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1. China's 'chequebook diplomacy' in Fiji under fire, Jonathan Pearlman, SMH, 2009-04-21

Australia has been pressing China to curb its support for Fiji over concerns that Beijing is propping up the military regime by supplying hundreds of millions of dollars in aid. In defiance of calls to boycott the regime, China has boosted aid to Fiji since a coup by the military commander, Frank Bainimarama, which has crippled the economy and led to drastic falls in tourism and foreign investment.

- UN Security Council urges Fiji to restore democracy, Jonathan Pearlman, SMH, 2009-04-22

2. More Diggers to train Afghan soldiers, Mark Dodd, Australian, 2009-04-21

Britain wants the Rudd Government to boost its military contribution in Afghanistan to help ensure

security for the forthcoming elections and train additional Afghan security forces. The comments by the expert in counter-insurgency warfare mark the first direct request from a major coalition ally for the Rudd Government to do more in Afghanistan.

3. U.S. may fill Afghan civilian posts with military personnel, Thom Shanker, NYT, 2009-04-22

The Obama administration is finding that it must turn to military personnel to fill hundreds of posts in Afghanistan that had been intended for civilian experts. In announcing a new strategy last month, President Obama promised “a dramatic increase in our civilian effort” in Afghanistan. But senior Pentagon and administration officials now acknowledge that many of those new positions would be filled by military personnel — in particular reservists, whose civilian jobs give them required expertise — and by contractors.

- U.S. lacks capacity to win over Afghans, Gareth Porter, Asia Times, 2009-04-23
- Old military hardware in a new bottle, Aunohita Mojumdar, Asia Times, 2009-04-23

4. Taliban seize vital Pakistan area closer to the capital, Jane Perlez, NYT, 2009-04-22

Taliban militants have established control of a strategically important area only 70 miles from the capital, law enforcement officials said Wednesday. The move is part of an unrelenting push by the Taliban toward the heart of Pakistan. Heavily armed militants were patrolling villages and local police had retreated to their station houses in much of the city of Buner, a rural area adjacent to Swat, where the Taliban seized control from the Pakistani army in February, they said. Buner is a gateway to a major Pakistani city, Mardan.

- Clinton: Pakistan in danger, Elise Labott, CNN, 2009-04-23

5. Computer spies breach fighter-jet project, Siobhan Gorman, August Cole and Yochi Dreazen, Wall Street Journal, 2009-04-21

Computer spies have broken into the Pentagon's $300 billion Joint Strike Fighter project - the Defense Department's costliest weapons program ever - according to current and former government officials familiar with the attacks. The latest intrusions provide new evidence that a battle is heating up between the U.S. and potential adversaries over the data networks that tie the world together.

- ADF hoses down F-35 'hacking' concerns, ABC, 2009-04-22

6. Refugees 'reacted to law change': Indonesia, Paul Maley, Australian, 2009-04-22

Indonesia experienced an increase in the number of suspected refugees transiting through its borders at the same time Australia was softening its border protection policies. Indonesia's

ambassador to Australia, Primo Alui Joelianto, said Indonesian-based people-smugglers had exploited changes to Australian law as a way of drumming up business.

- Australia 'barely rates' for refugees, Amanda Hodge, Australian, 2009-04-022
- Asylum worries for Australia in Sri Lanka conflict, ABC, 2009-04-23
- People smugglers use chaos in UN office to get asylum seekers to Australia, Tom Allard, SMH, 2009-04-23

7. A nuclear Japan: The least bad option? Hugh White, The Interpreter, 2009-04-17

I am not sure that a Japanese nuclear capability would automatically ignite a new wave of proliferation. Who among the non-nuclear states would find their strategic situation so profoundly altered by a Japanese nuclear capability that they would feel impelled to take this step? Beyond Northeast Asia, I think flow-on proliferation effects are much less likely: would Australia, or Indonesia, be more likely to seek nuclear weapons because Japan had them?

- Realigning priorities: The U.S.-Japan alliance & the future of extended deterrence, Schoff, James L., Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, March 2009 [PDF, 2.9MB]
- Australia-Japan civil society cooperation for nuclear disarmament, Nautilus Institute
- Extended nuclear deterrence - Japan, Nautilus Institute
- About face: Japan's remilitarisation, Richard Tanter, Austral Special Report 09-02S, Nautilus Institute, 2009-03-19 [PDF, 1.9MB]

8. Billions in uranium bound for China, John Garnaut, Age, 2009-04-22

China is shaping as a multibillion-dollar new uranium export market as it looks to Australia to supply the resources it needs to underpin a massive expansion in its nuclear power industry. Chinese officials this week announced they would start building five extra power plants this year on top of the 24 already under construction and 11 already in operation.

- China, Global Nuclear Futures Briefing Book, Nautilus Institute

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