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Early Warning

Waiting for the Other Persian Slipper to Drop: The Planned Re-Escalation by Iran of Fighting in Iraq and Elsewhere

Analysis. By Gregory R. Copley, Editor, GIS. Iran's clerical leadership will, by at least early in the second half of 2008, break the "understanding" — the "ceasefire" — it reached in November 2007 with the US Bush Administration. It will, in line with a long-standing strategy, resume a massive program of armed attacks on US forces inside Iraq, and possibly elsewhere, mainly through proxy guerilla *jihadist* forces, strongly supported by Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC: *Pasdaran*) *al-Quds* special forces. This intelligence is based on a variety of specific indicators which match historical Iranian clerical strategy, and confirmed by sources within Iran.

The revived conflict will be the second phase of the "one-two" process begun with the November 2007 "secret" — or at least publicly undisclosed — accords between Tehran and Washington.¹ Significantly, there is no evidence that the US George W. Bush Administration discussed the accords with any of its Coalition partners, and there is increasing restiveness within Coalition governments over the fact that they are expected to put forces into Iraq without any participation in the overall strategic process determined by the US Government.

Iran's re-escalation in Iraq, the Balkans, and elsewhere is designed to inflict politically-significant losses on US forces and prestige at a time when US and Coalition strength and preparedness in Iraq have declined, as Tehran knew would be the case as a result of the November 2007 accords. The surprise revival of the war against the US is designed to support Tehran's favored candidate in the November 2008 US Presidential elections, and that favorite will be either Sen. Hillary Clinton or Sen. Barack Obama.

The decline in Coalition preparedness in Iraq derives partly from Coalition members' reductions in forces, but mostly based on the lowering of the US military and political guard because the Bush Administration insisted on portraying the "improved security climate" in Iraq as a sign of the great success of US counter-insurgency warfare under Gen. David Petraeus, Commanding General, Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I),² when, in reality, it was a situation which was given to the US "on a silver salver" in order to induce a scaling back of US capabilities, politically and militarily, in Iraq, and to diminish the prospects of a US military attack on Iran.

Not only did the temporary (from Tehran's standpoint) cessation of hostilities remove pressure on Iran, enabling it to regroup inside Iran and politically in Iraq; it also ensured a declining sense of US preparedness leading up to the period of political — perhaps strategic — paralysis which faces US Administrations in the period immediately preceding Presidential elections. From Tehran's standpoint, almost any Bush Administration reaction to the revived attacks in Iraq in late 2008 should play into Tehran's hands in terms of helping to shape the US Presidential election outcome.

Indeed, had the US adopted the Petraeus approach to war-winning in Iraq much earlier (say, in 2003), and sustained it, then Iran would have continued to have been on the defensive, and the clerics may have by now been removed by the restive Iranian populace.

Iran's clerics, meanwhile, have taken advantage of the accords to complete their domination of the Iraqi Government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and Pres. Jalal Talabani, literally using the March 2-3, 2008, visit to Baghdad of Iranian Pres. Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad to highlight the reality that an Iranian President can come openly to Baghdad, and openly accept great pomp and ceremony, while the US President can only arrive secretly amid great security, and without fanfare.

The Iranian plan to break the November 2007 accord with the White House was always part of the Tehran strategy, and is completely in line with the firm Iranian clerical conviction — learned from the process which saw US Pres. Jimmy Carter removed from office and replaced by Ronald Reagan as a result of the “Iran hostage crisis” — that the last year of a US Presidential term is fertile ground to achieve strategic gains against the United States. The goal of the Iranian clerics was always to continue to apply pressure on US forces in Iraq up to the point where a “deal” could be struck with the US Presidency in a “lame duck” political year leading up to the Presidential election. But for the Iranian clerics, the deal was merely phase one of the process.

Even if the George W. Bush White House was aware that this was the Iranian clerics' plan, it had — because of delays in achieving military success in Iraq — virtually run out of other options to achieve a degree of political calm before the 2008 elections. Without the deal, the Administration would see the US political landscape dominated by the Iraq War, rather than the economy. However, with US economic indicators being perceived in the US media so badly, it is possible that the Bush White House could see a revived Iranian attack on US forces in Iraq as a welcome distraction. But that seems unlikely; paralysis of decisionmaking seems more likely.

In the meantime, to combat growing military criticism of the Bush White House's conduct of the war, it has been reported that a key commander in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, CENTCOM Commander Adm. William Fallon, USN, may be dismissed. But that will only deviate attention from the US need to prepare its tactical and strategic response options to the proposed Iranian escalation. Part of the problem has been that the Bush White House, in order to bolster its declining domestic popularity, has been too keen to congratulate itself on its “success” in Iraq, and nothing detracts from preparedness like taking time out for self-congratulation.

The situation, then, following the November 2007 accords, is that Iran has emerged as completely dominating the Northern Persian Gulf and across to the Mediterranean, and the US has been left, essentially, with few, if any, strategic options. Significantly, while preparing for his visit to Iraq, Iranian Pres. Ahmadi-Nejad, speaking at the port city of Bandar Abbas on February 20, 2008, noted: “Look at our region ... They [the Western powers] created a dirty black microbe called the Zionist regime to set upon the countries in the area like a beast of prey . They want to use it to force their policies on the peoples of this region ... They assassinate men of faith and patriots and then celebrate the event. You saw that brave son of Lebanon [ie: terrorist mastermind Imad Mugnyiah, killed in Damascus in a car bomb incident on February 12, 2008] who stood up against the wild attack of the Zionists in Lebanon and blunted their horns ...”

Iran's Fars News Agency, meanwhile, reported on February 18, 2008, the statement by *Pasdaran* commander Muhammad Ali Ja'ffari, who sent a message to *HizbAllah* leader Hassan Nasrallah saying that “in the near future we will witness the destruction of the cancerous parasite, Israel, at the strong hands of the *HizbAllah* fighters”. Does it seem as though the Iranian clerical leadership is in any way moving toward a “normalization” of relations with the US, Israel, or the West? And yet that “normalization” was the major ostensible motivation by former US Secretary of State James Baker and his Iraq Study Group (which included incumbent US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates), and the US State Department in pushing for the “agreement” they finally won in November 2007 with the Iranian clerics.

The price the US has paid — on behalf of the Middle East and international community — for a few months of reduced insurgent activity in Iraq will become more clear in the coming months. The changed strategic balance in the region will become even more clear over the coming decade.

Footnotes:

1. See Bodansky, Yossef: "Washington's Deal With Iran", *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 1-2008. Also in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, December 14, 2007, as "Washington's Deal With Iran Ensures Early US Withdrawal From Iraq, But Imperils Long-Term Western Interests and Stability in the Middle East".
2. See, for example, the laudatory article, "The Patton of Counterinsurgency", by Frederick W. Kagan and Kimberly Kagan, in the US conservative journal, *The Weekly Standard*, on March 10, 2008.

Iranian Opposition Movement Cites Iranian Use of *Pasdaran* Cover Organizations Inside Albania

One of the more credible terrorism analysts for the exiled National Council of Resistance of Iran — the formerly Soviet- and Saddam Hussein-funded *Muhaheddin e-Khalq* which worked to overthrow the Shah of Iran — Reza Shafa, on March 9, 2008, produced a report entitled "Albania a foothold for Iran's IRGC in Europe" which echoed intelligence gathered by GIS/Defense & Foreign Affairs over recent years.

Shafa noted: "The *mullahs'* regime [in Iran] is trying to use Albania as a foothold in the European continent. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has expanded its operations to continental Europe. Albania has a geopolitical importance for *mullahs'* ruling Iran."

Shafa noted also that some of the front and cover organizations being used by the IRGC (Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps: IRGC, the *Pasdaran*) included [directly quoting from Shafa's report]:

Bonyad Saadi Shiraz: It is an offshoot of the conglomerate Islamic Culture and Communication Organization (ICCO) which is operating worldwide apparently to promote Islamic beliefs but practically it is a sister organization to the IRGC and more accurately the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS). ICCO has a unique task of spreading fundamentalism and terrorism abroad. Since the Albanian authorities will not allow the *mullahs'* agents to operate freely in the area, IRGC utilizes the home made charity organizations to pursue its real intentions. Struggling not to blow the cover, Bonyad Saadi Shiraz prints some books propagate Khomeini's thoughts.

A college with the same title, Saadi Shiraz, opened-up in Tiranë with 39 students for 2001-2002 school years. It then admitted more students from Albania and Kosovo the following years.

Quran Institute: This organization is another charity association run by the ICCO in Albania. As the name implies under the pretext of teaching Quran, the IRGC is recruiting susceptible individuals for future terrorist acts in Europe.

Khomeini Assistance Committee: Since the early days of 1979 Iran[ian] Revolution, under Khomeini's direct supervision[,] an organization was setup in Iran called *Kommitte Imdad Imam Khomeini* (Khomeini Assistance Committee) to recruit among the poorest and most needy youths worldwide for IRGC and other security apparatus. The same organization now has spread its wings over to Albania with its vast economic resources enabling it to send as much as the project requires. Not long ago, Habibollah Asgar Owladi[,] a close confidant[e] of Ali Khamene'i, the *mullahs'* supreme leader, traveled to Tiranë. Asgar Owladi is known for his irreplaceable services to Khomeini Assistance Committee. He was to meet the country's religious leaders hoping to pave the way for the IRGC's later activities. Khamenei briefed him in person since the visit was very important for Tehran's *mullahs*.

Opening Exhibitions: In a parallel move, the Iranian regime opened up an exhibition of Iranian products manufactured by firms belonging to the MOIS. In 2007, the MOIS local agents tried contacting Albanian firms to make their activities look like a legitimate economical endeavor.

A document obtained from Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad's cabinet indicates that in the last fiscal year \$19.5-million were allocated to cover expenses in some targeted countries; out of that \$1.5-million were spent in Albania.

GIS/*Defense & Foreign Affairs* has specifically noted the linkage of Albanian intelligence officials with Iran in the past. For example, on January 16, 2006, in a report entitled "Kosovo SHiK, Directly Linked With Albanian SHiK Intelligence Organization, Prepares for 'Big Push' For Kosovo Independence", this Service noted that a key Albanian *jihadist* group leader, using the alias "Abou Abdallah" — who operated under the acronym AK — had worked with Iran to undertake insurgency operations in Iraq. This Service noted: "In July 2003 he [AK] entered Iran with a Chechen terrorist group in order to assist the terrorists of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi [then the *al-Qaida* leader in Iraq] and this group was incorporated with the groups of 'Allah's Lions', led by Zarqawi. On August 19, 2003, AK and the Chechen group undertook a terrorist attack against the UN offices in Baghdad; 21 people were killed and among them the leader of the UN mission in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello."

USMC Mulls How to Respond to Results of Blast Test Reports

Very well-placed sources in the US Marine Corps (USMC) have noted that the Corps was, on March 10, 2008, urgently pondering how to respond to the results of tests into the blast survivability of the seating and restraint systems for the new mine-resistant, ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicles, following a comment by a US Department of Defense (DoD) public affairs officer that the tests had not been authorized by DoD. The tests validated USMC concerns that some of the seating and restraint systems did not meet the basic MRAP specification which called for the seating and internal systems of the new MRAPs to be "blast resistant". The tests, in late January and early February 2008, showed that only one of the seats being used in the MRAPs actually met the critical blast resistant requirements.

See: *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, [February 16, 2008](#): *New Survivability Systems Validated for US Armed Forces Vehicles, But Unsafe MRAPs, HMWWVs Still Being Deployed.*

Tests on the seating and restraint systems for the MRAP were conducted at the highly-regarded Calspan Corporation test facility in Buffalo, New York, during the week of January 28, 2008, and at Penns Park, Pennsylvania, by the equally highly-regarded ARCCA Incorporated crash safety engineering test facility during the week of February 11, 2008. Testing for the HMMWV seats and restraint systems took place during the weeks of January 28 and February 4, 2008, at the NIAR Horizontal Accelerator test facility in Wichita, Kansas.

One USMC source said: "We're now in a difficult position because of the DoD statement, which, while correct in the sense that it was the Marine Corps which authorized the tests and not DoD, gives the impression that we have not been cognizant of the problem with some of the seats and restraint systems in the MRAPs and other vehicles. Threat analysis called for us to consider the two-stage impact of blast on the occupants of MRAPs, so we went ahead with the tests, and there is a clear and open trail of documentation which built toward these tests, which we conducted as quickly as possible. Now, we need to consider how to move forward to upgrade MRAPs in the field, just as we would add improvements to any weapon system as those improvements became available."

However, other USMC sources have indicated that there may have been some panic on the part of DoD when some officials realized that all but one of the seats performed badly in the tests. One source noted: "I think that there are a lot of people who would just like to see the test results ignored, because it's just one more thing to do in a very busy working environment. But while there have been no major challenges to MRAP occupants during this current period of low attack numbers on US personnel in Iraq, we know that we can expect a surge of attacks as we come up to the period before the US elections. This is how the insurgents work, and we need to have the MRAPs ready for that new season."

The test results, which have ramifications for a lot of military vehicles, have now, however, been widely circulated throughout Congress, and GIS/*Defense & Foreign Affairs* is aware of numerous independent enquiries by Congressmen into the matter. One senior Congressional source told GIS/*Defense & Foreign*

Affairs: “I hope nobody even thinks of sweeping this under the carpet. If we're going to place troops in harm's way, then we better make sure that every effort has gone into protecting them.”

See also:

Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis, [June 19, 2007](#): *Iranian, Jihadis Prepare Doctrine to Defeat New US MRAP Vehicles*.

Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis, [June 11, 2007](#): *New Study Highlights Ongoing Dangers to US Troops With Major New Vehicle Programs*.

Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis, [July 4, 2007](#): *US Defense Force Personnel Remain Vulnerable as New Vehicle Systems Enter Production Without Appropriate Survivability Systems*.

Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis, [October 8, 2007](#): *Some Progress, But Major Failings, in Getting Viable Survivability Systems into New US Armed Forces Vehicles*.

The Strategic-Tactical Relationship

For Want of a Nail ...

*Tactical successes or failures can often accumulate to determine strategic outcomes, but too often we ignore the linkages between tactics and strategy. A case study of US vehicles in Iraq.**

Analysis. By Gregory R. Copley, Editor, GIS. We can look back with some certainty to the reality that the great maritime nations' unwillingness to understand and address the causes of scurvy transformed the history of the modern industrial world.

Britain, by the end of the 18th Century, had conquered scurvy, helping the Royal Navy to win the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, dramatically altering the course of European and world history. But not before literally hundreds of thousands of mariners from all the major maritime nations had perished from the scourge.¹

Sustained, dominant power projection remained perhaps the sole preoccupation of Their Lordships of the Admiralty through the 17th and 18th centuries, and yet manpower losses through disease — primarily scurvy — took at least eight times' more lives than combat casualties during that period. Knowledge of the manpower loss expectations, even in peacetime, affected recruiting, not to mention operational efficiencies on ships which often embarked double the number of sailors needed in the knowledge that the homecoming crew would be, at best, half the embarking number. And yet, the commitment to finding an appropriate response to scurvy was never a priority for the military planners.

The example of the impact of scurvy on strategic outcomes is not isolated. It reflects priorities still prevalent today: the desire to deliver “teeth” to fighting forces, and minimize the attention to the “tail”: the logistical, support, training, non-combat operational doctrine, and human welfare end of the scale. And yet all military planners recognize that, to some extent, for example, “logistics [in the broadest sense of support] is strategy”.

Just as the accretion of activities at squad level determines outcomes at a theater, and ultimately political level, so decisions taken at a strategic level determine outcomes at a tactical level. We persist in studying battlefield doctrine and strategic policy as separate entities, without sufficiently emphasizing the tactical-strategic interface.² We have now developed the technology of the tactical- strategic interface: it is, to a great degree, the systems which enable “net-centric warfare”. But we have yet to evolve the philosophies and doctrines which keep strategists from micro-managing the tactical events, often seeing staff officers in headquarters using the technologically- granted battlefield situational awareness to dictate tactics at squad levels. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), operated from posts thousands of miles behind the lines, are already evidence that the tactical-strategic hierarchy has become blurred. Yet complex technology has not crowned its owners with decisive success.

The current conflict in Iraq has shown the damage to US and Coalition interests because of the lack of cohesion or structure between national policy and battlefield practice. This applies to more than merely

the US, although the credibility of the US has been damaged most by its failure to successfully marry sound strategic and anthro-political intelligence of the target area and its context with the tactical intelligence and operational realities posed by the threat to be addressed. The first years of the US-led Coalition activities in Iraq were dominated by the statement of then-US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, to the effect that “you fight the war with the army you have”, implying that no changes could be made to force structure and doctrine “on the move”.

US forces did, in fact, adapt to realities on the ground, but were constrained from holistically addressing a threat environment in the best possible sense, and as rapidly as necessary, due to the goals and management style set by the Rumsfeld dogma of “fighting with what you have”.

“Fighting with what you have” meant, initially, a conventional confrontation between Coalition and Iraq forces, with the obvious advantage to the Coalition. But, as countless observers have noted, the post-conventional phase was different, and the early Coalition advantage was never able to be brought to a successful conclusion. The result was an ongoing asymmetric war in which US casualties mounted fairly rapidly, while goals remained unmet, even at the most tactical level. The impact on political and public support for the Coalition in the US and among Coalition states fell in direct proportion to the stalemate at the tactical level.

This, of course, begs the question: “What if Coalition casualty levels were, say, halved, and the stabilization of Iraq achieved in, say, one year?”

Would, then, US prestige have plummeted? Would, then, Iran have regained the strategic initiative in Iraq and the region, and been able to sustain its clerical oligarchical hold over the Iranian people? Would, then, the US political and economic environment have turned to malaise and angst?

And yet, while the Rumsfeld dogma prevailed, nothing was done to address the real cause of many of the casualties in the asymmetric war in Iraq (as well as Afghanistan, and so on). And the war plunged deeper into stagnation. The old English rhyme, then, became *à propos*:

*For want of a nail the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.
For want of a horse the rider was lost.
For want of a rider the battle was lost.
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.*

There are those who would argue that gradual changes in US military operational doctrine and equipment in Iraq since Rumsfeld’s departure on November 8, 2006, as US Secretary of Defense enabled the US to regroup and recover some of the military and strategic initiative. But it is clearly recognized that in the longer-term, the mere extraction “with honor” of US — and coincidentally, Coalition — forces from Iraq has merely turned the theater over to the Iranian clerics, who remain undefeated and with renewed vigor and power. Nonetheless, some of the problems of recalcitrant “nails” — such as the main causes of battlefield casualties — were finally being addressed in the late stages of US involvement in Iraq.

Tests ordered and financed by the US military in January and February 2008 confirmed the viability of low-cost, life- saving systems to protect troops in military vehicles facing insurgent attacks. This meant that vehicles being shipped to combat forces in Iraq and Afghanistan without the vital upgrades would face the necessity for in-theater retrofitting of the technology, and the removal of systems which actually compounded the dangers being faced by the troops.

Nonetheless, the same mentality which caused the Admiralty to resist the obvious remedies to scurvy in the 18th Century continues to reign in the Pentagon. There was a refusal to accept the test results because they implied that the new mine-resistant, ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicles being deployed were not perfect in every way. This mentality seemed to be more about protecting the jobs of senior US Defense officials than about protecting US troops. And, anyway, with the decline in improvised explosive device (IED) attacks on US forces, as a result of political accords between the US and Iran in late 2007,³ why bother?

Studies by the International Strategic Studies Association (ISSA) — the publisher of *Defense & Foreign Affairs* — through 2007 highlighted the potential of new systems to protect troops against the two-stage effects of blast, and the 2008 tests now confirmed absolutely the accuracy of the ISSA analysis.⁴

Despite later US Defense Department attempts to minimize the results, and thereby minimize any suggestion that MRAP vehicles were not fully taking advantage of life-saving technologies, US Army and US Marine Corps (USMC) officials in late January and early February 2008 validated, through a mandated series of scientific tests, internal military vehicle systems which would help save ground force personnel from grievous injury and death, and substantially mitigate the level of injuries, from enemy attacks using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) against vehicles.

One seating and harness system was shown to dramatically improve chances of survival and reduce injury levels in vehicle accidents and blast situations. However, the tests also showed that most systems being fitted in US military vehicles actually *exacerbated* the danger to troops and compounded the prospect of death or injury when their vehicles were subjected to blast or crash.

Despite this, many new armored vehicles, and particularly the MRAP vehicles, and lighter HMMWV (“Hummer”) vehicles, were still, as of mid-February 2008, being shipped to US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan without the now-validated safety system. The only system to pass the two sets of tests was the CCOPS *Cobra* system,⁵ which had been highlighted by independent analysis of ISSA through 2007 and 2008.

Analysts at ISSA contended that reductions in deaths and in the seriousness and pervasiveness of injuries received in Iraq and Afghanistan combat situations would have profoundly altered the strategic framework of the US-led “war on terror”. In that study, this writer noted that the possibility of perhaps halving US military deaths and catastrophic injury in the wars — which may have occurred had the already-available life-saving technology been deployed from the beginning of combat operations in 2003 — would have had a profound impact on US political and public support for the wars and would have thus hastened its successful conclusion.

The scope of potential savings of lives and the prospect of massive reductions in both the occurrence and levels of injuries to troops was of “truly strategic proportions”. There is little doubt that had such savings in lives and reductions in the frequency and levels of injuries occurred during the early stages of the Iraq deployment, in particular, then the US would have been politically empowered to have undertaken the type of decisive tactical and doctrinal approach to urban conflict subsequently taken during the “surge” led by Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the Multi-National Force - Iraq (MNF-I), much earlier in the war. This would have led to a very different outcome for the US, the Coalition, and for Iraq.

ISSA had been conducting an investigation into the lack of safety systems for US Army and USMC vehicles deployed in urban warfare systems since early 2007, and major omissions in survivability systems, highlighted in ISSA Reports had begun to be addressed by the US Army and USMC by October 2007. It took until February 2008, however, for scientific tests to be completed to validate the problems as outlined by the ISSA reports.

US Marine Corps-authorized tests on the seating and restraint systems for the MRAP were conducted at the highly-regarded Calspan Corporation test facility in Buffalo, New York, during the week of January 28, 2008, and at Penns Park, Pennsylvania, by the equally highly-regarded ARCCA Incorporated crash safety engineering test facility during the week of February 11, 2008. Testing for the HMMWV seats and restraint systems took place during the weeks of January 28 and February 4, 2008, at the NIAR Horizontal Accelerator test facility in Wichita, Kansas.

The crash portion of the testing on seats for the MRAP was undertaken by Calspan using a Hyge Horizontal Accelerator, and the blast and slam-down testing was performed at the ARCCA facility using a state-of-the-art drop tower. All tests were conducted using a 50th percentile Hybrid III anthropomorphic test device (a test dummy).

The new tests validated earlier ISSA allegations that most of the seating and restraint systems used in the MRAP and HMMWV were lethally dangerous to vehicle occupants, often posing as great a threat to the life of troops in combat or training operations as occurs from enemy-initiated blast action. Moreover,

the test results sent many of the MRAP vehicle manufacturers rushing to correct the problem, even though they had, in many instances, ignored the ISSA warnings that their failure to act was exacerbating the situation.

These test results not only validate the ISSA finding that only one seat and restraint system being fielded was up to the task of minimizing battlefield losses of personnel to death and injury, but also validate the view that just up-arming vehicles is an insufficient response to the fluid threat from insurgent-initiated blast.

The official test results had not been published by the US Army and US Marine Corps by the end of February 2008, but sources close to the tests said that, for example, the tests on the seats used in the Force Protection, Inc. MRAP vehicles — seats made by Seats Inc. — produced “the worst results ever seen” in such tests, and resulted in three simultaneous hardware failures. As well, the seats made by MasterCraft used on the Armor Holdings MRAP vehicles saw the failure of a key component during the tests.⁶ Significantly, the Seats Inc. and MasterCraft seats and restraint systems used by some MRAP manufacturers were not built for military vehicles or a combat environment, and appear to have been chosen by MRAP manufacturers on cost grounds alone.

Tests were conducted for frontal (30 mph), lateral, and rear (just under 20 mph), and drop situations, as well as for blast. The Seats Inc. and MasterCraft seats both failed catastrophically in the tests,⁷ with the exception that the Master Craft seat passed the lateral test. Only the CCOPS *Cobra* seating, made by GSS specifically to address the two-stage effects of blast, as well as crashes and rollovers commonly occurring in military vehicles, passed all of the tests, and did so unequivocally. A new seat from each vendor was provided for each of the three tests.

ISSA, on October 8, 2007, urged that:

1. US Congressional oversight functions begin to enquire more closely into manufacturer compliance with the intent and letter of MRAP specifications for seating and restraint systems which demand attention to blast attenuation and crash survivability, and to consider the legal liability of manufacturers whose systems place vehicle occupants at unnecessary risk;
2. The US Department of Defense (DoD) should prioritize in-theater retrofitting of M1114 HMMWV vehicles to the same level as the provision of new MRAP vehicles; and
3. DoD and the MRAP program office insist on full testing of all seats — driver, commander, and personnel seating — to be installed in MRAP and other military vehicles, to ensure that the seating meets the anticipated threat levels, not only with regard to direct effects of blast, but also addressing two-stage blast attenuation, frontal collision, and roll-over.

These recommendations led to ongoing pressure for testing to validate the internal systems of US military vehicles.

Significantly, the MRAP vehicles made by BAE Systems,⁸ and currently being deployed in Iraq, all carry the CCOPS *Cobra* system in the front seat positions, although the company is now being urged to consider the seating for all positions in the vehicles to afford the same safety levels for all occupants.

The study also noted that there was now absolutely no excuse for continued shipment of MRAPs or HMMWVs into combat or training operations unless they have the CCOPS *Cobra* system fitted. It is clear that some vehicle manufacturers persisted in the fitting of unsafe seats merely to improve profit margins, even though the MRAP specifications clearly stated that the seats and restraint systems had to be blast resistant. Some of the seats would not have even passed normal, civilian FMVSS (US Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards) requirements, and even those standards are totally inadequate to address the threat posed to life and limb by blast and crash situations.

The long delays in getting defense forces to consider the vital rôle of appropriate seating and restraint systems in addressing the two-stage impact of blast, and in saving lives and the health of occupants during combat accidents and incidents, is reminiscent of the reluctance of navies in the Age of Sail to accept proven remedies for scurvy.

Delays, for reasons of bureaucratic obstinacy or for money-saving, in accepting life-saving approaches to dealing with scurvy, literally transformed the global strategic environment in the 18th Century, causing massive and unnecessary loss of life and dramatically slashing operational effectiveness. The failure to address scurvy in a timely and logical manner shaped modern history.

Today, we have seen the loss of life and the levels of injuries in the Iraq conflict — and elsewhere — mount to the point where the strategic picture has been impacted, quite apart from the massive human and financial cost entailed by failing to adopt now-proven approaches to dealing with combat blast on troops in military vehicles. With the recent tests, there is now no valid excuse for deploying military vehicles which incorporate components which *increase* risks to personnel in combat and training operations.

Who would deny the logic, save, perhaps, a scurvy knave?

Footnotes:

* Note: Some of this material also appeared in a *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis* report of February 18, 2008.

1. See, for example, Bown, Stephen R.: *Scurvy: How a Surgeon, a Mariner and a Gentleman Solved the Greatest Medical Mystery of the Age of Sail*. London, 2003: Summersdale Publishers.
2. See also, Copley, Gregory: *Grand Strategy in an Age of Tactics*, in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 1-2008.
3. See: Bodansky, Yossef: "Washington's Deal With Iran"; *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 1-2008.
4. For further background, see: *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, [June 19, 2007](#): "Iranians, Jihadis Prepare Doctrine to Defeat New US MRAP Vehicles". *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, [June 11, 2007](#): "New Study Highlights Ongoing Dangers to US Troops With Major New Vehicle Programs". *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, [July 4, 2007](#): "US Defense Force Personnel Remain Vulnerable as New Vehicle Systems Enter Production Without Appropriate Survivability Systems". *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, [October 8, 2007](#): "Some Progress, But Major Failings, in Getting Viable Survivability Systems into New US Armed Forces Vehicles".
5. The CCOPS Cobra seating system was developed under contract with the US Army National Automotive Center at the Detroit Arsenal and is currently produced by Global Seating Systems LLC, of Exton, Pennsylvania. See earlier ISSA White Papers on Personnel Survivability for more complete details.
6. The seat made by MasterCraft (which also provides seats for many military vehicles throughout the world) suffered significant failure in the front vertical and rear tests. This seat was, for the tests and in its use on MRAPs, installed on a commonly used blast box which failed during the frontal and rear tests, bringing into question the use of a blast box and whether or not the many blast boxes in existence today are suited or properly tested for their environment. During the frontal test, the blast box and the seat tracks failed and the test dummy slid underneath the seat belts, which were improperly anchored. Had this been a human in the seat, the injuries would have been catastrophic. During the rear test, the blast box also failed, causing the dummy to slide up the seat back and strike its head. Had this crash occurred in a moving vehicle, the driver would have been forcibly shifted away from the driving position and unable to control the vehicle.
7. The seat made by Seats Inc. (which provides seats for many military vehicles throughout the world) failed the frontal test (at only 30mph) so emphatically that officials at the test facility ranked it as the ugliest test that they had ever seen. It was reported that the dummy was completely ejected from the seat in the frontal test, and

that there were a large number of parts that just simply broke. During the rear test, the seat structure collapsed backwards causing partial ejection of the dummy. The side test could not be run on this seat due to fear of damaging the test facility.

8. BAE Systems in 2007 acquired Armor Holdings, and now produces MRAP and other vehicles under both the BAE and Armor Holdings brands.
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