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# SAR OVERNIGHTER



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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **Executive Summary**

Having been cleared of any misconduct pertaining to email exchanges with Mrs. Jill Kelley, Gen. John Allen's nomination to be the next Supreme Allied Commander at NATO will most likely go forward. The exact timing for the U.S. Senate to consider the nomination is unclear. Further reductions in the United Kingdom's troop contribution will not happen most likely before autumn, after the summer fighting season. Consolidating, closing and handing over UK bases will continue along with training and assisting Afghan forces. Afghanistan's National Disaster Management Authority is at odds over a report by Amnesty International concerning the deaths of internally displaced children and elderly. A majority of the 103 children who died of measles in the last 19 days were in Sindh Province, which was hit by flooding the past few years; and, Baluchistan Province, which is consumed by insurgent violence. Deconstructionist theory challenges many of the widely held Western assumptions concerning the war in Afghanistan. Evaluating the war in Afghanistan from a deconstructionist perspective can point to fatal contradictions and lead clearer thinking and action on behalf of the Afghan campaign.

## **Story of the Day**

### *Top U.S. Commander in Afghanistan Cleared in Pentagon Inquiry*

General John Allen, the commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, was cleared by Pentagon investigators of allegations of professional misconduct over email exchanges with a Florida socialite, U.S. officials said on Tuesday.

## **Security/Transition**

### *UK Troop Reduction in Afghanistan 'In Autumn'*

The withdrawal of 3,800 UK troops from Afghanistan this year is unlikely to take place until the autumn, Britain's top general in the country says.

## **Afghanistan**

### *Govt Rejects Amnesty Report on Refugee Deaths*

The Afghan government has dismissed as baseless an Amnesty International report that blames the deaths of 17 Afghans, mostly children, in displaced person camps on poor government management.

## **Pakistan**

### *Pakistan Records 103 Child Measles Deaths in 19 Days*

More than 100 children have died of measles in Pakistan this month, the World Health Organization (WHO) said Wednesday, calling it "an alarming outbreak."

## **Editorial/Commentary**

### *Deconstructing Afghanistan*

After more than a decade of nation-building in Afghanistan, with at best mixed results, perhaps it is time to take an opposite tack: "deconstructing" that sad land. This would entail some very bold policy shifts, beginning with a willingness to see our very "structures of thought come undone," as Jacques Derrida, the great philosopher of deconstruction, once described the first step in the process. In practical terms, this would mean challenging the guiding notion of democratization that has, thus far, cost us and our allies several thousand casualties and about a trillion dollars—to little effect.

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## Story of the Day

### Top U.S. Commander in Afghanistan Cleared in Pentagon Inquiry

Reuters

Jan. 23-Phil Stewart

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/23/us-usa-generals-allen-idUSBRE90L14K20130123>

General John Allen, the commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, was cleared by Pentagon investigators of allegations of professional misconduct over email exchanges with a Florida socialite, U.S. officials said on Tuesday.

The decision by the Defense Department's Inspector General helps lift a cloud that has hung over Allen, who is married and has two daughters, ever since he became indirectly ensnared in the scandal that forced David Petraeus to resign as CIA director in November.

It could also resurrect the four-star general's military career - although a U.S. official told Reuters that, as of late Tuesday, no decision had been made on whether to proceed with Allen's nomination to become the top U.S. military commander in Europe.

President Barack Obama put that nomination on hold when the investigation was announced in November, even as he expressed confidence in Allen's ability to serve out the final months of his command in Afghanistan.

"With the investigation having only recently concluded, no decisions have been made on moving the nomination forward," **the official** said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "But it's entirely possible that it could move forward in the days or weeks ahead."

The Pentagon inquiry centered on emails between Allen and Jill Kelley, a Tampa, Florida, resident who knew Allen when he served as the No. 2 officer at the U.S. military's Tampa-based Central Command from July 2008 to June 2011.

The Kelley-Allen emails surfaced when the FBI investigated Kelley's allegations of receiving anonymous, harassing emails from someone else about Petraeus. Those other emails led the FBI to uncover an extramarital affair between Petraeus and his biographer, Paula Broadwell.

But questions about the nature of the Kelley-Allen emails prompted Defense Secretary Leon Panetta to order a Pentagon investigation, a move that triggered a storm of speculation about their relationship.

Kelley, in a piece written with her husband Scott and published on the Washington Post website, said "the insinuation that Jill was involved in an extramarital affair is as preposterous as it is hurtful to our family." A copy of

The investigation also likely took its toll on Allen. Minimally, it limited his contact with the media as he was wrapping up his time in Afghanistan and preparing options for Obama on the future U.S. military presence once NATO declares the combat mission over at the end of 2014.

The White House is considering options for keeping between 3,000 and 9,000 troops in Afghanistan, officials have said - a lower range than Allen had initially recommended.

Panetta was described by his spokesman to be "pleased to learn that allegations of professional misconduct were not substantiated by the investigation."

"The Secretary has complete confidence in the continued leadership of General Allen," spokesman George Little added.

If his nomination does proceed, Allen could still potentially face questions about the email exchanges at a Senate confirmation hearing for the job as head of U.S. European Command and Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

### White House: Allen's NATO Nomination to Go Ahead

Associated Press

Jan. 23-Robert Burns

[http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US\\_COMMANDER\\_CLEARED?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_COMMANDER_CLEARED?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT)

The White House says it will go ahead with Gen. John Allen's nomination to become NATO commander.

The nomination had been put on hold while the Pentagon investigated Allen's email exchanges with a Florida woman linked to a sex scandal that led David Petraeus to resign as CIA director.

The Pentagon said on Tuesday that its inspector general determined that the email exchanges did not amount to conduct unbecoming an officer.

White House press secretary **Jay Carney** says he hopes the Senate will consider Allen's nomination "in a timely manner."

Gen. John Allen says he is pleased that he was exonerated in a Pentagon investigation into his email exchanges with a Florida socialite linked to the sex scandal that led David Petraeus to resign as CIA director.

In a brief statement issued Wednesday through his spokesman, Allen also expressed gratitude for the support he received during the week's long investigation by the Defense Department's Office of Inspector General.

The Pentagon announced on Tuesday that the inspector general had determined that Allen's email exchanges did not amount to conduct unbecoming an officer. The investigation report itself has not been made public.

Allen is commander of all coalition forces in Afghanistan and had been nominated to be Supreme Allied Commander of NATO forces.

He is due to leave his current post Feb. 10.

### **Media Assessment**

The story saw increasing coverage throughout the day. With coverage in international, regional and local media, with wire service reporting and major publications provide coverage.

According to Google News, there were 788 related news reports to the story.

### **Media Analysis**

The tonality of the coverage was largely fact based and non- biased

## ***Security/Transition***

### **UK Troop Reduction in Afghanistan 'In Autumn'**

*BBC*

Jan. 22-Quentin Sommerville

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21148284>

The withdrawal of 3,800 UK troops from Afghanistan this year is unlikely to take place until the autumn, Britain's top general in the country says.

Responsibility for security is being handed to Afghan forces, who now oversee 80% of the population.

Lt Gen Nick Carter said the insurgency tended to be at its "highest tempo" in the summer months.

He said the UK would take this into account as it sought to "manage" the reduction of troop levels to 5,200.

"We tend to try to work this around periods of very high operational tempo," Gen Carter told the BBC in his first interview since taking charge, "It's well known that during the summer, the insurgency is at its highest tempo. So what we will choose to do is manage that after that period, which would mean the autumn time would be the logical period to do this."

British troop numbers were reduced from 9,500 to 9,000 before Christmas and numbers are set to fall to 5,200 by the end of 2013.

The remainder will leave by the end of 2014, when all NATO operations are due to finish; although a small number will remain after that, working at an officer training academy and in other support roles.

Gen Carter's comments come as the MOD announces a third round of 5,300 Army redundancies - as part of a drive to cut the number of regulars in the UK's Army from 102,000 to 82,000 by 2017.

#### **BASES CLOSING**

In central Helmand, British troops are handing over or closing operating bases at the rate of one a week.

The accelerated drawback is reflected in casualty numbers. Three years ago a coalition soldier was killed every 18 hours in Helmand.

Halfway through their current six-month tour, seven British soldiers have been killed in Helmand - one in direct combat, the other six in insider attacks when Afghan security forces turn their weapons on their foreign partners.

And as the Afghans start to take the lead, their casualty figures are increasing.

The focus now is training as the Afghan security forces are expected to take full responsibility for security later this year.

British troops no longer train Afghan police directly. It is now Afghans training Afghans. But a great deal of support is still required and the insurgency is far from over.

Asked whether Afghan security forces were ready to face the Taliban alone, Gen Carter said: "In a straightforward tactical fight I think the answer to that question is 'Yes they can.'

"What's much more challenging for them is the institutional development of their army. And how their army is logistically sustained and supported and how in institutional terms it's connected to the ministry of defense, through its general staff down to the corp and brigade level."

The Afghan army is still lacking military essentials, according to Sgt Glen Miller, who has done multiple tours of the country.

He said: "The challenges will be the things that they can't really provide. Full medical helicopters and things like that. If they get a casualty, a serious casualty, they can always rely on us."

#### AND WHAT OF THE AFGHAN FORCES THEMSELVES?

Afghan army officer, Major Mohammed Ashraf, said, "Military training is our top priority. We need the modern weaponry that other countries have... armored vehicles, transport planes and helicopters, those would all be good to have."

But in the months ahead, as British troops pull back to the UK's biggest bases, the only soldiers left out on the ground will be Afghans.

## Karzai Meets US Officials, Demands Bagram Transfer

*Daily Outlook Afghanistan*

Jan. 23

[http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=6464](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=6464)

President Hamid Karzai Monday emphasized the importance of the US transferring Bagram prison detainees to Afghan authorities in a meeting with David Pearce, the acting special representative of the US to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The pair met to further discuss matters raised in the president's recent trip to Washington which Karzai described as very productive, according to a statement from the president's office.

"President Karzai once again thanked the US for the warm hospitality it extended to the Afghan delegation and noted that it was important that the US now puts into practice the agreements reached in Washington, in particular the full transfer of Bagram prison to Afghan

authority and any delay, otherwise, may raise suspicion among the people of Afghanistan," it said.

The transfer of prisoners from US to Afghan authority was a key condition of Kabul when it signed last March a long-term strategic agreement with Washington.

Until now, the full transfer has not taken place although US President Barack Obama told Karzai during his US visit that it will happen soon.

However, fresh concerns over the treatment of prisoners in Afghan jails are likely to present a new obstacle for Karzai's demands.

NATO on Monday said that it is suspending transfer of detainees to Afghan prisons after a report this week from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) revealed systemic torture of prisoners in more than 30 Afghan jails.

It is the second time NATO has banned transfers to address human rights concerns in Afghan prisons. It first did so after a similar UNAMA report in 2011 detailed widespread abuse, including the ripping out of detainees' toenails and the twisting of their genitals.

NATO halted prisoner transfers for several months and only resumed them after inspections and training. But the latest report has reignited concerns and NATO renewed its ban.

Karzai also discussed with Pearce the peace process and the Qatar office for the Taliban.

"On the issue of Qatar office to be opened for peace talks with the Taliban, President Karzai once again underlined Afghan government's position that those Taliban who take part in the peace negotiations must prove their credibility and hold verifiable authorization of the Taliban leadership," the statement said.

The president added that there must be a clear and written understanding among Afghanistan, the US and Qatar on the Taliban office opening and follow up arrangements for the peace process, it said.

"President Karzai made it clear that only the High Peace Council can represent the people of Afghanistan at the peace talks, as it was authorized by the Peace Jirga and created by the will of the Afghan people," it added.

## Coming This Year to Afghanistan: Way More Artillery Strikes

*Wired.com*

Jan.23-Spencer Ackerman

<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2013/01/afghanistan-artillery/>

As the U.S. tries to hand over responsibility for the Afghan war to the new Afghan military it's built, some

very old weapons systems are poised to become crucial: the mortar and the howitzer.

The plan for 2013 is for the 66,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan to draw down to an as-yet-undecided size at an as-yet-undecided pace. Those that remain will take a back seat to Afghans by the spring, as the Afghans plan and execute their own operations, a subtle shift from the “partnered” patrols the U.S. emphasized in 2012. Only the Afghans don’t yet have some of the crucial equipment, particularly fighter aircraft and attack helicopters, to help units that come under fire.

With the Afghans’ relative absence of close air support, “what we must do, then, is bring the surface fire capability to fruition, and that’s the indirect fire, observed indirect fire,” Army Lt. Gen. James L. Terry, the day-to-day commander of the war, told reporters at the Pentagon on Wednesday. Chief among them: the D-30 howitzer, a Russian-built 12-mm gun, and 60-mm mortars.

“So now instead of calling back up into the air, they have those organic capabilities inside those formations,” Terry said.

Pentagon officials cautioned that that doesn’t mean the U.S. air war is going to come to an end in 2013. But it’s on a downward trajectory. According to U.S. Air Force statistics, in 2012, U.S. warplanes fired their weapons 4,095 times; the lowest level recorded since 2009’s pre-surge 4,165 weapons releases. Close air support sorties in total were down to 28,471 last year — higher than in 2009, but still lower than their 2010 and 2011 levels.

But the whole idea is to shift the burden of the war onto the nascent Afghan forces. And with Afghan air power running behind Afghan ground forces, protecting Afghan forces under attack is going to be largely a ground responsibility. Terry praised “Afghan solutions” like the rise of a “mobile strike force, an armored wheeled-based platform” that seven Afghan battalions will use. As of now, it’s unarmed, so its purpose is to help Afghan troops survive an attack rather than repel one, but “potentially we’ll look at if we need to put a gun system on one of those platforms.”

Less clear is what the smaller complement of U.S. troops in Afghanistan in 2013 will do in their forthcoming “security force assistance” formations, of which there will be over 400. Their mission will be to train, advise and assist the Afghans as the Afghan troops plan and execute their own fights. But Terry signaled that U.S. forces won’t just be sitting on their bases and advising headquarters staffs.

“This is not simply about doing less,” Terry said, but rather about giving the “right resources” to the Afghans, at the battalion-level and above, so they can hold territory from insurgents.

“Those [U.S.] organizations are not purely headquarters focused, but they are focused, then, on increasing the capability with the Afghans. It doesn’t mean they won’t

be going out on patrol with them, either,” Terry said, adding that “some of this training will obviously have to be done in contact” with insurgents — especially providing some of the “enabling capabilities,” like the air support that only the U.S. can provide for now.

Until the Afghans build up their own air force and air-attack specialties, Afghanistan’s soldiers are about to launch a lot more artillery strikes.

## **Suicide Bomb Blast Rocks Herat in Western Afghanistan**

*Khaama Press*

Jan. 23-Sayed Jawad

<http://www.khaama.com/suicide-bomb-blast-rocks-herat-in-western-afghanistan-1281>

A heavy explosion rocked western Herat province of Afghanistan on Wednesday after a suicide bomber detonated his explosives near the vehicles convoy of Afghan security forces.

According to reports the suicide bomber planted explosives in a cycle and attacked the convoy of Afghan police forces while they were crossing the area.

The explosion took place in Enjil district around eight kilometers away from the main Herat city.

Preliminary reports suggest at least 8 Afghan police officers have been wounded and two of them are in a critical health condition.

No group including the Taliban militants has so far claimed responsibility behind the incident.

In the meantime deputy spokesman for the provincial police chief Syed Ahmad Mohammadi said the incident took place following a remote controlled bomb blast.

# Afghanistan

## Govt Rejects Amnesty Report on Refugee Deaths

Tolo News

Jan. 23

<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/9178-govt-rejects-amnesty-report-on-refugee-deaths>

The Afghan government has dismissed as baseless an Amnesty International report that blames the deaths of 17 Afghans, mostly children, in displaced person camps on poor government management.

Afghanistan's National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) deputy chief said the report was baseless and the government has provided adequate resources to the displaced.

"The government and non-government organisations have provided food and fuel for the refugees in the country," ANDMA deputy Mohammad Aslam Sayas said Wednesday.

Amnesty said in the report that the deaths occurred in the first two weeks of January in Kabul and Herat provinces where most of the country's half a million internally-displaced people live in makeshift camps.

"These deaths were a preventable tragedy," Amnesty's Deputy Asia Pacific Director Polly Truscott said in a statement.

Last winter about 100 people, mostly children and the elderly, died in the camps. The Afghan government and international donors had been urged to prevent a repeat of the tragedy.

The latest deaths show "the inadequate co-ordination of winter assistance to hundreds of thousands of people living in displacement camps across the country," Truscott said.

"The fact that children and the elderly are among the dead highlights the need to protect those groups that are most vulnerable to the harsh winter conditions," she added.

In Herat, assistance reached refugees returning to Afghanistan from abroad, but aid to the internally displaced was apparently blocked after pressure from the provincial governor's office, Amnesty said.

Local authorities are said to be concerned that offering aid to displaced people will encourage them to stay in camps instead of returning to their home provinces.

## ACCI will End Trade Relations with Pakistan: Alokozay

Daily Outlook Afghanistan

Jan. 23

[http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=6463](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=6463)

The Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) Tuesday said that it will end trade relations with Pakistan following a long-running dispute over containers stalled in Karachi port.

ACCI officials said despite assurances made by Pakistani officials to release the 3000 containers belonging to Afghan traders, the issue are still not resolved.

"Despite so much effort, the government has now failed to resolve our problems with Pakistan and we are forced to end our relations with Pakistan," ACCI deputy Khan Jan Alokozay said.

Alokozay said traders were losing as much as US\$600,000 a day over the matter and will encourage Afghan traders to discontinue doing business via Karachi.

ACCI officials have asked the Afghan government to prevent Pakistani-loaded vehicles from entering Afghanistan, even those whose destination is a different country.

Pakistan Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf earlier this month ordered the Afghan containers be released in one week following his meeting with the ACCI and the Afghan-Pak Joint Chamber of Commerce, but the ACCI said there has been no progress.

## Herat Students Selected for Global Law Competition

Tolo News

Jan. 23-Azim Arash

<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/9180-herat-students-selected-for-global-law-competition>

Five students from Herat province will head to Washington DC to take part in an international moot court competition after beating students from eight universities from across Afghanistan in a selection exam.

Stephen McFarland, US Embassy's Coordinating Director for Rule of Law and Law Enforcement in Kabul, addressed the students attending the exam saying that the US will continue to support Afghanistan until it reaches its goals.

"We will continue to work with Afghanistan," he said.

"We will continue to support those in Afghanistan who seek to strengthen the rule of law, which will encourage

equal justice for all, men and women, regardless of ethnicity, regardless of political persuasion."

"You are all a part of that effort and we look forward to working with all of you," he added.

The qualifying exam was held in Kabul as part of the International Philip C. Jessup Law Moot Court Competition.

The five who qualified will attend the international competition with students from more than 100 other countries.

Abdullah Atayee, Chief of Administrative of Judiciary at Supreme Court, said the selection showed Afghanistan's judiciary improvements.

"More than a hundred countries participate in this competition, and this is the third time Afghanistan has selected. This shows that Afghanistan has found its judiciary position," Atayee said.

## **Roshan officially recognized for quality in Afghanistan**

*Khaama Press*

Jan. 23-Sayed Jawad

<http://www.khaama.com/roshan-officially-recognized-for-quality-in-afghanistan-2135468>

Roshan, a leading total communications provider in Afghanistan, today announced that the company has been awarded the highest quality recognition of ISO 9001:2008 for its technology, network and sales operations. ISO is gained by organizations that focus on improving company operations through utilizing performance principles such as strong customer focus, leadership, involvement of people, governance, factual approach to decision making and continual improvement.<sup>1</sup>Recognized in over 150 countries, the two certifications,—a first for any telecommunications operator in Afghanistan—were awarded to Roshan after a year-long rigorous evaluation process conducted by ISO certified auditors.

Over the last ten years, Roshan has been committed to bringing the best-in-class services to Afghanistan while focusing on quality and the overall customer experience. In September of 2011, the company's three time award-winning Customer Care Center achieved ISO status—making it Afghanistan's first-ever ISO certification. The Customer Care Center responds to over 30,000 calls per day in Dari, Pashto and English, and also offers "Ladies Customer Center" for Roshan's female subscribers.

"The company's guiding principle has been to provide all Afghans with access to mobile telephony, as well as to play a key role in the country's economic development, reconstruction, and redevelopment process," Karim Khoja, Roshan Chief Executive Officer, said. "As we

embark on our ten year anniversary, with over half a billion dollars invested in our network including upgrading it to provide 3G services Roshan continues to deliver on the promise of providing quality to ensure the highest level of service through all customer touch points. Our customers tell us they consistently choose Roshan for the superior performance of our wide reaching network that, today, provides coverage to almost 65 percent of the population in all 34 provinces," Khoja added.

Roshan remains focused on delivering innovative products and services to meet the unique demands of the Afghan market. The company pioneered mobile data services in Afghanistan, becoming the first operator to introduce BlackBerry and data products. Roshan's data packages are differentiated to meet the varying needs of consumers, large corporate clients, and small business owners, alike. And, for the growing youth market Roshan introduced Kahkahshaan, an interactive content portal with robust local music, video and news content as well as access to social media.

# **Pakistan**

## **Pakistan Records 103 Child Measles Deaths in 19 Days**

AFP

Jan. 23

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gglzQmvU7pS82LJqPQ3h6Y9VVnoA?docId=CNG.c8e0480540a829085a3a9eee42c89e47.591>

More than 100 children have died of measles in Pakistan this month, the World Health Organization (WHO) said Wednesday, calling it "an alarming outbreak."

"Some 103 Pakistani children have died from Jan 1 to Jan 19 this year because of the post-measles complications such as pneumonia, post-measles encephalitis and diarrhea," WHO spokeswoman Maryam Yunus told AFP.

Sixty-three of the cases occurred in the southern province of Sindh, which was hit by severe flooding in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

More than 300 Pakistani children died of measles in 2012, a staggering increase on the previous twelve months and a result of three consecutive years of flooding, officials said.

The WHO said 64 children died of measles in Pakistan in 2011, 28 of them in Sindh. It was not immediately able to provide statistics for earlier years.

The UN body said most of the cases occurred between October and December in northern parts of Sindh, but was unable to provide a breakdown.

The UN body said 33 children died in southwestern Baluchistan province, which is plagued by separatist insurgency and sectarian strife.

The most populous Punjab province reported seven children's deaths. Half of a total of 2,447 cases were reported from Sindh province, of which Karachi is capital.

"It is certainly an alarming situation ...It is an outbreak," said Yunus.

She said WHO and UNICEF provided a combined 4.4 million doses of measles vaccines since last year to target the children in Sindh's flood affected areas.

A senior health ministry official confirmed the WHO figures.

"We can't dispute the figures. Our own teams have similar reports," he said.

"Something must have gone wrong...we are weighing where have we gone wrong," he said.

WHO spokeswoman said a key factor behind more deaths in Sindh was malnourishment, particularly in the flood affected districts.

The ministry official said the number of deaths in January is already "a record high".

Children under nine months are not eligible for the vaccine.

## **Pakistan to Raise Drone Attack Issue with US: FM Hina**

*Pak Tribune*

Jan. 23

<http://paktribune.com/news/Pakistan-to-raise-drone-attack-issue-with-US-FM-Hina-256775.html>

Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar on Tuesday told the Senate that the issue of drone attacks would be taken up with US Ambassador to Pakistan, Richard Olson, and also with Obama administration in Washington.

During a policy statement in the Senate, the foreign minister said drone attacks were a violation of Pakistan's territorial integrity, adding that the government was not oblivious to the challenges confronting the country. Khar's statement on US drones came in the wake of the Obama administration's finalizing of a rule book for targeted killings which would not apply to Pakistan, enabling the CIA to freely conduct direct drone strikes in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

Khar said all international organizations, including the UN, EU, and US think tanks also termed drone attacks as unlawful and counterproductive. Moreover, she said that Pakistan wanted cordial ties with all neighboring states, including India, adding that Pakistan's foreign minister and army chief would not be issuing irresponsible statements as had been made by their Indian counterparts.

The Senate called the foreign minister on Monday when PML-N's Senator Zafar Ali Shah raises the issue of US legislation, allowing CIA to carry on drone attacks in Pakistan. He sought the foreign minister's point of view over this issue and that is why Khar gave the policy statement. The Senate also observed heated debate over devolution process (18th Amendment). On a point of order, Senator Raza Rabbani said creation of Ministry of Education and Training is totally against the 18th Amendment.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh governments have moved a summary and demanded the federal government cancel the creation of this ministry, arguing that education is now a devolved subject. Later, the issue was taken up in the meeting of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) and it recommended the federal government remove the name of education, but regretted that the implementation was not honored.

Raza Rabbani said Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab have expressed serious reservations over the use of word "education" and the CCI has also opposed it, but the decision was not implemented in letter and spirit. "I also wrote several letters to the prime minister regarding this issue but was not honored," he maintained. The senator requested leader of the House to raise the issue with the prime minister and ensure implementation of the 18th Amendment.

Leader of Opposition in Senate, Ishaq Dar said the Punjab government had raised 12 issues in the CCI meeting, but the minister of inter-provincial coordination was interested in calling meetings and addressing these issues. ANP's Senator Ilyas Bilor told the House that provinces got autonomy (devolution) after years of efforts and no one would be allowed to reverse this.

He warned that strict action would be taken against those who try to reverse the devolution process. Leader of the House Jahangir Badar said the minister of inter-provincial coordination will explain the position on Wednesday.

He said that a senate committee is working over the hurdles in implementation of devolution process. Meanwhile, JUI-F's Senator Abdul Ghafoor Haidri condemned the imposition of governor's rule in Balochistan. He said injustices were carried out with Balochistan's elected assembly by the PPP government.

## Pakistan Coming Apart At the Seams

*Star Tribune*

JAN. 22- JOEL BRINKLEY

<http://www.startribune.com/opinion/commentaries/187919031.html?refer=y>

Distracted by the deadly violence in Mali and Algeria, no one seems to be paying adequate attention to the tragicomedy under way in Pakistan.

This matters because events of the last week demonstrate without equivocation that Pakistan is an utterly failed state -- but one that possesses nuclear weapons. The country is tumbling down the abyss.

Where else could a fundamentalist Muslim cleric who lives in Canada draw tens of thousands of fans to a rally calling for dissolution of the government -- speaking from inside a shipping container with a bulletproof window?

That's just one in a litany of absurdities under way there

At the same time comes the latest round of irresolvable acrimony between President Asif Ali Zardari and the supreme court, which has been trying to bring him down for years.

Two years ago, the court ordered the prime minister of the time, Yousuf Raza Gilani, to open a corruption investigation against Zardari -- as if Pakistanis didn't

already know that Zardari, like most every government official, was thoroughly corrupt. After all, since the time his wife, the late Benazir Bhutto, was prime minister, Zardari has been known as "Mr. Ten Percent" for the money he purloined from every business deal he managed.

The court ordered Gilani to ask Swiss officials for documentation of Zardari's in-absentia conviction on money-laundering charges 10 years ago. Gilani refused, noting that the president is supposed to be immune from prosecution.

The court scoffed. One justice spat: "Obedience to the command of a court" is "not a game of chess or a game of hide-and-seek." And soon after, the court forced Gilani to resign. Raja Pervez Ashraf, the information technology minister, took his place. Right away the court landed on him with the same request: Help us file corruption charges against Zardari; get those Swiss documents.

The new prime minister also resisted, and wouldn't you know it: Right now the court is trying to forcing him out of office -- charging him with corruption. It's almost comical. But all of this seems to have paralyzed an already ineffective, incompetent government.

Just a few days ago, an officer in the state anti-corruption agency who was investigating the allegations against Ashraf was found hanged in his barracks. Police called it a suicide; awfully convenient timing.

At the same, in northwestern Pakistan thousands of protesters shouting anti-government slogans put the bodies of 15 villagers on display, charging that security force shot them dead in their homes.

The chief security agency, the shadowy, mendacious Inter-Services Intelligence, or ISI, did not comment but did finally respond to a court inquiry into the fate of seven men who were arrested in 2007. A court ordered them released. But then, all seven men simply disappeared. Finally on Monday, an ISI lawyer acknowledged the "lack of incriminating evidence" against the seven men, but he went on to explain that they were arrested "on moral grounds."

Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry shot back that the ISI simply cannot detain suspects indefinitely and unlawfully -- particularly on so-called "moral grounds."

"Morally, they can put any one behind bars, even me," Chaudhry charged. "According to them, all the people are guilty." But despite years of heinous abuses, neither the court nor anyone else in government ever tries to reign in the renegade spy agency.

Why should we care about any of this? After all, Pakistan is hardly the only failed state in the world. Think about Somalia, Sudan, Haiti, and Zimbabwe. But have any of these other states received more than \$12 billion in aid from Washington over the last decade -- with

## ***Editorial / Commentary***

### **Deconstructing Afghanistan**

*Foreign Policy*

Jan. 23- John Arquilla

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/01/22/deconstructing\\_afghanistan?page=0.1&wp\\_login\\_redirect=0](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/01/22/deconstructing_afghanistan?page=0.1&wp_login_redirect=0)

After more than a decade of nation-building in Afghanistan, with at best mixed results, perhaps it is time to take an opposite tack: "deconstructing" that sad land. This would entail some very bold policy shifts, beginning with a willingness to see our very "structures of thought come undone," as Jacques Derrida, the great philosopher of deconstruction, once described the first step in the process. In practical terms, this would mean challenging the guiding notion of democratization that has, thus far, cost us and our allies several thousand casualties and about a trillion dollars -- to little effect.

The key to deconstruction is to search out the inherent contradiction that lies at the heart of virtually every strong belief. As another leading theorist of deconstruction, Paul de Man, once put the matter, the central task is to "undo assertions...by means of *their very own elements*." For example, Derrida thought deeply about Ernest Hemingway's conclusion, in his *Death in the Afternoon*, that bullfighting is the ultimate sport. Derrida then formulated a key question, "How often does the bull win?" He concluded that any sport in which one side lost almost every time -- for centuries -- was no sport at all.

It doesn't take too much reflection to see that beliefs about Afghanistan fit the deconstructionist pattern of being "undone by their very own elements." Starting from the beginning, there is the belief that Afghanistan is an isolated land filled with xenophobic people. Yet from ancient times, this "land of the high flags," as Zoroaster labeled it, was a crossroads of rich commerce, its peoples drawn from an admixture of Aryans, Chinese, Indians, and Mongols -- among others.

Another long-held belief, that Afghanistan is the "graveyard of empires," has been misleading from the beginning. Alexander the Great conquered Afghanistan with a relative handful of troops, and the Greeks stayed for a few centuries. Indeed, "Kandahar" is but a variant of "Alexander." And for many centuries after the adventurous Greeks, outsiders often ruled for long periods. The remarkable work of Boston University anthropologist Thomas Barfield makes quite clear that difficulty in exerting external control over Afghanistan is, in historical terms, a quite recent phenomenon.

Taking the deconstruction process up to the current situation, the single most telling contradiction lies at the heart of the Western "democracy project" in Afghanistan. If I may channel Derrida briefly -- he passed away in

another \$688 million payment now before Congress, awaiting almost certain approval?

And do any of the other failed states -- Afghanistan, Chad, Nigeria, and Uganda -- possess nuclear weapons? No.

Pakistan is the only state that has bombs -- and vibrant Islamic insurgency intent on toppling the absurdly ineffectual government. And don't forget that senior leaders of al-Qaeda live there, too, most of them resident in Pakistan's eastern borderlands. Of course, Osama bin Laden also resided there, completely undisturbed until U.S. forces killed him in 2011.

If the Taliban do ever succeed in toppling the government, they would almost certainly seize the nukes -- a terrifying prospect.

Right now, though, Taliban militants, responsible for manifest mayhem and thousands of deaths in recent times, appear to be sitting back and watching, most probably with smiles on their faces. Their goal is to destabilize the state, but it's quite obvious now that the sitting government is much better at that than they are.

2004 -- I think he would observe our efforts and ask: "If you are trying to nurture democracy, why is it that you regularly embrace the results of fraudulent elections? If your goal is the emergence of a civic culture, why, after all your efforts, is Afghanistan rated the most corrupt country in the world?"

There are other long-held assertions that seem to come undone by their very own elements as well. One is the idea that peace and security will come to the country from the center in Kabul and spread outward. This belief flies in the face of a long history of decentralized governance, with power widely distributed outward, toward the edges of the society. Even Alexander found it useful to cultivate and develop alliances with local tribes.

Another problem confronts the faith of those who believe staunchly in the "Afghanization" of the military effort to secure the country that has been underway for several years now. A deconstructionist view of this effort would point to the 31 battalions created thus far, and note that only one of them is capable of independent action. So-called insider attacks on allied forces training them would raise deconstructionist eyebrows as well. The overall conclusion Derrida or de Man might reach would be that the whole process is turning Afghans, some of the world's best natural warriors, into some of the world's worst soldiers.

There are inherent contradictions in the development process as well. Take, for example, the routine "flipping" of construction contracts -- i.e., the winning bidder on a particular project sometimes simply takes a cut off the top and passes on what's left to a party willing to do the job for less. There are known cases of several flips on a single contract, leading to the paving of roads that wash away with the first hard rain. And when projects are completed and things actually do work, as with electrification efforts and improved cell phone connectivity, the dams and towers that provide these social goods are often held hostage and "taxed" by the Taliban. "Pay up or we'll blow them up."

Deconstructing Afghanistan in this fashion performs the kind of service that Derrida sought to provide with his concept: it improves the clarity of vision and deepens understanding of the daunting challenges that bedevil almost all meaningful endeavors. In this instance, the deconstruction process should lead to willingness to question and debate the strategy to be pursued as the Afghan endgame unfolds.

Just how might strategy change? Recognition that the democracy project in Afghanistan has fallen prey to cronyism and corruption might lead to an extra effort to ensure the integrity of elections in 2014 -- and to abide by their honestly derived results. Understanding that centralized power will be resisted might lead to a willingness to rely more heavily upon provincial actors around the country to provide security -- much as was the case during the peaceful 40-year "rule" of Zahir Shah, Afghanistan's revered last king. Indeed, his fall

ushered in the current 40 years of political strife and war that have been visited upon Afghanistan. At the great *jirga* of 2002, after the Taliban were driven from power, leaders from around the country called for the return of Zahir Shah -- but we insisted on democracy, not monarchy.

In terms of the final strategic military question the West faces -- how many troops, if any, to leave behind after 2014 -- deconstructionist thought would almost certainly embrace the point that "surges" of soldiers have done little to improve the situation. Paradoxically, a small military presence, closely linked to Afghan tribal forces operating from the edges, will likely do far better than the big battalions.

Were Jacques Derrida still with us, he would no doubt find Afghanistan a fertile vineyard in which deconstructionists could toil. For those of us who see the value of analyzing matters using his methods, there is even more: a chance to correct costly errors and avert a looming debacle. But this will only happen with the emergence of a willingness to see the many fatal contradictions in our core beliefs about Afghanistan -- and about the Western role there as well.

## Controversy over Afghan-US Deal

*Institute for War & Peace Reporting*

Jan. 23-Mina Habib

<http://iwpr.net/report-news/controversy-over-afghan-us-deal>

President Hamed Karzai returned from his latest trip to Washington with a series of concessions on the timetable for withdrawing international forces from Afghanistan and the transfer of American-held detainees.

But his critics at home were left unsatisfied, with some saying he should have secured a pledge that all foreign troops would be gone by the end of 2014, and other voices rose against granting United States troops immunity from prosecution.

On his return from talks with President Barack Obama in Washington, Karzai set out the agreements they had reached at a Kabul press conference on January 14.

The NATO-led international force will begin pulling troops back from the Afghan countryside in three months' time -- earlier than anticipated, although their withdrawal from the country remains scheduled for 2014. Also this spring, US forces will focus on training their Afghan counterparts, an effort that Karzai said would not end until 2017, with a possible extension to 2024.

He also said he had obtained a promise that US-run prisons in Afghanistan and all detained persons in the country would be handed over to Afghan jurisdiction within two weeks. That is one of several issues that have

been an irritant in US-Afghan relations, and it is no coincidence that both Obama and Karzai made remarks underlining the importance of Afghan sovereignty.

Another contentious point, and one that Karzai had to concede at his Washington talks, was the issue of US servicemen being immune from prosecution under Afghan law.

For the US, this is a non-negotiable condition if a small contingent of American troops is to remain in Afghanistan beyond 2014. When a similar question arose in Iraq, the Baghdad government's refusal to grant immunity led to the US pulling out all military personnel at the end of 2011.

In Afghanistan, many oppose any exemption from the rule that foreign and local nationals alike are subject to the country's own legal system when they commit offences.

On his return, Karzai distanced himself from a final decision on the immunity question, and said a "loya jirga" or traditional assembly would have to be convened to rule on the matter.

"A decision on judicial immunity for American soldiers, on its nature, extent and terms, and on whether it should happen or not is something the Afghan government cannot take," he said. "A loya jirga of the Afghan people will decide whether to grant immunity and – if it does – under what conditions."

Afghan political analyst Satar Saadat believes the president is shirking his duty to deal with this controversial matter himself.

"Karzai has taken this decision in order to evade responsibility. Yet decisions made at a jirga are advisory only, and do not have legal status," he said.

Saadat said any deal on immunity would need to be carefully crafted.

"We must set limits for them. For instance, they could have immunity while on their bases, but not outside them. Another solution would be to hold joint trials [when Americans are prosecuted]. A third option would involve monitoring – the Afghan government would monitor the process when a foreign suspect went on trial."

Sayed Fazel Hussein Sancharaki, spokesman for the opposition National Coalition, agrees that this was not a matter for a loose assembly of local elders to deal with.

"Decisions about judicial immunity for the Americans, signing security pacts and the like are not a task for people who come in from the districts and villages to gather for a loya jirga. They have no knowledge of such issues," he said. "What's needed is to gather together the political, economic, military, legal and social elites rather than these people."

Assuming a deal is reached and a limited contingent of US forces remains in the country past 2014, they would operate under a new security agreement, which Karzai

and Obama also touched on during their talks. Back in Kabul, Karzai said it would take eight or nine months to nail down the content of this document.

Once again, Karzai's domestic critics wanted more detail on the specifics of the agreement, over and above the framework Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement which Washington and Kabul signed in 2012.

"The president should have consulted with all sides in the country," Sancharaki said. "A security agreement could have as many negative as positive implications for us. We don't know what the conditions of the pact the president will sign are."

Many politicians are opposed to a continued US military presence even in a reduced form.

Member of Parliament Nazir Ahmad Hanafi, for example, argues that "the foreigners are the reason for the war and lack of security".

"In areas where they have withdrawn, fighting has receded and security has been established," he continued. "I am certain that if the foreigners leave Afghanistan, the roots of war will dry up."

Former parliamentarian Hajji Farid expressed similar views in stronger terms, saying that NATO commanders had "admitted that most al-Qaeda members in Afghanistan have been eliminated and that the terrorist bases are located outside Afghanistan."

"So what's the purpose of them remaining in Afghanistan?" he asked. "The US has failed to create stability in Afghanistan over the last ten years despite the presence of NATO and ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] troops. It systematized corruption to world-record levels, it breached the constitution and other Afghan laws, it showed no respect for Afghan culture and beliefs, and it killed tens of thousands of innocent people. After this experience, do they need to stay?"

Others, however, insist that continued US involvement is essential to Afghanistan's future.

"We need a legalized US presence in order to uphold our national interests, to ensure stability and security and to maintain the achievements of the past ten years," said Asef Ashna of the Truth and Justice Party. "We must not sacrifice these opportunities because of the judicial immunity issue."

Saadat warned that Afghanistan would face a range of geopolitical and economic threats if it cut its security ties with Washington.

"Signing such pacts is an imperative of the times, provided they are based on our national interest, and on respect for Afghans' culture, beliefs and national sovereignty," he said.

As for the specific terms of a deal, Saadat said it should have a clear end date, be monitored by a bilateral committee, and set out explicit obligations for both

parties. He recalled that after the strategic partnership agreement was signed last year, eastern border areas of Afghanistan suffered a spate of shell and rocket fire from Pakistan. In his view, the US “ignored” these attacks instead of applying pressure to get them stopped.

## **Some Taliban Will Have a Role in Afghans' Future**

*The National*

Jan. 23

<http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/editorial/some-taliban-will-have-a-role-in-afghans-future>

Talking to the Taliban is not as easy as it sounds. As US soldiers count down the days until most of them leave Afghanistan, the country's future remains difficult to discern.

Hamid Karzai's government is at once seeking to negotiate with the Taliban and cajole the US into leaving a large residual garrison after 2014. Mr Karzai appears to have even encouraged Pakistan's recent release of Afghan Taliban prisoners.

The US, too, is trying to facilitate talks, even signing off on Qatar's plan to offer the Taliban office space in Doha. But the Taliban keep up the attacks, most recently on Monday in a deadly raid on Kabul's traffic police headquarters.

Prospects for a negotiated solution may seem bleak, but it is important to remember that “the Taliban” is a misleading phrase. Today's Taliban is not the relatively coherent regime of Islamist zealots that governed the country so badly from 1996 until late 2001. Eleven years of bloodshed later, any three young men with rifles and a pickup truck might be described as Taliban. Afghanistan is a land of disparate valleys, tribes, clans, minorities, factions and loyalties – and everyone has a rifle.

Forging a durable nation state across those divisions will be the work of decades. To the extent that it is possible, however, it must include some factions from within Taliban ranks. Indeed, it already has: members of Kabul's parliament and Mr Karzai's government describe themselves as former Taliban members.

It was a mistake from the beginning of the war to brand every opponent to coalition forces as part of a monolithic “Taliban”. Even among the dominant groups – the Quetta Shura of Mullah Mohammed Omar; Hizb-e-Islami, founded by former Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, which is a fading force but openly favors talks; and the Haqqani network, nominally subordinate to Mullah Omar and believed to be closely linked to the Pakistani intelligence agency ISI – there are divisions and shifting loyalties.

The reality is that in the coming years, Mr Karzai's government and its foreign backers will have to pursue a

sophisticated diplomatic approach, pursuing negotiations with some factions while undoubtedly continuing to fight others on the battlefield. Pakistan's chaotic state shows the dangers of this policy, as it fights Tehrik-i-Taliban for control of its own territory while negotiating with related Afghan groups. But there is no other choice.

A war of attrition against “the Taliban” is doomed to failure – too many people fit that vague category now. There are justified reservations about negotiations with leaders such as Mullah Omar, but ultimately Afghans must come to their own settlement.

## ***Regional and Other News***

### **NATO to Activate Turkey Missile Defenses This Week**

*Associated Press*

Jan. 23-Slobodan Lekic

[http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/E/EU\\_NATO\\_TURKEY?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/E/EU_NATO_TURKEY?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT)

NATO's Patriot anti-missile defense batteries along Turkey's border with Syria will become operational this week, a senior official said Wednesday.

Patriot batteries sent by the United States, Germany and the Netherlands have reached Turkey and are being deployed in the south of the country, said British Brig. Gen. Gary Deakin. The U.S.-made missiles are designed to protect Turkey, a NATO member, from any possible incoming ballistic missiles from Syria, where civil war has left at least 60,000 people dead.

"We expect to have an initial operating capability this weekend" with full operations by the end of the month, Deakin told reporters.

"We estimate that once it is in place at those locations, we will provide protection against missiles for up to 3.5 million people," Deakin said, adding that NATO was planning to keep the batteries in Turkey for at least a year.

Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime is believed to have hundreds of artillery rockets, as well as short- and medium-range missiles - including Soviet-built SS-21 Scarabs and Scud-B missiles - in its arsenal. The latter are capable of carrying chemical warheads.

Although Syria is reported to have used tactical surface-to-surface rockets against rebel forces on several occasions in the nearly two-year civil war, none has landed inside Turkey.

Syria's conflict started in March 2011 as an uprising against Assad, whose family has ruled the country for four decades but it quickly morphed into a civil war.

More than 1,000 American, German and Dutch troops are to be based in Turkey to operate the six Patriot batteries.

The Americans will be based at Gaziantep, 50 kilometers (31 miles) north of the Syrian border. The Germans will be based at Kahramanmaraş, 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of the Syrian border and the Dutch at Adana, 100 kilometers (66 miles) west of the border.

The Patriot missiles, which first entered service three decades ago, have been successively upgraded over the years. Although mostly used for anti-aircraft defense, advanced versions can also be used against cruise

missiles and medium- and short-range ballistic missiles. They have a maximum range of about 160 kilometers (100 miles) and can reach altitudes up to 80,000 feet.

NATO has repeatedly said the deployment in Turkey was strictly defensive and that the Patriots would not be used to establish a no-fly zone over northern Syria

### **Russia Warns Israel, West against Attack on Iran**

*Reuters*

Jan. 23-Gabriela Baczynska; and Steve Gutterman

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/23/us-nuclear-iran-russia-idUSBRE90M0F620130123>

Russia warned Israel and the West on Wednesday against any military strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities but suggested Tehran should be quicker to cooperate over inspections of its nuclear sites.

Speaking at his annual news conference, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov mixed words of caution over isolating Iran or attacking it with a gentle nudge to Tehran over the inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"Attempts to prepare and implement strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities and on its infrastructure as a whole are a very, very dangerous idea. We hope these ideas will not come to fruition," Lavrov said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has hinted strongly at possible military action to stop Iran from developing an atomic bomb. In an election victory speech on Wednesday, he said preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons would be the main challenge for a new government.

Referring to talks in which the IAEA has been trying to negotiate an agreement for inspectors to gain access to sites, officials and documents, Lavrov said: "The Iranians have said they want this document to be agreed in full. We think our Iranian colleagues could do this a little bit faster."

Speaking of separate negotiations between Iran and six world powers that are trying to ensure it does not pursue a nuclear weapons program, Lavrov said he was confident a new round of talks would be held but said a venue had not yet been agreed.

Iran denies it is trying to develop a nuclear arsenal and says its nuclear program has only peaceful purposes.

## Iran Proposes Nuclear Talks in Egypt

*Associated Press*

Jan. 23-Ali Akbar Dareini

[http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/I/IRAN\\_NUCLEAR?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/I/IRAN_NUCLEAR?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT)

Iran has proposed Cairo as a venue for restarting talks with the U.S. and other world powers over its controversial nuclear program, the country's foreign minister said Wednesday.

Ali Akbar Salehi's announcement was the latest indication of Tehran's willingness to go back into the negotiations in hopes of wresting concessions from the West over stepped-up sanctions that have crippled the Iranian economy.

Iran has also been trying to reach out to Egypt since the February 2011 fall of Hosni Mubarak, seeking to resume relations with the Arab state and extend its influence in the Middle East.

The Iranian foreign minister said Egypt has welcomed the Tehran offer and is now consulting about it with the six-nation group - the U.S., Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany.

Iran "has suggested that the next meeting be held in Cairo. Egypt has welcomed the proposal," Salehi told reporters after a Cabinet meeting Wednesday.

"Egyptian officials are now consulting with the six-nation group ... a date and a venue has not been finalized yet," Salehi said.

Iran's top nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili and the European Union's foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton and their deputies have been in discussions in recent weeks to restart the talks after the last round ended in stalemate in Moscow last June. Since then, Western sanctions have been pressing hard on the Iranian economy.

The Moscow talks made no headway on the West's main demand - that Iran halt its highest-level uranium enrichment, which Washington and others worry could quickly be turned into nuclear warhead-grade material.

Iran insists it does not seek nuclear arms - repeatedly citing a 2005 edict by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that called atomic weapons a violation of Islamic tenets - and says it only wants reactors for electricity and medical research.

Iran's leaders know the only route to ease the economic pressures - and possibly undercut threats of military action on its nuclear sites by Israel - is through potential deal-making with the six world powers, which include the five permanent U.N. Security Council members plus Germany.

If the talks restart, it would mark the first negotiations since the West stepped up unilateral sanctions against Tehran last summer, including a total oil embargo and

banking restrictions that make it increasingly difficult for Iran's Asian customers to pay for oil deliveries.

Iran depends on oil sales for about 80 percent of its foreign currency revenue. Its income from oil and gas exports has dropped by 45 percent as a result of the sanctions and the West is waiting to see if the measures force Tehran to give concessions at the negotiating table.

The Six-Nation Group Wants Iran To Halt Its 20 Percent Level Of Uranium Enrichment, Close Down Its Underground Fordo Enrichment Site And Ship Out Its Higher-Grade Stockpile.

Iran Says It Will Never Give Up Its Right To Enrich Uranium But Has Indicated It May Be Willing To Suspend The 20 percent level enrichment in return for specific concessions from the West, such as lifting the sanctions.

Meanwhile, experts from the U.N.'s nuclear agency visited Tehran earlier this month but left making no headway in a separate probe of suspicions that Iran worked on atomic arms at the site southeast of Tehran.

The International Atomic Energy Agency suspects Iran conducted tests at the Parchin site that could be used to detonate a nuclear charge. Tehran denies the allegations, saying Parchin is only a conventional military facility.

Iran says the IAEA's suspicions are based on forged intelligence provided by the CIA, Israel's Mossad, Britain's MI-6 and other intelligence agencies, and complains that Tehran has not been allowed to see the materials to respond to them.

Tehran says any future visits to Parchin must be under a deal that outlines the obligations of the U.N. agency and allows Tehran to inspect the documentation against it. Another round of talks with IAEA is planned for Feb. 13 in Tehran.

## The Brewing Terror Threat in Thailand

*International Herald Tribune*

Jan. 23-Didi Kirsten Tatlow

<http://rendezvous.blogs.nytimes.com/author/didi-kirsten-tatlow/>

Islamic terrorism never went away, though it seemed perhaps to have quieted down after the death of Osama bin Laden in 2011. But is it back now, stronger, as the crisis in Mali shows? And is southern Thailand a next crisis zone?

According to the Global Terrorism Index issued by the Institute for Economics and Peace, the countries suffering the most from the impact of terrorism include familiar places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia. But here's a surprise, perhaps: Thailand

ranked No. 8, even though many people associate it with holiday-making in the sun and not the carnage of war.

According to the index, issued last December by the institute, a nonprofit group that works for world peace, in 2011 Thailand had 173 terrorist incidents that resulted in 142 fatalities (Iraq topped the index with 1,228 incidents and 1,798 fatalities.)

In the excellent interactive graphic, Mali ranked 43d out of the 158 countries studied, something which will presumably change following the jihadist thrust there that has led to the military intervention of France and African nations, supported by the United States. As this Reuters article explains, "The aim of the intervention is to prevent northern Mali from becoming a launch pad for international attacks by al Qaeda and its local allies in North and West Africa."

In Thailand, the decades-old Muslim insurgency is growing and changing in character – and foreigners, as well as Thais, should beware, reports Asia Sentinel, an online platform for Asian issues.

The conflict is already very bloody. More than 5,000 people have been killed since 2001 and about 11,000 severely injured, according to statistics kept by Deep South Watch, a monitoring organization in southern Thailand. The Council on Foreign Relations Web site said this makes Thailand "the deadliest war zone in East Asia."

Last year, the insurgency in Thailand's south began taking on "a worrying new direction," the article in Asia Sentinel said.

"Buddhist monks and teachers have been regularly singled out as targets. More than 300 schools closed recently as teachers went on strike over the worsening security situation. In September 2012, militants threatened to kill anyone not respecting Friday as the Muslim Sabbath, which forced many businesses to close and many people to remain indoors for the day," the article said. "Creeping Islamization is changing the nature of this previously low-level conflict."

"Further complicating the nature of the rebellion are deep links to local criminal gangs, especially those centered on drug and people trafficking. Conflict in the Deep South is an extremely profitable business," it said.

As the article on the Council's Web site reported, an attack on Sept. 21 killed six in Pattani province in Thailand's south, just a few hundred kilometers from the tourist beaches of Phuket and Thailand's west coast.

"These types of brutal attacks have become routine in this province," it said. "On a daily basis, groups of heavily armed men attack local officials, police, soldiers, teachers and any Muslim they believe is not adhering strictly enough to Islamic values. The insurgents explode homemade bombs, climb onto school buses and strafe children with gunfire. Those believed to sympathize with the national government are sometimes decapitated,

their headless bodies left in public places, along with warnings to obey a strict form of Islam."

Thailand's deputy prime minister, Chalerm Yoobamrung, who is also the country's "security boss," as the Bangkok newspaper, The Nation, described him, has said that the institute's high ranking on the list was actually a misunderstanding.

Chalerm's response was pilloried early this month by the newspaper, which accused him of sweeping the problem under the carpet and hoping nobody would notice.

Just as the Islamist push in North Africa appears to have taken a new turn with the killing of local and foreign hostages in Algeria, some are worried the same will happen in Thailand, unless the problem is dealt with.

"Current travel warnings for Thailand continue to understate the risk," said the Asia Sentinel.

"Remarkably, the Thai insurgency has never veered near the coastal enclaves that are packed both with wealthy tourists and westerners who own beach properties in Phuket and other areas."

But, "There is precedent for caution," the Sentinel said. "In 2001, an Abu Sayyaf raid kidnapped about 20 people from Dos Palmas, an expensive resort north of Puerto Princesa City on the island of Palawan in the Philippines, which had been considered completely safe." A Peruvian-American tourist was beheaded by the kidnapers and an American missionary was killed in a shootout between them and security forces.