

The New York Times
Military-Industrial Redux
The Pentagon has been rightly shamed by reports that 96 major new weapons programs are running almost \$300 billion over estimates and averaging 22 months behind delivery. As Congress took aim this week at this sorry performance, defense officials rushed to announce that they would be hiring 20,000 new managers and engineers during the next five years to ride herd over weapons development.

KBR Does It Again
Far from suffering for its shoddy military contracting in Iraq, Congressional investigators have found that KBR Inc. was awarded \$83 million in performance bonuses. Even worse, more than half came after Pentagon investigators linked faulty KBR wiring to the electrocution of four soldiers intent on relaxation. One soldier died taking a shower and another in a swimming pool.

The Test Ban Treaty
Nearly 17 years ago, after more than 1,000 explosions, the United States conducted its last underground nuclear test. President George H. W. Bush, following Russia and France, announced a voluntary moratorium and the other major nuclear powers ♦ Britain and China ♦ made the same pledge with more or less enthusiasm. Since then, 180 countries have signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

A Fast Way to Lose the Arms Race
President Obama has called for a world without nuclear weapons, not as a distant goal, but as something imminently achievable. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton followed up, saying that American and Russian "leadership" in arms control and nonproliferation was "at the top of the list" of her priorities. Although the administration may be counting on the eyelid-lowering effect of arms-control terminology to minimize Congressional and public scrutiny, its plans are deeply troubling for America.

The Washington Post
What to Do About North Korea
The North Korean launch of its Taeopodong-2 missile and its second nuclear test have laid bare the paucity of President Obama's policy options. They have exposed the futility of the six-party talks and, in particular, the much-hyped myth of China's value as a partner on strategic matters. The Obama administration claims that it wants to break with the policies of its predecessor. This is one area where it ought to.

Defending Gen. McKiernan
Since the sudden announcement by Defense Secretary Robert Gates that the United States was changing commanders in Afghanistan, much has been written about the "inadequacies" of the departing commander, Gen. David McKiernan. The charges include that he is overly conventional, that he is too focused on big-army tactics, and that he does not understand the nature of the insurgency and what is required to defeat it. I have spent the past year in Afghanistan working directly for McKiernan. I have seen his tactics and his beliefs in action. America deserves to know what David McKiernan has accomplished here.

War and Justice
President Obama sketched out a framework Thursday for the judicial component of the war on terrorism. This war -- of indefinite duration, against stateless organizations -- may call for new laws and institutions to handle, for example, terrorism suspects who cannot be tried but also cannot be released, he said. At the same time, the government should never hold anyone without judicial oversight and should not create new institutions without congressional buy-in.

The Guardian
If Obama cedes ground on torture to Cheney, we'll all pay a heavy price
'Every government assumes deeds and misdeeds of the past,' writes Hannah Arendt in Eichmann and the Holocaust. "It means hardly more, generally speaking, than that every generation, by virtue of being born into a historical continuum, is burdened by the sins of the fathers as it is blessed with the deeds of the ancestors." For Barack Obama this cuts both ways. Talented as he is, he looks much more so when compared with the man who preceded him.

We still view the east from the Crusaders' battlements
Krak des Chevaliers is a dead castle in a living war, a

stupendous Crusader relic in the green hills of northern Syria whose stone ramparts encapsulate a thousand years of Christian folly. Stand (as I did last week) where the soldiers stood, peer from the battlements towards the Lebanese mountains and the Arab lands beneath, and you will know the impunity the Crusaders felt.

After the Tigers' defeat, the abuse of Tamils must stop

History is littered with the ruined reputations of national leaders who thought they had won a great military victory only to squander it by self-congratulation and stupidity. Whether Sri Lanka's president, Mahinda Rajapakse, joins their number has yet to be seen, but the triumphant speech he will shortly make to his fellow citizens will be an important signal of the path he is choosing.

The Times

Every soldier is subject to British law

The government lawyers who helped to enshrine the European Convention on Human Rights on the statute book in the form of the Human Rights Act must be trying to hide their embarrassment. A ruling by three Court of Appeal judges effectively concluded that a British soldier fighting in Iraq or Afghanistan is protected by Article 2 of the convention - the "right to life" - whether he is inside the confines of a base or exchanging fire with the enemy in the desert.

The Independent

When liberals advocate torture

Barack Obama's amazing sense of balance on the moral high-wire of American politics has been tested over the past few days. Last week he reversed his decision to accept a court order to release photographs depicting the abuse of US-held prisoners in Iraq during the Presidency of George W Bush. Many of his supporters on the left expressed their sense of betrayal at this volte-face.