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1. The company with the right contacts, Ben Cubby, Brisbane Times, 2009-0--30

General Atomics, the company behind the nation's newest uranium mine, has been patiently lobbying Australian politicians for more than a decade to encourage it to allow mining, to develop nuclear reactors and buy high-tech weapons. The company has ferried members of the US Congress, their families and aides to Australia for high-level talks. It has paid for Labor MPs to travel to the United States to see its weapons and nuclear reactors first-hand, as well as hosting taxpayer funded trips.

- Digging dirt with a sledgehammer, Nick O'Malley and Ben Cubby, Brisbane Times, 2009-07-30
- Arms maker behind uranium mine settled fraudulent pricing case, Nick O'Malley and Ben Cubby, Brisbane Times, 2009-07-30

2. Aiming higher, Ben Doherty, Age, 2009-07-29

Six years on, Australia and its partners remain in the Solomon Islands and talk has turned to how and when they should depart and what sort of country they will leave behind. A new framework

agreement between RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Government will outline a plan for RAMSI's gradual withdrawal. Rather than imposing a deadline, it will look at phasing out certain areas of involvement when conditions are met.

- Australia in Solomon Islands, Nautilus Institute
- Peacebuilding in the Pacific: the Australian experience, James Cotton, Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development, Issue 14, July 2009 [PDF, 268KB]

3. Afghanistan and Iraq: western wars, genocidal risks, Martin Shaw, openDemocracy, 2009-07-24

Thus the dangers of western military interventions for civilians include not only the direct harm to which they are exposed by US bombing. They also include the indirect risk of provoking genocidal violence. So far, the new Afghan insurgency, based mainly in the Pashtun-majority areas from which the Taliban draw support, has not had this outcome: but if it succeeds in extending the war into other parts of Afghanistan, these issues could well return.

- A lesson in imperial paranoia, Juan Cole, Asia Times, 2009-07-30

4. More US troops may be needed in Afghanistan, says Pentagon advisor, Al Pessin, Voice of America, 2009-07-29

A member of the strategic assessment team working with the new U.S. military commander in Afghanistan says the U.S. government and its allies need to be more realistic about what is needed to win the Afghan war, and he says that may include more troops. Senior Washington analyst Anthony Cordesman says the United States and its allies need to be honest about the security and development problems they have allowed to fester in recent years, and about the resources that will be needed to reverse the situation.

- Spain is open to bolstering forces in Afghanistan, Prime Minister says, Victoria Burnett and Rachel Donadio, NYT, 2009-07-29
- The dynamics of the "AfPak" conflict: Metrics and status report, Anthony H. Cordesman, CSIS, 2009-07-01

5. Taliban issues code of conduct, Al Jazeera, 2009-07-29

The Taliban in Afghanistan has issued a book laying down a code of conduct for its fighters. The book indicates that Mullah Omar, the movement's leader, wants to centralise its operations. The release of the rule book comes less than a month before Afghans head to the polls for a presidential election, which the Taliban has deemed an illegitimate system imposed by foreigners. The timing may be just a coincidence, however, as rival presidential candidates detail their manifestos and the Taliban makes an effort to win over the Afghan public.

- Afghan, NATO slam new Taliban code of conduct, Alfred de Montesquiou, AP, 2009-07-29
- US reaches out to second tier of Taliban leaders, Dawn, 2009-07-30
- Truce with Taliban in Afghan district, Carlotta Gall and Sangar Rahimi, NYT, 2009-07-29
- Peace negotiations and truces in Afghanistan, Australia in Afghanistan, Nautilus Institute

6. US envoy: most Taliban funds come from overseas, Slobodan Lekic, AP, 2009-07-30

Taliban militants are receiving more funding from their sympathizers abroad than from Afghanistan's illegal drug trade, the U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. "More money is coming from the Gulf than is coming from the drug trade to the Taliban," Holbrooke said.

7. Security checks at ports not up to scratch, Nick McKenzie, Age 2009-07-29

The system to safeguard Australia's ports from terrorism and other security threats is failing, according to a confidential report that calls for more maritime workers to be barred from security-sensitive areas. The damning report into a central part of the Federal Government's border security policy, the maritime security identity card, is the third report this year to expose serious and systemic border security vulnerabilities.

- Criminals infiltrate docks, airports, Nick McKenzie and Linton Besser, Age, 2009-06-25

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