

The following is a translation of the VOA TV Persian program "News and Views," which was broadcast via satellite on September 4, 2007 at 1530 UTC.

TRANSLATION BEGINS HERE

[Opening theme song]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

...in Washington, this is Setareh Derakhshesh with tonight's edition of News and Views.

[Intro music]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

- Possibility of US force reduction in Iraq, announced in a statement by President Bush in his unannounced visit to that country
- Tens of people killed in Pakistan suicide attack
- High-ranking US official's denial of North Korea's claim to be taken off the list of countries supporting terrorism
- And, Hashemi Rafsanjani's election as the head of the Assembly of Experts

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Greetings. Welcome to tonight's edition of News and Views from Washington, DC. This program comes to you Tuesday night on September 4, 2007, or Shahrivar 13, 1386. We begin with a few short headlines, and after that, we will focus on the latest developments around the world. President Bush arrived in Sydney, Australia to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit.

Hossein Haddad, a high-ranking Iranian Judiciary, said Kian Tajbakhsh will be released on bail when the investigation into his case is complete. However, no date has yet been set for this event. An appeals court in Iraq has upheld the death sentence of Ali Hassan al-Majid, otherwise known as "Chemical Ali".

Israel's Supreme Court has ordered the state to redraw the route of its West Bank separation barrier to minimize damage to Palestinian villages.

Afghan officials say police have killed one of the Taliban leaders who played a key role in kidnapping the South Korean volunteers. The spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry has strongly denied reports published in the Financial Times that its military was behind a successful hacking attack on the Pentagon computer network earlier this year.

[Music]

[On-screen graphic: Today's Report]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

President Bush said that if security conditions in Iraq continue to improve there will be an opportunity to scale down US forces in that country. The US President added that such a decision will be made by US commanders on the ground in Iraq, and not by US lawmakers.

In other developments, leaders of 16 Shiite and Sunni groups have agreed to sit down to discuss ways to end hostilities and work towards a lasting peace among them. The Iraqis held four days of secret talks in Finland with diplomats who helped bring peace to Northern Ireland and South Africa. United Nations diplomats and the former Finnish President organized the meeting.

We begin tonight's reports from Iraq with President Bush's unannounced visit to Iraq yesterday.

[Video clip of President Bush]

[Male voice]

President Bush says: "The surge of operations that began in June is improving security throughout Iraq. These military successes are paving the way for the political reconciliation and economic progress that the Iraqis need to transform their country."

The unannounced trip by President Bush to Iraq is taking place in anticipation of one of the most important reports regarding the future of US forces in Iraq. The selection of Anbar province as the meeting place, which used to be considered as one of the most chaotic places in Iraq, certainly has great importance.

Participants to this meeting were senior officials from the Bush Administration, US National Security Advisor, and US military commanders in Iraq on one side, and Iraqi officials and regional Sunni tribal leaders on the other.

After the meeting, President Bush said:

[Video clip of President Bush]

[Male voice]

“General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker tell me if the kind of success we are now seeing continues it will be possible to maintain the same level of security with fewer American forces.” But Mr. Bush did not mention anything about the quantity and timetable for such reduction. The President addressed US soldiers and said “Your daily successes make your return date to your country closer. However, such a decision will be made by our military commanders and with consideration to the situation on the ground, and not by Washington politicians who aim to increase their popularity in the media.”

[Video clip of President Bush]

[Male voice]

“When we begin to draw down troops from Iraq it will be from a position of strength and success — not from a position of fear and failure,” Mr. Bush told cheering troops. President Bush said in another part of his speech: “Because of the efforts of US troops, Anbar province has been turned into one of the most secure places in Iraq.”

Meanwhile Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, said yesterday that noticeable progress was made across the country in recent months, and he expects to have those improvements reflected in the report to be released on September 15th to the US Congress by US military commanders and the US Ambassador in Baghdad.

[Video clip of Nouri al-Maliki]

[Male voice]

Some analysts believe that whether Mr. Maliki remains Iraq’s Prime Minister will largely depend on the report made by the Commander of US forces in Iraq, General Petraeus, and US Ambassador to Baghdad, Ryan

Crocker, to the US President and Congress regarding the progress made by the addition of 30,000 US forces in Baghdad.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Continuing with Iraq, the U.S. military says coalition forces today in Iraq have detained two people suspected of smuggling weapons into the country from Iran. In a statement, the military says the arrests were made early Tuesday during a raid on the village of Qazaniyah near the Iranian border. Troops killed one gunman during the operation.

In other news, Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari who is in Tehran, has asked Iran to stop shelling the Kurdish areas in northern Iraq. Zebari said the cross-border shelling has displaced hundreds of Kurds and threatens the relations between Iraqi and Iran. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister denied the shelling.

[On-screen graphic: News from Congress]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

In the US, the Democratic leader of Congress says the unannounced visit by President Bush to Iraq will not change the political atmosphere in Washington. Democratic Senator Harry Reid's office issued a statement in reaction to the trip to Iraq by President Bush, Secretaries of Defense and State, and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stating that despite this maneuver by the Bush Administration, the American people are still demanding a new strategy in that country.

We now go to our correspondent, Syamak Dehghanpour, who is in front of Congress for more detail.

Greetings.

[Syamak Dehghanpour]

Greeting to you Ms. Derakhshesh. The unannounced visit by President Bush and other high-ranking military and political officials to Iraq has caused various reactions among the Republicans and Democrats in Congress. Leadership of Congress is resuming its work today in order to change the strategy in Iraq. It may attach amendments to the Defense Department budget and the emergency spending bill of \$147 billion requested by the White House to fund the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

As you are aware, such attempts by the Democrats may face President Bush's veto. The Democrats in Congress do not have much time left to pass several bills through the Senate by the end of this fiscal year, which is September 30.

[Video clip]

[Voice of Mr. Dehghanpour]

Despite severe criticisms of Nouri al-Maliki's Shiite government by some Democratic and Republican lawmakers, President Bush, during his trip to Iraq, called al-Maliki a leader on the path to progress and severely criticized those lawmakers who had asked for his removal.

Office of Democratic Senator Harry Reid, the Senate Majority Leader, announced in a statement that President Bush's visit to Iraq and the emphasis on progress in that country would not have much impact on removing doubts and changing the public's view.

Democratic presidential candidate Bill Richardson also expressed doubt in President Bush's success in proving his strategy.

[Video clip of Bill Richardson]

[Voice of Mr. Dehghanpour]

As of today, Congress begins consecutive sessions to evaluate the situation in Iraq; an evaluation by the office of Inspector General is one of them. According to Senator Reid's office, all unbiased investigations demonstrating President Bush's strategy to achieve political reconciliation has failed. In a speech given in Iowa yesterday by Republican Senator John McCain, he vowed to fight for President Bush's strategy when debate in Senate resumes.

A large number of lawmakers have personally visited Iraq to assess the situation for themselves.

[Video clip]

[Voice of Mr. Dehghanpour]

Republican Senator Mel Martinez was one of the Senators whose C-130 plane was fired upon by insurgents' RPG [Rocket Propelled Grenade] on

the way back. Although lawmakers corroborate limited security improvements, they are angered by the political deadlock in Baghdad. A group of Democrats are still hoping to gain Republicans' support for a definite deadline for bringing back US forces, probably by next spring, by adding amendments to the defense budget. However, the moderates are seeking to strike a deal with the White House to prevent President Bush's veto. Republican strategists believe Democratic efforts and the President's vetoes will energize the right wing of the party which will demoralize the anti-war movement and can help them in the upcoming election.

Democrats, who are seeking additional Senate seats in next year's election in order to strengthen their fragile majority in the Senate, are hoping to secure several of the 22 seats belonging to the Republicans. Oregon, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Maine are among such states.

[Video clip]

[Voice of Mr. Dehghanpour]

Democratic Senator Charles Schumer, chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, considers one of the disadvantages for the Republicans to be the people's desire for a change in direction regarding the war in Iraq.

[Video clip]

[Voice of Mr. Dehghanpour]

Republican Senator John Ensign, Chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, says that many conservative Republican incumbents in Republican states are in a strong position, and the Democrats themselves will have to defend their 12 seat majority during the course of elections.

One of the reasons why none of the 12 versions of the national budget bill have passed through its legal procedures so far is due to the weak Democratic majority in the Senate and their failure to compromise with Senate Republicans.

[Mr. Dehghanpour]

Several versions of the budget bill have passed the House of Representatives where Democrats have stronger majority. As I mentioned before, such bills will have to have passed by September 30. So far, it is uncertain how many of these bills will make it through to the government by then.

According to the latest polls, only one out of five Americans approve of the Democratic Congress. It is expected that the Democratic leadership in Congress will use Iraq to pressure President Bush and his Republican supporters in Congress.

Back to you Ms. Derakhshesh.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Today the Senate was supposed to hold confirmation hearings for two officials. What can you tell us about that?

[Mr. Dehghanpour]

Around 2:30 this afternoon, we are going to witness confirmation hearings for Jim Nussle. He is a former member of the House of Representatives who has been nominated by President Bush to become the new White House Budget Director. The confirmation may come to a resolution by 5:30 today when lawmakers will put his nomination to final vote.

Also today, in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, confirmation hearings will be held for retired Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt as Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs.

Back to you Ms. Derakhshesh.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

With thanks to Syamak Dehghanpour, we will look forward to your second report in the second part of tonight's program.

[Music]

[On-screen graphic: Washington News]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Pakistani officials say that the explosion of two strong bombs in Rawalpindi killed 24 and injured 66 others. We have a report on these developments.

[Pause]

With apologies, this report is being prepared. We will present you the latest news from Pakistan after our piece from the State Department.

We go now directly to the State Department. One day after the Iranian researcher, Haleh Esfandiari, was accused by the Islamic Republic of espionage and activities against national security, she was allowed to leave the country. Mrs. Esfandiari is an Iranian-American researcher for the Woodrow Wilson International Center.

Additionally, according to reports, Parnaz Azima, the Iranian-American correspondent for Radio Farda, who was also accused of anti-regime activities, has received permission to leave Iran.

Meanwhile an Iranian judiciary official said today that Kian Tajbakhsh would soon be released on bail.

The arrest of these individuals has added to the tension between US and Iran. Hello, Mr. Bijan Farhudi. What are the latest reactions at the US State Department to these developments?

[Bijan Farhudi]

Greetings. Accusations made against Mrs. Esfandiari and other similar Iranian-Americans were dismissed as something of a joke by the State Department, as those individuals presented no threat to the Iranian government there.

Today US Department Deputy Spokesman, Tom Casey, said the US government, along with Mrs. Esfandiari's friends and relatives and the Woodrow Wilson Center, welcome the return of this Iranian-American researcher to the country. He added "We hope to witness Mrs. Esfandiari's return to her work at the Woodrow Wilson Center."

The US Department Deputy Spokesman expressed hope that cases belonging to other detained Iranian-Americans would also be resolved soon so they can return to their friends and relatives in the US. Mr. Casey confirmed that he had seen the news that Ms. Azima's passport had been returned to her, but he was not able to confirm the validity of that news yet. According to Mr. Casey, he hoped that this issue would be resolved as well. As you are aware, two other Iranian-Americans are still under arrest in Iran. Kian Tajbakhsh, consultant for the Open Society Institute, received

the news from an Iranian judge today that he could be released on bail upon completion of investigations. Mr. Ali Shakeri, businessman and peace activist, is still in jail, and there is no news of his fate. Iranian officials have revealed very little about him.

The US Department Spokesman also touched on the disappearance of former FBI agent Robert Levinson on the Iranian island of Kish today, saying “We again ask the government of Iran to provide us with information on Levinson’s fate. He said “Unfortunately, the Islamic Republic has not provided much information so far,” adding that “No independent news is available about Levinson’s whereabouts either.” He was asked about Mrs. Levinson’s trip to Iran. Mr. Casey said he did not have any information on that subject, and it was not certain if Mrs. Levinson would make that trip. With freedom of travel to Iran for Iranian-Americans, one aspect of tension between the two countries may have been resolved. However, other issues still exist between Iran, the US, and the international community; the most important of which is the Iranian nuclear issue.

In recent days there have been various reports about a possible US military action against Iran. The Iranian President has said that the probability of attack on Iran is minute. To support his view, he offered the calculations that he had done about this matter and the conclusion that this attack would not take place.

On the other hand, Hashemi Rafsanjani, who was elected as the head of the Assembly of Experts, has warned against the danger from the US. Last week, President Bush warned against a “nuclear disaster” if Iran managed to acquire nuclear weapons.

I asked Mr. Casey about the present possibility of military action against Iran by the US. The US State Department Spokesman said he did not have any new information about that, other than what the President had said about intending to follow the diplomatic route. Of course, he added, no US President would take an option off the table, and all the options are still being considered; we are, however, committed to resolving this matter diplomatically.

I asked Mr. Casey if the election of Hashemi Rafsanjani to head the Assembly of Experts could mean a softer position toward the Islamic Republic. Tom Casey said “We cannot express an opinion about how the

Iranian position could change.” He added, however, “We hope rational individuals come to the position of power in Iran who can understand and accept the positive proposals offered by the international community, participate in negotiations with our P-5+1 partners to secure peaceful access to nuclear energy for Iran, and assure the world that Iran would not use that program as a cover to obtain nuclear weapons.”

I asked Mr. Casey if the United States considered Hashemi Rafsanjani to be a rational person. He said that would depend on the policies that person will adopt.

I need to add that British Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced today that London would support the third sanction resolution against Iran at the UN Security Council if Iran did not bring its covert nuclear program under supervision.

Back to you Mrs. Derakhshesh.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Regarding another country’s nuclear program, North Korea announced yesterday that the US had agreed to take North Korea’s name off the list of countries which support terrorism during their negotiations. We said yesterday that the State Department had not yet confirmed that news. Do you have any new information in that area?

[Bijan Farhodi]

There are two new developments in that area. The first comes from Christopher Hill, US Assistant Secretary of State and the chief US negotiator on North Korea, which was announced in Sydney, Australia, today. Mr. Hill denied that North Korea’s name had been taken off the list of countries which support terrorism. He added that such a decision would depend on further demilitarization of North Korea.

Today, at the State Department’s daily briefing with Tom Casey, most of the questions were about the very subject of taking North Korea off the list of supporters of terrorism. North Korea had claimed such a thing to be true. Mr. Casey said “This is a lot of noise for nothing, since no such thing has occurred. This all depends on Pyongyang meeting all the US legal requirements for being taken off this list, and on complete demilitarization of the Democratic Republic of Korea. All these issues will be discussed

during the Six-Party Talks, and the details will be worked out through the working groups there.”

Therefore, State Department officials denied the news that the Democratic Republic of Korea had been taken off the list of the countries that support terrorism. They added there would be a trend to take North Korea’s name off the list in the future if North Korea completes its denuclearization. Back to you Mrs. Derakhshesh.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

With thanks for your report, Bijan Farhoudi, which came to us directly from the State Department.

[Music]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

The report on the latest developments in Pakistan which we promised earlier is now ready.

In Rawalpindi, Pakistan, two strong bombs killed 22 and injured 66 others. Here is the report.

[Male voice]

According to Pakistani army and police, the suicide bombers turned the area into a bloody scene in two separate locations, one in an army bus, and another one a short while later in a business district of Rawalpindi, killing at least 24 people and injuring 66 others.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the explosions, which injured dozens and deepened the sense of crisis in Pakistan amid political uncertainty ahead of elections. Pakistani officials suggested the bombings were the work of Islamic militants, possibly in response to Pakistani military operations near the Afghan border.

The first explosion devastated a bus belonging to the defense ministry early this morning as it traveled through a high-security area of Rawalpindi, a garrison city just south of Islamabad, and army headquarters. A military spokesman declined to identify the victims, though other officials said many were soldiers.

One of the residents in the area told the Associated Press that “Pieces of bodies were flying all over the place. We tried to help the injured with emergency help.” The injured were moved to the Rawalpindi Hospital, and the bodies of the dead were moved to a mortuary nearby.

Aref Sultan, one of the bus passengers, described what he had seen.

[Video clip]

[Male voice]

“The roof of the bus was peeled off and blown into the air. Pieces of passengers’ bodies were also spread all over. It was a frightening situation and escape from the bus was very difficult.”

A Pakistani cabinet member, Sheikh Rashid Ahmad visited the casualties at the hospital. He then said:

[Video clip]

[Male voice]

“Civilians and security forces have both been harmed. This is part of a conspiracy against the country and the nation. The Defense Ministry bus was targeted by anti-government elements, and it must have been the result of a plot and conspiracy.”

Another Pakistani cabinet minister said that an explosion in a bus near a business district in the capital city of Pakistani would not force the government into announcing a state of emergency. Before joining the meeting with anti-terrorism officials in Islamabad, Federal Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao expressed his views as follows:

[Video clip]

[Male voice]

“These are two very serious incidents. We must identify the levers of corruption, but it has to be done without jumping into any unwanted and uneducated conclusion and out of urgency.”

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

President Bush, who left for Australia to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, has arrived in Sydney. The President is one of 21 world leaders who attend this one-week summit in Sydney to discuss

such topics as world trade, regional economic cooperation, and climate change.

The Chinese President, another one of the participating leaders, first witnessed the formation of an energy contract in western Australia worth billions of dollars. According to this contract, Australian firms will sell liquid gas to China. The host country has implemented the most comprehensive set of security measures for this gathering of world leaders in the summit. Australian police says it expects violent demonstrations by opponents of US foreign policy and the accommodating view of the summit towards free-market economy. Gita Arian reports on these developments.

[Gita Arian]

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, and host of the gathering, declared the agenda for the one-week summit to be stability, human life security, anti-terrorism activities, health, and preparation to confront natural disasters. He added that climate change played a special role in this year's summit.

[Video clip]

[Gita Arian]

The Australian Foreign Minister expressed hope to see APEC leaders agree for the first time on a new international agreement that includes the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Japanese Foreign Minister [the tape mistakenly calls him Prime Minister] Nobutaka Machimura expressed hope that progress will be made during these talks. Japan is one of the pioneers in this field, and the first such agreement of its kind, called the Kyoto Protocol, is considered to be one of that country's successes.

However, the US and Australia have not signed that protocol. President Bush will arrive in Sydney late Tuesday. According to an Associated Press report, despite the close ties between Bush and Australian Prime Minister Howard, it is not expected that Mr. Howard's proposals on the reduction of greenhouse gases will be met by President Bush's approval.

On another front, the new Japanese Prime Minister wants to use this summit to discuss North Korea with the US leaders. Mr. Machimura who arrived in Sydney today, noted the news that US was considering taking

North Korea off the list of supporters of terrorism, and said he would bring up the matter with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice this week. He says the understanding has been to focus on other matters only after the shut down of Pyongyang's nuclear reactor is finalized. The Six Party talks have not arrived at that point yet, he adds.

Although President Bush is still on his way to Sydney, protesters have gathered on the streets near that city's railway station and held demonstrations against the President's visit to that country. Protesters are demonstrating against Mr. Bush's Iraqi policy and the increase in global warming. The same demonstrators are also against the deployment of troops to Iraq by the Australian Prime Minister. The demonstrators are planning a huge rally on Saturday which is the day for leaders' gathering. On the other hand, Chinese President Hu Jintao has not been immune from criticism from the opposition. Followers of Falun Gong gathered for the second consecutive day in one of Sydney's parks to demonstrate against him. Falun Gong members say the government in Beijing has sought to arrest them for years. Beijing considers this group to be evil and says it is trying to maintain national unity by outlawing the activities of this group.

And finally, it has become a tradition for the participating leaders in the APEC summit to put on the traditional costume of the host nation for a group photo on the last day. Normally the host country announces its traditional costume beforehand, but this year's host has not made that announcement yet. The Australian Prime Minister has only said that it would be a clear representation of the country of Australia.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Former Iranian President, Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, was elected as Head of the Assembly of Experts on Tuesday. The Assembly of Experts which consists of 86 high-level clergies is charged with supervising the performance of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, along with selecting his replacement. Mr. Rafsanjani was elected to that post by securing 41 votes. He has been called a moderate by some foreign media, compared to the extremist President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. During the commencement of the assembly, he said, "The U.S. plan for a larger Middle East region, discussed after September 11, threatens the Middle East a great deal." After criticizing President Bush's trip to Iraq the previous day, Mr. Rafsanjani then said, "The US President went to Iraq without prior notice

and stayed at the military base in Al-Anbar, which had previously caused much trouble for the US, trying to make people believe there is security in Iraq.”

According to reports, President Bush’s unannounced visit to Iraq has been to gain first-hand information about the situation in Iraq in order to prepare himself for explaining the results of the troop surge in that country to Congress.

President Bush has always used Al-Anbar, where tens of thousands of US troops are stationed, as proof of the troop surge success. Mr. Rafsanjani called the departure of British troops from Basra a defeat for that country. He said “Britain has suffered a great number of casualties in Basra and their forces have been finally forced to desert their positions there. This defeat has created a huge problem for them.”

Mr. Rafsanjani then spoke about Iran’s nuclear program. He said “Western countries are trying to put pressure on Iran and incite public opinion against Iran.” Mr. Rafsanjani’s election to the position is considered to be another blow to the extremists and a victory for the moderates in Iran.

In other news, following the release of the Iranian-American researcher, Mrs. Haleh Esfandiari, and her departure from Iran, along with the potential release of a few others who are either under arrest or are not permitted to leave that country. We have a conversation with Dr. Mohammad Seifzadeh, who is an attorney and a law expert in Tehran. Here is the report.

[Voice of Dr. Seifzadeh]

According to the judicial disciplinary code of conduct, accusations are to be addressed by the public prosecutor's office. The accused remains as accused until and unless he has been found guilty by a reputable court. This means that the accused could be convicted or found to be innocent. Until there is a verdict issued for him by the court, we can not pass judgment and say he has committed a crime. Therefore, whatever was discussed at the prosecutor’s office was simply a declaration of allegations. Of course these allegations against him were not made based on any evidence.

The case will remain in the public prosecutor’s office. We hope that, by the virtue of the comments he made on TV that he had not committed any of

the crimes he has been accused of, the prosecutor's office will issue a non-accusatory decree and close the case altogether.

According to Article 168, political offenses must be conducted openly in a competent court with the participation of a jury. However, in order to arrest anyone, judges must take into account such principles of the Constitution as the principle of due process, presumption of innocence by the accused, and absence of precedence.

As far as I am aware, these legal principles are frequently overlooked and not followed in the majority of cases of such nature.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]
Now, the rest of the news.

High Representative of the Common and Foreign Security Policy of the European Union, Javier Solana, arrived in Beirut today. Mr. Solana's visit to Lebanon is part of his Mid-East trip. Mr. Solana's trip to Lebanon takes place two days after the Lebanese army destroyed militants in the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp.

Upon his arrival in Beirut, Mr. Solana told reporters that resolving the refugee camp issue, in his view, was a great achievement, and Lebanese armed forces should be congratulated for their ability. He also mentioned that he felt sympathy for those who had suffered during the ordeal. Mr. Solana met with Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. He is also scheduled to meet with the speaker of Lebanon's parliament, Nabih Berri, as well as the religious leader of the Maroni Christians. Nahl el-Bared and its vicinity seemed calm today. Associated Press television showed scenes of burning cars and clouds of smoke rising from the center of the camp. The Palestinian refugee camp had been destroyed by tank and mortar fire of the Lebanese army. The army has announced that no one will be allowed to enter the camp as long as there are booby traps and unexploded mines found there.

Meanwhile the Lebanese government has promised to rebuild the damaged areas. Lebanon's Foreign Minister says the Fatah al-Islam group intended to turn the refugee camp into a training camp for terrorists and establish an independent country in northern Lebanon. One of the

Lebanese army generals has said that the militants had close ties with al-Qaeda terrorists.

In other news, several people in Denmark were arrested on suspicion of making bombs for a planned terrorist attack. Danish intelligence officials said in a statement that the suspected individuals, whose identities were not revealed, had been picked up during a raid in an area of Copenhagen last Monday afternoon. Denmark's TV2 News channel reported that the police had the suspects under surveillance and surrounded their residential street which was located in an immigrant-populated part of the city. Denmark Radio also says the government has inspected a building in south of Copenhagen which is mostly inhabited by immigrants.

This is the third time since 2005 that Danish police has entered into action to break up terrorist networks in that country. In February a court sentenced a Palestinian-born Danish citizen to seven years in jail for participating in plans to explode a bomb in a European city. Three other suspects were acquitted. Extremists have never targeted Denmark in the past 20 years. But the recent London bombings raised fear that the Scandinavian countries could also become the target of terrorists due to their participation in the Iraq war. Denmark removed 460 members of its forces from Iraq in June and replaced them with a small jetfighter squadron.

[Promo video clip for the "Woman and Living" program]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arrived in Sudan to try to put an end to the conflict in the Darfur region of that country. Political leaders in the south of the country have accused the government in Khartoum of ignoring the 2005 agreement which would recognize creation of an independent government in the south.

UN Secretary-General says the world community has only witnessed tragedies in Darfur while nothing significant has been achieved. Nader Vakili has this report:

[Video clip; voice of Nader Vakili]

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called the deployment of 26-thousand peacekeepers for Sudan's Darfur region a historic and unprecedented

development for the people of that region. He asked them to put an end to the four-year crisis by entering into serious and decisive negotiations. In his first trip to the region since assuming his post, the UN Secretary General said, "The world has witnessed this sad adventure for a long time which has not helped with resolving the crisis." The UN chief added "With the UN resolution to combine the efforts of the African Union mission with the UN peacekeeping force, along with all-out efforts to persuade the involved groups to participate in negotiations, the present situation seems to be changing."

Ban Ki-moon, in reference to his one-week trip to Sudan, Chad, and Libya, said "We now have an historic opportunity that we must seize." The UN Secretary-General is planning to spend one day in the war-torn region of Darfur after his discussions with Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir today. Ban Ki-moon's trip to Darfur, likely set for tomorrow, is scheduled to visit a refugee camp which has housed 2.5 million people.

Another camp, which will be likely visited by Ban Ki-moon, is the as-Salam camp which, according to reports, is suffering from shortage of water and other essential necessities.

One of the people living in the camp who lost her home and livelihood two years ago says:

[Video clip]

"Lack of water is the most significant problem here. The water that we usually get, although very little, must be shared with others." The four-year old Darfur crisis has, so far, claimed 200,000 victims. The UN Secretary-General plans to start a fresh round of negotiations between the rebels and the government to end the crisis, especially in the western region of Darfur.

UN officials expressed hope that such negotiations would begin in October. However, political analysts believe achieving the UN goals is a difficult matter since peace treaties and ceasefires in the past have been ignored. Presently increased turmoil, along with an increase in the number of rebel groups, has made regional politics and peace achievement more complicated.

In his trip to Sudan, the UN Secretary General is planning to visit Juba in the south where a separate 10,000 unit UN peacekeeper force has been overseeing a fragile ceasefire between the Muslim government in the north and the Christian rebels in the south.

[VOA promo video]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Here is some news regarding Iran. The two-day ministerial conference of the Non-Aligned Movement with 100 groups of delegates from 56 nations, along with representatives from the Organization of Islamic Countries, UNICEF, the Red Cross, UNESCO, ECCO, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, wrapped up its work in Tehran.

This two-day conference opened with key notes from the Cuban Foreign Minister who holds the rotating presidency of the movement this year. Human rights and multi-culturalism, which had been proposed by Iran during the 14th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana, Cuba, were discussed.

In other news, a member of the Public Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly says that, according to the Anti-Drug Abuse Foundation, over 500 tons of drugs are discovered in Iran annually. However, there is no accurate estimate available on the quantities of drugs entering the country, or that which is consumed in the country. Another report from Iran asserts that 25% of young addicts start their addiction while still in school, and 20% of university students presently use at least one kind of either traditional or engineered narcotic. Additionally, the spread of drug addiction and AIDS among prisoners is a very alarming trend.

Now another piece of news about Iran. The three imprisoned students of Amir Kabir University, Majid Tavakoli, Ahmad Ghassaban and Ehsan Mansouri, received visitation rights on Monday to meet with their families. According to Amir Kabir newspaper, in a statement issued last Sunday night in Evin Prison by Judge Haddad, the judge in charge of the students' case, the approved family visits and upcoming trials were announced. The trials are to be scheduled for the last part of the month of Shahrivar and are to be held behind closed doors and without access to defense attorneys.

Masoud Malek asked Mohammad-Ali Dadkhah, the lawyer for these three students, to share his views on the upcoming court case and lack of access to defense lawyers outlined in Amir Kabir newspaper in a telephone interview.

The report is as follows:

[Voice of Mohammad-Ali Dadkhah]

Our Constitution has clearly stated that court rulings must be fact-based and documented. We must note that the Constitution has declared a specific framework when it comes to establishing a court of law. This framework cannot be dismissed. Article 35 of the Constitution plainly states that in any court of law each side can choose an attorney to represent him, and if he is unable to obtain an attorney, one will be assigned to him.

Conducting a court and trial without attorneys being present is precisely against the declared principle of the Constitution. Such a thing can become possible only if the Assembly of Experts or a joint session of the legislative bodies is held and the Constitution is changed. Criminal law cannot be passed against Constitutional assertions.

On the other hand, the Iranian government has ratified international political, economic, and social treaties. It has ultimately endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and internationally accepted and signed laws that are as binding as local laws. So, if such an event takes place, not only will the Constitution and national Iranian laws be broken, but we will be infringing upon the internationally guaranteed legal rights in our courts.

[Music and video clip promo]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

And now to other news of the world.

Hurricane Felix has smashed through the southern coast of the Caribbean in Central America with winds of 250 kilometers. The US National Hurricane Center announced that Felix, now a category 5 hurricane and the most dangerous of its kind, has landed on Nicaragua and Honduras. The eye of the hurricane has been north east of Nicaragua and near the Honduran border. Behim Behzadi has prepared this report:

[Video clip, voice of Behim Behzadi]

Thousands of local people and tourists deserted the beaches in Honduras, south of the Caribbean Sea, with hurricane warnings going out. Safety measures, such as covering windows, took place while Felix has been predicted to be one of the season's most severe hurricanes this year.

On Rotan Bay Island, whose pristine cliffs and scuba diving beaches attract tourists from all over the world, transfer of people to safer areas began by special flights inland on Monday. However, airport capacities could not handle the volume of passengers. Many ended up wandering at the central airport in Honduras.

The hurricane hit the Mosquito Coast in the early hours of the morning, and then headed for north eastern Honduras and the country of Belize. Meteorologists say Felix's path is similar to that of the Central American hurricane Mitch in 1998 which left 11,000 dead and 8,000 missing in its wake.

According to the US National Hurricane Center, Felix will bring 30 centimeters of rain which will cause flood and mudslide in lower coastal areas. Passengers rushed to Belize City, Belize airport on Monday to leave for safer areas before Felix's arrival. Felix hit Belize while that country had not yet recovered from the devastating damage caused by Hurricane Dean.

Rescue workers who had gone to Punta Gorda in Belize to help with hurricane relief were ordered to evacuate that port for safety precautions.

[Video clip]

Meanwhile tropical storm Henriette gathered strength and became a hurricane heading towards Baja, California, and northern Mexico.

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

In this part of our program we have a report on the third anniversary of the massacre which took place in the gymnasium of a school in the Russian city of Beslan.

[Male voice]

Three years after the horrifying hostage crisis at a school in Beslan, Russia, in which 330 people were killed, most of them children, a group of students released 333 white balloons into the air in memory of each child. Five minutes after one o'clock in the afternoon, local time, a moment of silence was observed in the demolished area where the school used to stand.

It was exactly at such a moment that the first explosions took place at the school in Beslan three years ago, and the bloody end to the siege of the school began. Amongst the sorrowful tolls of the graveyard bells, the name of each slain child was read aloud while tears rolled down everyone's face. At the same time in Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin observed a minute of silence in respect for the victims of that tragedy at the Kremlin.

In Beslan, morning services were held on the first three days of September. However, the discussion about the most important question still continues: What caused the first explosions which lead to the crossfire and shootings, leading to the destruction of the school gymnasium ceiling where over 1000 hostages were held?

According to an inspecting member of the Russian parliament, the explosion of hand-made bombs by 32 heavily armed hostage takers at the school gymnasium was the sole cause of the ensuing tragedy and the resulting heavy casualties. However, the common view taken up by the opposition and activist groups and the victims' families is that the security forces forced the situation out of control by opening fire and throwing in fire bombs and hand grenades. Of course tens of survivors insist the source of explosions was outside the gymnasium.

Yesterday, members of the Terror Victims' Support Foundation distributed copies of a report entitled "Truths about the Hostage Tragedy of 2004 in Beslan". The leader of the Terror Victims' Support Foundation, Marina Litvinovich, says, "This report contains a conclusion and deduction in total contrast with the official investigation results. Our report is factual and realistic since many accounts in that report were reported by the hostages themselves."

Marina Litvinovich then adds:

[Video clip]

[Male voice]

“But we do not have any way of distributing our findings through television, newspaper, or radio as they are all controlled by the Kremlin. Our only option is distributing our findings among the people for free.”

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Poppy cultivation has reached a new record in Afghanistan. Reports indicate Afghanistan is set to produce over 93% of the world's opium this year. Meanwhile, poppy fields and their associated issues of drug trafficking and addiction have put Afghan President Hamid Karzai in a difficult spot.

Hassan Ardeshir has prepared this report.

[Video clip, voice of Hassan Ardeshir]

Farmers in southern Afghanistan are still continuing to plant poppies in order to make ends meet. On Sunday, a report by Sky News pointed out that planting illegal crop had hit a new record this year while meeting over 90% of the world's demand for such substances.

Last week, the United Nations announced a 17% increase in the poppy-cultivated areas. More than half of this amount is located in the Helmand region, where both Taliban forces and British troops have each taken positions.

According to the report by Sky News, farmers belonging to the Lashkargah region met with a group of anti-drug and police officials. In that meeting the officials tried to convince the farmers to replace opium poppies with other crops. However, many farmers accused the Afghan police of corruption and complained about the lack of government and international support for the farmers.

The report predicts Afghanistan will produce 9,000 tons of opium poppies which comprises 93% of world's total opium. Increase in poppy cultivation has led to increased pressure on Afghan President Hamid Karzai to come up with new ways to combat this problem including the use of aerial spraying to destroy opium poppies. Aerial spraying had previously been rejected since it could damage other crops and water supplies which would be to the advantage of the Taliban.

Many believe that increase in poppy farming has led to increase in lawlessness which is prevalent in southern Afghanistan.

[VOA promo video clip]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]

Woody Allen's latest movie is called "Cassandra's Dream". The veteran Hollywood actor and director's latest work was screened at the Venice Film Festival. Kambiz Hosseini has prepared this report.

[Video clip, voice of Kambiz Hosseini]

The well-known American actor/director Woody Allen, along with the actors of his latest movie "Cassandra's Dream", has arrived at the festival on Lido Island by the traditionally-chosen boat to attend the film's press conference. "Cassandra's Dream" which is considered to be the latest work of this stylish comedian, is not entered in awards competitions with other nominated features at this festival, even though it is screened in the official section of the festival. Woody Allen's latest movie—a dark tragedy—is completely different than his other works.

[Video clip]

Woody Allen said in his press conference that, as a comedian, he was never interested in playing Hamlet. However, he was always interested in writing tragic stories. Tragedy refers to stories of human conflicts where the story either ends in a sad ending or the hero surrenders to the opposing force.

Woody Allen has chosen his movie location to be in Great Britain once again, as done before in the case of "Scoop" and "Match Point". Colin Farrell and Ewan McGregor both believe that acting for Woody Allen has been an extraordinary experience for them. McGregor believes that despite the tragic storyline of the movie, Woody Allen made him laugh quite often during filming. He expressed satisfaction with the degree of artistic freedom that Mr. Allen gives his actors.

Colin Farrell, called his experience with Woody Allen "beautiful", and said that he was pleased that he was not playing the hero in this movie since playing the hero would place a great deal of pressure on the actor's

shoulders. “Cassandra’s Dream” will be shown in US theatres starting November 30.

[VOA promo video clip]

[Host Setareh Derakhshesh]
Continuing “News and Views” with:
Tens of people killed in a suicide attack in Pakistan

TRANSLATION ENDS HERE