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1. [Yudhoyono's plea for better ties](#), Katharine Murphy, Age, 2010-03-11

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has made a historic pitch for better relations with Australia, promising action on people smuggling and calling for an end to negative cultural stereotypes from both sides.

- [Indonesia and Australia: time for a step change](#), Fergus Hanson, Lowy Institute, 2010-03-08, [PDF, 641KB]
- [Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono cool on Kevin Rudd's Asia plan](#), Mark Dodd, Australian, 2010-03-10

2. [War on waste: 'Defence extravagance must end'](#), Linton Besser and Dan Oakes, SMH, 2010-03-10

The Defence Minister, John Faulkner, has demanded action on millions of dollars Defence has spent on luxury items, saying "financial control is critical". His comments follow an investigation which revealed oil paintings, handmade Chesterfield lounges and exclusive golf and fitness club memberships are among \$48 billion of contracts reported by the department since 2006.

- [Defence spending questioned](#), Dan Oakes, Age, 2010-03-10

- [\\$124m of defence weapons useless](#), Dan Oakes, Age, 2010-03-11
- [Procurement of explosive ordnance for the Australian Defence Force](#), Audit Report No.24 2009-10, Australian National Audit Office, 2010-03-10, [PDF, 3.3MB]

3. [Soldiers in an absurd predicament](#), Editorial, Age, 2010-03-10

The Australian troops deployed in Afghanistan, and in particular the elite and highly accomplished special forces, must find their mission increasingly surreal. They train Afghan troops in Oruzgan province, but can't guide their military proteges through real-life combat situations because of decisions made by political chiefs in Canberra.

- [Showing leadership in Afghanistan](#), Clive Williams, ABC, 2010-03-10
- [Rift with US over curbs on diggers](#), Rafael Epstein, Age, 2010-03-09

4. [Gates: Some troops could leave Afghanistan early](#), Anne Gearan, AP, 2010-03-10

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates raised the possibility that some of the U.S. forces involved in the Afghanistan surge could leave the country before President Barack Obama's announced July 2011 date to begin withdrawal.

5. [The siege of the fictional city of Marja](#), Gareth Porter, counterpunch, 2010-03-08

For weeks, the U.S. public followed the biggest offensive of the Afghanistan War against what it was told was a "city of 80,000 people" as well as the logistical hub of the Taliban in that part of Helmand. That idea was a central element in the overall impression built up in February that Marja was a major strategic objective, more important than other district centres in Helmand.

- [Marjah fears return of warlords](#), Mohammad Elyas Dae and Abubakar Siddique, Asia Times, 2010-03-11

6. [Army seeks answers for Afghan civilian deaths](#), Sean D. Naylor, ArmyTimes, 2010-03-10

A helicopter attack that killed at least 15 civilians in Afghanistan's Oruzgan province was called in by a Special Forces A-team that did not have "eyes on" their target and resulted in a 48-hour standdown for U.S. special operations forces. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, apologized to Afghan President Hamid Karzai and then to the Afghan people on Feb. 23, "I have instituted a thorough investigation to prevent this from happening again," McChrystal said.

7. [Japan says it allowed U.S. nuclear ships to port](#), Martin Fackler, NYT, 2010-03-09

Japan has ended decades of denials by confirming the existence of secret cold war-era agreements with Washington that, among other things, had allowed American nuclear-armed warships to sail into Japanese ports in violation of Japan's non-nuclear policies.

- [Admitting worst-kept secrets all about timing?](#) Masami Ito, Japan Times, 2010-03-10

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