



APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, November 12, 2009

Recommended Citation

"APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, November 12, 2009", APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, November 12, 2009, <https://nautilus.org/apsnet/apsnet-12-november-2009/>

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[NZ snubs Rudd on asylum seekers](#), Yuko Narushima and Tom Allard, SMH, 2009-11-11

New Zealand has rejected an approach from the Rudd Government to take any of the 78 asylum seekers refusing to leave a customs ship moored in Indonesia. The rebuff comes as Indonesia's military launched a blistering attack on the presence of the Oceanic Viking, describing it as an "uninvited guest" and saying its presence undermined the country's sovereignty.

- [Rudd's new Sri Lankan 'solution'](#), Matt Wade, Age, 2009-11-12
- [Sri Lanka deal aimed at smugglers](#), Matt Wade, Age 2009-11-10
- [Philippines solution to Sri Lankan asylum-seeker crisis](#), Paul Maley, Australian, 2009-11-11

[Obama warns Afghan commitment 'not open-ended'](#), Age, 2009-11-12

President Barack Obama has warned that the US commitment to Afghanistan was "not open-ended" and that Kabul must make improvements in governance. "After years of substantial investments by the American people, governance in Afghanistan must improve in a reasonable period of time to

ensure a successful transition to our Afghan partner," the official said, adding that Obama had yet to decide on troop plans for the war-torn country.

- [U.S. Afghan envoy urges caution on troop increase](#), Elisabeth Bumiller and Mark Landler, NYT, 2009-11-11
- [Insecurity and Governing Capacity Greatest Obstacles to Progress](#), Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), 2009-11-11 [PDF, 5.4 MB]

[Japan pledges \\$5 billion in new Afghan aid](#), Mark Mcdonald, NYT, 2009-11-10

Japan said that it would sharply increase its nonmilitary aid to Afghanistan, pledging \$5 billion for a range of projects that include building schools and highways, training police officers, clearing land mines and rehabilitating former Taliban fighters. The announcement of the new aid package, which is to be disbursed over the next five years, comes just days before the arrival of President Obama in Japan.

[Britain signals Afghan exit plan](#), James Kirkup, Age, 2009-11-12

The beginning of a British "exit strategy" from Afghanistan has been signalled by Prime Minister Gordon Brown, as he pledged to start handing parts of the country over to Afghan forces within months. The Prime Minister said British forces would hand over two districts of Helmand province to Afghan control by the middle of next year.

- [Australia in Afghanistan for long haul](#), ABC, 2009-11-12

[Obama's journey tells Pacific region 'US is back'](#), Edward Luce, FT, 2009-11-11

White House officials stress that Mr Obama's biggest objective will be to reassure Asian countries that they are front and centre of America's vision, in contrast to the Bush years, when Washington often bypassed big Asian gatherings. "The overarching theme is that America is a Pacific nation, it understands the importance of Asia in the 21st century and it is going to be very engaged on a whole series of issues that are critical for our prosperity and security," said Ben Rhodes, a senior national security official.

- [\[Japan\] Okinawa hovers at the negotiating table](#), David Pilling, FT, 2009-11-11

[Israel wants answers from Solomon Islands over UN vote](#), Rowan Callick, Australian, 2009-11-12

Israel is sending a foreign ministry official to the Solomon Islands to seek an explanation as to why it was the only country in Oceania to vote at the UN for the Goldstone report condemning Israel's assault on Gaza. The Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru and Palau joined Australia in opposing the Goldstone report into Israel's January assault on Hamas. Fiji, PNG, Samoa and Tonga joined New Zealand in abstaining. Only the Solomon Islands voted in favour.

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