

The following is a translation of the VOA TV Persian program “News and Views,” which was broadcast on August 9, 2007 at 1530 UTC.

TRANSLATION BEGINS HERE

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

From Voice of America in Washington, I am Setareh Derakhshesh with tonight’s News and Views program.

[Music introduction]

[Announcer]

The start of the meeting between Pakistan and Afghanistan’s leaders in Kabul. Pervez Musharraf is not present.

A report on the state of emergency declared by Pakistani authorities.

[Video clip *In English*]

Various options have been considered, but no decision has been reached yet.

[Music & video clip]

[Announcer]

Extreme security measures in Baghdad’s Kazemieh district for the gathering of tens of thousands for Shiite mourning ceremonies.

[Video clip *in English*]

Two, one, zero and lift off...

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

...and the successful launch of the American space shuttle Endeavour with seven astronauts on board into space.

[Music and credits]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Hello. We’ll begin this evening’s News and Views program from Washington this Thursday evening, the 9th of August 2007 or the 18th of Mordad 1386, from the newsroom with tonight’s world news headlines.

An official of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) warned of a pending economic catastrophe in the Gaza strip. The deputy commissioner said, "If Hamas continues its control of the Gaza strip, soon the people of this region will be forced to rely 100% on foreign aid."

Yemeni authorities say militants have attacked government centers in that country.

On the 62nd anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki by America, Japan asked the world to dismantle all nuclear weapons. In today's ceremony, thousands, including Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, honored the memory of the victims of the nuclear catastrophe by observing a minute of silence.

The International Labor Organization and human rights organizations in London and other cities in the world are holding simultaneous demonstrations seeking the release of Iran's labor leaders who are in prison. These organizations designated today a day of international activism aimed at securing the release of Mansour Osanlou and Mahmoud Salehi.

Aid and rescue workers are working hard to assist in rescue efforts following floods in Vietnam that have led to the death of at least 23 people.

[Video title clip]

[Today's Report]

[Video clip: President Bush, following host's introduction]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

President Bush held a press conference in the last hour and commented on subjects such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.

Regarding America's relationship with Pervez Musharraf, the president of Pakistan, President Bush stated, "I've told President Musharraf that we have a common enemy who we must defeat and I have asked him to increase his cooperation in exchanging information."

President Bush expressed optimism that elections in Pakistan would be conducted fairly. He expressed confidence that Afghanistan and Pakistan are united in the common goal of defeating the Taliban and al-Qaeda and that these networks' leaders will be brought to justice.

Regarding Iraq, President Bush said, "In September, General Petraeus will report on the success or failure of operations. Currently 97% of Iraq's revenue is from oil.

Contrary to some who believe that a system of integrity for dividing Iraq's oil revenues does not exist, I believe the Iraqi government is proceeding in this area systematically. For example, most of this revenue is divided among governors of various provinces based on examination and is used in general expenses. Hence the government has learned and is learning how to act effectively. The main question is whether our staying in Iraq is valuable, and my answer is, yes, it is worth it."

One of the reporters asked if he had a message about Iran. President Bush replied that he did. "In fact, the meeting between Iran and Iraq's ambassadors in Baghdad was so that we could tell Iran that their interferences in Iraq would have consequences. Additionally, through Mr. al-Maliki, who is currently in Iran, I've sent a message to Iran that's Iraq's stability is extremely important to us."

Continuing with tonight's news, the four-day meeting between the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan began today in Kabul. Afghan authorities hope this gathering will further mutual cooperation against Taliban rebels. We have a report from Vafa Azarbahai.

[Video clip]

[Vafa Azarbahai]

Over 600 Afghan leaders, together with Pakistani politicians, came together today in Kabul to discuss the increase in violence that has resulted in border instability for both countries.

General Pervez Musharraf, the president of Pakistan, and Hamid Karzai, his Afghan counterpart, had announced their agreement to hold this conference last year. Hamid Karzai, the Afghan president, inaugurated the

conference. Mr. Karzai and Shaukat Aziz, the Pakistani prime minister, spoke at this meeting.

General Pervez Musharraf, the president of Pakistan, who was expected to be present at this meeting, informed his Afghan counterpart yesterday by phone that due to obligations in Islamabad, he could not attend the meeting.

A senior official in Islamabad today stated, "Due to current security concerns, it's possible that the government may have to declare a state of emergency." Senior Afghan officials did not consider President Musharraf's absence from the Kabul conference significant, and announced that the foundation of power is comprised of the tribal leaders, who did attend the conference.

This four-day conference was boycotted by some Pakistani representatives from the south and north of the Waziristan region because they feared Taliban vengeance.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

The Pakistani government spokesperson said that in the event of foreign or domestic difficulties Pervez Musharraf does not consider calling a state of emergency in Pakistan to be off the table.

Initially Pakistani authorities at first denied this.

President Musharraf is slated to consult his close advisors.

Following these discussions, authorities have said that Pakistan has refused this option.

A report on this matter.

[Video clip]

[Male reporter]

Tariq Azim, Pakistan's minister of state for information, considers reports of border instability in the northwest on the Afghanistan border a threat to its country's security and says...

[Video clip: Tariq Azim *in English*]

“As you know there have been problems in the northwest frontier of Pakistan...”

[Reporter]

“As you know there have been problems in the northwest border province of Pakistan. There have been suicide bombings. Three Chinese citizens have been killed there and the war against terror continues on the border with Afghanistan.”

Tariq Azim adds the declaration of a state of emergency would only occur if the situation were to deteriorate.

Pervez Musharraf, the president of Pakistan, is under pressure from America to take stronger actions and defeat the al-Qaeda and Taliban rebels who have once again gained strength in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice contacted General Musharraf on Wednesday night to discuss Islamabad’s absence from the Loya Jirga. The Loya Jirga, which was held on Washington’s initiative to promote peace and to curtail the influence of Taliban and al-Qaeda elements in Afghanistan, began its activities today, Thursday, in Kabul.

A man on the street in Pakistan doesn’t believe there’s a reason to call a state of emergency.

[Video clip: Mohammad Ezhar]

[Reporter]

Mohammad Ezhar, a resident of Islamabad says, “The situation is not as bad as the government is making it out to be. It’s just like it’s been over the last 28 years.”

And Ahmad Khan, another resident, says, “A state of emergency would be bad for the country because they’d close everything down.”

Liaquat Baloch, leader of the opposition party in parliament which supports Islam, says his group would not respect a state of emergency.

[Liaquat Baloch]

If they take a step like announcing a state of emergency or imposing such a state on the people of Pakistan, we have the right to resist that which would be counter to the constitution and to defend and protect our rights through demonstrations.

[Reporter]

At the same time it was announced in Pakistan that a number of al-Qaeda members were killed when they attacked Daigan, a village on the Afghan border.

Pakistani military helicopters bombarded the village of Miranshah, located in North Waziristan and the target of the gunfire was a house. A Pakistani military spokesperson said among the 12 men killed in the course of the attack, there were Chechens as well as Arabs.

In Baluchistan members of a tribe dissatisfied with the central government opened fire on a government military caravan and in the course of the conflict one of the attackers was killed, according to Baluchi police.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

We've asked Mr. Ravi Khanna to join us this evening. Mr. Khanna is the head of the Pakistan branch of Voice of America television.

[*in English*]

Hello, Thank you very much for being here.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

As usual, the questions will be asked in English and you will hear a translation of Mr. Khanna's words into Farsi.

First, I will ask him about the conference of tribal leaders in Kabul, asking how this will affect Mr. Musharraf's position, given he will not be present.

[*in English*]

I wanted to ask you first, after welcoming you to the program, about the Jirga in Kabul. Mr. Musharraf was not there today. This is a test for democracy. How is this going to affect his position, with him not being there and all the criticism that he's been receiving?

[Ravi Khanna *in English*]

[Voice over translation into Farsi]

I think it will have a serious effect. He's informed Mr. Bush and has negotiated with Karzai in this regard. By not being present at this conference he's killing three birds with one stone. On the one hand he shows ...

[the interpreter does not keep up with Mr. Khanna's pace and the sentence remains untranslated]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

I'm going to ask Mr. Khanna what Pakistan's role can be in relation to Iran and Afghanistan.

[in English to Mr. Khanna]

There is a lot of talk recently about the involvement of Iran in Afghanistan. The president has said that. President Bush has said that. Robert Gates has said that. What can Pakistan do, do you think? What could... what role could Pakistan play as an ally of the United States in helping to improve the situation and ameliorate the situation?

[Ravi Khanna *in English*]

I think basically that Pakistan can do things, but it'll have to be behind the curtain...

[Interpreter]

I think basically that Pakistan can do things, but it'll have to be behind the curtain. Pakistan has a good relationship with Iran and Mr. Musharraf could get something done. But it would have to be behind the curtain. Otherwise everyone will deny any involvement. Iran will claim they are not involved. Basically, Americans will have to put pressure on both Pakistan and Iran. Pakistan can operate with a stealthy kind of diplomacy.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

I'm going to ask about the outcome of the gathering.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh *in English*]

What do you think the outcome would be of this four-day conference in Kabul? What is expected of that?

[Ravi Khanna *in English*]

I was talking to my stringer there ...

[Interpreter]

I was talking with my stringer there and he was saying no one is taking this very seriously. I don't imagine this gathering will produce any results. Of course the Waziristan leaders are there and that is the region where there's some trouble.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Thank you.

[Video clip & music]

[Credits: Washington Report]

We are going to go to the US State Department and continue to follow up on reactions to developments in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Vafa Mostaghim reporting. Hello.

[Vafa Mostaghim]

Good evening, Ms. Derakhshesh. As you heard in the preceding reports, according to information from the State Department, Shaukat Aziz, the prime minister of Pakistan will represent that country. And Pervez Musharraf, the president of that country, and Hamid Karzai the Afghan president, have held discussions regarding this matter with one another. The State Department expressed no knowledge of Mr. Musharraf's possible participation at even a portion of the conference.

State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack, in reply to repeated questions about whether Pervez Musharraf was signaling a change in his position, stated that the two presidents, that is to say, Musharraf and Karzai, have discussed the matter, and Musharraf has expressed his support of standing up to terrorism and extremism and his desire to advance peace.

Therefore, his decision to stay in Islamabad has met with Karzai's approval and the United States also has no worries on this account.

[Video clip]

[Sean McCormack *in English*]

So, it's the start of a process. It's going to be important in order for it to work and produce results... that both presidents, both leaders continue to support it, whether they are actually there or not. I don't think there's any question about President Musharraf's support for the process.

[Vafa Mostaghim]

In the opinion of many experts, the participation of all representatives from various regions of the two countries [is important]. In the news we heard, the representatives from Waziristan weren't present at these meetings. Sean McCormack considered the conference a success of forming new mechanisms to resolve differences and he stated that there will be a positive result from this meeting. Here's another section of Mr. McCormack's comments.

[Video clip: Sean McCormack press conference]

[Sean McCormack *in English*]

One meeting isn't going to resolve the various differences that they either have or might come up in the future.

But what is important is that you now have a mechanism in place to deal with these differences and hopefully you will see some positive results in terms of a different kind of atmosphere.

[Video clip]

[Vafa Mostaghim]

A CBS news network report referring to the phone conversation between Condoleezza Rice, US secretary of state, and Pervez Musharraf indicates that it took place after reports that the Pakistan government was considering declaring a state of emergency.

This is not news that has been officially confirmed by the US State Department.

Ms. Derakhshesh.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

What are the State Department's latest reactions to the Islamic Republic's activities?

[Vafa Mostaghim]

As you indicated earlier, referring to President Bush's remarks, the State Department discussed the issue of Iraq's stability again. Sean McCormack has referred to discussions that Ryan Crocker, the US ambassador in Iraq, had with his Iranian counterpart, specifically regarding recent bombings and clashes with militias. He also announced that the meetings will take place at the level of the deputy ambassadors from both countries, but these meetings and attempts are all taking place in the hope that the Islamic Republic brings its actions in line with its claims that it wishes to see peace and stability in Iraq.

Ms. Derakhshesh.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Thank you for your report. That was Vafa Mostaghim from the US State Department.

[Credit Sequence- Video clip: News & Views]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

The Iranian president today in his meeting with Nouri al-Maliki, the Iraqi prime minister, said, "Iran and Iraq have a heavy responsibility for establishing peace and security in the region." The Iraqi prime minister arrived in Tehran yesterday for meetings aimed at strengthening economic, political and security ties with Iran. In the course of this three-day visit, Mr. al-Maliki will meet and hold discussions with various Iranian authorities,

Nader Vakili has a report on these developments.

[Nader Vakili]

Nouri al-Maliki, the Iraqi prime minister, arrived in Tehran on Wednesday for discussions regarding reciprocal relationships between his country and Iran and the improvement of security conditions in Iraq.

At the same time the foreign ministers of the two countries met in Tehran today and held discussions about improving political and economic relationships between the two countries.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari's meeting with his Iranian counterpart, Manouchehr Mottaki, took place one day after an air attack by American fighters against Shiite rebels in Sadr City during the course of which, according to the US military's report, 32 Shiites fighters were killed and another 12 were arrested.

This is Mr. al-Maliki's second trip to Tehran in the course of the last year. Upon his arrival in Tehran, the Iraqi prime minister was met by Parviz Davoodi, Iran's vice president, and Parviz Fatah, Iran's minister of energy, at Mehrabad International Airport.

Iraq, a country with a Shiite majority population, up until now has been walking the line in the maintaining friendly relations with Iran, its larger neighbor, while not aggravating Washington.

The United States accuses Iran of providing financial support and weapons to Iraqi paramilitary groups. This accusation has not only been denied by Tehran, but Tehran has designated the presence of America's military forces in Iraq as the cause of the country's instability.

In the course of this three-day trip, the Iraqi prime minister will meet with several Iranian officials including Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Iranian president. At the time of his trip to Iran, the Iraqi prime minister told reporters,

[Video clip: al-Maliki *in Arabic*]

[Nader Vakili]

"The principal goal of this visit is to strengthen trade, economic and security ties with Iran and Iraq's other neighboring countries. I can say that both Iran and Iraq have a common understanding of the pain and dissatisfaction of the Iraqi people and wish to find a solution to these problems."

Mr. al-Maliki also added that in the course of this time there, he will sign several cooperation accords with Tehran. The Iraqi prime minister did not provide reporters with any additional information in this regard.

Meanwhile, Syrian authorities yesterday announced additional security measures have been undertaken at their border to prevent the passage of foreign fighters into Iraq.

At a two-day conference for restoring security to Iraq, which took place earlier this year in Cairo, Syrian Interior Minister General Bassam Abdel-Majid said in his opening comments:

[Video clip: General Bassam Abdel-Majid]

“We have now arrested several foreign groups who have tried to cross the Iraqi border and have returned them to their countries of origin.”

[Nader Vakili]

An American delegation of Chargé d'Affaires, led by Michael Corbin, also attended this conference in Damascus. Also present were representatives from Iran, Bahrain, Egypt, a few other members of the Arab League as well as permanent members of the UN Security Council.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Tens of thousands of Shiites in Iraq participated in religious mourning ceremonies. Today's ceremonies took place amid extreme security measures and thousands of police were present in the streets on the outskirts of Baghdad, preventing traffic from coming through.

At the same time the US Army reports killing three terrorists and the arrest of 21 suspects in the course of military operations in the valley of the Tigris River.

In the Al-Anbar province, a US Marine was also killed in the conflicts.

In another development, the foreign ministers of Iran and Iraq met with one another in Tehran today and discussed political and economic relations between the two neighboring countries.

Hoshyar Zebari, the Iraqi foreign minister, traveled to Tehran together with Nouri al-Maliki, the prime minister.

Continuing with world news, South Korea states the meeting between the leaders of the two Koreas towards the end of this current month will help

the international effort to dismantle North Korea's nuclear program. America, Japan and China, together with Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations Secretary General, have expressed optimism that these discussions will lead to improved relations in the Korean peninsula.

We have a report about these developments.

[Video clip]

[Reporter]

South Korea is preparing for a meeting between its president and his North Korean counterpart. This is the second meeting between the two Korea's leaders after WWII, which led to the splitting of Korea into two separate countries.

South Korean Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung today in a meeting said,

[Lee Jae-Joung]

This time the discussions between the two Korea's will reflect the wishes of the people of Korea for the continuation of expanding relations between the two Korea's and the establishment of peace in the Korean peninsula.

[Reporter]

The announcement of the meeting between the two Korea's garnered diverse reactions in South Korea. A group demonstrated and chanted slogans against its northern neighbor, protesting the planned meeting and calling it a propagandist stunt and a political move on the part of the South Korean government with a view to the upcoming elections in that country. The demonstrators demanded a halt to North Korea's nuclear programs and an end to Kim Jong-il's dictatorship.

But in Seoul, presidential spokesperson Chun Ho-sun said he was not sure if in the past such attempts should have been made for a meeting between the leaders of the two countries, that is to say, at a time when there had been no progress made with regards to the North Korean nuclear program, or if one should have waited for a new government to follow through after elections. If the critics did not believe either of these two cases, then clearly now is the best time for a meeting between the leaders of the two countries.

America too welcomed the meeting slated to take place between the two Koreas' leaders at the end of this month, and Sean McCormack, the US State Department spokesman, calls it a positive step toward a dialogue between the two Koreas.

Nevertheless, the State Department spokesman said:

[Sean McCormack *in English*]

The center of gravity of everybody's diplomatic efforts here really is in the six-party talks.

[Reporter]

"The center of gravity of everybody's diplomatic efforts here really is in the six-party talks in the course of which South Korea, Japan, Russia, China, America and North Korea have made an investment in the diplomatic process. But this is not to say that South Korea should not hold discussions by itself with North Korea. This is something we've always supported."

South Korea, China, Japan, America and Russia are trying to persuade Pyongyang to end its nuclear program through political and economic incentives.

At the same time yesterday, in the course of a meeting between the representatives and experts from the countries participating in the six-party talks in Panmunjom, the demilitarized zone between the two Koreas, it is said that North Korea demonstrated rare flexibility.

South Korea's ambassador for the North Korean nuclear issue, Lim Sung-nam says, "North Korea would like, based on mutual trust principles, to fulfill its nuclear obligations prior to receiving aid and other incentives that have been agreed upon."

The outcomes of the meetings between experts and senior representatives of participants in the six-party talks will be presented and it is expected that the programs presented will be approved during the meeting slated to take place in early September.

[Video clip]

[VOA Titles and Music]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

As you heard Ban Ki-moon favors the upcoming meeting between the leaders to the two Koreas.

But in South Korea, the opposition considers the country's leader's meeting with the North Korean leader to be a publicity stunt with a view to December's presidential elections.

For additional information we go straight to the Voice of America studio in New York. Nazi Biglari, our international affairs reporter, further will address details the details.

Greetings to you.

[Nazi Biglari]
Hello Setareh.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said the meeting set for the 28th of August, three weeks from now, between the North and South Korean leaders can be a tool to move along the process that began in February with regard to North Korea's nuclear programs.

In a statement Ban Ki-moon expressed hope and optimism that this meeting between the two Koreas' leaders would complement the six-party working group meetings. He is referring to the meeting that took place in February in Beijing with the six-party working group, that consisted of representatives from both Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the United States.

In the course of the meeting, and based on the agreement reached, North Korea agreed to stop its nuclear weapons program and to allow the IAEA's weapons inspectors to return to North Korea after four years. In return, North Korea will receive aid in the area of energy.

After the accord was reached between North Korea and the IAEA, the agency's weapons inspectors returned to North Korea and according to reports, to date they have closed five North Korean nuclear plants.

Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has said this project is advancing well, but is only the first step in a long journey.

Ban Ki-moon also characterized the face-to-face meeting between the two Koreas' leaders an opportunity for establishing peace and stability in North Korea and in the region.

But the South Korean opposition doesn't show such optimism and excitement with regard to this meeting. According to a report in the Financial Times, the South Korean National Party (GNP) has labeled this opportunism with a view to the upcoming presidential elections in December in South Korea. And according to South Korean statistics this right-wing party, which is a strong supporter of a tough stance against Pyongyang, is currently ahead in the polls.

Currently, analysts question the manner of coordinating the meetings of the two Korean leaders and the six-party working group talks. The six-party negotiations are set to start again next month in September. But currently small work groups from America and local forces have met. During these meetings, they analyze technical details regarding the nature of aid to North Korea. One of the other details being examined in these meetings is the deadline which North Korea has to reveal the full nature of all its nuclear arms programs.

Setareh.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

How critical is North Korea's need for energy?

[Nazi Biglari]

US News and World Reports expressed the importance of energy to North Korea by showing satellite pictures taken of both Koreas at night. These show that while South Korean cities are full of light at night, North Korea is enveloped in darkness. In wintertime, homes and offices in North Korea are cold. And one of the consequences of the energy crisis in North Korea is the damages suffered by that country's agriculture, which has resulted in another crisis – the hunger crisis.

Assistant Secretary of State and America's chief negotiator regarding North Korea's nuclear programs, Christopher Hill, has said in this regard that President Bush's government wishes to decrease economic pressure on North Korea and to aid Korea in its energy crisis in exchange for a halt in nuclear weapons developments. The US State Department also has stated they are ready to act as soon as possible in this regard.

Setareh.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Thank you for your report tonight. That was Nazi Biglari from New York.

[Video clip: VOA Credits]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

The Endeavour space shuttle with seven astronauts including one teacher left yesterday headed for the International Space Station. Endeavour was launched into a clear blue sky from Cape Canaveral in Florida on Wednesday. This was the shuttle's first flight since 2002.

[Video clip: Endeavour lift-off]

[Reporter]

The Endeavour shuttle lifted off on Wednesday with a teacher, Barbara Morgan, on board as one of the seven astronauts. Barbara Morgan will realize Christa McAuliffe and the Challenger's six other astronauts' dream. In 1986 the Challenger exploded shortly after lift-off and its seven passengers were killed.

The Endeavour space shuttle and its seven passengers lifted off from the Cape Canaveral space station in Florida on Wednesday afternoon at exactly the scheduled time and is expected to reach the International Space Station on Friday.

When Endeavour reached its 73rd second in flight, mission control announced, "For Barbara Morgan and her crewmates, class is in session." It was in exactly the 73rd second of its flight that the Challenger space shuttle exploded.

Shortly after the shuttle's launch, the director of NASA thanked the entire crew who had worked toward this launch and stated that operations leading to the launch had gone flawlessly.

Ms. Morgan, who is expected to hold a class at the space station, was the backup astronaut for Christa McAuliffe but the tragic Challenger accident never swayed her from her decision to continue at NASA, aiming to visit the space station.

More than half the 104 teachers who were NASA's candidates for space travel in 1985, as well as hundreds of other teachers, gathered at the Kennedy Space Center to witness Ms. Morgan's flight.

Ms. Morgan's responsibility on this mission is to assist in operating the shuttle's mechanical battery and to oversee the transport of supplies from the shuttle to the space station. During this flight, the astronauts will repair portions of the space station and also will examine the condition of Endeavour shuttle's body prior to returning to Earth.

The analysis of possible damages to the shuttle's body that can result from the extreme temperatures at liftoff or from being struck by small space particles and the repairing of these damages is undertaken as a security measure.

The astronauts' program also includes three to four space walks.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

We return to America where operations continue for the rescue of six miners trapped in a mine in Utah.

In comments to press agencies, one of the mine owners has said he will need over one week to rescue the trapped workers. At the same time a spokesperson says that President Bush, in a phone conversation with Utah's governor, has reaffirmed federal assistance in the operations for the rescue of the trapped miners.

[Video clip: mine rescue efforts]

[Reporter]

Operations continue for saving the lives of six trapped miners in the state of Utah. One of the mine owners has told press agencies, "We will need over one week to rescue the trapped workers."

The efforts to dig a tunnel in the hopes of establishing contact with the miners will continue through Friday. Murray, one of the mine owners, said that after the collapse the mine workers returned to their original position as the collapse was continuing underground.

A government spokesperson said that in a phone conversation with Utah's governor, President Bush has reaffirmed federal support in the efforts to rescue the trapped miners.

The Mexican consulate in Utah also confirmed that three of the trapped miners are Mexican citizens.

Although the cause of the incident officially has not been announced conflicts are already arising in identifying the cause of the incident, even as rescue operations continue.

While the mine's owners insist the cave-in was the result of an earthquake, seismic researchers have stated that seismic monitors show an earthquake did not occur at the time of the incident, and believe the weakness of the mine's walls led to the collapse of the mine.

Murray Energy owns 16 coal mines across America. Bob Murray, the company chairman and one of the mine's owners, told reporters:

[Video Clip: Bob Murray *in English*]

Let me tell you something. The coal mine is a city underground. It has a hauling system, the belt conveyor...

[Reporter]

"Let me tell you something. The coal mine is a city underground. It has a hauling system, the belt conveyor. It has a hauling system that allows easy movement and displacement." Indicating the ventilators, he continued, "Some of this ventilation will get to them and keep them alive."

A previously rescued miner says:

[Video clip of miner *in English*]

I know that they know that I wouldn't give up and that this company would not give up on them...

[Reporter]

"I know that the workers will not give up looking for them. I can tell you that if I was in the place of the trapped miners, I would be sure that no one up here was going to give up. I'm sure they know this."

Bob Murray, the mine company's chairman says, "I don't know when there's going to be another earthquake and I also don't know how far we are from the trapped workers. But what I know well over the course of my long experience in mines and as a mine manager leads me to say that rescue operations will not take one week, but several weeks, even as we are not certain that the workers are still alive."

Nonetheless, digging a 270-meter hole is halfway underway and the digging of a larger hole was also begun on Wednesday. In a candlelight vigil, the residents of Huntington, Utah, who are mostly relatives of miners, express their hopes and prayers for the rescue of the lives of the miners.

[Video clip: VOA title]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Now some news from Iran.

Today, concurrent with global activities for solidarity with worker activists in Iran, the home of Mansour Osanlou, leader of the Union of Workers and Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, was surrounded by plainclothes security forces. According to Fereshteh Osanlou, his sister, five of the Vahed Bus Drivers' Tehran union workers were arrested by the officers and taken to the police station.

She added that dozens of the friends and colleagues who had come to express their support of Mr. Osanlou were not permitted to enter the home and were forced from the area by force and treated with disrespect.

Plainclothes officers also prevented several journalists from entering Mr. Osanlou's house.

In other news, two students, Ehsan Mansouri and Ahmad Ghasaban, have been transferred from Evin Prison to the Revolutionary Court and were interrogated.

According to the news report by Amir Kabir University students, the prosecutor in the case has asked the students for their final defense against accusations of activities against national security, the publication of four disrespectful publications and the accusation of disrespecting religion, the leadership and a disregard for the importance of the veil as a religious necessity.

According to this report, the students have announced that they do not accept any of these accusations and consider the confessions that have been presented as illegal.

Also in relation to the situation of imprisoned journalists in Iran, according to Soheil Asefi's family, a reporter from the internet publication Rooz Online, six days after his arrest he contacted his family from prison. On Saturday this week, based on a summons he received, Mr. Asefi appeared at the Revolutionary Court and was arrested and transferred to prison.

Nonetheless, his attorney has stated that according to the law, the court must set bail for his client. Siavash Sa'adatian talks to Nahid Kheirabi, Mr. Asefi's mother, and Dr. Nasser Zarafshan, one of this journalist's attorneys.

[Mr. Asefi's mother- *voice over*]

This morning, around 8:45 A.M. he got in touch and said he was okay. We asked where he was and he said he was in section 209 of Evin Prison.

I'm following his case through any channels I can, domestically through different authorities, through the parliament, through different commissions such as the National Security Commission, the Article 90 commission, the Cultural Commission.

I met with Mr. Karroubi yesterday and the meeting went well and he was sympathetic and my conversation with Soheil this morning, I believe, was a result of Mr. Karroubi's follow up efforts. Of course, his attorneys are also doing their work. What we seek is that he be freed unconditionally as soon as possible.

[Siavash Sa'adatian]

At the same time, Dr. Nasser Zarafshan is one of Soheil Asefi's lawyers. While explaining the legal process for bail to be set, he tells Voice of America that he has not yet succeeded in seeing his client in jail.

[Dr. Nasser Zarafshan- *voice over*]

In order to meet with Soheil I went to the Security Forces prison and attempted to meet with the deputy prosecutor for security so we could discuss this matter. Unfortunately, I was not successful in this attempt.

Soheil was summoned for a preliminary hearing. In such cases, according to the law, the person who was summoned may be accused and there will necessarily have to be a bail amount attached. An arrest order is for certain kinds of cases, where there is fear of other crimes being committed, or of the accused fleeing or other such possibilities. Think of a crime such as a murder, for example. In cases other than such specific and exceptional cases, the norm is for bail to be set. That a legal entity should call an individual for a hearing and then hand them over to the Security Forces is turning the legal process upside down.

In a way, the legal structure is being abused by the Security Forces. If the Security Forces were operating within the legal framework, they'd do their own work, create their case, and then hand it over to the legal entity, which then would summon the individual as an accused person, who would then receive an arrest order. Arresting someone and taking them to the Security Forces just by calling them in for a hearing is not legal.

In any event, my first goal is to see him. I will again return to the court and I will attempt to have a fair order legally issued in his case so he can be released, and then we can see what is actually going on.

[Siavash Sa'adatian]

Also, according to the latest news, in the case of Farshad Ghorbanpour, another jailed journalist, his wife met with him in prison midweek. According to Farshad Ghorbanpour's wife, bail has been set for this journalist at 200 million tomans, but his family is unable to post such an amount.

[Video title clip: News & Views]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

We continue with world news with tonight's News and Views program from Voice of America in Washington.

After Georgia accused Russia of firing a guided missile into its territory, a senior Russian military official characterized Tbilisi's move as an attempt at provoking Moscow. General Yuri Baluyevsky says that Georgia is using this claim to nullify the Control Commission formed to address the South Ossetia separatist state issue in Georgia.

We have a report from Hooshmand Mirfakhraei in this regard.

[Hooshmand Mirfakhraei]

Yesterday Georgia requested the UN Security Council take immediate action to address its claim of a missile attack by Russia on the Gori region.

UN representative and Georgia's Charge d'Affaires Irakli Chikovani said...

[Video clip: Irakli Chikovani *in English*]

United Nations Security Council has to tackle this matter...

[Hooshmand Mirfakhraei]

"The United Nations Security Council has to tackle this matter and Russia should not oppose Georgia's request for this investigation."

According to the Georgian Foreign Ministry report, records from radars compatible with NATO standards showed that a Russian Su-24 jet had flown into Georgian airspace and launched a missile, which did not explode upon hitting the ground.

Georgian Foreign Minister Gela Bezhuashvili, who was attempting to prevent deteriorating relationships between his country and Russia, stated,

[Video clip: Gela Bezhuashvili *in English*]

We need to be in partnership with Russia. Our relationship with Moscow will be based on the principle of respect for borders and the autonomy of both countries.

[Hooshmand Mirfakhraei]

Experts have confirmed that the anti-radar missile that was found is a Raduga Kh-58 made in Russia and capable of carrying 150 kilos of TNT. Russia has firmly denied firing this missile into Georgia.

On the 27th of September last year, Georgia arrested four Russian soldiers on spying charges but later released them. Nonetheless, Russia boycotted all transport and mail contact with Georgia and established limitations on trade with its southern neighbor. It also forced some Georgians to leave Russia, and according to Russian education authorities, the police asked them to provide security officials with a list of the names of students with Georgian names.

At that time, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, while expressing his readiness to meet immediately with Vladimir Putin, his Russian counterpart, to address and resolve these differences between the two countries, called the expelling of Georgian children from Russian schools and the dispatching of Georgian immigrants from Russia on cargo planes a repellent act.

Since Mikheil Saakashvili's presidency started in 2003 relations between these two countries have been tense because of Mr. Saakashvili's commitment to extracting his country from Russia's sphere of influence and his desire to join NATO. Moscow's support for the two separatist movements in South Ossetia and Georgian Abkhazia have been at the center of these tensions.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Today in Japan thousands participated in ceremonies in Nagasaki to commemorate the 62nd anniversary of the explosion in this city of the second atom bomb during World War II that led to the death of 70,000. In these ceremonies, the mayor of Nagasaki expressed a wish to see complete and permanent nuclear disarmament worldwide.

[Video clip: Nagasaki ceremonies]

[Reporter]

In Japan's Nagasaki today, ceremonies were conducted to commemorate the 62nd anniversary of the explosion of the second American atom bomb in 1945 led to the death of 70,000.

Approximately 5500 relatives of the Nagasaki victims as well as diplomats and other friends, including Shinzo Abe, the Japanese prime minister, took part in these ceremonies, which took place in the city's Peace Park, and at 11:02 Japan time, a minute of silence was observed in honor of the victims of this tragedy.

America's atomic attack on Nagasaki took place three days after its attack on Hiroshima, which led to the death of 140,000 and the total annihilation of that city.

In his remarks during this ceremony, the Nagasaki mayor expressed his wish to see nuclear disarmament worldwide. He said there is no justifiable reason for the use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Abe, the Japanese prime minister also stated in his remarks, "As the only country ever to have experienced nuclear devastation, Japan has a responsibility to convey its grievous experience to the international community to prevent this tragedy from being repeated ever again."

In the continuation of his remarks, he expressed his wish to see permanent peace and the dissolution of all nuclear weapons. He said Japan would never produce nuclear weapons.

After the atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima on the 15th of August 1945, Japan surrendered, ending WWII.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

On a different matter yesterday, and in the Middle East, Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian leader, in his negotiations with Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian president, said until Hamas returns control of the Gaza Strip to him, he will not negotiate with them.

Mr. Abbas characterized Hamas' control of the Gaza Strip as a detrimental development that weakens the efforts for the creation of a Palestinian nation more than ever.

[Video clip]

[Reporter]

Mahmoud Abbas, the head of the PLO, yesterday in Egypt characterized Hamas' control of the Gaza Strip as detrimental to efforts to create a Palestinian nation and categorically declared he would not negotiate with Hamas unless conditions in Gaza change.

Mr. Abbas' comments came after the end of his meeting with Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian president.

The PLO leader's visit to Egypt is one of several meetings before the peace conference. This conference is to take place over the next few months according to President Bush's suggestion.

The United States has been attempting to lay the groundwork for a future peace conference between Israel, the Palestinians and Arab countries since Arab countries are prepared to take control of many of the material aspects of the peace process in the Middle East.

This conference is a way of addressing strategic goals to advance the peace process between Israel and Mahmoud Abbas and finally will lead to the dissolution of Hamas.

Addressing Hamas' control of the Gaza Strip, Mr. Abbas told reporters, "Undoubtedly this situation will affect the lives of the Palestinian people. The destructive effect of Hamas' actions in fact serves the interests of Palestine's enemies, who oppose the creation of an independent Palestinian state in Gaza and on the West Bank. If Hamas wishes to have discussions, in order for negotiations to be fruitful existing conditions in Gaza need to change.

Mr. Abbas added, "Now that we are looking to undertake this International Middle East Peace Conference, and the primary axis of the conference is the plan for peace, we must agree with one another, and if we are really seeking a workable solution, if we have good will, we will also easily find a working solution."

But Hamas refused to participate in the conference and Fawzi Barhoum, the Hamas spokesperson in Gaza, in reply to Mr. Abbas' remarks, said,

[Fawzi Barhoum *in English*]

Unfortunately Mr. Abbas, until now, closed the door tightly toward all our attempts at dialogue and negotiations with Hamas...

[Reporter]

“Mr. Abbas has on one hand closed the door on negotiations with Hamas, but has instead opened another door on any and all kind of secret negotiations for Israeli occupation.”

Mr. Barhoum added, “The consequences of Mahmoud Abbas’ adherence to the security program devised by Israel and by America will only lead to the dissolution of the unified Palestinian people.”

Hamas states it wishes to have an independent force in Gaza.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

A chapter from a new book *Statecraft*, written by Dennis Ross, a senior US diplomat during the Clinton and George Bush, Sr. presidencies, is devoted to Iran and radical Islam.

A report by Ladan Yazdian and a conversation with Mr. Ross.

[Video clip]

[Ladan Yazdian]

Dr. Dennis Ross, a senior American diplomat and special envoy to the Middle East during the Clinton and George Bush Sr. presidencies, in his latest book, titled *Statecraft*, presents a summary of his experiences to readers.

In a VOA interview I asked Mr. Ross, given that in his book he considers the existence of favorable conditions necessary for negotiations, does he believe that negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians without the presence of Hamas are possible or effective?

[Dennis Ross *in English*]

I think they can be. There are those who say you can’t get anything done unless Hamas is there as well. I would suggest if you bring Hamas in at a point when Hamas has a lot of leverage and has no interest in agreement, it’s a prescription for getting nothing done.

[Ladan Yazdian]

He says talks without Hamas are possible; there are those who say you can't get anything done unless Hamas is there as well. "I would suggest if Hamas has no interest in peace it can prevent an understanding between the other parties. Hamas needs to understand the world is not waiting to make its wishes come true. Hamas must be responsible and act responsibly in Gaza, rather than blame Fatah in every matter.

Additionally we must not ignore the role of Iran in the Palestinian territories. The Islamic Republic supports terrorism in the region and is constantly providing financial support to suicide bombers. Also, the Islamic regime in Iran does not wish for peace between Israelis and Palestinians and is determined to use all of its efforts to prevent such peace, though I must say this will end up having negative consequences for Iran in the long run."

I ask Dennis Ross about references in some Arab newspapers to the "Shiite crescent" to explain hegemony and the struggle for the Islamic Republic's dominance in the region. Do you believe there is a possibility for the emergence of a crescent of Shiite countries led by Iran?

[Dennis Ross *in English*]

I'm not sure there's a Shiite crescent. I think there's an Iranian policy designed to promote those movements that are also militias designed to weaken regimes everywhere...

[Ladan Yazdian]

"I'm not sure there's a Shiite crescent. I think there's an Iranian policy designed to provide aid to militias whose goal is to weaken regimes in the region such as Hezbollah, the Mahdi Army, the Badr Force, and even Hamas, which is in fact a Sunni group.

A faction of the Iranian leadership wishes not only to dominate Shiites, but also all of the region's countries, and to achieve its goals by threatening other countries. But I have no doubt that this will have heavy consequences for them.

The most important of the negative consequences of Iran's activities in the region is that other countries in the region will unite against it. I think this country's reaching a nuclear weapon, unlike what its rulers imagine, will end up hurting them and destructive activities in the region will not go on

forever and will not produce the result they hope. The region's reaction will weaken Iran's position."

This Middle East and international expert has devoted a chapter in his book to Iran and the danger of radical Islam.

I ask him what he thinks about the meeting between Iranian and American authorities and how successful he thinks the three-way committee will be that's been created to examine Iraq's security issues.

[Dennis Ross]

You know, I have a feeling that it creates a symbol of cooperation and not the reality of cooperation.

[Ladan Yazdian]

He says, "I have a feeling that it creates a symbol of cooperation and not the reality of cooperation. The success of such meetings is contingent on the regime specifying its aims. I believe Iran is attempting to show that it has influence in the region. But I'm not convinced that Iran seeks peace and stability in Iraq. In my opinion bilateral talks will get nowhere and other countries, too, need to participate in the discussions."

I ask this senior US diplomat, "You've often stated you wished to see multilateral discussions between Iran, America and European countries. Were such discussions to take place, how effective could they be?"

[Dennis Ross *in English*]

It'll only be effective if there are much more punitive economic sanctions being imposed at the same time.

[Ladan Yazdian]

Dennis Ross says, "Multilateral negotiations will only be effective if there are much more punitive economic sanctions being imposed at the same time. And the reason for this is that the Iranian leadership is determined to obtain nuclear weapons and it is not with logic and discussions that it will be convinced. Stronger leverage must be employed. I think if the offering of Western countries is suitable, the Iranian regime will shut down its nuclear weapons program and confine itself to peaceful nuclear energy development."

[Dennis Ross *in English*]

I think there's a possibility of changing Iranian behavior.

[Video clip]

[VOA title sequence]

TRANSLATION ENDS HERE