

TOP THREE FLASHPOINTS

“...today, to many people, we look like the definition of a drunken driver...” Thomas Friedman on the world’s attitude concerning the USA

As of 2013-11-04

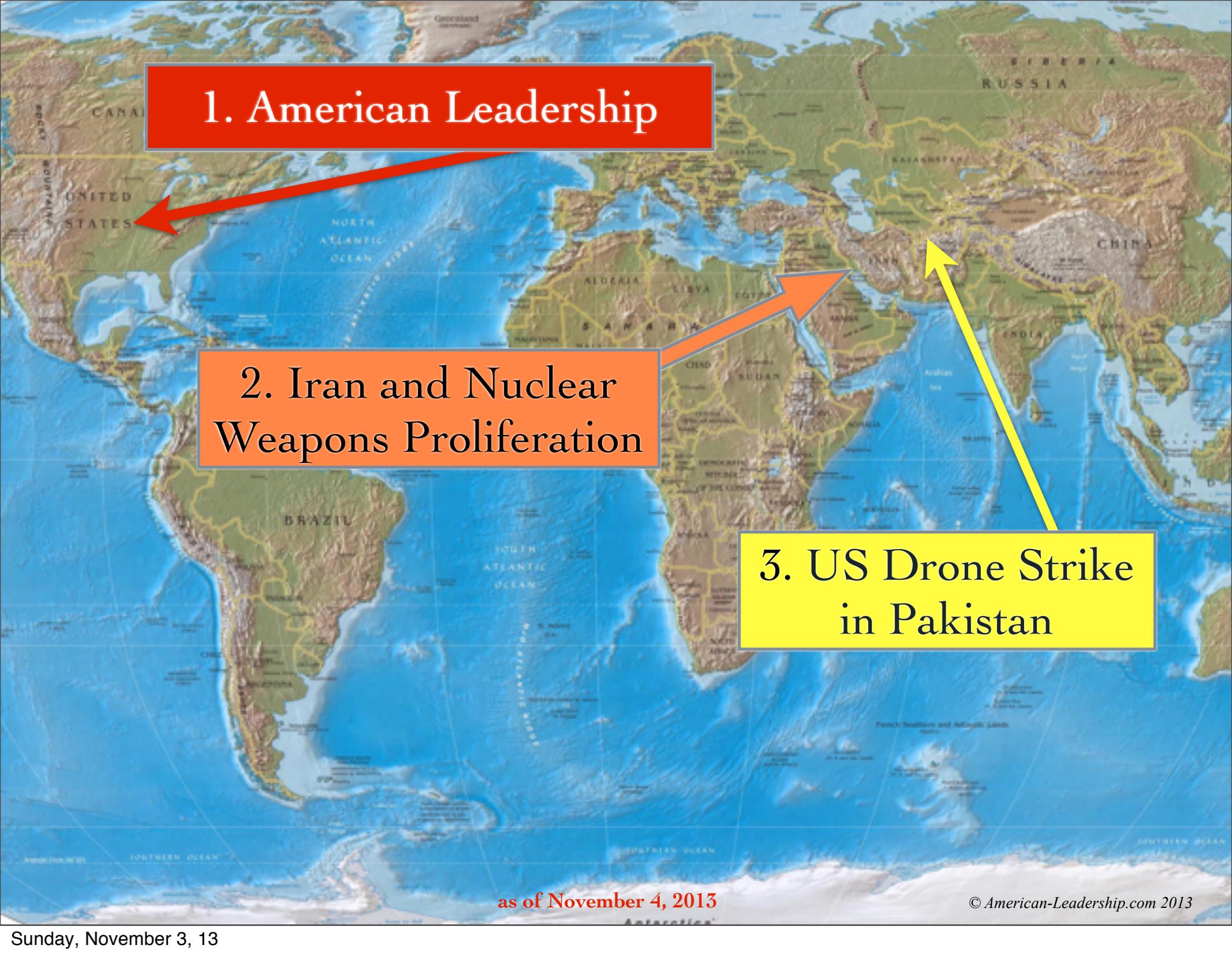
By John Antal

Greatest Danger to USA	1
Medium Danger to USA	2
Dangerous to USA	3

FlashPoints is a bi-monthly update on the most critical national security issues facing the United States. Author and military expert John Antal will provide you with insights and a quick synopsis of the top three flash points in the world at the time of each report. FlashPoints will list the greatest danger to the USA, and then list risks of medium and serious danger. Keep abreast of the latest impending international crisis by reviewing FlashPoints

as of November 4, 2013

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A world map with three callout boxes and arrows. The first box, labeled '1. American Leadership', is red and has a red arrow pointing to the United States. The second box, labeled '2. Iran and Nuclear Weapons Proliferation', is orange and has an orange arrow pointing to Iran. The third box, labeled '3. US Drone Strike in Pakistan', is yellow and has a yellow arrow pointing to Pakistan. The map shows major landmasses and oceans, with labels for various countries and regions.

1. American Leadership

2. Iran and Nuclear Weapons Proliferation

3. US Drone Strike in Pakistan

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1. American Leadership

The Greatest National Security Threat **remains** the lack of American Leadership

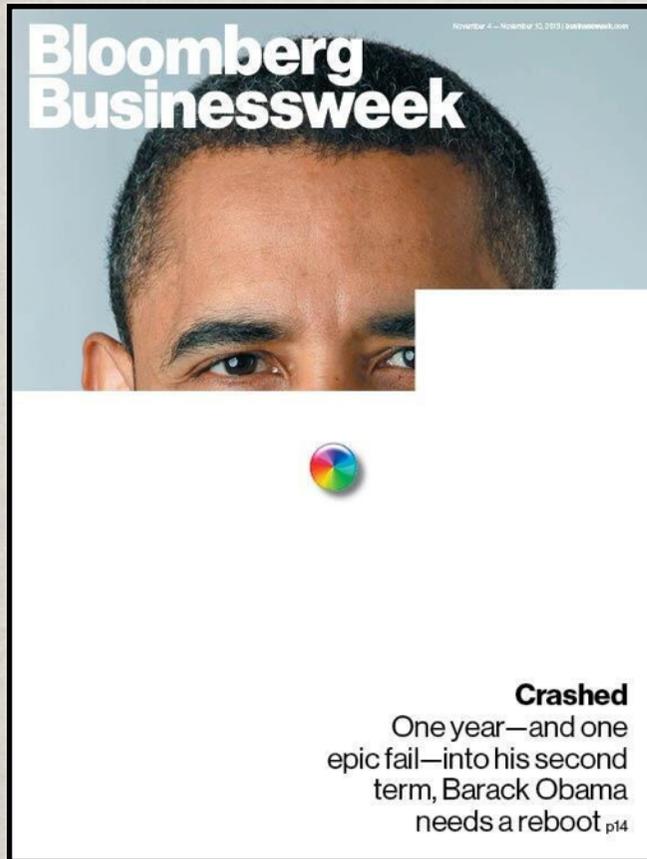
Comments on the lack of American Leadership in the past week.

“Over the years, I’ve seen an America that was respected, hated, feared and loved. But traveling around China and Singapore last week, I was confronted repeatedly with an attitude toward America that I’ve never heard before: “What’s up with you guys?”... today, to many people, we look like the definition of a drunken driver – like a lifelong mentor who has gone on a binge and is no longer predictable. And, as for defining the future, the country that showed the world how to pull together to put a man on the moon and defeat Nazism and Communism, today broadcasts a politics dominated by three phrases: “You can’t do that,” “It’s off the table” and “The president didn’t know.” Thomas Friedman in the New York Times, Sunday Review, published November 2, 2013.

"The Saudis are very upset. They don't know where the Americans want to go," said a senior European diplomat not in Riyadh. [Christian Science Monitor: Why is Saudi Arabia distancing itself from the US? October 23, 2013]

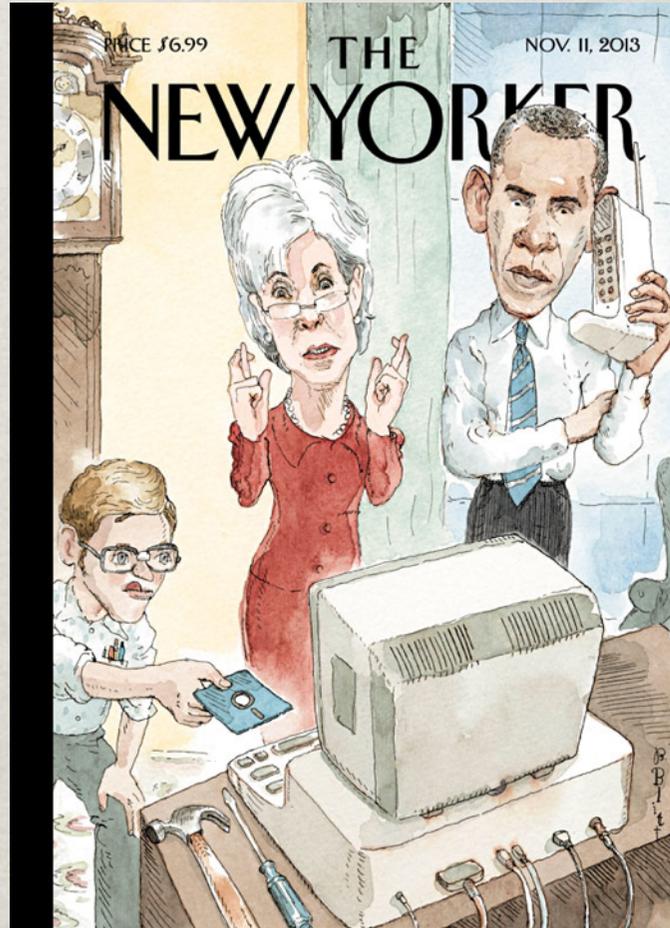
The world increasingly sees a “weak and retreating” United States that “cannot be counted on.... Allies of America are wondering whether America’s desperation at all costs to avoid military confrontation signals a dangerous weakening of American resolve.” Anti-Defamation League National Director Abraham Foxman, October 31, 2013

1. American Leadership



Bloomberg Businessweek Cover Captures The HealthCare.gov Debacle

The White House says President Barack Obama was not aware the NSA was spying on European leaders, and he did not know about the problems facing Healthcare.gov.



The New Yorker Mocks the Healthcare.gov Rollout

75% of Americans think the Nation is headed in the wrong direction. 52% now say that the country's best days are in the past. Rasmussen Wednesday, October 30, 2013

"The latest Christian Science Monitor/TIPP poll shows Obama's Presidential Leadership Index – which combines job approval, leadership, and favorability ratings – is at an all-time low of 43 (where a score of 50 is neutral)," Monitor reporter Linda Feldmann.

as of November 4, 2013

1. American Leadership (Continued)

Last week it was reported that the US National Security Agency (NSA) was listening to German Chancellor Angela Merkel's phone conversations.

President Barack Obama didn't know the United States was collecting communications of allied leaders such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said on October 28, 2013.

And in the leadership malaise, the National Debt continues to accelerate...



German Chancellor Angela Merkel
photo by (Julian Stratenschulte/Associated Press)

**U.S. National Debt data As of
November 3, 2013**

Analysis by John Antal

Leadership -- tireless leadership from the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the Republic, and at the state and local level -- is needed to focus on the key issues, shift the downward trend of the USA, reform our economy into an engine for economic growth, reestablish our democratic values and demonstrate that the USA is, in fact, exceptional and worthy of emulation. It will take work and sacrifice, but it can be done if we put our minds to it. After all, we are Americans.

2. Iran and Nuclear Weapons Proliferation

- “Iran could produce enough weapons-grade uranium to build a nuclear bomb in as little as a month, according to a new estimate by one of the USA's top nuclear experts.” USA Today, October 25, 2013.
- “Iran is two weeks away from weapons grade uranium.” Times of Israel, October 28, 2013.
- US leadership believes that the June 15, 2013, election of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has created a diplomatic opening. In September, President Obama said that a "comprehensive solution" between countries is possible.
- Israeli is nervous about the Iranian diplomatic offensive, fearing that the Iranians are merely buying time to complete the construction of a nuclear arsenal, but the international community and the US will not back an Israeli attack on Iran with the current diplomacy under way.
- Israel fears that the US will accept a policy of “containment” towards Iran, allowing Iran to have nuclear weapons but promising to counter-balance their use with American nuclear power.
- The P5+1 nuclear talks [five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany] are meeting in Istanbul, Turkey. The next round of talks will begin again on November 7, 2013.

2. Iran and Nuclear Weapons Proliferation (Continued)

- Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has said his country has no interest in nuclear weapons but that producing nuclear fuel is Iran's right.
- According to a Washington Post report on October 27, 2013, anti-American billboards in Tehran, Iran, were removed just days after they went up.
- “The result has been that ten years ago, Iran had less than 160 centrifuges spinning, now it has over 18,000... I hope we have come to understand that approach was wrong.... [You] “cannot kill all our scientists and kill our program. ...You cannot destroy the technology. How to ensure [the Iranian nuclear program] is peaceful: allow it operate in a transparent fashion; you cannot push it under the rug.” Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said at the P5+1 nuclear talks in Istanbul, Turkey on Friday, November 1, 2013.
- “The leader of an armed Iranian Kurdish group [Abdul Rahman Haji-Ahmadi,] says new President Hassan Rouhani is taking advantage of the West's wary optimism towards him to step up pressure on citizens at home, particularly Kurds, and has markedly increased executions.” Reuters report, November 1, 2013.

2. Iran and Nuclear Weapons Proliferation - Analysis by John Antal

- Iran, which is a Shia-dominated Islamic Republic, is a rising regional power engaged in a worsening regional Sunni-Shia conflict. In Syria, Sunni Saudi Arabia is supporting proxy forces against Shia Iranian-backed forces that support Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Assad belongs to the Alawi sect, a unique but little known form of Islam disdained by the Sunnis.
- Rouhani wants to end the sanctions and wants open trade with the US and the West.
- The economic sanctions imposed by the US and other Western nations on Iran, although hardly ironclad, are damaging Iran's economy. A poor economy threatens the rule of the Iranian mullahs.
- Although Iran has declared that it does not seek a nuclear weapons capability, it would be extremely naive to believe that this is true. Iran's actions in the past decade point otherwise.
- If the Iranian's achieve a breakout with regards to nuclear weapons and produce a number of nuclear weapons that can be delivered by aircraft, rocket, ship, or Hezbollah terrorist, the following dilemma is created for Israel:
 1. The Iranians have two general options for control of their nuclear weapons: centralized or decentralized. Since the Iranians fear an Israeli attack, as the Israelis attacked the nascent Iraqi and Syrian nuclear programs, the Iranian nuclear capacity is better protected under decentralized control. This would put Iranian Republican Guard commanders, many of whom have promised "dearth to Israel," in control of game-changing nuclear weapons. The possibility for mistakes or the actions of rogue commanders increases Israel's concerns.
 2. Israel is a very small country. One nuclear bomb detonated over Tel Aviv could seal the fate of Israel. Israel cannot sustain a nuclear attack of any size.
 3. The margin for error is very small and the risks of an Israeli action based on fear of an Iranian nuclear attack increase every day. Israel cannot wait for Iran to have nukes, nor is Israel prepared to put its hopes on Iran's good will or on US promises.

3. U.S. Drone Strike in Pakistan

- Hakimullah Mehsud, the leader of the Pakistani Taliban, was killed by a US drone missile attack in the village of Dande Darpa Khel in North Waziristan, Pakistan on November 1, 2013.
- Mehsud was responsible for many deadly suicide attacks in Pakistan that killed thousands of Pakistanis. He was working to internationalize his terrorist group and developed close ties to al Qaeda. He was responsible for the suicide attack at a CIA base in Afghanistan in 2009 that killed 7 American CIA operatives and was responsible for the failed car bombing in New York's Times Square in 2010. Mehsud had a \$5 million bounty on his head and was on the U.S. most-wanted terrorist list.
- According to CBS NEWS, "the drone strike came as the Pakistan government tries to negotiate a peace agreement with the Tehreek-e-Taliban, the formal name for Mehsud's militant group. Already the strike threatened to worsen U.S.-Pakistan relations as the Pakistani government's information minister criticized the US for jeopardizing the peace talks. A prominent political leader also threatened to block trucks carrying supplies to NATO troops in neighboring Afghanistan."



A very bad guy: Hakimullah Meshud, the former Emir of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan was a ruthless terrorist leader responsible for the deaths of thousands.

**"Every drop of Hakimullah's blood will turn into a suicide bomber. America and their friends shouldn't be happy because we will take revenge for our martyr's blood."
Azam Tariq, a Pakistani Taliban spokesman.**

3. U.S. Drone Strike in Pakistan - Analysis by John Antal

- Killing Meshud was a critical blow against terrorism, but the 2nd and 3rd order effects of the timing of this attack will play out in the months ahead and are cause for concern.
- Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met with President Barack Obama on October 23, 2013, a week before the attack, and emphasized two main points:
 1. Sharif announced that continued US drone attacks inside Pakistan are illegal unless they are coordinated with the Pakistani government.
 2. Sharif explained to Obama that he intended to open dialogue with Mehsud to bring the Taliban into peace talks.
- President Obama promised Sharif during their October 23, 2013, visit in Washington, DC, that the US would not act to impede the talks. Sharif told reporters he asked Obama to end the drone attacks.
- Previous talks by the Pakistani government with the Pakistani Taliban have failed, but this time the US drone attack has scuttled any possibilities of success. The Pakistani military is on high alert and they expect a new wave of suicide bombings in retaliation for Meshud's death.
- Either something changed, or we don't care what the Pakistanis think.
- The US may have had no choice but to attack. Meshud was a high value target and the opportunity to get him was fleeting. Nevertheless, the Pakistanis' peace talks are dead and the US must be on guard as this attack could have serious implications for US troops in Afghanistan.

3. U.S. Drone Strike in Pakistan - Analysis by John Antal

- The principles that guide the current US counterterrorism strategy are: adhering to US core values, building security partnerships, applying counterterrorism (CT) tools and capabilities appropriately, and building a culture of resilience in the homeland.
- So far, we have been most effective at killing al Qaeda leadership. Killing terrorist leaders is a vital CT tactic, but it is not a strategy. Killing terrorist leaders is not enough. New leaders emerge.
- The terrorist threat to the USA has morphed since 2001. Al Qaeda prime is not the only enemy we face. We need to execute a robust CT strategy on a more global scale, defeating the al Qaeda network as a whole, not just piecemeal, from Pakistan to Libya to Africa and the far east.
- There is a global jihad against the US. Unless the US executes an effective CT strategy to defeat al-Qaeda and its affiliates, we will be locked into an eternal war of revenge, killing their leaders with drones and suffering their terrorist attacks on our people and homeland.



“This drone strike is a great setback,” Pakistani Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar told reporters in Islamabad on November 2, 2013. “It is not the murder of a person, it is the murder of the peace process.” (S.S Mirza / Agence France-Presse / Getty Images / October 31, 2013)



If you want to raise your leadership awareness, read:

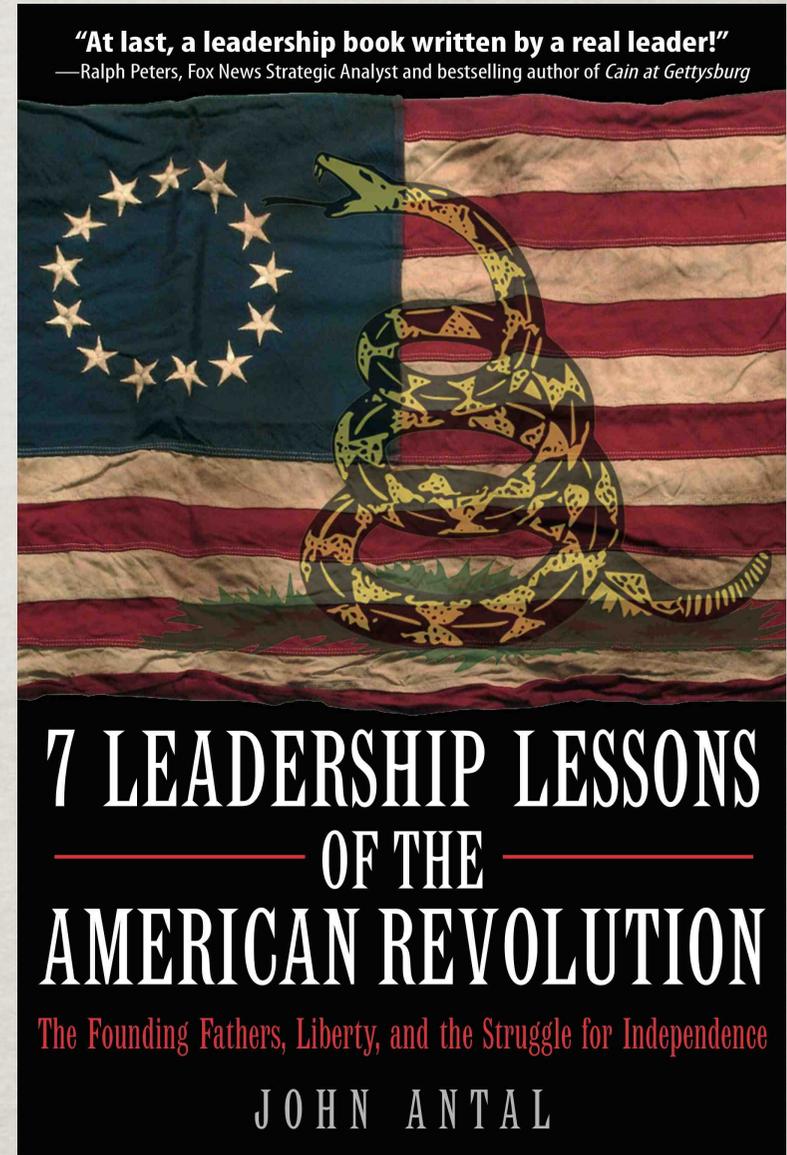
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"If you want to learn about leadership, read this book. If you wish to learn about the leadership that forged the birth of the American Republic, read this book. If you want to be inspired, read this book. John Antal has captured seven timeless stories that will raise your leadership awareness and make you a better leader in peace or war, at home, at work or in your community." **Steven Pressfield, bestselling author of *Gates of Fire* and *The Warrior Ethos***

"John Antal's timely book, *7 Leadership Lessons of the American Revolution* is succinctly written and easily understood. On the surface, it demonstrates how those who risked all to create this republic used specific leadership principles to overcome tremendous challenges in that endeavor. These same techniques are just as valid in this century as in theirs. Along the way, Antal paints these revolutionaries as living, breathing human beings with high-risk tasks to accomplish. But Antal's study actually goes much farther – because behind his straightforward storytelling lies something much more important: an examination of what principles that leadership came from, and what principles it should serve. You'll come away with the feeling that the founders of this country weren't "historical figures" but living, breathing human beings with huge problems to solve, for which they used methods available to any one of us who cares to learn."

Bradley Thompson, television writer and producer and the co-writer for the hit TV series' *Battlestar Galactica* and the second season of *Falling Skies*.

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