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SITUATION REPORTS

AFRICA

EGYPT: Marches Against Policy

On 9 February, protests in multiple cities were dispersed by police. The protests had two themes, women's rights and the presidential powers, as well as protesting the death of an activist while in police custody. In many areas, the protesters were armed with rocks and debris, though some did possess petrol bombs.

AMERICAS

BRAZIL: Provides Drone Raids

On 8 February, Bolivian Interior Minister Carlos Romero and Justice Minister Marcia Peligrini signed an agreement allowing drones belonging to Brazil to patrol into Bolivia. The patrols aim to halt the transportation and production of drugs along the border. The agreement also includes assistance for Bolivia in the placement of radar stations and detection of money laundering operations.

PERU: Reenters Antarctic Station

On 11 February, President Ollanta Humala held a video conference with researchers on the "Humbolt" which is traveling to Manchu Pichu base on King George Island. The expedition is the first in five years, and Humala hopes to continue funding research at the base. The President was scheduled to begin a visit to the base on 9 February, which weather prevented.

EUROPE

DENMARK: Considers Asylum Placement

On 11 February, immigration services announced the possibility of sending asylum seekers from Somalia back. The service cites a delegation visit to the capital in October 2012 as proof that the country is stabilized enough for returning asylum seekers to be safe. Human rights activists and the United Nations Asylum Association are opposing the move, citing rising rape and violence rates within Mogadishu.

MIDDLE EAST

BAHRAIN: Disperses Protests

On 11 February, protesters marched through Pearl Square on the anniversary of the suppressed uprising two years ago. Protesters were dispersed with stun grenades and tear gas. This march follows opposition al-Wefaq led-protests in Sanabis near the capital.

SAUDI ARABIA: Succession Clarified

At the beginning of February, King Abdullah, 89, appointed 67-year-old Prince Muqrin bin Abdul Aziz ibn al-Saud as Second Deputy Prime Minister and third in line to the throne. As both King Abdullah and Crown Prince Salman, who is 77 and First Deputy Prime Minister, are in poor health, Muqrin is expected to take over more of the duties of governance. Muqrin has served as intelligence head and supports the policy of gradual reform initiated by King Abdullah. He is described as “liberal-minded” and respected in Washington and London. As the youngest son of King Abdul Aziz al-Saud, founder of modern Saudi Arabia, Muqrin will be the last of his generation and ruling responsibility will then devolve to the grandsons of the founding King.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

BANGLADESH: Links Bank Data

On 13 February, the Bangladesh Bank activated a new database system which will increase the ability to research foreign monetary interactions with the country. The system monitors import, export, lines of credit, and remittances from all branch banks in real time. The bank is currently working on training for the program and monitoring for bugs.

INDONESIA: Passes Terror Funding Bill

On 11 February, a special committee in the House of Representatives approved a bill which would grant law enforcement the ability to freeze accounts with suspicion of terrorist activities. The bill will go before the full house for a vote in the next session. Finance minister Agus Martowardojo stated that the bill needs to pass in order for Indonesia to remain cooperative with the international Financial Action Task Force.

THAILAND: Discusses Anti-Terror Measures

On 12 February, Deputy Prime Minister Chalerm Yoobam-rung announced the possibility of a curfew being imposed in certain districts of Southern Thailand. The measure is meant to curtail insurgent activity of all forms and assist law enforcement in combatting all activities. The measure will be put forward for approval on 15 February.

BRIEFS

AFRICA

MOROCCO: Call for Cooperation on Terrorism

Summary: A statement by the Moroccan King condemning terrorism and calling for cooperation of Islamic countries to battle threats in the region could lead to positive cooperative efforts, otherwise the situation could become more threatening.

Development: On 7 February, a speech written by King Mohammad VI of Morocco was read by Abdelilah Benkirane to the members present at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Cairo. This speech condemned terrorism and extremism in the region and warned that the threat of terrorist activities is not only present in Mali but in all countries in the region. The Moroccan King emphasized the need for Muslim countries to address the reasons for crises in the Islamic world rather than blaming outside factors for these problems. He believes that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation needs to discuss these issues and push for involvement and cooperation among the Islamic nations for solutions. He stated that international cooperative efforts will be important, and Morocco will remain actively involved in these efforts.

Analysis: The Moroccan king has been working hard to address the key issues of the region of North Africa. Through this speech, he has pointed out the critical importance of resolving domestic issues that serves as the breeding ground for religious insurgents. At the same time, the King's warning that the threat of cross-border terrorism and extremism affects all countries of the region and requires more cooperative efforts to battle this threat. Behind the diplomatic language of the King, lies Morocco's concern about trans-border Islamic extremism in its own neighbors, Algeria and Mauretania. The United States and Morocco have had good relations, and the United States has pushed for Morocco to be a model in the region. This speech may be an important step in improving cooperation between countries in the region to reach a solution. If Islamic countries follow the Moroccan king's lead, then situations may improve, and relations between the United States and Morocco may become even stronger as a result.

[Victoria Laugalis]

EAST ASIA

CHINA: Mass Arrest and Detention of Tibetans

Summary: China's crackdown in Tibet, and arrest of some 70 Tibetans for encouraging self-immolation, could engender escalating protests in Tibetan-majority areas and heighten criticism around the world, including the US, about humanitarian concerns.

Development: On 8 February, in a crackdown on self-immolation, China's state-run Xinhua news agency reported that since November, the police in Huangnan, Qinghai, have detained 58 Tibetans while also formally arresting 12 others over self-immolations in the area. Since 2009, Tibetans have committed nearly 100 acts of self-immolation, protesting Chinese rule and demanding the right of their exiled leader, the Dalai Lama, to return from India. According to Xinhua, the Dalai Lama partners with other groups outside China seeking to challenge the Communist government's hold over Tibetan regions by encouraging the self-immolations. The news agency also reported that among those arrested was a man named Punhua, who was charged with homicide and giving speeches that encourage self-immolation at the funerals of those that died from the act. The report did not give any details about the other suspects. The U.S. State Department has expressed concern about the "deteriorating human rights situation in Tibetan areas" and criminally punishing those associated with the protestors. The United States also continues to urge the Chinese government to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama.

Analysis: Harsher, unjust treatment of those deemed by the government "encouragers of self-immolation" will not likely break the will of the Tibetan people. The actions by Chinese officials are raising humanitarian questions on the methods the Chinese government. With the US and others requesting dialogue and empathy from the Chinese government in the past, these mass arrests will likely make those requests more urgent. The Tibetan people are not likely to respond to the actions of the Chinese government with fewer acts of self-immolation. If the Tibetans respond defiantly, the situation may escalate even further soon. As protests continue, the Chinese government may begin arresting and detaining more Tibetans in an effort to discourage the protests and self-immolations and the situation in Tibet could likely get worse. Requests may become demands for mediation by the US and other countries if the Chinese government does not seek a humane way of handling this growing situation.

[Rebecca Childs]

JAPAN: Territorial Dispute with China Escalates

Summary: A Chinese frigate illuminated a Japanese destroyer with fire control radar for several minutes near the disputed islands of Senkaku, escalating tensions between China and Japan.

Development: A Japanese destroyer on patrol near the disputed islands of Sankaku was locked with a weapons firing radar from a Chinese frigate approximately 3 miles away on 30 January. The Sankaku islands, located in the East China Sea, are claimed by China, Japan, and Taiwan. They are currently controlled by Japan. Tokyo has launched a formal protest with Beijing condemning these actions and calling for a more peaceful approach to the dispute. China has not admitted to locking fire control radar on a Japanese ship but insists that Japanese presence near the islands is illegal and provocative.

Analysis: This incident points to escalated tension between the two nations and increased potential for an accidental or deliberate conflict. This incident reveals the lack of progress in talks between Japanese and Chinese officials to peacefully resolving the island dispute. The increased tensions between China and Japan indicate a high probability of US military intervention if an attack is provoked. The current military and economic relationship between US and Japanese forces may lead to increasingly provocative actions from Japan against China, further escalating the situation. China refuses to recognize territorial sea boundaries established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and therefore could potentially attack a Japanese vessel in its own established territorial waters. If this happens, it would likely cause a military conflict between the two nations and draw the US in due to Washington's security alliance with Japan.

[Chris Lelah]

EUROPE

PORTUGAL: Globalizing Torture

Summary: A report released by the Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI) states that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) globalized torture by using foreign countries to help with their operations, which could potentially disrupt the ongoing operations of the US.

Development: On 5 February, a report was published by the Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI) that claims 54 foreign states were involved in aiding the CIA with the torture of terrorism suspects. The OSJI report states that the "secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations, designed to be conducted outside the United States under cover of secrecy, could not have been implemented without the active participation of foreign governments." Many of the European countries became involved in the rendition program when a series of decisions were made in secret at a NATO conference three weeks after 9/11. Portugal was one of twenty-five European countries accused of supporting the United States with the torture of suspects. Portugal permitted the use of its airspace for flights associated with the CIA's extraordinary rendition operations. In 2006, the Council of Europe's report stated that Portugal was used as a "stopover" for flights involving the unlawful transfer of detainees. The Non-Government Organizations (NGO) Reprieve has identified at least 115 suspected stopovers between 2001 and 2006 that

were associated with the CIA. The NGO further identified at least six known extraordinary renditions of ghost prisoners that were facilitated through the Portuguese jurisdiction.

Analysis: Up to two dozen European countries could face proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights for their involvement in the extraordinary rendition operation that took place after 9/11. The new accusations have the potential to cause strains between the US and the European countries that could now be facing court hearings for their transgressions. The recent decrease in US military on the Azores Islands in Portugal coupled with the current allegations could possibly create tension between the US and the Portuguese public. The publication appears to have been timed with the confirmation hearing of John Brennan, President Obama's choice to head the CIA. In 2005, Brennan stated that he regarded the rendition cases as "an absolutely vital tool" in counterterrorism. The current media attention on the new CIA director's opinion on torture could have a serious effect on the public in the US. Furthermore, it could potentially cause more scrutiny on current CIA operations.

[Casey Finchum]

RUSSIA: Military Presence in Syria Complicates Situation

Summary: A Russian naval base located in Syria contains state of the art Russian air defenses making a US invasion improbable. Any damage to the Russian base could cause retaliation and escalating violence in the area.

Development: On 25 January, Russia made it clear that any disruption in the naval base at Tartus would be resisted, as it is Russia's only naval port to the Mediterranean Sea. With the growing concern for lives in Syria, the US has continued to aid the Syrian rebels in their war against their government. While the US denies any plan to invade Syria, they are making plans if intervention is necessary. Meanwhile, relations between Russia and the US have deteriorated to the point that the possibility of invading Syria and risking damage to Russia's naval base in Tartus becomes increasingly controversial.

Analysis: The situation in Syria is deteriorating with no sign of ending. There are growing concerns that the Syrian government may use chemical weapons against its own people. If this occurs, it could lead to US intervention. US and NATO strategy would likely be to attack through airstrikes. If there were to be collateral damage to the Russian naval base, it may lead to Russian retaliation. The potential conflict between Russia and the US would overwhelm the conflict in Syria. Intelligence reports have already concluded Russian military forces have been deploying to Tartus over the last month. It is unsure of Russia's intent for the deployments, but Russian diplomats claim to be preparing for the evacuation of Russian citizens in Syria if the war reaches Tartus.

[Taylor Stipe]

MIDDLE EAST

IRAN: New Stealth Fighter Jet Unveiled

Summary: Iran's new stealth fighter jet is allegedly functional, but operational capacity remains uncertain.

Development: On 2 February, Iran unveiled a new domestically built single seat fighter jet called the Qaher F-313. Iranian officials claim it is built for defensive purposes and can carry advanced armaments along with performing short take-offs and landings. The aircraft has a very low radar cross section and is also purportedly painted with a radar absorbent coating to further improve its stealth capabilities. Video of the aircraft in flight has been released by the Iranian government, but there is speculation that the video shows a small remote control version of the jet. The true operational status of the jet remains uncertain.

Analysis: The design of the aircraft is very different from modern stealth fighters. The videos released show that the jet is very small compared to a normal sized fighter jet, and aviation experts have pointed out many design flaws in the aircraft that cast doubts on its viability. These include a cockpit that looks too small to comfortably fit a pilot, an overly simplistic instrument panel, air intakes that are too small, lack of an afterburner nozzle, an airframe with questionable aerodynamics, and no immediately apparent way to attach armaments to the aircraft. It is unlikely that the jet is operational, and even if a fully functional version is produced, the capabilities of the aircraft would likely be minimal, serving only as a defensive deterrent. The aircraft is likely to be ineffective in combat with modern US fighters.

ISRAEL: E1 Settlements Increase Tensions

Summary: Israel began building settlements in occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank/East Jerusalem area, also known as E1, further angering the Palestinian people and Israel's Arab neighbors.

Development: Since 1967 Israel has continued to expand Jewish settlements in the Palestinian controlled E1 area. As recently as the United Nations vote concerning Palestine, Israel began construction of 11,000 new housing units in E1. This construction has led to Palestinians camping out on the settlements in protest. Palestinians argue that the settlements keep them from freedom of movement and expression, places to worship, education, and natural resources. The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) had an appointment to meet with Israel on 29 January, but Israel boycotted the session. The council decided that Israeli settlements violate Palestinian human rights and the Fourth Geneva Convention. The council agreed that Israel should discontinue construction in E1 and rescheduled an appointment with Israel for October 2013.

Analysis: The Palestinian peaceful protests let Israel know that development in Palestinian territory is not acceptable. These new settlements inhibit Palestinian freedoms. As the UN currently supports Palestinian complaints, the US, as a staunch supporter of Israel, may be caught in the backlash of any actions taken against Israel. Without any explanation for the settlements, an understanding is unlikely to be reached with their allies and the UN. The US may encourage Israel to attend the rescheduled appointment with the UNHRC to reach a peaceful resolution of the situation and lower tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbors.
[Ashley Ramirez]

SOUTH ASIA

NEPAL: Chief Justice May Lead Government

Summary: At the largest gathering of United Communist Party of Nepal (UCPN), the party chairman suggested that the current Chief Justice should step in as acting prime minister during the upcoming elections, potentially ensuring fair elections.

Development: On 8 February, UCPN party chairman, Pushpal Kamal Dahal or Prachanda, proposed that the current Chief Justice should step in as prime minister and preside over parliamentary elections. He proposed this solution on the last day of the largest UCPN gathering since Maoist rebels abolished the monarchy in 2006. This is proposed as being the final solution to a deadlocked government that was supposed to hold elections in November of 2011, but did not due to unrest in the government.

Analysis: UCPN is currently the ruling party in Nepal, so what they decide as a party does carry some weight. If the Chief Justice is approved as acting prime minister through elections, it will give Nepal a chance to finally hold their elections. Elections will then take Nepal one step closer to democracy, potentially opening up the area to further US and Western relations, as well as providing another democratic nation in the area.
[Chelsea McNally]

PAKISTAN: Iranian Natural Gas Pipeline to be Built

SUMMARY: Iran pledged Saturday to go ahead with the construction of a natural gas pipeline that will supply Pakistan with up to 750 million cubic feet of natural gas per day, despite pressure from the United States to nullify the arrangement.

DEVELOPMENT: Near the end of January, Pakistan's cabinet approved a waiver that allows the nation's government to award the contract for the construction of the pipeline to private Iranian firm Tadbir Energy. On Saturday, Iran made a public show of support for the project, pledging to see it finished, as well as promoting the benefits of a bilateral agreement between Iran and Pakistan on the rest of the Muslim world. The Iranian

government is offering a loan of USD 500 million to Pakistan to lay its 785km section of pipeline after China and Russia backed out of the USD 1.5 billion project under pressure from the United States. In March 2012, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned that “beginning the construction of [the] pipeline, either as an Iranian project or as a joint project, would violate [U.S.] Iran sanctions law.”

ANALYSIS: This prospective agreement threatens to further break down relations not only between the United States and Pakistan, but Iran as well, and it comes at a time when Pakistan is needed to ensure a successful drawdown of US forces in Afghanistan. The agreement, however, also alleviates a crucial energy shortage in Pakistan that caused multiple protests last summer over 20-hour-long power cuts. The US opposes the pipeline because of sanctions placed on Iran by Western nations in an attempt to slow or stop Iranian progression toward nuclear weapons. As the company slated to build the pipeline, Tadbir Energy, is a subsidiary of an investment firm with close ties to Iran’s Office of the Supreme Leader, US officials have legitimate concerns as to whether this agreement is an attempt to bypass those sanctions. Iran has demonstrated a willingness to circumvent other the sanctions through alliances with other nations as demonstrated recently by its attempts to secure ties with the new leadership of Egypt. While it is a distinct likelihood that the US will also impose sanctions on Pakistan for aiding Iran in their export of natural resources, it appears that Pakistan’s critical energy needs outweigh that looming possibility.

[Derek Rousseau]

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EAGLE EYE EDITING BOARD:

KYLE PARENT, kyle.parent@eagleeyeintel.com

CODY WIEBE, cody.wiebe@eagleeyeintel.com

COLEEN PARKER, coleen.parker@eagleeyeintel.com

JOE HARRIS, joe.harris@eagleeyeintel.com