

G4S Risk Management

Weekly Intelligence Report

Commencing 31 October 2008

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Afghanistan: Civilian Casualties and Insecurity on the Rise

Civilian casualties from US-led counter-insurgency operations continue to increase in Afghanistan, placing a strain on Washington-Kabul relations as well as undermining public support for Afghan and coalition efforts at reining in the Taliban-led insurgency. Concerns are mounting that high civilian casualty figures will bolster support for the Taliban movement and ultimately lead to a strong public backlash thus elevating the security and terrorism risk factor, not only in locales in Afghanistan's more historically hostile rural areas, but in highly-securitized urban centres. Capitalising on this destabilising situation are rogue criminal elements which have contributed to a surge in crime including assassinations, kidnappings, corruption and narco-trafficking. This theory has already manifested in Kabul with the shooting deaths of three expatriates in two separate incidents during the end of October, and the abduction of French aid worker in the capital has added to a general sense that security in the city is slowly degenerating.

Kidnappings are on the rise in Afghanistan with Taliban and criminal gangs increasingly setting their sites on western expatriates in recent months. On 3 November, a French aid worker employed with the human rights group Solidarité Laïque was abducted in the Kart-e-Parwan suburb near the city centre by unidentified assailants. The victim, identified as Dany Egreteau, had only arrived in the country a week prior. His Afghan driver, employed with the National Directorate of Security intelligence agency, tried to intervene, but was fatally shot during the abduction. Reports so far have indicated a Taliban denial leading to speculation of involvement by organised criminal gangs as suggested by the Afghan interior ministry. In September, US Special Forces secured the release of an American, employed with the Army Corps of Engineers, who had been held in captivity for two months in Wardak province.

“According to the Washington-based advocacy group Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict (CIVIC), coalition airstrikes have contributed to more than 100 civilian fatalities in southern Afghanistan since August, with some local civil rights groups suggesting that this death toll could be three times higher than official government estimates.”

There is a general consensus among security and political analysts that crimes such as these will increase dramatically in the foreseeable future as socio-economic conditions worsen across the country, particularly in Kabul. Mass migration flows into the capital over the past six years have nearly tripled the population of the city. This surge and the lack of economic opportunities has led to unemployment figures to rise to an estimated 30 percent, fuelling public anger directed at a government already deemed highly corrupt and poorly mismanaged. Hostage taking for ransom or for political gains, as evidenced, is likely to increase in the foreseeable future posing a substantial risk to Westerners.

Tensions flared between Afghanistan and the US following the twin US airstrikes in Kandahar province that targeted a wedding ceremony on 3 November, killing anywhere from 30-90 civilians. Afghan officials reported that the airstrike hit a wedding party in the village of Wech Baghtu, Sha Wali Kot district. And again on 5 November, reports indicated that another coalition airstrike in the western

province of Herat killed seven civilians. According to the Washington-based advocacy group Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict (CIVIC), coalition airstrikes have contributed to more than 100 civilian fatalities in southern Afghanistan since August, with some local civil rights groups suggesting that this death toll could be three times higher than official government estimates. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported that “nearly 1,500 civilians were killed in the first eight months of 2008”.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has prioritised the investigations of these fatal accidents and called for an immediate cessation of airstrikes while carefully pointing out the ramifications of future airstrikes. The Pentagon has also ordered a review of counter-insurgency strat-

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egy in Afghanistan. A plan for an Iraqi-style troop surge, which has attributed to an overall decrease in militant attacks in sections of Iraq, will bolster the 34,000 US troops already deployed in the country. American Gen. David McKiernan has requested an additional 15,000 troops that will ultimately come from the drawdown of US forces in Iraq. With the additional troops, there will arguably be an increase in civilian casualties, as evidenced in Iraq, that will ultimately not bode well for Karzai, especially with presidential elections looming in 2009.

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Algeria – 06.11.2008: The local daily, El Khabar, reported in its Tuesday (4 Nov) edition that security forces managed to thwart “twin” terror attacks by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) on Hassi Messoud/Oued Irara and Algiers International airports. Intelligence and security agencies were alerted to the plot only by an unidentified asset based in Europe, who claimed that the plan had involved the hijacking of a passenger jet to be used in “9/11” style attack, according to the paper. As a precautionary measure the government has deployed extra security personnel at the two airports as well as other transport facilities. This could potentially lead to delays to routine transit in addition to the elevated terrorism threat.

Cameroon – 06.11.2008: Following the 31 October piracy attack against an oil services vessel off of the Bakassi peninsula in south-western Cameroon, there were unconfirmed reports that one of the ten hostages may have been killed in an apparent rescue bid. Details are highly sketchy as of press time, however, the Bakassi Freedom Fighter (BFF) and their alleged leader Ebi Dari have claimed that a hostage was shot and killed in a rescue attempt. This conflicts earlier claims that the hostage survived the shooting. There are also no details on the exact nature of any rescue attempt, or who may have led such an effort.

Cameroon – 31.10.2008: A group of armed gunmen kidnapped 10 crew members in an attack on an oil vessel off the West African state of Cameroon on Friday (31 Oct) before threatening to kill them “one by one” within three days if the Cameroonian government did not meet their demands. Seven French nationals, two Cameroonians and a Tunisian were among 15 employees on board the vessel “Bourbon Sagitta,” owned by the French maritime services company Bourbon and contracted by French oil major Total, when it was boarded from three speedboats at around midnight. A group called the Bakassi Freedom Fighters has claimed responsibility for the attack which occurred near the Bakassi peninsula, which Nigeria recently handed over to Cameroon. It would appear however that a second group called the Niger Delta Defence and Security

Council (NDDSC) joined in the attack.

DR Congo – 01.11.2008: Rising levels of insecurity currently gripping much of the eastern DRC have prompted the US government to update its travel advisory for the region, urging all American nationals to abandon travel to much of the area. Goma and surrounding municipalities have been cited as areas that American citizens should immediately vacate. Meanwhile the region is witnessing a spiralling humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by mass refugee flows and the destruction of displacement camps by forces loyal to dissident Gen. Laurent Nkunda. Some 45,000 people were forced to leave the camps when Nkunda’s forces raided and looted them, adding to the 180,000 or so already displaced since August. Nkunda’s troops captured the North Kivu town of Rutshuru and remain some 16 km (10 miles) from the provincial town of Goma. Although the ceasefire between Gen. Laurent Nkunda’s forces and the government continues to hold, analysts remain sceptical over the longevity of the agreement.

DR Congo – 02.11.2008: Referring to the recent humanitarian crisis in the Congo, whereby hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes in the past week, the French and British foreign ministers called for a strengthening of the ceasefire between government forces and rebel fighters on Sunday (2 Nov). In a joint statement they stressed the need for serious political effort in order to avert a further deterioration of conditions within the country. An offensive launched by fighters loyal to General Laurent Nkunda last week had reached the outskirts of the eastern border city of Goma before Nkunda called a ceasefire on Wednesday (29 Oct).

DR Congo – 04.11.2008: Speaking from his hilltop headquarters in DR Congo’s eastern North Kivu province, rebel leader Laurent Nkunda warned the government on Tuesday (4 Nov) that he would extend his eastern guerrilla war to the capital city of Kinshasa if the government did not agree to hold political negotiations with him. He threatened to end last week’s ceasefire if President Joseph Kabila did not accept his offer of talks.

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Claiming to be fighting to defend Congo's Tutsi minority but also demanding a better government for the whole country, Nkunda led an aggressive rebel operation which forced tens of thousands of civilians to flee their homes.

DR Congo – 05.11.2008: UN and militia sources stated that pro-government militia forces and rebels following General Laurent Nkunda engaged in fighting in the volatile North Kivu province, north of the regional capital, Goma. Sporadic fighting has erupted close to the town of Kiwanja during the last two days. Nkunda insists that the Pareco Mai-Mai militia group, made up of mainly Congolese Hutus broke the fragile ceasefire that was declared last week. Nkunda also accused the Congolese government of supporting the Pareco Mai-Mai and this antagonism is now being considered motive for a full-scale operation against Kinshasa by rebel forces.

DR Congo – 06.11.2008: Fighting rages on in the eastern DRC where thousands of civilians continue to flee in droves from Rutshuru, 70 km (43 miles) from the North Kivu provincial capital of Goma. Recent developments have seen pro-government Mai-Mai militiamen alongside Congolese armed forces continue to engage with CNDP rebels in pitched battles in Rutshuru. The tenuous cease-fire has ostensibly collapsed. The city was overrun by the CNDP last week and there are elevated concerns that Goma may be the next city to fall. However, there has been a turn of events recently with Kinshasa announcing that it would be willing to open dialogue with Nkunda on a possible peace agreement. This has been described by some commentators as a "very significant" gesture on the part of the Congolese government.

Egypt / Belgium – 31.10.2008: Six Belgian tourists were killed and 26 wounded in a road accident when travelling in the south of Egypt on Friday (31 Oct). The coach driver is believed to have lost control of the vehicle carrying 43 tourists in the Abu Simbel area, about 290 km (108 miles) southwest of Aswan. Egypt's roads are among the dangerous in the world, with vehicles and roads poorly maintained vehicles and roads and traffic

regulations widely disregarded. On 1 August the Egyptian traffic authorities implemented a tougher traffic code in an effort to reduce road accidents and ease the country's chronic road congestion. Road accidents kill about 6,000 people and wound 30,000 others each year in Egypt.

Ethiopia – 06.11.2008: The terrorism threat level has increased in Ethiopia, following statements released by the National Intelligence Security Service warning of a potential terrorist strike. There were no further details in the warning, but the statement was released one day after the leader of the opposition Oromo Federalists Democratic Movement (OFDM), Bekele Jirata, was taken into custody. It appeared that Jirata was arrested for his connection to the secessionist rebel group the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The OLF has been responsible for a series of ambushes, bombings and kidnappings whilst waging a low-level insurgency since 1993. The government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi also holds the ethnic-Somali Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) accountable for a number of terrorist actions. There is a general consensus among regional analysts that these accusations are aimed at galvanising anti-Eritrean sentiments as Ethiopia's rival is accused by Addis Ababa of inciting such instability through covert support of the OLF and ONLF. However, the lack of substantive detail in the newly-released warning should not deter from the fact that the aforementioned insurgency groups are capable of launching devastating attacks as evidenced in September and May this year where civilian sites including restaurants and petrol stations have been targeted.

Ghana/ Israel – 31.10.2008: An Israeli businessman seized in Ghana last week reportedly escaped from his kidnappers on Wednesday (29 Oct). Although Ghanaian security sources claim to have raided the hotel in the capital, Accra, where the victim was being held since 19 October, Israeli public radio indicated on that the victim managed to escape without the intervention of security services. The perpetrators are thought to be Nigerian nationals who lured the unidentified businessman into Ghana on 15 October and subsequently kidnapped him

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before demanding a ransom of US \$300,000 dollars from his relatives in Israel.

Guinea – 04.11.2008: Angry protests erupted into violence between youths and security personnel in the capital city of Conakry on Monday (3 Nov). A police officer was shot dead and countless wounded as the military intervened in crowd control measures that went woefully wrong. Enco-5, Cosa and Bambeto appeared to be the worst-affected neighbourhoods during the city-wide protest action. Monday's demonstrations were launched as a result of the government's failure to lower petrol prices following a similar decline in recent global oil prices. On Saturday (1 Nov) demonstrations took place in Conakry where one person was shot dead during a rally protesting the lack of electricity supplies in the city. Demonstrators took to halting the economic lifeline of the country by blocking railway tracks which prevented trains loaded with the mineral bauxite from being offloaded for trans-shipment abroad. Rail companies responded to the situation by constructing fences along the affected rail tracks.

Guinea / Russia – 05.11.2008: In a continuation of the civil unrest reported in the Guinea capital, Conakry, officials stated on Wednesday (5 Nov) that the Russian aluminium company, RUSAL, has ceased shipping alumina to the city ports because of the widespread unrest. The capital has been gripped by riots and protests, particularly by youths in the Enco 5 suburb of the city following a fuel price cut that did not meet public expectation. Company officials for Friguia, a subsidiary of RUSAL, stated that barricades, vandalism and continued rioting and unrest across the railway system in Enco 5 had resulted in operations being suspended. However, Moscow-based officials have refuted that production has been interrupted.

Libya / Russia – 03.11.2008: Libya and Russia reportedly signed a civil nuclear cooperation deal on Saturday (1 Nov) as Muammar Gaddafi was visiting Moscow for talks aimed at restoring the "geopolitical equilibrium" on the international stage. The three-day meeting, which marked the first visit of the Libyan leader to Moscow

since 1985, mainly focused on trade agreements while nuclear talks allegedly centred around peaceful nuclear use in medicine and nuclear waste treatment. According to the deal, Moscow would build nuclear research reactors for the North African state and supply fuel. Moscow has not however confirmed the signature or existence of such agreement as yet.

Mali – 31.10.2008: Two Austrian hostages held for eight months by Islamic militants in the Sahara desert were freed and safely handed over to the Malian authorities on Friday (31 Oct). Andrea Kloiber and Wolfgang Ebner were kidnapped on 22 February while on holiday in Tunisia. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for the abduction and demanded the release of militants held in Algeria and Tunisia together with the payment of a US \$6.4 million ransom.

Mali – 04.11.2008: The al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) group was reported to have released two Austrian hostages who were initially kidnapped in Tunisia more than eight months ago. The pair, identified as Andrea Kloiber and Wolfgang Ebner, gave a press conference in Bamako on Saturday (1 Nov), describing the conditions under which they were held as "harsh". Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik and Malian President Amadou Toumani were both present at the press conference, with the former remaining adamant that a ransom had not been paid to AQIM.

Morocco – 31.10.2008: Severe flooding in the north-eastern regions of Morocco claimed the lives of 28 people. Fast moving flood waters from the Kirt River in Nador swept away 11 people, while six others died when their house collapsed on them in Taza. Tangiers was also affected by floods which claimed the lives of five people. In the provinces of Nador and Al Hoceima some 200 homes and two bridges collapsed. The government mobilised aid workers and the military to provide assistance in flood-stricken regions.

Mozambique – 06.11.2008: Central Mozambique is experiencing an acute health crisis with an outbreak of cholera, which has claimed about 50 lives since 31 Oc-

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tober. In response to this burgeoning health threat the regional health authorities in Manica province have issued a maximum cholera alert, following the deaths of 50 people in the district of Guru. Health authorities are canvassing the rest of the province in search of further outbreaks and all personnel in the region are advised to be aware of the current health threat and take appropriate mitigating steps. Consumption of untreated water from the Zambezi and Luenha rivers as well as the Chinda Lake has been attributed to the cause of the outbreak. Regionally, Zimbabwe has also been experiencing outbreaks of cholera.

Nigeria – 02.11.2008: In what many perceive to be a bold move on behalf of President Umaru Yar'Adua, 20 out of Nigeria's 40 cabinet members were relieved from office on Wednesday (29 Oct) on charges of "non-performance". The move was allegedly undertaken as a step towards repositioning and strengthening the present administration to enhance its capacity to deliver services to the electorate. Until new ministers are elected and sworn in, the Minister of State and Finance Remi Balalola will serve as Supervising Minister for the Federal Capital Territory Authority.

Nigeria – 04.11.2008: The kidnapping risk faced by foreign nationals in the Niger Delta was once again highlighted when a Lebanese citizen was abducted by unidentified assailants on Monday (3 Nov). It was revealed by Port Harcourt police spokesperson Rita Inoma-Abbey that the victim was an employee of an engineering firm contracted to construct a road in the Choba suburb of the city.

Nigeria – 06.11.2008: Further to previous reports of the abduction of a Lebanese national in the Delta region of Nigeria, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) launched one of its own commando units in support of efforts to secure the individual's release. Melad Nasari was working for Horman Engineering when he was abducted on Monday (3 Nov). MEND is currently engaged in a unilateral cease-fire with the Nigerian government and in this instance has acted as a negotiator rather than a belligerent. MEND's latest state-

ments claim that Nasari has been freed and in the process of security his release MEND claims to have also secured the release of a kidnapped manager from Zenith Bank Omoku.

Somalia – 31.10.2008: A Turkish trawler, identified as the MV Yasa Neslihan, was hijacked in the Gulf of Aden on Wednesday (29 Oct), according to the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Monitoring Centre in Kuala Lumpur. Details of the hijacking are still murky, but what is known is that the vessel had a crew of 20. The MV Yasa Neslihan was also reportedly transporting iron ore from Canada to China. Turkey's foreign ministry confirmed the hijacking and requested assistance from NATO, which recently dedicated seven vessels to assist with anti-piracy operations and escort services for commercial shipping.

Somalia – 05.11.2008: A recent reflection of the collapsed security environment within Somalia, six aid agency workers employed by the French agency Action Against Hunger were kidnapped near to the Ethiopian border on Wednesday (5 Nov). Armed militants believed to be members of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) ambushed the four European aid workers and two Kenyan pilots as they landed their light aircraft at an airfield near to the town of Dhusa-Mareb. Local unconfirmed sources stated that six vehicles were used by the heavily-armed assailants, who took hostages off the aircraft and also kidnapped personal waiting at the airfield. Somalia's security environment remains extremely fragile, with insurgents and militant groups controlling much of the country. Although an AU force and military personnel from Ethiopia continue to assist the interim government in rebuilding security, the situation remains highly unstable and volatile.

South Africa – 01.11.2008: A two-day convention was opened in the capital city of Johannesburg on Saturday (1 Nov) where dissident members of South Africa's governing African National Congress (ANC) gathered to discuss the formation of a breakaway movement. The event attracted more than 7,000 people, including members of some opposition parties, and completely ex-

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ceeded the expectations of organisers who had planned for a 4,000-strong crowd. The convention will involve the drafting of policies for a new party to compete against the ANC. Local police have tightened security around the venue to deal with any outbreaks of violence during the event.

Sudan – 05.11.2008: On Tuesday (4 Nov) more than 150 Sudanese journalists and support staff embarked on a 24-hour hunger strike in protest over censorship by state security services. In support for the protest against a growing media crackdown within the country, three opposition newspapers will reportedly be halting publication for three days and several writers will withdraw their columns from other newspapers.

Ethiopia / Somalia / Yemen – 03.11.2008: Sixty African refugees were found dead on a beach in Yemen over the weekend, in what appeared to be two smuggling incidents gone wrong. Details surrounding the incidents are still murky, but according to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the victims, of Somali and Ethiopian origin, had come across the Gulf of Aden from the Somali port city of Bosasso. Survivors explained that smugglers feared they were spotted by coastguards and forced many of the refugees overboard.

Zambia – 01.11.2008: In latest reports from the country, ruling party candidate Rupiah Banda has narrowed the lead of the opposition's Michael Sata with less than 15 percent of the votes still to be counted. Earlier polls had revealed that Sata was leading Banda by a margin of less than 50,000 votes, but results coming from rural polling stations continue to chip away at Sata's lead. Initial results had placed Sata ahead of Rupiah by over 310,000 votes leading to high expectations among Sata's Patriotic Front party. The firebrand opposition leader has already vowed to challenge the results should he be defeated, which will likely to lead to an escalation in incendiary rhetoric.

Zambia – 02.11.2008: The results of the controversial elections held in Zambia on Thursday (30 Oct) declared acting head of state Rupiah Banda as the winner, hav-

ing beaten main opposition candidate Michael Sata by a narrow margin. However election results have caused quite a stir within the country, as Sata has rejected Banda's victory amongst accusations of rigging and has demanded a recount of the votes. Angry supporters of Sata marched in protest through a Lukasa slum late on Saturday (1 Nov), setting fire to market stalls and throwing stones at local police. Tear gas was fired into the crowds to quell the unrest.

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Bolivia – 02.11.2008: US anti-drug agents were barred from combating cocaine traffickers in Bolivia until further notice following accusations of spying by leftist president Evo Morales. The agents, who belong to the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), were accused of political espionage and conspiracy since they allegedly maintained links with anti-government forces that staged protests in eastern and central regions governed by the opposition in September.

Colombia – 02.11.2008: On Saturday (1 Nov) the United Nations revealed that Colombian security forces could face an intervention by international courts if the government did not investigate them for allegedly systematic and widespread killings of innocent civilians around the country. A statement released by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay called attention to a growing trend within Colombia whereby security forces have been shooting civilians and passing the casualties off as combatant deaths to artificially improve their statistics in Colombia's ongoing guerrilla war. Amidst growing pressure from the family members of the victims, 27 army officers were sacked by the government on Wednesday (29 Oct) after information emerged implicating them in the deaths of a group of civilians who were shot and buried in mass graves, and were later counted as combatant deaths.

Dominican Republic / Haiti – 01.11.2008: According to Dominican authorities 476 Haitian citizens were sent back to neighbouring Haiti after reports of a violent incident involving a Haitian immigrant emerged from the southwest of the country. A Haitian man allegedly stabbed and killed a local while attempting to steal his motorcycle in the municipality of Neiba. Having triggered angry reactions amongst local residents, the incident was followed by dozens of retaliatory attacks on Haitian immigrants which left two dead and nine injured. Fearing further reprisals, hundreds of immigrants were forced to take cover and the governments of both countries were urged to address the issue.

Ecuador / US – 01.11.2008: Diplomatic relations between Quito and Washington continue to be strained following accusations by an Ecuadorian presidential commission that the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had infiltrated Ecuador's intelligence apparatus. Similar allegations were made in April resulting in President Raphael Correa sacking his defence minister and police chief in a bid to purge elements suspected of colluding with the CIA. Further reports revealed that the CIA was privy to intelligence on a cross-border raid by Colombian security forces on FARC rebel camps in Ecuador before they occurred. The March FARC raids led to a rupture in cross-border Ecuador-Colombia relations. The latest dispute with the US has added to a list of issues aimed at distancing Quito from Washington.

Mexico – 31.10.2008: Thirteen people, including two women, were killed in separate incidents in northern Chihuahua state on Thursday (30 Oct) in what appeared to be another incident of drug-related violence. Heavily-armed men attacked a man and a woman in the city of Ciudad Juarez, forcing them up against a wall and reportedly shooting them at least 15 times. In separate incidents, a woman was found dead in the city and three male bodies carrying signs of torture and gunshot wounds were found outside Ciudad Juarez where more than 1,000 have been killed so far this year.

Mexico – 04.11.2008: A weekend of drugs-related violence in the Mexican state of Michoacan resulted in the murder of 11 police officers in a number of separate incidents that occurred at roads and at police checkpoints around the state. Police arrested 10 suspects in connection with the killings as they tried to gauge whether these incidents were part of a coordinated plan. Mexico State prosecutor Alberto Bazbaz confirmed that the suspects belong to drug gangs, adding that some of them were armed at the time of their detention.

Mexico – 05.11.2008: Seven people, including the country's Interior Minister Juan Camilo Mourino, were killed when the Lear jet in which they were flying in crashed in the capital, Mexico City. The aircraft erupted into flames as it crashed into the city's financial district

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during rush hour traffic causing additional injuries to people on the ground. Vague estimates suggest that 40 people were admitted to hospital, although conflicting sources state that over 70 people were injured when the incident occurred at 1900 local time (0000 GMT).

Peru – 31.10.2008: Anti-government protests turned violent in a village in Moquegua province where villagers set ablaze a police station and abducted 25 police officers. It was reported that the infuriated mob lashed out at the police in retaliation for an earlier episode when riot officers hurled tear gas at demonstrators near a school which ended up affecting several children. The latest incident is representative of similar protest action that has been sweeping across the nation recently.

Peru – 06.11.2008: Peruvian Prime Minister Yehude Simon declared a 30-day state of emergency in the southern province of Tacna in reaction to violent protests that left 66 people injured. Military reinforcements and extra law enforcement personnel were deployed to the city of Tacna, the site of the 4 November riots, to enforce the state of emergency which will entail a dusk-to-dawn curfew and grant sweeping powers to security personnel. Public anger at the government's decision to redirect a greater portion of the province's mining revenues to other Peruvian provinces has stoked the civil commotion.

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Afghanistan – 01.11.2008: On Saturday (1 Nov) reports emerged that the head of Britain's Special Forces in Afghanistan resigned in protest over equipment failures which he believes led to the death of four of his troops. Despite his repeated warnings about the danger of having troops travel in lightly armoured Snatch Land Rover vehicles, Major Sebastian Morley's advice was not heeded by the Ministry of Defence. Four of Morley's soldiers were killed when a Snatch Land Rover hit a landmine in Helmand province in June 2008. In his resignation letter, he thus accused the government of "chronic underinvestment" which led to unnecessary deaths. A ministry source has confirmed the resignation, although claiming that there were also "personal reasons" behind the move. It is unclear at this juncture as to who will fill Morley's post.

Bangladesh / Myanmar – 02.11.2008: Tensions between Bangladesh and Myanmar escalated on Saturday (1 Nov) with the deployment of a Bangladeshi naval patrol to an area in the Bay of Bengal marked as disputed territory between the two countries. According to a Foreign Ministry spokesman in Dhaka, the move was initiated after Myanmar began oil and gas exploration activities in the area. However Dhaka stressed its desire to resolve the matter peacefully and summoned the Myanmar envoy to lodge a formal protest urging its neighbour to halt all such activities until the dispute over the sea border has been resolved.

Bangladesh / Myanmar – 05.11.2008: Conflict risks continue to rise in the maritime boundary area separating Bangladesh and Myanmar. Bangladesh says it has deployed another warship to the Bay of Bengal and will send a top diplomat to Myanmar amid escalating tensions over gas exploration in disputed waters. Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury confirmed the arrival of a three-member Bangladeshi delegation in Myanmar, with intention to meet with junta leaders on Thursday (6 Nov) to resolve the territory crisis. A series of negotiations have been conducted over the past year regarding ownership of the potentially-resource rich region known as St Martins with little success.

China – 01.11.2008: The country's food crisis continues to widen after tests revealed that an industrial chemical called melamine had transuded into animal feed stores. Authorities became aware of the fact after conducting tests on tainted-egg products that have contributed to a mass health crisis gripping the country. Melamine-tainted animal feed has already had an impact on the nation's dairy industry where milk products have already caused the illnesses of an estimated 50,000 children. Melamine, which may cause renal failure in children, is often used by unscrupulous producers in dairy products as a cost-saving filling agent. China's tainted milk crisis has added to a growing list of industrial food scandals that have raised major global concerns over the country's lax food safety regulations.

China – 01.11.2008: A mine in northern China was destroyed on Wednesday (29 Oct) as a gas explosion ripped through the site. The devastated mine, located in Shaanxi province, was reportedly a state-owned local operation, with annual production capacity of 330,000 tonnes. At the time of the explosion 36 miners were at work, of which seven were able to escape. So far rescue workers have managed to pull out 23 workers from the wreckage as another six are still reported missing.

China – 03.11.2008: Mudslides in the hilly countryside of southwest China killed at least 22 people and rendered another 45 missing over the weekend. Nearly 1,000 homes were destroyed as masses of mud and rock stormed down near Chuxiong city in Yunnan province, and in rural areas near the province's capital Kunming. The exact cause of the disaster is as yet unknown as investigations by local authorities continue.

China – 04.11.2008: Cab drivers in the southwestern city of Chongqing, China's fourth-largest urban centre, called a strike on Monday (3 Nov) to protest against a variety of issues, including the scarcity of fuel, competition from unlicensed cabs and heavy traffic fines. Less than one-tenth of the city's 9,000 cabs returned to work on Monday afternoon after they stopped driving during the morning rush hour. Those who did return were intercepted by angry crowds of striking cab drivers, and were

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pulled out of their cabs along with their passengers. Around 20 vehicles were destroyed in the ensuing violence as local police struggled to protect the returning cab drivers.

China / Vietnam – 05.11.2008: Parts of Vietnam and China continued to suffer from the worst floods and landslides in over a century, as officials stated that over 50 people died in China and 92 were thought to have been killed in Vietnam. Parts of southwest China were worst hit, along with the Vietnamese capital, Hanoi, which is undertaking a massive operation following severe flooding across the north of the country.

India – 01.11.2008: Accompanied by ruling Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh landed in insurgency-stricken Assam on Saturday (1 Nov) to review security arrangements and visit victims that were attacked during bomb explosions on Thursday (30 Oct). The duo landed in Assam's main city of Guhawati as a 12-hour shutdown of the city was called by the opposition Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and two of its right-wing affiliates to protest against the government's apparent failure in clamping down on terrorist attacks.

India – 04.11.2008: On Sunday (2 Nov) an Indian minister managed to narrowly escape a landmine explosion set off by suspected Maoist rebels in the eastern state of West Bengal. Barely five minutes after the car carrying Steel Minister Ram Vilas Paswan drove through the Midnapore district, an explosion occurred at the site, injuring six policemen who were following the minister's car. According to police sources, the state's chief minister, Buddhadev Bhattacharya, had also passed through the same route some 15 minutes before the incident. Both officials were returning from a foundation stone laying ceremony for a new private steel plant in Salboni area.

India – 05.11.2008: Reacting to the recent violence in India's financial capital of Mumbai, perpetrated against thousands of migrant workers from poor eastern and northern states, 12 lawmakers allied to the ruling coal-

ition government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh have decided to resign from their posts. The 12 lawmakers, including four federal ministers, handed in their letters of resignation to Rashtriya Dal Party (RDP) on Monday (3 Nov) in a move that could potentially force a vote of confidence within the government.

India (Kashmir) – 02.11.2008: The arrests of three key separatist leaders in Indian-administered Kashmir triggered widespread protests by angry crowds in Srinagar on Saturday (1 Nov). Tear gas and batons were used by the police to disperse the large crowds that had gathered on the streets of the city. A police source revealed that the leaders were arrested for trying to boycott the elections that are due to be held in the region later this month. Under the newly implemented Public Safety Act suspects may be held by police forces for up to two years without a trial, a law denounced by human rights activists as being draconian. So far 30 separatist leaders have been arrested for their campaign against the upcoming elections, and with the election date coming ever closer, further cases of violence and unrest in the region appear most likely.

Indonesia – 02.11.2008: The government of Australia issued a travel advisory warning to its citizens not to travel to Indonesia as the execution date of three bombers convicted in the 2002 Bali bombings draws near. Similarly, New Zealand upgraded its security risk assessment of Indonesia in the last week, listing the threat in Bali and Jakarta as "high" and the threat in the eastern provinces of Maluku and Central Sulawesi as "extreme". Indonesian authorities have tightened security around tourist destinations and diplomatic sites in preparation for any retaliatory attacks. Extra police forces, including anti-terror units, have also been deployed near the Nusa Kambangan Island prison off southern Java, where the trio is being held prior to their execution by a firing squad. Tensions within the country remain high as the government maintains secrecy around the executions and local security forces remain on high alert.

Indonesia – 03.11.2008: Three small Molotov cocktail bombs exploded in the town of Ternate, North Maluku

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province, in the Moluccas islands, early on Monday (3 Nov) around 0330 local time (1830 Sunday GMT), damaging the governor's office and house. The incident is set against the backdrop of the imminent execution of three Muslim militants involved in the Bali terrorist bomb attack which killed 202 people in 2002. Security measures have been reinforced in Bali and parts of the main island of Java, especially on the prison island of Nusakambangan where the perpetrators are being held, ahead of the execution which should take place any time between now and 15 November.

Indonesia – 04.11.2008: Several countries issued travel warnings for their respective nationals amid ongoing concerns of a terrorist backlash following the impending execution of three terrorists convicted of the 2002 Bali bombings. A last minute appeal lodged by the suspects, Amrozi Nurhasyim, Imam Samudra and Ali Ghufron, was rejected by a Supreme Court Judge on Monday (3 Nov). The court ruling was met with increased calls of retaliatory attacks by hardcore Islamist elements.

Indonesia – 05.11.2008: The country's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has had his personal security detail bolstered following death threats against him issued recently. Indonesia is preparing to execute three Islamic militants suspected in connection with the 2002 Bali bombings and levels of Islamic militancy have been predicted to escalate in accordance with this court case that brings heightened religious, political and tensions. The threat was contained in a letter purportedly written by the bombers on death row, Amrozi, Ali Gufron and Imam Samudra. It urged Islamic militants to kill Yudhoyono and other officials in retaliation for the executions

Indonesia – 31.10.2008: Five gold miners were killed in a landslide on Indonesia's Sulawesi island on Thursday (30 Oct). Rescue teams are still searching for 20 people who have gone missing since the incident which occurred in a small mine in Bombana region, 1,500 kilometres (930 miles) east of the capital, Jakarta. Landslides and flooding are a common occurrence in Indonesia during the rainy season, which is due to end next month.

Indonesia / Australia – 06.11.2008: The impending executions of three Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorists, who were found guilty for their involvement in the 2002 Bali bombings, are raising tensions in the archipelagic nation. Radical student movements and JI followers warned of a violent backlash should the government proceed with the executions. Student group Jemaah Ansharat Tauhid (JAT) descended on the village of Tenggulun, home to two of the terrorists, in a show of solidarity for the jailed JI members. JAT followers rallied in protest and chanted anti-Western slogans. On Tuesday (4 Nov), the American and Australian embassies received bomb threats via text messages that warned of a bombing should the executions be carried out.

Pakistan – 01.11.2008: Jamaat-ud-Dawa, an Islamic charity accused of maintaining terror links by the US, pledged on Friday (31 Oct) to build 1,000 temporary homes for survivors of the recent earthquake in Pakistan. However, as has been the case before, such a move will likely expand the group's influence within the impoverished region. Official reports have revealed that the death toll from Wednesday's 6.4 magnitude earthquake in the Baluchistan province will most likely reach 300, with 3,000 homes destroyed and 15,000 people left homeless.

Pakistan – 02.11.2008: The region of South Waziristan once again became the site of a violent attack on Sunday (2 Nov) when a suicide bomber rammed his car into a Pakistani paramilitary check post, leading to the deaths of eight soldiers. The attack targeted the check post of the paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC) located approximately 20 miles (35 km) from Wana, the main town in the region and a known hub for Taliban and al Qaeda militants. The incident comes on the heels of yet another US missile strike in the tribal regions of North and South Waziristan on Thursday (30 Oct) which allegedly claimed the lives of 20 people.

Pakistan – 04.11.2008: On Monday (3 Nov) police sources revealed that an Afghan government advisor who was visiting relatives in the northwestern border region of Pakistan had been abducted by armed gunmen.

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Unknown assailants broke into his in-laws' house in Seerdoor Kadak, a village in the Chitral district, and took the Afghan official away at gunpoint. The victim has been identified as Akhtar Kohistani, an advisor at the Afghan Ministry for Rehabilitation and Development.

Pakistan – 05.11.2008: Latest reports from Pakistan indicate that an attack on a paramilitary post in the north-western town of Doaba killed a Pakistani soldier and wounded nine on 4 November. The incident has highlighted the growing militant threat a day after the top US commander in the region held security talks with Pakistani leaders. Violence has intensified in Pakistan, most of it in the northwest, since last year with a series of suicide attacks, most on the police, military and political leaders, in which hundreds of people have been killed.

Pakistan / Afghanistan – 06.11.2008: Latest reports from the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (FATA) indicate that a meeting of anti-Taliban tribal chiefs has been targeted by a bomb attack, which has resulted in at least ten fatalities. The incident took place in the Bajaur agency where members of the Salarzai tribe were gathered early on Thursday (6 Nov). A further 45 people were injured in the attack, which targeted tribal figures who have assisted the government in their attempts to wrest back control of Bajaur and the adjoining Swat Valley from Islamic fundamentalists. Fighting in Bajaur and Swat has escalated as the government is less aggressive to the epicentre of regional militancy in Waziristan agencies.

Pakistan / US – 01.11.2008: US missile strikes on the North Waziristan village of Mirali reportedly killed a former senior al-Qaeda operative identified as Abu Rehman (aka Akash Khan or Abu Akash). Abu Rehman was believed to have splintered off the main al-Qaeda group to form his own terror cell. He was among 26 others killed in separate missile strikes by US-made Predator drones that were launched from across the border in Afghanistan. The second drone sortie targeted a house in Mir Ali, which allegedly housed foreign Islamist fighters, including Arabs and Central Asians. The latest US

attacks make it the 17th since mid-August and comes two days after Islamabad lodged a formal protest to the American government when it summoned the US Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W. Patterson. Islamabad continues to claim that the missile strikes are undermining public support for Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts.

Pakistan / US – 03.11.2008: On Sunday (2 Nov) Major General David Petraeus, the US commander in charge of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, arrived in the Pakistani capital city of Islamabad in his first foreign tour since taking charge of US Central Command. The trip is scheduled to include meetings with Pakistan's Defence Minister Chaudhry Ahmed Mukhtar and army chief General Ashfaq Kiyani. Petraeus' visit highlights the US governments increasing concerns over the alarming levels of insurgency violence in Afghanistan and the existence of sanctuaries for Taliban and al Qaeda militants in the restive tribal regions of Pakistan.

Philippines – 04.11.2008: The latest in a series of maritime disasters in the country occurred on Tuesday (4 Nov) as a ferry in central Philippines capsized, killing at least 39 people. The vessel was a large wooden-hulled outrigger of the kind mainly used to provide transportation between the 7,000 islands which make up the Southeast Asian archipelago. The accident is said to have occurred after the ferry was struck by a freak wind off the coast of Masbate. Of the 119 people on board, rescue services managed to recover 39 bodies while 76 survivors were helped to shore. The navy, coastguard and local authorities are still searching the area between Masbate and Sorsogon port in southern Luzon.

Philippines – 06.11.2008: Travel risk management concerns have again been highlighted in the Philippines after nine people were killed when a passenger motorboat capsized amid bad weather in the central Philippines on Thursday (6 Nov). The boat encountered strong waves created by a tropical depression while on its way to an island off Concepcion town in Iloilo province, located 280 miles (450 km) south-east of the Philippine capital, Manila. This is the second incident in two days after a mo-

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torized wooden boat sank off Masbate province on Tuesday (4 Nov) killing 42 people.

Sri Lanka – 02.11.2008: On Saturday (1 Nov) Sri Lankan government officials issued a statement claiming that Sri Lankan maritime forces attacked four insurgent boats as well as killing 14 Tamil Tigers in a skirmish off the northern coast of the island. However the rebel website Tamilnet has disputed this claim, instead alleging that only seven of its fighters were killed, and two naval vessels belonging to the Sri Lankan navy were also destroyed during the clashes.

Sri Lanka – 03.11.2008: Some 93 people were arrested on suspicion of alleged links with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during an operation against the rebel organisation in Kalpitiya village, in northwestern Puttalam district, 165 kilometres (102 miles) from Colombo, on Sunday (2 Nov). All people coming from the northern and eastern parts of the country have been advised to register their names with local authorities in Puttalam in an effort to prevent LTTE rebels from infiltrating civilian areas.

Sri Lanka – 04.11.2008: Leader of the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP) party announced on Tuesday (4 Nov) that a breakaway group of former Tamil Tigers under his command would be disarmed and integrated within the country's security forces within a matter of months. According to Vinayagamurthy Muralitharan, widely known as Colonel Karuna, rehabilitation of the 300 former rebels has already begun. Colonel Karuna's break from the Liberation of Tamil Tigers Eelam (LTTE) movement in 2004 is widely credited as having dealt the rebel group a devastating blow, which eventually contributed to a loss of their control over the east in 2007.

Taiwan / China – 06.11.2008: Newly-minted Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou and Chinese diplomat Chen Yunlin held a landmark meeting earlier on Thursday (6 Nov) amid intense protests by nationalist supporters. Protesters had congregated outside the government guesthouse before marching towards the Presidential Office. Riot police had cordoned off both locations creat-

ing an intense atmosphere among the clamorous crowds. Chen's visit, which was aimed at fostering closer trade and social ties with Taiwan, will conclude on Friday (7 Nov) and the likelihood of further protests until the end of the week are considered high.

Thailand – 04.11.2008: One person was reported dead and more than 71 injured as two bomb blasts ripped through the state of Narathiwat in southern Thailand on Tuesday (4 Nov). The twin explosions struck close to a local government office and a tea shop. Further details of the incident have as yet not emerged, although police suspect it to be the handiwork of separatist insurgents. Narathiwat is one of the states worst affected by an ongoing insurgency in the country's Muslim-majority south which has seen more than 2,700 people killed since 2004.

Thailand – 06.11.2008: A clear example of the hostilities that dominates the security landscape in Thailand's southern provinces was exemplified in the bombing of a school and shooting deaths of four individuals by separatist rebels. The incident occurred in Yala province, considered the more volatile out the four insurgency-racked provinces in the south. Domestic analysts believe that the bombing was in retaliation to comments made by Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat who last week claimed that the overall security situation in the region was improving. Similar claims made by previous Thai leaders have evoked the same response by militants.

Vietnam – 01.11.2008: Following the heaviest recorded rainfall in two decades, several areas of Vietnam have suffered severe flooding, leading to the deaths of 24 people so far. According to the national weather forecast centre, some 350 mm (13 inches) of rain fell in the capital city of Hanoi on Friday (31Oct), turning its streets into rivers and forcing its residents to wade through chest-high waters. The worst-hit area however, has been the central province of Nghe An, where a total of 11 people are reported to have lost their lives. Flooding is a common occurrence in Vietnam where heavy rainfall is often recorded.

Europe

Croatia – 05.11.2008: The European Commission's annual assessment regarding future members sounded positively for Croatia's inclusion on Wednesday (5 Nov). The Commission stated that Croatia was in a healthy position to complete talks by the end of 2009 ready for accession into the bloc by 2010. However, stern conditions were reinforced regarding Croatia's troublesome organised crime issue, which has seen a series of mafia-style high-profile killings in recent weeks. A prominent newspaper editor and marketing executive were killed by a car bomb in Zagreb in October, and the daughter of a high-profile lawyer was also shot and killed during the same month.

Germany – 05.11.2008: Twenty people were killed and 12 injured in a bus accident in northern Germany on Tuesday evening in the most fatal German road accident recent years. The travel coach burst into flames on the A2 autobahn near the northern German city of Hanover. Only 12 passengers managed to escape from the blaze, as the majority of the bus's occupants were elderly or infirmed. The cause of the fire was believed to be due to a passenger smoking in the toilet located at the rear of the bus.

Italy – 31.10.2008: Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's austere education reform scheme, which plans to cut more than US \$11.6 billion in funding and over 130,000 jobs from the system, has sparked outrage across the country. On Thursday (30 Oct) an army of education unions, led by the General Confederation of Labour (CGIL), continued their two-week nationwide protests. Students, parents and educationalists took to the streets of Rome and other major cities, waving placards, chanting anti-government slogans and causing major disruption to traffic flows.

Italy – 05.11.2008: In a series of raids against the Naples mafia Camorra, police arrested 88 suspects on Tuesday (4 Nov). Properties, bank accounts and shares worth \$100m (£61m) were also confiscated. Police sources have confirmed that one of the arrestees is Gemma Donnarumma, wife of suspected Camorra clan chief Valentino Gionta, who is already behind bars.

Amongst its many illegal activities, the Gionta clan has been accused of murder, extortion and drug trafficking, and is believed to have been run by Donnarumma after her husband was convicted for murder and jailed for life.

Italy / UK – 02.11.2008: The extradition of three Tunisian men wanted for alleged terrorist offences in Italy was carried out by the UK on Saturday (1 Nov). According to the Metropolitan Police Habib Ignaoua, Mohamed Khemiri and Ali Chehidi left Britain at 1500 GMT yesterday. Italian authorities suspect the men of being involved in the recruitment of fighters to join the 'jihad' in Afghanistan and Iraq between 1997 and 1999. All three of them deny these charges against them. The trio was arrested in Britain in 2007 on a European Arrest Warrant issued at the request of a judge in Milan. A legal appeal to block their extradition on the grounds that they may face torture was taken to the courts in July of this year, but the case was rejected by the judge. They now face a pending trial in Italy.

Russia – 03.11.2008: Amidst growing concerns in Moscow over the rising levels of violence in Russia's unstable southern republic of Ingushetia, President Dmitry Medvedev named Yunus-Bek Yevkurov as acting president of the region. Yevkurov, a former paratrooper in the Russian army and recipient of the "Hero of Russia" award for bravery during his deployment in Chechnya, is to replace outgoing president and former KGB officer Murat Zyazikov.

Russia – 05.11.2008: Russian President Dmitry Medvedev increased global concern on Wednesday (5 Nov) by stating that Russian missiles will be moved to the border with Europe in response to continuing US plans to create a European missile defence system, which will incorporate facilities in both the Czech Republic and Poland. Medvedev stated that an Iskander missile system will be deployed to a Russian enclave bordering both Lithuania and Poland. Russia's proposals were met with criticism from both Poland and Lithuania, with the Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus stating that the deployment will not aid global security or the war on terror.

Europe

Russia – 05.11.2008: Several cities across Russia witnessed clashes when ultra-nationalists defied a government ban against holding marches on the occasion of National Unity Day held on 4 November. Those who attempted to rally called for a crackdown against illegal immigrants in the country. Moscow police arrested at least 200 people in the capital, some of whom were reported to have given Nazi salutes during their attempted demonstrations. Offenders were also detained in St Petersburg, along with several major cities in Siberia and the Far East.

Russia (North Ossetia) – 06.11.2008: The deteriorating security environment in North Ossetia was clearly highlighted on Thursday (6 Nov) after 11 people were killed in an apparent roadside bomb attack. The incident has immediately been deemed to be a terrorist attack by the regional Interior Ministry. Preliminary investigations into the explosion in the centre of Vladikavkaz point to a suicide bombing as the cause of the explosion that targeted a minibus as passengers alighted at the entrance to a cinema. The apparent indiscriminate targeting of civilians appears to support claims of terrorist involvement at this early juncture. Vladikavkaz itself is located just 2.5 miles (4 km) north of the separatist Georgian republic of South Ossetia; the two territories are separated only by the Roki tunnel.

Sweden – 06.11.2008: A student from the Aviation College of Sweden was hospitalised after sustaining injuries from an accidental explosion in the city of Vasteras on Tuesday (4 Nov). It was revealed that the unidentified victim was constructing an improvised explosive device in the kitchen of a hotel that housed students of the college.

Turkey – 03.11.2008: An upcoming visit by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan to the restive south-east of the country has triggered widespread protests amongst its mainly Kurdish population. On Sunday (2 Nov) around 3,000 protesters took to the streets of Yuksekova town in Van province, close to the Turkish-Iraqi border, to demonstrate ahead of his arrival in the region. Similar protests in Istanbul led police to fire tear gas at

the gathered crowds and arrest 27 protesters for causing trouble in the capital.

Turkey – 06.11.2008: An explosion has been reported on the Turkish section of the oil pipeline that runs from Kirkuk to Ceyhan. The explosion took place late on Wednesday (5 Nov) in the south-eastern Turkish province of Sanliurfa near to the Iraq and Syria borders, where Kurdish separatists have long conducted hostile operations. In response to the explosion, the cause of which is yet to be confirmed, Turkish officials in the state-run Botas company switched off the flow of oil through the pipeline as soon as the drop in pressure was realised. There were no concrete indications of involvement of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) at this stage.

UK (Northern Ireland) – 03.11.2008: Belfast city centre saw an eruption of brief but violent skirmishes on Sunday (2 Nov) during a controversial homecoming parade in honour of soldiers who were returning home to Northern Ireland from Iraq and Afghanistan. In what marked the biggest public demonstration in Belfast in more than 15 years, the returning soldiers were greeted by a crowd of around 50,000 people. Clashes between loyalists and republicans, which brought out Northern Ireland's bitter sectarian divisions, were successfully contained by the massive police presence at the event, with no cases of injuries being reported. However many believe that lessons should be learned from the controversial parade, which brought the city dangerously close to all-out sectarian conflict.

Middle East

Iran / US – 04.11.2008: In what can be seen as a mark of the continuing hostility in current US-Iran relations, thousands of Iranians gathered to rally outside the US embassy in Tehran on Monday (3 Nov). The rally was organised to coincide with the 29th anniversary of the seizure of the compound during the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The protesting crowd, made up mainly of school-children, carried anti-US placards and chanted slogans while setting fire to American and Israeli flags. A declaration read out at the rally claimed that Iranian people regard the US as the main instigator of conflict around the world and the main reason for the current global insecurity faced by all.

Iraq – 01.11.2008: During a discussion with Iraqi lawmakers earlier this week, Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki reportedly revealed that Kurdish militias were responsible for the recent wave of violence against Christians in the city of Mosul. Recent government investigations pointed towards Kurdish involvement in the killing and displacement of several Iraqi Christians. Although Al Maliki has ordered Kurdish units in the Iraqi army out of Mosul, he has been reluctant to make any official announcements regarding the details of the investigation for fear that the information would cause political instability within the country. However the commander of Kurdish forces in Mosul, General Riyadh Jalal Tawfiq, has dismissed these charges claiming that the Kurds had nothing to do with any anti-Christian violence. Meanwhile, the prime minister faces increasing pressure from the Vatican and some Western countries to bring the perpetrators to justice, while Christian clergy in Iraq remain determined to uncover details of the events in Mosul.

Iraq – 04.11.2008: Baghdad was rocked by a series of bombings during the busy rush hour period on Monday (4 Nov), one of which narrowly killed a senior oil ministry official. Six people were killed and a further 21 injured as the bombs went off in Tahariyat Square. Undersecretary in the Oil Ministry, Abdul-Sahib Salman Qutub, escaped a bombing just outside his private residence while his driver sustained critical wounds. Just east of the capital, a police officer died and six people were wounded in a

third bombing, which was preceded by a bombing in the west that killed another policeman. Meanwhile in the satellite city of Baqouba, militants detonated an explosives-laden vehicle just outside the Diyala provincial council headquarters that killed two police officers and a child. Although the US and Iraqi governments continue to reiterate that attacks nationwide continue to drop, a statement supported by empirical data indicating that militant attacks have indeed decreased by nearly 89 percent from 2006, the latest bombings clearly illustrate the constant threat that terrorism still poses within the country.

Iraq – 06.11.2008: Twin bombings in Sunni enclaves of Baghdad killed four people on Thursday (6 Nov). Two of the victims were allegedly members of the anti-al Qaeda group, the Awakening Council. The blasts were part of a series of bombings that have occurred throughout the capital with incidents taking place in Bab al-Sheikh and the satellite city of Sadr. Analysts believe that the escalation of bombings over the past week is aimed at influencing the US domestic political agenda in light of the recent presidential elections.

Iraq / Syria – 02.11.2008: An Iraqi interior ministry spokesman revealed on Sunday (2 Nov) that extra police forces were deployed along the Iraqi border with Syria after last week's US raid into the neighbouring country's territory. The policemen, who hail from the western Anbar province, will reportedly be stationed around the border town of Al Qaim, a place that is notorious for being a transit point for foreign fighters entering Iraq from Syria. The US military's raid into Syrian territory last week caused a huge uproar within the region, triggering anti-US protests amongst Syrians and provoking an outcry from Baghdad where Iraqi officials expressed their displeasure at being used as a base from which to launch US incursions into neighbouring territories. The raid also increased tensions between Syria and Iraq, with the former allegedly reducing its troop presence along the border.

Israel – 02.11.2008: The Israeli government faced criticism from the United Nations on Saturday (1 Nov) over its recent demolition of Palestinian homes in the West

Middle East

Bank. According to UN Middle East envoy Robert Serry, such actions have been undermining a moratorium that Israel agreed to in April of this year to suspend all further demolitions in the area. Serry accused Israeli authorities of undermining recent peace efforts in the region, claiming that such acts were sending a "discouraging signal" regarding Israel's support to improve conditions in the occupied Palestinian Territories. However the Israeli government has in turn rebuffed Serry's accusations by denying that Israel had ever made any public commitment to a moratorium on house demolitions in the West Bank.

Israel / Palestinian Territories (Gaza Strip) – 31.10.2008: Militants from the Gaza Strip fired two anti-tank rockets at an Israeli army patrol along Gaza's southern security fence on Friday (31 Oct), causing no damage or injuries. The incident follows a similar attack on Thursday when Palestinian militants fired a rocket into an empty field in the south of the country, prompting the closure by Israel of its crossings with Gaza until further notice. On Wednesday, Israeli troops killed a 68-year-old Palestinian shepherd in the West Bank after he allegedly opened fire at the soldiers.

Israel / Palestinian Territories (Gaza Strip) – 06.11.2008: Following a week of rocket fire into Israel from the Gaza Strip, the Israeli defence force launched airstrikes against Palestinian militants in northern Gaza on Wednesday (5 Nov) night. Palestinian sources confirmed that one fatality was inflicted believed to be a member of the Islamic Jihad, the armed group of Hamas. IDF officials launched the strike in an effort to curtail the constant barrage of rocket and mortar fire that have rained on Israeli communities in the Ashkelon and Sderot areas. Meanwhile, Israeli authorities announced that they would be open to discussions with Hamas officials on the extension of a ceasefire agreement, which has more or less held for five months with the exception of the latest hostilities.

Israel / Palestinian Territories (Gaza) – 01.11.2008: Crossings for the transfer of goods between Israel and Gaza were ordered to reopen on Thursday (30 Oct) by

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak as information emerged that an alleged Kassam rocket attack by Palestinians was in fact false. Earlier it had been feared that the fragile truce between Israel and Gaza had been violated as a Kassam rocket was fired from the Gaza Strip at the western Negev town of Sderot. The border crossings had thus been closed indefinitely as Hizbullah Palestine, a little-known group, claimed responsibility for the attack. However, latest reports revealed that the group had in fact been claiming responsibility for an earlier attack that took place on 21 October.

Palestinian Territories (Gaza Strip) / Israel – 05.11.2008: Major concerns in the Middle East region have again escalated late on 4 November as reports are being received that at least six Palestinians have been killed in clashes between Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and fighters loyal to the ruling Hamas movement inside the Gaza Strip. The clashes are the first to be reported since a tenuous cease-fire was reported over four months ago. Three other people were injured in the incident late on Tuesday which involved an Israeli air strike, Palestinian rocket fire and a gun battle inside Gaza near the border. Israeli troops and Hamas fighters fired at each other after the soldiers moved to destroy what are believed to be smuggling tunnels that Israel claims are utilised for weapons smuggling and also for kidnap purposes. Details are limited but it is believed that Israeli strikes killed Hamas Commander Mazen Saeda before retaliatory actions using mortars were fired into southern Israel. Rhetoric on both sides is hostile and belligerent and the potential for an escalation of violence in the immediate term is considered genuine.



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