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1. Civilian deaths cast pall over Afghan war, Nick McKenzie, Age, 2009-05-19

Australian and United States defence force officials clashed over the killing of Afghan civilians in 2006. The behind-the-scenes dispute erupted after Australian forces witnessed images from an unmanned aircraft that appeared to show children being blown up during a US missile strike in mid-June 2006, during an US-led operation called Mountain Thrust.

2. U.S. pullout a condition in Afghan peace talks, Dexter Filkins, NYT, 2009-05-20

Leaders of the Taliban and other armed groups battling the Afghan government are talking to intermediaries about a potential peace agreement, with initial demands focused on a timetable for a withdrawal of American troops. The talks, if not the withdrawal proposals, are being supported by the Afghan government. The Obama administration says it is not involved in the discussions. But

Afghan officials believe they have tacit support from the Americans.

- UK backs Afghan efforts to reintegrate Taliban, Reuters, 2009-05-21

3. New Afghan force joins fight against Taliban, Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson, NPR, 2009-05-21

In central Afghanistan, the latest graduates of a new security program targeting the Taliban assumed their duties on the outskirts of Kabul. Afghan and U.S. officials say the Guardians are the first line of defense for their tribes against militants and criminals. But more important, they serve as the eyes and ears for the Afghan security forces and their American partners.

- Afghan leaders, U.S. soldiers initiate new security program to empower local residents, 1st Lt. Christopher Stachura, US Army, 2009-05-14

4. North Korea claims to conduct 2nd nuclear test, Choe Sang-Hun, NYT, 2009-05-24

North Korea announced on Monday that it had successfully conducted its second nuclear test, defying international warnings and drastically raising the stakes in a global effort to get the recalcitrant Communist state to give up its nuclear weapons program.

5. Defence plans 'unaffordable', Jonathan Pearlman, SMH, 2009-05-22

The Federal Government's 20-year defence white paper has been criticised by a security analyst, Alan Dupont, who says the plans are unaffordable and purchases of big-ticket items such as submarines and F-35 Joint Strike Fighters will probably have to be cut back.

- Beneath the surface of the 2009 Defence White Paper, Professor Alan Dupont, Lowy Institute, May 2009 [MP3, 22MB]
- Defence fails to update savings status for public-private project, Jonathan Pearlman, SMH, 2009-05-22

6. Japan poised to ease its ban again on export of weapons, Peter Alford, Australian, 2009-05-25

The Japanese Government is about to ease its universal embargo on weapons exports in a move that may foreshadow Japan joining the US-controlled F-35 joint strike fighter project. The decision is another whittling-away of Japan's long-standing policy of standing apart from foreign military engagements and co-operation.

- About face: Japan's remilitarisation, Richard Tanter, Nautilus Institute, 2009-03-19

7. Bikie gang links to defence security, Dylan Welch, SMH,

2009-05-23

Security breaches at one of Australia's largest and most secure military weapons sites, involving possible links to outlaw motorcycle clubs and a thief who stole rockets from the army, may constitute a breach of national security. A whistleblower working at the Australian Defence Force weapons storage depot has described a string of abuses by some staff working for a private security contactor, ISS Security.

8. Revealed: the RBA's dodgy global deals, Richard Baker and Nick McKenzie, Age, 2009-05-23

The Reserve Bank of Australia has been involved in the payment of multimillion-dollar commissions to shady middlemen in its drive to win banknote printing deals with foreign governments. Securency Pty Ltd, a Melbourne-based banknote supplier half-owned by the RBA, has made a substantial number of "commission" payments to agents, including some previously implicated in corruption scandals.

- Statement concerning Securency International Pty Ltd, Media Release, RBA, 2009-05-23

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