APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, March 27, 2008

Recommended Citation

"APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, March 27, 2008", APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, March 27, 2008, https://nautilus.org/apsnet/apsnet-27-march-2008/

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1. Defence Must Arm up for 'Asian Threat', Mark Dodd, Australian, 2008-0--25

Ross Babbage - a former senior defence official and now adviser to Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon - recommends a home-grown military capability that could "rip the arm off" any threatening Asian power. Australia would need to be able to stand its ground among its Asian neighbours, he warned, citing the rise of Indonesia, India and China.

- Learning to Walk Amongst Giants: The New Defence White Paper, Ross Babbage, Security Challenges*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2008, pp. 13-20.
  *Subscription required

2. Chinese Engagement is a Two-Way Street, Greg Sheridan, Australian, 2008-03-27

Rudd's own Beijing dilemma comes from the need for him to say something meaningful about Tibet and human rights when he visits China in a couple of weeks. The Chinese, who are terrific bullies in international diplomacy, may well punish him for anything he says or does about Tibet. Yet for the self-respect of all Australians - not to mention the human rights of Tibetans - he should do so.

3. Promises, Promises: Worryingly, the Government's Cuts to the Defence Budget Came Without Warning, Geoffrey Barker, APO, 2008-03-26

The Rudd government is playing a duplicitous and dangerous game with defence funding as it prepares what seems certain to be a tough budget. The demand that Defence find savings totalling $10 billion over the next decade came out of the blue last week after hand-on-heart pledges, before and after the federal election, that defence would be spared major funding cuts.

4. No Extra Troops for Afghanistan, Minister Insists, Tom Allard, SMH, 2008-03-25

The Defence Minister, Joel Fitzgibbon, says there is no argument "whatsoever" for Australia to increase its troop commitment in Afghanistan, even after it withdraws more than 500 soldiers from southern Iraq. Given the continuing unrest in Australia's immediate region, the Rudd Government wants more troops based here for any crises that may flare closer to home.

- France to Boost Afghanistan Force, AFP, Australian, 2008-03-27
- Afghans Regard Australians as Invaders, Envoy Warns, Brendan Nicholson, Age, 2008-03-27

5. Indonesia to Build Two Naval Bases in East Nusa Tenggara, Kompass*, 2008-03-17

The Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL) will add an operational base in East Nusa Tenggara to guard the area against disturbances from other countries and to control any illegal fishing. Pulau Mangudu and Pulau Salura are managed by an Australian tourism businessman. However, TNI-AL stationed troops at the islands after fears arose that they were slowly creeping into Australian hands.
*Indonesian Language

6. Reinado 'Had Four Timor Targets', Jill Jolliffe, Age, 2008-03-27

East Timor's chief prosecutor Longuinhos Monteiro said rebel soldier Alfredo Reinado planned to assassinate four leaders in the attack last month that wounded President Jose Ramos Horta and targeted Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao. He said Reinado had been influenced by a third person over a period beginning in December 2007, "then continuing for the three to four days before February 11" to carry out the attack.

- Reinado on TV as Hunt Went Awry, Lindsay Murdoch, Age, 2008-03-26

7. Afghanistan: Wrong Track on Opium, Hamish McDonald, APO, 2008-03-20

Next month's conference on Afghanistan should consider a novel scheme to neutralise the impact of soaring opium production. Neutralising the illegal opiate industry both from the supply end and the

demand end would be a far better way of winning hearts and minds in Afghanistan than the eradication path on which the coalition is embarked.

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