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1. [In Search of Smart Power](#), Brendan Nicholson and Daniel Flitton, Age, 2008-02-19

With the Government set to announce this week the details of a new blueprint for the defence of Australia, Allan Behm, the former head of the Australian Defence Force's international policy units, has urged lateral thinking to deal with the unique problem of how to defend 20% of the world's surface - including the Exclusive Economic Zone in the surrounding oceans - with just 0.3% of its population.

2. [Australia Says Job is Done for Soldiers in Iraq](#), Rob Taylor, Reuters, 2008-02-20

Australia's top military commander said on Wednesday the job of the country's combat soldiers in southern Iraq was done, bolstering a government decision to bring them home mid-year. Ahead of talks in Canberra with U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates on the planned withdrawal of 550 soldiers, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston said Iraqi forces had not needed Australian backup for two years now.

- [Iraq War Bill to Top \\$2bn](#), Max Blenkin and Sandra O'Malley, Australian, 2008-02-20
- [Iraq War Could Cost US over \\$2 Trillion, Says Nobel Prize-Winning Economist](#), Jamie Wilson, Guardian, 2006-01-07
- [Analysis of the Growth in Funding for Operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Elsewhere in the War on Terrorism](#), Congressional Budget Office, USA, 2008-02-12 [167 KB, PDF]

3. Defence Chief Concedes New Peril for Soldiers in Afghan Units, Brendan Nicholson, Age, 2008-02-21

Australian instructors working with Afghan army units will be in greater danger as they go into action further from their home bases, says Defence Force chief Angus Houston. He said the biggest danger in Afghanistan now was not a wave of Taliban fighters coming over a hill but "very lethal" home-made bombs, which were becoming common.

- [Aussie Trainers for Afghan Army](#), Patrick Walters, Australian, 2008-02-20
- [Opium Strategy Useless, Fitzgibbon Tells US](#), Tom Allard, Age, 2008-02-20

4. E Timor Military Pulls Out of Rebel Hunt: Commander, AFP, 2008-02-20

East Timor's military has pulled out of a hunt for rebels accused of assassination attempts against the nation's two top leaders, its chief Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak said Wednesday. "We have already cancelled our operations...Cancelling does not mean that there will not be any operation again," the brigadier general said.

- [FBI Team to Help E.Timor with Attack Probe](#), Tito Belo, Reuters, 2008-02-20

5. Indonesian Minister Accuses West of 'Exploiting' Bird Flu, Mark Forbes, Age, 2008-02-20

Indonesian Health Minister Siti Fadilah Supari claims the United States and World Health Organisation are part of a global conspiracy to profit from the spread of bird flu, and the US may use samples to produce biological weapons. Despite claims by Dr Supari that she has forged a new agreement to share virus samples and allow all nations access to resulting vaccines, Indonesia still blocks the sharing of samples from human victims.

- [Indonesia President Urges Fair Bird Flu Virus Sharing](#), Adhityani Arga, Reuters, 2008-02-20
- [US Dismisses Bird Flu Claims](#), Mark Forbes, SMH, 2008-02-21
- [Indonesian Boy Dies of Bird Flu, Putting Death Toll to 105](#), People's Daily, 2008-02-17

6. No Light Touch for Heavy Industry: Garnaut, John Breusch, AFR*, 2008-0-21

Economist Ross Garnaut has proposed that Australia could reduce the cost of cutting greenhouse gas emissions and set a ground-breaking example to the world by including neighbours like Papua New Guinea and Indonesia in its emission trading scheme.

* [Subscription required](#).

- [Interim Report to the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments of Australia](#), Garnaut

7. Austral Policy Forum 08-03A: [Malaysia's Dilemma](#) - David Martin Jones

David Martin Jones of the University of Queensland writes that in the Malaysian general election called for March 8th the apparently electorally dominant ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi's United Malay National Organization "is worried. More precisely, they are worried about the current state of racial and religious harmony in the multiethnic state." Beyond voters' concerns about inflation, crime, and foreign workers, the country, Jones argues, faces "an enduring problem. The difficulty facing UMNO after renewing its mandate in March will be to renegotiate the terms of its fraying social contract, widen the basis for minority participation whilst more forcefully addressing the problem of judicial corruption. It will not be an easy assignment."

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