APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, May 4, 2006

Recommended Citation

"APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, May 4, 2006", APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, May 04, 2006, https://nautilus.org/apsnet/apsnet-for-20060504/

APSNet for 20060504

Austral Peace and Security Network (APSNet)

Bi-weekly report from the Nautilus Institute at RMIT, Australia.

Thursday 4 May 2006

1. Struggle for a future: The threat of a new civil war looms in East Timor
2. Solomon Islands: A mess in need of minders
3. Victorian hurt in Iraq blast
4. Defence force in copters debacle
5. Time to intervene: A UN peacekeeping force is the only solution for Darfur
6. Australia-US Alliance Series: Week 4
7. PNG Indigenous Lawyer vs. International Logging Interests
8. Freeport mine 'poisoning' West Papua's environment

Austral Policy Forum 06-15A: Selective outrage and unacknowledged fantasies: re-thinking Papua, Indonesia and Australia - Edward Aspinall

1. Struggle for a future: The threat of a new civil war looms in East Timor, Stephen Fitzpatrick, Australian, 2006-05-04Underlying tensions would be easy enough to inflame, but ethnic violence does not just suddenly appear. East Timor's apparent division into two main groups snarling at each other's throats belies a more complex history of ethnic heritage and family and business connections, and a far simpler one as well: those who opposed the Indonesian occupation and

those who didn't. One thing is certain: when the UN Security Council meets in New York tomorrow to consider whether and how to renew its advisory role in East Timor - UNOTIL's mandate runs out in less than three weeks - the latest bloody events will feature prominently in considerations.
    - Push to extend UN's Timor mandate, Sarah Smiles, Age, 2006-05-04

2.
3. A mess in need of minders, Russell Skelton, Age, 2006-05-04It is contradictory for Foreign Minister Alexander Downer to give lectures on the need for more honesty and integrity in government when his emissary stands accused of manipulating the very process he is demanding be cleaned of outside influences. It also makes it difficult for the Foreign Minister to lecture both Taipei and Beijing on the need to stop buying diplomatic recognition by bribing local politicians. With the archipelago already awash with money - bribes from loggers, fishing conglomerates and absurdly generous and largely unaccounted for aid money from Taiwan - Downer's position appears compromised and hollow.
4. Victorian hurt in Iraq blast, Brendan Nicholson and Sarah Smiles, Age, 20-05-04.A Victorian man working as a security contractor in Iraq has narrowly survived a roadside bombing in which three former soldiers from Fiji who were with him were killed. The Fiji Times reported that seven former Fijian soldiers working as security contractors had been killed in Iraq in the past week. The men were employed by the UK-based security company ArmorGroup International.
    - ArmorGroup - Middle East Risk Management Services
    - Fiji, the war in Iraq, and the privatisation of Pacific island security, Nic Maclellan, Austral Policy Forum 06-11A 6 April 2006

5.
6. Defence force in copters debacle, Brendan Nicholson, Age, 2006-05-03The Australian Defence Force has started accepting delivery of a $1.6 billion fleet of French-made helicopters despite warnings that they are not safe to fly at night or in bad weather. The helicopters have also been revealed to be underpowered, requiring the replacement of engines at an additional cost of $110 million.
    - Management of the Tiger Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter Project - Air 87, The Auditor-General, Audit Report No. 36 2005-06
    - The ARH Tiger - the Australian Team, Australian Aerospace.

7.
8. Time to intervene: A UN peacekeeping force is the only solution for Darfur, Editorial, Australian, 2006-05-03Gareth Evans argued passionately for the international community to supply a fresh, properly trained, equipped and fully mandated intervention force of 12,000, including Australians, to protect civilians from further bloodshed. He is right, but being right does not equate with what is possible.
    - Transcript of speech by Gareth Evans: 2006 Gandel Oration for B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission by Gareth Evans, President of International Crisis Group, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2006-04-30

9.
10. Australia-US Alliance Series: Week 4, Richard Woolcott and Paul Barratt, New Matilda, 2006-0--03Richard Woolcott believes the changing world order and the government's exploitation of the alliance for domestic purposes will change Australian attitudes to the alliance. Paul Barratt discusses the importance of managing the national interest when it conflicts with alliance demands by explaining Australia's resistance to US pressure during revisions to the law of the

sea in the 1970s.

11. PNG Indigenous Lawyer vs. International Logging Interests, The Goldman Environmental Prize, 2006-04-26Attorney Anne Kajir, 32, uncovered evidence that widespread corruption and complicity in the Papua New Guinea government has allowed rampant, illegal logging, which is destroying the largest remaining intact block of tropical forest in the Asia Pacific region. "Landowners depend entirely on their forests as a means of survival so they must be properly informed on the impacts of logging on their land before signing away their customary birth given rights to these natural resources. It will be genocide if the robber barons continue to roam at will or plunge deeper into our last remaining rainforests."
    - Illegal Logging in Papua New Guinea, Late Night Live, 2006-05-02

12.
13. Freeport mine 'poisoning' West Papua's environment, Marianne Kearney, Age, 2006-05-04The giant Freeport mine is polluting West Papua's rivers and estuaries and a world heritage-protected national park, according to the company's own environmental assessments and Indonesian Government standards leaked to Indonesian environment group Wahli.
    - WALHI report on Freeport-Rio Tinto, Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WAHLI), 2006-0--03
    - Freeport's 1Q Earnings Astonish Analyst, Dorothy Kosich, MineWeb.com, 2006-04-19

14.

Austral Policy Forum 06-15A: Selective outrage and unacknowledged fantasies: re-thinking Papua, Indonesia and Australia - Edward Aspinall

In a challenging and closely argued essay from a prominent specialist on Indonesian politics, Edward Aspinall of the Australian National University and editor of the magazine Inside Indonesia argues that in the current Australian debate about Papua "there is much simplification, distortion and myth-making on both sides, not only about Papua, but also about Indonesia and Australia itself." "Australian advocates [of Papuan self-determination], "he argues, "need to examine their motives to ensure they are not also partly acting on the basis of unexamined fears and prejudices and that they have fully thought through the consequences of the positions they are advocating."

Why, Aspinall asks,

> "if a concern for human rights is the main motivation, why do so many supporters of Papuan human rights show so little interest in human rights issues elsewhere in Indonesia? A problem in Australia is that one of the two principal contesting frameworks explaining Papua is becoming dominant to the almost complete exclusion of attention to the claims of the other. The logic of the now dominant framework then subsequently structures most of the public debate - at some cost to the capacity to find non-violent solutions to complex contemporary problems."

Moreover, Aspinall fears, "a lot of what passes for public debate about Indonesia in Australia is based on profound ignorance and stereotyping of the country, including from people who claim to stand for human equality, respect and dignity. For them, Indonesia and its problems have little significance in their own right, but are only a canvas upon which Australian political battles can be played out and Australian fears and fantasies projected."

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