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1. More turbulence in fighter jet program, Dan Oakes, Age, 2010-02-03

The troubled Joint Strike Fighter project - upon which Australia is relying for its next generation of attack aircraft - has struck further chaos, with the US government sacking the general in charge and withholding hundreds of million of dollars in payments from the project's prime contractor.

- Joint Strike Fighter, Air Power Australia, 2010-01-17
- F-35 Lightning II, Wikipedia

2. Kevin Rudd's secret war on Iran, Sean Parnell, Australian, 2010-02-04

Four Australian shipments to Iran have been secretly blocked by Defence Minister John Faulkner amid fears the cargo was destined for use in a weapons-of-mass-destruction program. As the international community considers tougher sanctions against Iran over its nuclear ambitions, the Australian government has taken extraordinary measures to prevent suspicious exports reaching the Middle East.

- Implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (UNSC 1540), Nautilus Institute
- Thais say North Korea arms were Iran-bound, Thomas Fuller and Choe Sang-Hun, NYT, 2010-01-31

3. Amnesty slams evictions near PNG mine, Ilya Gridneff, AAP, SMH, 2010-0--03

Police burnt down homes and threatened people with guns while illegally evicting them from land next to one of the biggest gold mines in Papua New Guinea, an Amnesty International (AI) report says. It also cited concerns with the ongoing support companies involved in the Porgera gold mine gave to police after they became aware of their activity in the area.

- Papua New Guinea: undermining rights: forced evictions and police brutality around the Porgera gold mine, Amnesty International, 2010-02-02 [PDF 726KB]

4. Surprise peace talks in Canberra over Fiji diplomatic ties, Mark Dodd, Australian, 2010-02-04

Canberra has announced a surprise peace offering to Fiji's military strongman Voreqe "Frank" Bainimarama, agreeing to meet an emissary, interim Foreign Minister Inoke Kubuabola, for talks aimed at restoring diplomatic relations.

- Time for a fresh approach: Australia and Fiji relations post-abrogation, Richard Herr, Special Report Issue 27, ASPI, 2010-01-28, [PDF, 227KB]

5. East Timor's graftbuster appointed, AFP, Australian, 2010-02-04

An academic and human rights activist has been named East Timor's first anti-corruption commissioner. Aderito de Jesus was confirmed as Anti-Corruption Commission chief after winning unanimous approval in a parliamentary vote.

- Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao proposes that Aderito de Jesus Soares head Anti-Corruption Commission, Tempo Semanal, 2009-12-04

6. With raw recruits, Afghan police buildup falters, Rod Nordland, NYT, 2010-02-02

The attempts to build a credible Afghan police force are faltering badly. One in five recruits tests positive for drugs, while fewer than one in 10 can read and write — a rate even lower than the Afghan norm of 15 percent literacy. Many cannot even read a license plate number. Taliban infiltration is a constant worry; incompetence an even bigger one. After eight weeks of training, an average of 5 percent of recruits cannot pass firearms tests — but are given a gun and sent out to duty. Unsurprisingly, the Afghan National Police have the highest casualty rates of all the security forces fighting the Taliban

- Nato seeks to redress Afghan police shortfall, AFP, Dawn, 2010-02-03
- AFP in Afghanistan, Australia in Afghanistan, Nautilus Institute

7. Indonesian military 'deeply involved' in forest destruction: report, AFP, Jakarta Globe, 2010-01-29

The Indonesian military is deeply involved in the trade in illegally felled timber that is destroying vast tracts of pristine forest and contributing to global warming, researchers said. Tirta N. Mursitama, director of the Center for East Asia Cooperation Studies (CEACoS) at the University of Indonesia said the military acted as a coordinator, investor, facilitator and middleman for the illegal loggers in forests bordering Malaysia.

- Forestry Ministry graft behind rapid deforestation, Nivell Rayda, Jakarta Globe, 2010-02-03

8. Awkward associations, John Kerin, AFR*, 2010-02-02

Australia and Malaysia are strategic allies and trading partners, but the two have often been at odds. Anwar Ibrahim, now Opposition Leader has accused Rudd of appeasing “corrupt leaders” in Malaysia. Whatever the outcome of the Anwar trial, it appears to be a catalyst for the transformation of Malaysia, dragging the Australia-Malaysia relationship along with it.
*[Subscription required]

- Malaysia’s democracy on trial, Chris Wright, AFR*, 2010-02-02
  * [Subscription required]

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