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1. Closer military co-operation in Afghanistan under security agreement, Matthew Franklin, Australian, 2009-03-31

Australia and the United Kingdom will dramatically intensify co-operation on their military activities in Afghanistan under a new security agreement signed in London overnight. The new National Security Partnership will also lead to greater sharing of intelligence in the fight against terrorism as well as an increase in secondment of security and intelligence workers between the two countries.

- Joint Statement with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, strengthening the strategic partnership between the United Kingdom and Australia, Media Release, Prime Minister of Australia, 2009-0--30

2. Aussie special forces kill senior Taliban field commander,

Mark Dodd, Australian, 2009-04-02

Australian special forces in Afghanistan operating outside their normal operations zone in southern Oruzgan have killed a senior Taliban field commander responsible for suicide and roadside bomb attacks on coalition troops. Mullah Abdul Bari, a former Taliban governor of Helmand province, was killed in an operation involving Australian special forces and their Afghan National Army allies.

- Insurgent leader Mullah Abdul Bari killed in Oruzgan, Media Release, Department of Defence, 2009-04-01
- Soldiers hit by Taliban bomb, Jonathan Pearlman, SMH, 2009-03-26
- Poll finds 51% oppose role in Afghanistan, Tony Wright, Age, 2009-03-30

3. Obama's domino theory, Juan Cole, Salon.com, 2009-0--30

President Barack Obama may or may not be doing the right thing in Afghanistan, but the rationale he gave for it is almost certainly wrong. Obama has presented us with a 21st century version of the domino theory. The U.S. is not, contrary to what the president said, mainly fighting "al-Qaida" in Afghanistan. This latter-day domino theory of al-Qaida takeovers in South Asia is just as implausible as its earlier iteration in Southeast Asia. Most of the allegations are not true or are vastly exaggerated.

- U.S. Weighs Putting 70,000 Troops in Afghanistan, Yochi J. Dreazen, Wall Street Journal, 2009-0--01

4. U.S. reconciliation offer "lunatic"-Taliban spokesman, Sayed Salahuddin, Reuters, 2009-04-11

Taliban insurgents reject a U.S. offer of "honourable reconciliation", a top spokesman said, calling it a "lunatic idea" and saying the only way to end the war was to withdraw foreign troops. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told an international conference on Afghanistan that those members of the Taliban who abandoned extremism must be granted an "honourable form of reconciliation".

- Karzai open to talks with Taliban: Smith, Emma Rodgers, ABC, 2009-04-01
- Pakistani Taliban threatens attack on White House, Nahal Toosi and Kathy Gannon, AFP, 2009-0--04-01

5. Block on Chinese mining bid 'linked to Pine Gap', Cameron Stewart, Australian, 2009-04-02

Fears that Chinese spies could compromise the joint Australian-US intelligence operations at Pine Gap may have underpinned the Rudd Government's decision to reject OZ Minerals' takeover by China Minmetals, according to the country's leading intelligence expert.

- Chinese seek to invest, not dominate, Zhang Junsai, Australian, 2009-04-02

- Decision part of learning curve, Laura Tingle, AFR*, 2009-03-28
  * Subscription required.

6. Mission creep becomes a national sport, Brian Toohey, AFR*, 2009-03-28

It is absurd to include crime or global warming in the definition of a national security threat. Defence now faces a multitude of rivals in the national security arena, all encouraged by Attorney-General Robert McLelland to engage in their own version of mission creep.
* Subscription required.

7. How do you solve a problem like North Korea? Not with force, Sam Roggeveen, Age, 2009-03-27

It sounds counter-intuitive, but building a shield to protect yourself from attack can make you less safe. We already know from the Labor Government's party platform that it favours a limited Australian missile defence capability. But by sending our ship north to help protect our allies, we would strengthen their defences, making it more likely that North Korea would fire its missile at us instead.

- AEGIS TMD: Implications for Australia, Richard McMillan, Australian Defence College Monograph Series, No. 1 [PDF, 828KB]
- "Ballistic Missile Defence for Australia: Policies, Requirements and Options", Stephan Fruhling, Canberra Paper, No. 151, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, 2003
- "Australia's Nuclear Dilemma: Dependence, Deterrence or Denial?" Raoul Heinrichs, Security Challenges, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2008 [PDF, 100KB]

8. France to pay $19m for sins of its nuclear blasts, AFP, Australian 2009-03-26

France is to compensate victims of nuclear testing carried out in French Polynesia and Algeria, after decades of denying its responsibility. An initial sum of E10 million ($19.3 million) has been set aside for military and civilian staff, as well as local populations who fell ill from radiation exposure. About 150,000 civilian and military personnel took part in 210 nuclear tests carried out in the Algerian Sahara desert and the Pacific between 1960 and 1996.

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