

CrisisWatch

A monthly bulletin by the ICG on current and potential conflicts around the world



1 February 2005, N°18

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CrisisWatch:

- summarises briefly developments during the previous month in some 70 situations of current or potential conflict, listed alphabetically by region, providing references and links to more detailed information sources (all references mentioned are hyperlinked in the electronic version of this bulletin);
- assesses whether the overall situation in each case has, during the previous month, significantly deteriorated, significantly improved, or on balance remained more or less unchanged;
- alerts readers to situations where, in the coming month, there is a particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict, or a particular conflict resolution opportunity (noting that in some instances there may in fact be both); and
- summarises Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers that have been published in the last month.

CrisisWatch is compiled by Crisis Group's Brussels Research Unit, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our more than 100 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 50 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

January 2005 Trends



Deteriorated Situations

Bangladesh (p.5) Nepal (p.6)
Ethiopia/Eritrea (p.3) Pakistan (p.6)
Guinea (p.4) Philippines (p.7)
India (non-Kashmir) (p.5) Swaziland (p.3)
Kazakhstan (p.4) Tajikistan (p.5)
Kyrgyzstan (p.5)



Improved Situations

Central African Republic (p.2)
Indonesia (p.7)
Iraq (p.11)
Israel/Occupied Territories (p.10)
Sri Lanka (p.6)
Sudan - North/South (p.3)



Unchanged Situations

Afghanistan (p.5), Albania (p.7), Algeria (p.11), Angola (p.3), Armenia (p.8), Azerbaijan (p.8), Basque Country (Spain) (p.9), Bolivia (p.10), Bosnia & Herzegovina (p.8), Burundi (p.2), Chad (p.2), Chechnya (Russia) (p.9), China (internal) (p.6), Colombia (p.10), Côte d'Ivoire (p.4), DR Congo (p.2), Ecuador (p.10), Egypt (p.12), Georgia (p.9), Haiti (p.10), Iran (p.11), Kashmir (p.6), Kosovo (p.8), Lebanon (p.11), Macedonia (p.8), Maldives (p.6), Mauritania (p.12), Moldova (p.9), Myanmar/Burma (p.7), Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) (p.9), Nigeria (p.4), North Korea (p.6), Northern Ireland (UK) (p.9), Peru (p.10), Rwanda (p.2), Saudi Arabia (p.11), Serbia & Montenegro (p.8), Sierra Leone (p.4), Somalia (p.3), Sudan - Darfur (p.3), Syria (p.11), Taiwan Strait (p.6), Thailand (p.7), Turkey (p.9), Turkmenistan (p.5), Uganda (p.2), Ukraine (p.9), Uzbekistan (p.5), Venezuela (p.10), Western Sahara (p.12), Yemen (p.11), Zimbabwe (p.3)

February 2005 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alert

Bangladesh



Conflict Resolution Opportunity

None

The International Crisis Group

Crisis Group is an independent, non-profit, multinational organisation, with over 100 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict. Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, Crisis Group produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers, and backed up with high level advocacy. Crisis Group is co-chaired by President Emeritus of the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations Leslie H. Gelb and former European Commissioner for External Relations Lord Patten of Barnes, and its President and Chief Executive is former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.



Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

➤ Burundi Consolidation of fragile peace process despite continued sporadic violence between newly unified army and sole remaining rebels, Forces Nationales de Libération (FNL). Army claimed 45 FNL rebels killed, and thousands of civilians fled, in fighting east of Bujumbura 1 January. FNL denied role in shooting of governor of Bubanza province near Rukoko stronghold 23 January. Electoral commission set 28 February date for delayed constitutional referendum, but set no date for elections; published register of over 3 million voters; detractors pointed to anomalies, while UPRONA Tutsi party figure said elections not currently possible. South African mediator Jacob Zuma warned President Ndayizeye against amending draft constitution before referendum to allow him to run again. Government declared half-million people at famine risk in northern Kirundo and Muyinga provinces.

- [“Regional negotiators reject efforts to amend constitution”](#), IRIN, 28 Jan. 2005.
- [“Reports of flawed voter list leaves transition floundering”](#), IRIN, 24 Jan. 2005.
- [“New national army for Burundians”](#), BBC, 4 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°20, [Elections in Burundi: The Peace Wager](#), 9 Dec. 2004.

➤ Central African Republic Crisis sparked by 31 December 2004 court decision to disqualify all but 5 candidates from upcoming presidential elections resolved 23 January. Talks between President Bozizé and opposition, mediated by Gabon’s President Bongo, led to announcement of election delay to 13 March, with 6 more candidates now permitted to run - but not former President Ange-Félix Patasse. Bangui referred possible war crimes abuses during Patasse’s and Bozizé’s 2002-2003 power struggle to International Criminal Court.

- [“Election postponed, but most banned candidates can now run”](#), IRIN, 25 Jan. 2005.
- [“War crimes in Central African Rep go to The Hague”](#), Afrol, 12 Jan. 2005.

➤ Chad Unidentified gunmen involved in fighting in southeast, along border with Darfur. Sudanese National Movement for Reform and Development rebel group agreed deal with Sudanese government N’djamena 3 January to encourage refugee return.

- [“Refugee camps unaffected by latest security problems in east”](#), IRIN, 17 Jan. 2005.

➤ Democratic Republic of Congo Shaky transitional government avoided collapse despite former rebel leader Jean-Pierre Bemba’s threat to withdraw support by 31 January if elections scheduled for 30 June postponed till October. Electoral commission president, Apollinaire Malu Malu, said holding elections June would be difficult, sparking Kinshasa protests, which killed 4, and general strike in capital. South African president Mbeki visited DR Congo 13 January, shuttling between president and 4 vice-presidents. In east of country, uneasy peace in UN-imposed buffer zone unable to prevent militia attacks on aid agencies North Kivu. Rwanda

welcomed African Union communiqué calling for “forceful disarmament” of Rwandan ex-FAR and Interhamwe rebels in eastern DR Congo. Rejecting UN claims of Rwandan “covert residual presence” in DR Congo, Rwanda’s foreign minister claimed Congolese army helping arm Rwandan Hutu rebels. In Ituri province, outbreak of violence between Hema and Lendu militias led 10-15,000 to flee; UNHCR said many quickly returned. Disarmament process disrupted by lack of militia cooperation; both sides blamed each other for 28 January burning of She village, 60km northeast of Bunia. EU officials announced European police mission in Kinshasa to be operational by mid-February.

- [“Militiamen burn down Ituri village”](#), IRIN, 28 Jan. 2005.
- [“Militias disrupting disarmament and reintegration efforts in DR of Congo”](#), UN News, 27 Jan. 2005.
- [“African force to disarm Interahamwe in Congo”](#), *The East African*, 17 Jan. 2005.
- [“DR Congo: Army should not appoint war criminals”](#), Human Rights Watch press release, 14 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°21, [Back to the Brink in the Congo](#), 17 Dec. 2004.

➤ Rwanda Government welcomed African Union communiqué calling for “forceful disarmament” of Rwandan ex-FAR and Interhamwe rebels in eastern DR Congo and support towards implementation of Joint Verification Mechanism. Rwanda rejected UN expert panel conclusion that Rwanda maintains “covert residual presence” in DR Congo. Investigative hearings into 1994 genocide in “gacaca” village courts officially began 15 January, with first trials expected February; up to 1 million Rwandans may face trials.

- [“Rwanda denies violating Congo arms embargo”](#), Afrol, 26 Jan. 2005.
- [“One million Rwandans to face killing charges in village courts”](#), *The Guardian*, 15 Jan. 2005.
- Comment by Don Cheadle and John Prendergast (Crisis Group), [“Rwanda’s lessons yet to be learned”](#), *The Boston Globe*, 8 Jan. 2005.
- For background to ICTR, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°69, [The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda: Time for Pragmatism](#), 26 Sept. 2003.

➤ Uganda Limited unilateral government ceasefire ended 31 December, marking return to twin military and negotiating strategy for ending Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency. Government envoy Betty Bigombe held new meetings with LRA commander Sam Kolo. Army said 28 LRA rebels killed in separate incidents in Palabek 20 January; government officials and LRA met same day Gulu, 20 km to south. Following end of Sudanese north-south civil war, John Garang, leader of Sudan People’s Liberation Movement, gave LRA 72 hours to leave Sudan, further depriving LRA of refuge outside Uganda. Meanwhile, thousands of refugees from Congolese North Kivu and Ituri provinces entered Uganda, according to UNHCR. Domestically, President Museveni strengthened grip through cabinet reshuffle ahead of debate on possible third term from 2006. International Criminal Court expressed hope first Ugandan war crimes trials could begin within 6 months.

- [“Captured Brig. was on LRA peace team”](#), *The Monitor*, 24 Jan. 2005.
- [“President shuffles cabinet ahead of debate on presidential term limits”](#), IRIN, 14 Jan. 2005.
- [“Kony must leave Sudan, says Garang”](#), *The New Vision*, 11 Jan. 2005.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°77, *Northern Uganda: Understanding and Solving the Conflict*, 14 Apr. 2004; and Crisis Group Issues Report N°3, *HIV/AIDS as a Security Issue in Africa: Lessons from Uganda*, 16 Apr. 2004.

HORN OF AFRICA

↓ Ethiopia/Eritrea Rhetoric heated up as Eritrea denounced Ethiopian troop deployments along disputed border, despite recent Ethiopian 5-point peace plan proposed December. Having accepted earlier border ruling on Badme town “in principle” December 2004, Ethiopian PM said “adjustments” needed; opposition demonstration of 50,000 in Addis Ababa warned against concessions. UN Secretary-General Special Representative Lloyd Axworthy visited Addis but not Asmara in trip to region; Eritrea says 2000 Algiers agreement (and 2002 border ruling) left no room for negotiation, and refuses to meet with Axworthy.

- [“Ethiopian paper castigates govt over border row with Eritrea”](#), *The Reporter*, 21 Jan. 2005.
- [“Military officer says troop movements near border ‘provocative’”](#), IRIN, 21 Jan. 2005.
- [“Ethiopia PM wants border changes”](#), BBC, 13 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°68, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?*, 24 Sept. 2003.

→ Somalia MPs voted 168-79 to endorse PM Gedi’s cabinet 13 January, having rejected earlier cabinet December 2004; opened way for government relocation from Nairobi to Mogadishu. African Union (AU) promise of troops to bolster government, without detailing mandate or size, led to apparent split in government: President Yusuf requested 20,000-strong force, while PM Gedi said government has no plans to deploy foreign troops. Security worries brought to fore by Mogadishu shooting of General Yusuf Ahmed Sarinle, latest in string of assassinations apparently aimed at advocates of AU deployment and partners in Western counter-terrorism efforts. Transitional government said planned early February transfer would go ahead nonetheless.

- [“Relocation plans going ahead despite killing of police chief in Mogadishu”](#), IRIN, 25 Jan. 2005.
- Comment by Matt Bryden and John Prendergast (Crisis Group), [“State building or terrorist vacuum? Time to pay closer attention to Somalia”](#), *The Chicago Tribune*, 16 Jan. 2005.
- [“Somali cabinet wins crucial vote”](#), BBC, 13 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°88, *Somalia: Continuation of War by Other Means?*, 21 Dec. 2004.

↑ Sudan - North/South Formal signing of Naivasha deal 9 January. UN Security Council expressed hope deal could be step towards resolving Darfur situation, with formation of Khartoum coalition government, decentralisation and interim constitution. Discussion on UN monitoring force in south and central Sudan - to number up to 10,000 - underway. EU unfroze development aid to Sudan 25 January. In further positive development, opposition umbrella group National Democratic Alliance (NDA) signed political agreement with government to reintegrate NDA and lift state of emergency in force since 1989. Meanwhile, at least 20 killed in Beja protest for greater autonomy Port Sudan following demands for greater power and wealth-sharing on Naivasha lines; state governor later said some demands could be met after April implementation of north-south peace.

- [“Protesters die in Sudan clashes”](#), BBC, 29 Jan. 2005.

- [“Guns stop ‘crying’ in southern Sudan”](#), *The Washington Post*, 24 Jan. 2005.
- [“Elements of comprehensive peace agreement”](#), Institute for Security Studies.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°19, *Sudan’s Dual Crises: Refocusing on IGAD*, 5 Oct. 2004.

→ Sudan - Darfur Insecurity continued with multiple ceasefire breaches and intensified government security operations. U.S. proposal for UN sanctions to reflect crisis rejected by China and Russia 25 January; UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, speaking at African Union Abuja summit, said sanctions should remain option. WHO suggested humanitarian crisis may be easing, but violence continued, with fighting in West Darfur, razing of several villages South Darfur and 105 killed in Hamada town in government operation. Government aerial attack killed 100 in Shangil Tobaya town 26 January drawing sharp international criticism. AU said monitors initially prevented from investigating. Negotiations between main rebel groups and government slated for February. Long-awaited UN commission of enquiry concluded state-sponsored genocide had not taken place in Darfur, but cited multiple abuses of international humanitarian law. U.S. and EU continued to disagree on possible UN Security Council referral of crimes to International Criminal Court.

- [“U.N. panel finds no genocide in Darfur but urges tribunals”](#), *The Washington Post*, 1 Feb. 2005.
- [“Fresh wave of deadly clashes in Sudan’s Darfur region – UN”](#), UN News, 26 Jan. 2005.
- [“Targeting the Fur: Mass killings in Darfur”](#), Human Rights Watch briefing paper, 24 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°19, *Sudan’s Dual Crises: Refocusing on IGAD*, 5 Oct. 2004.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

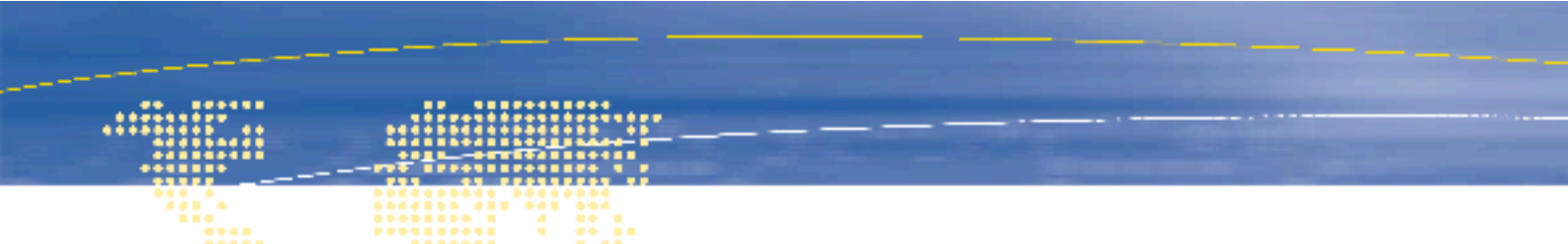
→ Angola Debate began on preparations for scheduled September 2006 elections: key issues include voter registration, role of electoral commission, and concerns over highly-armed civilian population. Angola’s first justice ombudsman appointed; human rights activists criticised opaque process, forcing public hearing. Oil began to flow from Bomboco field in separatist Cabinda province; tens of thousands took part in autonomy march 31 January.

- [“Angola’s oil-rich Cabinda province rallies for self-rule”](#), AFP, 31 Jan. 2005.
- [“Debate over the electoral process hotting up”](#), IRIN, 19 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°61, *Angola’s Choice: Reform or Regress*, 7 Apr. 2003.

→ Swaziland Unionised workers held 2-day general strike in Manzini to protest draft constitution being debated in parliament. Unions fear draft will further entrench power of monarchy. Swaziland, headed by King Mswati III, has world’s highest HIV/AIDS infection rate and is Africa’s last absolute monarchy.

- [“Swazi unions in anti-king strike”](#), BBC, 25 Jan. 2005.

→ Zimbabwe Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) pushed for postponement of elections from March to June 2005; electoral bill and independent electoral commission signed into law 10 January, with 5 commission-members appointed 21 January in moves designed to placate Southern



African Development Community. South African ANC Secretary-General Motlanthe cited concerns over requirement of police permission for MDC meetings. Repressive media law came into force 7 January stipulating prison for non-accredited journalists; newly-opened *Weekly Times* newspaper faced government ban after first edition. South African trades' unionists reaffirmed determination for fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe, backed by ANC; previous COSATU delegation deported October 2004. In U.S. Senate hearings Sec. State Condoleezza Rice termed Zimbabwe "outpost of tyranny". Former information minister Jonathon Moyo began defamation proceedings against Zanu-PF figures and fought exclusion from election as internal party row continued.

- "Public switches off as electioneering begins", IWPR, 24 Jan. 2005.
- "The rise and fall of Mugabe's spin doctor", BBC, 21 Jan. 2005.
- "Zimbabwe: the terror and abuse goes on", *The Guardian*, 18 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°85, *Zimbabwe: Another Election Chance*, 30 Nov. 2004.

WEST AFRICA

↳ Côte d'Ivoire South African President Mbeki's African Union (AU)-backed peace mission so far failed to break political deadlock. President Gbagbo continued to insist on referendum to approve change to constitution's Article 35 on presidential eligibility; opposition charged referendum impossible in split country without electoral register. AU Gabon conference communiqué called for strengthening of UN ONUCI peacekeepers and stated referendum "one of the options"; rebel Forces Nouvelles accused Gbagbo of preparing for war and Mbeki of "betrayal". Abuja AU summit 30 January soured by Ivorian claims neighbours profiting from instability, while UN confirmed existence of human rights blacklist of Ivorians who could face criminal proceedings. Residents of Abidjan's Adjame suburb protested against Gbagbo-supporting Groupe Patriotique pour la Paix militia, accusing them of extortion. UN authorised repairs (but not rearming) of Ivorian air planes damaged in French attack November 2004. Draft Security Council resolution to be voted on February would give increased stop-and-search powers to UN peacekeepers.

- "UN confirms existence of blacklist of human rights abusers", IRIN, 31 Jan. 2005.
- "Côte d'Ivoire air force authorised to fly again", Afrol, 25 Jan. 2005.
- "Ivorian nationality row worsens", BBC, 12 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°82, *Côte d'Ivoire: No Peace in Sight*, 12 July 2004.

↳ Guinea At least 100 arrested following apparent attempt to assassinate President Conté 19 January in Conakry; police said grenades and guns found near scene. Conté hinted at outside involvement in subsequent speech; some opposition figures suggested coup attempt excuse for crackdown. Sierra Leone put borders on alert to prevent those implicated fleeing Guinea. Newly-appointed PM's attempts to relaunch dialogue with opposition stymied by arrest of Antoine Soromou, official of opposition Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée, on identity card irregularities.

- "S.Leone on alert at borders for Guinean dissidents", Reuters AlertNet, 25 Jan. 2005.
- "One hundred' arrests in Guinea", BBC, 25 Jan. 2005.

- "Opposition leader arrested after new PM tries to reopen dialogue", IRIN, 7 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°74, *Guinea: Uncertainties at the End of an Era*, 19 Dec. 2003.

↳ Liberia UN peacekeepers strengthened presence Maryland county southeast Liberia, near border with Côte d'Ivoire, as riots followed spate of ritual killings. Amid fears of insufficient focus on re-integration of former combatants, residents of Bong County claimed ex-fighters terrorising local population; ex-soldiers rioted Gbarnga 26 January over unpaid resettlement allowances; disarmament commission said up to 4,000 former combatants could be forced out of school due to lack of funds.

- "Make sure mirage it is not", *The Analyst*, 25 Jan. 2005.
- "Liberian 'ritual killings' alert", BBC, 25 Jan. 2005.
- "Former combatants expelled from school after failure to pay fees", IRIN, 13 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 Dec. 2004.

↳ Nigeria Government-appointed human rights commission reported on abuses 1966-1999 after 2-year delay; recommended 3 former military leaders, including potential candidate in 2007 elections, General Babangida, be investigated for killings and excluded from politics. Opponents claimed Obasanjo regime increasingly dictatorial; leader of president's own People's Democratic Party quit 11 January amid rivalries over party nomination for 2007 election. Obasanjo announced 3-month national conference to debate constitutional reform; opposition figures claimed move designed to circumvent National Assembly. National police chief resigned 18 January over suspected corruption; separately, UK authorities said newly re-instated governor of Plateau province may be charged with money-laundering.

- "Nigerians to meet on constitution", BBC, 13 Jan. 2005.
- "Rights panel wanted three ex-military rulers probed for killings", IRIN, 12 Jan. 2005.
- "Nigeria ruling party chief quits after coup warning", Afrol, 11 Jan. 2005.

↳ Sierra Leone General strike 3-4 January ended peacefully with government concessions. Sierra Leonean media reported continued Guinean occupation of diamond-rich Yenga and harassment of Sierra Leonean residents.

- "Kabbah's legacy in 2007?", *Concord*, 25 Jan. 2005.
- "Good fences, good neighbours", *The Standard Times*, 21 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 Dec. 2004, and N°67, *Sierra Leone: The State of Security and Governance*, 2 Sept. 2003.

Asia / Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

↳ Kazakhstan Fearing repeat of Ukraine and Georgia-style revolutions, government intensified campaign against opposition and civil society groups: Almaty court ordered dissolution of Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DVK), leading opposition political party, on charges of political extremism and "inciting social tension", and arrested DVK

protesters. Ruling followed opening of case in December against George Soros-funded Open Society Institute for supposed non-payment of tax bills.

- "Kazakh leadership fears upheaval", IWPR, 7 Jan. 2005.
- "Kazakh opposition party shut down", Human Rights Watch letter, 7 Jan. 2005.

↓ Kyrgyzstan Government appeared increasingly nervous ahead of 27 February parliamentary elections, tightening grip on power and blasting supposed international provocateurs who seek to bring Ukraine-style revolution to Kyrgyzstan. Controversial election commission decision to bar former diplomat and opposition party leader Roza Otunbaeva from running sparked protests outside parliament, but opposition remains divided and unlikely to mount serious challenge to pro-government candidates. President Akaev's daughter, son, and 2 sisters-in-law registered as candidates.

- "Rights activist warns of election violence", IRIN, 27 Jan. 2005.
- "Kyrgyz opposition under pressure", IWPR, 21 Jan. 2005.
- "For president, parliamentary elections a family affair", RFE/RL, 17 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°81, *Political Transition in Kyrgyzstan: Problems and Prospects*, 11 Aug. 2004.

↓ Tajikistan Tensions increased in Tajikistan. Authorities barred 2 opposition leaders, Mahmadrusi Iskandarov and Sulton Quvvatov, from running in 27 February parliamentary elections, further strengthening grip of President Rakhmonov's People's Democratic Party. Divided opposition expected to receive only tiny fraction of votes. Car bomb exploded 31 January in capital, Dushanbe, outside emergencies ministry, killing driver and injuring several bystanders; U.S. embassy had warned of potential attacks against Americans. Rakhmonov removed several high-ranking officials by decree.

- "Explosion rocks emergency ministry", IRIN, 31 Jan. 2005.
- "Tajik coalition tearing at the seams", IWPR, 21 Jan. 2005.
- "Doubt raised about fairness of upcoming elections", RFE/RL, 17 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, *Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?*, 19 May 2004.

↓ Turkmenistan No relevant news. Country remains most closed in Central Asia.

- "Seven mosques destroyed in one year, activists say", IRIN, 5 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°44, *Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan: A New International Strategy*, 4 Nov. 2004.

↓ Uzbekistan Practices of Uzbek security services in spotlight again after deaths of 2 detainees in 2 weeks. Despite government denials, human rights activists and family members of Samandar Umarov, who officials said died of stroke, and Rahimjon Kuldashiev, who reportedly died of heart attack, claimed deaths were caused by police torture. President Karimov, alluding to events in Ukraine and Georgia, cautioned Western NGOs against interfering in country's internal affairs.

- "Pro-presidential party wins Uzbek parliamentary poll", RFE/RL, 17 Jan. 2005.
- "Further claims of Uzbek police abuse", IWPR, 14 Jan. 2005.

- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°76, *The Failure of Reform in Uzbekistan: Ways Forward for the International Community*, 11 Mar. 2004; and N°72, *Is Radical Islam Inevitable in Central Asia? Priorities for Engagement*, 22 Dec. 2003.

SOUTH ASIA

↓ Afghanistan Preparations for spring parliamentary elections considerably behind schedule; FM Abdullah announced possible 1-2 month delay. Sporadic violence returned after period of relative calm: attacks targeting police killed 6, while at least 24 Afghan soldiers killed by suspected Taliban in southern Helmand province and Kandahar. Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum escaped Taliban suicide attack unhurt 20 January. Senior Taliban commander Mullah Dadullah denied peace talks underway between commanders in southeastern provinces and government. Newly appointed Interim Supreme Court formally inaugurated 8 January; majority of 9-member court are religious clerics with no formal higher education. After President Karzai complained and NGOs protested, Bush Administration backed off threat of aerial eradication as part of major \$780m counter-narcotics plan.

- "Delay foreseen for Afghan elections", ISN, 26 Jan. 2005.
- "Karzai turns warlord into potential ally", RFE/RL, 19 Jan. 2005.
- "Afghanistan's addiction", *International Herald Tribune (Boston Globe)*, 12 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°88, *Afghanistan: From Presidential to Parliamentary Elections*, 23 Nov. 2004.

↓ Bangladesh Situation extremely volatile after grenade attack at opposition Awami League (AL) rally 27 January killed former finance minister Shah A.M.S. Kibria and 4 others. AL called for 3-day nationwide strike; violent protests followed. Security stepped up in preparation for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit due to be held 6-7 February Dhaka. Situation tense in Bagmara, northern Bangladesh, after 24 January clashes between Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) police force and Islamist vigilante group Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh, which injured 50. Ongoing RAB anti-crime operations reportedly killed 40 in 3 weeks. Tension remained between Bangladeshi and Indian border security forces.

- "Bangladesh opposition calls for fresh strike", Reuters AlertNet, 31 Jan. 2005.
- "Opposition crackdown on the cards", *The Daily Star*, 31 Jan. 2005.
- "50 injured as Bangla Bhai's men clash with police", *The Daily Star*, 25 Jan. 2005.
- "Five killed in crossfire", *The Daily Star*, 21 Jan. 2005.

↓ India (non-Kashmir) Andhra Pradesh state peace process in ruins after Maoist groups, including Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-M), accused elite police force "greyhounds" of violating ceasefire with heavy-handed search operations in Maoist areas. Riots, arson and strike followed 24 January killing of former state minister and Telugu Desam Party leader P. Ravindra. Rebel groups called for boycott of 26 January national day celebrations in northeastern states; 5 bombs exploded, police killed 2.

- "Blasts mar R-Day revelry in Assam", *The Times of India*, 26 Jan. 2005.

- "In the grip of Maoism", Asia Times Online, 22 Jan. 2005.
- "Why peace collapsed in Andhra Pradesh", BBC, 20 Jan. 2005.

↪ Kashmir India/Pakistan normalisation process stalled as Pakistan asked World Bank (broker of Indus Waters Treaty) to appoint neutral arbitrator to decide whether India's construction of Baglihar hydro-power dam on Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir should go ahead. Tensions rose across line of control after ceasefire violation accusations from both sides. Clashes between militants and Indian security forces continued. Indian foreign minister Natwar Singh to visit Pakistan 15 February.

- "Pakistani PM reaches out to India", BBC, 31 Jan. 2005.
- "Peace flounders over water dispute", Asia Times Online, 22 Jan. 2005.
- "Pakistan denies new Kashmir raid", BBC, 21 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°s 68, 69, and 70 *Kashmir: The View From Islamabad; The View From New Delhi*; and *Learning from the Past*, 4 Dec. 2003; and N°79 *India/Pakistan Relations and Kashmir: Steps toward Peace*, 24 June 2004.

↪ Maldives Parliamentary elections - postponed by tsunami - held 22 January. Maldivian Democratic Party claimed it won 18 of 42 seats contested; government put figure at 12. President Gayoom announced plans to establish multi-party democracy within year.

- "Maldives vote results confusion", BBC, 27 Jan. 2005.

↪ Nepal February 1, as *CrisisWatch* going to press, King Gyanendra announced disbandment of government, intention to rule alone with advisory council for 3 years, and intensified military action against Maoists. Takeover without warning, and consequences feared. Earlier, government's 13 January deadline to agree to talks ignored by Maoists, who claimed government lacked authority to negotiate. PM Deuba vowed to push ahead with elections in April, announced 9% increase in defence budget. Maoists reiterated aim to obstruct polls, while political parties remained divided. Heavy fighting continued in eastern and western districts: clashes in Kailali district 5 January reportedly claimed at least 55 lives; fighting in eastern area of Ilam 20 January killed 29 soldiers.

- "Nepal king assumes power", BBC, 1 Feb. 2005.
- "Nepal army suffers blow in east", BBC, 20 Jan. 2005.
- "Illegal killings on the increase", Amnesty International, 20 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing, *Nepal: Dangerous Plans for Village Militias*, 17 Feb. 2004.

↪ Pakistan Balochistan violence escalated: 13 killed, over 40 injured, while natural gas supply to half the country disrupted. Angry Bugti tribesmen fired rockets at gas installations between 7 and 12 January after army personnel allegedly raped female doctor in Sui City. Paramilitary forces reacted by bulldozing houses belonging to tribesmen. Pakistan army decided to set up military base in Sui despite Baloch opposition. Senior Shia leader shot dead in northern city of Gilgit 8 January - ensuing sectarian violence killed 15 before curfew imposed.

- "Pakistan tribals speak out", BBC, 29 Jan. 2005.
- "New target for Pakistan's militants", Asia Times Online, 19 Jan. 2005.
- "Pakistan risks new battlefield", BBC, 17 Jan. 2005.

- "11 killed in Gilgit violence", *Dawn*, 9 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°86, *Building Judicial Independence in Pakistan*, 9 Nov. 2004.

↪ Sri Lanka After initial Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) accusations of government aid misappropriation, series of LTTE-government talks brought sides close to agreed mechanism for equitable distribution of tsunami relief. Although negotiations did not cover peace process, high-level Crisis Group sources advise of real confidence-building significance, with situation having moved considerable distance from "no peace, no war, no talks" status quo. Meanwhile, UNICEF and Human Rights Watch accused LTTE of recruiting tsunami orphans. Over 38,000 killed, 1 million displaced by 26 December tsunami.

- "Sri Lanka Tigers rule out peace talks stemming from tsunami aid effort", Relief Web (AFP), 28 Jan. 2005.
- "Colombo, rebels try to seize the moment", *Globe and Mail*, 24 Jan. 2005.
- "Sri Lankan rebels see 'new perspectives' after tsunami", Reuters AlertNet, 22 Jan. 2005.
- "Still squabbling", *The Economist*, 6 Jan. 2005.

NORTHEAST ASIA

↪ China (internal) No relevant news.

- "Tibet: Monk leaves prison a broken man", Human Rights Watch, 26 Jan. 2005.

↪ North Korea NK government told U.S. congressional delegations to Pyongyang that 6-party talks would resume "in near future" - depending on direction of U.S. policy. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's "outpost of tyranny" comment 19 January produced sharp reaction. Japan-North Korea relations continued to slide after Japan returned "false" evidence supposedly proving fate of abducted Japanese citizens.

- "Hopeful signs seen for Koreas", *International Herald Tribune*, 31 Jan. 2005.
- "N. Korea slams 'outpost of tyranny' designation", Chosun Ilbo, 19 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°87, *North Korea: Where Next for the Nuclear Talks?*, 15 Nov. 2004 and N°89, *Korea, Background: How the South Views its Brother from Another Planet*, 14 Dec. 2004.

↪ Taiwan Strait China and Taiwan agreed to resume direct flights between mainland and island during January-February Lunar New Year holidays. But Taiwanese president Chen Shui-bian said Chinese anti-secession law, scheduled to be debated by China's parliament in March, could force Taiwan to hold referendum in response.

- "President: Taiwan may be forced to use referendum to counter China's anti-secession legislation", Associated Press, 21 Jan. 2005.
- Comment by Jim Hoagland, "Don't let China off the hook", *The Washington Post*, 20 Jan. 2005.
- "China, Taiwan agree to direct flights", *The Washington Post*, 16 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°s 53-55, *Taiwan Strait I: What's Left of 'One China'?*, *Taiwan Strait II, The Risk of War*, and *Taiwan Strait III, The Chance of Peace*, 6 June 2003; and N°75, *Taiwan Strait IV: How an Ultimate Political Settlement Might Look*, 26 Feb. 2004.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

- Indonesia Positive development in Aceh peace process as talks, under chairmanship of former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, held in Helsinki between government and exiled leadership of Free Aceh Movement (GAM) 27 January. Both parties agreed to "try to refrain from hostilities" while aid operations are ongoing in Aceh - and to resume discussions 21 February. But no formal ceasefire agreed; before talks military claimed to have killed 206 rebels in previous month. Once closed to foreign journalists and aid groups, Aceh now crammed with Indonesian and international relief agencies (including evangelical Christian and hardline Muslim groups) and over dozen foreign militaries. As of 25 January, 228,164 Indonesians reported dead or missing as result of tsunami. Witnesses at 2nd trial of radical Islamic cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir on charges relating to Bali and Marriott bombs continued to backtrack on Ba'asyir's involvement. Decree signed clearing way for creation of Papuan People's Council, but Papuan provincial leaders expressed concern over government plans to include newly-created and legally controversial West Irian Jaya province on list of regions to hold direct elections of regional heads in 2005.
- "The Aceh stalemate", Laksamana Net, 31 Jan. 2005.
 - "Indonesia says Aceh rebels killed", BBC, 20 Jan. 2005.
 - Comment by Gareth Evans (Crisis Group), "Optimism rises after the tsunamis", *Financial Times*, 11 Jan. 2005.
 - Comment by Sidney Jones (Crisis Group), "Will Indonesia seize its chance?", BBC, 8 Jan. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°90, *Indonesia: Rethinking Internal Security Strategy*, 20 Dec. 2004.

- Myanmar/Burma Karen National Union (KNU) army commander Mutu warned would resume armed struggle should negotiations with military junta not restart. Operations reportedly underway against northeast Indian separatist groups with camps in Myanmar: National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) claimed 5 cadre, 10 soldiers killed in 23 January attacks while Thai army reported clashes between Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and Myanmar military near Thai border. Trials began 24 January of 300 people linked to Myanmar's disbanded military intelligence unit. National convention to draft new constitution set to resume 17 February after 7-month hiatus.
- "Myanmar rebels warn junta: resume peace talks or fight", Relief Web (AFP), 31 Jan. 2005.
 - "Destructionists trying to derail Myanmar constitution", *Daily Times*, 27 Jan. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°34, *Myanmar: Update on HIV/AIDS Policy*, 16 Dec. 2004.

- Philippines Peace talks remain scheduled for early February despite worst fighting of 17-month "truce" between government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF): 28 killed in 9-10 January attack in Mamasapano, south of Cotabato city, by forces of MILF commander Abdul Rahman Binago, whose brother, leader of Abu Sofia bandit group, killed previous week. MILF leadership stressed attack not sanctioned. Philippine air force launched air strikes 27 January in Datu Piang against MILF guerrillas and area where suspected Jemaah Islamiyah militants believed to be meeting. Three improvised bombs found Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat province. Seventy U.S. special forces troops

remain Mindanao working with Philippine security forces to locate foreign militants and rebel forces.

- "Manila, Muslim rebels to start talks in early Feb", Reuters AlertNet, 31 Jan. 2005.
- "Philippines army bombs militants", BBC, 27 Jan. 2005.
- "21 killed as Philippine Muslim guerrillas attack army in truce violation", AFP, 10 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°80, *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 13 July 2004.

- Thailand Violence continued with almost daily incidents in 3 southern provinces. Attacks killed over dozen in January. Defence ministry announced plans to base 15th Infantry Division as permanent military unit in southern provinces. Rivalry between police and military over handling of southern crisis resulted in replacement of assistant police chief Lt-General Wongkot Maneerin. Despite failure to end violence, PM Thaksin Shinawatra's forceful handling of tsunami disaster boosted his already popular Thai Rak Thai party's prospects for 6 February polls.
- "Making sense of the muddle in the South", *The Nation*, 26 Jan. 2005.
 - "Bomb kills one, wounds 58 in Thailand's restive south", Reuters AlertNet, 16 Jan. 2005.
 - "Two killed, six injured by suspected Thai Muslim rebels", AP, 14 Jan. 2005.

Europe



Crisis Group Europe Report N°160, *EU Crisis Response Capability Revisited*, 17 January 2005.

The European Union has improved its conflict prevention and crisis management capacities considerably over the past four years but must do more to match its ambitions. The mechanisms to respond to violent conflict and potential conflict abroad have matured greatly, but modest Balkan and African missions do not yet constitute a powerful global presence. Many praiseworthy objectives remain words only, because member states have not given Brussels the means to implement them. The EU needs to become a stronger player because in a more dangerous world it is the only serious partner in sight that can significantly help the U.S. deal with a wide range of security problems and also the only actor with potential strength to cause Washington to take notice of constructive criticism and alternative policies.

BALKANS

- Albania PM Fatos Nano declared intent to sign stabilisation and association agreement with EU in 2005 - to join in 2014. Failure to enact key political reforms and fight organised crime delayed any agreement in 2004.
- "Albania hopes to join EU in 2014, PM says", AFP, 19 Jan. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°153, *Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?*, 25 Feb. 2004.



- Bosnia & Herzegovina Political situation in flux after December cabinet resignations after High Rep. Paddy Ashdown sacked 9 officials. Bosnian Serb president Dragan Cavic named Pero Bukejlovic, member of governing nationalist Serb Democratic Party, as next PM of Serb Republic. EU Council announced 31 January inclusion on list of visa restrictions (preventing entry into, or transit through, EU territory) of the 9 officials previously sacked by Ashdown.
- "EU force vows to get tough on Bosnia war criminals", Reuters AlertNet, 22 Jan. 2005.
 - Comment by Paddy Ashdown, High Representative for BiH, "RS leaders must not fail", Glas Srpski, 12 Jan. 2005.
 - "New premier is picked for Serb-run half of Bosnia", *International Herald Tribune*, 10 Jan. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing, *EUFOR: Changing Bosnia's Security Arrangements*, 29 June 2004.

- Kosovo PM Ramush Haradinaj's emergence as strong politician and apparently capable leader overshadowed by continued threat of possible indictment for war crimes. Threat of violence remains from supporters despite Haradinaj promise to cooperate with tribunal. Head of UN Mission in Kosovo, Soren Jessen-Petersen, expressed disappointment after talks in Belgrade 18 January bogged down over issue of power cuts in Kosovo Serb villages. Hashim Thaci's opposition PDK party became active in closing days of month, attacking government over decentralisation and for not respecting "collective contract" with trade unions. Profile of final status issue raised by Crisis Group report published 24 January; widespread reaction to proposed way forward from politicians and policy-makers. final status issues on agenda of 22 February U.S., NATO and EU Brussels summit.
- Comment by Gen. (ret.) Wesley Clark (Crisis Group), "Set Kosovo Free", *Wall Street Journal*, 1 Feb. 2005.
 - "Serbia's President rejects independence for Kosova", RFE/RL, 28 Jan. 2005.
 - Comment by Gareth Evans (Crisis Group), "It's time to talk independence for Kosovo", *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Jan. 2005.
 - "Kosovo worries behind S Serbia army changes", ISN, 25 Jan. 2005.
 - Comment by Nicholas Whyte (Crisis Group), "Getting Real on Kosovo", IWPR, 21 Jan. 2005.
 - For background to the March violence, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°155, *Collapse in Kosovo*, 22 Apr. 2004.



Crisis Group Europe Report N°161, *Kosovo: Toward Final Status*, 24 January 2005. The situation in Kosovo is too dangerous to be allowed to fester: 2005 must produce a final status solution that recognises the reality of its independence, but only on the basis of fully guaranteed protections for Kosovo's Serb and other minorities. There can be no return to Belgrade's rule, but independence cannot involve partition, or any unification with Albania or any neighbouring territory, and it must involve continued monitoring by the international community. The six-nation Contact Group should immediately lay out a tight timeline leading to an internationally recognised Kosovo by early 2006. Every effort should be made to work with Belgrade in the process and respect its legitimate interests, but it cannot have an absolute veto.

- Macedonia New VMRO-National party, headed by former PM Ljubco Georgievski, became biggest opposition group in parliament following 25 January reorganisation of opposition bloc. Municipal elections scheduled for 13 March. Church dispute resurfaced as Bishop Jovan (Serbian Orthodox) charged with disseminating "national, racial and religious hatred" 12 January. Macedonia to deliver 14,000-page response to EU enlargement questionnaire 14 February. EU Council announced 31 January inclusion on list of visa restrictions (preventing entry into, or transit through, EU territory) of 9 individuals who "actively promote or take part in violent extremist activities".
- Comment by Macedonian Deputy Prime Minister Radmila Sekerinska, "Macedonia's decisive year on road to NATO and EU", IWPR, 27 Jan. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°33, *Macedonia: Make or Break*, 3 Aug. 2004.

- Serbia & Montenegro New crisis emerged in south Serbia's Presevo Valley with 7 January fatal shooting by Serb soldier of 16-year-old Albanian boy illegally crossing border. Albanian majority Presevo municipal assembly called for army to withdraw from south Serbia and for international military presence to replace it. Government attempted to reconstruct Coordination Body for south Serbia and to include Albanians, who remain hesitant. Shooting led to Belgrade internal debate as to whether army or police best suited for guarding border with Macedonia and Kosovo. U.S. government cut all financial assistance to Serbian government (U.S.\$10m) and announced withdrawal of technical advisory personnel due to lack of cooperation with ICTY; EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana cancelled trip to Belgrade due to lack of Hague cooperation and deadlock over elections for state union parliament; EU commissioner for enlargement Ollie Rehn in Belgrade 25 January; warned failure to cooperate with Hague restricting progress towards EU integration. ICTY indictee General Vladimir Lazarevic announced 28 January he would surrender in early February.
- "Serb general agrees to face Hague court", *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Jan. 2005.
 - "Serbia pays high price for losing US aid", IWPR, 21 Jan. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°32, *Serbia's Changing Political Landscape*, 22 July 2004.

CAUCASUS

- Armenia Rapprochement of government and opposition parties: latter announced they would support President Robert Kocharian's proposed changes to constitution if government makes several opposition-supported amendments. Pro-government parliamentarians issued positive statements about proposed compromise.
- "Armenia coalition to mull proposed deal with opposition", armenialiberty.org, 21 Jan. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°158, *Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead*, 18 Oct. 2004.
- Azerbaijan Independent media continued struggle against government repression: leading opposition newspaper *Yeni Musavat* resumed publication under new editor after shutting down several times because of state fines. In Nakhichevan, opposition weekly *Monitor* ordered to pay \$20,000 in libel case brought by government. Etibar Mammadov, chairman of major

opposition Azerbaijan National Independence Party, resigned citing repressive, undemocratic government.

- [“Media watchdog demands end to pressure on Azerbaijani opposition paper”](#), RFE/RL, 7 Jan. 2005.
- [“Major opposition party chairman resigns”](#), Azernews, 29 Dec. 2004.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°156, [Azerbaijan: Turning Over a New Leaf?](#), 13 May 2004.

➤ Georgia Sergei Bagapsh elected president of unrecognised republic of Abkhazia, winning 92% of votes in 12 January repeat of disputed October 2004 election. Bagapsh’s rival-turned-running mate Raul Khajimba elected vice president. Abkhazian and Georgian foreign ministers expressed readiness to resume negotiations at March Geneva UN meeting. Tensions rose between Georgia and South Ossetia after spate of tit-for-tat kidnappings; all but 1 of abductees later released. President Saakashvili unveiled new South Ossetia peace initiative offering autonomy and series of steps to integrate region into Georgia - South Ossetia leader Eduard Kokoity promptly rejected it. Relations between Tbilisi and Moscow remained strained: after refusing to extend OSCE border monitoring mission, Russia said Chechen terrorists continue to hide in Pankisi Gorge. Tbilisi called allegation hypocritical and excuse for Russia to conduct “preventive strikes” against Georgia.

- [“Georgia offers autonomy to a breakaway region”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Jan. 2005.
- [“Waiting to exhale in Abkhazia”](#), RFE/RL, 21 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°159, [Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia](#), 26 Nov. 2004.

➤ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) passed resolution on Karabakh conflict 25 January, urging parties to comply with previous UN Security Council Resolutions calling for withdrawal of military forces from any occupied territories. Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers met 11 January in Prague, first 2005 meeting in so-called “Prague Process”; expressed optimism about coming year. Next meeting planned for late February or early March. OSCE fact-finding mission arrived Azerbaijan 28 January, will travel to occupied regions of Azerbaijan surrounding N-K to investigate Baku’s claims that Armenia establishing settlements.

- [“Council of Europe calls for talks between Azerbaijan, Karabakh leadership”](#), RFE/RL, 26 Jan. 2005.
- [“Moscow sheds light on Karabakh talks”](#), RFE/RL, 20 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Reports N°158, [Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead](#), 18 Oct. 2004, and N°156, [Azerbaijan: Turning Over a New Leaf?](#), 13 May 2004.

EASTERN EUROPE

➤ Chechnya (Russia) Russian forces killed 7 suspected Islamist militants in town of Nalchik, capital of nearby Russian republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. Russians said dead were members of “Yarmuk” group responsible for December attack on Russian anti-drug agents and linked to Chechen separatists. Chechen official said Chechnya’s pro-Moscow government hopes to sign agreement with Moscow in first half of 2005 that will give it wide-ranging autonomy.

- [“Seven killed in N Caucasus siege”](#), BBC, 27 Jan. 2005.

- [“Chechnya spells out demands to Moscow”](#), RFE/RL, 27 Jan. 2005.

➤ Moldova Chisinau said would resume 5-sided negotiations over breakaway Transdniestria (Russia, Ukraine, OSCE, Moldova, Transdniestria) if U.S. and EU granted “permanent observer” status in talks; Ukraine said had no objections. But consultations 25 January in Odessa failed to make headway. Meanwhile, Russia and Ukraine protested new Moldovan restrictions on travel of foreign diplomats into Transdniestria.

- [“Transdniester negotiations remain stalled”](#), RFE/RL, 26 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°157, [Moldova: Regional Tensions over Transdniestria](#), 17 June 2004.

➤ Ukraine Victor Yushchenko sworn in as president 23 January promising to unite country and work toward European integration; in first foreign visit, attempted to heal relations with Russian president Vladimir Putin in Moscow. But appointment as PM of outspoken Ukrainian nationalist Yulia Tymoshenko, key leader of “Orange Revolution”, likely to disconcert Russia, which has sought her extradition on bribery charges.

- [“Yushchenko woos sceptical Russia”](#), BBC, 24 Jan. 2005.
- [“Yushchenko pledges to reunite Ukraine”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Jan. 2005.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➤ Basque Country (Spain) ETA said 16 January it was prepared to enter talks with government, but Madrid ruled out dialogue until ETA ceasefire. Two days later car bomb explosion near Bilbao; further explosion 31 January in Dénia, southeast Spain - undermining ceasefire hopes.

- [“Blast in southern Spain laid to Basque group”](#), 31 Jan. 2005.
- [“ETA calls for talks with Madrid”](#), BBC, 16 Jan. 2005.

➤ Northern Ireland (UK) Police accusation IRA behind £26.5m 20 December bank robbery pushed peace process off-track; IRA denied involvement. Bank raid dominated January’s high-level talks. Gerry Adams reacted angrily to PM Bertie Ahern’s remarks Sinn Fein leadership must have been aware of IRA plan during December’s intensive talks. Moderate nationalist SDLP politician Eddie McGrady mooted coalition with Unionists, excluding Sinn Fein.

- [“Bank raid tops talks agenda”](#), BBC, 25 Jan. 2005.
- [“SDLP threatens to go it alone”](#), *The Observer*, 16 Jan. 2005.

➤ Turkey Clashes with security forces continued southeast Turkey: 2 soldiers and 5 Maoist Communist Party rebels killed in Tunceli 15 January; in separate incident near Iraq border, 5 Kurdish rebels killed Sirnak province 20 January. U.S. told Turkey it would take action against some 5,000 Kongra-Gel separatists (formerly Kurdistan Workers Party) hiding northern Iraq.

- [“Five Kurdish rebels killed in southeast Turkey”](#), Reuters AlertNet, 20 Jan. 2005.
- [“US tells Turkey it will tackle Kurd rebels in Iraq”](#), Reuters AlertNet, 11 Jan. 2005.
- Crisis Group Middle East Report N°35, [Iraq: Allaying Turkey’s Fears Over Kurdish Ambitions](#), 26 Jan. 2005.



Latin America /Caribbean

- Bolivia Country hit by wave of strikes and protests as fuel price hike reignited calls for autonomy in gas-rich Tarija region and economic capital Santa Cruz. President Mesa's government made partial concession - only to face escalation of protests: 30,000 marched in Santa Cruz 21 January. Call for open assembly to ratify protesters' autonomy declaration rejected by government. Indigenous and MAS leader Evo Morales, while not directly involved in Santa Cruz crisis, stoked opposition with calls for nationwide strikes. Thousands took to streets in protest against threat to national unity. On 27 January, Mesa administration gave in to demands for direct election of local authorities in Santa Cruz and referendum on regional autonomy before August.
- "Provincial autonomy push challenges Bolivia leader", Reuters AlertNet, 28 Jan. 2005.
 - "Chávez 'funding turmoil across Bolivia'", *The Guardian*, 24 Jan. 2005.
 - "Bolivia's gas-rich region joins call for autonomy", Reuters AlertNet, 24 Jan. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°7, *Bolivia's Divisions: Too Deep to Heal?*, 6 July 2004.

- Colombia Diplomatic dispute with Venezuela saw President Hugo Chavez recall his ambassador to Bogota and suspend bilateral trade projects in retaliation for December kidnapping of leftist rebel in Caracas. Rodrigo Granda, dubbed FARC "foreign minister", reportedly seized by bribed Venezuelan police and taken across border. Fidel Castro brokered end of crisis communiqué 29 January; Chavez and Uribe scheduled to meet 3 February. UN to suspend mediation efforts between Colombian government and FARC after 4 years of failed attempts to resolve 40-year conflict. Demobilisation of right-wing paramilitaries continued with 900 fighters in northern province of Cordoba 18 January, though army said had killed 11 paramilitaries who had been harassing local residents in central province of Risaralda. Still no legislative agreement on how to hold accountable worst offenders.
- "Colombia, Venezuela settle row", CNN, 29 Jan. 2005.
 - "Letting paramilitaries off the hook", Human Rights Watch Report, 18 Jan. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°9, *Colombia's Borders: The Weak Link in Uribe's Security Policy*, 23 Sept. 2004.



Crisis Group Latin American Report N°11, *War and Drugs in Colombia*, 27 January 2005. Lumping anti-drug and anti-insurgency policies together in Colombia reduces chances either will succeed and hinders the peace search. Fighting drugs forcefully is necessary but not sufficient for achieving sustainable peace. President Uribe's claim the conflict pits democracy against merely "narco-terrorists" who must be met by all-out war does not do justice to the complexity of the decades-old struggle with left-wing insurgents and far-right paramilitaries. Colombia should review the relationship between counter-drug and security policies, complement military and prosecutorial programs with social programs that attack *cont'd...*

...cont'd some of the conflict's roots, such as land rights questions, and implement broad rural development. It should also renew offers for ceasefires with insurgents aimed at their demobilisation and political integration. Peace must remain the priority.

- Ecuador Recently appointed head of Supreme Court unexpectedly announced resignation 13 January. 150,000-200,000 joined demonstration in opposition to Gutierrez administration in seaport of Guayaquil 26 January.
- "Ecuador president says democracy not at risk", Reuters AlertNet, 18 Jan. 2005.
- Haiti Crackdown on pro-Aristide gangs and former Aristide officials continued. Police acknowledged killing several bandits during raid in Village de Dieu shantytown; human rights group argued innocent bystanders among dead. Donors pledged \$41 million for 13 November elections. Prime Minister Latortue rejected possibility of direct talks with Aristide to help end violence.
- "Haiti rebel leader says he won't disarm", CNN, 25 Jan. 2005.
 - "Haitians accuse police of killing radio journalist", Reuters AlertNet, 20 Jan. 2005.
 - "Top aide to Haiti's prime minister shot", *The Guardian* (AP), 16 Jan. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°10, *A New Chance for Haiti?*, 18 Nov. 2004.
- Peru Four-day uprising led by Retired Major Antauro Humala ended in bloodshed. After occupying police post in Andean town of Andahuaylas 1 January and taking 10 hostages, Humala's 200 nationalist paramilitaries demanded resignation of President Alejandro Toledo, who responded by sending 1,000 troops to put down rebellion. Humala arrested, 6 killed, including 4 policemen.
- "Tragi-comic farce", *The Economist*, 6 Jan. 2005.
- Venezuela Diplomatic rift with Colombia after leftist FARC rebel "kidnapped" from streets of Caracas. Venezuelan authorities arrested 5 National Guard officers believed to be involved. President Chavez demanded public apology and explanation from Colombia - recalled Venezuela's ambassador from Colombia. Crisis finally resolved through Cuban mediation.
- "Agreement to end Venezuela-Colombia crisis has been reached", Venezuelanalysis.com, 29 Jan. 2005.
 - "Venezuela rally over rebel arrest", BBC, 23 Jan. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing, *Venezuela: Headed Toward Civil War?*, 10 May 2004.



Middle East /North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

- Israel/Occupied Territories Early moves by newly-elected Palestinian Authority (PA) president Mahmoud Abbas to establish Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire spurred renewed contacts between Israeli and Palestinian officials. Abbas, who won 9 January Palestinian election, ordered PA security forces to robustly patrol Gaza Strip and interdict further rocket attacks against Israeli targets. Militant organisations stated willingness to suspend attacks if Israel did same. Israel announced

possible troop pullback from several West Bank towns. Negotiators currently working out details of potential meeting between Abbas and Israeli PM Ariel Sharon. Meanwhile, Israel resumed construction of separation barrier section deep inside West Bank, but was reportedly rethinking plans to enforce 1950 law on landowners that could result in massive property confiscation in East Jerusalem.

- ["Israel set for West Bank pullback"](#), BBC, 30 Jan. 2005.
- ["Israel, Palestinians renew political ties"](#), *The Daily Star*, 27 Jan. 2005.
- ["A fragile Palestinian truce takes shape"](#), *The Economist*, 26 Jan. 2005.
- ["Israeli barrier move sparks anger"](#), BBC, 25 Jan. 2005.
- Comment by Hussein Agha and Robert Malley (Crisis Group), ["The last Palestinian"](#), *New York Review of Books*, 10 Feb. 2005 (excerpted in *Haaretz* 20 Jan. 2005).
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing, ["After Arafat? Challenges and Prospects"](#), 23 Dec. 2004.

Lebanon Clashes on border with Israel near Shebaa Farms area left approximately 3 dead, including French UN officer. Both U.S. and France said they are closely monitoring drafting of new electoral law, as fair elections in Lebanon will be viewed as key benchmark for April assessment of compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1559.

- ["UN gravely concerned by Hizbollah-Israeli violence"](#), Reuters AlertNet, 18 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing, ["Hizbollah: Rebel Without a Cause?"](#), 30 July 2003.

Syria U.S. kept pressure on Syria in run-up to elections in Iraq. In press conference, President Bush warned Damascus against providing base for terrorists seeking to destabilise Iraq. Earlier, U.S. Sec. State Condoleezza Rice stated Syria's behaviour could harm long-term relations.

- ["Bush gives warning to Iran and Syria"](#), *New York Post*, 27 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Reports N°s 23 and 24, ["Syria Under Bashar \(I\): Foreign Policy Challenges"](#); ["Syria Under Bashar \(II\): Domestic Policy Challenges"](#), 11 Feb. 2004.

GULF

Iran Tensions with U.S. remained high following comments by VP Dick Cheney and Sec. State Condoleezza Rice identifying Iran as key trouble spot and publication of *New Yorker* magazine article claiming Pentagon already preparing for possible war by deploying special forces inside Iran to identify suspected WMD facilities; denied by U.S. Talks continued with EU-3 at IAEA in Vienna in effort to reach deal on cessation of Iranian nuclear enrichment activities in exchange for political and economic incentives. EU-3 reportedly told Iran they would settle for nothing less than complete halt to enrichment program.

- ["Iran is told bomb work must end"](#), *International Herald Tribune* (Reuters), 28 Jan. 2005.
- ["Iran vows 'astonishing' response to any U.S., Israeli attack"](#), *The Daily Star*, 27 Jan. 2005.
- ["Cheney warns of Iran as a nuclear threat"](#), *The Washington Post*, 21 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing, ["Iran: Where Next on the Nuclear Standoff?"](#), 24 Nov. 2004.

Iraq Elections successful to extent turnout good in Kurdish north, Shiite south and higher than expected in Baghdad and - from anecdotal evidence - some Sunni Arab areas (preliminary estimates put nationwide figure at around 57%), but general Sunni Arab participation low. Challenge now seen as embracing Sunni Arab minority in government and constitution-making process. Elections took place amid severe violence, with steady attacks across Iraq in weeks leading up to vote, and suicide bombs and mortars killing at least 37 on 30 January election day. Security fears had forced officials to hold off publishing candidate names until just days before election. Crash of British C-130 killed 10 Britons; militant group claimed to have downed plane. Thirty-one U.S. troops died 26 January in helicopter crash caused by bad weather. 1,091 Coalition soldiers, including 986 Americans, and thousands of Iraqis killed by hostile fire since declared end of combat operations on 1 May 2003.

- ["Iraqis vote amid violence"](#), CNN, 30 Jan. 2005.
- ["Iraq air crash kills 31 US troops"](#), BBC, 26 Jan. 2005.
- ["The conundrum of Kirkuk"](#), *The Economist*, 20 Jan. 2005.
- Comment by Robert Malley and Peter Harling (Crisis Group), ["How the U.S. can salvage Iraq"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 11 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°34, ["What Can the U.S. Do in Iraq?"](#), 22 Dec. 2004.



Crisis Group Middle East Report N°35, ["Iraq: Allaying Turkey's Fears Over Kurdish Ambitions"](#), 26 January 2005. While attention is focused on the insurgency against the interim Iraqi government and the occupation troops, another conflict is brewing in northern Iraq that could precipitate civil war, the break-up of the country and Turkish intervention. Tensions are at boiling-point in the oil-rich Kirkuk region, with the situation aggravated by the worsening state of affairs in Iraq and by political actors, especially Kurds, who are seeking to undo the grave injustices of the ousted regime's policy of Arabisation. Ankara and the Kurdish leadership in Iraq must work together to change the atmosphere and establish mechanisms to head off emerging conflicts. Both should halt inflammatory rhetoric. The U.S. and EU need to do more to resolve the matter and help Ankara protect its vital interests without resort to destabilising threats of military intervention.

Saudi Arabia Court sentenced 15 people to prison terms for taking part in December anti-monarchy protest. First round of municipal elections set for 10 February.

- ["New powers' for Saudi assembly"](#), BBC, 25 Jan. 2005.
- ["Saudis jail anti-royal protesters"](#), BBC, 12 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°31, ["Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who are the Islamists?"](#), 21 Sept. 2004.

Yemen UK embassy closed briefly due to security concerns.

- ["Terror fears shut British embassy"](#), BBC, 5 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°8, ["Yemen: Coping with Terrorism and Violence in a Fragile State"](#), 8 Jan. 2003.

NORTH AFRICA

Algeria Series of attacks by Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) militants as Saharan region commander



Mokhtar Belmokhtar, newly returned from Mali, launched offensive despite recent GSPC setbacks; some 300-500 rebels believed at large. Eighteen killed in GSPC ambush 3 January Biskra region; at least 20 others killed in separate attacks through month. GSPC spokesman Abou Yasser Siyf offered "no truce, no dialogue" in 6 January statement; interior minister Zerhouni claimed "battle is won, but not over" following week. Meanwhile, interior ministry announced it had arrested Nourredine Boudiafi, leader of largely inoperative GIA terrorist group, 3 months previously. Government and leaders of Kabyle protest movement struck deal on so-called El Kseur platform, including economic aid and recognition of Berber language. Regional gas price increase of 18% announced 15 January sparked week of riots around Birine and Bouira, south of Algiers.

- "Algeria hit by further gas riots", BBC, 24 Jan. 2005.
- "Algiers cuts deal with Kabylie tribal leaders", Middle East Online, 17 Jan. 2005.
- "Algeria 'breaks up GIA terrorist network'", Afrol, 3 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°15, *Algeria: Unrest and Impasse in Kabylia*, 10 June 2003 and Report N°29, *Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page*, 30 July 2004.

➤ Egypt Three dissidents announced plans to run against President Mubarak in October 2005 presidential referendum and launch public petition for constitutional change; Mubarak invited "100 rivals". While activist Kifaya ("Enough") group protested Mubarak's renomination by ruling NDP, parliamentary opposition groups presented rival constitutional reform options. Ayman Nour, leader of recently legalised Ghad ("Tomorrow") Party, stripped of parliamentary immunity and arrested 29 January on

charges of forging party documents used in application for legal status. Egypt's PM, Ahmed Nazif, said family would be "obstacle", but not insuperable, to future candidacy of Gamal Mubarak. Foreign Minister Gheit said Egypt 100% within IAEA rules following inspection late December 2004; officials later admitted "errors" in reporting.

- "Egyptian opposition party head detained", Middle East Online, 31 Jan. 2005.
- "Is Egypt really after nuclear device?", Middle East Online, 21 Jan. 2005.
- "Constitutional battleground", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 20 Jan. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Briefings N°s 12 and 13, *Islamism in North Africa: Legacies of History* and *Egypt's Opportunity*, 20 Apr. 2004.

➤ Mauritania Seventeen suspected coup ringleaders in mass trial face possible death sentence. Government raised minimum wage by 400% in attempt to offset political instability.

- "Mauritania ups wages 400 percent", CNN, 19 Jan. 2005.
- "Prosecutor demands death penalty for 17 coup suspects", IRIN, 6 Jan. 2005.

➤ Western Sahara Amnesty International reported improvement in human rights situation in Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara. No movement towards peace.

- "No progress in Western Sahara dispute", Afrol, 28 Jan. 2005.
- "Morocco/Western Sahara: Increasing openness on human rights", Amnesty International, 24 Jan. 2005.



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