

Weekly Letter 129



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Headlines

EU HR Ashton nominated the top management of the External Action Service (EEAS)

more Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission has today announced the appointment...

Spain is committed to a European strategy for tackling the terrorist threat in the Sahel

more Spanish Defense Minister, Carme Chacón, stressed on Monday that Spain is committed to a European strategy for tackling the terrorist threat in the Sahel and hopes that such a...

Tensions in Lebanon are the most urgent threat to international security

"Lebanon is currently experiencing a domestic climate of uncertainty and fragility," **United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon** wrote in his 12th semi-annual *report on the implementation of Security Council (SC) Resolution 1559 (2004)*. Adopted amid concern about high tensions within Lebanon, that resolution notably calls to an end to foreign interference and the disbanding of all militias.

Following peaceful parliamentary elections on June 7, 2009, the March 14 coalition led by Sunni leader and son of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri killed in a bomb attack on February 14, 2005, **Saad Hariri**, defeated the March 8 opposition allied with Syria and Iran. At the head of a national unity government which includes Hizballah, Mr Hariri made the strengthening of the **Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF)** and the **Internal Security Forces (ISF)** his top priority. Also, the **National Dialogue**, chaired by President **Michel Sleiman** and which brings together the country's main political leaders, helps advance reconciliation and national sovereignty.

Despite these efforts and a rapprochement between Hariri and Syrian President **Bashir al-Assad** to diplomatic circles' surprise, speculation concerning potential indictments from the **Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL)** in charge of investigating Rafic Hariri's assassination is at the center of current political tension in Lebanon; Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, **Robert Serry**, told the SC in mid-September. For instance, three staff members of the STL working under the guidance of Prosecutor **Daniel Bellemare** were "violently attacked" by a group that "showed up unexpectedly," on October 27, 2010.

According to intelligence circles, there is growing speculation that **Hizballah**, which remains the "most technically-capable terrorist group in the world," might have played a role in Hariri's assassination even if Syria is still accused of holding a primary responsibility for the political tensions that preceded the attack. Formed in 1982, in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Lebanese-based radical Shia group takes its ideological inspiration from the Iranian revolution and was designated as a **Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO)** by the U.S. on



An Israeli airstrike hit the suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon, on Friday, August 4, 2006 (source: Lebanon DM)

India and Japan have historical and civilizational old ties

[more](#) Indian PM Manmohan Singh said that bilateral relations have been marked by mutual goodwill, amity and respect. This legacy has remained unbroken into the modern era, which...

India and Malaysia vowed to enforce their Strategic Partnership

[more](#) The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Sri Najib Tun Razak and the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh met in Kuala Lumpur on 27 October 2010. They...

Afghanistan strategy works, needs time, General said

[more](#) Coalition forces' counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan is working but the approach needs time to build on the past year's gains, a military official said. "Our progress is slow..."

Progress in Afghanistan is the "top foreign policy priority for the (UK) Government"

[more](#) Foreign Secretary William Hague said that it "remains vital to our national security that Afghanistan be able to maintain its own security to prevent al-Qaeda from returning"...

Hamid Karzai wants a rapid dissolution of Private Security Companies

[more](#) For a rapid implementation of Presidential Decree 62 on the dissolution of private security companies, President Hamid Karzai has ordered the establishment...

October 8, 1997. It provides support to several Palestinian groups, mostly weapons, explosive and training.

Although the Lebanese government sees Hizballah as a legitimate "resistance group", a growing part of the Lebanese political establishment wonders whether its political and strategic weight hampers the building of a sovereign government. Secretary-General Ban answered the question stating that Hizballah's "significant military arsenal creates an atmosphere of intimidation and poses a key challenge to the safety of Lebanese civilians and to the Government's monopoly on the legitimate use of force." He called on the group's leaders notably Secretary General **Hassan Nasrallah** to transform it into a solely Lebanese political party and to disarm. Actually, no steps are being taken in that direction since very heavily armed (and growing so) militia continue to create a hyper-dangerous situation, [warned](#) UN Special Envoy **Terje Roed-Larsen**.

In the Annual Threat Assessment in February 2010, then-**Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Dennis C. Blair** [explained](#) that "Hizballah remains the largest recipient of Iranian financial aid, training, and weaponry, and Iran's senior leadership has cited Hizballah as a model for other militant groups," Like its ally Syria, Iran backs Hizballah "armed resistance" with a view to challenging Israeli and Western influence in the Middle East. The **Country Reports on Terrorism 2009** published by the **U.S. Department of State** [affirmed](#) that "in November 2009, the Israeli navy seized a ship carrying an estimated 400-500 tons of weapons originating in Iran and bound for Hizballah, via Syria," Mr Blair noted, however, that the Syria's stance slightly differs from Iran's since it has taken "steps toward normal state to state relations" with Lebanon while Iran clearly privileges Hizballah at its first and main interlocutor in the country.

The stark fact is that Lebanon has always been a battleground opposing all the different political and ideological trends that exist in the Mideast, be they Christian, Sunni, Shia or Israeli. On the one hand, since the end of the 2006 Israeli-Hizballah conflict, Iran is accused of having assisted Hizballah in rearming, in violation of UN Security Council [Resolution 1701](#) (2006)," During a two-day official [visit](#) that happened peacefully despite concerns over possible provocations, Iranian President **Mahmoud Ahmadinejad** [said](#) "Lebanon was today a center for resistance and confronting excess-seeking powers,"

On the other hand, ongoing tensions with Israel doesn't help matters either. Lebanon [has](#) repeatedly demanded that Israel implement Resolution 1701 as well and withdraw from Lebanese territories namely from the village of Ghajar, Kfar Shouba, and the Shebaa Farms. Deploring the continued Israeli violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Secretary-General Ban [called](#) on Israel to adhere to its obligations and cease its "daily" overflights of Lebanese airspace.

ISRIA analysts reiterated their July 2010 assessment that [reads](#) "the ongoing crisis over Iran's nuclear program is likely to keep many surprises in store for the international community in case a war breaks out, with Lebanon as a primary theater of operations for Iran," Today, the situation in Lebanon is "the most critical and impending threat to international peace and security," they said. Given that Lebanon crystallizes decades-long tensions between heavily armed and very divergent interests, further instability in the country is likely to cause devastating and unpredictable consequences across the Middle East.

Security Council's counter-terrorism measures lack legal basis

[more](#) An independent United Nations human rights expert said today that the regime created by the Security Council to counter terrorism is outside the scope of its powers, and called...

We must remove barriers for servicing contracts in energy, Medvedev said

[more](#) In opening remarks at meeting of the Commission for Modernisation and Technological Development of Russia's Economy, President Dmitry Medvedev said that...

"Britain's secret frontline" MI6 Chief spoke in public for the first time

[more](#) Sir John Sawers posed the questions why do we need a secret intelligence service, what value does the UK get from that service, and how can the public have confidence...

It is time to enter a new stage of disarmament, top Russian foreign policy experts wrote

[more](#) The year 2010 was marked by important events in the sphere of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, which had a positive impact on the strengthening of international...

China is optimistic about its relations with France

[more](#) Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Fu Ying told *Le Figaro* that "When President Sarkozy was in China last

U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) eager to become Cyber 3.0

Last February, **ISRIA** analysts [explained](#) how the Cyberthreat has become a diplomatic and intelligence priority. Faced with increasingly dangerous cybersecurity challenges, the United States has [lobbied](#) its allies for months in order to make cyberthreats one of the main focus of the new **Strategic Concept** to be officially delivered at the upcoming **NATO Summit in Lisbon**. In a global effort led by Deputy Defense Secretary **William J. Lynn**, the **Pentagon believes** that "any major future (conflict) will almost certainly include elements of cyberwarfare," hence a real need for better coordination and increased means of retaliation. The "DOD experienced a wake-up call in 2008 when an intrusion into military networks extended to the classified realm," leading up to the setting up of concerted [efforts](#) across the **Intelligence Community (IC)**. This has been particularly true at the **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** whose chief **Janet Napolitano** [told](#) a conference hosted by the **Secret Service** that the IC has been living in a cyber 1.0 world while it needs to be cyber 3.0 and beyond. Most recently, the **Air Force (USAF)** enlisted in the movement by [publishing](#) a milestone 62-page "doctrine document" of which the purpose is to equip Airmen "to prevail in the contested domain of cyberspace".

China and U.S. interests regarding North Korea are incongruent

On October 22, 2010, Senator **Dick Lugar**, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member, released a **Congressional Research Service (CRS)** [report](#) on implementation of sanctions for North Korea (DPRK). Reminding the sinking of South Korea's **Cheonan** ship, which killed 46 individuals, as evidence showing that North Korea constitutes a continuing threat to international security, it starkly exposed China's "less than rigorous approach toward implementing sanctions targeting North Korea," Pointing out that China and U.S. interests on that issue largely contradict, the CRS affirmed that though latest UN sanctions "clearly raise the level of risk of doing business with the DPRK," China has taken "a minimalist approach to implementing," them. While Washington wants to bring North Korea back to the 6-party talks' table, China's "primary interest is to maintain the status quo," the report adds. Actually it seems to be even more than after Vice Chairman of the **Workers' Party of Korea (WPK)** Central Military Commission **Ri Yong Ho** and vice chairman of **China's Central Military Commission** on bilateral ties, international and regional situations, **Guo Boxiong**, [met](#) and praised the "new vigor into the development of bilateral ties," The latter was leading a senior Chinese military delegation that "deepened exchanges" with the **Korean People's Army (KPA)** during a four-day visit. According to **ISRIA**, the CRS report confirmed a growing divide between Congressmen and the Obama administration regarding China. President **Hu Jintao** is expected to make a state visit, originally due to happen this fall, to the U.S. next year.

Russia persuaded Armenia and Azerbaijan to bolster the ceasefire regime

On October 27, 2010, President of the Russian Federation **Dmitry Medvedev**, President of Armenia **Serzh Sargsyan**, and President of Azerbaijan **Ilham Aliyev** [discussed](#) future possibilities for reaching a settlement of the **Nagorno-Karabakh conflict**. The parties approved a joint statement which aims to bolster the ceasefire regime and strengthen confidence-building measures. The Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders [agreed](#) that their first step would be an immediate exchange of prisoners of war and the return of the bodies of those killed; with the help of the co-chairs of the **OSCE Minsk Group** and the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**. Additional steps of that

April, he reached an important consensus with President Hu Jintao, which...

There's a credible terrorist threat against our country, President Obama told

more "our intelligence and law enforcement professionals, working with our friends and allies, identified two suspicious packages bound for the United States," President Obama...

ASEAN's leadership is essential to greater cooperation across the region

more U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told the East Asia Summit that as the EAS evolves, the United States believes that ASEAN should continue to play a central role...

Collaboration between China and ASEAN have contributed to regional peace and stability

more On October 29, 2010, Premier Wen Jiabao of the State Council attended and addressed the 13th ASEAN-China Summit in Hanoi, Vietnam. Premier Wen said regardless...

Daily Updates

[November 1, 2010](#)

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Weekly Letter 130 will be available on November 8, 2010.

kind might be taken at the **OSCE summit** on December 1-2, 2010 in Astana.

Western Sahara parties full ready to support UN efforts

Christopher Ross, the United Nations (UN) envoy for Western Sahara, has [wrapped](#) up his fourth visit to Western Sahara. He met and talked with officials from Algeria, Mauritania, Tindouf Region in south-west Algeria and Morocco. In accordance with **Security Council resolution 1871**, which called on the parties to continue their dialogue without preconditions, the discussions addressed the need to overcome the status quo, the requirements of the negotiating process, and the pace of work in managing confidence-building measures. Analysts worried about increasing tensions in the region which could put the whole process at risk. They stressed negotiations have had no success since 1976 when the end of Spanish colonial administration triggered a conflict between Morocco and the **Polisario Front**. "There is no doubt that the status quo is untenable in the long term, given the costs and dangers that it entails," Mr Ross [told](#) reporters after meeting with Algerian President **Abdelaziz Bouteflika** in Algiers. Mr Ross also met with **King Mohammed VI** of Morocco who defends a plan for autonomy while the Polisario Front advocates the territory's final status should be decided in a referendum on self-determination that includes independence as an option. According to diplomatic sources, efforts are still needed to achieve "a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara," Even if all the officials Mr Ross has met with have confirmed their "full readiness" to support the efforts of the United Nations in general and his mission in particular, there is little hope that they will start intensive and substantive negotiations anytime soon. However, the Polisario Front [confirmed](#) its willingness to attend the next round of talks, which is intended to be held early in the coming month. In the meantime, the **European Commission** has [allocated](#) € 10 million to provide humanitarian and food aid to vulnerable Sahrawi refugees living in the refugee camps in south-west Algeria.

Turkey into the European Union, not for tomorrow

Ahead of the publication on November 9, 2010 of the **European Commission's** progress report on Turkey's accession negotiations, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) [stressed](#) that much remains to be done towards Turkey's membership of the European Union (EU). Although they welcomed recent Turkish constitutional reforms as a "step forward", they cited the lack of press freedom, the situation of the Kurds and the imprisonment of conscientious objectors as evidence showing Turkey still has a long way to go to meet accession criteria. "Penal law is still used to prosecute journalists and more than 6000 websites have been closed down. This doesn't fit with the modern society Turkey wants to become", EP rapporteur on Turkey, **Ria Oomen-Ruijten** (EPP, NL), said. "The military forces continue to play an important role, which is incompatible with a modern state" added MEP **Ana Gomes** (PES, PT). But the hottest issue remains Turkey's non-recognition of Cyprus, a member of the EU since 2004. "Turkey will never give up Northern Cyprus for the sake of the European Union," Turkey's EU Affairs Minister and chief negotiator **Egemen Bagis** [replied](#) after Enlargement Commissioner **Stefan Füle** stressed that resolving the Cyprus issue was a "credibility test". Meanwhile in Istanbul, Belgian Foreign Minister **Steven Vanackere** [used](#) a softer style, praising the multi-faceted relationship between Turkey and the EU. He notably mocked at stories greedy for "good headlines" and which tell that Turkey is drifting to the East. "They are missing the point. Turkey is improving its political and economic relations (abroad)," he said. In short, European officials acknowledged that the situation in Turkey has changed for the better in the last 12 years but that more has to be done.

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