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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](mailto:crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org).

## February 2005 Trends



### Deteriorated Situations

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Côte d'Ivoire (p.3)	Northern Ireland (p.10)
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### Improved Situations

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### Unchanged Situations

Afghanistan (p.5), Albania (p.8), Algeria (p.12), Angola (p.3), Armenia (p.9), Azerbaijan (p.9), Bangladesh (p.5), Basque Country (Spain) (p.10), Bosnia & Herzegovina (p.8), Central African Republic (p.2), Chad (p.2), Chechnya (Russia) (p.9), Cyprus (p.10), Ecuador (p.10), Ethiopia/Eritrea (p.2), Georgia (p.9), Guinea (p.4), India (non-Kashmir) (p.5), Indonesia (p.7), Iran (p.11), Iraq (p.11), Israel/Occupied Territories (p.11), Kazakhstan (p.4), Kosovo (p.8), Liberia (p.4), Macedonia (p.8), Mauritania (p.12), Myanmar/Burma (p.7), Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) (p.9), Nigeria (p.4), Rwanda (p.2), Serbia & Montenegro (p.8), Sierra Leone (p.4), Sri Lanka (p.6), Sudan (p.3), Swaziland (p.3), Syria (p.11), Togo (p.4), Turkey (p.10), Turkmenistan (p.5), Uganda (p.2), Ukraine (p.9), Uzbekistan (p.5), Venezuela (p.10), Zimbabwe (p.3)

## March 2005 Watchlist



### Conflict Risk Alert

Nepal



### Conflict Resolution Opportunity

Uganda

## 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 First democratic vote in 12 years - to approve power-sharing constitution - passed off peacefully 28 February. President Domitien Ndayizeye quashed speculation he would attempt last-minute changes to draft constitution, saying would not run in presidential elections. Most parties (but not Tutsi-dominated UPRONA) agreed to accept result of referendum. Three Tutsi-dominated parties, including UPRONA, recommended “no” vote, but “yes” vote appeared on course. Sole remaining rebel group, Forces nationales de libération (FNL), said it would not disrupt vote; peace negotiations believed imminent. FNL rejected possible role for South African Deputy President Zuma - Burundi’s principal peace mediator - preferring UN Special Representative Carolyn McAskie.

- [“Tutsi-dominated parties call for a ‘no’ vote in referendum”](#), IRIN, 21 Feb. 2005.
- [“Attacks on free press in run up to Burundi poll”](#), Afrol, 15 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°20, [Elections in Burundi: The Peace Wager](#), 9 Dec. 2004.

➡ Central African Republic Eleven presidential candidates signed electoral code of conduct and accepted Mixed Independent Electoral Commission for March parliamentary and presidential elections, formalising January Libreville agreement.

- [“Presidential candidates sign political deal, code of conduct”](#), IRIN, 10 Feb. 2005.

➡ Chad Embattled PM Faki resigned and several ministers were replaced 4 February amidst civil servant strikes. Chad continued mediation efforts on Darfur with 18 February meeting N’djamena; over 200,000 Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad.

- [“Prime minister resigns after civil servant strikes”](#), IRIN, 4 Feb. 2005.

➡ Democratic Republic of Congo Deteriorating security in Ituri, with renewed fighting between Hema and Lendu militias in Djugu territory, and between Mai-Mai and RCD-Goma; 9 Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers killed in ambush 25 February. Some 10,000 refugees now believed in Uganda while 56,000 IDPs receiving emergency UN aid around Lake Albert, northeast DR Congo. Government said would deploy police brigade to Djugu and could revoke militias’ political role. DR Congo court condemned 21 Congolese soldiers to death for atrocities committed eastern DR Congo December 2004; International Center for Transitional Justice called for trials of higher-ranking generals. Lack of progress and transparency on army integration and security sector reform has led to doubts over viability of 30 June election date.

- [“MONUC condemns the assassination of nine of its peacekeepers in Ituri”](#), MONUC press release, 25 Feb. 2005.
- [“Rwanda’s tormentors emerge from the forest to haunt Congo”](#), *The Washington Post*, 10 Feb. 2005.
- [“Joint verification mechanism now operational”](#), IRIN, 10 Feb. 2005.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°21, [Back to the Brink in the Congo](#), 17 Dec. 2004.


➡ Rwanda Regional ministers meeting Kigali agreed implementation of stability pact signed November 2004; called for donors to help turn region into “haven of peace”. Trials in “gacaca” courts for crimes committed during 1994 genocide delayed until March; suspects have until then to confess. Six Rwandans accused French troops of complicity in 1994 genocide; French court must decide whether to hear case.

- [“Call for special fund for war-torn region”](#), IRIN, 21 Feb. 2005.
- [“Six Rwandans sue French troops for complicity in genocide”](#), Hirondelle, 18 Feb. 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 Peace moves to end 18-year Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency edged forward: opportunity for resolution exists, but will require international engagement. Eighteen-day limited government ceasefire announced 4 February in areas between Gulu and Kitgum. Government subsequently said talks would continue beyond ceasefire expiry; LRA attack following expiry killed 10 civilians. LRA Brigadier Sam Kolo defected to army following dispute with deputy leader Vincent Otti, who will replace him as chief LRA negotiator. Ugandan President Museveni said defection showed success of army campaign; some MPs said Museveni undermining chief government negotiator Betty Bigombe. Referendum on amending constitution to allow return to multi-party politics scheduled for 30 June.

- [“With more militias being formed, will the 2006 polls be peaceful?”](#), *The Monitor*, 23 Feb. 2005.
- [“Museveni’s remarks on Kolo anger MPs”](#), *The Monitor*, 21 Feb. 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.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°22, [Peace in Northern Uganda: Decisive Weeks Ahead](#), 21 February 2005. The eighteen-year insurgency by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) may finally be amenable to resolution, but the next few weeks will be decisive. The government must make a concerted effort to move the peace process forward by extending for a month the unilateral ceasefire expiring on 22 February. The LRA must demonstrate it wants a peaceful resolution by negotiating seriously and concluding a definitive ceasefire. The peace process needs greater outside support, including a special U.S. envoy and pressure on Sudan to end all backing for the LRA. If the international community provides focused, meaningful support, peace is achievable in 2005.



### HORN OF AFRICA

➡ Ethiopia/Eritrea Concern over alleged military build-up and cross-border incursions. Ethiopia claimed 2 killed near Bure, 20km within Ethiopia, were Eritrean soldiers; Eritrea denied. President of UN Security Council called for UN mission to boost political dialogue; EU suggested development assistance could be “directly influenced” by political situation.

- [“UN warns of Eritrea standoff”](#), *The Guardian* (AP), 18 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°68, [Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?](#), 24 Sept. 2003.

◁ Somalia Crisis deepened over possible deployment of foreign peacekeepers to help transitional government (TG) return to Somalia (from Nairobi) and disarm warring factions. Bomb likely intended for African Union (AU) security team killed 2 in Mogadishu 17 February - a week after street protests against proposed AU/IGAD force, with some threatening “jihad” against troops from neighbouring countries with history of intervention. Ethiopia reaffirmed its interest in sending peacekeeping troops. Several warlords – now TG ministers – released joint statement 27 February rejecting contingents from Ethiopia or Djibouti. Transitional government PM Ghedi and President Yusuf delayed 10-day trip to Somalia amidst security concerns; eventually arrived in separate planes 24 February.

- [“Exiled PM’s Somalia visit delayed”](#), BBC, 23 Feb. 2005.
- [“Yusuf the uniter?”](#), *The Economist*, 17 Feb. 2005.
- Crisis Group press release, [“Don’t cross the ‘Mogadishu line’](#)”, 9 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°88, [Somalia: Continuation of War by Other Means?](#), 21 Dec. 2004.

◁ Sudan Situation in Darfur remained dire, with inadequate international response. Long-awaited UN commission concluded atrocity crimes had been committed in Darfur, but insufficient evidence of genocide; named 51 war crimes suspects and urged referral to International Criminal Court (ICC). U.S. resisted referral, preferring to finance addition to Tanzania-based International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda; EU and others said ad hoc courts overstretched and time-limited, and urged U.S. to abstain on Security Council vote. Breaches of ceasefire ongoing with rebel attacks - leading to possible exclusion of Justice and Equality Movement rebels from future talks - and continued government and militia attacks. N’jamena Joint Ceasefire Commission suggested AU-backed talks could recommence mid-March; Sudan Liberation Movement called for enforcement of no-fly zone and government withdrawal from captured areas as precondition; Vice President Taha said Sudanese forces withdrawing from western Darfur. Meanwhile, UN said up to 4 million may soon be in need of famine relief. Following January north-south peace accord, discussions continued on 10,000-strong UN peacekeeping force to be deployed southern Sudan within 6 months.

- [“New atrocities as Security Council dithers”](#), Human Rights Watch press release, 25 Feb. 2005.
- [“Darfur rebels ambush Sudanese troops; govt bombs villages”](#), *The Sudan Tribune*, 23 Feb. 2005.
- [“U.S. proposal for a Darfur tribunal: not an effective option to ensure justice”](#), Human Rights Watch, 16 Feb. 2005.
- Comment by Gareth Evans (Crisis Group), [“Genocide or crime? Actions speak louder than words in Darfur”](#), *The European Voice*, 18 Feb. 2005.
- Comment by John Prendergast (Crisis Group) and Don Cheadle, [“Seven deadly trends in Darfur”](#), *The Washington Times*, 10 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°19, [Sudan’s Dual Crises: Refocusing on IGAD](#), 5 Oct. 2004.

## SOUTHERN AFRICA

◁ Angola Army accused of continuing human rights abuse in oil-rich Cabinda province.

- [“Angolan army ‘abuses Cabindans’](#)”, BBC News, 2 Feb. 2005
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°61, [Angola’s Choice: Reform or Regress](#), 7 Apr. 2003.

◁ Swaziland Absolute monarch King Mswati III spent \$820,000 on new cars for his 10 wives. World Food Programme said food insecurity worsening.

- [“Humanitarian crisis worsening, warn relief agencies”](#), IRIN, 28 Feb. 2005.

◁ Zimbabwe President Mugabe announced election date of 31 March. Opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) reversed earlier threat to boycott elections, saying would participate “under protest”. Domestic situation unimproved with media repressed (most foreign media pushed out and newly opened Bulawayo *Weekly Times* shut down) and MDC meetings harassed (in contravention of SADC electoral guidelines); MDC campaign chief Ian Makone detained, then released. Information minister Jonathon Moyo, sacked from cabinet and from Zanu-PF following internal dispute, to stand as independent candidate. South African trade union delegation deported 2 February; similar mission by South Africa’s opposition Democratic Alliance refused entry 18 February. South African President Mbeki, while suggesting Zimbabwe’s land reform policies were “incorrect”, criticised U.S. approach of classing Zimbabwe as “outpost of tyranny”. EU renewed targeted sanctions 21 February - up for review after elections.

- [“Arms deal raises fears of coup if Mugabe loses vote”](#), *The Independent*, 24 Feb. 2005.
- [“Mbeki pans U.S. efforts to put heat on Mugabe”](#), *Business Day*, 22 Feb. 2005.
- [“Reporters quit Zimbabwe following interrogations”](#), *The Washington Post*, 22 Feb. 2005.
- [“Mugabe’s spin doctor to go solo”](#), BBC, 19 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°85, [Zimbabwe: Another Election Chance](#), 30 Nov. 2004.

## WEST AFRICA

◁ Côte d’Ivoire Forces Nouvelles (FN) said mediation efforts were “definitively buried” by pro-government militia attack on FN in Logouale 28 February, north of UN-protected “Zone de Confiance”. Army chief had earlier warned of possible government offensive; head of UN peacekeeping mission, General Fall, called for strengthened mandate to take account of tension and allow for disarmament, amidst rumours President Gbagbo may call for UN withdrawal if FN not disarmed. UN Security Council resolution noted Secretary-General’s call for troop increase; earlier in month President Chirac said 4,000-strong French force would withdraw if requested by African leaders; France to withdraw 600 troops for “budgetary reasons”. Gbagbo sought to replace South African mediation with Moroccan; Morocco rejected role. Two died in clashes between police and Gbagbo-loyalist militia in Abidjan’s Adjame suburb.

- [“New clashes erupt in Ivory Coast”](#), BBC, 28 Feb. 2005.
- [“Ivory Coast resolution circulating at U.N.”](#), *The Guardian*, 23 Feb. 2005.



- "Fears of new Ivory Coast conflict", BBC, 11 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°82, *Côte d'Ivoire: No Peace in Sight*, 12 July 2004.

↳ Guinea Since 19 January attack on President Conté's convoy PM Diallo's reform proposals shelved, with army mounting roadblocks across country. Following article comparing Guinea to Togo, Benn Pépito, editor of *La Lance* newspaper, arrested and held for 3 days.

- "Prominent editor arrested in Guinea", Afrol, 17 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°74, *Guinea: Uncertainties at the End of an Era*, 19 Dec. 2003.

↳ Liberia Electoral commission announced 11 October date for elections, with registration from mid-April to mid-May. Refugees in Guinea called for speeded-up repatriation to allow them to take part; 100,000 estimated Liberian refugees in West Africa. Despite fears reintegration of ex-combatants incomplete, U.S. announced DynCorp to train new 4,000-strong Liberian army, to allow eventual wind-down of current UNMIL force. Liberia's Governance Reform Commission criticised corruption and long-term contracts awarded by transitional government.

- "GRC finds flaws with LNTG", *The Analyst*, 23 Feb. 2005.
- "US hires private company to train 4,000-man army", IRIN, 15 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 Dec. 2004.

↳ Nigeria President Obasanjo opened national constitutional conference 21 February; opposition leaders criticised agenda as too narrow, attendance as dominated by presidential nominees, and stayed away, promising parallel conference. Violence continued in oil-rich Delta province, with 1 person killed in group occupation of Warri oil terminal, 12 killed in boat ambush - locals claimed 33 dead in army raid on Odioma. At least 30 reported dead after clashes between herdsman and farmers in eastern Adamawa state in land disputes.

- "Nigeria probes deaths in military raid in oil delta", AlertNet, 23 Feb. 2005.
- "Obasanjo opens constitutional debate, rules out secession", IRIN, 21 Feb. 2005
- "Switzerland to return looted millions to Nigeria", *The Washington Post*, 17 Feb. 2005.
- "Chasing ghosts of a corrupt regime", *The Observer*, 13 Feb. 2005.

↳ Sierra Leone Government weakened oversight of newly-launched anti-corruption strategy. President Kabbah warned Anti-Corruption Commission against public allegations before full investigation, citing risk announcement of investigation into 6 ministers would prove destabilising; reversed donor commitments, announcing central role for discredited Attorney General's office. Investigative journalists intimidated by arrest of anti-corruption journalist Olu Gordon. Special Court for Sierra Leone continued trials, but hit by incarceration of Chief Investigator Halloran on molestation charges. Freetown student demonstrations marked risk of growing civil unrest.

- "UN Special Court investigator locked up for molesting 13-year old", IRIN, 22 Feb. 2005.
- "Kabbah warns anti-corruption", *The Concord Times*, 17 Feb. 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.

↳ Togo Fast-moving crisis sparked by Faure Gnassingbé's unconstitutional seizure of power with army backing 6 February following death of father, General Gnassingbé Eyadema; parliament subsequently rubber-stamped coup. EU and U.S. criticised move; African Union suspended Togo; and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imposed sanctions. Having initially banned political rallies and said he would see out term until 2008, Gnassingbé accepted elections by April, then resigned, amidst strike actions and protestors' march on Lomé, prompting ECOWAS to lift sanctions. Gnassingbé elected leader of ruling Rassemblement du peuple togolais 25 February; expected to run as candidate in elections.

- "Gnassingbe acclaimed head of ruling party, but expected to step down as president", IRIN, 25 Feb. 2005.
- "Togo prepares elections, Gnassingbé stays in power", Afrol, 21 Feb. 2005.
- "Togo's turmoil holds meaning for all of Africa", *International Herald Tribune*, 18 Feb. 2005.

## Asia/Pacific

### CENTRAL ASIA

↳ Kazakhstan Election strategy (presidential elections due end-2005) threatened to split main opposition party, Ak Zhol. Meanwhile, members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, extremist - but purportedly non-violent - Islamist party, faced hardening crackdown, with string of arrests, and 9 February parliamentary approval of new law criminalising extremist activity. Group already banned in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

- "Opposition turmoil in Kazakhstan", IWPR, 18 Feb. 2005.
- "Kazak crackdown on Islamic party", IWPR, 11 Feb. 2005.

↳ Kyrgyzstan Parliamentary elections marred by government crackdown on media and opposition. Protests in Naryn region and elsewhere over exclusion of candidates threatened to escalate, while prominent independent printing house suffered mysterious power cut and broadcasts of Radio Free Europe's Kyrgyz service halted. Over half of 75 single-seat constituencies to be decided in 13 March run-off after candidates failed to win majority.

- "Parliamentary elections fall short of international standards", IRIN, 28 Feb. 2005.
- "Kyrgyzstan faces key voter test", CNN, 27 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°81, *Political Transition in Kyrgyzstan: Problems and Prospects*, 11 Aug. 2004.

↳ Tajikistan Parliamentary elections tainted by widespread malpractice and opposition complaints of voter intimidation. Central Election Commission estimated President Rakhmonov's National Democratic Party won about 80% of vote. OSCE said elections did not meet international standards.

- "OSCE criticises parliamentary polls", IRIN, 28 Feb. 2005.

- [“Tajikistan election said tainted by fraud”](#), *The Guardian*, 28 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, [Tajikistan’s Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?](#), 19 May 2004.

- ↳ Turkmenistan President Niyazov announced intention to end child labour; observers questioned whether ban would be implemented given large-scale use of child labourers in cotton picking and other industries (see Crisis Group report below). Meanwhile, French construction firm Bouygues signed contracts worth \$230 million to build new developments in Ashgabat.
- [“Central Asia struggles to end child labour”](#), BBC, 21 Feb. 2005.
  - [“...and also plans winter sports complex”](#), RFE/RL, 18 Feb. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°44, [Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan: A New International Strategy](#), 4 Nov. 2004.

- ↳ Uzbekistan Protest by group of women in Andijan against new commercial regulations signalled continued discontent with government’s economic policies, after series of protests late 2004. Cabinet reshuffle seen as attempt by President Karimov to consolidate power in face of social protests, and remove pro-Western politicians from power. Government continued its crackdown on devout Muslims.
- [“Uzbekistan: Not the usual suspects”](#), IWPR, 18 Feb. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°76, [The Failure of Reform in Uzbekistan: Ways Forward for the International Community](#), 11 Mar. 2004.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°93, [The Curse of Cotton: Central Asia’s Destructive Monoculture](#), 28 February 2005. Central Asia’s cotton industry fuels political repression and entrenches poverty, expanding the recruitment base for extremism. The economics are simple: millions of rural poor work for little or no reward growing and harvesting the crop; profits go to the state or elites with strong political ties; and the whole system depends on political repression. Forced and child labour and other abuses are common. Given powerful vested interests, structural reform of the industry will be difficult, but it is vital to advance economic development, tackle poverty and social deprivation, and promote political liberalisation. It has begun in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, but not in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. The international community, which has a direct stake in Central Asia’s cotton sector, has a responsibility to help.

## SOUTH ASIA

- ↳ Afghanistan UN announced delay of parliamentary elections originally set for 21 May for security and organisational reasons; final decision over voting system and electoral boundaries yet to be made. Delegation of ex-Taliban officials led by former ambassador to UN, Abdul Hakim Mujahid, held amnesty and reconciliation talks with government. Renewed violence Helmand, Khost and Kandahar provinces killed at least 22. Long-delayed westward expansion of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) - led by Turkey as of 14 February - finally progressing: U.S.

agreed transfer of 2 existing Provisional Reconstruction Teams in west to NATO control; Spain and Lithuania to add further 2, and 1 Forward Support Base to be created. First-ever Afghanistan Human Development Report showed economy, education improving, but poverty, inequality and instability threatening progress.

- [“19 are killed by Taliban insurgents”](#), *International Herald Tribune* (AP), 26 Feb. 2005.
- [“Afghan general elections delayed”](#), ISN, 25 Feb. 2005.
- [“Census sparks controversy”](#), IWPR, 24 Feb. 2005.
- [“UN warns of fresh Afghan chaos”](#), BBC, 21 Feb. 2005.
- [“Turkey takes over ISAF command”](#), IRIN, 14 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°88, [Afghanistan: From Presidential to Parliamentary Elections](#), 23 Nov. 2004.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°35, [Afghanistan: Getting Disarmament Back on Track](#), 23 February 2005. The two-year-old process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of forces, known as the Afghanistan New Beginnings Program (ANBP), is in danger of derailing: both the authority of the central government and the stability of the democratic process are at risk. Despite some significant successes, the ANBP has worrying gaps and weaknesses: it has not made significant inroads in disarming powerful Tajik-dominated units; has not kept pace with the evolving nature of Afghanistan’s militias; and is only now beginning to make tentative plans for tackling the threat posed by unofficial militias. The central government and its international supporters have been partially complicit in maintaining the power of militia commanders. U.S.-led Coalition must not give political, military or economic support to any commander who refuses to accept Kabul’s authority. As long as the ANBP’s weaknesses are not addressed, militia networks will remain a major destructive element in the country’s political and economic life.

- ↳ Bangladesh South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit planned for Dhaka 6-7 February postponed after Indian cancellation citing political turmoil in Nepal and security concerns in Bangladesh. Several aid organisations targeted in firebomb attacks by suspected Islamist extremists. Fifteen suspected leaders of radical Islamic groups charged with sedition in northwestern Natore district. Border tensions continued with India as 2 civilians reportedly shot dead by Indian forces 28 February.
- [“Bangladesh 15 on sedition charges”](#), BBC, 28 Feb. 2005.
  - [“WB concerned over attacks on NGOs”](#), *The Daily Star*, 18 February 2005.

- ↳ India (non-Kashmir) Sporadic violence continued in northeast, north and south. Curfew imposed in northern city of Lucknow after 20 February sectarian violence killed 3. Unrest following breakdown of peace talks between Andhra Pradesh state and Maoist groups continued; 8 killed by Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-M) in Andhra Pradesh 1 March; in neighbouring Karnataka state 6 policemen killed in CPI-M attack following earlier killing of Maoist leader. Second round of provincial elections held in northern states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana; at least 30 killed in poll violence blamed mainly on Maoist rebels. Four soldiers killed in northeastern Manipur state in 17 February attack by suspected separatists.
- [“Maoists in India kill 8, hack limbs off three”](#), AlertNet, 1 Mar. 2005.

- [“Curfew imposed after India riot”](#), BBC, 21 Feb. 2005.
- [“Rebels kill four soldiers in India's northeast”](#), AlertNet, 17 Feb. 2005.

↑ Kashmir Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh and Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri announced confidence-building measures after 16 February Islamabad talks, including bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad (to start 7 April) and agreement on cross-border Iran-India-Pakistan “peace pipeline”. Local elections held for first time in Jammu and Kashmir, voter turnout low due to separatist boycott calls. Some violence despite considerable security presence. Al-Mansurain militant group claimed responsibility for 24 February suicide attack on Srinagar government complex, killing 7.

- [“All aboard?”](#), *The Economist*, 17 Feb. 2005.
- [“LoC travel ‘mother’ of all CBMs”](#), *Dawn*, 16 Feb. 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.

↓ Nepal Situation increasingly grim after King Gyanendra's 1 February coup: state of emergency imposed; senior politicians arrested; media subjected to total censorship; and new 13-member cabinet appointed. Daily reports emerged of Royal Nepalese Army killing “Maoists” while vigilante actions against Maoists reported in Kapilvastu district, with at least 20 suspected Maoists beaten to death by local resistance squad and houses torched - retaliatory strike by Maoists reportedly killed 4 civilians. Maoists reacted to coup with strikes and 14-day transport blockade of all major roads into country, bombed electricity station in mid-western Banke district 20 February and increased attacks on security forces. Major clash in Bardiya district 28 February reportedly killed at least 50 Maoists. Five political parties, including that of deposed PM Deuba and arch-rivals Nepali Congress, announced common forum to wage non-violent protest against royal coup. U.S., UK, France, India recalled ambassadors for consultations. UK froze planned military assistance worth U.S.\$2.5 million, India announced military aid on hold, World Bank suspended budgetary support worth \$70m.

- [“Troops recover 50 Maoist bodies in Bardiya clash”](#), Kantipur Online, 1 Mar. 2005.
- [“Security forces ‘disappear’ hundreds of civilians”](#), Human Rights Watch, 1 Mar. 2005.
- Comment by Rhoderick Chalmers (Crisis Group), [“External powers must act to save Nepal”](#), *Financial Times*, 24 Feb. 2005.
- Comment by John Norris (Crisis Group), [“With a royal push, democracy falls off the roof of the world”](#), *Los Angeles Times*, 4 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing, [Nepal: Dangerous Plans for Village Militias](#), 17 Feb. 2004.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°36, [Nepal: Responding to the Royal Coup](#), 24 February 2005. The policy priority in Nepal must be the reversal of the royal coup of 1 February 2005: the re-establishment of constitutional rule, including restoration of all suspended freedoms, release of all people arrested in the royal crackdown and revocation of the state of *cont'd...*

...*cont'd* emergency. To achieve these goals, international donors -- ideally coordinated by a contact group comprising India, the U.S., the UK and the UN - should apply pressure on the King, including suspending all non-essential military assistance; suspend all direct budgetary support; and initiate a review of all current development assistance programs. Only a legitimate, broad-based, democratic government will be able to strengthen the institutions of state to the point where the combined political and security strategy necessary for dealing with the Maoist insurgency becomes possible.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°91, [Nepal's Royal Coup: Making a Bad Situation Worse](#), 9 February 2005. King Gyanendra's indefensible royal coup of 1 February is likely to strengthen the Maoist insurgency and intensify Nepal's civil war. The only way to achieve peace is through effective military action combined with a political strategy that undercuts Maoist positions, but neither is possible without a broad-based democratic government. A major build-up of government forces has done little to improve security across the country: Maoist insurgents hold sway over most rural areas and are increasingly active in towns nominally controlled by the government. State security forces lack the capacity to defeat them, especially now, as troops are occupied controlling politicians and journalists in Kathmandu rather than fighting insurgents. Gyanendra has gambled that the world would be reluctant to criticise his move too harshly or cut support for Nepal as long as the Maoists remain a serious threat. The international community must not allow that gamble to pay off.

↓ Pakistan Situation worsened in Balochistan while internal political dispute destabilised Sindh provincial government. Baloch parties - with support of major Pashtun party - called province-wide strike 12 February, describing strike as referendum on Musharraf government. Two Islamic extremists blew themselves up after gunbattle with police in Quetta 18 February while attacks on infrastructure increased. In Sindh accusations of corruption between chief minister and his revenue minister continued after latter dismissed, destabilising ruling party and provincial government. Peace agreement signed between government and South Waziristan militant leader Baitullah Mehsud and supporters: militants pledged to end attacks on government installations and support for foreign groups in return for exemption from legal and punitive action for past activities - no pledge to end cross-border attacks against Coalition and Afghan government.

- [“Balochs ‘facing state terrorism’”](#), *Dawn*, 28 Feb. 2005.
- [“Sindh crisis differences creep up between Musharraf, Shujaat”](#), *Pakistan Times*, 28 Feb. 2005.
- [“The world according to the Baloch”](#), BBC, 8 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°86, [Building Judicial Independence in Pakistan](#), 9 Nov. 2004.

→ Sri Lanka Peace process again under threat after early optimism aid talks would lead to enhanced government/Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) cooperation. Top LTTE political leader E Kaushalyan and 4 others killed 7 February (most senior Tiger killed since ceasefire began February 2002) - LTTE blamed killings on “paramilitary” forces. Government soldier subsequently killed on 3rd anniversary of ceasefire and top female LTTE leader attacked 1 March.

- [“Concern over new Sri Lanka attack”](#), BBC, 1 Mar. 2005.



- "Sri Lanka says it has no time to haggle peace with tiger rebels", New Karala, 26 Feb. 2005.
- "Sri Lankan truce 'under threat'", BBC, 22 Feb. 2005.

## NORTH EAST ASIA

North Korea Set-back to nuclear talks with Pyongyang's most explicit public announcement that it had nuclear weapons and intended to pull out of 6-party talks. Justification for hard-line stance given as response to "brazen-faced, double-dealing tactics" of Bush administration. U.S., Japan and South Korea envoys met in Seoul 26 February; insisted there be no incentives in advance of 6-party talks, suggesting NK raise issues of concern once dialogue is revived. After meeting envoy from China, Kim Jong-il announced would return to talks when situation "mature".

- "North Korea sets four conditions for nuke talks", *Korea Times*, 1 Mar. 2005.
- "U.S. and China join in appeal to North Korea", *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Feb. 2005.
- "When the partying has to stop", *The Economist*, 10 Feb. 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, Backgrounder: How the South Views its Brother from Another Planet*, 14 Dec. 2004.

Taiwan Strait Some warming of Cross-Strait relations, with conciliatory statements on both sides and continuing interest in direct flights between island and mainland. Beijing proposed closer economic ties 26 February, day after Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian and opposition politician James Soong said in joint statement they "do not rule out any possible model of relations" with Beijing. U.S. and Japan announced peace in Taiwan as "common strategic objective" after talks 19 February, angering Beijing. EU arms embargo on China likely to be lifted in coming months, but U.S. remains concerned over possible transfer of sensitive technologies: intense lobbying on embargo issue during Bush visit to Europe.

- "China proposes closer Taiwan ties", *International Herald Tribune*, 26 Feb. 2005.
- "Worries about weapons, contd", *The Economist*, 24 Feb. 2005.
- "Europeans see pluses in ending China ban", *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Feb. 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 Second round of talks between Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and government in Helsinki described as "constructive" by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, chief mediator. Indonesian government claimed GAM dropped independence demand, but this denied by GAM spokesman, Bakhtiar Abdullah. Both sides agreed to discuss "self-government" but not clear any common ground. Next round of talks scheduled for 12 April. Corruption in aid distribution remains major concern, while army claimed GAM attempting to infiltrate IDP camps. Army killed 7 suspected rebels 7

February. Charge dropped against radical Islamic cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir of planning or inciting terrorist acts, requested sentence of 8 years for lesser charges. U.S. State Dept. restored Jakarta's eligibility for International Military Education and Training program in significant step towards restoration of full military ties - cut in 1991 due to rights concerns.

- "TNI welcomes GAM's new stance", *Laksamana Net*, 23 Feb. 2005.
- "Indonesia and rebels optimistic on talks", *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Feb. 2005.
- "Indonesia: The shadow of extremism", BBC, 21 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°90, *Indonesia: Rethinking Internal Security Strategy*, 20 Dec. 2004.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°92, **International Crisis Group** WORKING TO PREVENT CONFLICT WORLDWIDE  
*Recycling Militants in Indonesia: Darul Islam and the Australian Embassy Bombing*, 22 February 2005. The bombing in front of the Australian embassy in September 2004 shows the importance of looking beyond Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) to understand its extended family - the splinters and offshoots of the 55-year-old Darul Islam (DI) movement. Virtually all jihadist groups in Indonesia have DI origins, including a small group that worked with JI on the September bombing. DI's evolution helps explain the recruiting base, support network, and potential partners for jihadists in Indonesia. It also offers important clues as to how JI, itself a DI offshoot, can adapt to changing conditions and even survive the arrests of its top leaders. Indonesia is unlikely to eradicate JI, but it ought to be able to contain the terrorist threat if it can manage communal tensions, improve law enforcement capacity, and exert more effective control of weapons.

Myanmar/Burma National Convention to draft new constitution resumed 17 February with notable absentees: National League for Democracy (NLD) Vice-Chairman Tin Oo's detention extended for another year under State Protection Law; 7 political activists from Shan political groups arrested 8/9 February; NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi also remains under house arrest.

- "Rebel in Myanmar promises a long war", *International Herald Tribune*, 1 Mar. 2005.
- "Political activists detained in run-up to new constitution", *Amnesty International*, 16 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°34, *Myanmar: Update on HIV/AIDS Policy*, 16 Dec. 2004.

Philippines Situation in southern islands deteriorated with further violent clashes and bombings. Incidents between soldiers and supporters of Moro National Liberation Front leader Nur Misuari killed at least 25 soldiers, 100 rebels in 2 weeks on island of Jolo. ICRC estimated 27,000 civilians displaced by conflict. Bombs in Manila, General Santos City, and Davao 14 February killed at least 8. Abu Sayyaf claimed responsibility: 2 members arrested for Manila bombing said to have been trained by JI operatives in Lanao del Sur; 10 Abu Sayyaf rebels killed 24 February when troops captured Jolo camp.

- "Philippine army begins weighing truce in the south", *AlertNet*, 1 Mar. 2005.
- "Philippines to press Muslim group to disarm after clashes", *ReliefWeb (AFP)*, 23 Feb. 2005.
- "Thousands flee homes in Philippines as military braces for rebel attacks", *AFP*, 17 Feb. 2005.

- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°80, *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 13 July 2004.

- ↳ Thailand PM Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai Party scored overwhelming victory in 6 February polls, but failed to win single seat in 3 southernmost provinces. Violence flared in south immediately after election with 6 bombings in 3 days, including apparent assassination attempt on Narathiwat's governor 10 February. Car bomb in Narathiwat border town 17 February killed 6 in deadliest attack since insurgency flared January 2004. Widespread opposition to Thaksin zoning plan to withhold development funds from villages deemed sympathetic to Muslim separatists prompted government rethink.
  - "Thai tactics win fear, not favour", *Asia Times Online*, 26 Feb. 2005.
  - "Thaksin summons parliament over rebels", *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Feb. 2005.
  - "Zones in the south: 'plan violates constitution'", *The Nation*, 21 Feb. 2005.
  - "Why they all love Thaksin", *The Economist*, 10 Feb. 2005.



## BALKANS


- ↳ Albania Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan completed official visit pledging support for NATO membership. EU warned of "lack of sufficient progress" in preparations for mid-year general elections.
  - "EU warns Albania of election 'setback'", *EU Business*, 24 Feb. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°153, *Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?*, 25 Feb. 2004.
- ↳ Bosnia & Herzegovina High Rep. Paddy Ashdown suggested Bosnia's progress with economic, judicial and security reforms created basis for future EU and NATO recognition as viable state. EU may decide to launch Stabilisation and Association Agreement talks in May if cooperation with UN war crimes tribunal improves sufficiently. Former commander of Bosnian Muslim army Rasim Delic and former Republic of Srpska generals, Radivoj Miletic and Milan Gvero voluntarily surrendered to Hague tribunal.
  - "Bosnian Muslim wartime commander to surrender to UN", *AlertNet*, 23 Feb. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing, *EUFOR: Changing Bosnia's Security Arrangements*, 29 June 2004.
- ↳ Kosovo Serbian President Boris Tadic made first visit by head of state to Kosovo since 1999 war, touring Serb enclaves. Avoided meeting interim government and repeatedly stated Kosovo independence unacceptable. For first time EU Council (foreign affairs ministers) stated Kosovo will not return to pre-1999 situation, but stopped short of explicitly ruling out partition - Head of UN Mission in Kosovo Soren Jessen-Petersen fully opposes partition. Kosovo government objected to UN Secretary-General Annan's 24 February report to Security Council that Kosovo Serbs "live in fear". Jessen-

Peterson more upbeat; reported "tangible progress" on minority rights, praised PM Haradinaj, and castigated Belgrade's representative for painting Kosovo black. Haradinaj launched decentralisation program, calling upon Serbs to return and for Albanians to be tolerant. Kosovo Serb official Oliver Ivanovic's car blown up 8 February in Serb-dominated North Mitrovica; no casualties.

- "A sub-par performance", *Transitions Online*, 28 Feb. 2005.
- "UN: Kosovo envoy confident on standards process", *RFE/RL*, 25 Feb. 2005.
- Comment by Christopher Patten (Crisis Group), "Action is needed to keep Kosovo on track", *Financial Times*, 23 Feb. 2005.
- Comment by Frank C. Carlucci, "The war we haven't finished", *New York Times*, 22 Feb. 2005.
- "Kosovo's Wild West", *IWPR*, 18 Feb. 2005.
- Comment by Pat Cox (Crisis Group), "Only full independence can save Kosovo", *Irish Times*, 14 Feb. 2005.
- For background see Crisis Group Europe Report N°161, *Kosovo: Toward Final Status*, 24 Jan. 2005.

- ↳ Macedonia Local elections for municipalities - now with greater powers due to decentralisation - planned for 13 March. PM Vlado Buckovski in Brussels presented answers to EU Questionnaire assessing Macedonian readiness for accession process.

- "Poll violence concerns", *IWPR*, 18 Feb. 2005.
- "Buckovski: Macedonia to strive for EU membership by 2010", *Southeast European Times*, 18 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°33, *Macedonia: Make or Break*, 3 Aug. 2004.

Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°37   
*Macedonia: Not out of the Woods Yet*, 25 February 2005. Macedonia has made significant progress in the past year, but the cycle of frequent short-term crises could endanger decentralisation, a fundamental aspect of the peace process. With key local elections set for 13 March 2005, tensions stirred up by last year's referendum over the subject have yet to evaporate, and various nationalist elements remain poised to exploit opportunities. The failure of the opposition-backed referendum handed the coalition a fresh chance to put mistakes behind it. It now has to confront rising unemployment and a weak economy, as well as corruption allegations, while the local elections mean the decentralisation process remains a priority. The government must explain to citizens why and how decentralisation improves their lives. A mismanaged process, coupled with unrealistic expectations, would be a dangerous recipe.

- ↳ Serbia & Montenegro Serbian President Boris Tadic visited Kosovo, insisting Serbian sovereignty. General Vladimir Lazarevic and Bosnian Serb generals Milan Gvero and Radivoj Miletic surrendered to ICTY. Term of state union parliament to expire 3 March, with no date for elections and disagreement between Serbia and Montenegro over how to proceed. Montenegrin government proposed alliance of 2 independent states: although rejected by Belgrade, no signs state union will collapse. BIA chief Rade Bulatovic accused of handing classified documents to CIA. President Tadic returned Labour Law to parliament following irregularities in final text.
  - "Serbia steps up extradition of war crime suspects", *Financial Times*, 1 Mar. 2005.



- "Police take over Serbia's frontiers", IWPR, 25 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°32, *Serbia's Changing Political Landscape*, 22 July 2004.

## CAUCASUS

- Armenia Opposition factions "Justice" and "National Unity" declared extension to year-long boycott of legislature. Armenia's ruling coalition sidestepped opposition-proposed compromise on constitutional amendments, calling instead on opposition to take part in constitutional reform in parliament rather than outside it.
  - "Opposition still boycotting Armenian parliament", IWPR, 9 Feb. 2005.
  - "Armenian coalition fudges opposition offer on constitution", Armenia Liberty, 3 Feb. 2005
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°158, *Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead*, 18 Oct. 2004.
- Azerbaijan Presidential spokesman said 7 opposition leaders and others arrested during post-election protests in October 2003 may be pardoned in March; statement follows OSCE report critical of their trial. But repression of opposition and media continued. Man serving 3-year sentence for involvement in 2003 election-related violence found dead in prison cell 17 February; investigation reportedly underway. Prison riot in Baku involving some 100 inmates caused injuries among police and prisoners.
  - "OSCE pushes for reforms in Azerbaijan", AzerNews, 10 Feb. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°156, *Azerbaijan: Turning Over a New Leaf?*, 13 May 2004.
- Georgia PM Zurab Zhvania found dead in acquaintance's Tbilisi apartment 3 February. Official investigation blamed carbon-monoxide poisoning from faulty gas heater; some observers questioned cause of death. Loss of one of country's most experienced politicians likely to weaken Saakashvili administration. Saakashvili nominated Zhvania's close associate, former Minister of Finance Zurab Nogaideli, as PM. Car bomb exploded outside police headquarters in Gori 1 February, killing 3 policemen and injuring 23. Authorities launched investigation, cautioned against blaming South Ossetians. Tbilisi-Moscow relations continued slide, with no progress in bilateral talks on framework agreement. EU mission traveled to Georgia in response to government's request to start border-monitoring mission to replace OSCE monitors. Sergei Bagapsh inaugurated president of de facto republic of Abkhazia 12 February.
  - "Lavrov trip does little to ease Georgian-Russian tension", Eurasianet.org, 18 Feb. 2005.
  - "A look back at Zurab Zhvania's career", RFE/RL, 3 Feb. 2005.
  - "Deadly Gori blast sparks confused reactions among officials", RFE/RL, 2 Feb. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°159, *Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia*, 26 Nov. 2004.
- Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) OSCE fact-finding mission completed week-long visit to occupied territories surrounding NK to evaluate Azerbaijani claims Armenia settling territories. Though final report yet to be completed, mission apparently found little organised settlement except in strategic Lachin corridor. Next talks between Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministers scheduled for 2 March.

- "Armenia/Azerbaijan: Mediator sees no organized settlement policy in occupied lands", RFE/RL, 14 Feb. 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) Chechen rebel president Aslan Maskhadov declared temporary ceasefire 1 February in purported goodwill gesture. Maskhadov said had ordered all rebel forces to halt offensive operations; warlord Shamil Basayev, who has previously operated independently of Maskhadov, announced would abide by ceasefire. Russian officials dismissed truce as ploy to increase international pressure on Moscow. Russian NGO met Maskhadov envoy Akhmed Zakayev in London; signed 'peace memorandum'. But heavy fighting reported in eastern Chechnya, where 70-90 rebels reportedly surrounded. Meanwhile, instability continued to spread across North Caucasus: for 2nd time in 2 months, Russian forces in Nalchik (republic of Kabardino-Balkaria) attacked apartment block housing suspected members of "Yarmuk" Islamic extremist group, killing 2 militants; clashes with militants also reported in republics of Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Dagestan.
  - "Chechen plan discussed in London", BBC, 25 Feb. 2005.
  - "North Caucasus republics enter circle of violence", RFE/RL, 23 Feb. 2005.
  - "Is it too late for peace talks in Chechnya?", RFE/RL, 11 Feb. 2005.
  - "An empire's fraying edge", *The Economist*, 10 Feb. 2005.
- Moldova Tensions grew ahead of 6 March parliamentary poll. Opposition and NGOs complained of police harassment and government use of public money to fund ruling Communists' campaign; EU and U.S. voiced similar concerns. Chisinau warned of Transdniestrian military mobilisation - denied by Tiraspol - but agreed to suspend restrictions on foreign diplomats travelling to Transnistria after Russia and Ukraine protested. EU announced would appoint special representative to help settle Transnistria dispute.
  - "EU calls on Moldovan government to ensure free and fair elections", RFE/RL, 11 Feb. 2005.
  - "Moldovan government says Transnistria mobilizing military", RFE/RL, 2 Feb. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°157, *Moldova: Regional Tensions over Transnistria*, 17 June 2004.
- Ukraine Meeting with EU and NATO leaders in Brussels, President Yuschenko signed 3-year action plan on implementing reforms to meet EU standards and declared goal of beginning accession talks when action plan ends. Domestically, parliament approved appointment of outspoken nationalist Yulia Tymoshenko as PM.
  - "Kiev seeks to assuage Moscow", *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Feb. 2005.
  - "Nato and Kiev agree to seek closer links", *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Feb. 2005.

## WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

- Basque Country (Spain) Regional Basque premier Ibarretxe, having narrowly gained regional parliamentary support December 2004, failed to convince Spanish parliamentarians to back his autonomy plan; Spanish MPs voted 313-29 against, citing lack of majority support in Basque Country and threat to Spanish unity. Ibarretxe said would press ahead with regional referendum regardless; elections planned for April. Madrid car bomb 9 February injured 43 near building to be visited by Spanish king and Mexican president. Judges began investigation into separate royal assassination plot 16 February; 2 ETA suspects arrested following day Valencia. Two Basque parliamentarians accused of illegal membership of ETA by anti-terrorism judges.

  - ["Eta cell' was planning attacks"](#), BBC, 17 Feb. 2005.
  - ["Madrid car bomb: 43 injured"](#), CNN, 9 Feb. 2005.
  - ["Early poll on Basque autonomy"](#), *The Guardian*, 3 Feb. 2005.
  
- Cyprus Turkish Cypriot PM Mehmet Ali Talat won northern Cyprus' parliamentary elections, pledging to work toward reunification of Cyprus and integration with EU.

  - ["Turkish Cypriot PM wins election"](#), BBC, 21 Feb. 2005.
  
- Northern Ireland (UK) Independent Monitoring Commission report on December 2004 £26.5m Northern Bank raid said IRA responsible for widespread criminal activity with Sinn Féin (SF) knowledge. SF leader Gerry Adams denied involvement claiming SF has never controlled IRA. IRA further implicated in January murder of Belfast Catholic Robert McCartney. Northern Ireland Secretary, Paul Murphy, said SF would face financial sanctions. Meanwhile, agreement on cross-border policing originally recommended in Patten report signed between Northern Irish and Garda forces.

  - ["Sinn Féin faces 'symbolic' financial sanctions"](#), *The Guardian*, 22 Feb. 2005.
  - ["Too soon' to confirm cash origin"](#), BBC, 21 Feb. 2005.
  
- Turkey Ankara paying close attention to formation of Iraqi government over fears of Kurdish autonomy. Sixth anniversary of former PKK leader Ocalan's arrest led to protests and clashes, particularly in southeast Turkey. Non-recognition of Greek Cyprus reported to have frustrated moves to greater EU-NATO cooperation; PM Erdogan stressed Turkey had no commitment to recognise Cyprus until general agreement.

  - ["Turkish police, Kurds clash on Ocalan anniversary"](#), Alertnet, 15 Feb. 2005.
  - ["The coming clash over Kirkuk"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 10 Feb. 2005.
  - Crisis Group Middle East Report N°35, [Iraq: Allaying Turkey's Fears Over Kurdish Ambitions](#), 26 Jan. 2005.



## Latin America / Caribbean

- Bolivia After 3 weeks of pro-independence demonstrations in Santa Cruz, President Carlos Mesa agreed to hold referendum that could extend greater autonomy to other provinces and allow Santa Cruz residents to elect own local leaders; Mesa also reshuffled cabinet. Executive and legislative branches agreed new

agenda covering 4 key points: hydrocarbons law, autonomy referendum, election of governors and constituent assembly. Recent poll revealed 52% approval for Mesa (up from 42% in January).

- ["Bolivia's president shakes up cabinet"](#), AlertNet, 4 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°7, [Bolivia's Divisions: Too Deep to Heal?](#), 6 July 2004.

- Colombia FARC demonstrated capability to strike in several regions simultaneously despite government's 2 year military campaign against them: heavy fighting in Narino, Meta and Antioquia departments killed at least 60 troops. President Alvaro Uribe met G-24 representatives at donor conference in Cartagena 3-4 February. G-24 affirmed support for Uribe administration but urged "legal framework" for demobilisation of armed groups. Paramilitary AUC threatened to abandon demobilisation talks if legislation stipulating possible prison terms for past crimes passed by Congress.

- ["Rebels wreak havoc in Colombia"](#), CNN, 21 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°11, [War and Drugs in Colombia](#), 27 Jan. 2005.

- Ecuador Peaceful demonstrations held in Quito for and against President Gutierrez. Opposition branded him "dictator" for having Congress sack most of Supreme Court.

- ["Thousands protest against Ecuador's president"](#), AlertNet, 16 Feb. 2005.

- Haiti Tensions between Haitian police and former military escalated: police stormed former military compound on hunt for leader of Haitian ex-soldiers, after killing of 4 policemen, allegedly by former military. Supporters of former president Aristide said would boycott polls set for October and November if so-called political attacks continue. Three UN peacekeepers shot at, lightly wounded 28 February in capital. As many as 500 prisoners escaped Port-au-Prince jail 19 February after armed men broke in with suspected inside help. Escape is serious blow for transitional government and for MINUSTAH, symbolising fragility of security situation. UN announced inquiry into alleged rape of Haitian woman by 3 Pakistani policemen.

- ["Jail raid Haitian officials held"](#), BBC, 20 Feb. 2005.
- ["Haiti police clash with former soldiers"](#), CNN, 7 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°10, [A New Chance for Haiti?](#), 18 Nov. 2004.

Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°7, [Haiti's Transition: Hanging in the Balance](#), 8 February 2005. Almost one year after the abrupt departure of former President Aristide, Haiti remains in turmoil, at risk of losing what may be its last chance to escape a crushing cycle of violence and poverty. The transitional government is fighting to maintain its credibility, and the elections planned for late 2005 are unlikely to produce the legitimate government the country needs without major improvement in three key areas: security, reconciliation and economic revival. The UN Mission has begun to take a more assertive approach, but both it and the transitional government must do more to address citizen insecurity. Haiti also needs a pluralistic national dialogue that establishes some common objectives for the next government, regardless who wins the end-of-year elections.

- Venezuela Relations with Colombia back to normal after diplomatic dispute despite acquisition by Chavez

administration of some 100,000 AK-47 assault rifles and military helicopters from Russia. Growing concern in Washington over deals and Chavez accusation U.S. plotting to kill him - Chavez threatened to cut oil supplies if attempt made. U.S. reportedly seeking to amend OAS Democratic Charter to allow sanctions against violators. Government levied large fines on 2 private television stations alleging anti-competitive behaviour; both claimed fines political.

- [“Defying U.S., Venezuela's Chavez embraces socialism”](#), CNN, 25 Feb. 2005.
- [“A spectre stalks the Americas”](#), *The Economist*, 24 Feb. 2005.
- [“Uribe and Chavez 'clear up row'”](#), BBC, 16 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°5, [Venezuela: Headed Toward Civil War?](#), 10 May 2004.

## Middle East / North Africa

### EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

- Israel/Occupied Territories Suicide bombing in Tel Aviv 25 February killed 5, undermining much progress earlier in month. Israel blamed Islamic Jihad and Syria, and froze confidence-building measures unveiled at 8 February Sharm el-Sheikh summit until Palestinian Authority (PA) takes concrete action against militants, threatening to do so itself. At summit, Israeli PM Sharon and PA President Abbas announced mutual ceasefire. Israel subsequently released 500 Palestinian prisoners; many Palestinians saw as inadequate as most had completed 2/3 of prison terms and long-term prisoners not included. Egypt and Jordan, meanwhile, re-established full diplomatic representation in Israel for first time since 2000. Israeli parliament and cabinet gave final approval to Gaza pullout plan - Sharon announced evacuation to begin 20 July. After week of political deadlock, Palestinian parliament approved PM Ahmed Qurei's new cabinet after Qurei agreed to replace most ministers with “technocrats”.
  - [“Israel steps up military operations, says Sharon”](#), Reuters, 27 Feb. 2005.
  - [“Palestinian lawmakers oppose prime minister's cabinet list”](#), *The Daily Star*, 24 Feb. 2005.
  - [“Released Palestinians return home”](#), BBC, 21 Feb. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°16, [After Arafat? Challenges and Prospects](#), 23 Dec. 2004.

- Lebanon Extraordinary month as assassination of former PM Rafik Hariri sparked outrage over Syria's military presence and political role in Lebanon, and resignation of pro-Syrian government. Anti-Syria protests - some with over 100,000 participants - followed massive 14 February bombing in Beirut, which killed Hariri and at least 17 others, and injured over 200. Suspicions over responsibility centred on Damascus. With rare unity and unprecedented public support, Lebanese opposition demanded resignation of pro-Syria cabinet - achieved 28 February - and withdrawal of Syria's 14,000 troops in Lebanon (Syria pledged redeployment to Bekaa). International pressure on Syria also intensified, with U.S. and French presidents calling for immediate withdrawal. Syria declared commitment to full withdrawal, but declined to specify timeline.
  - [“People power brings down Karami cabinet”](#), *The Daily Star*, 1 Mar. 2005.
  - [“Syria 'commits' to Lebanon pullout”](#), CNN, 24 Feb. 2005.

- [“International pressure on Damascus intensifies”](#), *The Daily Star*, 22 Feb. 2005.
- [“A huge crowd in Beirut mourns ex-leader”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°7, [Hizbollah: Rebel Without a Cause?](#), 30 July 2003.

- Syria International pressure on Damascus reached new levels after assassination - many believe by Syrian agents - of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri in Beirut. Tens of thousands marched in Beirut demanding withdrawal of Syria's 14,000 troops; U.S. and France led international criticism, with U.S. recalling its ambassador to Damascus. Syria committed to full withdrawal (but declined to specify timeline), and handed U.S. Saddam Hussein's half-brother, suspected of directing insurgency from Syria. Elsewhere, Israel blamed Syria for 25 February Tel Aviv bombing.
  - [“Syria and its friends buckle under pressure”](#), *The Economist*, 28 Feb. 2005.
  - [“Syria 'commits' to Lebanon pullout”](#), CNN, 24 Feb. 2005.
  - [“International pressure on Damascus intensifies”](#), *The Daily Star*, 22 Feb. 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 Washington remained high as President Bush toured Europe attempting to rally support for tough stance vis-à-vis Tehran, and notably refused to rule out military option. Bush visit produced joint U.S.-German statement against Iranian nuclear program, and stated willingness of U.S. to think further about European position, but differences still deep. Iran responded with tough rhetoric; foreign minister Kamal Kharazi declaring determination to continue enriching uranium. Russia and Iran signed nuclear fuel supply deal long-opposed by U.S.
  - [“Russia-Iran nuclear deal signed”](#), BBC, 27 Feb. 2005.
  - [“Bush calls for united front on Iran arms”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Feb. 2005.
  - [“Kharazi: Iran will continue uranium enrichment”](#), Middle East Online, 23 Feb. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°15, [Iran: Where Next on the Nuclear Standoff?](#), 24 Nov. 2004.
- Iraq Continuing major violence - with suicide car bombing killing at least 125 in Hilla 28 February - overshadowed positive political developments. Candidates manoeuvred for top jobs in transitional government as final elections results released: United Iraqi Alliance (Shiite list) won 140 seats in 275-seat transitional assembly; Kurdish Alliance 75 seats; Iraqi List (led by interim PM Ayad Allawi) 40 seats. UIA nominated Ibrahim Jaafari, political pragmatist but religious conservative, to be PM, most powerful post in new government. Allawi said would form coalition to challenge Jaafari. Meanwhile, violence continued, with Shiite worshippers targeted by multiple bombings in Baghdad on eve of holy day of Ashoura, killing 36. Elsewhere, U.S. launched offensive against militant strongholds in western province of Anbar. 1,134 Coalition soldiers, including 1,029 Americans, and thousands of Iraqis killed by hostile fire since declared end of combat operations on 1 May 2003.



- [“Hilla car bomb death toll rises to 127”](#), CNN, 1 Mar. 2005.
- [“Allawi fighting Shiites for prime minister post”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Feb. 2005.
- [“Shia majority for Iraq parliament”](#), BBC, 17 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°34, [What Can the U.S. Do in Iraq?](#), 22 Dec. 2004, and N°35, [Iraq: Allaying Turkey’s Fears Over Kurdish Ambitions](#), 26 Jan. 2005.

🏠 Saudi Arabia In tentative step forward for democracy, first round of municipal elections passed off 10 February, with good turnout and interest, but ban on women voting and complaints some candidates had formed unfair alliance: candidates backed by clerics won 6 of 7 seats in Riyadh. Further rounds set for March and April. Prince Saud al-Faisal said women might be given vote in next elections. Trial of three democracy advocates postponed after they rejected closed trial.

- [“Saudi Arabia may look at votes for women”](#), Swissinfo, 27 Feb. 2005.
- [“Saudi vote stirs new enthusiasm”](#), *The Washington Post*, 24 Feb. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°31, [Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who are the Islamists?](#), 21 Sept. 2004.

## NORTH AFRICA

🏠 Algeria President Bouteflika, elected 1999 and 2004 as non-party candidate, accepted presidency of ruling FLN party. Low-level violence continued: 6 rebels killed and Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) bomb-making unit destroyed in separate actions Boumerdes region; 4 soldiers died in GSPC ambush Batna region. Claiming responsibility, GSPC repeated mantra against “truce, reconciliation or dialogue with regime”. Opposition Islamist party agreed to back Bouteflika’s

- amnesty proposals covering both rebels and army - on condition 1992 emergency law restricting political activity lifted.
- [“Bouteflika takes control of ruling party”](#), Middle East Online, 1 Feb. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°29, [Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page](#), 30 July 2004.

🏠 Egypt In surprise move President Mubarak initiated constitutional change to allow for multi-candidate presidential elections. Activist Kifaya (“Enough”) group continued rare protests throughout month against possible Mubarak 5<sup>th</sup> term, calling for release of Ayman Nour, leader of Ghad (“Tomorrow”) party detained on charge of falsifying documents; detention criticised by U.S. Following Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire agreement, Egypt reopened official diplomatic relations with Israel after 4-year break. IAEA report said Egyptian nuclear reporting failures were “matter of concern”, but did not suggest weapons link.

- [“Election reform announced in Egypt”](#), CNN, 26 Feb. 2005.
- [“Mass arrests and torture in Sinai”](#), Human Rights Watch report, 22 Feb. 2005.
- [“Making a hero”](#), *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 17 Feb. 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 Trial of suspects in June 2003, August and September 2004 coup attempts ended with 84 convictions and 100 acquittals - including that of former president Ould Haidallah, ousted by current president Ould Taya in 1984.

- [“Fate of Mauritania’s stateless still disputed”](#), Afrol, 15 Feb. 2005.
- [“Mauritania coup trial ends with 84 guilty verdicts”](#), Middle East Online, 3 Feb. 2005.

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