

# August Around the World

By Col. Daniel Smith, U.S. Army (Ret.) | August 11, 2005

The song speaks of “those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer.”

The prevailing sentiment, less “laid back,” refers to “the dog days of summer” from which the rich and well-connected have historically sought relief by getting out of town. Indeed, one can easily picture Caesar Augustus—in whose honor the Roman Senate renamed and lengthened the sixth month in the Julian calendar—abandoning Rome in the same way Congress and the president flee Washington.

But the world doesn't stop because Washington or any other capital city takes a holiday. And holidays don't last forever. So, at the risk that what follows will be changed by further events in the next days or even hours, these are the things in defense and security that seem to be prominent the first few days of August and that will not go away when the calendar turns September 1, 2005.

Eleven days into the month and it seems as if there's been a full month's worth of craziness—also called news. Consider just a few highlights.

- Six-party (China, Japan, North and South Korea, Russia, the United States) talks on the future of North Korea's nuclear weapons program, and more broadly on the state of future U.S.-North Korean relations, entered their second week, lasting longer than any previous exchanges under the Bush stewardship.
- Some conclusions leaked from a still-classified National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) reportedly extend the estimated time until Iran might be able to produce enough highly enriched uranium to make a nuclear weapon from five to ten years.
- King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, who had been increasingly incapacitated following a stroke in 1996, died and was immediately succeeded by his half-brother, Crown Prince Abdullah, who had been *de facto* ruler the last few years.
- John Garang, who became Sudanese vice president three weeks ago following the end of a 20-year civil war between largely Christian and animist southern Sudanese and largely Islamic Arab northern Sudanese, died in a helicopter crash during violent weather. Some 50 Sudanese died in the ensuing demonstrations.
- India continued reeling from heavy monsoons that have killed more than 1,000 already and affected 20 million more. Meanwhile, in Niger—a country many westerners associate with the now infamous “yellow cake” controversy about Saddam Hussein's nuclear ambitions—UN and other humanitarian relief groups struggled to feed an estimated 3.6 million individuals whose lives and livelihoods are at risk from drought and locusts.
- President Bush named John Bolton as U.S. ambassador to the UN, going around the Senate's “advice and consent” role by invoking the president's authority to make temporary appointments while Congress is in recess. And then there's the news from—believe it or not—Grapevine, Texas.



Foreign Policy In Focus (FPiF)

[www.fpi.org](http://www.fpi.org)  
A Think Tank Without Walls

- 
- U.S. fatalities in Iraq hit 1,800 on August 1, soaring to 1,828 by August 5. British fatalities stand at 93, while other troop-contributing countries have lost 101 soldiers. Iraqi casualties were at least 77 for the first five days after a July in which 522 Iraqis were reported killed.

With such a start, what might the other 20 days of the month hold?

## Nonproliferation Front and Center

On the East Asia nuclear front, both the North Korean and U.S. delegation chief negotiators noted that “significant differences” remain despite the length of this round of talks (twelve days). South Korea reportedly has offered to supply the North with two million megawatts of electricity per annum if Pyongyang abandons its nuclear ambitions (*New York Times*). But as in Iraq, the poor state of North Korea’s electrical infrastructure renders extremely problematic any real near-term benefits to many North Koreans. It may not even get to that, however, as North Korea is insisting that it will never surrender its right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. On that note, the talks recessed on August 7 for three weeks (at least). How the Crawford White House reacts to the impasse may determine whether another round is held.

On the Persian Gulf nuclear front, Iran has again threatened to restart its suspended nuclear enrichment activities. Tehran had set an August 1 deadline for the Western European Three (Britain, France, and Germany) to present a package of incentives for Iran if it dropped its attempt to use nuclear power for electricity production. The package was not completed until August 5. What is really interesting is the timing of the National Intelligence

Estimate (NIE) consensus doubling the time before Iran would have sufficient quantities of fissile material. This conclusion would seem to undercut Bush administration insistence on the imminent challenge Iran presents to the world in general and the threat to the United States in particular. The revelation of selected NIE excerpts may be a not-so-subtle indication that some in the Pentagon and throughout the intelligence community will risk going public rather than going along should the White House again dismiss contrary views as “opinion” or try to shoehorn intelligence to fit its ideological interpretation of reality, as it did in Iraq in 2002-2003.

## Deaths

The passing of King Fahd is not expected to create major changes in Saudi international relations, in U.S.-Saudi relations, or in the oil markets, since the new king already was the effective power in the kingdom. However, since the line of succession is primarily “agnatic”—the crown moves to the deceased monarch’s next eldest brother and to all males of that generation before going to the monarch’s male children—Abdullah and the remaining male members of his generation may have relatively brief rules. Rapid turnover on the throne might introduce greater instability and roil oil prices. There are even some suggestions that with Abdullah firmly on the throne, the Saudis may use the change in leadership to raise oil prices.

John Garang’s unexpected death potentially has, on the surface, greater short to mid-term consequences than King Fahd’s. Despite the usual conspiracy theories, it does appear that the crash really was an accident. Still, the UN, United States, and other countries are sending investigators to the area.

---

Salva Tiir, long-time deputy to Garang, replaces him as head of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement. Tiir remains committed to implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed with Khartoum on January 9, 2005, as does the old Khartoum government. But there are dangers: small numbers of fighters have continued to resist negotiations. Darfur, in the western part of Sudan, may have as many as 300,000 dead—four times the “official” figure from Khartoum—in addition to the two million who have fled their homes. Northern Uganda is the scene of fighting between the Ugandan military and the Lord's Resistance Army, with combat spilling into southern Sudan. In the east is another armed group, the Beja, seeking concessions similar to those given Garang's movement. The currents and cross-currents seem to have left Washington bemused and unable to develop a comprehensive, integrated policy that illuminates the linkages and cross-cutting issues affecting Sudan and its neighbors.

## Winds of Change?

Nature seems to be lashing back at humanity's abuse of the planet. Monsoons reportedly have become more severe, and drought, not an uncommon occurrence, is lasting longer and destroying more and more farmlands, especially in the Sahel region. Livestock, which traditionally serve as a buffer, are dying from lack of food. And while Africans have organized an August 6 concert to raise money for famine relief, the United States calls for more study of the impact of global warming.

As expected, Congress had been gone barely for a decent interval (actually a weekend) when, as expected, the president made John Bolton the U.S. ambassador to the UN. Bush used the looming summit meeting at the UN in September to justify going around the Senate

in making the appointment, but by so doing he sends as ambassador one who does not have the “seal of approval” of both the executive and legislative branches—and thus may appear compromised.

Meanwhile, the story from (and on the) Grapevine—the one in Texas—is that the “war on terror” remains the defining paradigm of the second Bush term. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers and even Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, in an attempt to broaden the terms of reference for the Iraq war (and incidentally dilute the criticism of how the war is being run) floated the phrase “global struggle against violent extremism.” Bush did not salute. Rather, five times during his remarks he restated the phrase by which he hopes to be remembered: “war president.”

Already, the families of 1,828 U.S. service men and women, 93 Brits, and 101 other coalition soldiers, plus unknown numbers of Iraqi and Afghan families, remember George Bush as a war president—one who unnecessarily started a war and who, by unnecessarily dividing and radicalizing not just the U.S. public but publics around the world, continues to fan the war fires.

Two things seem certain. One, more families will come to regard, unkindly, George Bush as a war president. Two, in the end, the Myers-Rumsfeld formulation will have to be accepted as the best approach to coping with violence perpetrated by extremists. Quite obviously, war is not the answer.

---

*Dan Smith is a military affairs analyst for Foreign Policy In Focus (online at [www.fpif.org](http://www.fpif.org)), a retired U.S. Army colonel, and a senior fellow on military affairs at the Friends Committee on National Legislation.*

---

## FOR MORE ANALYSIS FROM FOREIGN POLICY IN FOCUS:

### *General Abizaid, I'm Glad You Asked*

By Col. Daniel Smith, U.S. Army (Ret.) (July 2005)  
<http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/158>

### *H.R. 2745: An IED for the UN*

By Col. Daniel Smith (Ret.) ( June 13, 2005)  
<http://presentdanger.irc-online.org/papers/0506hyde.html>

### *Ephemeral Ethics*

By Col. Daniel Smith (Ret.) | May 20, 2005  
<http://www.fpif.org/commentary/2005/0505ethics.html>

### *Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference— Prospects for Progress*

By Col. Daniel Smith (Ret.) (May 2005)  
<http://www.fpif.org/papers/0505nptrc.html>

### *Democracy Demands Accountability*

By Col. Daniel Smith (Ret.) ( April 12, 2005)  
<http://www.fpif.org/commentary/2005/0504democracy.html>

### *Global Security Challenges: Seeing the United States as Others Do*

By Colonel Daniel Smith, U.S. Army (Ret.) (March 2005)  
<http://www.fpif.org/papers/0503security.html>

### *Budget Legerdemain*

By Col. Daniel Smith, U.S. Army (Ret.) ( January 6, 2005)  
<http://www.presentdanger.org/commentary/2005/0501budget.html>

### *The Landmine Web*

By Col. Daniel Smith, U.S. Army (Ret.) (December 2004)  
<http://www.fpif.org/papers/0412landmine.html>

### *Being "Over There:" Location, Location, Location*

By Col. Daniel Smith, U.S. Army (Ret.) ( November 11, 2004)  
<http://www.fpif.org/papers/0411location.html>

---

Published by Foreign Policy In Focus (FPF), a joint project of the International Relations Center (IRC, formerly Interhemispheric Resource Center, online at [www.irc-online.org](http://www.irc-online.org)) and the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS, online at [www.ips-dc.org](http://www.ips-dc.org)). ©2005. All rights reserved.

## Foreign Policy In Focus

"A Think Tank Without Walls"

Established in 1996, Foreign Policy In Focus is a network of policy analysts, advocates, and activists committed to "making the United States a more responsible global leader and global partner." For more information, visit [www.fpif.org](http://www.fpif.org).

### Recommended citation:

Col. Daniel Smith, U.S. Army (Ret.), "August Around the World," (Silver City, NM & Washington, DC: Foreign Policy In Focus, August 11, 2005).

### Web location:

<http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/240>

### Production Information:

Writer: Col. Daniel Smith, U.S. Army (Ret.)

Editor: John Gershman, IRC

Layout: Chellee Chase-Saiz, IRC

