syrians brought from Azmarin Friday alone, according to local officials.

Further south in Aleppo—the major front line in the battle between government and rebel forces—rebels destroyed four army tanks and surrounded another six in clashes with the military that continued into Friday evening. The tanks made their way from the city in an attempt to free special forces fighters in the 46th regiment that have been surrounded by rebels for over two weeks.

Video posted on You Tube showed that fighters had captured five long-range missiles in a separate attack on regime forces about 50 kilometers from the Turkish border in al-Taani.

"Each missile was six meters long and pointed in the direction of Turkey," one fighter said, suggesting they were part of a military arsenal at the border prepared to confront Turkey.

Syrian rebels could gain by drawing Turkey into an armed confrontation with Syrian regime forces because it brings them closer to the military intervention they have longed call for. But the rebels say they fear Mr. Assad is intentionally provoking Turkey to transform the domestic political crisis into a wider regional confrontation that would draw Syrian allies Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon closer to his defense.

--*Rima AbouChakra in Beirut contributed to this article.*

Los Angeles Times
October 13, 2012
Pg. 9

11. Syrian Rebels Overrun Missile Base

By Times Staff

BEIRUT--Syrian rebels seized a government missile defense base near the northern city of Aleppo on Friday that had been the source of regular attacks on surrounding villages, activists said.

Free Syrian Army rebels and an Al Qaeda-linked group called Al Nusra Front surrounded the base early Friday and fought with soldiers for hours, activists said. They overran the base around dawn, killing dozens of troops and capturing others, said Abu Firas, spokesman for the Revolutionary Council for Aleppo and Its Suburbs.

"We don't distinguish between the groups Jubhat al Nusra and the other militias, as long as everyone is working toward one goal of ousting the regime," Abu Firas said.

Video purportedly recorded shortly after the battle shows multiple missiles pointing in various directions. Opposition activist Abu Hisham said they were S-75 surface-to-air missiles.

"These missiles of Bashar Assad were pointed at our people," the videographer said, referring to the Syrian president.

Rebels took weapons from the base, including antiaircraft machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and armored vehicles, he said.

But shortly after the rebels seized the base, government fighter jets attacked it, destroying the missiles, Abu Firas said.

The rebels retreated to the outskirts of the base, he said.

Despite Western opposition to Assad's government, the United States and other countries have cited the presence of extremists among the rebels as a reason not to supply the Syrian insurgents with weapons.

They have repeatedly cited concern that heavy weaponry might fall into the wrong hands.

The capture of the base also plays into the fear that extremists could acquire Syria's chemical and biological weapons, particularly if the government collapses and loses control of them.

Neighboring Jordan's King Abdullah II worries that such weapons could be seized by Al Qaeda or other militants, primarily the Iran-allied Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The U.S. has sent about 150 troops to Jordan, largely special operations forces, to bolster the kingdom's military capabilities in the event Syria's civil war escalates.

Syria is believed to have one of the world's largest chemical weapons programs, and the government has said it might use the weapons against external threats, though not against Syrians.

Western powers -- and many Syrians -- worry that

Islamist extremists are playing an increasing role in the conflict.

Little is known about Al Nusra Front, which began claiming attacks in Syria this year in postings on militant forums often used by Al Qaeda. Neither group has officially acknowledged a link to the other, but analysts say the militia's tactics, rhetoric and use of Al Qaeda forums point to an affiliation.

Syrian activists say the group is known for fighting on the front lines in harsh battles and goes out of its way not to appear in activist videos.

"Most brigades want to be filmed in operations so they can get support, but Al Nusra doesn't allow any filming," an Aleppo activist said via the Skype communications system.

Meanwhile, the fallout deepened from a Syrian passenger jet's forced landing in neighboring Turkey, as Russia said the plane traveling from Moscow to Damascus was carrying radar parts that were being transported legally.

Russia has been Assad's main supporter and ally, shielding him from international sanctions over his crackdown on the uprising.

Turkey's prime minister has said the plane was carrying ammunition and military equipment for the Syrian Defense Ministry.

Turkish fighter jets intercepted the Airbus A320 on Wednesday amid heightened tension between Turkey and Syria, fueled by recent cross-border shelling from Syria that killed five Turkish civilians.

Tension continued Friday as Turkey's military scrambled two F-16 fighter jets after a Syrian attack helicopter was seen over a Syrian border town where rebels and Assad government troops have been clashing for days, Turkey's Dogan news agency reported.

Activists say more than 32,000 people have been killed in the conflict, which began as a peaceful uprising.

New York Times
October 13, 2012
Pg. 7

12. Iraq: Deal To Buy Czech Planes

By Associated Press

Iraq has agreed to buy 28 Czech-made military airplanes in a deal worth $1 billion, part of a broader Iraqi effort to rebuild military capabilities destroyed during the American-led invasion of the country, officials said Friday. Iraq has only a few planes and is unable to defend its airspace. The government has bought billions of dollars in tanks, fighter jets, ships and other weapons from the United States in recent years, but now wants to forge military ties with other allies and nations, including Russia. Under the deal, Iraq will buy 24 new subsonic L-159 military planes, which are light combat and training planes. Delivery is expected within four years.

New York Times
October 13, 2012
Pg. 10

13. Focus Was On Tripoli In Requests For Security In Libya

By Eric Schmitt and Mark Landler

WASHINGTON — In the weeks leading up to the attack last month on the American diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya, that killed Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans, diplomats on the ground sounded increasingly urgent alarms. In a stream of diplomatic cables, embassy security officers warned their superiors at the State Department of a worsening threat from Islamic extremists, and requested that the teams of military personnel and State Department security guards who were already on duty be kept in service.

The requests were denied, but they were largely focused on extending the tours of security guards at the American Embassy in Tripoli — not at the diplomatic compound in Benghazi, 400 miles away. And State Department officials testified this week during a hearing by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee that extending the tour of additional guards — a 16-member military security team — through mid-September would not have changed the bloody outcome because they were based in Tripoli, not Benghazi.

The handling of these requests has now been caught up in a sharply partisan debate over whether the Obama administration underestimated the terrorist threat in Libya. In a debate with Representative Paul D. Ryan on Thursday night, Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. said White House officials were not told about requests for any additional security. “We weren’t told they wanted more security again,” Mr. Biden said.

The Romney campaign on Friday pounced on the conflicting statements, accusing Mr. Biden of continuing to deny the nature of the attack. The White House scrambled to explain the apparent contradiction between Mr. Biden’s statement and the testimony from State Department officials at the House hearing.

The White House spokesman, Jay Carney, said Friday that security issues related to diplomatic posts in Libya and other countries were dealt with at the State Department, not the White House. Based on interviews with administration officials, as well as in diplomatic cables, and Congressional testimony, those security decisions appear to have been made largely by midlevel State Department security officials, and did not involve Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton or her top aides.

While it is unclear what impact a handful of highly trained additional guards might have had in Benghazi were they able to deploy there, some State Department officials said it would probably not have made any difference in blunting the Sept. 11 assault from several dozen heavily armed militants.

“An attack of that kind of lethality, we’re never going to have enough guns,” Patrick F. Kennedy, under secretary of state for management, said at Wednesday’s hearing. “We are not an armed camp ready to fight it out.”

A senior administration official said that the military team, which was authorized by a directive from Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta, was never intended to have an open-ended or Libya-wide mission.

“This was not a SWAT team with a DC-3 on alert to jet them off to other cities in Libya to respond to security issues,” said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the delicacy of the matter.

Security in Benghazi had been a growing concern for American diplomats this year. In April, the convoy of the United Nations special envoy for Libya was attacked there. In early June, a two-vehicle convoy carrying the British ambassador came under attack by rocket-propelled grenades. Militants struck the American mission with a homemade

bomb, but no one was hurt. In late June, the Red Cross was attacked and the organization pulled out.

"We were the last thing on their target list to remove from Benghazi," Lt. Col. Andrew Wood of the Utah National Guard, who was deployed in Tripoli as the leader of the American military security unit, told the House committee.

But friends and colleagues of Ambassador Stevens said he was adamant about maintaining an American presence in Benghazi, the heart of the opposition to the Qaddafi government.

"Our people can't live in bunkers and do their jobs," Mrs. Clinton said Friday. "But it is our solemn responsibility to constantly improve, to reduce the risks our people face and make sure they have the resources they need to do their jobs."

At American diplomatic facilities overseas, the host nation is primarily responsible for providing security outside the compound's walls. Inside the compound, the State Department is in charge, relying on a mix of diplomatic security officers, local contract guards and Marines. The Marines are responsible for guarding classified documents, which they are instructed to destroy if there is a breach of the compound. Senior diplomats are protected by diplomatic security officers, not a detachment of Marines, as Mr. Ryan asserted in Thursday night's debate.

In deciding whether to extend a military security team, the State Department often faces a difficult financial decision at a time when its security budget is under severe pressure. The department must reimburse the Pentagon for the cost of these soldiers, an expense that can quickly run into the millions of dollars. For that reason, the State Department typically pushes to make the transition to local contractors, who are much cheaper.

In their debate, Mr. Biden responded to Mr. Ryan's attacks by accusing him and his fellow Republicans of cutting the administration's request for embassy security and construction. House Republicans this year voted to cut back the administration's request, but still approved more than was spent last year.

In an agreement between the Pentagon and the State Department, the military team was extended twice — December 2011 and March 2012 — but when it came to a third extension, Eric A. Nordstrom, the former chief security officer in Libya, said he was told he could not request another extension beyond August.

Charlene Lamb, a deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, said at the hearing that a request from Mr. Nordstrom to extend the military team was only a recommendation and that the State Department had been right not to heed it. Ms. Lamb also testified that budget considerations played no part in considering additional security. Decisions on diplomatic security went no higher than Ms. Lamb and, in limited cases, Mr. Kennedy, officials said.

The broader strategy, Ms. Lamb said, was to phase out the American military team and rely more on the Libyan militiamen who were protecting the compound along with a small number of American security officers. Ms. Lamb said this model of relying on locally hired guards had worked at the United States Embassy in Yemen.

In a July 9 cable signed by Ambassador Stevens, the embassy requested that the State Department extend the tours for a minimum of three security personnel in Benghazi. The department had earlier approved a request for five guards for the mission, which was still in effect at the time of the July 9 cable.

Five American security agents were at the compound at the time of the assault, Ms. Lamb said, though it was later noted that only three were based at the compound and that two had accompanied Mr. Stevens from Tripoli. She said there were also three members of a Libyan militia who were helping to protect the compound.

Michael R. Gordon contributed reporting.

Washington Post
October 13, 2012
Pg. 6

14. Libya Leadership Is In Disarray

Political chaos hampers probe of attack on U.S. mission in Benghazi

By Michael Birnbaum

Tripoli, Libya — More than a month after attacks in Libya left the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans dead, the United States is struggling to bring the killers to justice. But when American officials try to speak to Libyan leaders, there's often no one on the other end of the line.

Moammar Gaddafi's death almost a year ago left a country with few political institutions, and Libya's new political class is still trying to put together a democratically elected government. Infighting has grown even more bitter since the Sept. 11 attack on U.S. outposts in the eastern city of Benghazi. Many ministries, including those that would take the lead in an investigation, are on autopilot as the new lawmakers plot alliances and betrayals over endless cups of coffee in Tripoli, the capital.

Meanwhile, the Libyan investigation into the attacks is taking place a 400-mile flight away in still-unsettled Benghazi. Security there is provided by militias that have only loose affiliations with the central government, and the efforts of U.S. investigators to search the city's dusty streets for clues have been tightly curtailed.

U.S. lawmakers visiting Tripoli have said the Libyan government has provided almost no information or cooperation as the FBI and others pursue their own investigation. Although Libyan officials say they are working to hunt down the attackers, some acknowledge that the probe is not the top priority.

"The investigation is going to be done sooner or later," said Saleh Jouda, a member of the new legislature, the General National Congress, and deputy head of the national security committee. But Libya's interim leaders see the undertaking as politically problematic, he said.

"They don't want to deal with it," he said. "They just want to hand it to the new government."

It may be weeks before that new government is formed. Meanwhile, Republicans in Washington have seized on security lapses at the U.S. mission before the attacks — as well as the shifting explanations afterward about what transpired — to attack the Obama administration ahead of the election.

On Wednesday, House Republicans dominated a congressional hearing in which former diplomatic security officials said their requests for

more security in Libya had been dismissed.

In Tripoli, the day after the attacks and just hours after President Obama announced that Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens had died along with three others, Libya's new lawmakers were not focused on the incident, although leaders did immediately condemn the deaths. They were instead voting narrowly for the country's first democratically elected prime minister, Mustafa Abushagur, in a previously scheduled ballot.

The political uncertainty had affected U.S. security in Libya even before the attacks. The impending vote for prime minister had been the topic of a meeting just days earlier between U.S. diplomats in Benghazi and at least two leaders of the militias that provide most of the security in the rough-and-tumble city, according to a State Department cable sent the day of the attacks. The militia leaders had accused the United States of backing MahmoudJibril, whom they saw as a secularist. If Jibril won, they said, "they would not continue to guarantee security in Benghazi," according to the cable.

Abushagur beat Jibril by a hair. But after weeks of trying to form a cabinet, he lost a vote of confidence Sunday. Now, Libya's newly elected representatives are starting all over again.

The frustration has paralyzed the capital, with small conspiracies swirling in the marble-lined hotel lobbies where the emerging political class holds its meetings. One political adviser seen deep in conversation with a pistol-packing militia leader recently suggested that all Libya's militia chiefs surround the new congress in its building and force it to pick a government. If it didn't, the adviser said, the militias should just force all the politicians from office. They were elected in July.

An interim prime minister, Abdurrahim el-Keib, and cabinet have led Libya since last year. But they lack democratic legitimacy and have little power to solve the country's towering problems. Topping the list is the security situation. Militias that formed during the revolution have shown little inclination to disband; in large swaths of the country, they have largely replaced police and army forces, albeit with minimal control from Tripoli.

Amid the intrigue, U.S. officials say they have received little cooperation from Libyans.

"My sense is that almost everything the American government knows about the situation is what the American government has derived on their own," said Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), in an interview in Tripoli this week after he had been briefed by the investigators there.

Obama's top counterterrorism adviser, John O. Brennan, met with Libyan President Mohamed Yusuf al-Magariaf and other top officials this week and called for "specific additional steps Libya can take to better assist the U.S. in ensuring that the perpetrators are brought to justice," according to the White House.

But most Libyan officials, still stung by the revelation that far more Americans were active in Benghazi than the U.S. government had previously acknowledged, say the assistance should flow in the other direction.

"What would the FBI be doing in Benghazi by itself ?" said Deputy Justice Minister Khalifa Ashour. "It will go a lot faster if there's cooperation."

That caution about U.S. operations can be seen in the slow pace of approvals for U.S. investigators even to enter Libya. Some of the delays were attributable to lowlevel bureaucrats who shiver at the very name "FBI," said Mohamad al-Akari, a top adviser to Abushagur, still the interim deputy prime minister.

The Americans shouldn't have sought permission for the FBI to come to Libya in the first place, at least not by that name, Akari said. "They should have said it was 'investigative expertise.' Why say FBI? When you say FBI, it's like when you say Mossad." But Libyan officials say that despite their internal wrangling, Americans should know they are not neglecting their responsibilities.

"We are trying to track down these guys and bring them to trial," said Ahmed Langhi, a member of congress who represents Benghazi. "It's really one of our priorities."

Reuters.com
October 12, 2012

15. U.S. Intelligence Hurt When Libya Base Was Abandoned

By Mark Hosenball, Reuters

WASHINGTON--U.S. intelligence efforts in Libya have suffered a significant setback due to the abandonment and exposure of a facility in Benghazi, Libya identified by a newspaper as a "CIA base" following a congressional hearing this week, according to U.S. government sources.

The intelligence post, located 1.2 miles from the U.S. mission that was targeted by militants in a September 11 attack, was evacuated of Americans after the assault that killed Ambassador Christopher Stevens. Three other Americans died in the attacks on U.S.-occupied buildings, including two who were hit in a mortar blast at the secret compound.

The publication of satellite photos showing the site's location and layout have made it difficult, if not impossible, for intelligence agencies to reoccupy the site, according to government sources, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The post had been a base for, among other things, collecting information on the proliferation of weaponry looted from Libyan government arsenals, including surface-to-air missiles, the sources said. Its security features, including some fortifications, sensors and cameras, were more advanced than those at rented villa where Stevens died, they said.

The sources said intelligence agencies will find other ways to collect information in Libya in the aftermath of last year's toppling of long-time leader Muammar Gaddafi.

"Benghazi played a critical role in the emergence of the new Libya and will continue to do so. It makes sense that we would return there to continue to build relationships," one U.S. official said.

Public discussion of the top-secret location began with a contentious Wednesday hearing of the House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, which was investigating whether security lapses put Americans at risk.

The State Department displayed a satellite photograph showing two locations - the rented villa that served as a special diplomatic mission and the compound that officials had cryptically described as an "annex" or "safe house" for diplomatic personnel.

Both compounds were attacked by militants believed to be tied to al Qaeda.

After the diplomatic complex was overrun, U.S. and Libyan personnel rushed by car to the second site, where they fought off two more waves of assaults, officials said.

Charlene Lamb, a top official in the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, told lawmakers that the secret compound took "as many as three direct hits."

Two U.S. security officials, Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods, were killed there in what U.S. officials described as an unlucky mortar strike. As many as 37 people eventually escaped to Benghazi's airport.

When the satellite photo was displayed, a senior committee Republican, Representative Jason Chaffetz, complained that the discussion was drifting into "classified issues that deal with sources and methods," and the photo was removed from public display. No one at the hearing used the term "CIA base" to describe the facility.

'Boneheaded questioning'

The next morning, Dana Milbank, a Washington Post columnist, wrote that the committee's "boneheaded questioning" of State Department witnesses left little doubt that the compound in the pictures was a "CIA base."

The Center for American Progress, a Washington think tank with ties to the Obama White House, followed up with a blog post accusing Republicans of revealing the "Location Of Secret CIA Base."

On Friday, Representative Dutch Ruppersberger, top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, accused Republicans of mishandling secret information.

Spokespeople for the State Department and White House had no comment. The CIA also had no comment.

Oversight committee spokesman Frederick Hill said committee Democrats made matters worse by asking questions about the satellite photos. "Even after Republicans objected, Democrats continued to ask questions that led State officials to put even more sensitive information about who worked there into the public realm," Hill said.

The dispute over who was responsible for identifying the base is the latest case in which intelligence agencies - particularly the CIA - have been dragged into a political fray over the Benghazi attack.

The Obama administration's handling of the Benghazi attacks has become fodder for criticism from Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney and running mate Paul Ryan ahead of the November 6 election.

Intelligence officials are not happy at being drawn into the political battle. Paul Pillar, one of the CIA's former most senior analysts, said the agency is sure to be dismayed at how its sensitive work has been dragged into the debate.

"They're trying to do the best they can with fragmentary and incomplete information. No doubt they are very unhappy that this issue is now being exploited for political purposes," Pillar said.

Washington Post
October 13, 2012
Pg. 1

16. Charges Sharpen In Libya Debate

GOP Intensifies Security Criticism; White House Continues To Defend Its Actions

By Anne Gearan

Republicans escalated their charges against the Obama administration for alleged failures in handling last month's Libya attack, thrusting the death of the U.S. ambassador there into the center of the presidential campaign Friday.

Mitt Romney accused his rival of "doubling down on denial" about the true origins of the Sept. 11 siege in Benghazi, which senior Obama officials initially said appeared to be an outgrowth of anti-American protests, not terrorism.

Whether the administration has truthfully disclosed what it knew about the perpetrators of the attacks became a flash point in Thursday night's debate, when Vice President Biden blamed the administration's shifting explanations on U.S. intelligence agencies.

"There were more questions that came out last night because the vice president directly contradicted the testimony of State Department officials," Romney told supporters Friday at a campaign event in Richmond. "American citizens have a right to know just what's going on."

Earlier in the week, State Department officials had said that they had not received reports of protests outside the compound before the killings. But Biden said the explanation that the attacks grew from a protest — rather than from terrorists determined to hit the consulate — persisted "because that's exactly what we were told" by intelligence officials.

After trying for weeks to portray the deaths in Benghazi as part of a larger failure of Obama's foreign policy, Republicans now sense their first real opening on national security, an area that has long been considered one of the president's strengths. It was an unexpected twist that the administration seemed to grow more vulnerable following the debate between Biden, a veteran of global diplomacy and the former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Ryan, a relative novice whose expertise is the domestic budget.

Obama officials moved swiftly Friday to blunt further fallout, first during the White House briefing and later in a speech by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

"There is nobody in the administration motivated by anything other than trying to understand what happened," Clinton said. "We do not have all the answers. No one in this administration has ever claimed otherwise."

In Thursday's debate, Republican vice-presidential nominee Paul Ryan raised the possibility that the White House had blamed the attacks on antiAmerican protests at first because a successful terrorist attack would blemish Obama's national security credentials. The successful killing of Osama bin Laden is a stock Obama campaign theme, and he frequently tells audiences that his administration has al-Qaeda "on its heels."

"Look, if we are hit by terrorists, we're going to call it for what it is — a terrorist attack," Ryan said. Romney continued that theme Friday, telling voters at a campaign rally that he would investigate the varying accounts.

There are multiple investigations into the attack: an FBI probe into the deaths of the four Americans, an independent inquiry by a panel appointed by Clinton and at least two congressional probes.

As Republicans pounced on Biden's remarks, White House press secretary Jay Carney and Clinton said Friday that there was no selective use of intelligence about the attacks.

"We have been very transparent about what we

know," Carney said. "As hours and days and weeks have passed by and more facts have come to light and more has been revealed through the investigations underway, that, you know, we have gained a clearer picture of what happened and what did not happen."

Administration accounts have evolved because information about the attacks has evolved, Clinton said.

"We are providing the best information we have at that time and that information continues to be updated, it also continues to be put into context and more deeply understood through the process we are engaged in," she said.

Another point of contention is whether the White House should have been alerted to requests by security officials for more manpower ahead of the Benghazi attack. Biden suggested on Thursday night that the security requests had not made their way back to Washington — a claim that was quickly contested.

Two former security officials testified before Congress this week that they had made requests for more manpower that were either ignored or rejected. Senior State Department officials acknowledged the requests but said there was no evidence that additional security would have prevented the attack. On Friday, administration officials clarified that what Biden said during the Thursday debate — that "we did not know they wanted more security" — meant only that the White House had not been informed of the threat by the State Department, not that no one in the administration had been informed.

"There was no actionable intelligence regarding the Benghazi facility" that could have been used to prevent the attack, Carney said, and continued questions about what the administration knew are "an effort here to politicize this, to turn this into an issue in the campaign."

Carney and congressional Democrats have said some of the Republicans now criticizing embassy security had voted to cut the State Department's security budget. Republicans counter that Democrats also voted for smaller security budgets.

In separate remarks Friday, Clinton repeatedly vowed to find out what happened and to do everything possible to protect diplomats in the field. But she said the business of diplomacy, like combat, involves a calculated risk.

"We will not retreat," she said in a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

"We will never prevent every act of violence or terrorism, or achieve perfect security," Clinton said. "Our people can't live in bunkers and do their jobs. But it is our solemn responsibility to constantly improve, to reduce the risks our people face and make sure they have the resources they need to do their jobs."

She spoke a day after a Yemeni security official at the U. S. Embassy in Sanaa was killed on his way to work.

The E-Ring (e-ring.foreignpolicy.com)
October 12, 2012

17. Inside The CAG: Dempsey's Inner Circle

By Kevin Baron

Walking around the Joint Chiefs of Staff hallways in the Pentagon, one often hears of a mystical and powerful force known simply as "the CAG."

Ever heard of them? Know who they are? What they do? How much power they wield? Probably not, but you should.

The "Chairman's Action Group" is a team of 18 little-known but highly influential advisors -- though they prefer not to be called that -- working directly for Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Col. Troy Thomas, special assistant to the chairman and director of the CAG, sat with the E-Ring on Friday for a rare on-the-record interview to help explain.

"We advance his intent, in terms of his narrative, his engagements, and his ideas," Thomas said. Translating from militarese to English, mostly the CAG plans all of the chairman's public engagements and messaging, advising on what he should say, where he should say it, to whom and how, in addition to organizing his travel. Thomas travels wherever Dempsey goes.

"I don't think of myself as an advisor. But we do try to help him learn; he's given us that charter. This chairman, you know, he really values divergent thinking, intellectual curiosity," Thomas said.

It has become common -- almost expected -- that four-star general officers have some type of personal, on-call, at-the-ready advisory group of middle-grade officers, serving like a body-man tending to the senior officer's special needs. Service chiefs and combatant commanders have their own versions of CAGs, and the groups often get together. What each group does, exactly, depends as much on the personality of the officer as the makeup of the group.

"No two groups are exactly alike," Thomas said. The CAG in its current format dates back to Gen. Peter Pace's term as chairman, according to several sources, but has changed over time, in size, influence, and purpose.

According to Thomas, Dempsey says the purpose of his CAG is "to help me learn." But as Thomas describes it, that function ranks third behind crafting the chairman's message and putting him out in public. Dempsey's speechwriters -- yes, they exist -- are part of that team working on the narratives. Another team, Thomas said, has the job of coming up with Dempsey's "engagement strategy" in the U.S. and abroad, planning Dempsey's days for best impact, efficiency, and purpose based on what Dempsey's wants out of each trip.

A third team is the one giving Dempsey ideas, a bit like Dempsey's personal study group. They read books, think tank reports, or take assignments from the chairman and pass information up to him as they see fit.

What the CAG is not, Thomas argued, is a team of advisors whispering into the chairman's ear about what his position should be on Turkey-Syria border violence, or Libya, or the budget. That remains the job of the Joint Staff's numbered directorates, run by three-star generals with deputies and staffs of their own. CAG members are nominated by the services and go through rounds of interviews and writing samples before the chairman handpicks who he wants. They consist of ranks from O-4 to O-6 from all of the services, and one civilian.

Thomas said, trying to make a distinction, the CAG tries to actively consume the tidal wave of books, reports, and news coming at Dempsey each day, either when asked or unsolicited, almost like a special projects unit.

"Where we're different, I think, from the staff is the staff is also engaged in helping him learn, but they're really sort of experts, and they're really experts in their area. We try to be helpful by making sure he's exposed to counterarguments, making sure he's exposed to innovative ideas, making sure -- looking for connections and linkages among problem sets and solutions that other people aren't seeking, trying to anticipate unintended consequences."

It's an ongoing dialogue, he said, of Dempsey asking the CAG to look into an idea someone mentioned to him, or check out a book he's heard about. "Most of the time I'm having trouble keeping pace with him because he is a voracious reader," Thomas said.

But can a staff of midgrade officers really say "no" to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

"He's challenged the entire staff to think creatively, to be curious, to engage in divergent thinking, but mostly they do it in their area," Thomas said. "I think with Gen. Dempsey, his style is that everyone feels like they're free to engage in debate and offer their perspective, and if that meant suggesting to the chairman that there was another way to look at it than the way that he's looking at a problem, he would expect you to that. And if you didn't, you're probably not serving him in a way he needs you to serve him."

Perhaps the biggest change Dempsey made to build his CAG was moving the speechwriters from under Public Affairs to be in the CAG. It's a product of Dempsey's background, in a way. He did not come into office with much of an entourage of confidants nor a personal spokesman, like Mullen did with Rear Adm. John Kirby. Mullen and Kirby had years together in his previous jobs, so by the time he was chairman, Kirby managed Mullen's messaging. By the time Mullen retired, it seemed Kirby knew what Mullen thought before Mullen did.

That dynamic is gone, under Dempsey.

"Where Public Affairs will sort of manage and shape the event, we will help the chairman develop the content, based on his guidance," Thomas said.

Col. Dave Lapan, Dempsey's spokesman, said that for the recent Landon Lecture in Kansas, a major policy speech, the CAG worked on framing Dempsey's remarks while the Public Affairs staff worked on getting local press to attend and other logistics.

Thomas said the CAG planned Dempsey's recent trip to the Pacific northwest because all of the services have elements there for him to visit, including the Coast Guard.

"We met with Microsoft to talk about cybersecurity. We talked, we went to meet with Boeing to talk about innovation in business models and economic competition in the Asia-Pacific region," he said, all so he can not only engage with the public but learn.

Missing from that trip: the press. Dempsey has surrounded himself with a brain trust specifically to help craft his message and engagements, not to mention the whole of the Joint Staff. But Dempsey usually avoids the press, or only meets with local press.

Thomas was uncomfortable answering why that is, but Lapan said reporters have not been invited to follow Dempsey for reasons varying from logistics to the size of Dempsey's plane or hotel space. Dempsey's starting point for the Northwest trip was Texas, as he visited his grandchildren, instead of Andrews, for example.

Thomas argued that in Dempsey's first year he had over 200 public engagements, but conceded that total includes speeches. When asked if the CAG has advised Dempsey to do more media engagements, Thomas said, "The CAG is not in the business of advising him on media engagement. We leave that to the public affairs officer."

"We're trying to sort of implement [Dempsey's] idea. So he and I will engage in a conversation about what he might want to talk about in a particular forum," he said. "In the course of that conversation, there'll be a discussion with Colonel Lapan about media involvement in that particular occasion."

"I might offer whether or not I think the message might resonate with a larger audience, but mostly, exactly how the media might get involved in that message I leave to [Lapan]," he said.

For Dempsey's trips to Southeast Asia and Korea, Dempsey took no reporters. Lapan said that decision was made because Dempsey's staff felt the Pentagon press corps already was traveling in full with Defense Secretary Leon Panetta at the same locations for the same events.

This week, Dempsey announced he wants to expand his travel to visit Russia, China, and India.

Look for Thomas at his side. Just don't call him an advisor.

Christian Science Monitor (csmonitor.com)
October 12, 2012

18. Pentagon's Plan X: How It Could Change Cyberwarfare

The Pentagon has always been secretive about its desire and ability to carry out offensive cyberwarfare. Now, Plan X makes it clear that offensive cyberattacks will be in the Pentagon playbook.

By Anna Mulrine, Staff writer

Washington--The same Pentagon futurologists who helped create the Internet are about to begin a new era of cyberwarfare.

For years, the Pentagon has been open and adamant about the nation's need to defend itself against cyberattack, but its ability and desire to attack enemies with cyberweapons has been cloaked in mystery.

Next week, however, the Pentagon's Defense Advance Research Products Agency (DARPA) will launch Plan X – an effort to improve the offensive cyberwarfare capabilities "needed to dominate the cyber battlespace," according to an announcement for the workshop.

Though the program will be closed to the press, the relatively public message is a first for the Pentagon. For one, it shows that the Pentagon is now essentially treating its preparations for cyberwar the same way it treats its preparations for any potential conventional war. Just as it takes bids from aerospace companies to develop new jet fighters or helicopters, Plan X will look at bids from groups that can help it plan for cyberwarfare and expand technologies.

Moreover, it opens a window into the highly secretive world of offensive cyberwarfare. No longer is it unclear whether the US is in the business of planning Stuxnet-style cyberattacks. Plan X indicates that such capabilities – which experts say could range from taking out electrical

grids to scrambling computer networks in top-secret facilities to causing the pacemaker implanted in an enemy official to go haywire – will be an explicit part of the military playbook.

"If we can have a robust public discussion of nuclear weapons why not a robust discussion of cyberstrategy?" says Jim Lewis, director of the Technology and Public Policy program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "Up until now, cyber has been kind of ad hoc. What they're doing now is saying that this is going to be a normal part of US military operations."

The US is already engaged in offensive cyberwar. Media reports claim that the US helped develop and deploy the Stuxnet digital worm, which inflicted serious harm on Iran's uranium enrichment program.

In his most wide-ranging speech to date on cyber warfare Thursday, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta hinted at the need for increased offensive capabilities, warning that America "won't succeed in preventing a cyber attack through improved defenses alone."

"If we detect an imminent threat of attack that will cause significant physical destruction in the United States or kill American citizens, we need to have the option to take action against those who would attack us, to defend this nation when directed by the president," Mr. Panetta said. "For these kinds of scenarios, the department has developed the capability to conduct effective operations to counter threats to our national interests in cyberspace."

But the lack of discussion surrounding offensive cyber capabilities – and a clear US military plan for pursuing them – has been a significant roadblock for US military forces interested in honing those skills, says retired Col. Joe Adams, a former West Point professor who coached the military academy's cyber team.

In the past there has been a "skittishness about teaching cadets offensive skills like how to hack" into systems, says Dr. Adams, now executive director of research and cybersecurity for Merritt Network, Inc. "We've really ramped up the defensive part, but there hasn't been any work done to identify people who have the intuitive ability to conduct operations on the offensive side."

Many of the threats the US faces – and may in turn inflict on other countries and non-state actors – will be nuanced.

The notion of a "cyber Pearl Harbor," as Panetta has characterized it, is a misnomer, Adams adds.

"Everybody's looking for a cyber Pearl Harbor – we don't need a Pearl Harbor to really mess things up. That's the very nature of this advanced, persistent threat: We're not kicking people's doors in anymore."

Instead, cyber incursions will be more subtle. Just imagine what could happen in a hospital, Adams says. "I don't even have to turn off the refrigerators. I just have to change the thermostat so they're too warm, or too cold, or make some blood supplies go bad, or spoil a little medicine, or just reroute where they send ambulance alerts."

In particular, offensive cyberskills "are more art than science," says Adams. "These kids need to be screened right, and they need to be utilized. A career path in the military is built on building their skills, but also retaining them. We've done really poorly with that."

Part of the problem is that American military training has long emphasized traditional skills, which are often are at odds with developing cyber warriors. You could have an outstanding cyberthinker in a class, but tradition dictates that "he's going to be a tank platoon leader, or a rifle platoon – he's going to have to prove himself as an Army officer before they're going to make use of his talent," says Adams.

In the meantime, his cyberskills atrophy. "The cadets I was teaching, there just wasn't another outlet for them in the military yet."

Plan X is designed to help the Pentagon "understand the cyber battlespace" and to develop skills in "visualizing and interacting with large-scale cyber battlespaces," according to the DARPA proposal.

These, too, are unique skills that must be cultivated within the military, says Adams. "Another art piece is mapping a network [that could be a potential target]. How do you do it – and how do you do it subtly – without knocking things over and turning things off? And if it's hostile, how do we do it without getting caught?"

Plan X hints at some of these needs – and makes it clear that the Pentagon is grappling with how to establish a framework for fighting cyberwar, too.

"Plan X is an attempt by the national security bureaucracy to come to grips with the multitude of issues around use of cyberweapon in an offensive form – the legal, diplomatic, ethical issues," says Matthew Aid, a historian and author of "Intel Wars: The Secret History of the Fight Against Terror."

"We can't have a public discussion about Stuxnet, about these brand new weapons – or their ethical implications – until the White House pulls back just a little the veil of secrecy that surrounds the entire program," Mr. Aid adds.

For example, Stuxnet revealed how unwieldy such weapons can be when it inadvertently "jumped" into friendly computer systems that were never meant to be targeted.

Indeed, "One of the biggest problems in cyberwarfare is the potential for collateral damage," says Mr. Lewis of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"You just can't attack stuff and not worry that innocent civilians will be harmed – you have to take steps to mitigate the risk."

Aid says now is the time to have these conversations. "We can only see one tenth of one percent lurking beneath the surface – what's beneath the surface scares ... me," he says. "This is combat – this is war by a different name."

Danger Room (Wired.com)
October 12, 2012

19. Darpa's New Director Wants To Keep The Skies Under U.S. Control

By Spencer Ackerman

The U.S. has total dominance of the skies above planet Earth, a defense budget five times as large as its nearest competitor, and a fleet of robotic aircraft and advanced manned planes. The newest leader of the Pentagon's blue-sky researchers says the U.S. is more vulnerable than it thinks in the skies. Maintaining America's air supremacy may be about to become a top priority for the agency that helped give the world the Predator drone.

Arati Prabhakar has kept a low profile since returning to Darpa on July 30 as its director. But in her first public speech since returning to the agency she left two decades ago as

a program manager, Prabhakar mused on a subject outside her background in applied physics and clean energy: air power.

"We're starting to think about how we maintain the level of control we have in the air domain, as a cornerstone of how we think about warfighting," Prabhakar said in response to a question from Danger Room at a defense-industry breakfast Friday in northern Virginia. She's going to get along awesomely with the U.S. Air Force.

Sure, the U.S. has a large and expanding fleet of armed drones, plus stealth fighter jets more advanced than any other nation has. America is upgrading its bombers and its flying gas stations, too. But Prabhakar said keeping competitors at bay is actually "such a huge technical challenge, not just in terms of the aircraft, but in terms of the missile capabilities, the sensing capabilities, our ability to affect the cyber [element] in the air domain." And that's part of her renewed focus on bringing about "radical transformation" in defense tech, a mission she said has gone a bit underemphasized as Darpa's had to help fight two present-day wars.

"Now it's 2012, and again, Darpa's core mission is to be preparing for the future," she said. "I think it's a very important time for us as an agency, given our charter, to put our heads up and look ahead and to be cognizant to the complexity of the national security challenge, much broader than the counterinsurgency focus that has … pulled some of our more applied work."

Prabhakar doesn't have any specific program to announce yet. Her directorship is in its infancy, so she can be expected to reacquaint herself with an agency she admits has "virtually no overlap" with the one she left and think in broad terms about the direction she wants to take it.

Much of Prabhakar's address to the National Defense Industrial Association signaled continuity. She praised several existing programs, like efforts to shoot missiles at enemy ships from thousands of miles away and create 3-D holograms of warzones. (Prabhakar also hinted, vaguely, at a new "Plan X" project to routinize attacks on enemy data networks that she inherited from former acting director Ken Gabriel.) Her tone was more down-to-earth — "Hey, I'm Arati," she would welcome the crush of businessmen waiting to meet her — than her predecessor, Regina Dugan, who once greeted a cybersecurity seminar by musing on the "timeless words of our existence." (Sources in Congress say they've seen a similar shift, with Darpa adopting a new, cooperative tone with the Hill.)

For the moment, at least, Prabhakar's vision of "radical transformation" isn't that radical: Prabhakar is talking about upgrading stuff the U.S. already does well, like long-range missile strikes, offensive cyber capabilities and old-fashioned airpower. It's probably unfair to expect a new director to come into her job with a fully-formed vision of radical transformation. But there's a big difference between maintaining a traditional U.S. advantage and creating a whole new one that no one else anticipated.

NextGov.com
October 12, 2012

20. DARPA To Shift Away From Applied Battlefield Tech

By Joseph Marks

As the U.S. commitment in Afghanistan winds down, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency should focus less on responding to immediate conflicts and more on tackling obstacles the United States could face years or decades in the future, the agency's director said Friday.

"We're coming through an extended period with two active wars," DARPA Director Arati Prabhakar said. "Very naturally some of our focus over the last many years has been shifted to taking our technologies into the field and getting our products into the hands of warfighters. I think we've made some real impact with that ... We learned a lot in that process as well."

But the Pentagon's research arm can best serve the military and the nation by focusing less on current challenges and returning to its traditional mission.

"DARPA's core mission is to be preparing for the future," Prabhakar said. "I think it's a very important time for us as an agency, given our charter, to put our heads up and look ahead and be cognizant of national security challenges much broader than the counterinsurgency focus that, of course, has pulled in some of our more applied work."

Prabhakar became DARPA director July 30. She was speaking at a breakfast event sponsored by the National Defense Industrial Association.

The agency will shift to focus more on cybersecurity, analysis of large and complex data sets, and the next generation of biological research, she said.

Among the challenges DARPA will face, Prabhakar said, is adapting to a world in which commercial rather than government technology underlies most complex systems and in which the United States has less of an edge in technological innovation.

"We as a country and [DARPA] as a national security enterprise had an extended period of time during which the United States had huge technological advantages and huge industrial advantages across many, many sectors," she said. "Today, we live in a world where so much of the technology we rely on for national security is globally available -- whether it's all aspects of information technology or materials technology or manufacturing and production technology ... One thing we must do is continue to be the world's best user and the best builder of capabilities from this globally available tool set."

As such, senior leaders must determine which elements of research and production are so vital to national security that the nation must maintain domestic capabilities and which can be purchased reliably from abroad, she said.

The agency also will try to help combat the relative decline in the number of U.S. students pursuing science, technology, engineering and math degrees, she said.

"One of the very first things we do to contribute is to do the projects that are so inspiring that kids get excited about doing technology," Prabhakar said. "I think that's a nontrivial contribution that DARPA makes."

Washington Post
October 13, 2012
Pg. 3

21. A Transition Fraught With New Challenges

Army begins to retool training; Commanders now face painful fiscal choices

By Ernesto Londono

FORT POLK, LA. — Shortly after dark, the paratroopers jumped out of C-130s into a Caspian Sea country teeming with mayhem, political unrest and insurgents. Their first mission was to prevent a U.S. consulate from being overrun. Then they were to repel an invasion by a hostile neighboring nation that was after oil wealth of the fictional country of Atropia. If all went according to plan, the mission would last no longer than a few weeks.

A protracted ground war this would not be.

The training exercise — which kicked off in this Army base in Louisiana last week — is among the first the U.S. Army has designed in an effort to overhaul the country's fighting force as the war in Afghanistan draws to a close.

The withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014 will conclude a chapter of expensive and unpopular war in that country and in Iraq that began more than a decade ago and led to the deaths of more than 6,000 American troops.

The new army, senior military leaders say, must become more nimble, its officers more savvy, its engagements more nuanced and almost certainly shorter. The lessons of the Arab Spring weigh heavily on war planners, with an array of threats looming in the Middle East and elsewhere. A high premium is being placed on devising the proper use of Special Forces, drones and cyber capabilities.

"My premise is that the world is going to get more complex, it's going to get more difficult," Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno said Tuesday en route to Fort Polk, where he observed the first phase of the training exercise. "We're going to need leaders who can be very adaptive."

The transition is fraught with challenges. The Pentagon has been ordered to slash its budget by $487 billion over the next decade. As part of that effort, the Army intends to shrink from its 2010 wartime peak of 570,000 active-duty soldiers to 490,000 in 2017. After growing accustomed to largely unquestioned spending during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, commanders will now face painful fiscal choices.

For the past decade, Fort Polk and other Army training centers have mainly prepared soldiers for the type of challenges they would face in Iraq and Afghanistan. But it's hard to tell what the next major conflict will look like, so the new training exercises encompass an amalgam of threats, military officials say.

The soldiers involved in the exercise here are tasked with helping an allied nation push back an invading force, while battling two insurgencies. Special Forces working closely with conventional units and troops have been ordered to show deference to American civilian officials with vast experience in the country.

"As we focus the Army for what we think the next conflict is going to look like, we need to be mindful that it will require closer cooperation among State, Defense and intelligence agencies working together to fulfill the mission," said Robert Mosher, a retired Foreign Service officer playing the role of an embattled consul general in the exercise.

To make the training more realistic, a would-be consulate was created as part of a fake village that had previously been built for the training of soldiers deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Surrounding woods became Atropia, a battlespace for roaming soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division.

Col. Bill Burleson, a commander at the Joint Readiness Training Center, said today's Army is more battle-tested than it has been in decades. But the flurry of threats — ranging from hostile nations with nuclear programs, a possible war between Israel and Iran, and burgeoning insurgencies in North Africa and the Arab world — can be dizzying to contemplate, he said.

"We've got tremendous operational experience after 10 yearsplus of fighting," he said. "What we've set out to do is put together a training exercise that trains for the uncertainty and ambiguity of the future."

A key challenge, Army officials acknowledge, will be retaining top talent as mid-career officers and enlisted soldiers mull new job prospects and the era of major land wars ends. Frederick Wellman, a retired Army lieutenant colonel who runs a public relations firm focused on defense and veterans issues, said the thought of a peacetime job will probably be jarring for troops that have spent a decade at war.

"A lot of guys who have all this combat experience, and with incredible responsibility, now see a future where they're working in a cubicle at the Pentagon or in some obscure headquarters," he said. "A lot of these young men are saying: I want more opportunities, I want more."

Odierno said the Army is trying to create enough interesting assignments and short deployments for training missions to keep soldiers excited. But he said he's mindful that the Army might lose exceptional soldiers to the private sector.

One such officer, Maj. Seth Bodnar, a West Point graduate and Rhodes scholar who served as an aide to Odierno in Iraq, decided to leave the Army last year. He loved serving, he said, but wanted to try his luck in the private sector. Bodnar said he hopes the Army manages to retain the ability to innovate during peacetime.

"I think one of the challenges of the Army as a whole will be maintaining the edge, that dynamism and innovative spirit that characterized the Army over the past decade," he said. "When the incentive is to innovate or die, you innovate."

Tacoma News Tribune
October 13, 2012

22. Some JBLM Soldiers To Stay Here As Reserves Amid Afghan Mission

The next Joint Base Lewis-McChord Stryker brigade to fight in Afghanistan plans to leave 1,000 of its soldiers at home as a "readiness reserve" in case its mission advising Afghan partners changes during its deployment.

By Adam Ashton, Staff writer

The next Joint Base Lewis-McChord Stryker brigade to fight in Afghanistan plans to leave 1,000 of its soldiers at home as a "readiness reserve" in case its mission advising Afghan partners changes during its deployment.

"I don't need everyone for this mission" at first, said Col. Mike Getchell, commander of more than 4,000 soldiers in the 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. "They'll continue to train so they're ready to serve when they're called to do it."

Getchell is heading into Kandahar province over the next two months with his

most seasoned soldiers. He's drawing on veterans and high-ranking leaders initially because they have the most experience working in complex environments. Their work will center on training Afghans in the end stages of a war rather than in traditional combat.

"We are the experts; we have to pass our expertise on to our Afghan partners," Getchell said in an interview this week with The News Tribune.

His deployed group of more than 3,000 South Sound soldiers will replace another Lewis-McChord Stryker team, the 3,500 soldiers from the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division.

Getchell's troops head to Afghanistan as the nation turns its attention to ending the 11-year-old conflict by 2014, no matter which candidate wins the White House next month.

With that goal in mind, the deploying soldiers are planning to "advise and assist" Afghan security forces in carrying out campaigns against insurgents.

The 4th Brigade troops largely will not lead independent U.S. patrols, and they will not shell out millions of dollars in reconstruction money to prop up local governments. Instead, they will steer requests for assistance to Afghan leaders and support Afghan forces planning their own missions.

"Let's let our Afghan partners solve their problems," Getchell said.

His soldiers plan to live in varying conditions. Some will serve in large forward bases. Other high-ranking officers and noncommissioned officers likely will be embedded within small Afghan outposts to train their allies.

He said the 4th Brigade could wind up closing down the U.S. presence in some areas and turning them over completely to Afghan forces.

"It is less fighting for us and more training of Afghan security forces," he said.

This plan marks a somewhat lighter touch than what other Stryker brigades from Lewis-McChord have used in Afghanistan.

The first to deploy was the 5th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, which lost 37 soldiers in 2009-10 clearing remote parts of Kandahar province neglected for years by NATO forces.

Lewis-McChord's 3rd Brigade deployed in December for a mixed mission calling on some soldiers to advise advanced Afghan units and other American troops to partner on combat patrols with Afghans in volatile districts of Kandahar. It has lost 14 soldiers in combat.

Lewis-McChord's 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (formerly the 5th Brigade) returned to Afghanistan with about 4,000 soldiers in the spring. Its goals are similar to the 3rd Brigade's, and it has lost eight soldiers in Afghanistan this year.

Getchell turned to wounded veterans from the 3rd Brigade to teach his soldiers about the enemy's latest tactics using buried mines against U.S. and Afghan patrols. Those combat-wounded soldiers left strong impressions on the deploying troops.

"There's nothing more powerful than seeing a wounded company commander teaching soldiers who are on their way to replace his guys," Getchell said.

Dangers to Getchell's soldiers could come not only in the buried mines, but also from within the ranks of their Afghan counterparts. More than 50 Western soldiers have been killed this year by Afghan police or soldiers.

The Defense Department attributes most of these killings to emotional disagreements between Western and Afghan service members, such as the visceral reaction many Afghans had to the February burning of Islamic holy books at the NATO-run detention center at Bagram Airfield.

Both U.S. and Afghan forces have recently launched cultural awareness programs aiming to bridge differences between the allies. Getchell focused on some of that training as the 4th Brigade prepared to leave.

"We taught our cultural training in terms of the Golden Rule. If you want to be treated well, treat others well," he said.

The 4th Brigade will arrive in Afghanistan as the fighting season ends and insurgents retreat to their winter hideaways. Getchell's forces likely will be tested in April and May when the Taliban launches its annual spring offensive.

By then, the brigade commander expects his soldiers to have the lay of the land, and to have a handle on any strategic changes that might come down from NATO after the U.S. election.

His brigade is known as the last combat unit to fight in Iraq from its most recent deployment in 2009-10. Likewise, he thinks his soldiers might have an opportunity to define how the U.S. views the end stage of the Afghanistan War.

Ties with the 3rd Brigade helped drive home the significance of this deployment, Getchell said. He described his soldiers as accountable to the Lewis-McChord troops they're replacing, and to the civilian leaders who consider the assignment an important one in the broader scheme of a drawdown of Western forces.

"Those who have gone before us made (the mission) important," he said.

Reuters.com
October 12, 2012

23. U.S. Hearing On Kandahar Massacre To Include Video Testimony From Afghans

By Laura L. Myers, Reuters

SEATTLE--The preliminary court hearing next month in Washington state for the U.S. Army soldier charged with killing 16 Afghan civilians in a March rampage will include live video testimony from witnesses including villagers and Afghan soldiers.

U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Robert Bales is scheduled to have a two-week evidentiary proceeding called an Article 32 hearing at Joint Base Lewis-McChord beginning on November 5, Army Lieutenant Colonel Gary Dangerfield said on Friday.

Bales, a decorated veteran of four combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, is accused of walking off his base under cover of darkness and opening fire on civilians in their homes in at least two villages.

He faces 16 counts of premeditated murder and six counts of attempted murder, as well as charges of assault, wrongfully possessing and using steroids and alcohol while deployed, and destroying a laptop computer.

The March 11 mass shooting in Afghanistan's Kandahar province eroded already strained U.S.-Afghanistan relations.

Bales' civilian defense attorney, John Henry Browne, told Reuters that he and an Army prosecutor planned to question five to 15 Afghan villagers and military personnel as key witnesses from Kandahar Air Field.

Tracking down witnesses in Afghanistan has "been a real problem," Browne said. "A

lot of them just don't want to cooperate with anyone."

Browne's co-attorney, Emma Scanlan, has interviewed soldiers in Afghanistan, but some Afghans wounded during the rampage were released from hospitals before she could interview them, Browne said.

"Some are still in medical care," Browne said, declining to specify where they were receiving treatment.

During the preliminary hearing, video testimony, possibly on Skype, would be beamed back to military officials and observers during the night at the Washington base, Browne said.

Other witnesses, from a potential pool of about 100, will testify in person at the Washington state base, Dangerfield said.

Browne said he was reviewing 5,000 pages of evidence, although other physical DNA and ballistics evidence is being processed by a U.S. military crime lab.

Bales faces a possible death penalty, as premeditated murder is a capital offense under the U.S. military code of justice.

"He's holding up. He's a strong fellow, but wants this process to move on," Browne said.

The Article 32 hearing's investigating officer is Colonel Lee Deneke, an Army reservist, Dangerfield said.

Deneke is also an assistant U.S. attorney in Tennessee, Browne said, where he serves as an Anti-Terrorism Advisory Council coordinator for the U.S. Attorney's Office. He has experience in military capital punishment cases, he added.

Bales is held at Leavenworth military prison in Kansas, but was assigned to the 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division headquartered in Washington state.

New York Times
October 13, 2012
Pg. 7

24. South Korean Official Warns Of 'Existential Threat' From North

By Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL, South Korea — A senior South Korean policy maker on North Korea said on Friday that it must be assumed that the North has the capacity to mount a nuclear device on a ballistic missile, adding that such a capability would pose "an existential threat" to South Korea.

The official, who spoke to a group of journalists on condition of anonymity, stressed that reliable information about the North's capabilities is scarce, and he cautioned that he was not confirming that the North had built an operational nuclear weapon. But his comment, which was one of the most explicitly worded assessments of the North's nuclear and missile capabilities by a senior official, reflected growing concern in the South Korean government that the North may have more advanced technology than previously believed.

"We must assume that North Korea has already reached the stage" of "being able to mount a nuclear device on its ballistic missiles," the official said. "If not, they are getting closer to that level."

The official made the comment while explaining why South Korea and the United States had recently reached a deal under which South Korea will be allowed to nearly triple the range of its ballistic missiles, giving it the ability to strike all known North Korean missile sites. He said the South now had "less margin of error, because North Korean ballistic missiles tipped with a nuclear explosive would be an existential threat to us."

The missile agreement with the United States was announced Sunday. On Tuesday, the North claimed to have missiles that can reach the American mainland, and on Wednesday it said it felt freer to conduct long-range missile tests in light of the American-South Korean missile accord.

The South Korean official said he could not verify the North's recent claims, stressing the paucity of reliable information. "There is no such thing as a North Korea expert," he said. "No one has enough information about North Korea." But he said there was no doubt that the North was determined to develop the means to deliver a nuclear warhead.

Since 1998, North Korea has launched several long-range rockets, which Washington and allies have considered a cover for testing long-range missile technology. They all exploded in midair or failed in their stated purpose of putting satellites into orbit, casting doubt on the North's ability to deliver a payload on an intercontinental ballistic missile.

In a paper published by the RAND Corporation earlier this month, an analyst, Markus Schiller, said that there were strong indications that North Korea's missiles served largely as "a bluff" to "create the impression of a serious missile threat and thereby gain strategic leverage, fortify the North Korean regime's domestic power, and deter other countries."

"It cannot be ruled out that North Korea has nuclear warhead designs for its missiles, but without actual testing, the reliability of these warheads has to be assumed to be low," he wrote. "It seems likely that the North Korean missile threat is limited to the range of its Nodong missile," roughly 1,000 kilometers. "Missiles beyond this range seem not to be operationally deployed or sufficiently reliable."

New York Times
October 13, 2012
Pg. 5

25. China And Japan Say They Held Talks About Island Dispute That Has Frayed Relations

By Martin Fackler

TOKYO — A senior Chinese diplomat made a secret visit to Tokyo this week to hold talks aimed at defusing tensions between Japan and China over a group of disputed islands, Japan's top government spokesman said Friday.

The spokesman, Osamu Fujimura, said Luo Zhaohui, who leads the Chinese Foreign Ministry's Asian Affairs Department, met Thursday with Shinsuke Sugiyama, the director general of the Asian and Oceanic Affairs Bureau at Japan's Foreign Ministry. Mr. Fujimura was confirming a statement issued Thursday night by the Japanese ministry that revealed the meeting.

The talks appeared to signal a willingness by the nations to at least begin discussing their often highly emotional disagreement over control of the island group, known as the Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China. According to the ministry's statement, the diplomats "exchanged opinions" on the dispute and held preparatory talks for a higher-level meeting between the two nations to take place at an unspecified date.

While neither the Japanese nor the Chinese offered much additional detail, the meeting offered the first glimpse of behind-the-scenes diplomacy

aimed at cooling a heated territorial dispute that has set the two Asian powers increasingly at odds and has begun to damage their extensive economic ties. The fact that the meeting took place at all seemed to signal that the two nations wanted to pull back from a confrontation that has led to violent street protests in China and cat-and-mouse games between their patrol ships on the high seas.

Mr. Fujimura expressed hope that a higher-level meeting, which is expected to involve vice ministers, who are usually the nations' top-ranking career diplomats, would be a first step toward lowering tensions.

"It is important for both Japan and China to work toward an environment of improved relations by starting with various efforts at communication," Mr. Fujimura said. "We expect there to be a frank exchange of opinions."

On Friday, the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo confirmed the Thursday meeting and said that its diplomat, Mr. Luo, had left Japan.

Reports in Japanese newspapers said the two diplomats had spoken by phone to arrange the meeting after talks last month in Beijing ended inconclusively. This suggested that the diplomats might be using personal rapport to try to bridge the differences between their two nations.

The islands at the center of the dispute are uninhabited, rocky outcroppings, surrounded by the shark-infested waters of the East China Sea. But they hold a highly symbolic value for many Chinese, who say that Japan's annexation of them in 1895 was a first step in empire-building that culminated in its invasion of China in the 1930s. Japan says that China only started making a claim to the islands in the early 1970s, after evidence emerged that the seabeds around the islands might hold rich oil and natural gas deposits.

The long-running dispute flared anew this year, when the nationalist governor of Tokyo suddenly proclaimed that he wanted to buy some of the islands from their owner, a Japanese citizen. This prompted activists from both nations to stage landings on one of the islands, which are controlled by Japan but also claimed by China and Taiwan.

Tensions spiraled last month after Japan's prime minister, Yoshihiko Noda, announced that the Japanese government would buy the islands instead. While Mr. Noda apparently hoped to defuse the standoff by keeping the islands out of the Tokyo governor's hands, the move drew outrage in China, where attacks on Japanese businesses and boycotts of Japanese goods hurt economic relations. Trade between the two totaled $345 billion last year, economists say.

Spurred by nationalist fervor at home, the Chinese government had kept up the pressure on Japan, sending small flotillas of unarmed patrol ships into waters near the islands. These were shadowed by Japanese coast guard vessels, resulting at times in verbal clashes in which each side used bullhorns and radios to accuse the other of trespassing.

The growing tensions have even held the tiny but still worrisome prospect of dragging the United States into a military confrontation with China: Washington is obligated by treaty to defend Japan if it is attacked, and American officials have said in the past that the islands fall within the scope of that security treaty. So far, American officials have avoided supporting the claims of either side, while calling on both nations to ease the dispute.

Hisako Ueno and Makiko Inoue contributed reporting.

New York Times
October 13, 2012
Pg. 7

26. Security Council Seeks To Aid Mali

By Rick Gladstone

The Security Council unanimously passed a resolution on Friday authorizing the use of military force to assist Mali's government in reclaiming the northern half of the country. Radical Islamists have turned the territory into an enclave for Qaeda militants and for the imposition of harsh Shariah law, which has been used to terrorize the population with amputations, stonings, whippings and other abuses, particularly against women. The Council resolution, sponsored by France, says the Islamists and their collaborators in northern Mali may be held accountable for war crimes. It gives Secretary General Ban Ki-moon 45 days to devise a plan to help the Malian authorities and endorses the deployment of troops from the Economic Community of West African States as part of the plan.

New York Times
October 13, 2012
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27. U.S. Rethinks A Drug War After Deaths In Honduras

By Damien Cave and Ginger Thompson

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras — The Honduran Air Force pilot did not know what to do. It was the dead of night, and he was chasing a small, suspected drug plane at a dangerously low altitude, just a few hundred feet above the Caribbean. He fired warning shots, but instead of landing, the plane flew lower and closer to the sea.

"So the pilot made a decision, thinking it was the best thing to do," said Arturo Corrales, Honduras's foreign minister, one of several officials to give the first detailed account of the episode. "He shot down the plane."

Four days later, on July 31, it happened again. Another flight departed from a small town on the Venezuelan coast, and using American radar intelligence, a Honduran fighter pilot shot it down over the water.

How many people were killed? Were drugs aboard, or innocent civilians? Officials here and in Washington say they do not know. The planes were never found. But the two episodes — clear violations of international law and established protocols — have ignited outrage in the United States, bringing one of its most ambitious international offensives against drug traffickers to a sudden halt just months after it started.

All joint operations in Honduras are now suspended. Senator Patrick J. Leahy of Vermont, expressing the concerns of several Democrats in Congress, is holding up tens of millions of dollars in security assistance, not just because of the planes, but also over suspected human rights abuses by the Honduran police and three shootings in which commandos with the United States Drug Enforcement Administration effectively led raids when they were only supposed to act as advisers.

The downed aircraft, in particular, reminded veteran officials of an American missionary plane that was shot down in 2001 by Peruvian authorities using American

intelligence. It was only a matter of time, they said, before another plane with the supposedly guilty turned out to be filled with the innocent.

But the clash between the Obama administration and lawmakers had been building for months. Fearful that Central America was becoming overrun by organized crime, perhaps worse than in the worst parts of Mexico, the State Department, the D.E.A. and the Pentagon rushed ahead this year with a muscular antidrug program with several Latin American nations, hoping to protect Honduras and use it as a chokepoint to cut off the flow of drugs heading north.

Then the series of fatal enforcement actions — some by the Honduran military, others involving shootings by American agents — quickly turned the antidrug cooperation, often promoted as a model of international teamwork, into a case study of what can go wrong when the tactics of war are used to fight a crime problem that goes well beyond drugs.

"You can't cure the whole body by just treating the arm," said Edmundo Orellana, Honduras's former defense minister and attorney general. "You have to heal the whole thing."

A sweeping new plan for Honduras, focused more on judicial reform and institution-building, is now being jointly developed by Honduras and the United States. But State Department officials must first reassure Congress that the deaths have been investigated and that new safeguards, like limits on the role of American forces, will be put in place.

"We are trying to see what to do differently or better," said Lisa J. Kubiske, the American ambassador in Honduras.

The challenge is dizzying, and the new plan, according to a recent draft shown to The New York Times, is more aspirational than anything aimed at combating drugs and impunity in Mexico, or Colombia before that. It includes not just boats and helicopters, but also broad restructuring: several new investigative entities, an expanded vetting program for the police, more power for prosecutors, and a network of safe houses for witnesses.

Officials from both countries have often failed to fully grasp the weakness of the Honduran institutions deployed to turn the country around. But the need to act is obvious. The country's homicide rate is among the highest in the world, and corruption has chewed through government from top to bottom.

"We know that unless we really help these governments and address the complexities of these challenges they face, their people and societies would be further endangered," said Maria Otero, under secretary of state for civilian security, democracy and human rights.

"Honduras," she added, "is the most vulnerable and threatened of them all."

A Country's Cry for Help

The foreign minister, Mr. Corrales, a hulk of a man with a loud laugh and a degree in engineering, said he visited Washington in early 2011 with a request for help in four areas: investigation, impunity, organized crime and corruption. President Porfirio Lobo, in meetings with the Americans, put it more bluntly: "We're drowning."

In 2010, a year after a military coup eventually brought the conservative Lobo government to power, drug flights to Honduras spiked to 82, from six in 2006. Half the country, which is only a little bigger than Tennessee, was out of government control. Then last October, the mingling of corruption and impunity hit the front pages here with the murder of Rafael Alejandro Vargas, the 22-year-old son of Julieta Castellanos, the rector of Honduras's largest university.

Mr. Vargas's death stood out not just because he was the son of a prominent academic; he was killed by police officers, who appeared to have kidnapped him as he left a birthday party, and then killed him when they realized who he was. Many of the officers were not arrested.

"It was a wake-up call for all of Honduras of just how corrupt and infiltrated the police were," Ms. Otero said.

Another State Department official said the killing — along with the soaring homicide rate and the increased trafficking — sounded alarms in Washington: "It raised for us the specter of Honduras becoming another northern Mexico."

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton demanded a strong response, and William R. Brownfield, the assistant secretary for international narcotics and law enforcement affairs, became the point man for what was created: a broad security program centered on rapid-response law enforcement activities organized by the D.E.A. and the Pentagon.

Known as Anvil, it was meant to work alongside efforts like outreach to youth and training for some police officers, prosecutors and judges. But the interdiction of cocaine was the immediate focus. Mr. Brownfield and other officials wanted to test whether they could keep drug planes from landing on Honduras's isolated Caribbean coast.

The plan was for American and Colombian radar intelligence to guide D.E.A. agents working with the Honduran police. They would intercept drug planes once they landed, using State Department helicopters flown by Guatemalan pilots. "It was the most multinational law enforcement operation we have ever conducted," Mr. Brownfield said.

They started in the spring, and several officials, including Ambassador Kubiske, said the program had succeeded in many ways. From April 24 to July 3, 4.7 tons of cocaine were seized, and the number of drug flights coming into Honduras fell significantly.

But the operation had evident procedural flaws. It was started without some simple measures that could have prevented deaths or allowed for swift investigations and a full public accounting when things went wrong.

According to a senior American official who was not authorized to speak on the record, there were no detailed rules governing American participation in law enforcement operations. Honduran officials also described cases in which the rules of engagement for the D.E.A. and the police were vague and ad hoc.

"In these kinds of situations, who can really say how the decision to shoot is made?" said Héctor Iván Mejía, a spokesman for the Honduran National Police.

And for a law enforcement program, investigations seemed to be an afterthought. On several occasions, crime scenes were left unsecured for more than 12 hours, until an investigator could be flown to them. After episodes in which suspects were injured or killed, it often took days — and significant public pressure — to begin inquiries about whether deadly force was justified, too late to create a full and credible account.

The Honduran authorities were not much help. After one previously undisclosed interdiction raid in July, soldiers refused to board an American military helicopter that had come to collect reinforcements.

More broadly, it was often unclear who was in charge. Sometimes neither Honduran nor American authorities seemed to know who was ultimately responsible for the policy.

The D.E.A.'s role was especially contentious. Its commandos were part of a tactical assault program known as FAST, for Foreign-deployed Advisory and Support Team, which has been credited with victories against drug traffickers from Peru to Afghanistan. But a May 11 shooting in a town called Ahuas, in which gunfire killed four people whom neighbors said were innocent, led to concerns in Congress that the D.E.A.'s commandos were operating with impunity.

The agents were supposed to act as trainers. "During our operations in Honduras, Honduran law enforcement is always in the lead, and we play a support and mentorship role," said Dawn Dearden, a spokeswoman for the D.E.A.

But American officials overseeing Anvil now acknowledge that turned out not to be the case. Members of the Honduran police teams told government investigators that they took their orders from the D.E.A. Americans officials said that the FAST teams, deploying tactics honed in Afghanistan, did not feel confident in the Hondurans' abilities to take the lead.

Three of the five joint interdiction operations during Anvil included deadly shootings. In Ahuas, officials said the gunfire came from the Honduran police. In late June, D.E.A. agents shot and killed the pilot of a plane bearing drugs, and another pilot who landed farther inland on July 3. Anvil ended soon afterward, several days ahead of schedule.

"This operation was bungled in its conception, in its implementation and in its aftermath," said Mr. Leahy, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee's panel on the State Department and foreign operations.

Representative Howard L. Berman of California, the ranking Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, wrote to Mrs. Clinton, "Unfortunately, this is not the first time the United States has come perilously close to an overmilitarized strategy toward a country too small and institutionally weak for its citizens to challenge the policy."

Mr. Brownfield, the assistant secretary, said it was impossible to "offer a zero risk program for interdicting drugs in Central America." He noted that the shootings during interdiction raids happened in the middle of the night, in remote locations that were hard for investigators to reach. Despite these challenges, he said that investigations were conducted and that he was "basically satisfied" that he knew what had happened.

But an aide to Mr. Leahy said members of Congress were not reassured. "One of several reasons funds currently are being withheld is that we have yet to see the results of any investigation, and there is little confidence that the next time would be any better," the aide said.

Military Justice Gone Awry

When the Honduran Air Force pilot took off from his base at La Ceiba on July 26, tracking a plane without a flight plan, the State Department helicopters used for interdiction had already returned to Guatemala. The D.E.A. agents were gone. Anvil had ended, but the broader mission of joint enforcement and the sharing of American intelligence had not.

From the moment the Honduran pilot departed in his aging Tucano turboprop, just before midnight, he was in radio contact with Colombian authorities, who regularly receive radar intelligence from the American military's Southern Command.

Intelligence-sharing is a major component of the American approach to fighting drugs regionally, and military commanders said they were not especially worried about any mistakes as they watched the suspicious flight on their radar screens. Nearly a decade earlier, Honduran military commanders signed an agreement with the United States to abide by laws that prohibit firing on civilian aircraft. After all, small single-engine planes are used by local airlines, courier services and missionaries all over Honduras's remote northeastern coast.

Yet Honduran and American officials said the Honduran pilots did not seem to be aware of the rules.

Mr. Corrales, the foreign minister, and some American officials have concluded that the downed planes amounted to misapplied military justice, urged on by societal anger and the broader weaknesses of Honduras's institutions.

"It reflects a lot of frustration in the country, that they think this is a tool they need to use," Ambassador Kubiske said. "If you had a law enforcement system and then a justice system that could reliably detain suspected narcos when they land — if they could seize the goods and put together a strong case." She added, "If they had a strong functioning system, then this would look like a less attractive alternative."

Creating a stronger system is at the core of what some officials are now calling Anvil II. A draft of the plan provided by Mr. Corrales shows a major shift toward shoring up judicial institutions with new entities focused on organized and financial crime.

Mr. Corrales said the plan was closer to what he had hoped for before Anvil, with a few protective fixes: each vetted investigative unit will include up to three embedded prosecutors, who will direct the activities of Honduran police officers and D.E.A. agents.

The D.E.A.'s role will also probably change. American officials say they are discussing how to keep it more limited, possibly by requiring FAST agents to stay on helicopters during raids, "more like a coach on the sidelines," one American military official said.

Much of what is being proposed would be paid for with a national security tax Honduras recently established. The Americans have agreed to help Honduras determine how the money will be spent, and if Congress releases its hold on American contributions, joint security programs will accelerate quickly.

But many Hondurans worry that the pull of the familiar — of muscular, military-style interdiction — may be difficult to resist. In the handwritten notes on Mr. Corrales's draft, he placed a No. 1 next to two items: intelligence-sharing, and a reference to training for 20 Honduran helicopter pilots.

Honduran officials have also resisted demands from Congress for a more thorough

investigation of Juan Carlos Bonilla, the head of the Honduran police, who has been accused of running a death squad that killed at least three people from 1998 to 2002. (He was acquitted of a single murder charge in 2004, though critics say the case was hindered by corruption.)

Dr. Castellanos, the university rector, said the challenge for Honduras and the Americans would be staying focused on long-term problems like corruption. “It’s a tragedy; there is no confidence in the state,” she said, wearing black in her university office.

The old game of cocaine cat-and-mouse tends to look like a quicker fix, she said, with its obvious targets and clear victories measured in tons seized. Since Anvil ended, officials have seen a revival of suspicious planes heading to Honduras, with many landing inland, along rivers.

“This moment presents us with an opportunity for institutional reform,” Dr. Castellanos said. But that will depend on whether the new effort goes after more than just drugs and uproots the criminal networks that have already burrowed into Honduran society.

“There’s infiltration everywhere,” she said. “There is no guarantee it can be stopped.”

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Pg. 1

28. Private Security Hovers As Issue After Benghazi

By James Risen

WASHINGTON — Lost amid the election-year wrangling over the militants' attack on the United States Mission in Benghazi, Libya, is a complex back story involving growing regional resentment against heavily armed American private security contractors, increased demands on State Department resources and mounting frustration among diplomats over ever-tighter protections that they say make it more difficult to do their jobs.

The Benghazi attacks, in which the United States ambassador and three other Americans were killed, comes at the end of a 10-year period in which the State Department — sending its employees into a lengthening list of war zones and volatile regions — has regularly ratcheted up security for its diplomats. The aggressive measures used by private contractors eventually led to shootings in Afghanistan and Iraq that provoked protests, including an episode involving guards from an American security company, Blackwater, that left at least 17 Iraqis dead in Baghdad’s Nisour Square.

The ghosts of that shooting clearly hung over Benghazi. Earlier this year, the new Libyan government had expressly barred Blackwater-style armed contractors from flooding into the country. “The Libyans were not keen to have boots on the ground,” one senior State Department official said.

That forced the State Department to rely largely on its own diplomatic security arm, which officials have said lacks the resources to provide adequate protection in war zones.

On Capitol Hill this week, Democrats and Republicans sparred at a House Oversight and Government Reform Committee hearing over what happened in Benghazi, whether security at the mission was adequate, and what — if anything — could have been done to prevent the tragedy.

But amid calls for more protection for diplomats overseas, some current and former State Department officials cautioned about the risks of going too far. “The answer cannot be to operate from a bunker,” Eric A. Nordstrom, who until earlier this year served as the chief security officer at the United States Embassy in Tripoli, Libya, told the committee.

Barbara K. Bodine, who served as ambassador to Yemen when the destroyer Cole was bombed in 2000, said: “What we need is a policy of risk management, but what we have now is a policy of risk avoidance. Nobody wants to take responsibility in case something happens, so nobody is willing to have a debate over what is reasonable security and what is excessive.”

For the State Department, the security situation in Libya came down in part to the question of whether it was a war zone or just another African outpost.

Even though the country was still volatile in the wake of the bloody rebellion that ousted Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, the State Department did not include Libya on a list of dangerous postings that are high priority for extra security resources.

Only the American Embassies in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan are exempted from awarding security contracts to the lowest bidder. Dangerous posts are allowed to consider “best value” contracting instead, according to a State Department inspector general’s report in February.

The large private security firms that have protected American diplomats in Iraq and Afghanistan sought State Department contracts in Libya, and at least one made a personal pitch to the ambassador, J. Christopher Stevens, who was killed in the militants’ attack in Benghazi on Sept. 11, according to a senior official at one firm.

But given the Libyan edict banning the contractors, the Obama administration was eager to reduce the American footprint there. After initially soliciting bids from major security companies for work in Libya, State Department officials never followed through.

“We went in to make a pitch, and nothing happened,” said the security firm official. He said the State Department could have found a way around the Libyans’ objections if it had wanted to.

Instead, the department relied on a small British company to provide several unarmed Libyan guards for security at the mission in Benghazi. For the personal protection of the diplomats, the department largely depended on its Diplomatic Security Service.

The wrangling over protection is part of a larger debate that has been under way for years within the State Department over how to balance security with the need of American diplomats to move freely.

Many diplomats rankle at the constraints imposed on them by security officials, who demand that they travel around foreign capitals in heavily armored convoys that local civilians find insulting and that make it nearly impossible for the envoys to meet discreetly with foreign officials. Many American diplomats have also grown deeply frustrated by the constraints imposed on them by working in the new, highly secure embassies that have been constructed around the world over the past decade.

After the 1998 bombings of two American embassies in East Africa by Al Qaeda, the State Department began a multibillion-dollar program

to replace many embassies with hardened and highly secure facilities. American construction companies with experience in building prisons and military barracks won many of the contracts to build cookie-cutter buildings that look more like fortresses than diplomatic outposts. Between 2001 and 2010, 52 embassies were built, and many others are now under construction or being designed.

Often located in remote suburban areas far from crowded streets, the buildings are designed to withstand truck bombs, but they also require local security forces and heavily armed guards to resist the type of attack that the militants staged in Benghazi.

But many diplomats say the fortified embassies make it difficult for them to do their jobs, forcing them to find ways around them. Ronald E. Neumann, who served as the ambassador in Afghanistan from 2005 to 2007, and who worked in Baghdad before that, said that many foreign officials refuse to come into American Embassies because they are insulted by the intrusive security measures, and they do not want American officials coming to their homes with huge convoys.

"So you meet people in hotels," said Mr. Neumann, now the president of the American Academy of Diplomacy in Washington. The security "has forced you to get more creative."

That can mean taking more risks. "A lot of people are simply violating the security regulations to do their jobs," said Anthony H. Cordesman, a national security analyst at the Center for International and Strategic Studies in Washington. "They have to find ways to get out, and sometimes they end-run the security officer, or sometimes the security officer will turn a blind eye."

In fact, just as the Benghazi attack occurred, the State Department's building department was beginning to address some of the frustrations by proposing more open and accessible designs for embassies. Under the new policy, embassies will still have to meet the same security standards, but the State Department will require that a higher priority be given to the visual appearance of buildings and will try to situate them in more central locations so that they are not so isolated. It is unclear whether the Benghazi crisis will force the State Department to abandon the new design policy.

"The problem is that embassies no longer function as public buildings," said Jane Loefller, the author of "The Architecture of Diplomacy," a history of the design and construction of American embassies. "They used to be public, but no longer."

For the State Department, finding the right balance between security and diplomacy has become increasingly difficult in a political environment. Perhaps no one understands that as well as Patrick F. Kennedy.

Five years ago, Mr. Kennedy, then the under secretary of state for management in the Bush administration, was caught up in a high-profile Congressional investigation of the episode in Nisour Square. Democratic lawmakers on the House Oversight Committee criticized the department for lax management of overly aggressive security contractors.

This week, Mr. Kennedy, who has the same job in the Obama administration, faced Republicans on the same House committee, who criticized the State Department for lax management and failing to provide more aggressive security in Benghazi.

MiamiHerald.com
October 12, 2012

29. 2 Terror Trials Separated By More Than A Subway Ride

From logistics to the law, the latest New York City terror proceedings offer a stark contrast to the challenges of mounting the Sept. 11 trial at Guantanamo.

By Carol Rosenberg

Within hours of being handed over to U.S. custody last week, a radical Islamic preacher from London named Abu Hamza al Masri was brought before a federal court in New York City. He got a seasoned criminal defense attorney, open hearings and is now in a federal lockup awaiting an August terror trial. It took days, not years.

Next week, the accused 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheik Mohammed and four alleged accomplices get their second military commissions hearings of the Obama administration at the U.S. Navy base at Guantánamo. All five have been in U.S. custody for nine or more years.

The contrasts don't end there.

One's a military court. Another's civilian. If the Sept. 11 prosecution ends in conviction and the military jury decides they deserve the death penalty, the secretary of defense will choose the method of execution. Masri and four other men who were extradited to U.S. custody from Britain can get at most life in prison, and release if they are acquitted.

From logistics to the law, the cases of Masri and Mohammed illustrate how encumbered the Guantánamo war court system has become.

Contrasting costs

*Subway vs. charter commercial airliner

The federal courthouse is a $2.25 subway ride away from the rest of New York City. Guantánamo lawyers, and everyone else from judge to victim family members, get to the Guantánamo proceedings on $90,000 charter jetliners. For the Oct. 15-19 proceedings, postponed from August by Tropical Storm Isaac, the Pentagon chartered two.

*Permanent offices vs. makeshift work space

Masri's court-appointed defense lawyer, Jeremy Schneider, walked to his client's arraignment from his downtown New York office, five blocks from the court. Guantánamo lawyers split their time between Washington Beltway offices and crude, cramped work space at Camp Justice, some of it recently declared a health hazard of toxic mold and rat droppings.

*Federal lockup vs. designer detention

Masri is held for trial next to the courthouse, in a 10-story federal lockup with solitary confinement for "high-risk" prisoners where lawyers can simply show up to see a client seven days a week. It costs $33,989 a year to keep an inmate in federal detention, according to the U.S. Bureau of Prisons. The Obama administration says it costs $800,000 a year to keep a prisoner at Guantánamo. To see a client, a defense lawyer needs to get a slot on the prison camp's military roster and a ride on the $90,000 charter plane.

Different crimes

To be sure, the Sept. 11 attacks were a crime unparalleled in American history. Nearly 3,000 people were killed in the four

hijackings, al-Qaida's first attack on U.S. soil.

Masri, who was jailed in Britain since 2004 and convicted of incitement, is accused in U.S. federal court of abetting kidnappings of Americans in Yemen and conspiring to set up a terrorist training camp in Oregon, crimes that date back to the 1990s.

Each case took a roundabout route to U.S. justice. The same year Masri was convicted in a British court, the CIA moved Mohammed and his alleged co-conspirators to Guantánamo from years in secret agency detention specifically designed to keep them out of reach of the International Red Cross, as well as U.S. courts.

The Bush era Pentagon charged Mohammed with war crimes in 2008. But the Obama administration withdrew the case, and chose to try the case in New York City with a civilian judge and jury.

Congress and political opposition thwarted that effort. Now the case is back at the Guantánamo war court, where the Pentagon uses some Justice Department lawyers and blends both military and civilian practice.

Different courts

*UK vs. CIA

In the Masri case, the British government imposed two conditions on the extradition of the five accused terrorists to U.S. soil — no execution if convicted and no military prosecution, then turned him and four other men over to U.S. jurisdiction. Mohammed came to military custody from the CIA, which still controls classifications in the 9/11 case, notably the details of his black site detentions and interrogations, including 183 rounds of waterboarding.

*Federal judge vs. 40-second delay

Spectators walked in off the street, went through a metal detector and sat in court for Masri's 30-minute arraignment. Sketch artists sat in the jury box, close enough to illustrate that Masri's arms end in stumps, he says from an explosion in the 1980s while he fought the Soviet invasions of Afghanistan. For Mohammed's arraignment, the Pentagon vetted spectators — Sept. 11 victims, legal observers, reporters, who in Cuba watched the 13-hour 9/11 proceedings through a soundproofed window behind the court. Sound comes in a 40-second sound delay, time enough for a censor to muffle with white noise button sensitive information. The sketch artist was sequestered in back too. A security officer inspected her drawings before the public could see them.

*Release vs. indefinite detention

If a civilian jury acquits Masri, he goes free. The United States might seek to deport him back to his native Egypt or negotiate his return to Britain, where his family lives. Acquittal by military commission does not automatically guarantee you get out of Guantánamo. Obama detention doctrine says the Pentagon can keep a foreigner indefinitely as a captive of the war on terror — unless a federal court orders the government to let the man go.

*Settled system versus expeditionary justice

There's no question that Masri is entitled to the protections of the U.S. Constitution at his trial. Not so at the U.S. military court in Cuba. Defense lawyers have asked the Army colonel presiding at the 9/11 trial to rule on whether military commissions are governed by the U.S. Constitution. The prosecutors want that issue decided later.

Bloomberg Government (bgov.com)
October 9, 2012

30. Russia-Lithuania Contractors Face U.S. Army Suspension Threat

By Tony Capaccio, Bloomberg News

U.S. Army officials will review a Lithuanian-Russian team for possible suspension or debarment from American military work over delays and cost increases on a contract to overhaul helicopters.

The move comes after the Pentagon's inspector general found that AviaBaltika Aviation Ltd. based in Kaunas, Lithuania, and Saint Petersburg Aircraft Repair Co., based in the Russian city of the same name, failed to comply with terms of an Army contract to upgrade 10 Russian-made Mi-17 helicopters within six months, including a refusal to provide access to quality-control personnel.

Eight of the aircraft were for the Pakistani Air Force and two were for the U.S. Army, which uses them for training at Fort Rucker, Alabama. The planned six-month overhauls took as long as 19 months for the Pakistanis, leaving its military without the choppers in August 2010 during the country's worst-ever flooding. The U.S. aircraft took 26 months to overhaul.

"Our report contains enough information to initiate consideration of suspension and debarment," according to the audit dated Sept. 27 and signed by Jacqueline Wicecarver, the Defense Department's assistant inspector general for acquisition and contract management. The 151-page audit, marked "For Official Use Only," was obtained by Bloomberg News.

AviaBaltika's attorney, Robert Burton of Venable LLP in Washington, said his client denied any wrongdoing.

"We have not seen the full report, but the summary and its recommendations are inaccurate and we plan to fully rebut them," Burton said in an e-mail.

Information about any delays on the contract is incorrect, Alexander Gruzdev, chief engineer for Saint Petersburg Aircraft Repair Co., said in a phone interview. He declined further comment, saying details of the contract are private.

The U.S. provides the medium-lift Mi-17 to countries including Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq that have experience with the Russian aircraft. The two companies, acting as subcontractors to Northrop Grumman Corp., are performing the overhauls in Russia.

What began as a $37.7 million job has increased to $64.2 million and may cost as much as $76.8 million, more than double the original estimate, if the Army pays the subcontractors' pending claim for $12.6 million. The increase included about $12.9 million for the purchase of unauthorized parts in a pattern of "unquestioned, unnecessary additional costs," the audit found.

The Pentagon audit found that lax oversight by Army contracting officials at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, let aircraft parts be overpriced by as much as double a U.S. supplier's quotes.

While the Lithuanian and Russian companies repeatedly blocked Pentagon and contractor quality-control specialists from inspecting the overhauls, Army contracting

personnel kept paying them, according to the audit.

The contracting personnel "did not perform adequate oversight and management," including not consistently supporting Falls Church, Virginia-based Northrop and another contractor, Flight Test Aerospace Inc., in managing the overhauls, the audit said.

Flight Test Aerospace, based in Chantilly, Virginia, working under Northrop, hired AviaBaltika to perform the overhauls. It subsequently joined with Saint Petersburg Aircraft Repair to do the work in Russia. The aircraft arrived from September to November 2009.

"Instead of issuing a stop-work order" in the face of the delays and blocked access, Army contracting personnel continued to pay the foreign contractors $26 million, allowed "excessive parts mark-up and did not determine fair and reasonable prices" for millions of dollars in contract modifications, according to the audit.

The 10 helicopters were accepted "without verifying whether the aircraft were overhauled in accordance with contract quality requirements," it said.

Officials with the Lithuanian and Russian contractors "did not perform in accordance with the terms" of the contract when they denied access to Pentagon and U.S. contractor personnel or "when they insisted on purchasing and installing replacement parts when not contractually authorized," according to the audit.

The lack of access also prevented the Army from catching "unsanctioned parts that affected flight worthiness" in the eight Pakistani helicopters, the audit found. Four choppers in Pakistan still contain parts that "could lead to aircraft malfunctions and endanger the life and safety of the crew" if they aren't replaced, it said.

The auditors "concluded that indications of criminal activity were present" and referred them to the inspector general's investigations unit for review.

The Army's Legal Services Agency "will review all evidence of fraud or other evidence indicating a lack of contractor responsibility" as it assesses whether to initiate suspension or debarment actions, Brigadier General Flora Darpino, who was at the time director of the agency, wrote in an April 16 letter contained in the audit.

Army Deputy Assistant Secretary for Procurement Kim Denver wrote in a May 7 letter to the inspector general that the Army Contracting Command would review contract personnel performance and identify "administration actions as appropriate."

Burton, the lawyer for AviaBaltika, faulted the Department of Defense inspector general's findings.

"For example, the report is founded on the DoD IG's incorrect conclusion" that the company "is responsible for costly program delays -- a conclusion which is contradicted by a court ruling," he said. "We deny any wrongdoing and stand behind our pricing and performance, which are consistent with our contracts."

Randy Belote, a spokesman for Northrop, said that while the company is aware of the inspector general's findings, it hasn't fully reviewed the audit. He declined to comment further.

Army Lieutenant Colonel James Gregory, a Pentagon spokesman, said the "cost was consistent with the overhaul cost conducted by three other companies/subcontractors."

"Total cost per overhaul varies based on aircraft condition and current market conditions regarding Mi-17 parts," Gregory said in an e-mail. These overhauls "were more extensive than most, and the overall cost is in line with other aircraft overhauled by other companies that were in similar condition."

The Army is evaluating the pending $12.6 million "equitable adjustment" claim that the Russian and Lithuanian companies filed last year to recover additional expenditures they allege were caused by Flight Test Aerospace actions.

The Army inspector general recommended that the money not be repaid. Northrop Grumman, which stands to earn a fee on the $12.6 million, also advised Army contracting officials not to pay the claim.

The claim includes hourly labor rates of as much as $500 per hour for the Lithuanian-Russian team's general director, financial director, senior manager and chief accountant. These translate into yearly salaries of as much as $1.35 million, the audit found.

"These labor rates are not reasonable," the audit said. "Compared to General Services Administration contracts for accounting services, the $500 per hour rate for the chief economist in Russia or Lithuania is higher than the rates charged in the U.S." by domestic accounting firms.

ForeignPolicy.com
October 12, 2012

31. Ready Player One

Did the Pentagon just take over America's cybersecurity?

By James Andrew Lewis

It was bound to happen. The Senate fumbles and the House proffers only magical solutions for cybersecurity. The task of improving cybersecurity reverts to the executive branch, but the Department of Homeland Security does not inspire confidence. So the Department of Defense (DOD) is given a larger role in protecting cyberspace -- a responsibility that Defense Secretary Leon Panetta finally claimed in an important speech he delivered Oct. 11, "Defending the Nation from Cyber Attack." Panetta may have said that the Pentagon will only play a "supporting role," but make no mistake: When it comes to cybersecurity, the center of action just shifted.

Given the feeble state of U.S. cyberdefenses, an astute antagonist could use cyberattacks to disrupt critical services and information. This is a standard military doctrine for America's likely opponents. An expanded role for the DOD makes sense when the United States is so vulnerable -- not only from sophisticated opponents but, surprisingly, from less advanced countries that may be more aggressive and less able to calculate risk.

The driver for immediate action is Iran. "Iran has also undertaken a concerted effort to use cyberspace to its advantage," Panetta said. His speech laid the dots alongside each other without connecting them, but many sources in and out of government suggest that Iran was likely responsible for the disruptive attacks on Aramco and RasGas that the secretary mentioned. Iran may also have been behind recent denial-of-service attacks against U.S. banks. Iran has discovered a new way to harass much sooner than expected, and the United States is ill-prepared to deal with it.

The specifics of Iranian involvement are murky, but there is a general consensus

that Tehran was either witting or supportive of the attacks. Iran has been working to acquire cyberattack capabilities for years -- well before Stuxnet -- and those who believe that the allegations of Iranian involvement are true do not believe the recent attacks were in retaliation for that piece of malware, which disrupted Iran's centrifuges. If anything, some speculate they were a reaction to the new U.S. sanctions. A more active Iran creates a new layer of problems in cyberspace that the United States cannot wait for Congress to address. An initial problem is how to credibly signal to Iran to refrain from further attacks. Panetta's speech was an attempt to do so. There is a message for Iran that, while indirect, is unlikely to miss.

This is not "cyberdeterrence," a term that makes little sense. The United States has one of the world's most powerful cyberforces, and it did not deter Iran, nor can it deter espionage and crime. Deterrence doesn't work because the United States can't make a credible threat. Against Iran, what would it be? More sanctions? A naval blockade? An airstrike? Even if the United States made these threats, Iran would be unlikely to assess them as credible. The Iranians know U.S. cybercapabilities better perhaps than any other country, and the threat of cyber-retaliation appears not to have frightened them. What Panetta is offering is not deterrence but prevention and preemption.

Panetta laid out a number of steps to harden defenses. Investing in new technology is a traditional American solution to defense problems. The secretary's most significant remark about new technology is that "we're seeing the returns on that investment" in the form of better attribution. Anonymity will offer less protection to attackers and may make some reconsider an attack. If nothing else, better attribution offers improved targeting.

More importantly, Panetta defined an active role for the DOD in cyberdefense, something that has been under discussion since 2009. An early question asked was, if NORAD can defend U.S. airspace, why can't Cyber Command defend cyberspace. The answer is to use the National Security Agency's unparalleled signals-intelligence capabilities and relationships to intercept incoming malicious traffic and define when and where it is legal for the agency to do so. The National Security Agency (NSA), with the right authorities, could block many future attacks.

A greater defensive role for the DOD is a good idea and a key element of any cybersecurity strategy, but there are obvious problems. Say "NSA" to privacy advocates, and they scream. To intercept malicious traffic from Iran or other opponents, you need to monitor all incoming traffic. Remember that we are ultimately talking about streams of ones and zeros, the code transferred among machines and only translated into human languages at the end. It is possible to screen these ones and zeros to look for patterns that indicate an attack without ever looking at content, but some doubt the NSA would be able to resist temptation. An expanded role for the DOD also requires expanded privacy protections.

The DOD's new role also requires defining the space for action. Forget the dot-com mythology about cyberspace having no borders. Cyberspace depends on a physical infrastructure of computers and fiber, and this physical infrastructure is located on national territory or subject to national jurisdiction. Cyberspace is a hierarchy of networks, at the top of which a small number of companies carry the bulk of global traffic over the Internet "backbone." International traffic, including attacks, enters the United States over this "backbone." The backbone is a choke point, relatively easy to defend, and something that the NSA is already intimately familiar with (as are the other major powers that engage in signals intelligence). Sit at the boundary of the backbone and U.S. jurisdiction, monitor and intercept malware, and attacks can be blocked. An analogy is that the Navy defends the ocean approaches (*pace* forward deployment) but not the inland waterways.

But how far down the Internet's spine should the DOD go? Should it also monitor the networks of large corporations or Internet service providers? Should it be able to go onto consumer devices when they are infected? The precedent in the United States is for military or intelligence agencies to perform domestic security functions only in a crisis, not on a routine basis. Panetta makes clear that the DOD does not envision playing this role.

What he does envision is something that might be called preemption, using new rules of engagement for Cyber Command. He says, "We won't succeed in preventing a cyberattack through improved defenses alone. If we detect an imminent threat of attack that will cause significant physical destruction in the United States or kill American citizens, we need to have the option to take action against those who would attack us to defend this nation when directed by the president." The United States, using national technical means, often has advance knowledge of an opponent's plans, intentions, and capabilities for cyberattack. Panetta seems to be saying that when an attack appears imminent, the president can direct the DOD to strike first. If it were a precise attack that avoided collateral damage, the political risk of striking another country could be manageable. There would still be risk of creating a wider conflict, and this, as the speech makes clear, is a decision only the president should make.

An active defensive role for the military is one of the three key elements needed for effective cybersecurity. The second is better protection for consumers. Last summer, the Federal Communications Commission began a program with major service providers to block or clean malware from their customers' computers. The third missing piece in a comprehensive defense is protection of critical infrastructure. Panetta says members of Barack Obama's administration "are considering" an executive order on cybersecurity. The drafts of this order are not public, but would likely take much of Section 104 of the bill put forward by Sen. Joseph Lieberman and Sen. Susan Collins -- which failed to pass this summer but which would have implemented protections for critical infrastructure -- and instead implement it under existing authorities.

The defense secretary said that there is no substitute for legislation and that Congress has a responsibility to act, but few expect to see this anytime soon. With a dysfunctional Congress unable to provide authorities for better cybersecurity, an executive order that mandates security at selected critical infrastructure

may be the best the country can do. There are tensions within the Obama administration over Internet orthodoxies, but if the White House can manage to issue a credible order on critical infrastructure (not voluntary, and not dependent on imaginary incentives) to complement protections from Internet service providers and a larger role for the Pentagon, it will have done much of what needs to be done to begin building an adequate cyberdefense.

James Andrew Lewis is a senior fellow and director of the Technology and Public Policy Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

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Pg. 1
News Analysis

32. Taliban Likely To Weather Storm In Pakistan

Nation is outraged over a schoolgirl's shooting, but there's little chance of a push against militants.

By Alex Rodriguez

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan--On city streets, on the airwaves and in the newspapers of a country numbed by years of bombings and assassinations, outrage against the Taliban is suddenly reaching a zenith. A 14-year-old girl lies critically wounded because she was bold enough to publicly demand an education.

It's a moment Pakistan's civilian and military leadership could channel into an all-out campaign against Islamic militants.

Can they seize the moment? Probably not.

Experts say there are too many obstacles. The enemy isn't encamped on a hill, it is embedded in cells across the country, in sprawling cities and in mud-hut hamlets. Even if they had the will, neither the police nor the army has the wherewithal to scour every corner of the country.

When police nab suspected militants, convictions are rare. Police work is often sloppy, largely because investigators lack basic skills to build cases.

Just as important, there is no indication that hard-line clerics are ready to rethink the militant mind-set they have encouraged. Leaders of religious parties at a session of the parliament this week linked the attack on the teen to the CIA's drone campaign in Pakistan's tribal areas and Washington's war against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Yes, the shooting of Malala Yousafzai should be condemned, the clerics said, but it's U.S. meddling in the region that turns law-abiding Pakistanis into radicals.

"Many of the religious parties are still speaking with forked tongues," said Ayaz Amir, a lawmaker with the PML-N party and a political commentator. "There was hardly anyone even naming the Taliban."

Taliban attacks on reformers are nothing new in Pakistan. The attack on Malala, however, hit Pakistanis hard, not just because of her gender and age, but because educating girls is such a basic cause.

In early 2009, the Taliban controlled much of her home area, the forested ridges and meadows of the Swat Valley, and imposed their own brutal brand of justice. Floggings were common and opponents were routinely beheaded, their mutilated bodies hung from street posts.

The Taliban banned girls from attending school. More than 200 schools were destroyed. Malala contributed diary entries to a blog published by the BBC Urdu Service in which she described atrocities committed by the Taliban and laid out in stark detail how its decrees made going to school perilous.

A Pakistani military offensive in the spring and summer of 2009 retook Swat, and Taliban fighters went into hiding, with many of them finding sanctuary in the eastern Afghanistan provinces of Kunar and Nuristan.

Malala became a national figure, winning Pakistan's first National Peace Award for Youth and a nomination for an international children's peace prize from a Dutch nongovernmental group.

But the Taliban did not forget. On Tuesday, she paid the price.

Two gunmen on a motorcycle pulled up to her school bus, climbed aboard and opened fire on Malala. A bullet pierced her temple and lodged in her neck. Two other girls were also shot; one was not seriously hurt and the other remains in critical condition. Malala underwent surgery to remove the bullet. On Friday, her condition was described as critical but stable.

The reaction of many Pakistanis parallels their outrage over a March 2009 video showing a Pakistani woman in Swat being flogged repeatedly by a Taliban fighter. Intense and unambiguous, it helped create the popular backing the military needed to launch its Swat offensive.

The attack on Malala is mobilizing the country in much the same way, said Raza Rumi, an analyst with the Jinnah Institute, an Islamabad-based think tank.

"The national outrage and shock after the attack on Malala shows there is already a huge public opinion swing in Pakistan, where the focus has shifted from the narrative of appeasing the Taliban to fighting extremism in the country," Rumi said. "It's a kind of game-changer."

Analysts say a key test will be whether the government launches an assault on the North Waziristan tribal area, a stronghold for the Pakistani Taliban along the Afghan border. It also serves as a base for pockets of Al Qaeda fighters and an affiliate of the Afghan Taliban known as the Haqqani network.

The United States has long urged Pakistan to target North Waziristan. The Pakistani army has talked of an offensive there, but has never followed through.

Islamabad's rationale has been that its troops are stretched too thin, but many experts and officials in Washington believe the reluctance has more to do with the Pakistani government's long-standing relationship with Haqqani leaders.

The attack on Malala has renewed calls for such an offensive.

"The time has come for the federal government and security forces to launch a full-scale offensive on the warmongers," said Iftikhar Hussain, information minister for the province that includes Swat. "How long will our people be crying over the bodies of their loved ones?"

Experts say an offensive is unlikely. Pakistani leaders fear that moving against North Waziristan could trigger large-scale blowback in the form of suicide bombings and other terrorist acts in Pakistan's major cities, where militants maintain a stealthy presence.

"The reaction might be furious in Pakistan's mainland," said Imtiaz Gul, author of "The Most Dangerous Place: Pakistan's Lawless Frontier," a

look at militancy in the nation's tribal belt.

Militants are embedded throughout Pakistani society, from the country's largest city, Karachi, to the mango groves and sugar cane fields of Punjab province. Police have neither the manpower nor the tools to root out terrorist cells in a systematic way. They are poorly paid, poorly trained and lack even rudimentary investigative techniques.

"This is an issue that we face in many parts of the country, this creeping monster of militancy coming from various shades of the Taliban," Gul said. "The challenge for the military, the civilian government and police is how to surveil all these groups and locate where they embed themselves."

The clout of the hard-line Islamist community was evident with the 2011 assassination of Punjab provincial Gov. Salman Taseer, who spoke out against the country's blasphemy law. The law makes it a crime to insult the prophet Muhammad, the Koran or the Islamic faith, but it is often exploited as a tool to repress minorities.

Taseer was gunned down by one of his own bodyguards, who confessed and is now on death row. After the shooting, fundamentalist clerics led thousands of demonstrators through the streets of major cities, applauding the bodyguard, Malik Mumtaz Hussain Qadri, with chants of "Salute to your bravery, Qadri!"

This week, when they have spoken about the attack on Malala, the clerics have focused on a much easier target in a country where anti-American sentiment runs sky-high: U.S. drone strikes.

During Friday prayers at Islamabad's Red Mosque, site of a 2007 government siege against Islamic extremists that ended in more than 100 deaths, an imam belittled the girl for her admiration of President Obama and criticized the media for focusing so much attention on her.

"All the media is showing is the bleeding head of this child. Why don't they show the dead bodies torn apart in drone attacks?" the imam said in his sermon.

Lawmaker Amir says the outrage sweeping Pakistan won't amount to much unless hard-line clerics reverse themselves.

"I would have seen it as heartening if the religious parties said on Friday, 'Today we will mount rallies and protests across the country, and we will grieve for Malala and condemn the Taliban,'" he said. "That is not happening."

Special correspondent Nasir Khan in Islamabad contributed to this report.

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Global Focus

33. U.S., Allies Girding For Worst-Case Scenario With Syria's WMD

By Carol J. Williams

During a week that witnessed deadly artillery exchanges between Syria and Turkey and a tense showdown over a plane purportedly ferrying munitions from Russia, the arrival of 150 U.S. troops in Jordan was likely to be viewed as token support for an ally coping with a refugee influx from Syria's civil war.

The deployment, though, may be a response to mounting concerns at the Pentagon and among European and Middle East allies that Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons could fall into the hands of hostile forces if the embattled regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad is eventually toppled.

U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta disclosed little about the special-forces mission to Jordan when he confirmed it at a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels on Wednesday. But he noted that the United States has been working closely with Jordan to keep track of Syria's weapons of mass destruction as the 19-month-old rebellion grinds on.

Unlike a decade ago, when bad intelligence on Iraq's alleged chemical and biological weapons spurred a clamor for U.S. military intervention, defense strategists appear to be approaching the suspected stockpiles of mustard and nerve gases in Syria with more collaboration and caution.

The resistance to preemptive action isn't just a consequence of lessons learned in Iraq. Syria is believed to have one of the world's largest chemical weapons arsenals, with commercial satellite surveillance and intelligence reports suggesting as many as 50 production and storage sites as well as missiles that could carry the deadly agents beyond its borders. Jane's Intelligence Review reported in 2009 that Damascus had embarked on a major upgrade of its chemical weapons facilities, transforming its Safir site near Aleppo, now the scene of intense fighting, into a credible deterrent to any threat from nuclear-armed Israel.

The scope of the Syrian chemical weapons program and the international community's failure to craft a cohesive plan to stop the fighting confront Western military strategists with the need to plan for a worst-case scenario rather than act to prevent it, analysts say. That means preparing allies in the region to launch a massive rapid-deployment operation after the Assad regime collapsed but before Al Qaeda-aligned fighters or rogue elements of the Syrian rebels could get their hands on the WMD.

The U.S. special forces sent to Amman are probably training Jordanian troops in containment techniques and checking their equipment and chemical-biological hazard protection and practices, said Steven Bucci, a former Army Green Beret officer and senior Pentagon official who is now a research fellow in defense and domestic security at the Heritage Foundation.

"They will probably be running them through training procedures for dealing with this stuff to secure it and get it under control or to respond to it if it gets used" in a calamitous last battle, said Bucci. "This is about the best use of our military we could have now, and hopefully we're also helping out the Turks."

Bucci testified to Congress in July that even a limited operation to secure Syria's chemical weapons would require more than 75,000 troops -- and many more if launched amid the civil war now raging.

It is "not a viable option" to commit masses of U.S. ground troops to such an operation, Bucci told the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade. Any effective force, he said, would have to involve troops from allied Muslim countries also at risk of attack with Syria's chemical weapons.

That's why, he said in an interview Thursday, it is essential for the United States to coordinate with Syria's neighbors now to prepare a post-Assad operation that can prevent terrorist groups or smugglers from making off with the WMD.

Raymond Zilinskas, director of the chemical and biological weapons program at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, points out that assessments of Syria's chemical weapons program are largely unverified. But he, too, says the United States and its allies should be girding for the worst.

"From what I understand, these depots are pretty well guarded by the Syrian regime's forces, and they would probably be the last to give up their guarding duties," Zilinskas said. "But if there is a total collapse, there would of course be a threat of jihadists getting these weapons."

Talk of airstrikes to remove the threat is nonsensical, Zilinskas said. Syria has formidable antiaircraft defenses built with Russian assistance, and the international community lacks crucial information on the precise locations, quantities and containment of the gases to be able to bomb them without risking spreading the deadly substances.

"Sarin is pretty volatile. If all these other problems could be resolved, the sarin would probably be destroyed or would be so volatile that it would disappear quickly," Zilinskas said. "But that's not necessarily the case with mustard gas. It's much less deadly but much more persistent. And if the Syrians turn out to have VX, which is a persistent nerve gas, that could cause real problems. That is the worst-case scenario they have to prepare for."

Bloomberg Businessweek
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Pg. 92

34. The Morality Of War From The Sky

By Jeffrey Goldberg

President Obama, who is putatively a civil libertarian—or, at the very least, the preferred candidate of most civil libertarians—has achieved something remarkable over the course of his term. He has led an expansive war against America's enemies using lethal flying robots that not infrequently incinerate innocent civilians, and he's been rewarded for it. According to a *Washington Post*/ABC News poll conducted earlier this year, 83 percent of Americans support Obama's drone policy.

This is especially noteworthy because those who support the policy don't actually know what it is. It's discussed by the administration in only the most cursory and circumspect manner. Obama has provided the public with very little information about its revolutionary consequences.

When it comes to hunting terrorists, drones are extraordinarily effective. They're unblinking eyes; they can follow targets for days and weeks and, when so directed, deliver lethal blows imperviously. The president's drone fleet is responsible for the deaths of many terrorists who would otherwise be alive today, plotting to kill Americans.

Now that this is stipulated, here are the more difficult questions. One of the things we don't know is how many militants have been killed in drone attacks. We certainly don't know how many civilians have died. Recent studies conducted or authorized by groups suspicious of the drone war suggest the civilian death toll is high—one report by the London-based Bureau of Investigative Journalism estimates that between 2,562 and 3,325 people have been killed by drones in Pakistan since June 2004 and that of those, 474 to 881 were civilians.

It's impossible to know the precise number of innocent dead for the obvious reason that drones operate over territory that's too dangerous for Americans to enter safely. Civilian deaths caused by American air-launched missiles are not a new phenomenon; what would be useful to know, and what the government can't tell us, is whether drone-fired missiles are more accurate than missiles fired from manned aircraft.

Another question is whether drone strikes, particularly in the militant tribal areas of Pakistan, are scattering terrorists across the globe. The fear of constantly buzzing drones over the towns and villages of Pakistan's tribal areas may be driving young men toward militancy. In 2010 one small corner of North Waziristan came under U.S. drone attacks nearly once every three days, according to a report on Wired.com. Most young men in the tribal regions are reliably anti-American already, but the civilian deaths caused by drones may create in these men a desire to retaliate against Americans.

One reason the people of North Waziristan—the innocent as well as the guilty—find drones so frightening is the matter of "signature strikes," or "atmospheric strikes." The U.S. national security infrastructure allows the targeting in certain benighted places of clusters of young men whose identities are not known but whose behavior is deemed suspicious. This policy is as remarkable as the president's decision to use drones to assassinate American citizens on foreign soil, as he did with the al-Qaeda strategist Anwar al-Awlaki, based in Yemen. Al-Awlaki was a despicable figure, but isn't it just a bit strange that the federal government can't eavesdrop on a U.S. citizen's phone conversation without a court order but can assassinate him without one?

Drones have served another useful purpose for the administration: They've helped mask an enormous post-Sept. 11 policy failure. Not too long ago, it was thought that the U.S. could build up reliable local intelligence and military organizations in such places as Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. These organizations would suppress terrorism so America wouldn't have to. Reality suggests otherwise. Instead of having allies do the hard and sometimes dirty work of counterterrorism, the U.S. is doing it for itself.

In the short term, drone campaigns have done quantifiable damage to al-Qaeda and like-minded groups. Long term, the effects of this campaign—making it so much easier for presidents to kill people, making the U.S. open to blowback from countries that feel they're entitled to fly drones over U.S. territory—are not understood. And that's because the president refuses to talk straight about his war, and neither the American people nor their representatives in Congress seem interested in knowing the complicated truth.

Goldberg is a columnist for Bloomberg View.Source: Bureau of Investigative Journalism, U.S. Air Force

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Sydney Morning Herald
October 13, 2012
Pg. B11

35. Beating The Retreat In Afghanistan

RETREAT is regarded as the most difficult strategic manoeuvre, historically no more so than in Afghanistan. Yet it has been done without the catastrophic loss of his entire army (bar one survivor) experienced by the British

general William Elphinstone in 1842. The Soviet columns rumbled back across the Oxus River in 1989 largely intact, after a decade of attrition, leaving behind a regime that survived until the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

So after the small Australian force is withdrawn from Oruzgan province at the end of this year, and most of the US and European contingents in 2014, we should be asking what will be left, whether a job has been left unfinished and whether it could ever be finished by staying any longer. Only then can we decide what was the point of it and whether it was worth the sacrifice of 38 Australians (among more than 3000 coalition combat deaths), our 240 wounded, and billions of dollars.

In our patch of Afghanistan the achievement is fragile. One of the four local battalions of the Afghan National Army has just been declared ready for independent operations. The other three are expected to reach that status soon. The test will come in six months when the winter ends and the fighting ''season'' starts. But it is probably time Afghan units start learning to fight on their own.

Possibly they will evolve a style of operation that avoids the bitterness created by foreign soldiers intruding into villages and homes, and the frequent civilian deaths caused by mistaken intelligence or use of remote weapons. But equally possible is that the skewed ethnic balance of the army towards non-Pashtun recruits will be shown up by its estrangement from the population in the south.

Meanwhile, the police service continues as a dispirited, incompetent and corrupt mess, and the civil administration is controlled by a brutal warlord. This month the Defence Department told a parliamentary inquiry it had cost the Australian Defence Force $255 million to deliver $27 million of development aid over the six years since our return (after the special forces operation in 2001). What survives of the Australian investment, in lasting human development and civil society, may be vestigial. That will reflect the overall picture of nation building in Afghanistan. The outgoing head of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Afghanistan, Reto Stocker, has seen armed groups proliferate and security and access to health and other services deteriorate for ordinary Afghans since he arrived seven years ago.

The presidency of Hamid Karzai ends in 2014. The International Crisis Group, a respected think tank, warns that the country is ''hurtling'' towards a devastating political crisis, even regime collapse, with scant preparation for free and fair elections after the chicanery of Karzai's government at the last elections. The group points to ''alarming signs Karzai hopes to stack the deck for a favoured proxy''.

The grand project of the Bush administration to create a modern democratic state comes down to much less ambitious scenarios. One is that the Afghan army, its annual cost of nearly $US12 billion mostly funded by the US and more than twice the Afghan government budget, in effect becomes the Afghan state – an irony given that Americans lament the dominance of the army in Pakistan and have been encouraging civilians to assert themselves over the military in places such as South Korea, Indonesia and Egypt. Another is that with the 2014 elections becoming farcical, the government is formed through powerbroking arrangements between ethnic and tribal warlords. In neither case is a walkover for the Taliban likely. With enough foreign support, the regime could hang on indefinitely, fighting a stalemated civil war outside the capital.

Whether this miserable civil war continues between Kabul and the insurgents – the Taliban and other Pashtun-based groups such as the Haqqani network and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami – may depend on the feelers extended between Karzai and some Taliban elements through talks in Qatar.

These show some surprising flexibility. Anatol Lieven, a British specialist on the region, recently reported some Taliban figures willing to consider a powersharing government, retention of some of the social gains that have been achieved in the past decade, such as education for girls in several parts of the country, even a continued US military presence in a number of bases for a limited period – Washington sets a 10-year period from 2014.

Whether these hopeful signs flourish or dwindle may depend on intensified outside support to improve governance in Kabul – however belatedly – and to guide the Afghan army. But when the last foreign soldiers do leave, Afghanistan will be left looking like ... Afghanistan.

Washington Post
October 13, 2012
Pg. 14

36. Unfinished Business

A new pact on securing weapons is needed to succeed Nunn-Lugar.

TWENTY YEARS ON, it can be hard to recall the chaos and uncertainty that spread across the Soviet Union in the months after the superpower imploded in December 1991. The strict controls that had been a hallmark of the Soviet system seemed to vanish. A sprawling inventory of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and materials lay vulnerable, often protected by no more than a padlock.

In Washington, there were sighs of relief at the end of the Cold War, but there was deep ambivalence about aiding a former adversary. Much to their credit, Sens. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.) rallied Congress to approve legislation that transferred $400 million in Pentagon spending to begin securing nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union.

Nunn-Lugar, as it came to be known, was one of the most farsighted foreign policy initiatives of its generation. It helped dismantle a vast arsenal, from giant submarines carrying nuclear-armed missiles to chemical-weapons shells that could fit in a briefcase, and then expanded well beyond Russia. At a current budget of $1 billion a year in the departments of Defense, Energy and State, the program has been a bargain if you think about what might have happened without it.

It was never going to be easy for the United States to extend a hand to Russia in this way. Russia's sense of humiliation has been a constant undercurrent. But many in Russia recognized the dangers and the country's meager resources in those early post-Soviet years. They did the right thing, and cooperation paid off not only in scrapping warheads but also in alleviating mistrust, increasing transparency and deepening stability.

Today, Russia can afford to dismantle weapons on its own. The Foreign Ministry announced Wednesday that it

will not extend the Nunn-Lugar agreement when it expires next year. No doubt, the decision is motivated in part by President Vladimir Putin's desire to reassert Russia's sense of self-sufficiency and his own primacy. He recently expelled the U.S. Agency for International Development, which was funding pro-democracy and civil society programs, and pushed legislation through parliament that would stigmatize as "foreign agents" nongovernmental organizations from abroad working in Russia. Alleviating mistrust is not his priority.

On weapons, the important question is not aid but willpower. Will Russia keep up the dismantlement effort on its own? Despite great strides, the legacy of the Cold War has not been completely secured nor cleaned up. Russia, like the United States, is also building new weapons. A wise next step would be to negotiate a replacement agreement that would better fit Russia's revival, keeping both countries engaged and focused on the unfinished business. That might be difficult in the current political environment, but Nunn-Lugar stood the test of time over two decades, and it is too soon to give up on its mission.

Boston Globe
October 13, 2012

37. State Dept. Erred In Benghazi, But GOP Posturing Won't Help

No one yet knows all the facts surrounding the deadly attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya, but it's clear that the State Department made a serious mistake. There wasn't enough security to protect Ambassador Christopher Stevens. The Obama administration issued contradictory statements about what triggered the attacks. And days after the compound was burned, it was left so unsecured that a journalist plucked Stevens's diary from the wreckage. Charlene Lamb, deputy assistant secretary for diplomatic security, didn't help matters this week when she insisted that the consulate had "the correct number" of security assets on the ground. With four Americans dead, she should have admitted the obvious: It didn't.

Still, it is disingenuous for members of Congress to express outrage over security failures after they voted to cut hundreds of millions in funding for diplomatic security last year. At the hearing this week, Representative Darrell Issa, the California Republican who chairs the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, said he was so concerned about the safety of US diplomats that he rushed to hold a public hearing even before the FBI investigation was finished. Yet he was silent when a colleague challenged him to help restore the funds.

The hearing, held weeks before the election, presented an irresistible opportunity for Republicans to blast Obama's foreign policy record and highlight allegations that the administration tried to "cover up" the attack by blaming it on an anti-Muslim video. It is not entirely clear why the administration would rather blame a video than terrorism, as many Republicans claim. A successful attack staged by protesters inflamed by YouTube is arguably far more embarrassing than one staged by Al Qaeda.

But one thing is clear: Politics have pushed aside the real questions US voters should be asking: What kind of presence should United States have in the world, and how much are Americans willing to pay for it?

The plan in Libya was to have a small US footprint -- the opposite of the effort in Iraq. Lamb said the reason she didn't authorize more than five armed Americans to protect the consulate that fateful day was that Libyans were being trained to do it. Only time will tell whether that overall approach -- leaning on local forces in such a chaotic environment -- is tenable. US diplomats in Iraq were protected by Blackwater's expensive private army. No US ambassador was killed during the occupation of Iraq. But the massive effort cost the lives of more than 4,400 Americans.

Intervening abroad will always carry risks, both for Americans and their foreign employees; Thurday's assassination of a Yemeni man who worked at the US embassy in Sana is a grim reminder. In the future, the United States must limit the risks, but not try to eliminate them. US diplomats should be able to count on the best protection under the circumstances, which wasn't the case in Benghazi. Still, if US embassies become fortresses, diplomats won't be able to meet local people -- a key part of their jobs.

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38. Corrections

An article on Thursday about Russia's refusal to renew the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, a hugely successful 20-year partnership with the United States to safeguard and dismantle nuclear and chemical weapons in the former Soviet Union, misspelled the surname of a deputy foreign minister who announced the Russian position. He is Sergey Ryabkov, not Ruabkov.

Editor's Note: The article referred to by David M. Herszenhorn appeared in the *Current News Early Bird*, Oct. 11, 2012.