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1. Election rhetoric comes home to roost
2. Australia's basing its $87m secret on sensitive absurdity
3. Smith heads to Sri Lanka for urgent talks on asylum seekers
4. Replacement of Indonesia's military chiefs a 'routine' affair
5. [Indonesia] Military against Australia's push for joint naval patrols
6. No more troops, Faulkner tells US
7. Defending the Arsenal: In an unstable Pakistan, can nuclear warheads be kept safe?
8. Handle with care: private security companies in Timor-Leste

Election rhetoric comes home to roost, Laura Tingle, AFR*, 2009-11-06

"Kevin Rudd's approach to Afghanistan, like Barak Obama's began with a political calculation rather than a strategic imperative. There is no evidence that, as they campaigned for office, either Rudd or Obama though deeply about Afghanistan itself, or weighed the balance of risks, costs and benefits of the intervention before committing themselves, if elected, to persevere with it. What they did consider was the need to show their national security credentials by offsetting plans to withdraw from Iraq with strong commitment to another, less unpopular, war."
*[Subscription required]

Australia's basing its $87m secret on sensitive absurdity, Tom Hyland, Age, 2009-11-08

The Federal Government is spending $87.5 million on a new Middle East military base. Not that it uses the word ''base''. Instead, budget papers say that the money is being spent on ''command and control enhancements'' which will ''consolidate ADF supporting assets to one location''. There's a serious side to all this, said academic Richard Tanter, director of the Nautilus Institute at RMIT. ''Governments ought to be as transparent as possible, and secrecy should only be justified in serious cases of potential danger to persons,'' Professor Tanter said.

- Al Minhad Air Base, Australian Forces Abroad, Nautilus Institute

Smith heads to Sri Lanka for urgent talks on asylum seekers, AAP, Australian, 2009-11-08

Foreign Minister Stephen Smith, headed for urgent talks in Colombo on stemming the flow of asylum seekers to Australia, wants Sri Lanka to accelerate its resettlement program for the displaced. With the stand-off between the 78 Tamils and authorities aboard the Australian Customs vessel, the Oceanic Viking, now in its third week, Mr Smith flew to Sri Lanka today to meet Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, Rohitha Bogollagama.

- Hopes rise for asylum seekers, Tom Allard, Age, 2009-11-09
- No shipload of whites fleeing disaster would be treated like this, John Pilger, Age, 2009-11-06

Replacement of Indonesia's military chiefs a ‘routine’ affair, Markus Junianto Sihaloho, Jakarta Globe, 2009-11-08

Although coming amid a scandal involving the country’s top law enforcement institutions, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s decision to replace the heads of the Army, Navy and Air Force is a routine move that had been in the works for months, military observers said. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Agustadi Sasongko Purnomo will be replaced by Lt. Gen. George Toisutta, commander of the Army Strategic Command; Navy Chief of Staff Admiral Tedjo Edhy Purdijatno will turn his post over to Vice Admiral Agus Suhartono, currently inspector general at the Ministry of Defense; and Air Force Chief Air Marshal Subandrio will step aside for Air Vice Marshal Imam Sufaat, who is currently deputy chief.

- Current data on the Indonesian military elite, September 2005 – March 2008, The Editors, Indonesia (85)*, April 2008 *[Subscription required]
- The emerging TNI elite: impact of recent reshuffles, Leonard C. Sebastian and Andi Widjajanto, RSIS Commentaries, 2008-03-06, [55.2KB PDF]
- Attachment B: Profile of Maj. Gen. George Toisutta, Military Commander of West Papua, West Papua military build-up threatens Land of Peace campaign, Tapol, 2005-06-21 [309KB PDF]

[Indonesia] Military against Australia’s push for joint naval patrols, Markus Junianto Sihaloho, Jakarta Globe, 2009-10-29

The government is likely to reject an Australian push for its navy to be allowed to patrol Indonesian waters, in what could be a blow to Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s attempts to stem the flow of refugees through Indonesia. Military spokesman, Air Vice Marshall Sagom Tamboen said the joint patrol could be used as a way for the Australian government to prevent boats carrying asylum-seekers from entering its territorial waters.

No more troops, Faulkner tells US, Anne Davis, SMH, 2009-11-06

Australia has made it clear to the US it is not in a position to increase troop or training commitments in Afghanistan if the Obama Administration decides to add to its troop levels in response to General Stanley McChrystal's report, the Defence Minister, John Faulkner, said in Washington. Australia also will not take over as the lead force in Oruzgan province when the Dutch forces leave in August next year, Senator Faulkner said.

- Afghanistan: Time to leave, Patrick Cockburn, The Independent, 2009-11-08
- It's time to pull out of Afghanistan and take the fight to Bin Laden in Britain, Kim Howells, Guardian, 2009-11-03
- Afghanistan's security environment, United States Government Accountability Office, GAO-1--178R, 2009-11-05 [529.81KB PDF]

Defending the Arsenal: In an unstable Pakistan, can nuclear warheads be kept safe? Seymour M. Hersh, NY, 2009-11-16

A retired senior Pakistani intelligence officer, who worked with his C.I.A. counterparts to track down Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, said that he was deeply troubled by the prospect of Pakistan ceding any control over its nuclear deterrent. "My belief today is that it's better to have the Americans as an enemy rather than as a friend, because you cannot be trusted," the former officer concluded. "The only good thing the United States did for us was to look the other way about an atomic bomb when it suited the United States to do so.

- Nuclear Security in Pakistan: Reducing the Risks of Nuclear Terrorism, Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, Arms Control Today, July/August 2009
- Pakistan's nuclear weapons are safe, for now, Myra MacDonald, Reuters, 2009-11-08

Handle with care: private security companies in Timor-Leste, Sarah Parker, East Timor Law Journal, 2009-11 [303 Kb PDF]

The debate surrounding the engagement of private security providers is becoming increasingly important in Timor-Leste, where two developments have influenced the local discussion. Firstly, the number of Private Security Companies (PSC) operating in Timor-Leste has increased since independence. Secondly, the government is considering legislation authorizing non-state security personnel (and other civilians) to carry and use firearms in the course of their duties.

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