

# COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

## *Center for Preventive Action*

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## **United States Preventive Priorities for 2011**

*To offer guidance for how the Obama administration should rank its conflict prevention goals for 2011, the Center for Preventive Action asked a wide selection of government officials, academics, and experts to comment confidentially on a list of plausible contingencies that might occur in the New Year. The responses led to a number of additions, subtractions, and refinements to the contingencies.*

*The initial list of contingencies was grouped according to three tiers of relative importance, based on different levels or categories of risk associated with various types of instability and conflict. Tier I includes events that pose immediate or direct spillover threats to the U.S. homeland; have serious systemic implications for international security; or involve large-scale genocide. Tier II includes threats to countries of strategic importance to the United States, or where instability and conflict may have serious regional implications or cause a major humanitarian disaster. Tier III encapsulates concerns where the United States has limited strategic interests.*

*The twenty-seven contingencies are not based on any ordering of priority. Nor are they listed with any suggestion of their relative likelihood. Though the responses informed and improved the list, the Center for Preventive Action is solely responsible for this product.*

### Tier I

- Mass casualty terrorist attack on the U.S. homeland
- Major military/political reversal in Afghanistan
- Iranian nuclear crisis (surprise advance in nuclear weapons capability/possible Israeli strike)
- North Korean crisis (surprise advance in nuclear weapons/ICBM capability, continuing deadly provocations, succession-related political instability)
- Serious escalation of drug-related violence in Mexico (political instability/border spillover effects)
- Deadly U.S.-PRC military incident
- Indo-Pakistani military escalation (triggered by major terrorist attack, or unrest in Kashmir)
- Severe internal instability in Pakistan (triggered by civil-military crisis, or major terror attack)
- Highly disruptive cyber attack on U.S. infrastructure or financial institutions

### Tier II

- Serious secession-related violence in Sudan/resumption of North-South conflict
- New Lebanon crisis (Hizbullah coup/civil war, or Israeli strikes on Hizbullah)
- Political paralysis/major escalation of violence in Iraq
- Renewed conflict between Russia and Georgia

- Acute political instability in Saudi Arabia (succession/terrorist attack related)
- Acute political instability in Egypt (succession/terrorist attack related)
- State failure/collapse in Yemen (enabling AQAP consolidation/operational effectiveness)
- Acute political instability/violence in Haiti

### Tier III

- Al-Shabaab consolidates control of Somalia/threatens Somaliland-Puntland
- Violent instability in Zimbabwe/succession crisis
- Violent instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo/mass killing in eastern Congo
- Major electoral-related violence in Nigeria/acute political instability
- Escalation in militarized gang violence in Central America (El Salvador and Guatemala)
- Violent instability in Burma/Myanmar
- Political instability/resurgent ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan
- Electoral violence in Uganda
- Political crisis devolves to armed violence in Cote d'Ivoire
- Violent instability in Thailand