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APSNet 31 January 2008

1. [Defence Chief Baulks at More Diggers for Afghanistan](#)
2. [Billion Dollar Blowouts](#)
3. [Solomons Mission 'Bogged for Years'](#)
4. [Downer Discusses Suharto's Role in the Region](#)
5. [Safeguarding Iraqi Oil a Vital Task](#)
6. [Tortured in Thailand](#)
7. [Indonesia's 100th Bird Flu Death Shows Disease Out of Control: Experts](#)
8. [China, East Timor Sign Cooperation Accord](#)

1. [Defence Chief Baulks at More Diggers for Afghanistan](#), Misha Schubert, Age, 2008-01-25

Defence Chief Angus Houston has made a case against boosting Australian troop numbers in Afghanistan. But Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon has been careful not to rule out more troops for Afghanistan. Instead, he has warned that any extra commitment hinges on the NATO-led coalition outlining a clearer strategy and lifting its own troop numbers.

- [Charting a Course for Afghanistan](#), Jacob Townsend, ASPI, 2008-01-31
- [West Will Never Beat Taliban, Rudd Warned](#), Matt Wade, SMH, 2008-01-31
- [U.S. Troops 'Ready' to Aid Pakistan](#), Ann Scott Tyson, Washington Post, 2008-01-25
- [Aussie Hits on Taliban Have Come at a Price for Civilians](#), Lauren Wilson and Mark Dodd, Australian, 2008-01-28

2. [Billion Dollar Blowouts](#), Cameron Stewart, Australian, 2008-01-30

In front of an audience of top military brass in Sydney Joel Fitzgibbon told some home truths about shortcomings in Australia's defence. The Rudd Government has inherited a mixed bag on defence, but one which poses serious potential dangers - politically and strategically - unless astutely managed.

- [Speech by the Minister for Defence to Open the 'Pacific 2008 Maritime Congress and Exposition'](#), Darling Harbour, Sydney, Department Of Defence, 2008-01-29

3. [Solomons Mission 'Bogged for Years'](#), Michael McKenna, Australian, 2008-01-31

The Australian-led, four-year intervention in the Solomon Islands is in danger of becoming mired for years by a failure to tackle widespread economic problems, according to an independent review. The Centre for Independent Studies warns that the focus of the 16-country Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands has left it with no "exit strategy" despite ending years of ethnic violence, cutting corruption and restoring macroeconomic stability.

- [Five Out of Ten: A Performance Report on the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands \(RAMSI\)](#), Gaurav Sodhi, Centre for Independent Studies, Issue Analysis, No. 92, 2008-01-31 [PDF. 373 KB]
- [SOLS: PM Calls for Expanded RAMSI Role](#), Sam Seke with Doctor Derek Sikua, Solomon Islands Prime Minister, ABC, 2008-01-29 [Audio]
- [Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands \(RAMSI\)](#), Australia in Solomon Islands, Nautilus Institute

4. [Downer Discusses Suharto's Role in the Region](#), Tony Eastley, ABC, 2008-01-28 [Transcript]

Alexander Downer: "... we didn't know too much about the level of corruption, but we knew about the human rights record and we certainly, as had the Keating and Hawke governments before us, made the point to president Suharto directly and the Indonesian Government about human rights issues."

- [Suharto: A Declassified Documentary Obit](#), Ed. Brad Simpson, George Washington University, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 242, 2008-01-28

5. [Safeguarding Iraqi Oil a Vital Task](#), Michael Richardson, AFR*, 2008-01-30

Kevin Rudd said, even after Australia's 550 combat troops were withdrawn in June, Australia would continue to help train the Iraqi police and army, and support Iraq through naval deployments in the Gulf to help safeguard Iraqi oil exports. Australia has been rotating a warship every six months to the northern sector of the Gulf to help guard Iraq's two offshore oil export terminals.

* [Subscription required](#).

- [Smith Pledges More Aid for Iraq](#), Anne Davies, Age, 2008-01-30

- [Don't Mistake Recent Improvement in Iraq for Total Success](#), Daniel Flitton, Age, 2008-01-29

6. [Tortured in Thailand](#), Bangkok Post, 2008-01-31

Destroyed CIA videotapes show the water-boarding of two suspected al-Qaeda leaders at secret CIA interrogations in Thailand during 2002, a US congressional hearing has heard. Thai authorities have long denied the existence of the so-called prison in Thailand - apparently on the narrow interpretation of the description of the facility.

7. [Indonesia's 100th Bird Flu Death Shows Disease Out of Control: Experts](#), AFP, 2008-01-29

Confirmation of the 100th human bird flu death in Indonesia shows the virus is out of control in the country most ravaged by outbreaks of the disease. "The virus is uncontrollable in Indonesia ... it means that viral contamination of the environment is quite high," said Ngurah Mahardika, a virologist at Udayana University on the resort island of Bali, which recorded its first two human deaths from the disease last year.

- [INDONESIA: Scientists Worry Bird Flu Strain is Drug Resistant](#), Joanna McCarthy with Dr Deoraj Caussy, World Health Organisation and Professor Anne Kelso, WHO Collaborating Centre For Influenza, ABC, 2008-01-28 [Audio]

8. [China, East Timor Sign Cooperation Accord](#), ABC, 2008-01-31

China and East Timor have signed cooperation agreements worth almost one-point-four billion US dollars. They include economic and technical cooperation, the construction of a headquarters for the national armed forces and housing for soldiers, and the purchase of equipment for East Timor's foreign ministry.

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