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1. Australian troops using hard drugs in Afghanistan, Iraq

2. Island nations key to Security Council bid
3. Share asylum burden, Indonesians plead

4. [Sri Lanka] Tamil civilians to go free

5. Indonesia's gecko-gate
6. [Pakistan] Zardari in the Crosshairs

7. Afghan Militias Battle Taliban With Aid of U.S.
8. [Afghanistan] Karzai 'would fall in weeks' if Nato pulls out
9. [Japan] Document proves nuke pact negotiations

1. Australian troops using hard drugs in Afghanistan, Iraq, Samantha Healy and Yoni Bashan, Daily Telegraph, 2009-11-22

Diggers are using cocaine, heroin and other hard drugs while on tours of duty in Afghanistan and are returning home as addicts. New Freedom of Information figures reveal hundreds of soldiers, sailors and airmen have tested positive to a string of illegal drugs since troops were sent to Afghanistan and Iraq. Young Diggers Australia president John Jarrett said soldiers were mainly developing addictions to cocaine, a drug which is "as cheap as chips" in Afghanistan.

- Australian defence force refutes drug use in Afghanistan claim, Australian Government, Department of Defence, 2009-11-22
- It's easy for soldiers to score heroin in Afghanistan, Shaun McCanna, Salon.com, 2007-07-07
- More soldiers than ever are using cocaine - and being dishonourably dismissed, Daniel Martin, Mail Online, 2007-12-14
- Revisiting British army drug testing, 2003-07: test thresholds, efficient targeting, and underlying trends, Sheila M Bird, The RUSI Journal, Volume 153, Issue 3 June 2008* [723 KB] *[Subscription required]

2. Island nations key to Security Council bid, Daniel Flitton, Age, 2009-11-23

Australia is competing with Finland and Luxembourg for one of two seats set aside for ''Western European and Other'' countries in 2013-14. Both joined the race much earlier than Australia, which only declared its intention to run in 2008, in the months after Labor took office. The late start has hurt Australia's chances and raised the prospect of an embarrassing rerun of the failed 1996 campaign.

3. Share asylum burden, Indonesians plead, Tom Allard and Karuni Rompies, Age, 2009-11-21

Indonesia has begun negotiating a new arrangement to handle asylum seekers with the Rudd Government as the country's foreign affairs minister called on Australia to ''share the burden'' of immigrants streaming through the archipelago. Its call came as a customs vessel intercepted 53 asylum seekers off north-western Australia. They were being taken to Christmas Island, along with two crew. The boat was the fifth this week to make its way into Australian territory, but Indonesia is grappling with a larger influx of asylum seekers that is overwhelming its detention centres.

- Detainees in island brawl, Brendan Nicholson, Age, 2009-11-23

4. Tamil civilians to go free, Amanda Hodge, Australian, 2009-11-23

More than 130,000 mostly Tamil civilians will be free to move in and out of Sri Lankan refugee camps from next month and will be able to return to their communities by January, the government said. The Sinhalese-dominated government has faced down months of international pressure to release the civilians and forge a political settlement with its Tamil minority. Visiting UN humanitarian chief John Holmes reiterated calls for Sri Lanka to allow civilians to leave the camps. But in the end, it was domestic politics that forced the government's hand.

- Sri Lanka to open refugee camps ahead of polls, Ranga Sirilal and Shihar Aneez, Reuters, 2009-1--21

5. Indonesia's gecko-gate, Tim Lindsey, Australian, 2009-11-20

The cancellation by Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of his trip here is hardly a sign of deterioration in the bilateral relationship. Regardless of issues between Australia and Indonesia over asylum-seekers, Yudhoyono would have to cancel anyway; he is up to his neck in an enormous domestic scandal that many Indonesians say is starting to look like their Watergate. At the heart of it all is Indonesia's popular anti-corruption commission (KPK). Originally expected to be the latest in a long and unhappy line of toothless, gutless or silenced anti-corruption initiatives, it quickly proved

itself anything but. This scandal goes to the heart of the government's legitimacy and shows no sign of letting up.

- President seeks to settle out of court, Erwida Maulia and Dicky Christanto, Jakarta Post, 2009-1--23
- Indonesian anti-corruption agenda falters, but perhaps other things matter more, Gerry van Klinken, Austral Policy Forum 09-9A, 2009-03-30

6. Zardari in the crosshairs, Arif Rafiq, Foreign Policy, 2009-11-19

Afghanistan's election crisis has temporarily abated, but Pakistan could soon face a volatile political transition of its own. President Asif Ali Zardari is under ever-increasing pressure to resign. His influence and power is dwindling and will likely continue to diminish in the coming months. By this spring, the Zardari presidency could meet its end. There have been several waves of pressure on Zardari this year, coming primarily from the Army and segments of the private media -- both see Zardari as inept, corrupt, and unpatriotic.

- Nuclear fallout rocks Pakistan, Syed Saleem Shahzad, Asia Times, 2009-11-20

7. Afghan militias battle taliban with aid of U.S., Dexter Filkins, NYT, 2009-11-21

American and Afghan officials have begun helping a number of anti-Taliban militias that have independently taken up arms against insurgents in several parts of Afghanistan, prompting hopes of a large-scale tribal rebellion against the Taliban. The emergence of the militias, which took some leaders in Kabul by surprise, has so encouraged the American and Afghan officials that they are planning to spur the growth of similar armed groups across the Taliban heartland in the southern and eastern parts of the country.

- Hamid Karzai wants Afghan troops to replace foreign forces in five years, Jon Boone, Guardian, 2009-11-19

8. Karzai 'would fall in weeks' if Nato pulls out, Julian Glover, Guardian, 2009-11-20

The Afghan government could fall within weeks if Nato pulled out troops now, David Miliband warned as he urged British opponents of the war to give the fight to rebuild the country more time. In an interview, the foreign secretary said: "If international forces leave, you can choose a time – five minutes, 24 hours or seven days – but the insurgent forces will overrun those forces that are prepared to put up resistance and we would be back to square one."

- Karzai's cronies: meet the unsavory characters surrounding the Afghan president and his new government, Jordana Timerman and David Kenner, Foreign Policy, 2009-11-19

9. Document proves nuke pact negotiations, Nanae Kurashige and Masahiro Tsuruoka, Asahi Shimbun, 2009-11-23

A document that refers to records of meetings leading up to a secret nuclear pact between Japan and the United States has been found among government files, it was learned. Sources said the document, which details the 1960 agreement that ended up allowing U.S. warplanes or vessels

carrying nuclear weapons to pass through or make port calls in Japanese territory without prior consultation, also confirms the existence of transcripts of earlier meetings. It was found during in-house investigations conducted under orders from Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada. The finding refutes the government's previous claim that such an agreement, or records of negotiations, do not exist.

- DPJ to admit existence of secret nuke pact, Japan Times, 2009-11-22

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