

International Intelligence

Afghan Fighting Rages In Taliban Strongholds

U.S. troops have been battling throughout June in the Taliban stronghold along the borders of south central Uruzgan, southeastern Zabul, and Kandahar provinces. According to southern Kandahar's Afghan military commander, Khan Mohammad, about 70 Taliban suspects have been killed. "Most of the people killed have died due to bombings in different mountainous areas," he said. The intense fighting was triggered by increasing attacks on U.S. troops, foreign aid workers, and those Afghans who are appearing in the voter registration centers to register for the planned September elections. Taliban suspects have been consistently blamed for all these attacks.

Contrary to expectation and predictions, the U.S army and its western allies have so far failed to stamp out the remnants of the former fundamentalist Taliban regime. The presidential and parliamentary elections have been put back from June to September. It is unlikely that Kabul will be able to hold even sham elections in September.

"Taliban's continued attacks on foreign troops, aid workers, and governmental interests is not only a proof of the United States-led coalition's failure in curbing terrorism, but would also cast a shadow over the landmark elections slated for September," maintained former Afghan army officer, Col. Mohammad Jihangir.

Al-Sistani Warning Was Felt at UN

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani on June 7 issued a stern warning to the UN Security Council to abandon Iraq's "provisional constitution" as illegal. Iraq's supreme Shi'a spiritual leader issued an open letter to the chairman and members of the Security Council, warning them that the inclusion or even mention, in any new UNSC resolution, of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) would lead to "dangerous consequences." The TAL, drafted under the occupation and its influence, is regarded by some

as a new "constitution" to be included in discussions of the permanent constitution after the interim period.

News wires reported that Al-Sistani's warning was taken into consideration in the final draft of the resolution of the Security Council, and therefore the TAL was not mentioned in the UN resolution adopted June 9.

Al-Sistani's message read: "We have been informed that there are those who are attempting to mention the so-called 'Transitional Administrative Law' in the new UNSC resolution concerning Iraq, in order to give it international legitimacy. This 'Law' was drafted by a non-elected council under the occupation and through direct influence from it, and it would bind the national congress that will be elected in the beginning of the next year to establish the permanent constitution of Iraq. This matter is in contrast to all laws and is rejected by most members of the Iraqi people. Therefore, any attempt to give legitimacy to this 'Law' through mentioning it in the international resolution would be regarded as an act against the Iraqi people, and would be a foreboding of dangerous consequences."

The TAL included major changes in the Iraqi social and political structure, turning Iraq into a federation of regions, dividing the country into ethnic or religious regions, and giving the Kurds an independent status and veto on future Iraqi constitutional deliberations.

Pentagon Mentions Bombing of Three Gorges

A Pentagon report, picked up in *China Post* on June 9, implies use of the threat of bombing the Three Gorges Dam as a deterrence policy. Lyndon LaRouche emphasized the same day that the threat of war on China, from the Pentagon report and from an ongoing mobilization of anti-China forces in Taiwan, with help from Japanese layers around the fanatic mayor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara, was becoming the central reality of developments in Asia.

The report from the Pentagon on the Peoples' Liberation Army's combat capa-

bility, issued May 28, states that the asymmetric capabilities Taiwan possesses or is acquiring, could deter an attack from mainland China by making it unacceptably costly. "Taiwan's air force already has a latent capability for airstrikes against China," the report states, adding: "Leaders have publicly cited the need for ballistic and land-attack cruise missiles. Since Taipei cannot match Beijing's ability to field offensive systems, proponents of strikes against the mainland apparently hope that merely presenting credible threats to China's urban population or high-value targets, such as the Three Gorges Dam, will deter Chinese military coercion."

While Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense declined to comment on the Pentagon report, a number of analysts said that once made public, it would only exacerbate relations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Computer Voting Decried in Venezuela

The Aug. 14 national vote on recalling President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, is set to rely on computerized voting. Venezuelan Vice-President Jose Vicente Rangel announced on June 7 that the recall referendum must be held with computerized "touchscreen" voting. Will Diebold Corporation be determining Venezuela's fate? Rangel also expressed total confidence that Chávez would win the referendum and "give a beating" to the opposition on the day of the recall vote. He referred to the huge pro-Chávez rally that was held this past weekend, and addressed by a raving President, as "the true referendum."

At the Sunday rally, held to counter the mass anti-Chávez rally held in Caracas the day before, Chávez said he would personally head the campaign to defeat the recall, and called for organizing commando units in every town and city in the country to "get out the vote." He declared that the objective was to garner votes twice the 2.4 million names pulled together by the opposition to convoke the referendum; and that he planned to rule Venezuela "until 2021." To a cheering

crowd, Chávez roared that the opposition was “a devil with foreign masters,” and made a point of singling out for praise the Jacobin leader Lina Ron, who recently told the Miami Herald that her supporters were “armed to the teeth.”

International analysts agree that while Chávez does not have majority support in the country right now, the splintered opposition and lack of a single figure who can challenge Chávez’s hold on power—not to mention computerized voting manipulation—could mean that the lunatic President might even win the recall vote.

Finally, U.S. Offers Iraqis Public Works Jobs

In what can only be described as a “better late than never” proposal, some U.S. military commanders in Iraq are proposing to beat back insurgency in Iraq by offering public works jobs, reported a June 8 wire in the *Wall Street Journal*. In Baghdad, Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, a career tank officer who commands the U.S. Army’s First Cavalry Division, is talking about launching a campaign focused on repairing sewers, sanitation, and electricity, which would provide urgently needed employment.

In an interview, General Chiarelli pointed out that the United States has a limited amount of time to “convince the Iraqi people we can make life better for them.” He plans to spend as much as \$240 million on low-skill public works projects for tens of thousands of otherwise unemployed Iraqis. Paul Bremer had been holding back funds for carrying out large-scale public projects related to rebuilding the power grid and the oil industry. General Chiarelli made an obvious point, telling the *Journal*: “The harder we work to get dollars for these projects, the fewer of my soldiers will get shot at. I am convinced of it.”

In Baghdad’s Al Rashid district, through one of the poorer neighborhoods, General Chiarelli is planning to put at least 15,000 Iraqis on the payroll for the next couple of weeks, repairing roads and electrical networks. A similar project is slated for Sadr City, the Shi’ite slum named after Mugata

al Sadr’s father. In these areas, Chiarelli plans to spend \$20 million to clean out and repair clogged sewer lines and \$25 million for a new landfill.

Test Trains To Cross Korea DMZ in October

“The South and North . . . shall test run on the linked sections of the railways in October 2004,” said a joint statement of the two Koreas, issued after their June 2-5 meeting in Pyongyang. “In addition, the two sides will open the Seoul-Sinuiju (west side) road and the East Coast road no later than in October.” The western road leads to the Kaesong Industrial Complex, and the other leads to Mt. Kumgang in the East.

The two Koreas also agreed to set up by the end of June a joint agency with South Korean management to run the Kaesong Industrial Complex just north of the DMZ; and finalized paperwork allowing the South to provide water, electricity, Internet service, and other infrastructure to South Korean businesses to begin operations in a pilot zone of Kaesong, starting in September. Kaesong will be connected to the rail and road connectors. Fifteen firms out of 136 South Korean applicants seeking to operate in the Kaesong complex have been selected, including watch maker Romanson. A next round of economic cooperation talks will be held Aug. 31-Sept. 3 in Seoul. South and North Korea also each agreed to open seven ports to the other. North Korea has agreed to open four more ports—Haeju, Wonsan, Hungnam, and Chongjin—in addition to the already-opened Nampo, Najin and Kosong. South Korea will open seven of its ports, including Pusan, Inchon, and Kunsan. Only vessels registered in third countries, such as China and Panama, have so far been allowed between the South and the North.

The economic agreement followed a key military agreement on June 4 when chief generals met for the first time since 1945 at South Korea’s Mt. Sorak and signed to prevent border clashes, halt propaganda broadcasts against each other along the inter-Korean border, and jointly protect shipping.

CHINA offered on June 5, to hold another round of talks on North Korean denuclearization on June 25, for envoys from North and South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and the United States. U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld repeated, also on June 5, Dick Cheney’s threats on his April Asia tour that too-long diplomatic negotiations were giving North Korea time to develop and sell nukes to terrorists. Rumsfeld spoke to an international security conference in Singapore.

TONY BLAIR must be “delusional,” declared former Iraq chief weapons inspector David Kay on June 6 in London. “Anyone out there holding—as I gather Prime Minister Blair has recently said—the prospect that ISG (Iraq Survey Group) is going to unmask actual weapons of mass destruction is really delusional. . . . The problem is the unwillingness to take the responsibility of saying a few simple words: ‘We were wrong’.”

CHINA’S military is already superior to that of Taiwan, wrote Washington China hand David Shambaugh in the *Straits Times* on June 10; although the Pentagon is claiming the Chinese military will be superior to Taiwan’s only by 2008. There has been more progress in modernizing the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in the last five years than the previous 25, Shambaugh, of George Washington University, said. “They’ve already tipped the balance in many areas.”

ISRAEL has developed its first cruise missile. *Jane’s Defense Weekly* reported on June 10 that the surface-to-surface cruise missile has a range of at least 300 kilometers. Called the Delilah-GL (Ground Launch), it is a version of an air-launched missile. According to Israeli Military Industries, the turbojet-powered missile has a range “well beyond 300 kilometers.” It can carry a 30-kilogram warhead.