

# International Intelligence

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## ***India wants convention on global terrorism***

India's President K.R. Narayanan, during his five-day state visit to France, suggested a comprehensive international convention on terrorism to signal the world's determination to fight the scourge, and sought to involve France and other European Union nations in establishing a new global order to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, according to the Press Trust of India on April 17.

"The convention on the suppression of financing of terrorism, sponsored by France, is a major step forward. We must go further and enter into a comprehensive international convention on terrorism. . . . Religious intolerance, extremist fundamentalism, and methods of violence and terrorism have become entirely out of tune and out of place," Narayanan said, at a banquet hosted by the French President Jacques Chirac.

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## ***Europe hit by violence linked to Pokémon***

The cult-craze among children over Pokémon trading cards has hit Europe, and with it, there are rising incidents of violence. On April 18, the British press widely covered the case of two 13-year-olds who held two other boys at knifepoint, robbing them of Pokémon cards worth £200 (approximately \$300). Pokémon, which began as a Japanese cartoon series, is short for "Pocket Monster," and, despite the extreme violence of the cartoons and video games, Pokémon paraphernalia is marketed to children as young as toddlers. In one 1997 incident in Japan, some 700 children who watched a particular Pokémon cartoon were hospitalized after suffering epileptic-type seizures.

The British case stands out because it occurred in Wilts, where a pilot project for groups of boys promoted playing with Pokémon cards, because, as one instructor, Nigel Sharp, told *The Sun*, "it teaches them strategy, planning, mathematics, planning, and sticking to strict rules. These are all qualities we encourage." Since the Wilts incident, nu-

merous British schools have banned Pokémon from the classrooms, because it promotes violence. Repeatedly, students have been bullied and mugged for the much-desired "shinies," holographic Pokémon cards.

The United Kingdom leads Europe in sales of Pokémon products, but other countries are catching up, although still far behind the United States and Japan. Two million Pokémon games have been sold for European children, compared to 13 million in the United States, and 15 million in Japan. However, in Germany, up to 62% of children ages 3-12 regularly watch Pokémon on television.

Nintendo, the maker of Pokémon, markets some 4,000 products, ranging from videos, t-shirts, to chewing gum, and reported a turnover of \$4.5 billion last year. In Germany, roughly \$100 million was made from Pokémon in 1999, but Nintendo's aggressive marketing has produced a growth rate of 32% in the first three months of this year.

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## ***Iraq rejects new weapons inspection team***

An official Iraqi newspaper accused Washington, on April 16, of stirring a fresh crisis with the United Nations over arms control, following Baghdad's rejection of a UN plan for a renewal of weapons inspections, reported the *Jordan Times* of April 17. "The U.S. administration wants to provoke a new crisis between Iraq and the United Nations" and "show that Iraq is not cooperating with the United Nations," said the ruling party's daily, *Al Thawra*. It said the United States is "not interested in finding a solution to the main problem, namely the embargo that has been in force for almost 10 years."

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz on April 15 rejected the latest UN plans to resume weapons inspections. "What has been decided by the Security Council," referring to the December Security Council Resolution 1284 offering a renewable suspension of sanctions in exchange for Iraq's cooperation with UNMOVIC, "concerning the commission that has been formed, means nothing to us," he told reporters following

the Council's unanimous approval April 13 of the UNMOVIC blueprint. "I have never hinted that Iraq will cooperate with this resolution. . . . Resolution 1284 is a ruse, is unjust and we cannot accept it," Aziz said.

*Al Thawra* charged that Washington was only using Resolution 1284 as a weapon against Baghdad: "The U.S. administration knows full well that this resolution cannot be implemented and that it is not acceptable to Iraq nor to most of the permanent members of the Security Council."

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## ***Jiang Zemin in Israel, Palestinian Authority***

President Jiang Zemin became the first Chinese head of state to visit Israel, and also the Palestinian Authority, in April. In Bethlehem, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat asked for China to join the Mideast peace process, by appointing a permanent envoy to help with the negotiations, according to the report Palestinian Authority Minister Nabil Shaath gave to media on April 15. Jiang responded by saying that China will make a maximum effort to push forward the peace process on the basis of relevant UN resolutions.

The meeting also included members of the Palestinian Authority Cabinet, and, as AP noted, "Each visit by a head of state is an important diplomatic achievement for Arafat, who intends to declare Palestinian statehood this year." At their meeting, China and the PA signed an economic cooperation agreement, and China pledged \$4 million to build a new hospital in the town of Qalqiliya.

Jiang spent the first three days of his Middle East trip in Israel. Israel has pledged to sell at least one airborne radar system to China, and the Israelis could sell as many as six more of the sophisticated PHALCON radars.

During a meeting the previous week, between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and U.S. President Bill Clinton, the latter reportedly pressed Israel not to go ahead with the sales. But Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh told AP that at least one unit would be delivered to the Chinese. "This is

**RUSSIAN GENERAL** Konstantin Totsky, Director of the Russian Border Service, told reporters on April 14 that the situation along the Afghan-Tajik border is tense, and “the anti-Taliban coalition is constraining the Talibs now.” Should the Taliban reach the Tajik border, Russian troops will have to not only ensure Tajikistan’s security, but also help train its border guards, he said. He reported that up to 250 kilograms of heroin have been seized on the border since the beginning of this year.

**AN ITALIAN** “center-right” coalition won decisive election victories in Northern Italy and the region of Rome on April 16. Prime Minister Massimo D’Alema has resigned, and President Carlo Ciampi is expected to give Giuliano Amato, a pro-austerity technocrat, the mandate to form a government.

**JAPAN’S** governing tripartite coalition said on April 11 that, on June 13, it might call a general election for the House of Representatives to be held June 25, just before the annual Group of Eight heads of state summit, which is being held Okinawa on July 8.

**ISRAELI** Foreign Minister David Levy sent an official letter to United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan announcing that Israel will withdraw from southern Lebanon in conformity with UN Security Council Resolutions 425 and 426, reported the April 17 issue of *Ha’aretz*. The letter said that Israel will withdraw to the border as demarcated by the UN Secretary General in 1978.

**IRAN** freed 500 Iraqi prisoners of war on April 9, and will release another 2,000 soon. Despite the recent terrorist destabilizations in both Iran and Iraq, which were supposed to restart a new conflict between the two countries, Iran undertook the release as a gesture of good-will. Both countries suffered terribly during their 1980-88 war, which was encouraged by the “Islamic card” politics of Zbigniew Brzezinski.

an obligation we cannot violate.” However, he did admit that Israel could refrain from any further sales. “We consider very sincerely and seriously the concerns which we hear now from our friends, and good and true friends in the United States, and we would consider” curbing any further sales.

## ***Nigerian HIV vaccine registering successes***

Thirty Nigerian soldiers who tested positive for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), returned sero-negative after being treated at the clinic of Dr. Jeremiah Abalaka, Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Isaac Alfa said at a lecture in Enugu on April 12. The Nigerian Ministry of Commerce awarded Dr. Abalaka patent rights for his vaccine against HIV in March. Chief of Air Staff Alfa revealed that as a result of the remarkable effect of the vaccine, more military personnel would be sent for the treatment. He noted that the vaccine “cured” 30 Nigerian Army officers, who were tested by very experienced Army doctors and laboratory experts, who confirmed that they indeed tested negative for HIV.

Dr. Abalaka was flown from the capital, Abuja, to Enugu to deliver a lecture for Air Force Week. In the lecture, entitled “HIV/AIDS: Prevention and Cure—A New Approach,” he said 259 people with HIV had received his treatment by the end of December, while 751 people had been under treatment since February 2000. Dr. Abalaka said 10 doctors scattered “over the country, were presented with the HIV vaccines for trial on their patients over a period of six months, after which they reported back that it was highly effective on their patients.” Dr. Abalaka in his paper emphasized, “I lay no claim to curing AIDS, but the HIV infection.”

Not satisfied with the results, the wife of the British ambassador to Nigeria, Lady Julia Burton “rose in stout opposition” on April 12, to Dr. Abalaka’s discovery of the HIV vaccine, reported the *Post Express* of Lagos. Lady Burton “declared in strong terms”: “As of today, there is no cure at all. The biggest weapon against the dreaded

disease is education.’ ” She called on Nigerians to avail themselves of information on HIV/AIDS from experts and professionals, rather than relying on secondhand information from those who know little or nothing. There is no mention of her own credentials, beyond being a British aristocrat.

## ***Internal situation in Iran deteriorates***

Following an April 14 statement by Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in which he implicitly attacked the reformist leadership around President Mohammed Seyyed Khatami (calling them “American-style” reformists) and praised “revolutionary violence,” the country’s political and military leadership seems to be more divided than ever.

The most dangerous sign of this came on April 16, when the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)—a paramilitary extremist group loyal to Khamenei—issued a warning to “the external enemies and their internal allies.” “The enemies have contempt for the slogans of the revolution,” whose measures are treacherous attempts to repeat history, “to put an end to Islam, isolate the righteous warriors, and isolate the thoughts of Imam Khomeini. The revolution is that of mercy, but if the time comes, the enemies and their allies inside the country will be crushed to stop their plot and treachery forever,” it said. “The revolutionary violence is meant for safeguarding right and justice . . . when the time comes the [Guards] will hold fast to it, when it will be too late to learn a lesson.”

The unusually strong statement comes following accusations in the pro-reform press that a murderous “shadow government” is controlling the levers of power in the Islamic Republic.

The power struggle between reformers and conservatives has intensified since the near-fatal shooting in March of Saeed Hajjarian, a close ally of President Khatami, who is widely credited for helping engineer the stunning reform victory in February’s parliamentary elections.