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1. RAN ships blockaded Chinese arms to Timor, Mark Dodd, Australian, 2009-06-17

Australian warships joined a 1970s Indonesian naval blockade of East Timor that turned away a Beijing weapons shipment for pro-independence Falintil guerillas, according to the son of Jose Ramos Horta. The stunning claim is contained in an 18-page analysis of Chinese-Timorese relations written by Loro Horta, a graduate of Sydney University and the prestigious People's Liberation Army National Defence University in Beijing.

- Love-Hate Relationship: Australia, Timor and a Rising China, Loro Horta, RSIS Commentaries, 2009-06-17 [PDF, 48kb]

2. Russia deal hits weapon purge plan, Daniel Flitton, Age, 2009-06-17

Uncertainty over a deal to sell Australian uranium to Russia could complicate a round of talks on

Kevin Rudd's pet project to rid the world of nuclear weapons. The Kremlin is still waiting to hear whether Canberra will honour a treaty to sell yellowcake to the nuclear superpower, nine months after an inquiry warned against going ahead with the Howard-era deal.

3. $1.4bn wasted on cancelled Seasprite, Patrick Walters, Australian, 2009-06-18

More than $1.4 billion of taxpayers' money was wasted on the Defence Department's botched acquisition of the Super Seasprite helicopter, 47 per cent more than the $953 million claimed by the Defence Department last year. The Auditor-General is highly critical of the Defence Materiel Organisation's management of the US-manufactured helicopters, which were ordered for the navy's Anzac frigates but were never accepted into operational service.

4. Deciding to go to war should not be left to the PM, Editorial, Age, 2009-06-18

Australia's constitution, unlike that of the United States, does not reserve to the legislature the right to declare war. A private bill now before the Senate, if passed would require the government to obtain the consent of Parliament for troop deployments. The legislation probably won't be passed: neither the Government nor the Opposition has shown any enthusiasm for it. The major parties evidently prefer a situation in which government is not constrained by the views of the people or their elected representatives when it decides to send young Australians in harm's way.

5. Defence boss 'faces a culture of secrecy', Jonathan Pearlman, SMH, 2009-07-16

The Defence Force says it will take 75 hours of "decision-making time" to consider whether to make public the report used to prepare its funding plans for its 20-year security blueprint. The assessment comes as Defence comes under a new minister, John Faulkner, who has been one of the Government's most ardent advocates of greater transparency and openness.

6. New Afghanistan commander will review troop placements, Greg Jaffe, Washington Post, 2009-06-17

Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, who has taken over as the top commander in Afghanistan, said he will launch a broad assessment of how U.S. and NATO troops are arrayed in the country to ensure his forces are focused on safeguarding key population centers and not hunting down Taliban fighters.

7. US drone attacks cloaked in secrecy, Gareth Porter, Asia Times, 2009-06-18

The United States Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA's) refusal to share with other agencies even the most basic data on the bombing attacks by remote-controlled unmanned Predator drones in Pakistan's northwestern tribal region, combined with recent revelations that CIA operatives have been paying Pakistanis to identify the targets, suggests that managers of the drone attack programs have been using the total secrecy surrounding the program to hide abuses and high civilian casualties.

- Drone wars, Paul Rogers, openDemocracy, 2009-04-22

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