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SITUATION REPORT

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FP's Situation Report: Flynn says eradicating Hamas could lead to something worse; Brokering a cease-fire is proving difficult; What does DoD know about SAMs in Ukraine?; The Taliban is gaining ground; and a bit more.

Gordon Lubold

Last night, the U.N. Security Council called for an immediate and unconditional humanitarian ceasefire in the war between Israel and Hamas. In a rare showing of agreement, "the Palestinians and the Israelis both criticized the statement adopted by the council," [reports](#) The AP's Edith M. Lederer. Neither side thought it went far enough in condemning the other side.

After the fighting in Gaza stopped for 12 hours on Saturday, it resumed on Sunday. So far, the war has killed 1,030 Palestinians, mainly civilians, and Israel has lost 43 soldiers and three civilians. Meanwhile, the fight to achieve a temporary ceasefire shows just how difficult it will be to reach any lasting truce. And with each person killed or injured, new seeds of anger and distrust are planted on each side. This is leading to a growing sense of pessimism ... on the ground and at the highest levels of power.

Peace in the Middle East? Not in my lifetime, a top Pentagon intel official says. *FP's Yochi Dreazen:* "Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, who will be stepping down from his post as the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency later this year, told an audience at the Aspen Security Forum that Israel needed to carefully calibrate its current military offensive in Gaza so that it punished Hamas without fully eradicating it. If it did, Flynn warned that Gaza could fall under the sway of the extremist group that now control broad swaths of Syria and Iraq." [More here.](#)

David Remnick's not feeling optimistic either: *The New Yorker editor writing for the Aug. 4 issue of the magazine:* "... the most malign and extremist elements within this conflict--Israeli and Palestinian-grow in strength and deepen their conviction that there is no chance of accommodation. Childhood memories of terror and death accumulate, and cripple the moral and political imagination." You can read more of his essay [here.](#)

Why is getting even a short-term deal proving so difficult for Secretary of State John Kerry? *The NYT's Michael R. Gordon:* Part of the reason the diplomatic effort has faced such an uphill struggle is far-reaching changes on both sides since the last Gaza cease-fire in 2012. Israel and Hamas seem to be dug in this time, with Israeli officials appearing dismissive

of Mr. Kerry's push for a weeklong cease-fire in a way that few American secretaries of state have faced."

And finding a good peace broker isn't easy. "The challenge of reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable is all the more difficult because there is no party that is in a position to mediate directly between Hamas and Israel. The United States does not deal directly with Hamas. And the countries with the closest ties, Qatar and Turkey, have fraught relations with Egypt, whose cease-fire plan has provided the broad framework for Mr. Kerry's efforts." **More [here](#).**

Obama calls Netanyahu Sunday and pushes for an "immediate, unconditional humanitarian cease-fire." *From the White House's readout:* "The President underscored the United States' strong condemnation of Hamas' rocket and tunnel attacks against Israel and reaffirmed Israel's right to defend itself. The President also reiterated the United States' serious and growing concern about the rising number of Palestinian civilian deaths and the loss of Israeli lives, as well as the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza."

In Gaza, the 12-hour ceasefire on Saturday allowed residents to survey the damage. *Sharif Abdel Kouddous reporting from Gaza for FP:* "The devastation is so complete that some residents who returned during the temporary cease-fire on Saturday could not locate where their homes once stood." **More [here](#).**

Israelis don't want a ceasefire, a new poll shows. *The Jerusalem Post's Gil Hoffman:* "When asking about a potential cease-fire, the poll gave two choices. The first endorsed a cease-fire because 'Israel had enough achievements, soldiers have died, and it is time to stop.' The second said Israel cannot accept a cease-fire because 'Hamas continues firing missiles on Israel, not all the tunnels have been found, and Hamas has not surrendered.'... Only 9.7 percent chose option one, 86.5% option two, and 3.8% said they did not know. Men were more likely to want the operation to continue than women." **More [here](#).**

The New York Times broke a story over the weekend about a Pentagon plan to share targeting information with the Ukrainians. *The NYT's David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt* reported that "The Pentagon and American intelligence agencies are developing plans that would enable the Obama administration to provide specific locations of surface-to-air missiles controlled by Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine so the Ukrainian government could target them for destruction."

The story renews questions about what intelligence the United States had on the location of surface-to-air missiles prior to the shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17. As recently as Friday, the Pentagon told reporters that it had no specific information on the transfer of surface-to-air missiles to the Pro-Russian rebels, even though it's tracking the movement of other weapons systems, like tanks and rocket launchers. But if The NYT story is right, the Pentagon may have more intelligence on these systems than it's admitting to publicly, which raises the question: Did it have this information before July 17 too?

From the Sanger and Schmitt story:... "It is unclear whether President Obama, who has already approved limited intelligence sharing with Ukraine, will agree to give more precise information about potential military targets, a step that would involve the United States more deeply in the conflict."

Kerry's on board: "And a senior State Department official said Saturday that Secretary of State John Kerry supported sharing intelligence on the locations of surface-to-air missiles that Russia has supplied the separatists." **More [here](#).**

So is Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio): *Defense News's John T. Bennett reports on a letter*

Turner sent the president. It reads, "The United States should immediately seek to provide the Ukrainian armed forces with the military capabilities required to eliminate all anti-aircraft systems currently being used in the Russian-backed separatist territory in eastern Ukraine." Read more [here](#).

Ukrainians say the black boxes confirm that a missile brought down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17. *The WSJ's Lukas I. Alpert with the story* [here](#).

And the Obama administration released photos yesterday to prove Russia is firing into Ukraine. *The WaPo's Karen DeYoung with the story* [here](#).

What would Obama do if Russia invades Ukraine? What *should* he do? War on the Rocks is asking its readers these two questions. Find out the results and vote yourself [here](#).

The Taliban is quietly making some gains this summer. The NYT's Azam Ahmed reporting from Mahmud Raqi, Afghanistan: "The Taliban have found success beyond their traditional strongholds in the rural south and are now dominating territory near crucial highways and cities that surround Kabul, the capital, in strategic provinces like Kapisa and Nangarhar.

"Their advance has gone unreported because most American forces have left the field and officials in Kabul have largely refused to talk about it. The Afghan ministries have not released casualty statistics since an alarming rise in army and police deaths last year." ***More*** [here](#).

Weapons falling into the wrong hands seems to be a theme these days. Now you can extend that fear to Afghanistan, if you haven't already. *U.S. News and World Report's Tom Risen:* "The Afghan National Security Forces, or ANSF, have a glut of supplied weapons far above their agreed-upon needs, according to a new report from the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR.

"Without confidence in the Afghan government's ability to account for or properly dispose of these weapons, SIGAR is concerned that they could be obtained by insurgents and pose additional risks to Afghan civilians and the ANSF," says the report, released Monday." ***More*** [here](#).

Welcome to Monday's edition of Situation Report. If you'd like to be one of our subscribers, we'd love to have you. Sign up for Situation Report by sending us a note at gordon.lubold@foreignpolicy.com and we'll just stick you on. Like what you see? ***Tell a friend.*** And if you have a report you want teased, a piece of news, or a good tidbit, you, ***send it to us early for maximum tease:*** kate.brannen@foreignpolicy.com **And the more shovel-ready, the better.** *And hey! Follow us: [@k8brannen](#), [@glubold](#) and [@njsobe4](#).*

Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey surveys today's worrying security landscape for FP: "In each region of the world, we face serious -- but very different -- security challenges, from rising state-to-state tensions in Asia and Europe to escalating sub-state violence in the Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, technologies and capabilities once confined to states are moving beyond their control. The result is an international order under duress with as many things working to pull the world apart as to pull it together."

How should we confront these problems? "First, wherever possible, we should view problems through a regional lens -- not one country, one group, and one crisis at a time. Second, we should carefully integrate all our instruments of power, making sure that our

policies leverage each instrument to its best use."

But what do we really need? Strategy, Dempsey argues. "Despite cynics' arguments that grand strategy is a thing of the past, it is critical today -- when calls for U.S. leadership and military power shift from crisis to crisis."

The bottom-line: "Most problems around the world today do not have quick military fixes." You can Dempsey's full essay [here](#).

Now for the countries "struggling for their souls" ...

Is Iraq on a path to separation? Sunni fighters have seized large swaths of territory in the northern part of Iraq. Kurdish forces have taken Kirkuk and nearby oil fields. *Reuters' Dominic Evans:* "The government is trying to reverse this de facto, three-way split of the country, but its reliance on Shi'ite militia and volunteers rather than the ineffectual national army has deepened sectarian mistrust without pushing the rebels back."

A Sunni living in a Shi'ite area of Baghdad to Evans: "The Sunnis all want separation now ... Facts on the ground tell you this will be the final result. On both sides now you have extremists who don't want to get along." **More** [here](#).

What's next for Iraq's Kurds. *Slobodan Lekic for Stars and Stripes:* "Despite strong support for independence among most Kurds, significant obstacles remain to a final break with Iraq. For that reason, many analysts argue the most realistic scenario would be greater autonomy for the Kurds, who already enjoy significant self-rule. This would mean transforming Iraq into a confederation with three constituent regions - a Kurdish state in the north, a Sunni entity in the west and center, and a Shiite region in the center and oil-rich south of the country." **More** [here](#).

Iraqi tribes are preparing to take on ISIS in northern Iraq. *Asharq Al-Awsat:* "Tribal leaders in northern Iraq said they were forming militias to fight the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) on Sunday, as reports emerged of the jihadist group seizing more territory southwest of Baghdad."

The Al-Obeidi tribe, which spans the two provinces of Salah Al-Din and Kirkuk, will put together an armed group to "repel the terrorists," Wasfi Al-Asi, the leader of the tribe, said in a news conference in Baghdad on Sunday." **More** [here](#).

Dozens are killed as Libyan forces battle militias. *The AP's story:* "Heavy clashes between Libyan soldiers loyal to a renegade general and Islamist-led militias killed 38 people-including civilians-in the country's restive east, health officials said Sunday, as fighting between rival militias around the capital's international airport raged on." **More** [here](#).

Over the weekend, Marines evacuated U.S. embassy staff out of Libya. *Military Times' Jeff Andrew deGrandpre and Jeff Schogol with the details:* "Embassy staff members were driven in vehicles from their compound in Tripoli to Tunisia, according to the Pentagon's top spokesman, Rear Adm. John Kirby. They were escorted by the embassy's Marine security guard detachment, which for the last several months has been reinforced by conventional infantry Marines assigned to Task Force Tripoli."

"Military officials have not disclosed the precise number of Marines assigned to the embassy in Libya, but NBC News reported Saturday that 80 'heavily armed' Marines were among the 158 Americans who vacated the compound." And at least seven military aircraft were

involved in the operation, including three F-16 fighters and two MV-22 Ospreys . **More [here](#)**.

And the British Foreign Office says: leave now. *The BBC with the story [here](#).*

Boko Haram's attacks grow even more bold. *Reuters:* "Nigerian Boko Haram militants kidnapped the wife of Cameroon's vice prime minister and killed at least three people on Sunday in a cross-border attack involving more than 200 assailants in the northern town of Kolofata, Cameroon officials said." **More [here](#)**.

What's happened in Nigeria since the girls were kidnapped? *Andrew Walker reporting for FP:* In the more than 100 days since the girls of Chibok were kidnapped, the world's attention has moved on to other stories -- but Nigeria's situation has deteriorated at a dizzying pace. This year has been the most violent period in the five-year insurgency of the militant Islamist group known as Boko Haram."

The population is losing faith in the government's ability to respond. "The perception among a growing number of Nigerians is that the government, led by President Goodluck Jonathan, is unable to handle Boko Haram." More on Nigeria **[here](#)**.

Famine looms in South Sudan. *Al Jazeera reports:* "Nearly a million children aged under five face acute malnutrition, the World Food Programme (WFP) and UN children's agency UNICEF said in a joint statement released late on Friday, after their top directors visited the nation ... Without swift action, 50,000 children could die from malnutrition this year, they added." **More [here](#)**.

... **And in Somalia.** *AFP reports:* "More than 350,000 people here in Somalia's capital are in acute need of food aid as the government and charities struggle to cope with the situation, the United Nations warned Saturday, and other Somali cities are also facing a similar crisis." **More [here](#)**.

A bright spot in an otherwise gloomy Situation Report ... Norwegian Police say that the terror threat has declined. *The WSJ's Kjetil Malkenes Hovland in Oslo:* "The risk of a terror attack in Norway has fallen slightly, the Police Security Service said Sunday, but authorities will maintain a high level of national security for another day, following a July 24 warning that an extreme Syrian Islamist group could be planning an attack. **More [here](#)**.

On the F-35, the NYT editorial page wrote yesterday: "common sense evaporates when it comes to big-ticket weapons," [here](#).

Germany's first female defense minister has launched a "charm offensive" to revamp the military. *The NYT's Alison Smale, [here](#).*

George Tenet is trying to keep the Senate Intelligence Committee's report of the CIA's detention and interrogation program under wraps. *The NYT's Mark Mazzetti:* "Over the past several months, Mr. Tenet has quietly engineered a counterattack against the Senate committee's voluminous report, which could become public next month. The effort to discredit the report has set up a three-way showdown among former C.I.A. officials who believe history has been distorted, a White House carefully managing the process and politics of declassifying the document, and Senate Democrats convinced that the Obama administration is trying to protect the C.I.A. at all costs." **More [here](#)**.

DoD's industrial policy chief Elana Broitman is stepping down next month after only five months on the job. *Defense News's Marcus Weisgerber with the story [here](#).*

House and Senate negotiators reach a deal on a VA bill. *The AP's Matthew Daly:* "The chairmen of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs committees have reached a tentative agreement on a plan to fix a veterans' health program scandalized by long patient wait times and falsified records covering up delays. Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., and Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., scheduled a news conference Monday to talk about a compromise plan to improve veterans' care." ***More [here](#).***

2 USAF missileers will work with the Navy in a morale-improvement effort. *Military Times' Brian Everstine:* "They're Air Force missileers, but their next assignments are with the Navy. Capt. Patrick McAfee, from the 341st Missile Wing at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana, is headed to Submarine Force Pacific at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. Capt. John Mayer, from 20th Air Force headquarters at F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, is headed to Submarine Force Atlantic in Norfolk, Virginia.

"They are the first to be selected for the new Striker Trident program - one of the Air Force's efforts to improve morale in the nuclear force. ***More [here](#).***