APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, August 20, 2009

Recommended Citation

"APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, August 20, 2009", APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, August 20, 2009, https://nautilus.org/apsnet/apsnet-20-august-2009/

APSNet 20 August 2009

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1. Friend or foe - reckoning with China, Michael Richardson, AFR*, 2009-0--20

Investments in energy reserves and mines are a legitimate way for a rising power to make its presence felt abroad. But China also wants to expand its sea and land territory. This gives the country a dual character. It is both a status quo power and a revisionist state. How China pursues its land and sea claims in coming years will have a critical impact on Asia and the Pacific. It will shape Sino-US relations. Beijing's behaviour will also determine the extent and nature of the Chinese state, and the way it is regarded by all of its neighbours, from Japan in the north to Australia in the south.
* Subscription required.

- China envoy flies home, John Garnaut and Katharine Murphy, Age, 2009-08-20
- Fake email could be cyber espionage, Jonathan Pearlman, SMH, 2009-08-18

2. Schacht lobbied Rann for miner, Michael Owen, Australian, 2009-08-20

Lobbyist and former Labor senator Chris Schacht was headhunted to join the board of a uranium exploration company, which was seeking to have a drilling ban lifted and its mining licence renewed by the Rann government. After his appointment to the board of Marathon Resources, Mr Schacht lobbied Premier Mike Rann and Mineral Resources Minister Paul Holloway in private meetings and during trips to China. The Rann government is under pressure because of its lack of action to regulate the activities of lobbyists and establish a lobbyists' register, as the Rudd government and other states have done.

- Union boss calls for nuclear energy, Michelle Grattan, Age, 2009-08-19

3. Indonesian police follow money trail from Noordin to Middle East, Tom Allard, SMH, 2009-08-19

Ties between Middle East extremists and the terrorist cell thought to be responsible for suicide attacks on two Jakarta hotels have emerged after the weekend arrest of an alleged financier of the plot, who lived for many years in Saudi Arabia. The financial links between Noordin's cell and Middle East militants - including al-Qaeda - are being investigated by Indonesian police, according to counter-terrorism sources. If proven to be substantial, the links could herald a disturbing new wave of co-operation between Noordin and far-flung followers of violent jihad.

4. All roads lead to the mine, Richard Chauvel, New Matilda, 2009-08-20

In Papuan eyes, Grasberg is a symbol of the exploitation of Papua's resources for the benefit of others. The security forces in Indonesia do not receive sufficient funds from the Government to cover their operational costs and, without payment from corporations such as Freeport, would not function in their current form. Ironically perhaps, from the resource company's perspective, the security forces pose the greatest threat to the conflict-free running of projects.

- Indonesia: resources and conflict in Papua, ICG, 2002-09-13

5. UN to wind back mission in Timor, Jonathan Pearlman, SMH, 2009-08-20

The United Nations is preparing gradually to wind down its mission in East Timor and believes Australia could do the same, says the mission's chief of staff, Gerard Gallucci. Dr Gallucci said the mission was likely to cut its $US205 million ($250 million) budget next year by about 10 per cent, before withdrawing forces. It was ''a fair assumption'' that Australia could also wind down its 650-strong force.

6. Key plan to bring Anzacs closer, Daniel Flitton, Age, 2009-08-20

New Zealand is rapidly shrinking the trans-Tasman divide, as NZ Prime Minister John Key lays down ambitious goals for joint border controls with Australia, linked military programs and common rules for business. Mr Key said he was happy Australia had tried to put an ''Anzac face'' on our foreign relations. New Zealand sent SAS forces back to Afghanistan this month for the first time since 2005 and he said his country must play its part in confronting global terrorism. He cited operations in Solomon Islands and East Timor as examples of joint action to promote security in the region.

7. Australian spooks face FBI-style makeover, Jonathan Pearlman, SMH, 2009-08-19

Australia's domestic spy agency, ASIO, could be expanded into an FBI-style agency that targets a range of threats such as organised crime and border security under plans to redefine its mission for the first time since the Cold War. Senior members of the national security forces are understood to be considering a review of ASIO's six-point threat list, which guides its activities but have remained virtually unchanged since 1986.

8. Former defense minister on Afghanistan: German mission is a 'disaster', Spiegel Online International, 2009-08-17

This mission is a disaster -- for NATO, for Germany and for the soldiers dying in the Hindu Kush. Over the next two years, we should engage ourselves with all our might, and then we should initiate a withdrawal. The Americans will do exactly the same thing because Obama wants to get re-elected. It is not in the interest of Germany or NATO to get themselves tied down there for another 10 years. The alliance needs to once again focus itself on tasks in the European field of activity, such as the Middle East.

- The US has a plan for Afghanistan, Syed Saleem Shahzad, Asia Times, 2009-08-19

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