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1. Defence bureaucrats fail ministers, Sean Parnell, Australian, 2010-01-28

The litany of failures in Defence extends well beyond the Collins Class submarines, with significant hardware and manpower deficiencies and even the department admitting it has failed ministers on policy. In a letter to accompany a series of briefs for Defence secretary Ian Watt, Defence chief Angus Houston and bureaucrat Stephen Merchant declared the "great speed and precision" of military operations belied the cumbersome and ineffectual work of the department.

- Upgraded frigates finally join fleet, Mark Dodd, Australian, 2010-0128
- New subs to be built in Adelaide whatever the pick, Brendan Nicholson, Australian, 2010-01-28

2. Minister blasts submarine management, John Kerin, AFR*, 2010-01-28

Defence Minister John Faulkner labelled the management of the troubled Collins-class submarine fleet sub-optimal and prevailed on Defence to “get it right” before attempting a new generation of submarines. Senator Faulkner’s warning came in an otherwise upbeat speech to the navy’s annual Sea Power conference in Sydney in which he noted good progress on a number of defence procurement projects, including the $8 billion air-warfare destroyer project and construction of the $3.5 billion troop transport assault ships.
*[Subscriptions required]

- Let's test that idea - contestability of advice in the Department of Defence, Andrew Davies, ASPI, 2010-01-22 [PDF, 236 KB]

3. 'Example' to be made of death row Australian, Barbara Miller, PM, ABC News, 2010-01-28

An international relations expert says Afghanistan wants to make an example of an Australian sentenced to death for the murder of his Afghan colleague. The Federal and Afghan governments have confirmed that South Australian man Robert William Langdon has been sentenced to death by hanging in Afghanistan, after being found guilty of the murder. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd says representations will be made on behalf of 38-year-old Langdon to the Afghan government consistent with Australia's opposition to the death penalty.

- Cash talks begin to secure release of Robert Langdon from death row in Kabul, Mark Dodd and Gavin Lower, Australian, 2010-01-28
- Australia - Prime Minister transcript of interview on 6PR with Simon Beaumont 27 January 2010, ISRIA, 2010-01-27
- NATO contractor is sentenced to death in Afghanistan, Rod Nordland and Abdul Waheed Wafa, NYT, 2010-01-27
- Private security contractors, Australia in Afghanistan, Nautilus Institute

4. A reconciliation plan in Afghanistan, Alissa J. Rubin, NYT, 2010-01-27

The Afghan government is set to unveil an ambitious, far-reaching plan to persuade the Taliban’s foot soldiers to abandon their fight and to offer an opening for the movement’s leaders to return to politics in the country they once ruled. The new program, which President Hamid Karzai will outline at a conference in London, seeks to avoid the problems that dogged earlier, more piecemeal approaches. This time it will be a comprehensive plan, operating at the district, provincial and national levels, according to his advisers, who describe it as “bottom-up and top-down.”

- Britain, Japan to help reintegrate Taliban foot soldiers, Karen DeYoung, Washington Post, 2010-0--26
- Why can't you buy the Taliban? Aziz Hakimi, Open Democracy, 2010-01-20

5. NATO struggling to fulfill commitments for more troops in Afghanistan, Craig Whitlock, Washington Post, 2010-01-27

NATO is struggling to make good on commitments to deploy extra forces to Afghanistan, one month after the Obama administration said it was counting on the alliance to send as many as 10,000 more troops to serve alongside U.S. soldiers. Germany said it would send 500 reinforcements to Afghanistan, disappointing U.S. officials, who had been pressing Berlin for at least three times that number. German officials, facing stiff domestic opposition to the war, said they would instead double their development aid to Afghanistan and begin withdrawing soldiers in 2011.

- No more French combat troops for Afghanistan: Sarkozy, AFP, 2010-01-26

6. Parties back criminal findings in bailout, Febriamy Hutapea, Jakarta Globe, 2010-01-28

In a potentially devastating blow to the fortunes of Vice President Boediono and Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati, two political parties indicated that they would find that crimes had been committed in the bailout of PT Bank Century, setting the stage to impeach Boediono. The news means that the House of Representatives special committee probing the costly bailout will likely send the findings to the full House to vote on whether to forward them to the Constitutional Court. That body issued guidelines outlining the procedures for impeachment late last year.

7. Iraq war was illegal, Dutch panel rules, Afua Hirsch, Guardian, 2010-01-12

The war in Iraq had "no basis in international law", a Dutch inquiry found, in the first ever independent legal assessment of the decision to invade. In a series of damning findings, a seven-member panel in the Netherlands concluded that the war, which was supported by the Dutch government following intelligence from Britain and the US, had not been justified in law. "The Dutch government lent its political support to a war whose purpose was not consistent with Dutch government policy," the inquiry in the Hague concluded.

- Conclusions of the committee of inquiry on Iraq, Press Release, The Hague, 2010-01-12, [PDF, 122KB]
- Summary report of the commission of IRAK, [PDF, 193KB]

8. Economic and fiscal policy strategies for climate change mitigation in Indonesia, Frank Jotzo, Salim Mazouz, Ministry of Finance, Republic of Indonesia and Australia Indonesia Partnership, 2010-01-25, [PDF, 648KB]

Indonesia is seeking to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 26 per cent by 2020 and up to 41 percent with international assistance. This paper spells out a longer-term strategic framework, grounded in economic principle and international experience that can guide climate policymaking. It provides a framework for Indonesia’s climate policy design, and it spells out a number of concrete strategies for domestic fiscal and economic policies for climate change mitigation, and sets out international financing strategy considerations advantageous to Indonesia.

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