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1. US politicians dismayed by Afghan president's demand that military scale back operations, AFP, Australian, 2010-11-15

Hamid Karzai has warned that the US military must scale back operations and reduce "intrusiveness" into Afghan life or risk fuelling the Taliban insurgency. The Afghan President's comments, which appeared to contravene the US military's counter-insurgency strategy, were met with dismay from US politicians. Mr Karzai said the presence of about 100,000 US troops and especially “terrible” night raids conducted by US forces on Afghan homes, inflame the emotions of Afghans and lead angry young men to join the insurgency

2. Slaughter of commanders drives Taliban to the table, suggests NATO strategy working, Christina Lamb, Australian, 2010-11-14

The average age of Taliban commanders in Afghanistan has fallen from 35 to 25 because NATO forces have been killing so many of them. About 339 mid-level Taliban commanders and 949 foot soldiers have been killed in the past three months, according to US officials, who claim the so-called “counter-network strategy” is driving militants towards the negotiating table. The figures will be used to claim that the US surge in Afghanistan is starting to succeed.

Senior al Qaeda and Taliban leaders killed in US airstrikes in Pakistan, 2004 - 2010, Bill Roggio and Alexander Mayer, Long War Journal, November 2010

The Year of the Drone - An Analysis of U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan, 2004-2010, Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, New America Foundation, 2010-02-24

3. Into stormy waters, Tom Hyland, Age, 2010-11-14

'We're not in the business of naming threats,'' Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd said after the talks. Not publicly, at least. Yet China was the dragon outside the room when Rudd and Defence Minister Stephen Smith met US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Defence Secretary Bob Gates. China is mentioned just once in the 2433-word communique issued after their annual AUSMIN meeting - a reference to a shared goal of ''seeking a positive, co-operative relationship''. Yet the talks, and the agreement to expand defence co-operation, were clearly aimed at bolstering American dominance of the Pacific in the face of China's dramatic rise.

- Striking a new balance, Hugh White, SMH, 2010-11-08
- Backlash fear over US ties, Daniel Flitton and Dan Oakes. Age, 2010-11-08
- Australia could be a martyr, says Brigadier General John Frewen, Michael Sainsbury, Australian, 2010-11-16
- Harmonious Ocean? Chinese Aircraft Carriers and the Australia-U.S. Alliance, John Frewen, Joint Force Quarterly 59, October 2010
- Rudd warns China on rare earth trade, John Kerin, AFR, 2010-11-12 [subscription required]

4. Defence accused of covering up $90m contract row, Dan Oakes, Age, 2010-11-17

The Defence force has been accused of ordering an ''expensive whitewash'' to cover up allegations of impropriety in the awarding of a $90 million contract for transporting Australian troops overseas. The accusation was made after it emerged that auditors hired by Defence to probe the contract were unable to interview any of the tenderers or the official at the centre of the row.

5. Australia tried to stifle Moti career, Daniel Flitton, Age, 2010-11-13

Australia sought to scuttle the appointment of Julian Moti as Solomon Islands Attorney-General by pressing federal police to revive child sex allegations against him. Declassified official documents back claims Australia engaged in a calculated strategy to derail Mr Moti's political career over concern he would damage Australia's interests in the Solomons.

6. Sobering report on the cholera situation on PNG's Daru Island, Liam Fox, Pacific Beat, Radio Australia, 2010-11-15

Cholera has resurfaced in Papua New Guinea; this time on Daru Island in Western Province - only 50 kilometres from the Australian island of Saibai. Health authorities on Daru Island are struggling to cope with the impact of the disease, which has claimed at least 17 lives. Outside help has arrived, but there are fears the cholera will spread to villages along the major river system on the PNG mainla

- Australia Provides Support to PNG to Tackle Cholera Outbreak, AusAID, ReliefWeb, 2010-11-13
- Health in PNG: Towards better health for men, women and children, AusAID
- Papua-New Guinea: MDR-TB an emerging "health emergency", IRIN, 2010-11-16

7. Australia's foreign aid budget under review, Linda Mottram, Connect Asia, Radio Australia, ABC, 2010-11-17

The Australian Government has announced major review of its foreign aid budget. It's the first time the nation's aid programme will be scrutinised in 15 years. Australia's aid budget has doubled in recent years and is set to double again by 2015. The Treasury has warned the government that scaling up existing aid activities won't deliver value for money - especially in the Pacific, where a quarter of all Australian aid goes. And aid monitoring groups say transparency, accountability and a focus on poverty must be ensured.

- Independent review of aid effectiveness, AusAID, 2010-11-16
- AusAID's Management of the Expanding Australian Aid Program, Australian National Audit office, Audit Report No.15 2009–10, 2009-11-26 [2.8 Mb PDF]

8. White Paper puts us back in ANZUS, Gordon Campbell, DScoop Independent News, 2010-11-03

On every count, this much-delayed report (originally due at the end of March) is a letdown. Anyone looking to this document for the clarity, independence and intellectual rigour that Derek Quigley brought to the Defence Beyond 2000 review eleven years ago will be disappointed. Yes, every item on the agenda gets a mention, but details, priorities, coherence? Not so much.

- NZ White Paper echoes Australian anxieties, Andrew Butcher, Lowy Interpreter, 2 November 2010
- The New Zealand Defence White Paper: a more strategically-extroverted Kiwi? Rod Lyon, ASPI , 11 November 2010
- New Zealand Defence White Paper, John Key & Wayne Mapp, New Zealand Government, 2010

9. Labour trafficking, Fiona David, Australian Institute of Criminology, Research and Public Policy Series 108, 2010-11-15 [2.7 Mb PDF]

While the body of literature on trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation has grown steadily, much less is known about trafficking where the exploitation occurs outside the sex industry. This report examines what is known about labour trafficking in Australia, based on incidences of reported crimes, but also by drawing on information about unreported crime. As such, it provides an assessment about the known or likely incidence of trafficking in persons that can occur in the

agricultural, cleaning, hospitality, construction and manufacturing industries, or in less formal sectors such as domestic work and home-help. In particular, it is worth noting the role of intermediaries in facilitating access to what might be described as 'risky' migration pathways, involving payment of exorbitant fees to brokers and agents overseas, and the role of diasporas as both a source of protection and as a site of potential exploitation.

- Migration and people trafficking in southeast Asia, Jacqueline Joudo Larsen, Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, Australian Institute of Criminology No. 401, November 2010 [1.2 Mb PDF]

10. Five steps to becoming a more effective UN member, John Langmore, Inside Story, 2010-11-10

The [Defence] White Paper discussed Australian defence as if it could be dealt with in isolation from other dimensions of global affairs. An early and astonishing result was the $1.57 billion increase in the defence budget for 2010–11, bringing the total to $26.8 billion. In the same budget the allocation for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was $1.1 billion. So the increase in Australian military spending this year is 50 per cent greater than the total allocation for diplomacy. As far as I know, not a single Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade officer is working full-time on peaceful conflict resolution.

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