

CURRENT NEWS

EARLY BIRD

October 14, 2012

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Item numbers indicate order of appearance only.

LIBYA

1. **Libya Struggles To Curb Militias, The Only Police**
(*New York Times*)....David D. Kirkpatrick
A month after the killing of the American ambassador ignited a public outcry for civilian control of Libya's fractious militias, that hope has been all but lost in a tangle of grudges, rivalries and egos.

CYBER SECURITY

2. **U.S. Suspects Iran Was Behind A Wave Of Cyberattacks**
(*New York Times*)....Thom Shanker and David E. Sanger
...After Mr. Panetta's remarks on Thursday night, American officials described an emerging shadow war of attacks and counterattacks already under way between the United States and Iran in cyberspace.

AFGHANISTAN

3. **Afghan War Fading Quietly**
(*Washington Post*)....Greg Jaffe
With little combat to wage, 3rd Platoon feels secluded in the wilderness.
4. **Nine Killed In Militant Attacks**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Times Staff and Wire Reports
...NATO said a service member with the U.S.-led coalition was killed in a roadside bombing in the south. It released no other details.
5. **'IED Whisperer' A Lifesaver In Afghanistan**
(*Seattle Times*)....Hal Bernton
Staff Sgt. Kelly Rogne, who serves with a battalion from Joint Base Lewis McChord, is known as the 'IED whisperer' for his ability to find the makeshift bombs that have extracted such a deadly toll in Afghanistan.
6. **Afghan Anti-Taliban Leader Prefers To Go It Alone**
(*Agence France-Presse*)....Joe Sinclair, Agence France-Presse
...The ALP is a branch of the Afghan National Police, with members intended to act as local security guards. However, the programme has proved controversial with critics including Human Rights Watch likening the force to a militia amid accusations of serious rights abuses and fears over the proliferation of armed groups.
7. **Afghan Boys Eke Living Amid Peril At Gorge**
(*New York Times*)....Graham Bowley

...The war economy touches everybody in Afghanistan and will leave a desperate hole when it is gone — not least for the Pepsi bottle boys, a prime example of how Afghans have fit their lives around America's military presence here. These children flock from the bazaars of Pul-i-Charkhi in the poor eastern suburbs of Kabul to work for a few infernal hours on the Mahi Par Pass, but it is better than anything else they could have.

MIDEAST

8. **Turkey Faults U.N. Inaction Over Syria**
(*New York Times*)....Sebnem Arsu and Hwaida Saad
In a sign of escalating frustration in Turkey after days of cross-border shelling with Syria, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan lashed out at the United Nations' inaction in Syria with some of his strongest comments yet, saying world powers are repeating the mistakes they made in Bosnia in the 1990s.
9. **Few Good Options To Secure Syria Chemical Arsenal**
(*Yahoo.com*)....Karin Laub, Associated Press
The U.S. and regional allies are closely monitoring Syria's chemical weapons — caught in the midst of a raging civil war — but options for securing the toxic agents stuffed into shells, bombs and missiles are fraught with risk.
10. **UN Envoy Draws Up Plan For 3,000 Troops To Police A Truce In Syria**
(*London Sunday Telegraph*)....Colin Freeman
...Given the volatility of the conflict and the growing presence of Islamists on the rebel side, it is thought British and American forces would be unlikely to take part because of their past involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. Instead, Mr Brahimi is thought to be looking at nations that currently contribute to Unifil, the 15,000-strong mission set up to police Israel's borders with Lebanon.
11. **Iran's Supreme Leader Vows To Defeat Sanctions, Military Threats And 'Soft Wars'**
(*Yahoo.com*)....Ali Akbar Dareini, Associated Press
TEHRAN, Iran - Iran's supreme leader said Saturday that his country will defeat a combination of sanctions, military threats and "soft wars" launched by enemies trying to weaken Iran and force it to back down over its nuclear program.
12. **Security Shambles As Hezbollah Drone Spies On Israeli Army**
(*London Sunday Times*)....Uzi Mahnaimi
AN IRANIAN drone beamed back live images of secret Israeli military bases in a security debacle that has raised questions about the Jewish state's air defences.

PAKISTAN

13. **16 Killed In Suicide Attack In Pakistan**
(*New York Times*)....The New York Times
A suicide bomber exploded his vehicle at an arms bazaar in northwestern Pakistan on Saturday, killing 16 people and wounding 15, a senior government official said.
14. **Girl's Shooting Rallies Her Cause**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Scott Gold
...The Taliban has committed all manner of atrocities over the years, many of them aimed at women. This time, the militants created an icon for a global movement -- for the notion that the most efficient way to propel developing countries is to educate their girls. The idea has been flourishing in some of the world's most destitute and volatile places. Today, courtesy of the Pakistani Taliban, it has a face.

MILITARY COMMISSIONS

15. **Guantanamo Hearings Reopen Monday**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Richard A. Serrano

Pretrial hearings for Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and four other alleged top Al Qaeda operatives reopen Monday morning with a military commission judge expected to rule on numerous key disputes in the capital murder case for those accused of planning, financing and preparing the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

16. **Military Members Get Voting Help From Pentagon**
(*WTOP.com*)....J.J. Green
...The Pentagon is responding to concerns coming from some service members that they won't be able to vote in the upcoming Presidential election.
17. **StratCom Celebrates Start Of New Headquarters Project**
(*Omaha World-Herald*)....John Ferak
With Friday's groundbreaking for a new U.S. Strategic Command headquarters concluded, construction details and a timeline on the project need to be determined in the coming weeks.

MARINE CORPS

18. **Marine's Death Remembered Not As A Shame, But As An Honor**
(*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*)....Sean D. Hamill
When he died Sept. 14 while organizing fellow Marines to resist a Taliban attack on his air base in Afghanistan, Lt. Col. Christopher K. "Otis" Raible, of Irwin, was one of the highest-ranking Marines to be killed during combat in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. During a series of poignant and moving speeches given during a memorial service Saturday at Norwin High School attended by about 500 friends, family and members of the community, the heroic way Lt. Col. Raible died was described and cheered.

NAVY

19. **Norfolk-Based Attack Sub And Cruiser Collide**
(*Newport News Daily Press*)....Michael Welles Shapiro
The Newport News-built USS Montpelier attack submarine collided with a guided missile cruiser Saturday afternoon, according to the Navy.

AIR FORCE

20. **BATMAN Labs Makes Gear That Helps Warfighters**
(*Dayton Daily News*)....Barrie Barber
The Air Force Research Laboratory's "BATMAN lab" has an expanded mission to make the job of Air Force rescuers easier on the ground.
21. **Airmen Tackle Weapons Course Reflective Of Modern Combat**
(*Tampa Tribune*)....Howard Altman
...Instead of firing M-16s long distances at plain paper targets, the course teaches airmen how to find and hit targets in urban settings -- where gunmen and their targets usually are at closer range and civilians often are nearby.

CONGRESS

22. **Defense Cuts Prompt Blame Game**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....David S. Cloud
A last-minute reprieve is likely, but the issue is still being used as campaign fodder.

ASIA/PACIFIC

23. **As U.S. Seeks Bigger Imprint In Asia, India Remains An Unknown**

(*Washington Post*)....Simon Denyer and Rama Lakshmi

...But it has become apparent that New Delhi is ambivalent about playing a leading role in Washington's new "rebalancing" act. So much so that some U.S. analysts are questioning whether India will ever be a dependable strategic partner for the United States, and whether New Delhi will ever match its global ambitions with a leadership role on the world stage.

24. **Joint Drill With U.S. Will 'Retake' Remote Okinawa Island**

(*Japan Times*)....Kyodo

...While Tokyo and Washington said the exercise has not been designed with a specific location in mind, the first-ever drill to be held on a remote Japanese island under this scenario appears to be heavily influenced by the territorial flareup over the Senkaku Islands, the sources said.

25. **Andersen May House Marines: Northwest Field Could Be Firing Range Site**

(*Pacific Daily News (Guam)*)....Brett Kelman

The military is reconsidering the placement of a proposed Marine base, but most of the Marines will rotate through Andersen Air Force Base, so the military likely prefers to keep the base on the island's north end, said a local buildup expert.

AMERICAS

26. **Secret Nukes: The Untold Story Of The Cuban Missile Crisis**

(*Miami Herald*)....Juan O. Tamayo

It was October 1962. The Missile Crisis had just been defused when Khrushchev, eyeball to eyeball with JFK, blinked. But 100 tactical warheads remained on the island – and the U.S. had no clue.

LEGAL AFFAIRS

27. **Lawsuit Says Military Created 'Pervasive Threat' To Its Own Troops**

(*Fayetteville (NC) Observer*)....Drew Brooks

On one occasion, former Fort Bragg soldier Lisa Ethridge alleges, a soldier she had been dating raped her and beat her so severely that she suffered skull fractures.

VETERANS

28. **Returning Veterans Swell Ranks Of US Entrepreneurs**

(*Yahoo.com*)....Michael Melia, Associated Press

As a truck driver for the U.S. military in wartime Iraq, Ed Young racked up 7,000 miles, facing a constant threat of attack that left him struggling with depression and suicidal thoughts.

29. **Woman General Says 'Shift Happens' On The Road To Success**

(*San Antonio Express-News*)....Sig Christenson

Becky Halstead's "success" diagram has as many lows as highs — a coach's fatal skydiving accident, her appointment to West Point and soon after, marriage, divorce and rising to general.

BOOKS

30. **The Hunt For 'Geronimo'**

(*Vanity Fair*)....Mark Bowden

President Obama saw it as a '50-50' proposition. Admiral Bill McRaven, mission commander, knew something would go wrong. So how did the raid that killed bin Laden get green-lighted? In an adaptation from his new book, Mark Bowden weaves together accounts from Obama and top decision-makers for the full story behind the daring operation.

COMMENTARY

31. **When It Comes To Sequestration And Defense Cuts, There Is Plenty Of Blame To Go Around**
(Washington Post)....Glenn Kessler
 ...If the committee failed — which it did — then automatic cuts totaling \$1.2 trillion also would be ordered in security and nonsecurity spending. This process is known as "sequestration." Ryan was one of the many Republican members of Congress who voted for the agreement. In fact, he was one of its biggest cheerleaders.
32. **Army, Marines To Shield Quality In 80,000-Force Drawdown**
(Pensacola News Journal)....Tom Philpott
 Soldiers and Marines have had the most deployments, seen the toughest fighting and suffered the greatest number of U.S. casualties in recent wars. And as with most post-war periods, ground forces also will see their career opportunities tighten faster than other service branches.
33. **Will Attack On A Child At Last Prod Pakistan?**
(Philadelphia Inquirer)....Trudy Rubin
 ...Perhaps the attack on Malala will jolt her country into a new reality. I really hope so. But it won't happen unless Pakistani generals and politicians display the same courage as this young girl.
34. **Solving The Okinawa Problem**
(ForeignPolicy.com)....Mike Mochizuki and Michael O'Hanlon
 How many Marines do we still need in Japan?
35. **Who'll Get Thrown Off The Island?**
(Weekly Standard)....Ethan Epstein
 ...So, Sino-Japanese relations are approaching something of a postwar nadir. And there are reasons to believe the situation will only deteriorate further next year.
36. **The New, New, New, New, New, New, New Strategy For The Middle East**
(Boston Globe)....Thanassis Cambanis
 The next president has an unprecedented chance to overhaul a creaky, 30-year-old vision of America's role in the region.
37. **Questions On Drones, Unanswered Still**
(New York Times)....Margaret Sullivan
 UNDERSTANDING American drone strikes is like a deadly version of the old telephone game: I whisper to you and you whisper to someone else, and eventually all meaning is lost.
38. **Time To Pack Up**
(New York Times)....Editorial
 After more than a decade of having American blood spilled in Afghanistan, with nearly six years lost to President George W. Bush's disastrous indifference, it is time for United States forces to leave Afghanistan on a schedule dictated only by the security of the troops. It should not take more than a year. The United States will not achieve even President Obama's narrowing goals, and prolonging the war will only do more harm.

New York Times
October 14, 2012
Pg. 1

1. Libya Struggles To Curb Militias, The Only Police

By David D. Kirkpatrick

BENGHAZI, Libya — A month after the killing of the American ambassador ignited a public outcry for civilian control of Libya's fractious militias, that hope has been all but lost in a tangle of grudges, rivalries and egos.

Scores of disparate militias remain Libya's only effective police force but have stubbornly resisted government control, a dynamic that is making it difficult for either the Libyan authorities or the United States to catch the attackers who killed Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens.

Shocked by that assault, tens of thousands of people filled the streets last month to demand the dismantling of all the militias. But the country's interim president, Mohamed Magariaf, warned them to back off as leaders of the largest brigades threatened to cut off the vital services they provide, like patrolling the borders and putting out fires.

"We feel hurt, we feel underappreciated," said Ismail el-Salabi, one of several brigade leaders who warned that public security had deteriorated because their forces had pulled back.

Taming the militias has been the threshold test of Libya's attempt to build a democracy after four decades of dictatorship under Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi. But how to bring them to heel while depending on them for security has eluded the weak transitional government, trapping Libya in a state of lawlessness.

Now that problem has become entangled in the American presidential race as

well, with Republicans arguing that the Obama administration's failure to protect Mr. Stevens illustrates the breakdown of its policy in the region. Mounting pressure on the administration to act against the perpetrators carries its own risks: an American strike on Libyan soil could produce a popular and potentially violent backlash in the only Arab country whose people largely have warm feelings toward Washington.

The militias' power is evident. In one of Tripoli's finest hotels, the Waddan, about two dozen militiamen from the western city of Misurata continue to help themselves to rooms without paying, just as they have for more than a year; the interim interior minister, also from Misurata, protects them.

In Benghazi, independent brigades are using tapped telephones to hunt down suspected loyalists of Colonel Qaddafi, with the help of his former intelligence services. Even the huge anti-militia protest here last month became cover for a group of armed men to attack one of the largest brigades, possibly for revenge.

"Nothing changes," shrugged Fathi al-Obeidi, the militia commander who led a contingent of fighters that helped rescue the Americans in the besieged diplomatic mission here last month.

Some Benghazi residents even say that the militia seen carrying out the attack, Ansar al-Shariah, did a better job than the paralytic government at providing security and even some social services. "They are very nice people," said Ashraf Bujwary, 40, an administrator at a hospital where Ansar al-Shariah men had served as guards. Security has been "on shaky ground" since the militia fled, he said.

In some ways Ansar al-Shariah exemplifies the twilight world of post-Qaddafi Libya, in which residents with looted weapons have organized themselves into regional, tribal or Islamist brigades to keep the peace and defend differing visions of Libya. In Bani Walid, near Misurata, the dominant militia is made up of former Qaddafi loyalists who have embraced a local strongman and rejected the new government. Some brigades provide public security or services; others oppose democracy as contrary to Islam. Ansar al-Shariah did both.

In a Congressional hearing last week, Eric A. Nordstrom, the former chief of security at the American Embassy in Libya, said that he had tracked Ansar al-Shariah as a potential threat "for quite some time." He characterized the brigade as both "extremist" and, in his view, an informal arm of the Libyan government.

Wissam Bin Hamid, the 35-year-old leader of a major Benghazi militia, Libya Shield, said he considered Ansar al-Shariah more of an Islamic "social club" than a fighting brigade. "Families come to them when they have a problem with a son," he said, like drug use or bad behavior. Like other Benghazi militia leaders, he said he wanted to see evidence before blaming Ansar al-Shariah for the attack.

Organizers of the march against the militias nonetheless insisted they had achieved at least a subtle change. The big turnout showed that supporters of a civilian government were in fact "the force on the ground," insisted Abu Janash Mohamed Abu Janash, 26, one of the organizers.

But he also acknowledged that Ansar al-Shariah was not chased from its headquarters, as had been reported. He said

the protest organizers had given Ansar al-Shariah a warning to evacuate. "They were friendly," Mr. Abu Janash said. "We had lunch together."

Only after the fact did Mr. Abu Janash learn that armed men had led the march several miles away to attack a larger militia known for defending the government. "The march was hijacked," said Mr. Salabi, the brigade leader, who was wounded in the attack.

The civilian government responded to the outcry by assigning military officers to help oversee the biggest militias. But the brigade leaders said that they, not the government, would choose their new officers, and that the current commanders would not yet give up control. The militia leaders say they refuse to submit to the national army or the police because so many of the officers used to work for Colonel Qaddafi.

"Some fought with us, some fought against us, some stayed in their homes," Mr. Bin Hamid of Libya Shield said.

"The whole government is infiltrated," Mr. Salabi said.

Others say egos are also at play. "You have militia commanders who love the prestige, who have more power than they could ever imagine," said Zeidoun bin Hamid, the director of operations for Libya Shield. "People like the glorification, and it is hard to take it away from them."

Even Benghazi militias that work with the government are aligned with rival power bases within it, like the defense minister, military chief of staff and the interior minister.

The interim interior minister, Fawzi Abdel Aali, formerly of the Misurata militia, organized a militia with national pretensions, the Supreme Security Committee. But in an interview at its

headquarters in Tripoli, a militia spokesman criticized his ostensible boss. "I will be frank," said the spokesman, Abdel Moneim al-Hur, "He is not doing his job."

Mr. Hur accused the interior minister of failing to pay the militia's fighters, who had policed Benghazi, leading them to walk out months ago. And he accused the minister of using the militia as a "pressure group" to squeeze the Parliament by asking its fighters to stop their police work.

As for the militiamen in the luxury hotel, the spokesman noted that the freeloaders and the interior minister were all from Misurata. "He turns a blind eye to what his cousins do," Mr. Hur said.

Some militias are eagerly rounding up suspected Qaddafi loyalists. A few weeks ago, fighters from Benghazi's Feb. 17 Brigade detained a dental student, Firas Ali el-Warfalli, whose father had been on one of Colonel Qaddafi's revolutionary committees. When Mr. Warfalli's family and fellow students put up billboards calling for his release, an ally of the militia posted to the Internet a recording of a telephone call on which Mr. Warfalli referred to supporters of Colonel Qaddafi's green flag as "seaweed like us." A brigade officer confirmed that the recording came from the Intelligence Ministry.

Telephone surveillance in the hands of independent militias suggests a lack of oversight and raises concerns about eavesdropping on political rivals, said Anwar Fekini, a prominent lawyer. "No government that is worthy of being called a government would allow this," he said. "But we have a government that exists only on paper."

Suliman Ali Zway
contributed reporting.

New York Times
October 14, 2012
Pg. 11

2. U.S. Suspects Iran Was Behind A Wave Of Cyberattacks

By Thom Shanker and David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON —

American intelligence officials are increasingly convinced that Iran was the origin of a serious wave of network attacks that crippled computers across the Saudi oil industry and breached financial institutions in the United States, episodes that contributed to a warning last week from Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta that the United States was at risk of a "cyber-Pearl Harbor."

After Mr. Panetta's remarks on Thursday night, American officials described an emerging shadow war of attacks and counterattacks already under way between the United States and Iran in cyberspace.

Among American officials, suspicion has focused on the "cybercorps" that Iran's military created in 2011 — partly in response to American and Israeli cyberattacks on the Iranian nuclear enrichment plant at Natanz — though there is no hard evidence that the attacks were sanctioned by the Iranian government.

The attacks emanating from Iran have inflicted only modest damage. Iran's cyberwarfare capabilities are considerably weaker than those in China and Russia, which intelligence officials believe are the sources of a significant number of probes, thefts of intellectual property and attacks on American companies and government agencies.

The attack under closest scrutiny hit Saudi Aramco, the world's largest oil company, in

August. Saudi Arabia is Iran's main rival in the region and is among the Arab states that have argued privately for the toughest actions against Iran. Aramco, the Saudi state oil company, has been bolstering supplies to customers who can no longer obtain oil from Iran because of Western sanctions.

The virus that hit Aramco is called Shamoon and spread through computers linked over a network to erase files on about 30,000 computers by overwriting them. Mr. Panetta, while not directly attributing the strike to Iran in his speech, called it "probably the most destructive attack that the private sector has seen to date."

Until the attack on Aramco, most of the cybersabotage coming out of Iran appeared to be what the industry calls "denial of service" attacks, relatively crude efforts to send a nearly endless stream of computer-generated requests aimed at overwhelming networks. But as one consultant to the United States government on the attacks put it several days ago: "What the Iranians want to do now is make it clear they can disrupt our economy, just as we are disrupting theirs. And they are quite serious about it."

The revelation that Iran may have been the source of the computer attacks was reported earlier by The Washington Post and The Associated Press.

The attacks on American financial institutions, which prevented some bank customers from gaining access to their accounts online but did not involve any theft of money, seemed to come from various spots around the world, and so their origins are not certain. There is some question about whether those attacks may have involved outside programming help, perhaps from Russia.

Mr. Panetta spoke only in broad terms, stating that Iran had "undertaken a concerted effort to use cyberspace to its advantage." Almost immediately, experts in cybersecurity rushed to fill in the blanks.

"His speech laid the dots alongside each other without connecting them," James A. Lewis, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, wrote Friday in an essay for ForeignPolicy.com. "Iran has discovered a new way to harass much sooner than expected, and the United States is ill-prepared to deal with it."

Iran has a motive, to retaliate for both the American-led financial sanctions that have cut its oil exports nearly in half, and for the cybercampaign by the United States and Israel against Iran's nuclear enrichment complex at Natanz.

That campaign started in the Bush administration, when the United States and Israel first began experimenting with an entirely new generation of weapon: a cyberworm that could infiltrate another state's computers and then cause havoc on computer-controlled machinery. In this case, it resulted in the destruction of roughly a fifth of the nuclear centrifuges that Iran uses to enrich uranium, though the centrifuges were eventually replaced, and Iran's production capability has recovered.

Iran became aware of the attacks in the summer of 2010, when the computer worm escaped from the Natanz plant and was replicated across the globe. The computer industry soon named the escaped weapon Stuxnet.

Iran announced last year that it had begun its own military cyberunit, and Brig. Gen. Gholamreza Jalali, the head of Iran's Passive Defense

Organization, said the Iranian military was prepared “to fight our enemies” in “cyberspace and Internet warfare.” Little is known about how that group is organized, or where it has bought or developed its expertise.

The United States has never acknowledged its role in creating the Stuxnet virus, nor has it said anything about the huge covert program that created it, code-named Olympic Games, which was first revealed earlier this year by The New York Times. President Obama drastically expanded the program as a way to buy time for sanctions to affect Iran, and to stave off a military attack on the Iranian facilities by Israel, which he feared could quickly escalate into a broader war.

In advance of Mr. Panetta’s speech in New York on Thursday, senior officials debated how much to talk about the United States’s offensive capabilities, assessing whether such an acknowledgment could help create a deterrent for countries contemplating attacks on the country

But Mr. Panetta carefully avoided using the words “offense” or “offensive” in the context of American cyberwarfare, instead defining the Pentagon’s capabilities as “action to defend the nation.”

“We won’t succeed in preventing a cyber attack through improved defenses alone,” Mr. Panetta said. “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. For these kinds of scenarios, the department has developed that capability to conduct effective operations to counter threats

to our national interests in cyberspace.”

The comments indicated that the United States might redefine defense in cyberspace as requiring the capacity to reach forward over computer networks if an attack was detected or anticipated, and take pre-emptive action. These same offensive measures also could be used in a punishing retaliation for a first-strike cyberattack on an American target, senior officials said.

One senior intelligence official described a debate inside the Obama administration over the pros and cons of openly admitting that the United States has deployed a new cyber weapon, and could use it in response to an attack, or pre-emptively.

For now, officials have decided to hold back. “The countries who need to know we have it already know,” the senior intelligence official said.

Nicole Perloth contributed reporting from San Francisco.

Washington Post

October 14, 2012

Pg. 1

3. Afghan War Fading Quietly

With little combat to wage, 3rd Platoon feels secluded in the wilderness

By Greg Jaffe

JAGHATU, AFGHANISTAN — The platoon sergeant poses a simple question to the men of 3rd Platoon: “What do you consider success on a mission?”

There is an uneasy silence in the dark chow tent. In a few months, the U.S. Army will bulldoze its portion of the base, part of America’s slow withdrawal of combat forces from Afghanistan. All that will remain here in this isolated place is a small Afghan army

camp and a mostly empty government building with a mortar hole in its roof, the sum total of 11 years of U.S. counterinsurgency efforts in this district 65 miles south of Kabul.

Sgt. Gary M. Waugh, a soldier on his second Afghan tour, takes a stab at answering the question. “Us not doing a thing,” he says. “Not firing our weapon.”

A few of the soldiers rest their chins on the butts of their rifles. A diesel generator drones in the background as the platoon sergeant surveys his men. “Right answer,” he replies. America’s war in Afghanistan has consumed close to \$500 billion and cost more than 2,000 American lives. By December 2014, the last American combat troops are scheduled to leave the country. American-led combat operations are expected to finish by the middle of next year. But the war is already ending at little outposts throughout Afghanistan as the U.S. military thins its ranks and tears down bases.

How does a war end? In Jaghatu, these soldiers are learning one way. It ends with resignation, isolation, boredom and the soldiers of 3rd Platoon striding out of the chow tent and into the bright light of a warm September day. Now that they had defined mission success, they had another question: What exactly was the mission anymore?

Isolated soldiers

The U.S. troops at Jaghatu are about as isolated as soldiers can be in Afghanistan. Surrounded by mountains and enemy-controlled terrain, the Americans receive almost all of their supplies by helicopter and parachute drops.

Six months ago, before the current soldiers came, the troops’ mission was clearer: to rout the Taliban from the

area. In May, a platoon of Americans in Jaghatu fought a four-hour battle with the Taliban for “Antennae Hill,” a large outcropping of rock, scrub and dirt with a commanding view of the valley south of the outpost.

When 3rd Platoon, part of 2nd Battalion of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, arrived this summer, its members watched the shaky helmet-cam footage that their predecessors had taken as they cursed, sprinted and fought their way to the top of the hill without serious casualties. Pfc. Dillon Guillory, 24, played and replayed the video on his laptop, anxiously waiting for his moment.

Except for occasional patrols, Guillory has spent most of his deployment manning a guard post that overlooks a tattered Afghan flag and the crumbling government building. In Jaghatu, U.S. troops don’t charge up hills after the enemy anymore. They don’t search houses, and they rarely meet with Afghan village elders. Those jobs are supposed to be done by the Afghans.

The Americans’ main mission is supposed to be training the Afghan soldiers with whom they share the base, but Guillory is one of only a handful of 3rd Platoon soldiers who interact with Afghans.

“How are you doing?” Guillory asks as he checks the badge of an Afghan worker who speaks no English. “Done with work already?”

To pass the time, Guillory and the other soldiers lift weights and box on a small square of dirt to the screams of Rage Against the Machine’s “Street Fighting Man.” They eat Baskin-Robbins ice cream that floats to earth in weekly parachute drops.

Guillory speaks via Skype to his wife in Lafayette, La., as often as twice a day, more

frequently than he talks to any Afghan and many of the soldiers in his platoon.

He watches on his laptop computer and coaches her as she removes the stitches from their recently neutered pit bull, Nelly. "You're doing great," he soothes as her hands shake. "You are not going to hurt him."

She sends him video real-estate listings of houses that she dreams of buying when his enlistment ends. The latest is a four-bedroom home with triple-crown molding, a glass-enclosed fireplace and a \$313,000 list price. "I've watched it three times, and I can see us living there," he messages his wife.

In his three months in Afghanistan, Guillory has experienced only one moment when the war seemed real, immediate and dangerous. In late July, the platoon was sitting on a ridgeline watching some Afghan troops when a burst of enemy machine-gun fire exploded around them. Guillory threw himself on the ground, crushing his compass with his body armor, and slid to cover on his stomach.

"The whole thing only lasted 15 or 20 seconds," he recalls.

One of the enemy rounds ricocheted off a rock and struck Pfc. Adam Ross, 19, in the back of the head just below his helmet. The medic worked to stanch the bleeding and called out the details of the injury to Guillory, who scribbled the information on his hand and then radioed the outpost.

The soldiers did not learn that Ross was dead until they were back in their tent. There was no cursing or screaming. Just silence. Guillory, who had not known Ross well, snapped a picture of the writing on his left hand. He had been so shaken that instead of writing "Back of

Head," he had scrawled "Head Back."

The next day, the medic carved Ross's last name and the date of his death into a piece of splintering wood in Guillory's guard shack. Guillory added the 173rd Airborne's winged insignia in white marker and wondered how he had not been struck, as well.

Weeks passed and the memory faded, until it became just another memorial scratched into a piece of wood and surrounded by graffiti from previous units' tours.

Now the real-estate listing from his wife seems as real as anything in his life. It is sundown, and Taliban gunfire pops in the distance. Afghan troops respond with a machine-gun blast. "Why would you need a fireplace in Louisiana?" Guillory wonders aloud.

Their next patrol

Sometimes, the soldiers at Jaghatu have days when they don't feel like soldiers at all. Second Lt. Andrew Beck, the leader of 3rd Platoon, calls his men together to brief them on their next patrol, which involves sitting on a ridgeline while Afghan police search a small village.

They meet in front of Beck's hooch, a windowless metal container ringed by six-foot-tall barriers built to shield against incoming rockets and mortar shells. Beck, 25, urges his men three times to be cautious. "The general in charge of Afghanistan's intent is not to destroy the Taliban," he says, unintentionally overstating the top commander's guidance. "I know that sucks. His intent is to minimize civilian casualties."

Beck's platoon sergeant speaks next: "You guys have been here more than two months. Just keep doing what you are doing."

What exactly are they doing? Even their commanders

are not sure. The Jaghatu outpost was built in 2010 to interdict Taliban fighters who were believed to be moving weapons through the area and into Kabul. But there were never enough U.S. or Afghan troops to pacify the district or find the enemy weapons caches. Even the addition of about 450 Afghan soldiers this spring has not improved security.

Today, U.S. troop levels are falling, and American commanders are realizing that there are severe limits to what they can accomplish in the time they have left in Afghanistan. Beck feels those constraints most acutely when he passes through the Jaghatu bazaar and stares through bulletproof glass at the rickety stalls and bearded shopkeepers.

"Every time I drive through the bazaar, I wonder what is going on 100 meters outside the base," he says. The Americans pull some intelligence from the district police chief, but never enough. "You feel useless," Beck adds.

It is a little after 11 a.m. when Beck and his platoon return from three uneventful hours of watching the Afghan police search the village west of their base. He gathers his 28 paratroopers in the outpost's conference room to discuss what they have seen on the patrol.

"Because we have limited missions, we have to make every one of them count," he says.

Beck graduated near the top of his West Point class in 2011 and had his pick of units; he chose the 173rd Airborne because he knew it was headed to Afghanistan. He expected that he would be leading his soldiers on helicopter-borne assaults and hoped he would be responsible for the security of a few Afghan villages.

The lieutenant asks his men if they noticed anything unusual when they were sitting on the ridgeline watching the village. Silence. "Okay, the pattern of life looked normal, surprisingly normal for what we thought could be an insurgent haven," he says.

Soldiers stare blankly or doodle in field notebooks. Chairs squeak. The soldiers steer the conversation to a larger issue: They do not understand why they are doing so little.

For weeks they've been told that their primary mission is to help the Afghan army and police units in Jaghatu improve. A young private complains that they barely ever see or speak to the Afghan troops. A more senior sergeant echoes him.

There is a new Afghan battalion commander at the base, and Beck suggests that he may be more open to allowing his men to train with the Americans, though it is too soon to tell. "If the Afghans don't want to take advantage of working with the best Army in the world and the best platoon in this brigade, it is their fault," he says.

A loyal ally

On a Friday in which no patrols are scheduled, Beck pays a visit to America's longest-serving and most loyal ally in Jaghatu — the district's 24-year-old police chief. He walks through Guillory's gate and into an adjoining, walled compound that houses the government center building with the hole in the roof.

Beck and a few of his soldiers have come to take pictures of the police chief's men decked out in new body armor, helmets and goggles that the Americans had given them earlier that morning. The Afghan police stand stiffly between a flower bed and a wall scorched from insurgent rocketpropelled grenade blasts.

A U.S. soldier adjusts a helmet that is slightly askew.

"A picture with your gun?" the police chief asks one of Beck's men.

So far this year, Afghan soldiers or police officers have been accused of killing more than 50 U.S. and allied troops. There's an awkward pause as the soldier glances at Beck for guidance and then strikes a last-second compromise, popping the magazine out of his gun, checking the chamber for a stray round and handing it to the police chief.

The chief doesn't seem to register the soldier's move as a slight, but it bothers Beck. "He is the guy we trust most, and we have to take the magazine out of the rifle," Beck says.

Beck hands the young police chief his loaded M-4. "One more picture by the truck," he says.

"When you guys leave, you are going to take everything?" the chief asks. "All of the helos and the armor?"

"I don't know," Beck replies. "You'll probably know before me."

"I think your Army is tired," the chief says.

Before Beck returns to his base, the police chief has one more request. There's a pile of cardboard left from one of the American airdrops that morning, and the chief asks if he can have it. They are out of propane gas and need something they can burn to cook their dinner.

Expecting a firefight

Finally, after weeks of waiting, Beck's soldiers get word that at last there is going to be a mission. It will be their biggest since arriving in Afghanistan. More than 100 Afghan soldiers, 15 Afghan police and about 40 Americans will return to the area where Ross was killed. Everyone is expecting a firefight.

The night before they leave, Guillory talks to his wife on Skype. "Hey, babe, I got to wake up early for work tomorrow," he tells her at 8:15 p.m. He flips off the light in his bunk, but his wife keeps talking. He tries again 14 minutes later: "Okay, I need to go to bed, babe. I'll call you tomorrow."

After two more tries, she says goodnight around 8:40 p.m.

By 3 a.m. the tent is bustling. Boots thump on the plywood floor, and soldiers stuff bottles of water and prepackaged meals into their assault packs.

By 3:30 a.m. they are gathered in front of their trucks. The platoon sergeant double-checks the soldiers' body armor, thumping the ceramic plates with his fist and tugging on loose straps. The medic reminds the men that they need to act quickly to stabilize wounded colleagues. "Stop the bleeding and then go to the airway," he says. "If you lose the airway, you lose the patient."

Beck speaks last, and this time he does not preach caution. "It is going to be a good day," he says. "The enemy ... has never seen this much Afghan army or coalition forces coming at them. We are going to knock them on their a--."

The platoon's trucks roll through the outpost gate, pausing on the edge of the desert. One by one, they test fire their heavy machine guns as the sun peeks over the mountains of the Jaghatu bowl. The .50-caliber gun on Guillory's truck is one of the last to shoot, the loud ca-chunk thundering through the valley.

"The terrorists are up now,"

Guillory yells.

"All right, let's fire these weapons at the f---ing Taliban," the gunner says.

The armored trucks lumber down the deeply rutted dirt road past a handful of wary-looking Afghan families. At first the soldiers joke with one another to stay loose, but as the truck edges closer to the insurgent-controlled villages the chatter ebbs.

Over the radio, there is an order to halt the convoy. The armored vehicles edge to the side of the road and wait for more instructions. A few minutes later, they receive a second order: Return to base.

Hundreds of miles away in Helmand province, Taliban fighters dressed in Army uniforms have penetrated the heavily defended Camp Bastion, where they killed two Marines and incinerated six U.S. fighter jets, each worth about \$25 million. Senior military officials in Kabul are advising their field commanders to scale back missions with Afghan forces for a few days.

The platoon sergeant and Guillory climb down from their armored vehicles and walk back to the outpost. The soldiers who had steeled themselves to fight are once again preparing to sit.

"We look really bad to the Afghans right now," the platoon sergeant says to Guillory. "We are supposed to be supporting them, and we left them."

"I don't understand why we aren't just going out anyway," Guillory replies.

Instead, Guillory returns to his war: a view of the mortar hole in the government building and a guard post with little to do. He chews through a pack of gum. There are six months left in his tour and 26 months left before U.S. combat troops leave Afghanistan. "I am sure there are people that have a bigger understanding of the war than us little guys," he says. "But at my level, it seems so stupid."

On the other hand, they didn't fire their guns at the

enemy. They didn't do a thing. The mission was a success.

Los Angeles Times

October 14, 2012

Pg. 7

Afghanistan

4. Nine Killed In Militant Attacks

By Times Staff and Wire Reports

A suicide bomber on a motorbike blew himself up at a local intelligence office in southern Afghanistan in the deadliest of three attacks in the country that left at least nine people dead, officials said.

Six people -- four Afghan intelligence officers, a coalition service member and a civilian employee working for the military alliance -- died in the suicide bombing, in the Maruf district of Kandahar province. The Taliban claimed responsibility.

A second attack killed two policemen and wounded three in neighboring Zabol province. A police vehicle hit a mine, then a second bomb detonated when police rushed to aid their colleagues.

NATO said a service member with the U.S.-led coalition was killed in a roadside bombing in the south. It released no other details.

Seattle Times

October 14, 2012

5. 'IED Whisperer' A Lifesaver In Afghanistan

Staff Sgt. Kelly Rogne, who serves with a battalion from Joint Base Lewis McChord, is known as the 'IED whisperer' for his ability to find the makeshift bombs that have extracted such a deadly toll in Afghanistan.

By Hal Bernton

BABINEK, Afghanistan
— Staff Sgt. Kelly Rogne

walked down a dusty village road, rhythmically swinging a metal detector that resembled an oversized hockey stick.

He led a column of more than 20 soldiers past deep-green fields of marijuana that surround this village in Panjwai district, traditional homeland of the Taliban.

To defend this turf, Taliban fighters have seeded Babinek and other areas with dense concentrations of bombs, creating one of the most perilous patrol grounds U.S. soldiers have encountered during more than 11 years of war in Afghanistan.

Rogne, 36, from Colville, Stevens County, has displayed an uncanny ability to find these improvised explosive devices (IEDs). He uses technology, tracking skills and intuition honed by careful study of past bomb placements.

Some call Rogne the "IED Whisperer."

On an early September patrol out of Combat Outpost Mushan, Rogne located 29 IEDs through the course of a painstaking, eight-hour movement across less than a kilometer of road, an accomplishment relayed through the chain of command to Pentagon generals.

On his next mission, Rogne would venture back on that route.

"I think I'm ready. I'm feeling it. They're out there," he declared.

Costly war drags on

The nation's longest conflict has claimed the lives of more than 2,000 U.S. service members and continues to kill more each week. Within the past year, taxpayers' spending on the war totaled more than \$100 billion, financing everything from helicopter gunships to Alaska snow crab and Maine lobsters shipped

to remote outposts as morale boosters.

With U.S. combat troops scheduled to be withdrawn by the end of 2014, the war in Afghanistan has, in many ways, faded from public attention and received little prominence in the heated U.S. presidential campaign.

But the pace of war has quickened in Panjwai in the last year.

Within a 20-mile stretch of irrigated fields and villages, the district hosts seven U.S. Army installations that bristle with surveillance equipment, Stryker vehicles and mine-clearing equipment. This attention reflects Panjwai's history as a 1990s launching point for the Taliban and its strategic importance for insurgents as a smuggling corridor for weapons and explosives.

"It's a very small piece of Afghanistan," said Command Sgt. Maj. Eric Volk, the senior enlisted officer for the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment from Joint Base Lewis-McChord. "But it's a very large part of the fight."

Since arriving in Afghanistan in March, the Western Washington-based battalion — Rogne's unit — has been at the forefront of that fight.

Volk says the battalion has put serious pressure on the Taliban, citing a significant drop in insurgent attacks in Kandahar City and other areas of southern Afghanistan as signs of success. This has been a tough campaign, turning villages into battle zones as U.S. troops repeatedly cycle through them trying to clear out insurgents.

Here, as elsewhere in Afghanistan, the insurgents' makeshift bombs remain potent weapons.

In contrast to the high-powered U.S. arsenal,

insurgents piece together IEDs from the scantiest of materials, packing explosives into recycled plastic containers as small as pint water bottles and drawing current from strings of used batteries.

Since 2006, the U.S. military has spent \$18 billion for research, equipment, training and other efforts to combat IEDs, and soldiers are able to safely destroy most of the bombs they encounter.

Still, the bombs extract a deadly toll. During the past three years, nearly 60 percent of U.S. troops who died in combat were killed by IEDs, according to Defense Manpower Data Center statistics.

In Panjwai, five men attached to the 1st Battalion's 1,200-person task force have been killed by the bombs.

IEDs often maim soldiers rather than killing them, and these traumatic wounds have become signature injuries of foot-patrol campaigns.

Of the more than 100 troops evacuated from the 1st Battalion task force with serious injuries, 23 lost limbs, including seven double-amputees and one triple amputee, according to Lt. Col. Wilson Rutherford, 1st Battalion's commander. Dozens more soldiers suffered mild traumatic brain injuries, fractures or other wounds from the blasts.

Insurgents try to warn villagers to stay away from active IED sites.

But in the first six months of this year, the bombs caused 33 percent of all civilian casualties, killing 327 civilians and injuring 689, according to United Nations statistics.

Staff Sgt. Caleb Duncan, of Vancouver, Wash., recalls one child, a triple amputee, who was brought to battalion soldiers for medical care.

Duncan said it was one of the worst things he has seen in

this war. "You don't have to speak to put out the message: 'Look, the Americans didn't do this, the Taliban did.'"

An ingenious enemy

Those who plant the IEDs are often elusive, quick to duck under trees that hide them from overhead surveillance cameras. Under cover, they can drop their weapons or bomb-making materials, put on new clothing and transform themselves from fighters to villagers. They are also canny scavengers, even turning a staple of Army field life — the foil wrappers that encase Meals Ready-to-Eat — into the outer casing for a pressure plate.

U.S. soldiers are wary of contributing to the bomb-making materials. They are under orders to cut up any big, empty plastic jugs, such as those that contain protein powder, before leaving them in the base trash. No one wants those jugs smuggled off base and packed with explosives.

"It's the little things that tend to bite you," said 2nd Lt. Kenneth Shogry, from New Milford, Conn. "What we look at as trash might be a resource for the insurgents."

Some of the IEDs are triggered by radio signals. Some are touched off by command wires operated by insurgents hiding nearby. Most are "victim activated," with a trigger mechanism set off by body weight.

Soldiers have learned survival can be a matter of inches.

While on patrol, they carefully place their boots in the footprints created by those who walk just in front of them. Veer slightly to the left or right and you could lose your legs — or your life — to a bomb.

Soldiers have also had to adjust their battle tactics.

An infantry soldier under fire will typically take cover

or close in quickly on the enemy and try to take them out. But soldiers here have found insurgent bullets may be part of a plan to bait them into an IED. If they take cover, the soldiers might set off a bomb planted by a wall or tree. If they try to pursue an insurgent, they might be crossing a belt of bombs primed to explode.

So, when under attack, soldiers often take a knee and hope the insurgents aren't good shots.

"They are shooting at us to try to force us to go in a certain direction, which is more dangerous than if you just stay put," said Volk, the command sergeant major. "The men have to display a lot of discipline."

Surviving these patrols sometimes feels like winning the lottery.

Sgt. Peter Butler, from Portland, was shook up by two blasts that injured other soldiers. Late in the summer, he stepped directly on a trigger device, and he could feel a whoosh of air as his foot went down.

That bomb malfunctioned.

"The blasting cap went off, but the DET (detonator cord) didn't go," Butler said. "That's the only reason I got two little legs left."

On patrol, soldiers wear a mandatory piece of gear widely distributed only since last year — Kevlar diapers.

With the aid of Velcro and belt loops, the troops wrap the diapers around their crotches to shield the upper body core and the groin. In some bad blasts, they have been effective. That's earned the diapers the respect of soldiers, some of whom have told their buddies they would rather be left to die on the battlefield than be robbed of their sex life, as well as their legs, by a bomb.

"I have heard that many, many times," said Cpl. Keith

Robinson, of Lewiston, Idaho. "Some might be joking. Some might be serious. It's kind of an awkward statement to begin with."

Lifesaving specialty

Since arriving in Afghanistan in the spring, Rogne estimates he has found more than 150 IEDs while walking the lead position on patrols. But he's not keeping score.

"A lot of people thought I was after numbers, how many IEDs I could find," Rogne says. "It's not about that. When you have a group you work with hit by IEDs, and you see how it affects people's lives, you don't ever want anyone to step on one again. So the reason I go out front is that's where I can best be utilized."

Rogne, the son of a Colville logger, joined the Army when he was 18. He is on his fourth combat tour. In the run-up to a mission, he spends hours studying battlefield maps, photos and intelligence to better anticipate where bombs might be placed.

He started this year's tour of duty with the 1st Battalion's Blackhawk Company, and helped his platoon survive a difficult start to the summer without any wounds from IEDs. Then in July, he got an unexpected call to Combat Outpost Mushan in the western part of Panjwai to serve as the lead enlisted officer for Apache Company's 2nd Platoon.

Rogne was assigned to replace Sgt. 1st Class Edgar Barrera, who had been severely wounded on a nightmarish July 7 patrol. Around 7 a.m. that morning, stepping outside of a compound that had been searched for signs of insurgents, Barrera detonated a bomb. The explosion claimed both his legs and an arm, and caused shrapnel and other wounds to a half-

dozen soldiers near the site of the blast.

There were gunbattles, and another bomb explosion severed both feet of one soldier.

Late in the day, Sgt. Juan Navarro, a team leader who had been caught in the first blast but demanded to stay with his soldiers, sat down to take a break.

Navarro chose a piece of turf that had been walked over by many other soldiers and swept for bombs with three different devices, according to several soldiers.

His weight set off another bomb blast, and he died from his wounds.

Often, after a patrol, Apache Company soldiers would hit the free-weights set up under a tent near their living quarters. The often-intense physical workouts offer troops a kind of therapy, helping them cope with tensions that build up during a deployment.

After the July 7 patrol, the gym tent was largely empty, recalls 1st Sgt. Michael Robinson. Instead, soldiers had a quiet day of grieving.

"You could see them giving each other hugs when someone would break down for a few minutes. You could see them draw together."

Soon, patrols resumed back through the bomb-laden trails.

"It's a mindset," Robinson said. "If you let the fear take hold, it will rule you, and a bad thing will happen. If you understand that the IED is just an obstacle — something that is just there: You can identify it. Go around it. Or take it out. But you have a choice."

Rogne helped the platoon build confidence.

In a simulated IED field erected next to the base's sand-filled barriers, Rogne explained the capabilities, limitations and quirks of three different mine-detection systems. Soldiers then

went to work trying to find disarmed bombs that had been retrieved from the road.

Through August, the schedule of the missions picked back up, with the soldiers threading their way through one band of bombs after another without taking any new casualties. Meanwhile, they struck back at the insurgents, killing some who sought to spring ambushes.

"Rogne helped," said Staff Sgt. Bill Kearney. "But also time, and a few good firefights to get back at the enemy."

'Disruptive mission'

In mid-September, the Army wanted to build a new route through an area just outside Babinek. So the company commander tapped 2nd Platoon to carry out a "disruptive mission" that would hopefully create a diversion big enough to shift the insurgents' focus away from engineers who were making new road cuts.

The first half-hour of the platoon's patrol was quiet. Then Rogne found his first bomb. He spotted it cached inside a shallow depression in front of an abandoned compound. This was the same area where Barrera had stepped on the IED in July.

On this day, that spot held no surprises.

An Army demolition expert on the patrol checked out the site and uncovered the wire, trigger and a blue plastic bottle packed with explosives. He executed a "BIP" — blow-in-place — that sent a cloud of dust kicking up out of the roadway.

By the end of the morning, Rogne had found three more IEDs.

Several insurgents sought to counterattack, but were chased off by Army helicopter gunships.

The platoon settled in for a noon lunch break.

On that day, safe and secure.

Agence France-Presse
October 13, 2012

6. Afghan Anti-Taliban Leader Prefers To Go It Alone

By Joe Sinclair, Agence France-Presse

He took up arms after the Taliban killed his mother in a hail of bullets and inspired a local uprising that ousted the insurgents from his area.

But Sayed Farhad Akbari, a 32-year-old construction company director, says he has refused to be co-opted into a government-sponsored police programme, branding the authorities corrupt and ineffectual.

The interior ministry has arranged funding for 300 new Afghan Local Police (ALP) in Logar province, just south of Kabul and considered key to protecting the capital.

And according to both Akbari and a senior provincial police commander, he and his followers have been invited to join up as the government tries to capitalise on the uprising and fill a gaping hole in security.

The ALP is a branch of the Afghan National Police, with members intended to act as local security guards.

However, the programme has proved controversial with critics including Human Rights Watch likening the force to a militia amid accusations of serious rights abuses and fears over the proliferation of armed groups.

Speaking by telephone Akbari, who has two wives and 10 children, said he fought back after a series of Taliban atrocities.

They killed seven schoolgirls from his village and closed their school, as well as five members of the same

family whose son worked for the government and a local mullah who had called on the insurgents to stop the violence.

"They also killed my mother who was travelling from Kabul to Logar with my brother and four other people. They opened fire at their car. All the others were wounded but my mother died," Akbari, from Kulangar district in central Logar, told AFP.

"After that incident I was fed up and angry. I wanted to leave the country but I changed my mind. I thought I should stay and help save my village from the Taliban."

What started as a gathering at a mosque grew until he had the support of 50 villages and 200 armed men, with 2,000 more waiting to join once weapons are available, he said.

He claims to have spent \$160,000 of his own money to buy guns, cars and motorcycles, and local people have provided fuel, food and drink.

The uprising in Logar followed similar anti-Taliban movements in Ghazni and Laghman provinces, but those came amid fears local militia leaders were trying to reassert their authority ahead of the 2014 withdrawal of NATO troops.

Akbari said his group had killed 23 Taliban in three clashes since the uprising started in August, but were simply villagers fighting through necessity.

Colonel Mohammad Tahir, a senior police officer in provincial capital Puli Alam, said the same people who joined the uprising were now set to join the ALP programme.

"They want to continue their mission but they want help from the government," he said, adding that the Afghan army and police had already been providing them with ammunition.

But Akbari said his group had no desire to join, dismissing the ALP as "not very effective" and claiming they complained of not being paid for several months.

"Yes, the government has asked us to join the ALP but we will not. The government is corrupt, they keep freeing the Taliban they arrest. The government has lost its strength and effectiveness," he said.

With the departure of about 30,000 US surge troops in October, the NATO footprint in Afghanistan is shrinking.

Lieutenant Colonel James Wright, commander of 1st Squadron (Airborne) 91st Cavalry Regiment, the US force in Logar, said local police were a necessity.

"Frankly they're at the point now where they flat out have to do it. They've come to their senses that something is better than nothing," he said, adding that the Kolangar uprising and the ALP programme were at least seen as "mutually supportive".

"They would either be recruits or help augment what's going on with it," he said.

But interior ministry spokesman Sediq Seddiqi said: "We have no plans to incorporate the uprisings into the ALP. They are by the people and people are leading it."

NATO is trying to build trust in the government through adviser programmes that target policing and the court system, but when it comes to the release of suspected insurgents Akbari has a point.

Of about 70 people detained by NATO and handed over to Afghan investigators in the province over the past six months, only six cases have gone forward to trial, said Navy Lieutenant Anthony Sham, part of a two-man rule of law team based near Puli Alam.

There have been no convictions.

"There's a lot of things we see in the Afghan system that we deem as corrupt and sometimes they deem as cultural," said Sham.

"One of the big things we see in Logar is not necessarily payment to get somebody out of jail, but people vouching for each other, somebody in a position of leadership saying, 'No, this detainee is a good person.'"

Having lost faith in the government, Akbari prefers to tackle the Taliban himself, and he said he had heard of three other areas of Logar where people were preparing to rise up.

"We are not against Islam, we are against those who misuse Islam for their own benefit and terrorise people," he said.

"The area is now cleared. We are also helping young boys who study and get brainwashed in Taliban madrassas to come and study in our schools."

New York Times
October 14, 2012
Pg. 6

7. Afghan Boys Eke Living Amid Peril At Gorge

By Graham Bowley

MAHI PAR PASS, Afghanistan — Beneath the soaring faces of rock, on a treacherous road flanked by gaping drops, lines of trucks crawled up from the Pakistani border, groaning under impossible loads of house-size metal containers and boxes tottering under tarps.

Past them and between them nudged cars, vans and other trucks carrying furniture, women in burqas, open loads of cows and donkeys.

Amid the tidal wave of traffic, piercing the cacophony with their yelps and whistles,

stood the Pepsi bottle boys. They earn their meager living by keeping the contractor trucks flowing on this section of the Jalalabad road, one of the main NATO supply routes to Kabul and one of Afghanistan's deadliest stretches of road.

"I don't like it, but I have to work and make some money," said one of the boys, Samiullah, a grimy-faced 12-year-old wearing a red baseball cap.

He was guiding traffic at one of the scariest hairpin bends, where cars rushed two abreast down from a tunnel through the mountain and three rusted tankers lay upside down in the gorge below. "I can get killed at any time."

Like all of the children on this road, Samiullah waved a flattened plastic soft drink bottle, the only tool of trade for these self-appointed traffic police.

The bottle was a symbol of his poverty; these children possess almost nothing else in the world. And it was also a signal to the truck drivers that they might want to toss a few afghanis down to him in return.

"Without us there would be a car crashed every day," he said.

The war economy touches everybody in Afghanistan and will leave a desperate hole when it is gone — not least for the Pepsi bottle boys, a prime example of how Afghans have fit their lives around America's military presence here.

These children flock from the bazaars of Pul-i-Charkhi in the poor eastern suburbs of Kabul to work for a few infernal hours on the Mahi Par Pass, but it is better than anything else they could have.

Late last year, they began to experience what life may be like after the Americans leave in 2014.

When Pakistan closed the border to NATO supply trucks in November, the trucks stopped coming, and business for these children slowed to almost nothing. Suddenly, they were out of jobs.

"Business was very low at the time," said one young man, Ziaullah, who did not know his age but looked about 20. He cut a lonely figure in a dirty green tunic amid billowing fumes on the edge of the cracked road.

"It hurt our business a lot, because usually the drivers of the trucks are paying us money, not the small cars; they usually pay 10 to 20 Pakistani rupees," or 10 or 20 cents, he said. "At that time I was earning 100 to 150 afghanis a day," \$2 to \$3, "so I was dividing the money for different things: 50 for bread, 50 for sugar."

Pakistan reopened the border in July, and the NATO supply convoys, driven by Pakistani and Afghan contractors, have resumed.

"I am happy if the road is open," Ziaullah said. "It is good for my business and my family." Ziaullah is the only person in his family who has a job, and he works so that his five brothers can go to school.

All of the boys up and down this five-mile stretch of winding switchback about 45 minutes east of Kabul tell life stories of deprivation and crushing poverty.

Samiullah has worked here every day for five years since his father was paralyzed and a family enemy killed his elder brother. His friend Jan Agha, 13, a quiet boy with a sad, dirty face, lost both his mother and father.

Not all of the Pepsi bottle boys are actually children.

Mohammedullah, 70, whose face is as craggy as the mountain rock looming above him, lost a leg in a mine blast during the Taliban's rule. Now

he perches by one of the curving tunnels for six days a week, taking only Fridays off.

He said the drivers are crazy, and if they ignore his advice and the road gets blocked, even for a short time, "it is like the end of the world here."

"The small cars occasionally give me money, but sometime if I am lucky to catch a good and rich businessman or governor or a big military officer, then I am calling my home and telling them to cook meat soup," he said. "That day my luck is flying in the sky."

Two months ago he did not come to the road for 10 days because he had to take a family member to the hospital, and when he returned someone had taken his spot.

With the help of some soldiers and a local stall keeper, he persuaded the interloper to go farther down the mountain.

"It is like a chain," he said. "Everyone gets his part of the chain."

Most of the traffic shunters, old and young, seemed to resent their hard existence.

But not Ihsanullah, 10, another boy who stood on a high arc of road so steep the trucks struggled to a standstill and looked as though they were about to tumble backward.

A small, plump boy with a beaming face, wearing dirty sandals and a dirty gray tunic, he sported a luminous green traffic policeman's vest and gave himself the name Traffic.

He said he had been working on the same spot since he was 6.

Every day, he arrives here at 5 a.m., leaves for school at 8 a.m., and then returns in the afternoon, though sometimes his head is "twisting" from the fumes and noise, he said.

He pays 10 afghanis for a bus from his house in Pul-i-Charkhi to the Jalalabad station

and then jumped a ride with the truckers.

His father, a watchmaker, died two years ago from diabetes. He gives the money he earns to his mother, who divides it among his four sisters and three brothers.

American military vehicles drive this road, but he said they usually do not give him money, only Pepsi, cookies and chocolates. It is the bigger commercial trucks that give him cash, though on this day he had gotten nothing.

When a truck nosed around the corner, Ihsanullah grew excited, striding out between the cars, waving his green plastic bottle, whistling the traffic around it.

"Go, go, go!" he cried. But the cars sped by without stopping.

Then a minibus driver held a note from a window. Another truck driver tossed a 10 Pakistani rupee note into the air with a wave.

Ihsanullah scuttled and swept it up. He strode back, his chubby face lighted up. "If I am not here for a few minutes or one or two or three days, then I miss being here. I enjoy being with my friends," he said, turning back as another brightly painted truck growled over the hill. "I love it."

Sangar Rahimi contributed reporting.

New York Times
October 14, 2012
Pg. 12

8. Turkey Faults U.N. Inaction Over Syria

By Sebnem Arsu and Hwaida Saad

ISTANBUL — In a sign of escalating frustration in Turkey after days of cross-border shelling with Syria, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan lashed out at the United Nations' inaction in Syria with some

of his strongest comments yet, saying world powers are repeating the mistakes they made in Bosnia in the 1990s.

"This negligence 20 years ago was explained by the international community being caught unprepared in dealing with the issues of the post-cold-war era," Mr. Erdogan said at an international conference in Istanbul. "Well, how can the injustice and weakness displayed in the Syrian issue be explained today?"

He also called for a change in the structure of the Security Council, where reluctance by any member — in this case, China and Russia — can stymie action.

Tensions between Turkey and Syria, a former ally, have been rising for months, as Turkey has sheltered leaders of the armed opposition to the government of President Bashar al-Assad, and refugees from the fighting. But the bad feelings have intensified in recent days as shells from Syria began landing in Turkey, prompting retaliation, and as Turkish officials said they found Russian munitions on a Moscow-to-Damascus civilian jet they forced to land for an inspection.

Russia has denied that weapons were onboard, saying the plane was instead carrying electronic components for a radar station and did not violate any international agreements. The United States has said relatively little on the shipment, though Victoria Nuland, the State Department spokeswoman, said Friday that "we have no doubt that this was serious military equipment."

On Saturday, the Russian newspaper *Kommersant* reported that the cargo had been sent by a company based in the Russian city of Tula that produces antitank, antiaircraft and anti-artillery

systems, as well as radar equipment. The company, KBP Tula, was accused by the United States in 2003 of providing weapons and sophisticated military equipment to the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in violation of United Nations sanctions.

Later in the day, Syria's state-run news agency, SANA, said Syria had banned Turkish Airlines flights through its airspace.

On the Syrian side of the border with Turkey, fighting continued Saturday in Idlib Province, with human rights activists saying that the rebels had made further progress in the area.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an antigovernment group, said rebels reported shooting down a Syrian fighter jet on Saturday near Aleppo. Neither the report nor a video of wreckage could be confirmed.

Human Rights Watch said Saturday that video images and interviews with residents of two towns suggested that the Syrian Air Force used cluster munitions in attacks last week. The group, based in New York, said videos posted online by Syrian activists showed what weapons experts identified as cluster munitions remnants. The munitions, which release deadly fragments when they explode, are banned by most countries, but not Syria, according to Human Rights Watch. The group noted that similar munitions were identified in videos posted in July and August. Other reports of the munitions being dropped by helicopters have not been independently verified.

Sebnem Arsu reported from Istanbul, and Hwaida Saad from Beirut, Lebanon. Anne Barnard contributed reporting from Beirut, and Ellen Barry from Moscow.

Yahoo.com

October 13, 2012

9. Few Good Options To Secure Syria Chemical Arsenal

By Karin Laub, Associated Press

BEIRUT--The U.S. and regional allies are closely monitoring Syria's chemical weapons — caught in the midst of a raging civil war — but options for securing the toxic agents stuffed into shells, bombs and missiles are fraught with risk.

President Bashar Assad's embattled regime is believed to have one of the largest chemical weapons stockpiles in the world. Fears have risen that a cornered Assad might use them or that they could fall into the hands of extremists, whether the Lebanese Hezbollah militia, an Assad ally, or al-Qaida-inspired militants among the rebels.

For now, the main storage and production sites are considered secure. However, some suggest the civil war poses one of the gravest risks of losing control over non-conventional weapons since the breakup of the Soviet Union two decades ago.

Syria's suspected arsenal is scattered across a number of locations, mainly in the north and west, where fighting between Assad's forces and rebels seeking to oust him has been heaviest.

"We need to be up front that this is not something very easy to do," Steven Bucci, a former senior Defense Department official, said of attempts to keep the weapons locked up.

The price of military action against the arsenal is prohibitively high, Bucci and others say.

Airstrikes on chemical weapons depots could inadvertently release toxic clouds or expose them to looters. A ground operation would require thousands of troops, and the U.S. administration has pushed back on any suggestion of direct military action in Syria. Pinpoint operations by special forces could easily go wrong.

The issue has been a topic in the U.S. presidential campaign. Republican nominee Mitt Romney has said he would send U.S. troops into Syria if needed to prevent the spread of chemical weapons, while President Barack Obama has said that movement or use of chemical weapons would have "enormous consequences."

Syria's secrecy compounds the problem. Damascus hasn't signed non-proliferation agreements, long denying it has chemical weapons. Syria "is a black hole for us," said Michael Luhan of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, declining to give an estimate of the size of the arsenal because foreign inspectors are barred.

Other experts acknowledge there is no firm data and say they base their estimates largely on U.S. intelligence reports.

Syria is believed to have hundreds, if not thousands, of tons of chemical agents, said Leonard Spector, deputy director of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, California. This includes mustard gas, a blistering agent, and the more lethal nerve agents sarin and VX, he said.

The chemical agents are believed to be designed for use in artillery shells, aerial bombs and ballistic missiles, said Scott Stewart of the U.S. security think tank Stratfor.

It is not known to what extent the chemical

agents have already placed in munitions. Bucci, of The Heritage Foundation, said he believed "most of it" has been put into artillery shells and rockets.

Bucci and Stewart estimate some 50 sites are associated with the program.

A map by the Monterey think tank shows four production sites: one 20 kilometers (12 miles) southeast of Aleppo, Syria's largest city and a major battleground, and three outside the cities of Hama, Homs and Latakia. Storage sites have been identified near Hama, Homs and the capital Damascus, which also has a research and development facility. Three sites are marked as having dual use infrastructure, for both civilian and military purposes.

Anxiety rose over the summer after the regime warned it might use chemical weapons against foreign attackers. Obama warned Assad that the threat of chemical warfare is a "red line" for the U.S. Even key Assad ally Russia told him to stand down.

Syria has not used chemical weapons, unlike Iraq's former leader Saddam Hussein. Analysts say the bigger threat is that the weapons fall into the wrong hands.

Such worries over the fate of advanced weaponry were highlighted on Friday, when a shadowy militant group known as Jabhat al-Nusra joined Syrian rebels in seizing a government missile defense base.

U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said late last month that Washington believes the main sites are secure but the regime apparently moved some chemical weapons to protect them. Panetta acknowledged that the U.S. doesn't know what happened to some of the weapons.

Spector told Congress this summer that the regime could lose control over chemical weapons sites, even as it holds on to Syria's urban centers. The rebels control stretches of countryside in the north and the west, close to where the main production facilities are believed to be, said Spector, a former senior U.S. arms control official. With front lines shifting, such sites could fall behind rebel lines or its regime guards could abandon them.

Hezbollah fighters, meanwhile, could take advantage of the chaos and try to loot installations. Israel, which fought a war with Hezbollah in 2006, has warned it would act, presumably by striking suspicious Hezbollah convoys.

However, the possibilities for military action are limited because of the size and decentralization of Syria's arsenal. Bucci and Stewart said airstrikes carry too much risk of harming civilians, while targeted operations would not be able to secure all sites simultaneously.

Using special forces "would necessitate putting troops in harm's way, without overwhelming support," said Stewart, a former anti-terrorism investigator at the U.S. State Department. "The only way to secure all the sites in a comprehensive manner is through a large ground force, which is politically untenable at this point."

Technical and political restraints could decrease the risks of militants obtaining and using chemical weapons.

Militant groups may lack the proper gear, training and logistics to move chemical weapons, said Michael Eisenstadt of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Some chemicals are stored in heavy bulk

containers, while so-called binary munitions for missile warheads require separate components that are likely stored separately, he noted.

Smaller munitions, such as an artillery shell filled with chemical agents, would be easy to move, Bucci said. Militants could "fit it in a suitcase, carry it around and use it by hooking it up to other munitions," he said.

Hezbollah could be deterred by the threat of Israeli retaliation, said Stewart. Such payback would jeopardize Hezbollah's standing as a key military and political force in Lebanon.

"The largest concern is jihadist actors getting their hands on chemical weapons munitions and using them in the region," such as firing rockets at Israel or targeting Western diplomatic missions in the area, he said.

For now, the West's best options are deterrence and containment, analysts said.

This includes warning the regime and the rebels of the dire consequences of using or losing control of chemical weapons and working with Syria's neighbors, particularly Jordan and Turkey, to prevent chemical weapons from being smuggled out of Syria.

On Thursday, Jordanian officials confirmed that U.S. special operations forces and their Jordanian counterparts have been training at a compound some 80 kilometers (50 miles) from the Syrian border how to protect civilians from possible chemical attacks.

"With chemical weapons, it starts to get so beyond the pale," Bucci said of the potential threat. "It scares the heck out of everybody, rightfully."

10. UN Envoy Draws Up Plan For 3,000 Troops To Police A Truce In Syria

By Colin Freeman, Chief Foreign Correspondent

THE NEW international envoy to Syria is drawing up plans for a 3,000-strong peacekeeping force that is likely to involve European troops in policing any future truce.

Lakhdar Brahimi, the veteran Algerian diplomat who took over as joint United Nations and Arab League peace envoy last month, has spent recent weeks sounding out which countries would be willing to contribute soldiers.

Given the volatility of the conflict and the growing presence of Islamists on the rebel side, it is thought British and American forces would be unlikely to take part because of their past involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Instead, Mr Brahimi is thought to be looking at nations that currently contribute to Unifil, the 15,000-strong mission set up to police Israel's borders with Lebanon. They alone are thought to have the infrastructure and on-the-ground knowledge any peacekeeping operation would require.

Countries contributing to Unifil include Ireland, Germany, France, Spain and Italy, one of which would be expected to play a leading role in the Syria force. Yet the presence of any European troops on the ground in Syria — even from nations considered more "neutral" in the Arab world — would still represent a significant new Western military involvement in the Middle East. Experts fear they could be a magnet for attacks for both Islamists and regime loyalists.

Details of Mr Brahimi's plans emerged as he arrived

in Istanbul yesterday for talks aimed at quelling tensions between Syria and Turkey.

Last week, following several days of cross-border shelling by the two countries' armies, Turkey intercepted a Syrian-bound passenger jet after claiming to have received reports it had Russian-made defence equipment on board.

Meanwhile, in a sign of the challenges facing Mr Brahimi's mission, Syrian human rights groups reported some of the heaviest fighting to date. A rebel offensive that began in the north on Thursday had killed more than 130 soldiers in two days, according to the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The Syrian government, meanwhile, has been using ever more air power, hammering rebel units on the border with Lebanon. Last night, rebels claimed to have downed a Syrian jet near Aleppo.

Despite the escalating ferocity of the fighting, the British government has effectively ruled out any direct military intervention in Syria for now, pointing out that, unlike Libya, there is no clear front line and that both sides are also backed by regional powers. "The best way forward is engagement and diplomacy, coupled with pressure applied by sanctions," Philip Hammond, the Defence Secretary, told *The Sunday Telegraph*.

Mr Brahimi, 78, became envoy after the resignation in August of Kofi Annan, the former UN secretary general, whose initial peace plan earlier this year ended in complete failure. Since taking over, Mr Brahimi has deliberately sought to dampen expectations, warning that it might be "nearly impossible" for him to succeed. Yet he will visit Syria soon to try to persuade

Damascus to call a ceasefire, and diplomatic sources say his office has been exploring the peacekeeping option in a "very serious" manner.

He is understood to have ruled out the use of African troops, who he believes would not be adequately resourced, and troops from neighbouring Arab states, most of which are seen as supporting the rebels.

"Brahimi has asked for the lists of troop-contributing countries, and has already ruled out a number of countries, which essentially leaves European troops," a source said. "He is looking at all options and not putting all his eggs in the peacekeeping basket, but all information points to him exploring the peacekeeping option in a very serious manner."

Mr Brahimi is also understood to have made much more effort to cultivate opposition groups than Mr Annan did, in the hope of getting them to the negotiating table.

At present, though, that seems a distant prospect. Earlier this year rebels refused to take part in a ceasefire, saying they did not trust President Bashar al-Assad's regime to honour it. Since then, they have become much more equal players on the battlefield, whetting their appetite for all-out victory rather than a truce that might leave elements of the regime intact. Any peacekeeping force would also require a mandate from the UN Security Council, two of whose permanent members, Russia and China, back Mr Assad.

Last night, the Turkish prime minister, Tayyip Erdogan, accused the council of inaction over Syria, saying it was repeating mistakes that led to massacres in the Balkans conflict in the 1990s. Ankara had been hopeful that it might

be able to persuade Russia, which sold Syria \$1 billion of arms last year, to soften its opposition to military intervention, including a no-fly zone. But relations with Moscow have deteriorated after Turkey's forcing down of the passenger jet, which Russia insists was carrying only radar components.

Elsewhere in Syria, government forces rained mortar fire down on the Khalidiya neighbourhood of the city of Homs. Meanwhile, Syria's state news agency said Damascus was ready to accept a Russian proposal for a Syrian-Turkish joint security committee to prevent border flare-ups.

--Additional reporting by Richard Spencer in Cairo and Tom Parfitt in Moscow

Yahoo.com
October 13, 2012

11. Iran's Supreme Leader Vows To Defeat Sanctions, Military Threats And 'Soft Wars'

By Ali Akbar Dareini,
Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran - Iran's supreme leader said Saturday that his country will defeat a combination of sanctions, military threats and "soft wars" launched by enemies trying to weaken Iran and force it to back down over its nuclear program.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's remarks, his third public speech in a week, came as tensions rise in the standoff between Iran and the West over Tehran's nuclear program.

They follow a precipitous decline in Iran's currency linked to economic sanctions imposed by the West, as well as remarks by Defence Secretary Leon Panetta highlighting the possibility of a cyberwar between Iran and the United States.

"We should not neglect the enemy. The enemy enters through various ways. One day it's talk of sanctions. Another day it's talk of military aggression. And one day, it's talk of soft war ... We have to be vigilant," state TV quoted Khamenei as saying during a speech in northeast Iran Saturday. "But they should rest assured that ... our enemies will fail in all their conspiracies and tricks."

The U.S. and its allies accuse Iran of using its civilian nuclear program as a cover to develop nuclear weapons. Tehran has denied the charges, saying its program is peaceful and geared toward generating electricity and producing radioisotopes to treat cancer patients.

The West are pursuing a two-pronged strategy that includes a mix of sanctions and diplomacy to try to force Tehran to halt uranium enrichment, a technology that can be used to produce nuclear fuel or materials for use in a warhead.

But the West has not ruled out the possibility of military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities, and Panetta made a pointed warning on Thursday that the U.S. will strike back against a cyberattack, underscoring the Obama administration's growing concern that Iran could be the first country to unleash cyberterrorism on America.

Tehran for its part announces the discovery of computer viruses at nuclear, industrial and government sites. It blames the West and Israel. Israel has said little to deflect suspicion that it tries to infect some Iranian systems.

Iranian leaders have been consistently defiant, announcing measures they say the Islamic Republic is taking to evade sanctions, defeat cyberattacks, and prepare to

repulse or retaliate for a military strike.

"Many politicians ... in the U.S., Britain and other countries ... employed all their might and designs with the assumption they could bring the Islamic Republic and the Iranian nation to its knees. They are gone and even their names are forgotten but the Iranian nation is present by the grace of God," Khamenei said.

Iranian leaders have also argued that it can always find customers for its oil and that the West is hurting itself, more than Iran, by cutting itself off from Iranian crude exports. Khamenei said Wednesday that European countries are "foolish" to support sanctions against Tehran, telling them they are sacrificing themselves for the sake of the United States.

But they also admit that sanctions are taking a bite.

Iran's currency — already in steady decline for months — lost nearly 40 per cent of its value earlier this month. It reached an all-time low of 35,500 to the dollar, down from 24,000 rials days earlier and close to 10,000 rials as recently as early 2011. It's now fluctuating between 29,000 rials to 32,000 rials in the open market. The decline set off limited, one-day protests in Tehran's market district.

The plummet of the rial was blamed on a combination of Iranian government mismanagement and the bite from tighter sanctions. Both measures have reduced the amount of foreign currency coming into the country.

Khamenei urged the nation to consume Iranian products and shun foreign goods to support domestic production.

"We should choose what we consume from among our own products. That some are always after foreign brands

and names is wrong," he said. "Domestic consumption increases domestic production. When domestic production is increased, it will tackle unemployment and reduces inflation. These are all connected to each other."

London Sunday Times
October 14, 2012
Pg. 30

12. Security Shambles As Hezbollah Drone Spies On Israeli Army

By Uzi Mahnaimi

AN IRANIAN drone beamed back live images of secret Israeli military bases in a security debacle that has raised questions about the Jewish state's air defences.

The drone, which was airborne for three hours before being intercepted by an F-16 jet, is believed to have transmitted pictures of preparations for Israel's biggest joint military exercise with the US army, which began last week, as well as ballistic missile sites, main airfields and, possibly, its nuclear reactor in Dimona.

Middle East sources said the drone was launched from Lebanon by technicians from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, with the help of Hezbollah militants. The drone is believed to have been the new Shahed-129, which was unveiled by Tehran last month, with a range of up to 1,200 miles and a flight duration of 24 hours. Trying to explain why the drone was not detected, an Israeli defence source blamed "unfamiliar stealth elements".

Even the interception was botched. A first missile fired by the F-16 jet missed. The drone was brought down at a second attempt.

Another Israeli source compared the humiliation to a Hezbollah attack off the Lebanese coast in 2006, when

an Iranian missile almost crippled Israel's flagship, the Hanit. The ship's missile defence system had been switched off.

Israeli officials initially refused to discuss last Saturday's incursion. But on Thursday, Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, said Hezbollah had been responsible. Iran has supported Hezbollah in Lebanon since the militant group was set up in 1982. Tehran's money has helped to create a formidable military force.

Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the militant group's leader, said the drone, "manufactured in Iran but assembled by the resistance [Hezbollah]", entered Israeli airspace from Lebanon and conducted reconnaissance of "sensitive and important locations". He claimed the Dimona nuclear facility in the Negev desert was one of the sites it flew over.

Hezbollah's television station broadcast animated footage detailing the drone's flight. The station said the drone flew south over the Mediterranean, avoiding detection by Israeli radar before it reached the Gaza Strip. The drone appears to have remained unseen over Gaza before proceeding to the West Bank, where it was shot down. The aircraft had travelled 200 miles, the programme claimed.

Thousands of American and Israeli troops began a joint exercise last week to show their ability to defend the country against a missile attack that is expected to follow any air strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. But an Israeli military observer asked: "How could we defend this country from thousands of rockets and missiles if we can't block a single Iranian drone?"

New York Times

October 14, 2012

Pg. 12

13. 16 Killed In Suicide Attack In Pakistan

By The New York Times

PESHAWAR, Pakistan — A suicide bomber exploded his vehicle at an arms bazaar in northwestern Pakistan on Saturday, killing 16 people and wounding 15, a senior government official said.

Azam Khan, the top government official for home and tribal affairs for Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, said the explosion at the Firdous Arms Market killed mostly local tribesmen. The market is in the semitribal frontier town of Darra Adam Khel, south of Peshawar, the provincial capital.

The target of the attack was not immediately known, Mr. Khan said, but it is generally believed that the bomber was aiming at pro-government Afridi tribesmen who have been fighting Taliban-affiliated groups in the area.

Darra Adam Khel fell under militant control about three years ago and was cleared by an army operation in 2010. But militants affiliated with Tehrik-i-Taliban, known as the Pakistani Taliban, continue to target government officials and their allies, and have also attacked minority sects. Districts near Peshawar have seen a spate of bombings in recent weeks.

Los Angeles Times

October 14, 2012

Pg. 1

14. Girl's Shooting Rallies Her Cause

Attack on Pakistani teen fuels global push for female education

By Scott Gold

Malala Yousafzai did not trade in her modest head scarf

for a pair of skinny jeans. She wanted to go to school.

For that, the Taliban tried to kill her. When her attackers learned that the freckled 14-year-old Pakistani might survive, they promised to finish the job. Malala, they explained, had been "promoting Western culture."

The Taliban has committed all manner of atrocities over the years, many of them aimed at women. This time, the militants created an icon for a global movement -- for the notion that the most efficient way to propel developing countries is to educate their girls. The idea has been flourishing in some of the world's most destitute and volatile places. Today, courtesy of the Pakistani Taliban, it has a face.

"People think 'Western values' is wearing jeans and sipping pop. Malala was doing none of that," said Murtaza Haider, a Pakistan native and the associate dean of research and graduate programs at the Ted Rogers School of Management at Toronto's Ryerson University. "All she said was: 'Would you be kind enough to reopen my school?' This is what the Taliban thinks is a 'Western value.' This is not a Western value. This is a universal value."

Pakistan's Swat Valley, where Malala grew up, is rich in agriculture and minerals, and ringed like a halo by mountains with perennial snow. There are falcons and peridot-colored lakes, and, for a time, there was the country's only ski resort. Queen Elizabeth II visited in the 1960s.

Then, in 2003, came an arm of the Taliban, which imposed strict religious law, as it had in neighboring Afghanistan. Music was banned. Men would wear beards. And girls would no longer go to school.

This last bit did not sit well with Malala. When she was all of 11 years old, she started a diary about life under the Taliban's thumb.

Entries in that diary were published by the BBC. Malala became something of a celebrity, featured in documentaries, insisting to visiting journalists that she still had rights -- "to play," she said, "to sing." Most of all: "I have the right of education." She knew she was risking her life, telling a reporter at one point that if the Taliban tried to kill her, "I'll first say to them: 'What you're doing is wrong.'"

The communications revolution that is the hallmark of Malala's generation has not yet lived up to its promise of transforming the world economy. But it has ushered in an age of instantaneous, worldwide conversation. When replacement referees in the NFL bungle crucial calls, the debate is won at the moment it begins, and the regular refs are promptly brought back in. When politicians dismiss half the country as "victims" or deliver a lackluster debate performance, the public verdict is delivered swiftly.

Malala lived in one of the few places where that conversation still doesn't resonate. But she had unwittingly tapped into that revolution -- and was back in school when she was shot and critically wounded last week. She didn't know it, but she had a voice powerful enough to contest the Taliban.

Years before she was born, anecdotal evidence collected by development programs suggested the importance of educating girls. Knowledge in girls' heads often meant money in their pockets. And women tended to invest not in themselves, but in their

communities -- in healthcare, for instance, or nutrition.

Researchers developed metrics to measure the effect. Educated women were more skilled and could make more money, but they also married later and raised healthier children. They had lower rates of disease. Extrapolate from there and the results ballooned from primary education to more efficient local government, even democratic reform.

That movement has caught fire.

In 2009, the book "Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide" made the compelling argument that this is the defining social issue of the 21st century, as rejecting slavery defined the 19th and fighting totalitarianism defined the 20th.

The book spawned a television series that aired this fall. A film, "Girl Rising," documenting the struggles of girls seeking an education, is to arrive in theaters next spring and air on CNN. The movie is the centerpiece of 10x10, a global action campaign for girls education.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has steered the weight of the U.S. government toward the issue, and more foreign aid has been earmarked for girls education. Corporate partners have signed on to the cause.

"It's just that moment, the moment when you put your finger on the pulse of the problem," said Maro Chermayeff, executive producer of "Half the Sky's" outreach effort. "People are starting to understand that incredible untapped potential -- the army of change that girls can be."

Richard Robbins, director of "Girl Rising," now has a photo of Malala on his desk in

Los Angeles. Traveling to Haiti, Sierra Leone and elsewhere for the film, Robbins said he found that girls encountered a host of obstacles to education: geographic isolation, for instance, or the sense that school is not a good investment because there's no job at the other end.

"But there are very few people in the world now who are actually against education," Robbins said. "This idea that it's dangerous for a girl to have knowledge -- this is the last gasp of that idea, which was pretty prevalent 200 years ago, everywhere in the world."

There is always room for cynicism in Malala's corner of the world. Pakistan has blown numerous opportunities to combat extremism. With the planned withdrawal of Western troops from Afghanistan, some see an opening for more Taliban influence in the region, not less. As one Pakistani journalist tweeted: "For everyone who seems to think Malala's assassination attempt is some 'moment' -- Pakistan had lots of them and guess what happened? Nothing."

But even some hardened observers see suggestions of lasting effects. Women have protested with signs assailing the Taliban by name -- unthinkable in some pockets of Pakistan. Few thought that a promised reward for information leading to Malala's assailants would do any good. On Friday, police announced that several men had been detained.

"There's definitely international condemnation, but in equal amount there's condemnation in Pakistan," said Shamila Chaudhary, a former director for Pakistan and Afghanistan at the White House National Security Council, now a senior South Asia fellow at the New America Foundation.

Some believe the attempt to kill Malala could propel the girls education movement into the Swat Valley -- and then, perhaps, pose an existential threat to the Taliban.

Shabana Basij-Rasikh attended college in the U.S. and has returned home to Afghanistan to open one of that nation's first boarding schools for girls. Students who live in regions under Taliban control attend in secret, she said. Some hide their school books in grocery bags, just as she did when she grew up under Taliban rule.

"What Malala has achieved, the military could not," Basij-Rasikh said.

Los Angeles Times
October 14, 2012

Pg. 17

15. Guantanamo Hearings Reopen Monday

By Richard A. Serrano

FT. MEADE, MD.-- Pretrial hearings for Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and four other alleged top Al Qaeda operatives reopen Monday morning with a military commission judge expected to rule on numerous key disputes in the capital murder case for those accused of planning, financing and preparing the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The hearings at the U.S. Naval Base on Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, over the next five days will center on whether a top CIA official who oversaw the waterboarding of Mohammed should be compelled to testify about the harsh technique and whether public comments by President George W. Bush and other members of his administration so prejudiced the defendants' rights to a fair trial that the case itself should be thrown out.

Also at issue before Judge James L. Pohl, an Army colonel with a law degree from Pepperdine University, is the often-belligerent courthouse demeanor of Mohammed and the others, and whether they have been treated inhumanely over the years at the island prison and now are psychologically unable to understand the case against them.

The weeklong hearings will mark the first time the defendants have been in court since May. At that time they appeared for a marathon arraignment session on an 87-page charge sheet that included conspiracy, murder, aircraft hijacking and terrorism. About 3,000 people died in the attacks, and the charges carry the death penalty. A trial is tentatively set for next May.

Mohammed is the accused mastermind of the attacks, serving just under Osama bin Laden. The others are Ramzi Binalshib, the alleged plot cell manager, Walid bin Attash, an alleged Al Qaeda training camp steward, and Ammar al Baluchi, a.k.a. Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, and Mustafa Ahmed Hawsawi, both alleged Al Qaeda financiers.

WTOP.com

October 13, 2012

16. Military Members Get Voting Help From Pentagon

By J.J. Green

WASHINGTON - Some active duty members of the military have found themselves deployed away from home when they realize, they forgot to register to vote and have not filed an absentee ballot.

The Pentagon is responding to concerns coming from some service members that they won't be able to vote in the upcoming Presidential election.

"It's absolutely not too late," says Erin Conaton, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel at the Department of Defense. "We encourage them to go to our website to be sure when their state deadline is."

For those whose state deadlines have passed, Conaton says, "In a worst case scenario where they do not receive their ballot in time, there is a write-in ballot option."

She says it doesn't matter where the active-duty service member is.

"Whether they're here in the United States, or whether they're deployed overseas, or on a ship in the middle of the ocean," she says there are 221 voter offices worldwide available for service members.

And random checks are conducted to ensure each office is operating.

"Each and every week, we call every single of those 221 offices across the country and around the world to make sure that there's somebody there answering the phone, ready to be there when a service member would call," Conaton says.

The spot checks will continue until after the election.

More information is available at the Federal Voting Assistance Program website or call 1-800-438-VOTE.

Omaha World-Herald

October 13, 2012

17. StratCom Celebrates Start Of New Headquarters Project

By John Ferak, World-Herald Staff Writer

With Friday's groundbreaking for a new U.S. Strategic Command headquarters concluded, construction details and a timeline on the project need to be determined in the coming weeks.

And one of the key challenges for the military personnel at Offutt Air Force Base is ensuring the safety of the critical building project for the nation's nuclear defense and cybersecurity.

Gen. C. Robert Kehler, commander of StratCom, told reporters Friday that military personnel will have an important task of monitoring the construction site "from beginning to end" for security. "We don't want to have some unfortunate devices placed into it," Kehler said.

Incidentally, an hour after the groundbreaking, a military dog alerted authorities to a suspicious package inside a commercial vehicle, prompting a brief building evacuation near the base's entrance.

During the ceremony, Kehler told an audience of 200 state and local dignitaries that he would ensure construction remains on a tight schedule and within budget. The building is estimated to cost \$524.4 million, excluding hundreds of millions of dollars of technology inside it.

Construction of the approximately 1 million-square-foot facility isn't slated for completion for another four years.

"It is the largest (current) construction project in the Air Force, and it will be for many years," Kehler said. "Our job is to validate this wise investment."

Kehler said StratCom has had a critical role in protecting the country from the threat of nuclear attack, but it has been 20 years since the Cold War ended.

The current headquarters opened in the late 1950s with a projected 25-year lifetime. In those days, telephones and typewriters were in their heyday, and computers occupied an entire room.

"We know things are different today," Kehler said.

Today's military faces "a rapidly evolving threat" from violent extremists who can engage in cyberattacks.

The new command and control facility at Offutt is expected to greatly enhance StratCom's ability to defend the nation and its allies. Information technology upgrades were the driving force behind the new headquarters.

U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., said the new headquarters will position StratCom "today, tomorrow and into the future" to be the country's leader in cyber-defense.

At times, though, it was a battle to convince Congress that Bellevue was the right site for the headquarters, Nelson told the crowd.

"We persevered," Nelson said. "We did push hard for this because StratCom is a necessity."

Gov. Dave Heineman said the headquarters will provide StratCom with greater mission capability for decades.

"StratCom's mission has expanded ... farther into the space and cybermissions, requiring this state-of-the-art facility to synchronize operations that defend the United States from our adversaries and to preserve peace and freedom throughout the world," Heineman said.

Terry said the new StratCom headquarters will play a key role in defending the freedom for all U.S. citizens. The new facility will usher in a new era for StratCom, Terry said.

"Technology is more important today than it ever has been in defending America," Terry said. "As a local boy, I am extremely proud that StratCom will be here for the next generation."

Both Terry and U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, R-Neb., praised Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., for championing efforts in Washington, D.C., to secure funding for the project. Terry said that even as late as 2011, there were behind-the-scenes efforts by some congressional delegations from other states to "steal" the project from Offutt, or second-guess the decision to put the new headquarters here.

"Ben, you did a great job in leading this effort," Terry told Nelson. "We are just so proud. Thank you all for making this happen."

KiewitPhelps, a partnership including Omaha's Kiewit Corp., was awarded the contract for the new StratCom headquarters. Current StratCom operations employ 1,700 military personnel and civilians. The total is expected to grow when the new headquarters is operational.

Nelson told the crowd, "This is a great day. Never before has the role and mission StratCom been more important than today."

Nelson recited the history of StratCom and spoke about the military base's tremendous impact on the local economy.

Nelson said it was an incredible feat to secure funding for the massive construction project.

"It was a wise decision to make," he said. "We did push hard for this."

Nelson joked that he had received one complaint about the project from the U.S. Golf Association. They were disappointed to learn that the nine-hole golf course on the base was being removed.

"You're supposed to laugh at that," Nelson told the crowd to a roar of laughter.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
October 14, 2012

18. Marine's Death Remembered Not As A Shame, But As An Honor

By Sean D. Hamill, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

When he died Sept. 14 while organizing fellow Marines to resist a Taliban attack on his air base in Afghanistan, Lt. Col. Christopher K. "Otis" Raible, of Irwin, was one of the highest-ranking Marines to be killed during combat in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

During a series of poignant and moving speeches given during a memorial service Saturday at Norwin High School attended by about 500 friends, family and members of the community, the heroic way Lt. Col. Raible died was described and cheered.

But his friends, family, local officials and Marine brothers who spoke during the 2 1/2 hour ceremony wanted to talk mainly about how he lived: his goofy, "wicked sense of humor;" how he outworked other, more talented players to start on the Norwin High School football team; the fun he had with his daughters at a Daddy-Daughter Dance in Arizona; how he once stood up for a friend during a heated pickup basketball game; how he'd listen to Steelers games while flying his AV8 Harrier jet; how he doled out meaningful philosophy to pilots under his command on the eve of battle.

They were the kinds of stories his parents, Kim and Al Raible, hoped everyone would bring to the ceremony, that was complete with a military color guard, the playing of taps and a photo montage of his life that had the audience alternately crying and laughing.

"This is what has held us together," Mrs. Raible said Saturday. "I guess I just didn't know how many people cared,

how many people loved him and how many people understood his sacrifice."

He was buried Oct. 3 in Arlington National Cemetery. His wife and three young children (ages 11, 9 and 2) could not attend Saturday's memorial at the high school because they were attending the Miramar Air Show in Southern California that was dedicated in his honor.

The attendance at the high school memorial "is clearly a testament to how many lives he touched," his wife, Donnella, said in an email. "He loved North Huntingdon and Pittsburgh. He was always talking about what a great place Pittsburgh is. And of course, he was a huge fan of the Steelers and the Pens."

The brave actions that led to his death have not gone unnoticed by the Marines.

Lt. Col. Raible was already highly decorated as a combat pilot and squadron commander of the only Harrier squad in Afghanistan, Marine Attack Squadron 211 Avengers. For his actions on Sept. 14, he was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart, a Bronze Star, Combat Action Ribbon and an Air Medal with Strike 15 Award.

The conflict began when 15 members of the Taliban, dressed as U.S. military, cut a fence that ringed the base. They stormed a line of planes and helicopters there, destroying six Harrier jets and damaging two more, causing more than \$200 million in damages that U.S. Rep. Tim Murphy, R-Upper St. Clair, said was the single largest loss of U.S. military aircraft since the Vietnam War.

Lt. Col. Raible and another Marine, Sgt. Bradley W. Atwell, were killed by an exploding grenade, but not before Lt. Col. Raible's fellow Marines reported that his quick organization played a

significant role in containing the enemy before the Taliban were finally defeated.

"So, when the bad guys got to the gate, and they were attacking those airplanes, Chris Raible made a decision," Marine Lt. Gen. Jon M. Davis, deputy commander, U.S. Cyber Command, told the audience Saturday. "It was dark. It was chaotic. One man, one man with courage, Chris Raible, took charge. He organized those Marines and led a counterattack. He was killed in the process of doing that.

"His Marines cried at his loss. I cried at his loss. His family cried at his loss," Lt. Gen. Davis said. "They lost a great leader."

A fellow pilot, Col. T.J. Dunne, told the audience that many people will say of Lt. Col. Raible's death: "It's a shame."

"But I would say shame is on the complete opposite spectrum from what Otis did," Col. Dunne said through his tears.

Instead, because he died defending his fellow citizens, Lt. Col. Raible's death "was an honor."

A cousin, Duane Raible, used a visual to drive this point home, putting a picture of Lt. Col. Raible on a large video screen behind him on the auditorium stage, with a list of the various names and titles he was known by before asking the audience: "Please stand and applaud loudly his new title: 'Our Family's American Hero.'"

The crowd enthusiastically agreed, leaping to their feet and applauding as he requested, loudly.

Lt. Col. Raible is one of the highest ranking Marines to die during combat since the wars began in Iraq nine years ago and in Afghanistan 11 years ago, according to the U.S. Office of the Secretary of Defense. Only three other Marine officers of

the same rank have been killed in action in Iraq or Afghanistan, and none of a higher rank, though one colonel died in a non-hostile incident in Iraq.

Lt. Col. Raible was also an instructor pilot at the Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One -- known as MAWTS-1 -- which is the Marine Corp's version of the Navy's TOPGUN training program for the best of the best pilots.

Not that any of his non-military friends knew that he was that important in the military.

"I didn't realize until he died how high up he was in the military," his lifelong friend, Art Pancost said prior to the ceremony, "because he never mentioned it."

What they all knew, though, was something Mr. Murphy said during his remarks: "He was a natural leader," a theme many of the speakers came back to.

Jim Garrett, head of the civil and environmental engineering department at Carnegie Mellon University, from which Lt. Col. Raible graduated with honors in 1995, said during the summer of 1993, Lt. Col. Raible was the leader of a group of six students who renovated a laboratory as part of his work-study program.

It could have been just a burdensome, tiring project, but "under Chris' leadership, the group bonded," and remained in touch 19 years later.

Mr. Garrett told the audience that CMU was establishing an alumni award for distinguished public service in Lt. Col. Raible's name, and naming him its first recipient.

And for all of those who spoke, hearing how he died running toward the terrorists was not a surprising story, even for those who never served in the military with him.

"You bet that was the guy I knew," Mr. Pancost told the crowd.

Newport News Daily Press
October 14, 2012

19. Norfolk-Based Attack Sub And Cruiser Collide

Crews of the USS Montpelier and the USS San Jacinto are not injured

By Michael Welles Shapiro

The Newport News-built USS Montpelier attack submarine collided with a guided missile cruiser Saturday afternoon, according to the Navy.

A news release said no personnel on either the sub or the cruiser USS San Jacinto were hurt during the crash. It also says the Montpelier's nuclear propulsion plant "was unaffected by this collision."

The collision occurred at around 3:30 p.m., and the crews of the sub and the cruiser, both of which are homeported in Norfolk, were doing routine training, according to the release.

The Navy is currently investigating the cause of the crash.

The submarine, nicknamed the Mighty Monty, was built by Newport News Shipbuilding and commissioned in 1993. It is part of the Los Angeles class of fast attack submarines.

The San Jacinto was built by Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Miss., and commissioned in 1988.

Dayton Daily News
October 14, 2012

20. BATMAN Labs Makes Gear That Helps Warfighters

By Barrie Barber, Staff writer

WRIGHT-PATTERSON
AIR FORCE BASE -- The Air Force Research Laboratory's

"BATMAN lab" has an expanded mission to make the job of Air Force rescuers easier on the ground.

The high-tech Wright-Patterson laboratory -- short for Battlefield Air Targeting Man-Aided kNOWLEDGE -- was given the go-ahead this month for four more years to create new technologies for combat forward air controllers and pararescuemen. Forward air controllers aid aircraft in targeting locations, and pararescue crews find and recover downed airmen.

The lab has outfitted literally outfitted the "warfighter" from head to toe, with a helmet-mounted Heads-Up Display to heated boot insoles.

"Ounces are pounds to our operators, so anything we shed off (can) make them more effective in the field," said Gregory Burnett, BATMAN chief engineer.

Among other innovations, the lab has worked with high-tech companies to develop a small, chest-mounted laptop computer and a device known as the "bat hook" that clips onto a power line to let special operators recharge batteries, Burnett said.

The goal of smaller, lighter and portable gives troops the flexibility to carry other things, he said.

"We're adding all these advanced portable technologies to increase survivability and lethality," he said.

Jill Ritter, BATMAN program manager, declined to disclose the program's budget.

Some of the high-tech products have made it onto commercial store shelves.

The General Dynamics Itronix laptops, which produces the military's wearable computers, have been used by civilian police forces and utility maintenance crews,

and Gerbing's heated insoles are available commercially, according to the Air Force.

Defense Research Associates of Beavercreek has worked with the BATMAN lab on several projects, such as the bat hook. The laboratory has not only solved problems for the Air Force but brought needed skills to the region, said David McDaniel, the company's electrical group manager.

"Our skill sets have been improved significantly based on tackling these type of developments for AFRL," McDaniel said.

The warfighter helps test and evaluate performance before the final product gets produced, Burnett said.

With the added, the lab has started work on medical-related issues such as finding ways a pararescueman, or PJ, can use small, mobile physiological devices to monitor several patients simultaneously, Burnett said.

Research may take three months to two years on an emerging technology or device, he said.

The lab has developed a tactical vest to ease weight distribution, wrist mounts with microcomputers and displays, and a wireless data/audio link to reduce the number of cables or "snakes" on a uniform.

Other advances have improved audio files to record voice notes and so-called 3-D audio to improve soldiers situational awareness in the field, according to the Air Force.

"We're researching the whole spectrum," Burnett said. "What ultimately gets produced, time will tell."

Tampa Tribune
October 14, 2012

21. Airmen Tackle Weapons Course Reflective Of Modern Combat

By Howard Altman

TAMPA -- Sr. Airman Daniel Rivera pointed an M4 rifle at the mock threat, squeezed the trigger and, "pop, pop, pop," fired a three-round burst of 5.56-mm ammunition at the target.

Today at MacDill Air Force Base, Rivera, a reservist with the 927th Air Refueling Wing, was trying to pass the U.S. Air Force Rifle/Carbine Qualification Course by, among other tests, tightly bunching his shots on paper targets known as "green Ernies" while moving, standing and kneeling.

For Rivera, who in January will deploy to an undisclosed location, it is a new experience.

A concrete laborer in civilian life, Rivera never had fired an M4. He is one of the first airmen to use the base's South Range since it was refurbished with a new range tower, years of lead residue removed and a new system that filters cordite and other chemicals from the air.

The range re-opened this week.

The qualification course was launched at MacDill in July 2011, and the wing became the first reserve unit to mandate all deploying airman take and pass it.

The course is designed to ensure airmen are effective riflemen in modern combat situations. It now is required of all active duty and reserve airmen.

"This course is much more realistic," said Tech. Sgt. Christopher Cratty, the senior instructor for the wing's combat arms section.

Instead of firing M-16s long distances at plain paper targets, the course teaches airmen how to find and hit

targets in urban settings -- where gunmen and their targets usually are at closer range and civilians often are nearby.

On this day, Rivera and Sr. Airman Mark Randell, who will deploy in December, donned full battle gear and ran through various shooting scenarios.

One has the airmen shooting at a target at 25 meters with six markings, forcing them quickly to aim and fire up one side of the target and down the other. That, Cratty said, helps them learn how to handle threats in a situation resembling what they might find in combat.

Another exercise, which Cratty refers to as the "line dance," teaches airman how to slip from behind a wall, fire quick and accurate shots, and duck back behind the wall.

"We instruct them to fire three-shot bursts," said Cratty. "Back in Vietnam it was learned that troops fired about 700 shots per kill. That was a waste of ammo."

The airmen wear gas masks while tackling the test scenarios.

Both Rivera and Randell work in transportation logistics; most of their reserve duties entail packing and shipping military supplies. And even though both men say they are going places where combat is unlikely, the training is required because in modern warfare, front lines can be anywhere.

"We train as we fight," said Cratty.

Rivera, who had not fired any weapon since his M-16 training in 2008, said the training is a good idea.

"I feel more confident," he said while loading bullets into the M-4's 30-round magazine.

After hours of testing Saturday, both men passed their tests.

Los Angeles Times
October 14, 2012

Pg. 12

22. Defense Cuts Prompt Blame Game

A last-minute reprieve is likely, but the issue is still being used as campaign fodder.

By David S. Cloud

WASHINGTON--"Unthinkable," declares Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney. "A disaster," predicts Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta. "Devastating," agrees Sen. John McCain. "Deeply destructive," warns President Obama.

America's longest wars are finally ending, but politicians from both parties worry about the strange new peril facing the Pentagon: impending automatic budget cuts.

Unless Congress and the White House reach a compromise, Pentagon spending will be slashed by \$54 billion on Jan. 2. That could force layoffs of 100,000 Defense Department civilian employees, devastate vast parts of the defense industry, and affect purchases of ships, planes and almost everything else the world's largest military buys.

That prospect is so politically unpleasant as the nation fights deep unemployment that defense contractors, Pentagon officials and members of Congress say a last-minute reprieve is almost a certainty when Congress convenes in a lame-duck session after election day.

"There's about a 90% chance it will never happen," said Gordon Adams, a defense budget expert at American University and a former senior official at the Office of Management and Budget.

That isn't stopping dire warnings and raw accusations on the campaign trail.

Romney, who vows to boost defense spending, has charged repeatedly that the cuts are the product of a White

House plan to weaken defense. The administration, in turn, has blamed the Republican-led House, including Romney's running mate, Rep. Paul D. Ryan of Wisconsin, for forcing the cuts.

Lost in the finger-pointing: Leaders of both parties agreed to the automatic spending cuts, known as sequestration, in acrimonious and ultimately unsuccessful negotiations last year between the White House and Congress to reach a grand bargain to lower the federal deficit.

They agreed to cut nearly \$1 trillion in planned federal spending, including \$487 billion at the Pentagon. But they also agreed on the need to trim \$1.2 trillion more over the next decade. The White House insisted that half of the savings should come from domestic programs and half from the military, in a deliberate attempt to ensure it doesn't happen.

Ripping up the defense budget was so unpalatable, the thinking went, that it would force both parties to compromise and reach a comprehensive deal that addresses taxes, mandatory spending on Social Security and Medicare, and other areas of the federal budget.

So far, it hasn't worked.

"They insisted upon [defense cuts] ... in the debt negotiations," Ryan said in the vice presidential debate Thursday night, repeating Romney's charge that the White House wants "devastating cuts on our military."

Vice President Joe Biden shot back that Ryan, chairman of the House Budget Committee, had supported the deal that ordered the automatic cuts on the Pentagon budget.

The most likely outcome is a quick fix to delay the cuts and provide more time to craft

a deficit-reduction deal. But the timing, and the final deal, may depend on who wins the White House next month.

"If Obama is elected, I don't see the Republicans suddenly caving" and agreeing to raise taxes to reach a deficit deal, said Todd Harrison, a defense budget analyst with the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a Washington think tank. "If Romney wins, the Republicans may want to wait until he gets into office to make a deal."

If sequestration occurs, the Pentagon budget would be capped at \$491 billion for 2013, down from the \$546 billion that the Obama administration is seeking next year for national defense.

The war in Afghanistan doesn't count against the cap and military pay is also protected. But almost every other account in the Pentagon budget would be trimmed the same -- slightly more than 10% -- to get down to the cap, Harrison said.

"Having the flexibility to target the cuts would make a huge difference," he added.

In inflation-adjusted dollars, the Pentagon budget is now the largest since World War II. Most of the money goes to defense contractors for expensive new weapons systems, like the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter under development, as well as to medical and retirement benefits for troops and their families.

The defense budget is so large -- more than \$610 billion this year -- and the annual federal deficit so deep that many experts believe the Pentagon will face further cuts in the eventual budget deal, no matter who wins.

"It's almost like Newtonian gravity," said Adams, the defense budget expert. After more than a decade of two

wars, U.S. troops are out of Iraq and are leaving Afghanistan, so the Pentagon's needs will shrink unless another major conflict drives spending back up.

Some defense budget experts think the Pentagon could easily absorb spending cuts of 10% or more as the wars recede. But the inflexibility of automatic cuts would be harsh for the military and the defense industry, which has grown accustomed to lavish budgets.

Industry executives have tried to pressure Congress and the White House, warning that the sequester would require widespread layoffs at defense plants around the country. Other experts say layoffs probably would be gradual because most funding on major weapons contracts is paid out over years.

Washington Post
October 14, 2012
Pg. 15

23. As U.S. Seeks Bigger Imprint In Asia, India Remains An Unknown

By Simon Denyer and Rama Lakshmi

NEW DELHI — If the soaring rhetoric of their burgeoning partnership is to be believed, India is the linchpin of Washington's strategic pivot toward Asia.

But it has become apparent that New Delhi is ambivalent about playing a leading role in Washington's new "rebalancing" act. So much so that some U.S. analysts are questioning whether India will ever be a dependable strategic partner for the United States, and whether New Delhi will ever match its global ambitions with a leadership role on the world stage.

"The U.S.-India strategic partnership came with great hype about India's potential contribution to U.S. interests,"

Colin Geraghty of the American Security Project in Washington said in a report this month, adding that a "sense of disappointment" has set in.

In Washington, analysts and business leaders have expressed disappointment in the past two years over the pace of reform in India, the lack of progress in civil nuclear cooperation and India's continuing engagement with Iran. While the longer-term logic of the relationship remains firmly intact, there is a growing sense that India will never be a truly trusted ally.

The U.S. strategic rebalance reflects the Obama administration's belief that the center of gravity of American foreign and economic policy has shifted toward Asia and that maintaining peace in the Asia-Pacific has become increasingly important as a result of China's rapid rise.

In one of the few concrete measures announced so far, the U.S. Navy will gradually move more of its ships to the region, deploying 60 percent of its fleet there by 2020.

"India clearly plays an important role in our rebalance," Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter said in an e-mail interview, looking to it as an "anchor of regional stability ... and a partner on issues in the Indian Ocean and beyond."

Privately, some senior Indian officials say they would welcome a stronger American presence in the region — New Delhi shares a strong strategic interest in hedging against China's rise and in maintaining open sea lanes and free commerce throughout the region.

Publicly, though, the reaction has been distinctly lukewarm, with Adm. Nirmal Kumar Verma, then Indian naval chief, delivering what

Indian media called a “snub” in August, when he said deployment in the Pacific and South China Sea was “not on the cards.”

“We want strategic autonomy,” retired Indian diplomat T.P. Sreenivasan said in Washington last month, according to a Foreign Policy blog post. “We don’t want to be identified with U.S. policy in Asia, even if we secretly like it.”

India’s reluctance to tie itself to the U.S. mast is partly a legacy of its Cold War antipathy toward Washington and distrust stemming from the imposition of American sanctions after India’s nuclear tests in 1974 and 1998.

India has also watched nervously in recent years as President Obama first courted China and then as he seemed to move toward a policy of containment.

The strategic rebalance has inflamed nationalist sentiment in China, and there is a sense in New Delhi that a little distance from the occasionally clumsy Americans is a generally sound foreign policy approach — especially when India shares a long, disputed border with the Chinese.

“India is a little wary about both the U.S. and China,” said retired Commodore C. Uday Bhaskar, a senior fellow at the Society for Policy Studies in New Delhi. “India would not want to be in a position where it is forced to defer to China, or make China belligerent by joining a formal military alliance with the U.S.”

U.S. officials acknowledge that the two democracies will not agree on every issue but emphasize their respect for India’s “strategic autonomy” and shared interests.

Nevertheless, with Marines deploying to Australia, the positioning of coastal combat

ships in Singapore, and the Philippines reopening old bases to U.S. forces, “questions may arise in the U.S. security establishment and Asia about what India’s enduring contributions will be to this endeavour,” S. Amer Latif, a visiting fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, wrote in a report this year. Growing frustration

Washington is not demanding any specific commitments from the Indians as part of the rebalance, but officials and defense manufacturers have expressed frustration over India’s refusal to sign two key defense agreements usually demanded of U.S. allies — enabling seamless communications between the two militaries’ weapons systems and guaranteeing mutual “logistical support.”

Defense trade between the two nations is booming, and India conducts more joint military exercises with the United States than with any other country, but experts say military ties still lack a strategic and political underpinning.

India’s tentative “Look East” policy, which is supposed to foster closer ties with East and Southeast Asia, has also disappointed some U.S. officials and strategic experts who would like to see New Delhi forging closer trade and security links with America’s Asian allies.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton gave a New Delhi a nudge last year, urging it “not just to look east, but to engage east and act east, as well.”

“You can see frustration in Washington because people are not entirely clear what India wants,” said Harsh V. Pant, a lecturer in the Department of Defense Studies in King’s College London, who says

strategic autonomy effectively means India wants friendly relations with everybody. “That means you are not ready to make choices.”

At a seminar last week, Indian National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon spoke of the “remarkable transformation” that had taken place in U.S.-India relations over the past decade, buttressed by a shared vision and a shared set of values.

And Richard Fontaine, president of the Center for a New American Security, said it would be wrong to give up on India.

“It’s easy to get caught up in the short-term frustrations ... but the strategic logic that brings these two countries together is sound,” he said. “People are increasingly viewing India with more of a sense of realism than romanticism.”

Japan Times
October 14, 2012

24. Joint Drill With U.S. Will 'Retake' Remote Okinawa Island

By Kyodo

Japan and the United States are planning to hold a joint drill in Okinawa next month in which troops would “retake” an uninhabited island from foreign forces, bilateral sources said Saturday.

While Tokyo and Washington said the exercise has not been designed with a specific location in mind, the first-ever drill to be held on a remote Japanese island under this scenario appears to be heavily influenced by the territorial flareup over the Senkaku Islands, the sources said.

As the drill will inevitably anger China, which claims the Japan-controlled Senkakus in the East China Sea and

was infuriated by Japan’s nationalization of three of the disputed islets last month, the exercise could take place unannounced so as not to worsen Tokyo’s strained ties with Beijing.

The drill is part of a joint bilateral exercise to be held from Nov. 5 to 16, and would take place in the latter stages, the sources said.

The main participants would be U.S. troops from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Force and personnel from the Ground Self-Defense Force’s Western Army stationed in Sasebo, Nagasaki Prefecture, whose duties include defending remote islands.

In the drill, Japanese and U.S. troops would use boats and choppers to land on an isle occupied by foreign forces and retake it.

According to the sources, the exercise would likely be held on tiny Irisuna Island, part of the village of Tonaki in Okinawa Prefecture and located 60 km west of Okinawa Island.

Pacific Daily News (Guam)
October 13, 2012

25. Andersen May House Marines: Northwest Field Could Be Firing Range Site

By Brett Kelman, Pacific Daily News

The military is reconsidering the placement of a proposed Marine base, but most of the Marines will rotate through Andersen Air Force Base, so the military likely prefers to keep the base on the island’s north end, said a local buildup expert.

Mark Calvo, who is the governor’s buildup director, said that rotational Marines should be coming and going through Andersen on a regular basis. The buildup is expected to bring 5,000 Marines to

Guam, and two-thirds of those troops will be rotational, according to the Joint Guam Program Office.

The regular rotation flights could be a major factor in the placement of the Marine base, also known as the main cantonment, Calvo said. Proximity to Andersen would give some options "leverage" over others, Calvo said.

"If that is the primary way of moving these rotational forces out -- two thirds, or 3,000 -- it would seem logical to place the cantonment area as close as possible to Andersen."

On Thursday, the Joint Guam Program Office announced that it was considering five options for the base, although none of them were preferred over any others. The options are: Naval Base Guam, the area known as Radio Barrigada, two options at Naval Computer and Telecommunication Station -- one of which includes military property in the South Finegayan area -- and Andersen Air Force base itself.

Andersen's "Northwest Field" area also is an option for the Marine firing range. The military already has begun construction of a Marine aviation complex in Andersen's North Ramp area.

That means the Marines could potentially fly into, live on and train on Andersen.

Although the military announced Thursday that it will reconsider Andersen as an option for the Marine base and the firing range, this idea isn't new.

Three powerful members of the U.S. Senate -- Sens. John McCain, Jim Webb and Carl Levin -- previously urged the military to consider alternative buildup plans that include Andersen Air Force Base. After visiting the air base in 2011, the senators issued a

statement that said the base was "underutilized."

Andersen amounts to about 15,400 acres of land, making it the largest military property on Guam, according to the environmental impact statement.

Firing range

Almost a third of that base area is known as "Northwest Field," which is a World War II-era airfield. Most of this area is used for maneuver training -- including navigation, survival skills, perimeter defense and even pyrotechnics firing -- but now this area is being considered for a Marine firing range.

The military plans to gather comments on this firing range location -- and six other possible range configurations -- over the next few years. The first public meetings will be held next month.

In 2009, when the military was planning for a larger buildup, Northwest Field was briefly considered as a firing range location. However, the airfield was dismissed because it was deemed too close to munitions storage, aviation training areas and habitat for endangered species.

However, the military now is planning the firing range using a different modeling program, which means the range safety zones are smaller. Because of this, the Joint Guam Program Office is considering areas that were previously deemed too small.

For the firing range, the military also will consider two configurations along Route 15, three configurations at Naval Magazine and a previously dismissed option at Naval Computer and Telecommunication Station.

At this point, the military is considering all of these options, for both the Marine base and the firing range, from a wide

perspective, said Maj. Darren Alvarez, deputy director of JGPO Forward.

The military isn't closed to demolishing existing buildings to make room for Marine structures, but this strategy could increase the cost of projects significantly, Alvarez said.

"It's not just a matter of finding the available green space. It might be as much as wipe out what is partially there and then re-creating," Alvarez said.

Miami Herald
October 14, 2012
Pg. 1

26. Secret Nukes: The Untold Story Of The Cuban Missile Crisis

It was October 1962. The Missile Crisis had just been defused when Khrushchev, eyeball to eyeball with JFK, blinked. But 100 tactical warheads remained on the island -- and the U.S. had no clue.

By Juan O. Tamayo

The Cuban Missile Crisis had just ended, with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's promise to President John F. Kennedy on Oct. 28 1962 that he was withdrawing his strategic nuclear weapons from the island.

But nearly 100 smaller Soviet nuclear warheads were also in Cuba, unknown to the U.S. government at the time and for decades into the future.

Fidel Castro wanted desperately to keep them.

Had Castro prevailed, Cuba would have become a nuclear power. And if Kennedy had known that Khrushchev had all but lied on Oct. 28, the hawks in Washington might have won their push for an all-out U.S. invasion of the island.

Instead, Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Anastas

Mikoyan, sensing that the "hothead" Castro could not be trusted with any nuclear weapons, got them out of Cuba after telling him that Soviet law did not permit the transfer of nuclear weapons to other countries.

"It is a pity. And when are you going to repeal that law?" Castro asked Mikoyan during a tense meeting on Nov. 22, 1962, according to a new book by his son, Sergo Mikoyan, and researcher Svetlana Savranskaya.

It's been 50 years since the Cuban Missile Crisis, Oct. 16-28, when the world came closer than ever to a U.S.-Soviet nuclear war and nightmarish terms like Armageddon and "mutually assured destruction" — MAD — became almost real.

Research in recent years has shown the crisis impacted a broader swath of the world than previously known, said James Hershberg, editor of the book series published by the Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington.

Moscow's concessions to Kennedy likely pushed North Korea to launch its own search for nuclear weapons, one study showed. Another argued that it led North Vietnam to step up its armed campaign against the south.

But Sergo Mikoyan's book, *The Soviet-Cuba Missile Crisis*, focuses on the crisis in Havana in November of 1962, as his father jawboned with Castro to clean up the loose ends of the Cuban Missile Crisis

"The headline here is just how close Cuba came to being a nuclear power," said Hershberg, whose book series includes the Mikoyan work.

The book includes 50 Soviet government and Mikoyan family documents, including official notes from

the Mikoyan-Castro talks. Sergo Mikoyan died in 2010 and Savranskaya, a researcher at George Washington University's National Security Archive, completed the book.

The tale essentially starts after Khrushchev tells Kennedy Oct. 28 that he will withdraw from Cuba the "weapons which you call offensive" — Soviet R-14 and R-12 missiles with nuclear warheads and ranges of up to 1,550 miles, and medium-range IL-28 bombers, aged but still capable of carrying nuclear bombs.

What Khrushchev did not reveal was that 98 tactical nuclear warheads also had been deployed in Cuba for the Luna and FKR-1 missiles, both coastal defense weapons deployed essentially to destroy a possible U.S. invasion armada.

In the weeks leading up to the Missile Crisis there had been conversations between U.S. and Soviet officials about the Soviet Union sending Cuba weapons so that it could defend itself, according to documents released Thursday from the archives of Robert F. Kennedy, then the attorney general and an advisor to his brother.

But with the United States apparently unaware such weapons had nuclear capabilities, the tense exchanges between the two Cold War powers centered on the removal of weapons "capable of offensive war," not the weapons that could be used to repel a possible U.S. invasion.

On Oct. 20, 1962, a surprise U.S. air strike to take out the strategic missiles — an option that some advisors thought would ultimately lead to a full-scale invasion — was still under discussion, according to the RFK papers. But President Kennedy had reservations about the potential loss of thousands

of lives — including those at U.S. missile sites in Turkey and Italy if the Soviets chose to retaliate, and an Oct. 22 memo about the drawbacks of a surprise air strike also noted it might be perceived "as a Pearl Harbor in reverse" and spark retaliatory strikes by local "Soviet" commanders of the Cuban missiles.

So even though the United States public breathed a sigh of relief that the Missile Crisis was over on Oct. 28, Khrushchev ordered Anastas Mikoyan — the No. 2 in the Soviet hierarchy, its top foreign troubleshooter and a Castro friend since 1960 — to Havana in the first days of November for a critical assignment that would last three weeks and included multiple objectives:

- *Assure Castro that JFK had promised he would not invade Cuba;

- *Smooth his anger over Moscow's failure to consult him on the negotiations with JFK;

- *Push him to accept inspections to confirm the removal of the strategic weapons;

- *Urge him not to shoot at U.S. spy planes overflying the island;

- *Settle the issue of the tactical warheads;

What's more, the Soviet-Cuba oral agreement in the summer of 1962 for the deployment of all the nuclear weapons to the Caribbean island had included a promise that Cuban troops would control the tactical warheads after receiving training.

Castro was indeed fuming. Moscow's withdrawal of its missiles would leave him without any real deterrence against a U.S. attack, just 18 months after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion and amid at least one confirmed CIA plot to assassinate him.

The Soviet ambassador in Havana reported that he had never seen the Cuban leader "so distraught and irate." And when Mikoyan pushed too hard on one issue, Castro shot back, "What do you think we are. A zero on the left? A dirty rag?"

Initially, Mikoyan and the Soviet military favored allowing Castro to keep the tactical nukes for self-defense, according to the younger Mikoyan.

But on Oct. 27, Castro sent Khrushchev a cable all but urging a preemptive nuclear strike on U.S. targets. And on Nov. 19 he ordered his U.N. ambassador, Carlo Lechuga, to announce that the tactical warheads were in Cuba. That order was quickly recalled.

"Mikoyan understood then that the Cuban tail was quite capable of wagging the Soviet dog," Savranskaya wrote in a postscript to the book. "What became clear to Mikoyan ... is that the Soviets could not really control their Cuban ally."

The issue of the tactical warheads came to a boil on the night of Nov. 22, when Mikoyan met for more than three hours with Castro, Ernesto "Che" Guevara and three other senior Cuban government officials at the Presidential Palace in Havana.

"Is it true that all the tactical nuclear weapons are already removed?" Castro is quoted as asking Mikoyan in notes of the meeting taken by the Soviet delegation. Mikoyan replies that Moscow "has not given any promise regarding the removal" of the tactical weapons. "The Americans do not have any information that they are in Cuba."

Castro pressed on. "So then the weapons are here? And no assurances were given regarding their withdrawal?" Mikoyan replies, "Not about the weapons."

Castro says, "Therefore then the weapons are here."

Later in the notes, Castro returns to the tactical weapons, asking, "Doesn't the Soviet Union transfer nuclear weapons to other countries?" Mikoyan replies that there is "a law prohibiting the transfer of any nuclear weapons, including the tactical ones, to anybody. We never transferred it to anyone, and we did not intend to transfer it."

Castro insists. "Would it be possible to leave the tactical nuclear weapons in Cuba in Soviet hands, without transferring them to the Cubans?" Mikoyan says no, because the 42,000 Soviet troops in Cuba were technically only "advisers."

Minutes later Castro again returned the tactical nuclear weapons. "So you have a law that prohibits transfer of tactical nuclear weapons to other countries? It is a pity. And when are you going to repeal that law?" he is quoted as saying in the notes.

Mikoyan dodges the question. "We will see," he says.

Sergo Mikoyan, who accompanied his father during the first few days of the Cuba mission, wrote in the book that it's not clear whether such a law really existed. Perhaps it was a secret policy of the Soviet leadership, perhaps a convenient lie.

The younger Mikoyan argues that the "old men" who ruled the Kremlin in the early 1960s essentially saw in Cuba a young and virile socialist revolution that needed Moscow's support.

The "romantic" Khrushchev sent nuclear weapons to defend Havana from U.S. attacks and did not fully realize the risks, he noted. Moscow's military was more pragmatic, and the

Cuba deployment doubled the number of Soviet missiles that could hit U.S. territory.

But by the time Mikoyan wound up his mission to Havana, the book noted, Moscow viewed Cuban leaders as “hotheads who were preparing their country to die in the fire of a nuclear confrontation with the United States in the name of world socialism.”

Published jointly by the Woodrow Wilson Press and Stanford University Press, the book is based partly on Sergo Mikoyan’s Russian-language book *Anatomy of the Cuban Missile Crisis*, published in 2006.

Anastas Mikoyan’s wife of 43 years, Ashkhen Lazaranova, died during the first days of his three-week mission to Havana, but he stayed on the Caribbean island until he had completed his tasks and left on Nov. 26.

A few days later, Mikoyan met with presidential advisor John J. McCloy, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson and Charles W. Yost, Stevenson’s deputy, to discuss the details of the agreement ending the Missile Crisis. A summary of that conversation notes that Mikoyan was “clearly influenced by commitments to Castro to make a strong case on Castro’s behalf; he also seems to be motivated by the burden that Cuba represents to the USSR.”

Mikoyan died in 1978 at age of 82 of natural causes.

Sergo Mikoyan, who served as personal secretary to his father, was one of Moscow’s top Latin America specialists and served as editor of the journal *Latin America*, published by the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

The U.S. government knew in 1962 of the deployment of the Luna missiles and suspected

they carried nuclear warheads, but would not learn the full details of the tactical weapons until a conference in Havana in 1992, on the 30th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis, attended by U.S., Soviet and Cuban delegations.

That’s when Soviet General Anatoly Gribkov, army chief of operations during the missile crisis, revealed that Moscow had deployed nine nuclear tipped Luna in Cuba to be used against any U.S. invasion force.

“The United States had no idea the warheads had made it to the island — missiles without warheads aren’t so dangerous,” said Philip Brenner, an American University professor who attended the conference.

Former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, who also attended the meeting, was so taken aback, said Brenner, that he “had to hold on to a table to steady himself after he learned that.”

But Gribkov, like Khrushchev, was not telling the full truth. In fact, there were 80 nuclear tipped FKR-1 cruise missiles, 12 nuclear warheads of the Lunas, also known as FROG missiles, and six nuclear bombs for the IL-28s.

Sergo Mikoyan wrote that all the tactical warheads left Cuba Dec. 1, 1962, on the cargo ship Arkhangelsk and arrived Dec. 20 in the Soviet port of Severomorsk.

Miami Herald staff writer Mimi Whitefield contributed to this story.

Fayetteville (NC) Observer
October 14, 2012

27. Lawsuit Says Military Created 'Pervasive Threat' To Its Own Troops

By Drew Brooks, Staff writer

On one occasion, former Fort Bragg soldier Lisa Ethridge

alleges, a soldier she had been dating raped her and beat her so severely that she suffered skull fractures.

On another occasion, Ethridge says, the same soldier tied her to a tree and raped her.

Instead of ensuring that the soldier faced justice, Ethridge says in court documents, her chain of command repeatedly advised her not to “open this can of worms” by pushing for charges.

Sgt. 1st Class Tamika Lane also was raped twice while in the military. The first came at the hands of a stranger at her first duty station, Fort Lewis, Wash. The second came years later, at Fort Bragg.

In both instances, Lane’s attackers were never brought to justice, despite the mountain of evidence against them, she said.

Now, both women are among 19 current and former service members who have filed a lawsuit alleging that the military has created a “pervasive threat” to its own troops through years of failed sexual assault policies and directives.

The lawsuit, filed late last month in a federal court in San Francisco, alleges that higher-ranking Army and Air Force personnel prey on young and lower-ranking troops.

It also alleges that recent scandals, including sodomy and other charges filed against a Fort Bragg general, show that a key problem is unjust influence by the chain of command.

“We want to see the structure that exists now. we want to see that changed,” said Susan Burke, one of the lawyers who filed the lawsuit.

Burke, who has filed four other cases related to sexual assaults in the military and has been an advocate on the issue since 2010, said the current system sees complaints

funneled through the chain of command.

That leaves victims vulnerable to commanders who may have their own issues or biases, Burke said, citing Fort Bragg Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sinclair, who was recently charged with crimes that include forcible sodomy and wrongful sexual conduct.

“That kind of proves the point as to why we need this change,” said Burke, who openly wondered how many sexual assault complaints passed by Sinclair’s desk during his 27-year career.

“It’s very troubling,” she said.

'Epidemic in our ranks'

The service members who filed the lawsuit allege that they were harassed, raped or assaulted and then suffered retaliation when they reported the incidents. They are current and former top Department of Defense officials, as well as secretaries for the Army and the Air Force.

The Defense Department has declined to comment on the lawsuit.

Ethridge and Lane appear to be the only service members involved in the lawsuit who have ties to Fort Bragg.

The Observer typically does not identify victims of sexual assaults but is making an exception with the permission of the two women.

“This brings a little light to the epidemic in our ranks,” said Lane, explaining why she chose to come out with her story. “It’s not going to get better unless there’s attention - unless there’s change.”

Ethridge, who served in the Army from 1999 to 2004, says in the lawsuit that when she tried to leave the relationship with the soldier who raped her, he “threatened to kill her children in front of her if she did not return home each night.”

When her accused rapist continued to stalk her on post, Ethridge became depressed and feared for her life and the lives of her two children, according to the lawsuit. When those fears affected her job performance, she was demoted and assigned extra duties.

Ethridge has since been hospitalized for suicidal thoughts and suffers from nightmares, according to the lawsuit. A specialist when she left the Army, Ethridge lives in North Carolina and said she is raising a child conceived during one of her rapes.

Lane was a noncommissioned officer at Joint Special Operations Command when she was raped in 2009, according to the lawsuit.

She had allegedly been raped once before, at Fort Lewis in 2001.

After her first rape, the accused attacker received non-judicial punishment with no serious consequences, despite other women stepping forward with allegations that he abused them, too, according to the lawsuit.

At Fort Bragg, Lane's assailant was acquitted of the rape and instead convicted of adultery, according to the lawsuit. He was punished with a letter of reprimand.

In both instances, Lane alleged that she was the victim of open retaliation that included derogatory comments, attempts to have a Bronze Star medal revoked and orders to report to another command.

Lane, who lives in Fayetteville, has since been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and severe anxiety, according to the lawsuit.

She said she is being medically retired, in part because of issues created by the

emotional trauma of her two rapes.

Lane said she hopes the lawsuit brings change in how the Army trains soldiers on sexual assaults.

She called the current training "a joke" that isn't taken seriously by instructors.

Burke said the lawsuit was filed despite recent efforts by the Department of Defense to improve the issues. The Pentagon is creating a system to track reports of sexual assaults and is reviewing how commanders are trained in preventing and responding to rape cases.

But Burke, who said she receives calls nearly every day from rape survivors, said the issues are not new, citing scandals in 1991 and 1996.

"This is a decades' long problem," she said. "Words are not enough. Minor tweaks are not enough."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Yahoo.com

October 13, 2012

28. Returning Veterans Swell Ranks Of US Entrepreneurs

By Michael Melia, Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn.--As a truck driver for the U.S. military in wartime Iraq, Ed Young racked up 7,000 miles, facing a constant threat of attack that left him struggling with depression and suicidal thoughts.

Four years later, he is driving long hauls again, but now in the U.S. as one of a growing number of veterans turning entrepreneur. The Navy veteran who had seen his post-war life spiraling out of control says his Connecticut-based car transportation business has helped to put him on the road to recovery.

Young received training to run his enterprise through a program for disabled veterans at the University of Connecticut, one of many efforts emerging nationwide to help returning service members start small businesses.

"The biggest thing I got out of it was, no matter what, don't give up on your idea," said Young, 26. "Basically it's like in the military. Just accomplish the mission. That is your job, to accomplish your mission, no matter what."

More than 200,000 people are discharged from the U.S. military each year, and advocates say they often possess qualities that make good entrepreneurs: resourcefulness, a taste for risk-taking and a can-do attitude. Nonprofit groups, state governments and U.S. agencies are all providing business training aimed at giving them new purpose and easing their transition to civilian life.

Already, veterans are well-represented in the entrepreneurial ranks. Nearly one in 10 small businesses are veteran-owned, and retired service members are at least 45 percent more likely than those without active-duty military experience to be self-employed, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration. As troops return from Iraq and Afghanistan, some see an opportunity not only to help them find work, but for veteran entrepreneurs to provide a jolt to the U.S. economy.

"We think this is an opportunity where we're going to have a lot of veterans who have the right skills to be entrepreneurs," said Rhett Jeppson, associate administrator for veterans' business development at the SBA. "We can help prepare them for the opportunities out there."

Unlike GIs who played a famed role in growing the U.S. economy after World War II, however, this generation is returning to the worst economic slump since the depression.

Young, who graduated last year from the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities at UConn, had to apply to 10 banks before landing a \$24,000 loan to buy a truck and start his business, Black Knight Services. After completing more than \$75,000 in sales in the first six months of the year, he said he is looking to buy more trucks, but for now he still operates out of his apartment in Milford, Conn., when not on the road.

"It has its ups and downs, but I love it 100 percent," he said. "Unfortunately, I really can't stand people that much. At least I'm just by myself and with my thoughts."

It's been a dramatic turnaround for Young, who began drinking heavily after returning from Iraq in 2009. He hit bottom when he was arrested in 2010 for threatening to hurt his two young children. It was during his jail time and his treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder that Young, who had developed a taste for entrepreneurship as a deejay in middle school, began to develop ideas for his own business.

Michael Zacchea, the executive director of the Connecticut bootcamp, said businesses like Young's that start during difficult financial times are more likely to succeed in the long run. Regardless of the veterans' career ambitions, Zacchea said, the program also aims to teach veterans to take charge of their civilian careers.

"It might be as simple as somebody starting a mom and pop shop," he said. "It's economic but it's also about social identity reconstruction. I

used to be a warrior; now I'm an entrepreneur and I can feed myself."

The bootcamp program, funded with assistance from donors and foundations, began at Syracuse University in 2007 and has spread to seven other schools. The students selected from around the country receive 10 days of intensive training and, for the future, a network of close advisers.

The SBA, which supported loans worth more than \$1.5 billion to veteran business owners last year, is also beginning to take training directly to military bases. Under a program called Operation Boots to Business, introductory entrepreneurship classes will be given at bases around the country starting over the next year — part of a larger effort called for by President Barack Obama to assist veterans' transition to the workforce.

Wherever possible, Jeppson said, the SBA also teams up with businesses and other groups for programs like the entrepreneurship boot camp.

"The interest is huge. A lot of people are looking for partners to do things like this," he said.

Veteran-owned businesses can receive priority for some federal contracts, and local governments are developing programs of their own to promote entrepreneurship. Illinois, for example, passed a law this year that sets a goal of 3 percent of every state contract to go to small businesses owned by veterans.

States are coming to see small business as an ideal outlet for returning veterans who are generally highly confident and independent, Connecticut Veterans Affairs Commissioner Linda Schwartz said.

"They find when they get into a situation that they are working for someone else,

the pace is not fast enough," she said. "I think that's why entrepreneurship efforts are paying off across the country."

This story is the latest installment in a joint initiative by The Associated Press and Associated Press Media Editors taking a closer look at this latest generation of war veterans as they return to civilian life, and the effect this is having on them, their families and American society.

San Antonio Express-News
October 14, 2012

29. Woman General Says 'Shift Happens' On The Road To Success

By Sig Christenson

Becky Halstead's "success" diagram has as many lows as highs — a coach's fatal skydiving accident, her appointment to West Point and soon after, marriage, divorce and rising to general.

There's a word to describe the scraggly hand-drawn graph that illustrates her life, but not the one some of the women veterans hearing her speech Saturday in San Antonio might have been thinking.

"When shift happens in our life it's about the response more than it is about the shift," Halstead, who led 20,000 GIs in Iraq in 2005, told a veterans support group for women. "And so I give most of my speeches on leadership with the premise that the first person you must lead is you."

At 53, Halstead is the first female West Point graduate to become a one-star general. But she has an untraditional resume, one that includes falling ill to a chronic illness and jettisoning the drugs that were supposed to help — but didn't.

The tale of her recovery was perfectly suited to Grace After Fire's fall summit, "The Power of Women

Veterans." The gathering touched on healthy nutrition, family resiliency, relaxing techniques for women and a seminar, "Are you sick and tired of feeling sick and tired?"

Psychologist Sunita Trevino pointed to a range of issues faced by women while they are in uniform and, later, while reintegrating into civilian life. The problem starts with a simple perception.

"When you think of a veteran," she said, "the first thing you think of is a man."

The military was even more of a man's world when Halstead went to West Point in 1977. At first rated among the worst cadets as new students began summer training, she became a top performer. Nothing was easy. As a one-star general, a commander gave her a scathing performance review, prompting Halstead to say, "Don't think the challenges stop. They never stop."

Fort Worth-based Grace After Fire is geared to helping women in the military and those who have left it. The group's president, retired Air Force Col. Kimberly Olson, noted that 1.8 million women have served in the armed forces and that all of them volunteered.

"We opened the doors for these young women to go into combat. We did that and the unintended consequences of that was if we forgot that there needed to be a safety net to make sure that they're going to get on the pointy end of the spear, that somebody or something is going to take care of them," said Olson, a tanker pilot who was in the Pentagon on 9/11.

Halstead's greatest crisis came late in her career, when she fell ill with fibromyalgia, a malady in which people suffer from chronic joint and muscle pain, fatigue and lost sleep. Likening herself to many

women in the audience, she said that females in the armed services are the worst at asking for help.

"We wait until our organs have rotted and need to be surgically taken out before we tell anybody we feel badly," she told a mostly female audience. "Really most of us, men and women, we're not going to a doctor until we absolutely have to because we don't want to be perceived as weak."

Halstead went on a standard treatment for fibromyalgia — drugs. Two of them were anti-depressants, prompting her to ask a doctor why he had prescribed them.

She was, after all, not depressed.

"He said, 'no, but you will be,'" Halstead recalled, sparking laughter in the crowd.

Four years later, her retirement papers in, she had indeed become depressed. Doctors were giving her 15 different prescriptions. They had told her she had a disease that was so debilitating she'd never have a good day again.

"So I started to become the disease," Halstead said. "I let the disease control me."

Today, she credits chiropractic care and far better nutrition with transforming her life. The medications are gone. While she didn't want to retire from the Army, Halstead has reinvented herself as a motivational speaker.

"So a major shift in my life was getting ill," she said, "but the more important major shift was getting well."

Vanity Fair
November 2012
Pg. 144

30. The Hunt For 'Geronimo'

President Obama saw it as a '50-50' proposition. Admiral Bill McRaven, mission

commander, knew something would go wrong. So how did the raid that killed bin Laden get green-lighted? In an adaptation from his new book, Mark Bowden weaves together accounts from Obama and top decision-makers for the full story behind the daring operation.

"In the name of Allah the most gracious the most merciful. Praise Allah and pray on his prophet. To the esteemed brother, Sheikh Mahmud, Allah protect him."

Holed up in his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, Osama bin Laden sat at a computer and set down his thoughts in a long letter dated April 26, 2011, to Atiyah Abdul-Rahman, his third-in-command and the link to his far-flung and beleaguered followers -- the man he addressed as Sheikh Mahmud. It was the al-Qaeda leader's sixth spring of confinement in Abbottabad. His hair and beard had grown white. Ten years after the 9/11 attacks, bin Laden's life had shrunk to the cramped and crowded space of the upper two floors of a house behind high walls. His days consisted of familiar routines, rarely broken: his meals, his seven daily prayer sessions, his readings, the poetry lessons for his children and grandchildren, the sermons to three of his wives, the brisk daily walk around the vegetable gardens.

In his letter to Sheikh Mahmud, he raced to catch up with the Arab Spring, to interpret the events in light of his own immutable beliefs. Bin Laden also hammered home some advice about security. After more than nine successful years in hiding, he considered himself to be an expert: "It is proven that the American technology and its modern systems cannot arrest a *Mujahid* if he does not commit a security

error that leads them to him," he wrote. "So adherence to security precautions makes their advanced technology a loss and a disappointment to them."

The computer turned bin Laden's words into neat lines of uniform Arabic. He was feeling confident. He had five days to live.

I. The Pacer

Eight months earlier, on a hot day in August, Tom Donilon, then the deputy national-security adviser, had added a brief item to the end of his daily morning briefing for Barack Obama. He said, "Leon and the guys at Langley think they may have come up with something" -- something related to bin Laden.

There had been no scent of the al-Qaeda leader for more than eight years, ever since he had slipped away from the mountain outpost of Tora Bora during a botched siege by allied troops. The Bush administration maintained that he was somewhere in the mountainous regions of northwestern Pakistan, but, in truth, they had no idea where he was. On May 26, 2009, Obama had concluded a routine national-security briefing in the Situation Room by pointing to Donilon, Leon Panetta, his newly appointed C.I.A. director, Mike Leiter, director of the National Counterterrorism Center, and Rahm Emanuel, his chief of staff.

"You, you, you, and you," he said. "Come upstairs."

The four followed Obama through the warren of narrow West Wing hallways to the Oval Office. They didn't sit down.

Obama said, "Here's the deal. I want this hunt for Osama bin Laden and [Ayman] al-Zawahiri to come to the front of the line. I worry that the trail has gone cold. This has to be our top priority and it

needs leadership in the tops of your organizations." He added, "I want regular reports on this to me, and I want them starting in 30 days."

The conventional wisdom is that the intelligence apparatus had slackened off in its search for bin Laden -- and it's true that President George W. Bush, frustrated by the inability to find him, publicly declared that bin Laden wasn't important. But among the analysts and operatives, the hunt had always continued. Obama's order just gave it more focus and intensity. Now, a year later, there was something to talk about. While looking for an al-Qaeda figure who went by the name Abu Ahmed al-Kuwaiti -- a man known to have once been a trusted aide and courier for bin Laden -- intelligence analysts had become aware of a curious compound just outside Abbottabad, a prosperous city about 30 miles northeast of Islamabad. Too wary to use cell phones or Internet links, bin Laden relied on couriers to distribute his letters and occasional video and audio pronouncements. Reversing the paths taken by these tapes or thumb drives always ended one or two steps short of bin Laden's inner circle. But now they had someone who might take them all the way inside. The search for him had lasted eight years. It had taken the C.I.A. five years just to learn his real name: Ibrahim Saeed Ahmed. The trail had ended at this residence.

Panetta brought two of the agency's bin Laden team leaders to the Oval Office. They handed Obama classified pictures and maps and walked him through the material. What had first intrigued them was the compound itself. Unlike most homes in that affluent neighborhood, it did not have Internet or phone connections. The walls were unusually high,

topped by two feet of barbed wire. There was no way to see inside the house itself, from the ground or from above. The agency had learned that the compound was home not only to Ibrahim Ahmed's family but to his brother Abrar's family as well. They went by assumed names: Ahmed called himself Arshad Khan, and the brother went by Tariq Khan. They had never been wealthy, but their accommodations were expensive. The brothers were also wary. They burned their trash on-site. None of their children attended school. In telephone calls to distant family members, always made from locations away from the compound itself, they lied about where they were living. The C.I.A. has been known to misinterpret many things, but one thing it recognizes is high operational security.

The agency had been investigating the compound quietly, taking pictures from above and collecting information on the ground. That and telephone intercepts had produced two discoveries.

The first was that living inside the compound on the upper two floors of the central building was a third family. Neighbors in Abbottabad who knew of the Khan brothers were not aware of this third family. The second discovery was that Ahmed still worked for al-Qaeda. Though he was known to have been close to bin Laden years earlier, the agency had no proof that he had retained the connection. But in a telephone conversation with an old friend that summer, a call the C.I.A. monitored, Ahmed was peppered with the standard questions, "What are you doing now? What are you up to?" Ahmed at first didn't answer. But his friend was insistent, and so he finally gave in, albeit cryptically, explaining, "I'm

with the same ones as before." His friend said, "May Allah be with you," and quickly dropped the subject. That suggested that whoever Ahmed and his brother were minding in that house was a top al-Qaeda figure.

Those were the new facts presented to the president. "This is the best lead that we have seen since Tora Bora," said one of the team members. Thinking back on the moment during a long Oval Office conversation, Obama recalled being guarded, "not particularly optimistic." He found the information intriguing, but only in a general way. The connection to bin Laden was tenuous. Still, he encouraged Panetta and his team to press on. He wanted to nail down the identity of whoever was living upstairs. He also wanted a "close hold" on the information. They were not to let others know about it. They were definitely not to tell Pakistan.

The use of a variety of tools, including agents on the ground and remote surveillance, enabled the team to flesh out life at the compound in detail. There seemed to be no way to determine the identity of the mystery family. The most important clue -- the one that would persuade John Brennan, the president's chief of counterterrorism, that the family was indeed bin Laden's -- was the figure who came to be known as The Pacer, a man in traditional Pakistani attire and prayer cap who regularly took walks around the vegetable garden, part of which had a tarp stretched above to shield it from the sun. Images of The Pacer from overhead cameras were very good, but the angle made it impossible to get a clear look at the man's face. Efforts were made to gauge the man's height by measuring his stride and the shadow he cast. The calculations were only precise

enough to say this: he was tall and thin. But Brennan, a former C.I.A. officer, had seen Predator imagery of bin Laden back in 2000. He felt he recognized the man, recognized the walk.

Panetta briefed the president periodically throughout the fall. In December, Michael Morell, the head of the C.I.A.'s bin Laden team, and several others met with Tom Donilon and Brennan at the White House. An agency team was now living in a house in the neighborhood. They watched the comings and goings of the Ahmed brothers. They counted the pieces of laundry that were hung out to dry. They determined that the hidden family was large: three wives, a young man, and 10 or more children. The number of wives and children corresponded with the number of family members they believed might be living with bin Laden.

On December 14, just before Obama left to join his family in Hawaii, Panetta visited him in the Oval Office. Obama was struck, as were the agency men, by the fact that this third family never left the compound, and also by the compound's very size. It was atypical of the neighborhood. Whoever had built it had considerable resources and clearly intended to prevent anyone from seeing inside. Obama was also captivated, as others had been, by the video imagery of The Pacer strolling soundlessly inside the high walls.

There was always the possibility, the president knew, that "this was some warlord from Afghanistan who had set up shop, the possibility that this was a drug dealer from the Gulf who valued his privacy or had a mistress or a second family." But he also understood that The Pacer might be exactly

who they thought he was. From what he knew of the man, Obama had never bought the conventional wisdom -- the assumption that bin Laden "was living an ascetic life somewhere, in some mountain somewhere." The evidence was circumstantial, but he agreed that it would be hard to find another explanation that fit all the facts. Obama kept his expectations under control, as he is known to do, but admitted to himself that "this might be for real."

He instructed Panetta to get creative, to figure out a way to nail it down -- to "run it to ground." He also asked Panetta to start preparing plans for action.

II. "This Is 50-50"

By now, the C.I.A. had its own small armies in the field. When Panetta and Morell returned from the meeting, the first thing they considered was using their own people. The two broad options were to bomb the compound or to send in a raiding party. The latter would require a lot more planning and rehearsal than the former, and would involve a lot more people. Using C.I.A. personnel had the advantage of keeping the secret -- now four months old -- fairly well contained.

The C.I.A. teams were excited about the mission, and eager to do it themselves -- and soon. But Panetta and Morell had time. The president had also told them to work harder on identifying the mystery man in the compound. Before committing to using its own operators, the C.I.A. wanted to at least consult with Admiral Bill McRaven, a navy SEAL who now led the Joint Special Operations Command, an army within an army that during the past decade had conducted thousands of operations around the world, mostly in secret.

All McRaven knew before getting the call was that the C.I.A. had a possible new lead on bin Laden. He had heard that before, and none of these "Elvis sightings" had ever panned out. Early in the war in Afghanistan, his men had spent a lot of time chasing bin Laden's ghost. This time he was told that the intelligence seemed better than usual, but he didn't think much of it until summoned to Langley in January. In the deputy director's seventh-floor office, overlooking the Potomac, McRaven and one of his top aides met with Panetta, Morell, and the heads of the C.I.A.'s own strike force. He was shown pictures of the compound. Everything was heavily couched in maybes. But on that qualified basis, they launched into tactical discussion. If you were going to hit this target, how would you do it?

The C.I.A. men had had a head start. They sketched five different options. That fact alone was telling. McRaven could see at a glance that there was really only one way to do it. The admiral ruled out the bombing option immediately. Whatever the advantages in simplicity and reduced American risk, his educated guess was that it would take upwards of 50,000 pounds of ordnance to destroy a compound of that size and make sure bin Laden, if he was there, did not survive. You had to consider the possibility of tunnels or an underground bunker. That explosive power would kill everyone inside the compound and quite a few people nearby.

A ground raid, on the other hand, posed relatively few problems. His men had been hitting compounds like this daily for years, often a dozen or more a night. This one was unremarkable. It had a

three-story residence, a smaller outbuilding, and high stone walls all around it, which merely indicated the right way to go in -- from above.

McRaven explained to Panetta and Morell how special ops would hit the target. The biggest problem was its location in Abbottabad, a "denied" space 150 miles from friendly territory in neighboring Afghanistan, which meant that delivering the force and safely extracting it without triggering a shooting war with Pakistan would be challenging -- but doable. It would increase the complexity of the mission, and complexity multiplied the number of things that could go wrong. That aside, attacking the compound and the buildings was old-hat. The tactics McRaven's teams had developed were built on years of trial and error, missions that had worked and those that hadn't. Think what one will about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but they had produced a new kind of fighting force. McRaven explained what his men would do, and why. He even suggested the right man for the mission: his SEAL Team Six commander, who in 2009 had led the mission that killed three Somalian pirates, rescuing an American freighter-ship captain. McRaven also noted that, no matter how well the operation in Abbottabad was planned, long experience taught that something would go wrong. Something *always* went wrong, which was why his men's unrivaled experience would be invaluable.

After listening to McRaven, Panetta and Morell abandoned the idea of a C.I.A. operation. If there was going to be a helicopter raid, McRaven and the SEALs would do it.

On March 14, Obama met with the National Security Council to formally review

the intelligence. They gathered in the White House Situation Room, where much of the drama over the next two months would unfold. The Situation Room, informally known as the Woodshed, sits in the basement of the West Wing and, despite the resonant name, is not the sort of space a set designer would create for a great center of national power. The main conference room is nearly filled by the long polished-wood table at its center and the row of high-backed black leather chairs around it. There is barely enough room for staff members to sit on chairs against the beige walls. The lighting is fluorescent, and instead of windows there are flat-screen TVs, six of them, the largest filling the south wall down the long table from the president's chair. When the room is full, the top leadership of the nation can truly be said to be huddled.

By early March the C.I.A. had determined that the Abbottabad compound definitely held a "high-value target" and that he was most likely Osama bin Laden. The C.I.A.'s team leader, perhaps the most senior analyst on the trail, was close to convinced. He put his confidence level at 95 percent. Brennan felt about the same, but others were less certain -- and some were far less certain. The assessment would ultimately be "red-teamed" -- worked over by analysts assigned to poke holes in it -- three times: by the Counterterrorism Center, by Brennan's staff, and by another group within the C.I.A. Four veterans at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence had reviewed the case and provided their own opinions. Most of those involved placed their confidence level at about 80 percent. Some went as low as 40 or even 30 percent.

"O.K., this is a probability thing," said Obama. "Leon, talk to me about this." The director explained that following the agency's erroneous conviction, a decade earlier, that Saddam Hussein had been hiding weapons of mass destruction -- a finding that was used to justify a long and costly war -- the C.I.A. had instituted an almost comically elaborate process for weighing certainty. It was like trying to craft a precise formula for good judgment. Analysts up and down the chain were now asked not only to give their opinion but also to place a confidence level on it -- high, medium, or low. Then they were required to explain why they had assigned that level. What you ended up with, as the president was discovering, was more confusion.

At one meeting, Obama asked Morell, who was seated in a chair against the wall behind him, under the presidential seal, for his own view. Morell put the probability that The Pacer was bin Laden at 60 percent.

Morell had been personally involved in the flawed analysis of Saddam's weapons capability and yet had felt more certain about *that* than he felt about this. "People don't have differences because they have different intel," he said. "We are all looking at the same things. I think it depends more on your past experience." He explained that counterterrorism analysts at work on al-Qaeda over the past five years had enjoyed a remarkable string of successes. They had been crushing the terror group inside Pakistan and systematically killing its top leadership. So they were very confident. Those who had been at work longer, like himself, had known failure. They knew the fragility of even the soundest-seeming intelligence analysis. The W.M.D. story had been a brutal lesson.

"Mr. President," he said, "if we had a human source who had told us directly that bin Laden was living in that compound, I still wouldn't be above 60 percent." Morell said he had spent a lot of time on both questions, W.M.D. and Abbottabad. He had seen no fewer than 13 analytical drafts on the former and at least as many on the latter. "And I'm telling you, the case for W.M.D. wasn't just stronger -- it was *much* stronger."

The president listened, but he had already pretty much made up his mind. "One of the things you learn as president is you're always dealing with probabilities," he told me. "No issue comes to my desk that is perfectly solvable. No issue comes to my desk where there's 100 percent confidence that this is the right thing to do. Because if people were absolutely certain then it would have been decided by someone else. And that's true in dealing with the economic crisis. That's true in order to take a shot at a pirate. That's true about most of the decisions I make during the course of the day. So I'm accustomed to people offering me probabilities. In this situation, what you started getting was probabilities that disguised uncertainty as opposed to actually providing you with more useful information." The president had no trouble facing reality. If he acted on this, he was going to be taking a gamble.

The conversation about percentages wore on, and the president finally cut in. "This is 50-50," he said. That silenced everyone. "This is a flip of the coin. You guys, I can't base this decision on the notion that we have any greater certainty than that." What he wanted to know was: if he decided to act, what were his options?

The simplest, and the one that posed the least risk to American forces, was to reduce the compound to dust, along with everyone and everything in and around it. As Peter L. Bergen recounted in *Manhunt*, the air force calculated that to do the job right would mean dropping upwards of 30 precision bombs, or launching a comparable number of missiles. This would be enough to guarantee that anything on, in, or near that plot of earth would be killed. There would be minimal worry about air defenses, and no chance of having to mix it up with Pakistan's army or police. Obama asked how many people were living at the compound, and was told that there were four adult males, five or six adult women, and nearly 20 children. He asked about the houses that were close to the compound in the neighborhood. Those, too, would be destroyed.

As McRaven had done earlier, Obama scrapped that plan immediately. He said the only way he would even consider attacking the compound from the air was if the blast area could be drastically reduced.

McRaven explained the raid option. He had not yet brought on a full team to scope out the mission completely. The one thing he could tell the president for sure was that if his team could be delivered to the compound they could clear it and kill or capture bin Laden with minimal loss of life. He presented the still-sketchy ground operation as a simple statement of fact. Without bringing any more people into the planning loop, he said, "I can tell you that we can succeed on the raid. What I can't tell you yet is how I get in and how I get out. To do that requires detailed planning by air planners who do this for

a living Getting out could be a little sporty. I can't recommend a raid until I do the homework."

In the days ahead the air force would come back with a plan for smaller bombs and smaller blast circles. They could hit the compound without harming people outside its walls, but the lesser assault meant that they could not guarantee taking out anything underground. There would still be a lot of bodies, women and children included, and no way to tell if one of the dead was bin Laden.

In the aftermath of the raid, the term "air option" has come to be synonymous with "bombing." In fact, there was a very different air option, not widely known, and this different option was the one that was ultimately taken seriously. The idea had been put forward by General James "Hoss" Cartwright, vice-chairman of the Joint Chiefs: wait for the tall man in the prayer cap to go for his daily walk and take a shot at him with a small missile fired from a drone. It would require great precision, but the drones had delivered that in the past. There would be no dead wives and children, no collateral damage at all. But it was strictly a one-shot deal. If the drone missed, The Pacer and his entourage would vanish.

In the end, despite all of the potential complications of a helicopter raid, the president told McRaven to start rehearsing that option. It had clear advantages, one of them being that you would know if you had achieved your objective. Another, in the president's view, was the sheer intelligence value: as he recalls, "there might be the possibility that we would get enough intelligence out of the compound, even in a very short operation, that would help us dismantle other portions of the

organization." At the same time, raiding the compound posed a slew of hard questions that the air option did not. One of the thorniest was what to do if bin Laden was not killed but captured. Obama believed that there was very little chance of this, but it was a possibility.

How the legal system should deal with high-profile terrorists had been a hot political issue for years, and Congress had done nothing to resolve the problem. President Bush had locked most of them away at Guantánamo, and talked about holding military tribunals somewhere down the line. But some, like the shoe bomber, Richard Reid, had already been tried in federal courts and were now serving life sentences. Attorney General Eric Holder's plan to put Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the operational mastermind of 9/11, on trial at the federal courthouse in Manhattan had run into so much opposition that the administration was forced to reverse itself and announce that he would instead face a military tribunal at Guantánamo.

In the unlikely event that bin Laden surrendered, Obama saw an opportunity to resurrect the idea of a criminal trial. He was ready to bring him back and put him on trial in a federal court. "We worked through the legal and political issues that would have been involved, and Congress and the desire to send him to Guantánamo, and to not try him, and Article III," the president told me. "I mean, we had worked through a whole bunch of those scenarios. But, frankly, my belief was, if we had captured him, that I would be in a pretty strong position, politically, here, to argue that displaying due process and rule of law would be our best weapon against al-Qaeda, in preventing him from appearing as a martyr."

III. The Decision

McRaven's men undertook their first rehearsal on April 7. They worked on an isolated acre deep inside the sprawling, wooded grounds of Fort Bragg, where a mock-up of the three-story Abbottabad house had been built.

For the first practice session, the SEALs rehearsed what would be, effectively, the last part of the mission, hitting the compound and the target house. They approached aboard two stealth Black Hawk helicopters. One unit roped down to the roof of the building and assaulted from above. The other roped inside the compound walls and assaulted from the ground. This part of the operation took only about 90 seconds to complete. The delivery choppers moved off while the men did their work, then swooped back to pick them up.

McRaven's men had done this sort of thing so many times they could almost do it blindfolded. For the most part the group consisted of SEAL Team Six, but McRaven had also grabbed men from other units.

SEAL Team Six had rotated home not long before. The men on these elite special-operations teams went to war in shifts. For most of the past 10 years they had been deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan for three-to-four-month tours, where they maintained a very high op tempo, going out on missions sometimes two or three times a night. When deployed, they lived for the most part sequestered from conventional troops, either at their own forward operating bases or on a portion of a larger base that was sealed off. It was a deeply satisfying business. The men in these units tended to stay. Many found it hard to adjust to anything else. The

skills required were not readily applicable to other kinds of work. When you have been part of such operations -- adrenaline-pumping missions in which you risk your life and good friends die; and when you enjoy the silent admiration of everyone you meet; and when you believe your work is vital to the nation's security -- it is hard to find anything else that compares.

The team re-assembled for a second rehearsal a week later in Nevada, where the heat and the altitude (about 4,000 feet) were similar to Abbottabad's. This time the rehearsal was designed to duplicate the conditions flying to the target. On the real mission, the helicopters would have to travel 90 minutes before arriving over Abbottabad. They would be flying very low and very fast to avoid Pakistani radar. Mission planners had to work out precisely what the choppers could do at that altitude, and in the anticipated air temperatures. How much of a load could the choppers carry and still perform? In Nevada, they went through the entire scenario. The mock-up of the compound was much cruder; instead of stone walls, there was just a chain-link fence. But the purpose of the rehearsal was not to duplicate the final 10 minutes of the raid -- what they had been doing at Fort Bragg. The purpose was to simulate the stresses on the choppers. They would discover only later that they had made one mistake.

Meanwhile, another option was being tested -- Vice-Chairman Cartwright's magic bullet, in the form of a small guided munition that could be fired from a tiny drone. No one involved with planning the mission will discuss its particulars, but the weapon may well have been a newly designed Raytheon G.P.S.-guided missile, about

the length and width of a strong man's forearm. The missile can strike an individual or a vehicle without harming anything nearby. Called simply an S.T.M. (Small Tactical Munition), it weighs just 13 pounds, carries a 5-pound warhead, and can be fired from under the wing of a small drone. It was a "fire-and-forget" missile, which meant you could not guide it once it was released. It would find and explode on the precise coordinates it had been given. Since The Pacer tended to walk in the same place every day, Cartwright believed the missile would kill him, and likely him alone. It placed no American forces at risk.

The weapon had yet to be used in combat, though the technologies involved were hardly new. Still: did you want to hang such a critical opportunity on a single shot, with a missile that had never been fired in anger? If you missed, The Pacer would vanish. And if you hit him, how would you know that you had? If there was no proof that bin Laden was dead, al-Qaeda could theoretically keep him alive for years, raising money and planning attacks in his name.

The final meeting before the raid was held in the Situation Room on Thursday, April 28. Filling the black leather chairs were Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of Defense Bob Gates, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen, Vice-Chairman Cartwright, Brennan, Donilon, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, and C.I.A. Director Leon Panetta and his deputy, Michael Morell. Top staffers ringed the room. Admiral McRaven did not participate: he and the SEAL team were now in Afghanistan.

Everyone sensed that the secret had held about as long

as it could. Brennan had asked Mike Leiter to assemble a group from the Counterterrorism Center to perform one last "red-teaming" of the intelligence. The final meeting began with that presentation, which was deflating for almost everyone in the room. Leiter told the president that his group could arrive at only 40 percent certainty that bin Laden was there. This was, as Leiter pointed out, "38 percent better than we've been for 10 years." Obama asked if that estimate was based on new or different information. It was not. The president asked Leiter to explain the disparity. Why was their confidence so much lower than, say, the leader of the C.I.A.'s bin Laden team, whose confidence had been 95 percent? Leiter could not explain this to the president's satisfaction, and so the new assessment was dismissed. As far as Obama was concerned, the level of certainty was the same as it had been for months: 50-50.

One by one, the principals around the room were asked to choose among three options -- a raid, a missile strike, or doing nothing -- and then to defend their choice. The president said that he probably would not make a decision until the next morning, but he wanted to hear everyone's view. It was widely reported in the weeks and months after the raid that most, or at least many, of the president's top advisers opposed the raid, but this is not true. Nearly everyone present favored it.

The only major dissenters were Biden and Gates, and before the raid was launched, Gates would change his mind.

The vice president was never shy about political calculations. "Mr. President, my suggestion is: don't go," he said. "We have to do two more things

to see if he's there." Biden believed that if the president decided to choose either the air or the ground option, and if the effort failed, Obama could say good-bye to a second term. Biden never hesitated to disagree at meetings like this, and the president had always encouraged him to do so. In this case Biden disagreed with his own top adviser on such matters, Tony Blinken, who was not asked for an opinion at the meeting but had earlier told the president that he strongly favored the raid.

Gates favored taking the shot from the drone. He spoke quietly but forcefully. He acknowledged that it was a difficult call, and that striking from the air would leave them not knowing whether they had gotten bin Laden, but he had been working at the C.I.A. as an analyst in 1980 when the Desert One mission to rescue the hostages in Iran failed. He had, in fact, been in this very Situation Room when the chopper collided with the C-130 at the staging area in the desert and turned that rescue mission into a fireball. It was an experience he did not wish to revisit. He had visibly blanched the first time he had heard that McRaven was planning a helicopter-refueling stop in a remote area outside Abbottabad, similar to what had been done in Iran in 1980. As defense secretary, Gates knew the importance of maintaining the flow of fuel and matériel to American forces fighting in Afghanistan, which depended on Pakistan's goodwill. There was so much to lose, he said, and the evidence for bin Laden's presence in the compound was still flimsy.

Cartwright agreed with Gates. He had put the drone option on the table, and he was confident that the small missile would hit the target. It was the

simplest and least risky way to go. Leiter, though expressing low confidence that The Pacer was bin Laden, also advocated the drone option.

Everyone else favored sending in the SEALs. Clinton, who had faulted Obama during the primary campaign for asserting that he would send forces to Pakistan unilaterally if there was a good chance of getting bin Laden, now said that she favored the raid. She delivered this opinion after a typically lengthy review of the pros and cons. She noted that the raid would pose a diplomatic nightmare for the State Department. But because the U.S.-Pakistani relationship was built more on mutual dependence than friendship and trust, it would likely survive the crisis. Admiral Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation before delivering his endorsement. Mullen had witnessed McRaven's rehearsals at Fort Bragg and in Nevada. He had high confidence in the SEAL team

Brennan, Donilon, Clapper, Panetta, and Morell all agreed. The C.I.A. director felt strongly about it, which was not surprising. This had been his project all along, and the analysts who worked for him would have felt betrayed if their boss had changed his mind. Panetta told Obama that he ought to ask himself this question: "What would the average American say if he knew we had the best chance of getting bin Laden since Tora Bora and we didn't take a shot?"

So the vote in the room was largely in favor of unleashing McRaven and the SEALs, and by the next morning Gates had countermanded his opposition. When his deputies Michael Vickers and Michèle Flournoy had learned that he had voted in favor of a drone strike,

they decided to confront him. They went to his office first thing Friday morning. "Boss, we think you are wrong," said Flournoy.

Like most of the other principals, Gates had been brought into the loop fairly late. Flournoy and Vickers had spent a lot more time on the matter than he had. They believed he didn't fully understand how well-thought-through McRaven's plan was. Both had been terrifically impressed by the special-ops commander. They were used to dealing with generals and admirals, and few of them liked being challenged. McRaven had understood from the start that he would have people looking over his shoulder. Flournoy was particularly impressed by McRaven's willingness to admit that he didn't have all the answers. "You know, I haven't thought about that, but I need to," he would say. He was open to suggestions and made substantial revisions based on the input he was given. They had seen how carefully McRaven picked the members of the team, choosing men who had honed their skills night after night for months.

They also argued that Gates had not adequately considered the downsides of a drone strike. First of all, neither Flournoy nor Vickers bought Cartwright's optimism about the small missile's hitting the target. The Pacer, after all, was moving. The missile could not be guided. You have one shot, they reminded Gates, and if you miss, you've blown it. Imagine the criticism of the president that would follow: You got the chance of a lifetime and you blew it with something untried?

They talked for an hour, and when they were done, Gates phoned the White House to say that he had changed his mind. So in the end every one

of the president's top advisers except Biden was in favor of taking immediate action. Two, Cartwright and Leiter, wanted to use the drone. Everyone else backed McRaven.

In truth, the president had all but made up his mind to launch the raid when he left the meeting that Thursday afternoon. He had been thinking about it for months. He delayed making the final decision in order to take one last breath. He had been inclined to hit the target for a long time now. He had made his peace with "50-50" months ago. He had been tempted by the air option, but believed that the importance of certainty was too great.

Still, he turned it over in his mind until the small hours. His habit was to stay up much later than Michelle and the girls. That night he was preoccupied not so much with making a decision, but with whether he had considered every element carefully enough. "It was a matter of taking one last breath and just making sure, asking is there something that I haven't thought of?" Obama explained to me. "Is there something that we need to do? ... At that point my estimation was that we weren't going to be able to do it better a month or two months or three months from now. We weren't going to have better certainty about whether bin Laden was there, and so it was just a matter of pulling the trigger." Alone in the Treaty Room, he considered the matter for three or four hours. He woke up several times that night, still mulling it over. In the end, he would recall, the decision would boil down to Obama's deep confidence in McRaven: "He just never looks like he's surprised by anything."

IV. "How Tall Is This Guy?"

The two stealth Black Hawks lifted off from the

airfield at Jalalabad at 11 P.M. local time. They were blacked out and, together, carried a full, minutely calculated load: 23 SEALs, a Pashto translator, and a dog -- a Belgian Malinois named Cairo. The job of the translator and the dog would be to keep the curious away from the compound while the SEALs did their work. As soon as the Black Hawks crossed the border into Pakistan, three big Chinooks lifted off from Jalalabad. The Chinooks carried the Rapid Reaction Force, to be mobilized in case of trouble. Some have credited Obama for insisting that this force be deployed; if the Pakistanis made trouble, the U.S. would make trouble for them. But McRaven would have deployed it anyway -- it was standard procedure. In this instance, one Chinook would set down just inside the border on the Afghan side. The other two would proceed to a staging area north of Abbottabad. McRaven had determined during rehearsals that the drumming chop of the approaching Black Hawks would be faintly audible about two minutes before they reached the target. The helicopters were stealthy, designed to avoid being spotted by radar, and quieter than standard models, but they still created quite a racket as they moved overhead. Approaching the compound from the northwest, the Black Hawks were now visible in the grainy overhead feed from the Sentinel drone to those gazing at screens in the White House and at the C.I.A.

After that, things happened very fast. The reconstruction that follows comes chiefly from civilian and military personnel who participated in the planning and execution of the raid. Some information derives from published accounts.

Biden, Gates, and General Brad Webb, in a conference room in the White House basement, across from the Situation Room, watched with horror as the first chopper, instead of hovering over the compound yard for a few moments to drop the SEAL team, as planned, abruptly wheeled around, clipped the compound wall, and hit the ground. The chopper hadn't been able to hover -- it had "mushed," or begun to skid uncontrollably. An after-action analysis would conclude that because the compound was encircled by stone walls, whereas the mock target in Nevada had only a chain-link fence, the air beneath the Black Hawk was warmer and less dense than anticipated, and insufficient to bear the helicopter's weight.

No one watching the small screen in the White House could see exactly what had happened. They could see only that the helicopter was down inside the wall, and everyone knew that had not been part of the plan.

Excruciating moments passed as McRaven sought word from the scene. Every discussion of what could go wrong on this mission had referenced the helicopter that clipped a plane and exploded in the Iranian desert in 1980. Here, in the first seconds of the mission, they already had a helicopter down.

Obama had been following Donilon's advice up to this point, receiving mission updates secondhand, talking with Panetta via the video hookup and letting others monitor the video feed and chat lines, but when the chopper went down he abruptly got up and crossed the hall.

Clinton watched him go, standing over the food tray in the adjacent room with

Ben Rhodes, the chief foreign-policy speechwriter.

"Ben, do you think it's a good idea for the president to watch this?" she asked.

"He's not going to be directing anything," Rhodes said. "It's just a feed."

Clinton followed the president. Sitting at the head of the small conference table, Webb stood up to surrender the spot when he noticed Obama enter. The president waved him back down.

"I'll just take this chair here," he said, sliding into the corner. "I need to watch this."

In Jalalabad, the president's entry was duly noted by Webb on the chat line.

"Sir, the president just walked into the room," a sergeant major told McRaven.

The admiral didn't have time to explain things to Washington. He quickly ascertained that no one on the chopper had been hurt. They were already adjusting their approach to the target house. All of these men had long ago proved their talent for adapting quickly. McRaven had lost helicopters before. He told Panetta straightforwardly what had happened -- and that he had options.

The White House was still in the dark. A White House photographer snapped a picture at precisely this moment, with Webb at the center in his blue uniform, head down, intently monitoring the video feed and chat line on his laptop screen; Obama seated in the corner with furrowed brow; Donilon standing behind Webb with his arms crossed, flanked by Mullen and Chief of Staff Bill Daley; Clinton with her hand to her mouth; Gates and Biden looking glum; all fixated on an off-camera screen.

The second Black Hawk had diverted from its planned course and landed outside the

compound walls in a newly planted field. The mission had called for it to hover briefly outside to drop the translator, the dog, and four SEALs, and then move to a hover directly over the home to drop the rest of the team on its roof. It was clear now that the entire assault plan had gone awry.

Then, without further explanation of what had happened, SEALs could be seen streaming out of both choppers. Those watching in Washington concluded correctly that, whatever had happened, the mission was proceeding. In his flat Texas twang, McRaven could be heard ordering in one of the two Chinooks waiting north of Abbottabad.

The team from the crashed chopper moved quickly along the inside wall, pausing only to blow open a metal door that led to the house. The team from the chopper outside the wall blasted in through another entrance. There were flashes of light on the screen. The men were moving now on the house itself, and then were inside.

Upstairs, the household had been startled awake by a loud crash. One of bin Laden's adult daughters ran up from the second floor to the third and was told to go back down. Bin Laden instructed his wife Amal to leave the lights off, though they would not have been able to turn them on anyway: C.I.A. operatives had cut the electricity to the entire neighborhood. Bin Laden waited upstairs with Amal.

One group of SEALs entered the garage area of the guesthouse. Teams like this had hit houses that were wired to explode, and had encountered human targets wired to blow themselves up, so they moved very fast, and with adult males in particular they were inclined to shoot on sight. The courier

Ibrahim Saeed Ahmed sprayed a wild burst of AK-47 rounds at the SEALs, who returned fire and killed him. His wife, behind him, was hit in the shoulder.

Another part of the team moved on the main house, clearing it methodically, room by room. Abrar Ahmed, the courier's brother, was in a first-floor bedroom with his wife Bushra. Both were shot dead. The team then cleared the first floor, room by room. When they encountered a locked metal door in the rear, sealing off a stairway to the upper floors, they slapped on a small C-4 charge, blew it off its hinges, and moved up the stairs. Bin Laden's 23-year-old son, Khalid, a slender bearded man in a white T-shirt, was shot dead at the top of the stairs. There were wailing women and children on this floor, none of whom posed a threat. The team didn't know it yet, but there was only one adult male left in the compound, and he was in the third-floor bedroom.

Originally, half of the assaulting SEALs were to have come through the third-floor balcony into the top floor, in which case bin Laden would have been encountered immediately, at about the same time the Ahmed brothers were being shot downstairs. Instead, bin Laden had 15 long minutes to wait in the darkness as the SEALs cleared the rooms. Their rifles had silencers, and none of the victims had fired, so he may not have heard shooting, but he would have heard the burst of fire from Ahmed, the shouting, and the sound of the door being blown off. He might have also heard the muted pop of the SEALs' silenced weapons. He would have heard those sounds moving toward him. The only windows on his secure third floor looked north, out over the compound walls. The downed chopper was in the western

corner and the one that landed outside the walls was to the south, so he could only have surmised who was coming for him. He may have thought it was a Pakistani force.

Three SEALs came up the stairs methodically, scanning different angles, searching while protecting one another. The first man up spotted a tall, bearded, swarthy man in a prayer cap wearing traditional Pakistani clothes, a knee-length flowing shirt over pajama-like bottoms. The SEAL fired and the man retreated quickly. The teammates followed. As the first SEAL entered the bedroom, he saw bin Laden on the floor, but first had to contend with Amal, who shouted and moved in front of her husband. The SEAL knocked her aside as his teammates stood over the mortally wounded bin Laden and fired killing shots into his chest.

The engagement was over in seconds. Amal had been shot in the leg. Bin Laden had weapons on a shelf in his bedroom, but had not picked them up. His identity was unmistakable, even with the grotesque hole through his right forehead. When he was shot he had not been surrendering, but neither had he been resisting. It is impossible to second-guess men in a firefight, but the available evidence suggests that if the SEALs' first priority had been to take bin Laden alive he would be in U.S. custody today. What is more likely is that the SEALs had no intention of taking bin Laden alive, even though no one in the White House or chain of command had issued such an order. It would have taken a strong directive to capture him alive to preempt the instinct to kill him. The men who conducted the raid were hardened to violence and death. Their inclination would

have been to shoot bin Laden on sight, just as they shot the other men they encountered in the compound.

McRaven heard the code word, "Geronimo." It was part of an alphabetical code to report progress, the "mission execution checklist." Geronimo meant bin Laden. The admiral conveyed the report immediately to Panetta, and it began to spread through the C.I.A. and the White House. In the corner of the crowded conference room, Obama heard the words "Geronimo ID'd."

"Looks like we got him," said Obama, only half believing it.

The president knew the ID was still tentative. To the extent he felt relief or excitement or satisfaction, he tried to fight those feelings down. To him, the moment meant that the SEALs could now start extricating themselves -- which for all he knew could entail fighting their way out. There had been a chopper crash and explosions at the compound. If the United States was going to have to defend the raiders on their way out -- and there was a force ready to do so -- it meant the worst might still lie ahead. Hearing the report, the president thought, Get the hell out of there now!

McRaven realized he didn't know whether bin Laden had been killed or captured. He said, "Find out whether it's Geronimo E.K.I.A. [Enemy Killed in Action]." The answer came back, "Roger, Geronimo E.K.I.A." So McRaven passed that on to Panetta. The delay between these two reports would cause some confusion in later accounts, which suggested that the SEALs had first found bin Laden, chased him, and then a few minutes later killed him. The finding and the shooting had together taken place within seconds.

There remained some uncertainty -- a point McRaven was careful to make. The president had been deeply aware of the fact. As he would recall, the SEALs had just been through a firefight. They were operating at night, and in the dark. The circumstantial evidence was compelling -- and everyone had heard the words "Geronimo ID'd" -- but there had as yet been no conclusive confirmation that the man who had been killed was bin Laden. The situation was tense, and it would be until the choppers were in the air.

The video on the screen now showed the team leaving the house, herding the uninjured women and children to one corner of the compound, away from the downed chopper. Some of the men emerged carrying a bag -- bin Laden's body had been zipped into a nylon body bag after being dragged down the stairs. One of bin Laden's daughters would later say that she heard her father's head banging on each step, leaving a bloody trail. The SEALs moved deliberately, and Obama remembers feeling that they were taking too long. Everyone was waiting for the Pakistani response.

But the commotion at the compound had, in fact, attracted little interest in the neighborhood or the country. The translator, wearing a Kevlar vest under his traditional long Pakistani shirt, shooed away the few residents who came out for a look. He told them in Pashto to go back to their houses -- a "security operation" was under way. There was also the matter of the dog. People retreated.

The Chinook summoned by McRaven now landed loudly outside the compound walls. Men were working on planting explosives on the downed Black Hawk and destroying its sensitive avionics. A medic

from the Chinook unzipped bin Laden's body bag, took swabs of blood, and inserted needles to extract bone marrow for DNA testing. Twenty minutes elapsed before the body bag was carried out to the working Black Hawk. One of the bone-marrow samples was placed on the Chinook. The intelligence haul from bin Laden's computers was likewise distributed between the two choppers. Finally, the White House audience saw the downed Black Hawk explode. The demolition team scurried to the Chinook, and the choppers lifted off. When Pakistan's air force finally scrambled two F-16s, the American force was safely across the border. The choppers landed back in Jalalabad. It was three A.M.

McRaven signed off on his narration for about 20 minutes to go and meet the men on the tarmac as they brought out the body bag. It was unzipped, and photos were taken and transmitted immediately to Washington and Langley. The man had been dead for an hour and 40 minutes, and he had taken a shot to the head. The face was swollen and distorted.

McRaven called Langley with a question for the bin Laden team.

"How tall is this guy?" he asked.

He was told, "Between six four and six five."

The dead man was certainly tall, but no one had a tape measure, so one of the SEALs who was six feet four lay down next to it. The body lengths roughly matched.

Twenty-four hours later, McRaven supervised the disposal of bin Laden's body. They had decided weeks earlier that the best option would be burial at sea; that way there would be no shrine for the martyr's followers. So the body was cleaned, photographed

from every conceivable angle, and then flown on a V-22 Osprey to the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Carl Vinson* cruising in the Arabian Sea. As a formality, the State Department contacted Saudi Arabia's government and offered to deliver the body to his home country, but bin Laden was as unwanted there in death as he had been in life. Told that the alternative was burial at sea, the Saudi official said, "We like your plan."

Procedures for a simple Muslim burial were performed on the carrier, with bin Laden's body being washed again and wrapped in a white shroud. A navy photographer recorded the burial in full sunlight, Monday morning, May 2. One frame shows the body wrapped in a weighted shroud. The next shows it lying diagonally on a chute, feet overboard. In the next frame the body is hitting the water. In the next it is visible just below the surface, ripples spreading outward. In the last frame there are only circular ripples on the surface. The mortal remains of Osama bin Laden were gone for good.

V. Five Days Later

On May 6, 2011, President Obama flew to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, to meet with the SEAL team and the chopper pilots. They assembled in a drab classroom on the base. The president was struck by how "ordinary" the group seemed. With only one or two exceptions, the men did not resemble the bulked-up heroes of Hollywood but rather a group of ordinary, fit-looking men. They ranged in age from their late 20s to their early 40s. Some had gray hair. Dressed differently, Obama thought, they could have been bankers or lawyers. It wasn't physical prowess that distinguished them, he decided. It was savvy and skill. In the front of the classroom

was a model of bin Laden's compound. McRaven had said his men would walk the president through the mission in detail. They would tell him anything he wanted to know, except which of them had killed bin Laden. That secret would stay with the team.

McRaven addressed the group first. Then the helicopter pilot whose Black Hawk had crashed inside the compound stood up. He was a tall, thin man with dark hair who appeared unused to speaking before a group, especially one that included the president of the United States. He described for Obama exactly what had happened with his chopper, and how deliberate his crash had been. He explained that once he realized the craft was going down, he maneuvered it to catch the tail on the wall so that it would land upright.

"Was the weather a factor?" Obama asked.

"Yes," the pilot said. The air had been warmer inside the compound than the mission plan had anticipated. He explained the aerodynamics.

When he was finished, the SEAL-team commander spoke. He was a short, stocky man who was at once dead serious and perfectly at ease. He began by thanking the chopper pilot. "I am here today," he said, "because of the amazing work that this guy did." He then gave a long account of exactly how their successful mission had been "10 years in the making." The capability he and the other men in the classroom represented had been honed over all those years of combat, he said. Their skills and tactics had been purchased with the lives of others. He mentioned the operating bases in Afghanistan that were named in honor of these men. Then he explained that the success of the mission had depended

on every member of the team, and gave examples. He cited the skill of the pilot settling down the chopper upright. He mentioned many others. He cited the Pashto translator, who was able to turn away the curious onlookers outside the compound.

"I don't know what we would have done if all those people had just started rushing the compound," he said.

He even mentioned Cairo, the dog.

"You had a dog?" the president asked, surprised.

"Yes, sir, we always have a dog with us," the commander said.

"Well," said Obama, "I would like to meet that dog."

"Mr. President, then I would advise you to bring treats," said the commander.

Contributing editor Mark Bowden has written extensively on military matters for Vanity Fair, including an ASME-nominated reconstruction of the battle in Wanat, Afghanistan. "The Hunt for 'Geronimo'" -- an adaptation of Bowden's forthcoming book, The Finish: The Killing of Osama bin Laden (Atlantic Monthly Press) -- is based on more than a year of interviews. His conversation with President Obama focused on the raid on bin Laden's compound. "He talked about how accustomed he has become to handling questions with no easy answers," recalls Bowden, "and how efforts to assign precise odds to these questions are just methods of 'disguised uncertainty.'"

Washington Post
October 14, 2012
Pg. 5

The Fact Checker

31. When It Comes To Sequestration And Defense Cuts, There Is

Plenty Of Blame To Go Around

By Glenn Kessler

Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney has repeatedly hammered President Obama for cutting military spending — in the first presidential debate, in a new Web video and in mailers sent to residents in vote-rich Virginia. "Over 130,000 Virginia jobs and America's national security are on the line," the glossy pamphlet says. "Barack Obama's agenda ignores Virginia's families and security."

The mailer even quotes Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta as decrying the impact of the cuts. That's actually a clue that something more complex is going on here — why would Panetta be complaining about his boss's policies?

This is a classic Washington food fight. But any fair reading of the facts would show the blame game is much more complex than Romney's rhetoric. Indeed, as the moderator of the vice presidential debate, ABC's Martha Raddatz, noted when Romney running mate Paul Ryan raised them: "Let's put the automatic defense cuts aside, okay? No one wants that."

So, what's really going on here?

The Facts

In 2011, Democrats and Republicans had a bitter showdown on whether to raise the ceiling on the national debt. The impasse ended with bipartisan passage of the Budget Control Act of 2011, which cut spending by nearly \$1 trillion over 10 years by setting new budget caps for security and nonsecurity discretionary spending.

Security spending included not just the Defense Department but also Homeland Security,

Veterans Affairs, foreign aid, intelligence and other areas. The goal was to allow some flexibility to avoid being locked into a specific number for defense spending.

The law also tasked a “supercommittee” with finding ways to reduce the deficit by an additional \$1.2 trillion over 10 years. If the committee failed — which it did — then automatic cuts totaling \$1.2 trillion also would be ordered in security and nonsecurity spending. This process is known as “sequestration.”

Ryan was one of the many Republican members of Congress who voted for the agreement. In fact, he was one of its biggest cheerleaders.

“The Budget Control Act represents a victory for those committed to controlling government spending and growing our economy,” he said in a statement issued after the measure passed.

Romney, for his part, blasted the deal as soon as it was made, saying it “opens the door to higher taxes and puts defense cuts on the table.” Romney has also since said that Republican leaders made a mistake in agreeing to this deal.

So why blame Obama for the defense cuts? The Romney campaign points to passages in Bob Woodward’s new book, “The Price of Politics,” and Glenn Thrush’s e-book, “Obama’s Last Stand,” as showing that Obama was the first to come up with the idea of putting defense cuts on the table. The accounts show that Obama wanted to have leverage to force the Republicans to accept tax hikes for the wealthy.

In other words, it was part of a negotiation. The two sides were haggling over an enforcement trigger that would cause pain on both sides. As The Washington Post previously reported,

the Obama administration originally wanted the trigger to hinge on repeal of George W. Bush tax cuts on the wealthy. Republicans responded by saying the trigger should be balanced by repeal of the individual mandate in Obama’s health-care law.

Ultimately, that was too much for both sides, so they settled on security spending (pain for Republicans) balanced by nonsecurity spending (pain for Democrats). The inside accounts of sausage-making are interesting, but not surprising. Ultimately, the final deal was good enough for top Republicans, including Romney’s running mate.

Since then, both sides have played political games over the defense cuts.

Earlier this year, Ryan crafted a bill that would have halted the automatic cuts in defense spending for one year while cutting in other areas. It passed the House in May on a partyline vote, with not a single Democrat voting for it.

The Democratic-controlled Senate did not accept the bill — and has not done much else, either, to deal with the problem. Democrats have proposed ending Bush-era tax cuts for the wealthy as a way to meet the deficit targets in the Budget Control Act, although no vote has ever been taken on a sequestration replacement plan.

The Romney ad and pamphlet cite a study by Stephen S. Fuller of George Mason University as showing how “Obama’s cuts” would kill more than 130,000 jobs in Virginia. But the study never mentions Obama, and Fuller says both sides are responsible for the scenario he envisages.

“The cuts that I have calculated are a result of sequestration, the Budget Control Act of 2011,” Fuller said in an e-mail. “These were

in effect approved by all of the Congressmen and Senators voting for the Act and the president as he signed it. There is lots of blame to go around since the Republicans have their fingerprints on this Act, too.”

The Pinocchio Test

Romney may have always opposed this deal, but it is wrong to lay all of the blame on Obama for the defense cuts in the sequester; the Budget Control Act was a bipartisan deal designed to spread the pain around.

Republicans may now be experiencing buyer’s remorse, but that’s no excuse for claiming that these are all Obama’s defense cuts — especially since the study cited in the ad makes no such claim.

Pensacola News Journal
October 14, 2012

Military Update

32. Army, Marines To Shield Quality In 80,000-Force Drawdown

By Tom Philpott

Soldiers and Marines have had the most deployments, seen the toughest fighting and suffered the greatest number of U.S. casualties in recent wars. And as with most post-war periods, ground forces also will see their career opportunities tighten faster than other service branches.

The Army plans to shed 60,000 troops, or 11 percent of its active force, to reach 490,000 by fiscal 2017. The Marine Corps will cut 20,000 — 5000 a year over the next four years — to reach an end-strength of 182,100.

Both services say they are determined through the drawdown to sustain force quality and to keep a proper mix of job skills and leadership experience to meet future requirements.

“Everything we do through the next five years is going to be about making the Army a quality force,” said Al Eggerton, deputy chief of the officer division for the directorate of military personnel management.

“We’ve gotten an awful lot of experience in the last 10 years of war, and we’re going to make selections to keep the very best of that that we can. And we’re going to make sure we level our force across the optimum grades and skills and that we don’t have any hollow points.”

This time “we won’t just be opening the door and allowing everyone to walk,” he said. “We want to use precision, care and compassion.”

Army leaders haven’t reached final decisions yet on grade structure or skill mix for the post-drawdown force. So Eggerton can’t say yet how force cuts will impact specific groups of officers or enlisted.

“That’s a point of contention for field officers who would love to know exactly how we’re going to do this. But at this point we’ve got the framework but not the decisions,” Eggerton said.

When final decisions are made, perhaps soon after the election, Eggerton said, “we will begin to look at each year group of the drawdown period and, by grades and skills, analyze our populations to determine where we need to pare and where there are shortages or gaps we have to fill.”

In the post-Cold War drawdown of the 1990s, to meet force targets, Army cut recruiting too deeply, creating hollow areas that later impacted the career force. Recruiting this time is falling more modestly.

From 2004 to 2010, the Army was expanding and officer promotion selection rates “were allowed to go fairly

high because we needed to keep all the fully-qualified people we had," Eggerton said. In the last two years, rates moved "back toward what was the norm prior to our large expansion."

So competition for promotion is rising. Some officers in overmanned skills, if not selected for promotion on a first pass, are being invited to leave service early through waivers of remaining service obligations.

Other officers are being offered "affiliation bonuses" to leave active duty for reserve components. To sharpen this incentive, the Army has Congress to double the maximum affiliation bonus to \$20,000.

Army also has asked for authority to separate some officers involuntarily, anticipating that voluntary enticements and the usual promotion board process of separating officers who twice fail selection to the next highest rank, won't get the Army to its drawdown targets fast enough.

"Some year groups and grades won't get a chance to be seen by the promotion process and separate through that, which would be more natural," Eggerton said. He can't say yet how many officers might be forced out if Congress grants that authority.

For the enlisted force, the goal is "precision retention" of careerists. Commanders will be able to deny even "enlisted members who are fully qualified the opportunity to re-up their contracts" based on service needs.

But the key force-shaping tool is the enlisted Qualitative Service Program, introduced earlier this year, to identify non-commissioned officers for involuntary early separation from active duty. A series of "centralized enlisted selection board processes," the QSP

will allow tailoring of the force based on how well leaders have developed, and imbalances across skills.

The first QSP board in June denied continued service to 138 active duty and 40 Active Guard Reserve senior NCOs. Eight more boards are planned for 2013, all of them targeting grades and skills projected to be over strength or to lack viable career progression without QSP board action.

To be considered for QSP, soldiers who E-9 must have three years time in grade. Those in E-8 and below must have four years in grade.

Gen. James Amos, Marine Corps commandant, said the Corps plans no involuntary "reductions in force" that would cut service contracts short. That would not be "keeping faith" with Marines "who are bred on loyalty and faithfulness" and who have put their lives on the line again and again.

That said, competition to reenlist, or for officers to extend service obligations, "will be a little more fierce" as the size of the Corps falls. This will incentivize Marines "to be the very best they can. So that is how I keep faith," Amos recently told a group of news reporters.

Like the Army, the Marine Corps has slowed recruiting. During the Iraq War, its accession target some years hit 35,000, Amos said, up from the normal 30,000. In fiscal 2012, the Corps signed only 28,500 recruits.

Meanwhile, first-term reenlistments have become "much more competitive," Amos said. Combat experience alone is no guarantee a Marine will be retained because 70 percent of current Marines have seen combat.

And top-performing Marines who haven't seen combat shouldn't feel

discouraged about their career prospects. First of all, the world "isn't getting any nicer out there," Amos said, so Afghanistan likely won't be the last chance this generation of Marines has to fight for their country.

But also a "superstar" Marine who hasn't seen combat will still compete favorably for promotion with a combat-experienced Marine who "is something less than a superstar player," Amos said. "Our system is designed, promotion-wise, actually to [find] the best Marine."

"Combat is a pretty good filter for the performance of a Marine under stress. But over time we have gone through periods of peace. And our bright young Marines have always floated to the surface in preparation for future combat," Amos said.

Philadelphia Inquirer
October 14, 2012

33. Will Attack On A Child At Last Prod Pakistan?

By Trudy Rubin, Inquirer
Opinion Columnist

Pakistanis have united in outrage over the Taliban's attack on 14-year-old Malala Yousafzai, who campaigned for girls' education and became a prominent symbol of defiance against Islamist rule.

Gunmen boarded a school bus, asked for Malala by name, and shot her in the head (as I write this, she is in critical condition). A Pakistani Taliban spokesman defended the attack, justifying it because Malala was promoting "enlightened moderation." He said they would attack her again if she recovered.

So, as Malala fights for life, I have a question: Will this atrocity finally push Pakistan's military and ISI intelligence

agency to reject the militancy that pervades the country? Will Pakistan's leaders acknowledge they can't fight certain Taliban groups while providing a haven for other groups that are useful tools against their archenemy, India?

Malala's story shows how shortsighted, indeed suicidal, that approach is for Pakistan, where militants want to take over a nuclear-armed country. As the Pakistani daily the News put it after the shooting: "Malala Yousafzai is in critical condition today and so is Pakistan."

I have a personal interest in Malala's case. In November 2009, I visited the beautiful Swat valley, where she and her family lived, and which had fallen prey to the Taliban. While there, I had a moving conversation with Malala's father, Ziauddin Yousafzai - a human-rights campaigner who ran an independent school for girls.

With its mountains and waterfalls, Swat had once been a tourist destination where generations of Pakistanis went for their honeymoons. But in 2008, a vicious group of Taliban moved in from the adjacent tribal areas and took over the valley. They shut down girls' schools, including the one run by Yousafzai, cut off the heads of anyone who challenged them, and murdered women. At the time, 11-year-old Malala started writing an anonymous blog for the BBC about life under the Taliban.

The residents felt abandoned by their political leaders. Indeed, during a visit to Pakistan in April 2009, I had watched in amazement as the parliament endorsed a deal with the leader of the Swat militants that would have conceded them the valley.

The only thing that saved the people of Swat was that

the Taliban started marching toward Islamabad a week after the deal was signed. The parliament quickly rescinded the pact, and the Pakistani army mounted a massive assault on the militants, pushing them back.

By the time I arrived in November, the militants were no longer visible, but people there were still nervous. They felt trapped between the militants and the military.

Local merchants were convinced the Taliban couldn't have grown so strong if the military and ISI hadn't coddled them. "When the dragon becomes too large," one told me, asking for anonymity, "it eats its own. There are still some Pakistani agencies [meaning the ISI] who have a soft spot for the Taliban."

I sat in the garden of a local architect's home, talking with prominent Swat civic leaders, including Malala's father. He told me that even after the army supposedly vanquished the Taliban and he went to reopen his school, he was afraid the Taliban would kill him. He slept every night in a different house.

"We had terrorists in our valley," he told me. "They wanted to negate our right to culture and poetry, and they wanted to destroy the special musical heritage of our valley. They want to impose their culture on us."

Then Yousafzai got to the point that most disturbed him: Pakistan's political leaders were failing to tell their own people that the Taliban presented a mortal threat, and could only drag the country backward.

When it came to fighting the Taliban, he said, "Pakistan's religious parties, even Imran Khan [the famous cricket player turned politician], all say it's America's war, not my war. How can they say this if my

children are being killed in Swat?"

This brave man was referring then to the female students from his school who were at risk from the Taliban. Today it is his own daughter who is at death's door.

Even now I wonder whether Malala's sacrifice is enough to wake the country to the threat it faces. Pakistani journalists tell me the country's religious parties, while denouncing the attack on Malala, have not condemned the Taliban by name. Nor has Imran Khan, who offered to pay for Malala's medical care but who still talks of deals with the militants.

Pakistan's top general rushed to Malala's bedside. But Pakistan still harbors the Afghan Taliban leaders who are responsible for the death of many thousands of civilians and want to take over Afghanistan after U.S. troops leave. And Pakistan harbors terrorist groups that murder Pakistani Shiites, Ahmadis, and Christians

Perhaps the attack on Malala will jolt her country into a new reality. I really hope so. But it won't happen unless Pakistani generals and politicians display the same courage as this young girl.

ForeignPolicy.com
October 12, 2012

34. Solving The Okinawa Problem

How many Marines do we still need in Japan?

By Mike Mochizuki and Michael O'Hanlon

In recent weeks the U.S. Marine Corps has begun to deploy the V-22 Osprey to Okinawa, Japan. The Osprey flies like a propeller plane but can take off and land like a helicopter, providing more speed than the latter but

more tactical flexibility than the former. It has also reignited the long-standing debate between Japan and the United States over the future of the Marines' presence on Okinawa. Critics have called the airplane unsafe and demanded its redeployment back to the United States. While flight data do not confirm this specific allegation, policymakers in Tokyo and Washington do need to realize they have an even bigger problem -- and search for a new, less intrusive way of basing Marines on this small island at the southern end of the Japanese archipelago.

The question of the Marines on Okinawa has been contentious for some two decades now. Numbering between 15,000 and 20,000 at a time there, they have constituted more than a third of the U.S. military presence in Japan, on an overpopulated island that itself represents well under 1 percent of the Japanese landmass. On top of those Marines, another 10,000 or so Air Force personnel continue to be based at the Kadena Air Base on Okinawa as well. The Marines have been resented locally not only for their sheer numbers, but for Air Station Futenma, which is surrounded by residential neighborhoods and schools in the city of Ginowan. The occasional accident there has put anxiety into the hearts of many who fear a worse accident in the future; moreover, as Okinawa is one of Japan's only prefectures actually growing in population, local officials want the land for other purposes.

There is a lot to say in defense of the Marine Corps, as well as the U.S. position, starting with the fact that these forces serve common alliance interests in a stable Asia-Pacific region. Washington has tried to work with Tokyo to relocate the

base, the most recent proposal being to build an airfield on the shore of Henoko Bay farther north in a much less populated part of Okinawa. But Japanese national and local politics have repeatedly gotten in the way. In 2006, the United States and Japan agreed to relocate almost half the Okinawa-based Marines to Guam in the coming years to relieve pressure on Okinawa. And regarding the Osprey in particular, though it has suffered some famous accidents, as of August it had been statistically safer over its lifetime than the average Marine Corps aircraft. According to Marine Corps headquarters at the Pentagon, it has had a 20 percent lower rate of serious accidents per flight hour than the typical Marine helicopter or other aircraft -- though admittedly its two recent crashes merit further public discussion to relieve understandable anxieties on Okinawa.

All that said, the current relocation scheme appears stuck in the morass of Okinawan politics. This June, Governor Hirokazu Nakaima's ruling coalition failed to win a majority in the prefectural assembly election. That fact puts him on the defensive. Given the public discontent about the Osprey deployment, the governor has little choice but to push harder in resolving the Futenma issue -- without, alas, approving the Henoko site -- as well as opposing the Osprey deployment.

There is another problem with the Marine Corps' plan for the region, concerning the airfield construction plan combined with the partial relocation to Guam. None of this is the fault of the Marine Corps, which has sought in good faith to find a plan that works for all. Alas, in addition to the political challenges the

plan faces, it is also now associated with a price tag estimated by the Government Accountability Office to be up to \$30 billion, split roughly equally between Tokyo and Washington. This at a time when sequestration threatens to lop another 10 percent off future Pentagon budgets, on top of the nearly 10 percent cut already in effect from the 2011 Budget Control Act.

There is a cheaper, simpler, more promising way. It would bring more Marines home to the United States, where downsizing in the years ahead will free up space at stateside Marine Corps bases, and compensate by predeploying supplies in the broader Pacific region. This latter step would cost some money, but nowhere near the \$30 billion saved by jettisoning the current plan, and it could be funded largely by Japan (since the United States would be helping the Japanese solve a local problem). Futenma would ultimately be closed, but first provisions would be made for limited Marine Corps use of other airfields on the main island of Okinawa and perhaps on smaller islands in the prefecture as well -- together with full access to such facilities in times of crisis or war.

Specifically, we would suggest leaving only 5,000 to 8,000 Marines on Okinawa and bringing the rest back to places like Camp Pendleton, California, rather than building new facilities for them on Guam. The United States would then station prepositioning ships with weapons and supplies for several thousand Marines in Japanese waters (to complement existing similar capabilities now already at ports in Guam) in order to allow the Marines who had been relocated stateside to return rapidly to the Western Pacific in a crisis. In addition, Marines based in

the United States would rotate regularly to the Asia-Pacific region to conduct exercises with friends and allies, including Japan.

Regarding airfields, we would counsel the following changes. Follow through promptly on the commitment to close Futenma and return the land to local control. To replace some functions of Futenma, build a modest helipad inside an existing Marine Corps base on the northern half of the island, where Okinawa-based Marines do most of their training now, so the logistical implications may be minimal (or even net positive).

In addition, by agreement with Tokyo and the Okinawan prefectural government, the United States would seek authority to conduct some Marine Corps fixed-wing flights at the Kadena Air Base if necessary, provided the total number of takeoff and landings at that base decreases. To ensure that Kadena does not become busier on a day-to-day basis, the United States should base some Air Force planes now at Kadena elsewhere in peacetime -- like Misawa in northern Japan, or even Guam. Finally, Japan could build a third runway at Naha international airport, which would aid the island's economy in peacetime and provide more capacity for U.S. and Japanese military use in crises or war.

This plan is win-win-win. It saves money for both allies. It actually improves U.S. responsiveness to possible regional crises. And it finally extracts the United States from the quagmire that the Japanese and alliance politics of this issue have become.

The United States and Japan have been bogged down by the Okinawa issue too long. The precious time and talent of policymakers have gone toward

trying to solve a problem that has become almost insoluble. We need to look at this problem anew, address it, and finally move beyond it. The American defense budget crunch may be just the final impetus needed to motivate policymakers to fresh thinking and decisive action.

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Weekly Standard
October 22, 2012

35. Who'll Get Thrown Off The Island?

The greater East Asian co-hostility sphere.

By Ethan Epstein

Relations between China and Japan, never particularly placid, have reached bona fide crisis proportions over the past several months—and could get worse.

The trouble began earlier this year, when Tokyo's governor announced his intention to purchase the uninhabited and fiercely disputed Senkaku Islands (which the Chinese call the Diaoyu) from their private owner. This swiftly became Japanese national policy. And because in East Asia an uninhabited island is never just an uninhabited island, China had a national temper tantrum.

Riots broke out in dozens of Chinese cities, with tacit government approval. Scores of Japanese-owned businesses, factories, and cars were torched. A Japanese consulate was attacked. Protesters marched with banners calling for genocide, and businesses posted signs declaring, "No Japanese Allowed!" An editorial in the *People's Daily*, the Chinese Communist party's newspaper

of record, lauded the rioters' "patriotism."

Economic damage was inflicted as well. Sales of Japanese cars in China (the world's largest auto market and, it often seems, the world's largest traffic jam) have tanked. "Toyota's China sales plunged 49 percent last month compared to September 2011. Honda was off 41 percent and Nissan was down 35 percent," reports *Bloomberg Businessweek*. Mazda and Mitsubishi sales also plummeted, with 35 percent and 65 percent declines, respectively. Air China, China Eastern Airlines, Japan Airlines, and All Nippon Airways have significantly reduced their flights between the two countries. And China's finance minister and central bank chief snubbed a series of IMF meetings in Tokyo last week—though the gesture was wholly symbolic.

So, Sino-Japanese relations are approaching something of a postwar nadir. And there are reasons to believe the situation will only deteriorate further next year.

First, Japan must hold a general election by September, though it will likely happen much earlier. The main parties' standard-bearers are scrambling furiously to out-hawk one another. The country's woefully unpopular prime minister, Yoshihiko Noda, made waves by purchasing the Senkakus, and by pointedly vowing to accept "no compromises" with China. While these moves have won broad approval, his party will likely lose its majority in the Diet for a number of other reasons, including its economic performance.

A new party will contest the election. Founded and led by the boisterous Osaka mayor Toru Hashimoto, the Japan Restoration party is

also making hawkish noises. Hashimoto, whom the *New York Times* describes as a “boyish-faced 43-year-old former television commentator” with an “in-your-face style,” is basically a Japanese Tea Partier. (A green tea partier?) He’s taken on Osaka’s public-sector unions, slashed deficits, and imposed performance standards on teachers. On foreign policy, he advocates an aggressive response to territorial disputes, and wants a national referendum on revising Article 9 of Japan’s postwar constitution, which mandates pacifism. (Judging by recent polling, a major overhaul of Article 9 would stand a good chance of passing.)

But most important was September’s selection of former prime minister Shinzo Abe to lead Japan’s largest opposition party, the Liberal Democrats. (Their name is something of a misnomer—the Liberal Democrats aren’t.) During his last premiership, from 2006 to 2007, Abe pursued an activist foreign policy. He warned of China’s military buildup. He imposed tough sanctions on North Korea. He floated a plan to revise—or even do away with—Article 9.

Much of Abe’s foreign policy record was (and is) tough, smart, and conservative. But Abe has an unfortunate habit of poking the eyes of Japan’s allies; he’s outraged South Korea by promoting school textbooks that ludicrously deny that Imperial Japan used “comfort women”—i.e., Korean sex slaves—before and during World War II.

Japan-watchers agree that Abe, the candidate likely to take the hardest line on China, is also most likely to win the premiership. Richard J. Samuels, the Ford International Professor of political science at MIT, says, “Abe has to

be considered the favorite,” and wonders if Abe will govern as the “nationalist who seems capable of reckless driving in the waters of the East China Sea.” Ellis Krauss, professor of Japanese politics and policymaking at the University of California, San Diego, while averring that he “would take no Las Vegas odds as to what might happen,” nonetheless concedes that right now, “Abe is the favorite.”

China, meanwhile, will soon undergo its own leadership transition. Xi Jinping is set to be installed as president on November 8, replacing Hu Jintao. Hu’s foreign policy has been notably more bellicose than his predecessors’: In addition to its troubles with Japan, China is currently embroiled in territorial disputes with South Korea, India, Vietnam, and (of course) Taiwan.

Not much is known about Xi’s personal policy preferences, but at a September speech at an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting, he used what the *South China Morning Post* called a “tougher tone on . . . disputes,” saying, “We are firm in safeguarding China’s sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity.” With the Chinese economy indisputably slowing, the new president and his party may find it strategic to inflame anti-Japanese nationalism further in order to deflect internal criticism from China’s ever more restive populace.

Dean Cheng, a research fellow at the Heritage Foundation’s Asian Studies Center, says it is likely that China’s current foreign policy assertiveness is not simply leadership posturing, but a combination of leadership weakness (it has no real direction in foreign

policy); national arrogance (it’s weathering the global economic downturn, enjoys rising comprehensive national power, has eclipsed Japan economically, etc.); and rising nationalism on the part of the populace. If this is correct, then the Chinese will continue to push their neighbors. Coupled with growing military capabilities, the Chinese may see themselves as ascendant in the region, and therefore conclude that they have little need to negotiate with smaller states, but will expect deference from them.

Dan Blumenthal, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, predicts, “There will be a short period of caution as the new Chinese leadership finds its footing. But then they will need to do something in the East and South China Sea to show that they are not breaking from Hu Jintao’s guidance and to consolidate support from the [Chinese military].”

Still, there are some who remain stubbornly optimistic that China’s new president will forge a fresh, less combative course. Douglas H. Paal of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, for example, said that with the leadership changes, he hopes “there will be some adjustments and improvements, because there have been some rough patches in recent years.” Henry Kissinger went further in a panel discussion last week at the Woodrow Wilson Center, saying, “I do not believe that great foreign adventures . . . can be on their agenda.”

Then again, I happened to be in Beijing during the last leadership transition, when Hu Jintao became president. All the talk at that time had Hu going to lead a great liberalization of Chinese politics, loosening restrictions on the press and

possibly even paving the way for democracy. We know how well that worked out.

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Boston Globe
October 14, 2012
Pg. K1

36. The New, New, New, New, New, New, New Strategy For The Middle East

The next president has an unprecedented chance to overhaul a creaky, 30-year-old vision of America's role in the region.

By Thanassis Cambanis, Globe Correspondent

Cops say they figure out a suspect’s intentions by watching his hands, not by listening to what comes out of his mouth. The same goes for American foreign policy. Whatever Washington may be saying about its global priorities, America’s hands tend to be occupied in the Middle East, site of all America’s major wars since Vietnam and the target of most of its foreign aid and diplomatic energy.

How to handle the Middle East has become a major point in the presidential campaign, with President Obama arguing for flexibility, patience, and a long menu of options, and challenger Mitt Romney promising a tougher, more consistent approach backed by open-ended military force.

Lurking behind the debate over tactics and approach, however, is a challenge rarely mentioned. The broad strategy that underlies American policy in the region, the Carter Doctrine, is now more than 30 years old, and in dire need of an overhaul. Issued in 1980 and expanded by presidents from both parties, the Carter doctrine now drives American

engagement in a Middle East that looks far different from the region for which it was invented.

President Jimmy Carter confronted another time of great turmoil in the region. The US-supported Shah had fallen in Iran, the Soviets had invaded Afghanistan, and anti-Americanism was flaring, with US embassies attacked and burned. His new doctrine declared a fundamental shift. Because of the importance of oil, security in the Persian Gulf would henceforth be considered a fundamental American interest. The United States committed itself to using any means, including military force, to prevent other powers from establishing hegemony over the Gulf. In the same way that the Truman Doctrine and NATO bound America's security to Europe's after World War II, the Carter Doctrine elevated a crowded and contested Middle Eastern shipping lane to nearly the same status as American territory.

The consequences have been profound. Every conflict in the Gulf since (and there has been a constant supply) has involved the United States. Our Navy patrols its waters, in constant tension with Iran; our need for bases there has persuaded us to support otherwise noxious leaders. The Carter Doctrine has driven the US fixation on stability among Arab regimes and Washington's micromanagement of Israel's relations with its neighbors. The entire world enjoys the same oil prices when they're low and stable, but the United States carries almost all of the increasingly unsustainable cost of securing the Gulf.

As difficult as it can be to imagine a fresh approach to such a complex web of alliances and conflicts, the next administration will enjoy a tool

that Carter lacked: the insights gained from three decades of sustained, intimate, and often frustrating direct involvement in the region. Hundreds of thousands of American combat troops have done tours in the Middle East, diplomats and politicians have deeply involved themselves in US policy there, and Washington has spent billions of dollars in the process.

In 2012, we look back on a recent level of American engagement with the Middle East never seen before. Even the failures have been failures from which we can learn. The decade that began with the US invasion of Afghanistan and ended with a civil war in Syria holds some transformative lessons, ones that could point the next president toward a new strategy far better suited to what the modern Middle East actually looks like--and to America's own values.

President Carter issued his new doctrine in what would turn out to be his final State of the Union speech in January 1980. America had been shaken by the oil shocks of the 1970s, in which the Arab-dominated OPEC asserted its control, and also by the fall of the tyrannical Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Shah of Iran, who had been a stalwart security partner to the United States and Israel.

Nearly everyone in America and most Western economies shared Carter's immediate goal of protecting the free flow of oil. What was significant was the path he chose to accomplish it. Carter asserted that the United States would take direct charge of security in this turbulent part of the world, rather than take the more indirect, diplomatic approach of balancing regional powers against each other and intervening through proxies and

allies. It was the doctrine of a micromanager looking to prevent the next crisis.

Carter's focus on oil unquestionably made sense, and the doctrine proved effective in the short term. Despite more war and instability in the Middle East, America was insulated from oil shocks and able to begin a long period of economic growth, in part predicated on cheap petrochemicals. But in declaring the Gulf region an American priority, it effectively tied us to a single patch of real estate, a shallow waterway the same size as Oregon, even when it was tangential, or at times inimical, to our greater goal of energy security. The result has been an ever-increasing American investment in the security architecture of the Persian Gulf, from putting US flags on foreign tankers during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, to assembling a huge network of bases after Operation Desert Storm in 1991, to the outright regime-building effort of the Iraq War.

In theory, however, none of this is necessary. America doesn't really need to worry about who controls the Gulf, so long as there's no threat to the oil supply. What it does need is to maintain relations in the region that are friendly, or friendly enough, and able to survive democratic changes in regime--and to prevent any other power from monopolizing the region.

The Carter Doctrine, and the policies that have grown up to enforce it, are based on a set of assumptions about American power that might never have been wholly accurate. They assume America has relatively little persuasive influence in the region, but a great deal of effective police power: the ability to control major events like regional wars by supporting one side or even intervening

directly, and to prevent or trigger regime change.

Our more recent experience in the Middle East has taught us the opposite lesson. It has become painfully clear over the last 10 years that America has little ability to control transformative events or to order governments around. Over the past decade, when America has made demands, governments have resolutely not listened. Israel kept building settlements. Saudi Arabia kept funding jihadis and religious extremists. Despots in Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, and Libya resisted any meaningful reform. Even in Iraq, where America physically toppled one regime and installed another, a costly occupation wasn't enough to create the Iraqi government that Washington wanted. The long-term outcome was frustratingly beyond America's control.

When it comes to requests, however, especially those linked to enticements, the recent past has more encouraging lessons. Analysts often focus on the failings of George W. Bush's "freedom agenda" period in the Middle East; democracy didn't break out, but the evidence shows that no matter how reluctantly, regional leaders felt compelled to respond to sustained diplomatic requests, in public and private, to open up political systems. It wasn't just the threat of a big stick: Egypt and Israel weren't afraid of an Iraq-style American invasion, yet they acceded to diplomatic pressure from the secretary of state to liberalize their political spheres. Egypt loosened its control over the opposition in 2005 and 2006 votes, while Israel let Hamas run in (and win) the 2006 Palestinian Authority elections. Even prickly Gulf potentates gave dollops of power to elected parliaments. It wasn't all that

America asked, but it was significant.

Paradoxically, by treating the Persian Gulf as an extension of American territory, Washington has reduced itself from global superpower to another neighborhood power, one than can be ignored, or rebuffed, or hectored from across the border. The more we are committed to the Carter Doctrine approach, which makes the military our central tool and physical control of the Gulf waters our top priority, the less we are able to shape events.

The past decade, meanwhile, suggests that soft power affords us some potent levers. The first is money. None of the Middle Eastern countries have sustainable economies; most don't even have functional ones. The oil states are cash-rich but by no means self-sufficient. They're dependent on outside expertise to make their countries work, and on foreign markets to sell their oil. Even Israel, which has a real and diverse economy, depends on America's largesse to undergird its military. That economic power gives America lots of cards to play.

The second is defense. The majority of the Arab world, plus Israel, depends on the American military to provide security. In some cases the protection is literal, as in Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait, where US installations project power; elsewhere, as in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan, it's indirect but crucial. (American contractors, for instance, maintain Saudi Arabia's air force.) America's military commitments in the Middle East aren't something it can take or leave as it suits; it's a marriage, not a dalliance. A savvier diplomatic approach would remind beneficiaries that they can't take it for granted, and

that they need to respond to the nation that provides it.

The Carter Doctrine clearly hasn't worked out as intended; America is more entangled than ever before, while its stated aims--a secure and stable Persian Gulf, free from any outside control but our own--seem increasingly out of reach. A growing, bipartisan tide of policy intellectuals has grappled with the question of what should replace it, especially given our recent experience.

One response has been to seek a more morally consistent strategy, one that seeks to encourage a better-governed Middle East. This idea has percolated on the left and the right. Alumni of Bush's neoconservative foreign-policy brain trust, including Elliott Abrams, have argued that a consistent pro-democratic agenda would better serve US interests, creating a more stable region that is less prone to disruptions in the oil supply. Voices on the left have made a similar argument since the Arab uprisings; they include humanitarian interventionists like Anne-Marie Slaughter at Princeton, who argue for stronger American intervention in support of Syria's rebels. Liberal fans of development and political freedoms have called for a "prosperity agenda," arguing that societies with civil liberties and equitably distributed economic growth are not only better for their own citizens but make better American allies.

Then there's a school that says the failures of the last decade prove that America should keep out of the Middle East almost entirely. Things turn out just as badly when we intervene, these critics argue, and it costs us more; oil will reach markets no matter how messy the region gets.

This school includes small-footprint realists like Stephen Walt at Harvard and pugilistic anti-imperial conservatives like Andrew Bacevich at Boston University. (Bacevich argues that the more the US intervenes with military power to create stability in the oil-producing Middle East, the more instability it produces.)

While the realists think we should disentangle from the region because the US can exert strategic power from afar, others say we should pull back for moral reasons as well. That's the argument made over the last year by Toby Craig Jones, a political scientist at Rutgers University who says that the US Navy should dissolve its Fifth Fleet base so it can cut ties with the troublesome and oppressive regime in Bahrain. America's military might guarantees that no power--not Iran, not Iraq, not the Russians--can sweep in and take control of the world's oil supply. Therefore, the argument goes, there's no need for America to attend to every turn of the screw in the region.

What's clear, from any of these perspectives, is that the Carter Doctrine is a blunt tool from a different time. It's now possible, even preferable, to craft a policy more in keeping with the modern Middle East, and also more in line with American values. It might sound obvious to say that Washington should be pushing for a liberalized, economically self-sufficient, stable, but democratic Middle East, and that there are better tools than military power to reach those aims. In fact, that would mark a radical change for the nation--and it's a course that the next president may well find within his power to plot.

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New York Times
October 14, 2012
Pg. SR12

The Public Editor

37. Questions On Drones, Unanswered Still

By Margaret Sullivan

UNDERSTANDING

American drone strikes is like a deadly version of the old telephone game: I whisper to you and you whisper to someone else, and eventually all meaning is lost.

You start with uncertain information from dubious sources. Pass it along, run it through the media blender, add pundits, and you've got something that may or may not be close to the truth.

How many people have been killed by these unmanned aircraft in the Central Intelligence Agency's strikes in Yemen and Pakistan? How many of the dead identified as "militants" are really civilians? How many are children?

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism in Britain has estimated that, in the first three years after President Obama took office, between 282 and 535 civilians were credibly reported killed by drone strikes — including more than 60 children. The United States government says the number of civilians killed has been far lower.

Accurate information is hard to come by. The Obama administration and the C.I.A. are secretive about the fast-growing drone program. The strikes in Pakistan are taking place in areas where reporters can't go, or would be in extreme

danger if they did. And it is all happening at a time when the American public seems tired of hearing about this part of the world anyway.

How does The New York Times fit into this hazy picture?

Some of the most important reporting on drone strikes has been done at The Times, particularly the “kill list” article by Scott Shane and Jo Becker last May. Those stories, based on administration leaks, detailed President Obama’s personal role in approving whom drones should set out to kill.

Groundbreaking as that article was, it left a host of unanswered questions. The Times and the American Civil Liberties Union have filed Freedom of Information requests to learn more about the drone program, so far in vain. The Times and the A.C.L.U. also want to know more about the drone killing of an American teenager in Yemen, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki, also shrouded in secrecy.

But The Times has not been without fault. Since the article in May, its reporting has not aggressively challenged the administration’s description of those killed as “militants” — itself an undefined term. And it has been criticized for giving administration officials the cover of anonymity when they suggest that critics of drones are terrorist sympathizers.

Americans, according to polls, have a positive view of drones, but critics say that’s because the news media have not informed them well. The use of drones is deepening the resentment of the United States in volatile parts of the world and potentially undermining fragile democracies, said Naureen Shah, who directs the Human Rights Clinic at Columbia University’s law school.

“It’s portrayed as picking off the bad guys from a plane,” she said. “But it’s actually surveilling entire communities, locating behavior that might be suspicious and striking groups of unknown individuals based on video data that may or may not be corroborated by eyeballing it on the ground.”

On Sunday, Ms. Shah’s organization will release a report that raises important questions about media accuracy on drone strikes. But accuracy is only one of the concerns that have been raised about coverage of the issue.

“It’s very narrow,” said David Rohde, a columnist for Reuters who was kidnapped by the Taliban in 2008 when he was a Times reporter. “What’s missing is the human cost and the big strategic picture.”

Glenn Greenwald, a lawyer who has written extensively on this subject for Salon and now for The Guardian, told me he sees “a Western media aversion to focusing on the victims of U.S. militarism. As long as you keep the victims dehumanized it’s somehow all right.”

Mr. Rohde raised another objection: “If a Republican president had been carrying out this many drone strikes in such a secretive way, it would get much more scrutiny,” he said. Scott Shane, the Times reporter, finds the topic knotty and the secrecy hard to penetrate. “This is a category of public yet classified information,” he told me. “It’s impossible to keep the strikes themselves secret, but you’ve never had a serious public debate by Congress on it.” Last month, ProPublica admirably framed the issue in an article titled “How the Government Talks About a Drone Problem It Won’t Acknowledge Exists.”

As for the human cost, Sarah Knuckey, a veteran human rights investigator now

at New York University School of Law, says she got a strong sense of everyday fear while spending 10 days in Pakistan last spring.

“I was struck by how afraid people are of the constant presence of drones,” said Ms. Knuckey, a co-author of a recent Stanford/N.Y.U. report on the drone campaign’s impact on Pakistanis. “They had the sense that they could be struck as collateral damage at any time.”

She is also troubled by the government’s lack of transparency. “The U.S. is creating a precedent by carrying out strikes in secrecy without accountability to anyone,” Ms. Knuckey said. “What if all countries did what the U.S. is doing?”

The Taliban and Al Qaeda are much worse problems for the Pakistani and Yemeni people than American drone strikes are. But acknowledging that doesn’t answer the moral and ethical questions of this push-button combat conducted without public accountability.

With its vast talent and resources, The Times has a responsibility to lead the way in covering this topic as aggressively and as forcefully as possible, and to keep pushing for transparency so that Americans can understand just what their government is doing.

New York Times
October 14, 2012
Pg. SR10

38. Time To Pack Up

After more than a decade of having American blood spilled in Afghanistan, with nearly six years lost to President George W. Bush’s disastrous indifference, it is time for United States forces to leave Afghanistan on a schedule dictated only by the security of the troops. It should not take more than a year. The United States will not achieve even

President Obama’s narrowing goals, and prolonging the war will only do more harm.

Vice President Joseph Biden Jr. said on Friday that “we are leaving Afghanistan in 2014, period. There is no ifs, ands or buts.” Mr. Obama indicated earlier that this could mean the end of 2014. Either way, two more years of combat, two more years of sending the 1 percent of Americans serving in uniform to die and be wounded, is too long.

Administration officials say they will not consider a secure “logistical withdrawal,” but they offer no hope of achieving broad governance and security goals. And the only final mission we know of, to provide security for a 2014 Afghan election, seems dubious at best and more likely will only lend American approval to a thoroughly corrupt political system.

This conclusion represents a change on our part. The war in Afghanistan had powerful support at the outset, including ours, after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

After Mr. Bush’s years of neglect, we believed that a new president, Barack Obama, was doing the right thing by at least making an effort. He set goals that made sense: first, a counterinsurgency campaign, stepped-up attacks on Al Qaeda, then an attempt to demolish the Taliban’s military power, promote democratic governance in Kabul and build an Afghan Army capable of exerting control over the country.

But it is now clear that if there ever was a chance of “victory” in Afghanistan, it evaporated when American troops went off to fight the pointless war in Iraq. While some progress has been made, the idea of fully realizing

broader democratic and security aims simply grows more elusive. Meanwhile, more than 2,000 American troops have died in this war, more than 50 of them recently in growing attacks by Afghan forces, and many thousands more have been maimed. The war has now cost upward of \$500 billion.

Representative Paul Ryan, the Republican vice-presidential nominee, said at the debate on Thursday: “We don’t want to lose the gains we’ve gotten. We want to make sure that the Taliban doesn’t come back in.”

More fighting will not consolidate the modest gains made by this war, and there seems little chance of guaranteeing that the Taliban do not “come back in,” at least in the provinces where they have never truly been dislodged. Last month, militants struck a heavily fortified NATO base. Officials say the Pakistan-based Haqqani network is behind many of the attacks on Americans.

Americans are desperate to see the war end and the 68,000 remaining troops come home. President Obama has not tasked military commanders with recommending a pace for the withdrawal until after the election. He and the coalition partners have committed to remain engaged in Afghanistan after 2014 at reduced levels, which could involve 15,000 or more American troops to carry out specialized training and special operations. Mr. Obama, or Mitt Romney if he wins, will have a hard time convincing Americans that makes sense — let alone Afghans. The military may yet ask for tens of thousands more troops, which would be a serious mistake.

To increase the odds for a more manageable transition and avert an economic collapse, the United States and other major

donors have pledged \$16 billion in economic aid through 2015. That is a commitment worth keeping, but the United States and its allies have tried nation building in Afghanistan, at least for the last four years. It is not working.

The task is to pack up without leaving behind arms that terrorists want and cannot easily find elsewhere (like Stinger missiles) or high-tech equipment (like Predator drones) that can be reverse engineered by Pakistan or other potential foes. The military can blow those things up if it must.

It is hard to be exact about a timetable since the Pentagon and NATO refuse to discuss it. The secretary of defense, Leon Panetta, told us last week that decisions about the timetable would be made after the military command reported to Mr. Obama in December. He would not say much of anything beyond that — whether the withdrawal would be front-loaded, or back-loaded, or how many troops would be needed to secure the election.

Some experts say a secure withdrawal would take at least six months, and possibly a year. But one year is a huge improvement over two. It would be one less year of having soldiers die or come home with wounds that are terrifying, physically and mentally.

Suicides among veterans and those in active service reached unacceptable levels long ago. A recent article by The Associated Press quoted studies estimating that 45 percent of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan are claiming disability benefits. A quarter of those veterans — 300,000 to 400,000, depending on the study — say they suffer from some form of post-traumatic stress disorder. This is far too high a price to go

on asking of troops and their families.

Four years ago, Mr. Obama called Afghanistan a “war we have to win.” His strategy relied on a newly trained Afghan Army and police force that could take over fighting the Taliban; a government competent to deliver basic services; and Pakistan’s cooperation. Here is what happened:

AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES NATO and the Pentagon built an Afghan Army and police force of nearly 352,000 that is now nominally in the lead for providing security in most of the country. Attrition rates are high and morale is low; the attacks on coalition forces have eroded trust and slowed the training. Afghan leaders have to work harder with Washington to weed out corrupt troops and Taliban infiltrators, but the nation cannot hang its hopes on that happening.

There is an agreement to finance the army to 2017 with Kabul paying \$500 million, Washington about \$2.5 billion and other donors about \$1.3 billion. If Kabul keeps its commitments, the donors should make good on theirs.

The Taliban have not retaken territory they lost to coalition forces, but Kandahar and Helmand Provinces, the Taliban base and the main focus of the 2010 surge, remain heavily contested. A Pentagon report in May said Taliban attacks in Kandahar from last October through March rose by 13 percent over the same period a year earlier.

William Byrd, an Afghan expert at the United States Institute of Peace, said, “The most that probably can be hoped” is that the army continues to hold Kabul and other major cities. It is not likely

to ever become an effective counterinsurgency force.

EFFECTIVE, CREDIBLE GOVERNANCE President Hamid Karzai’s weak and corrupt government, awash in billions of dollars, continues to alienate Afghans and make the Taliban an attractive alternative. Mr. Karzai recently chose Asadullah Khalid, a man accused of torture and drug trafficking, to take over the country’s main intelligence agency. Dozens of Karzai family members and allies have taken government jobs, pursued business interests or worked as contractors to the United States government.

A recent report by Afghanistan’s central bank said the Afghan political elite had been using Kabul Bank as a piggy bank. In 2010, word that the bank had lost \$300 million caused a panic, and the number later tripled. To win pledges of continued aid at an international donors conference in July, President Karzai promised to crack down on corruption and make political reforms, but he has done little. The aid sustaining his government is at risk if he fails. We doubt that he will exercise real leadership. For now, he has proved himself to be not only unreliable, but a force undermining American goals and Afghans’ interests.

In 2009 and 2010, Mr. Karzai’s supporters tried to defraud the national elections. With elections scheduled for 2014, the question is whether Mr. Karzai will keep his vow to abide by the Constitution and leave when his term is up. He needs to make sure the Parliament and the government put in place an electoral system that encourages competent candidates to run and enables a broadly accepted election with international monitors. All sides are lagging. (There has been even less progress in restoring

local governance, the bedrock of Afghan society, where the Taliban exert enduring influence.)

Mr. Obama wants to use American troops to provide logistical assistance and security at the elections. There were real threats to voters' lives in the first post-Taliban elections, but the real threat to democracy is from corruption, not bombs. Mr. Karzai stole the last election, and he got away with it with American forces in place. After giving him 10 years and lots of money, things keep going in the wrong direction. Why would this now change?

RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN After some bitter disputes, Pakistan began cooperating with the United States again in June by reopening a critical supply route to Afghanistan. American officials say the Pakistanis may have decided that sowing chaos in Afghanistan by supporting Taliban proxies is not in their interest after all. This could be wishful thinking. Last week, the Pentagon blamed the Pakistani-backed Haqqani network for some of the recent "green on blue" attacks. Islamabad's collusion with the Taliban and other extremist groups is the biggest threat to Afghan stability.

The United States has a huge interest in a less destructive Pakistan, a nuclear-armed country of 170 million that supports jihad in Afghanistan, Kashmir and Indian cities. But there is reason to argue that America's leverage with Pakistan on security matters is limited by its need for Pakistani bases, border crossings and intelligence on the Taliban.

If tens of thousands of American troops were removed from landlocked Afghanistan, that might actually allow the United States to

hang tougher with Islamabad. Pakistan officials might not listen, but at least the United States could be more honest about what the Pakistanis were doing to worsen the threat of terrorism and insurgency.

We are not arguing that everything will work out well after the United States leaves Afghanistan. It will not. The Taliban will take over parts of the Pashtun south, where they will brutalize women and trample their rights. Warlords will go on stealing. Afghanistan will still be the world's second-poorest country. Al Qaeda may make inroads, but since 9/11 it has established itself in Yemen and many other countries.

America's global interests suffer when it is mired in unwinnable wars in distant regions. Dwight Eisenhower helped the country's position in the world by leaving Korea; Richard Nixon by leaving Vietnam; President Obama by leaving Iraq.

None of these places became Jeffersonian democracies. But the United States was better off for leaving. Post-American Afghanistan is likely to be more presentable than North Korea, less presentable than Iraq and perhaps about the same as Vietnam. But it fits the same pattern of damaging stalemate. We need to exit as soon as we safely can.