

U.S. faces four Mid-East challenges

The Bush administration hopes to form a "Sunni front" to counter anti-U.S. Shiite leaders in the Middle East. The radical approach is intended to deal with cleric **Muqtada al-Sadr** in Iraq, Iran's hardline President **Mahmoud Ahmadinejad**, and **Hassan Nasrallah**, leader of Lebanon's **Hezbollah Party**

1 Iraq: U.S. wants Sunni Arab nations of **Saudi Arabia**, **Jordan** and **Egypt** to persuade moderate Sunni Iraqis to support Iraq's Shiite Prime Minister **Nouri Kamal al-Maliki**. Washington hopes this will enable al-Maliki to reign-in al-Sadr (above) and his **Mahdi Army** militia which is behind reprisals against Sunni insurgents



2 Iran: Ahmadinejad (right) escalated long-standing cold war with U.S. by training Hezbollah fighters and supplying them with rockets to attack Israel in summer. White House will only deal with Tehran if it suspends nuclear programme



3 Lebanon: Nasrallah (right) is cashing in on success of Hezbollah's 33-day war with Israel to grab more political power at expense of U.S.-backed government of Prime Minister **Fouad Siniora**



4 Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Israeli Prime Minister **Ehud Olmert** is offering mass Palestinian prisoner release to Syrian-backed **Hamas** government in return for Israeli soldier seized in June. **Conflict at heart of Mid-East crisis**

