APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, August 24, 2006

Recommended Citation

"APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, August 24, 2006", APSNet Semi-Weekly Bulletin, August 24, 2006, https://nautilus.org/apsnet/apsnet-for-20060824/

APSNet for 20060824

Austral Peace and Security Network (APSNet)

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

Thursday 24 August 2006

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Austral Policy Forum 06-30A: Burma and Its Neighbours: The Geopolitics of Gas - Åshild Kolås and Stein Tønnesson

1. Jakarta Wants in on our Nuclear Debate, John Kerin, AFR*, 2006-08-24Indonesia has called for Australia's plans for a nuclear enrichment and power industry to be discussed as part of a

proposed security treaty between the countries. "Indonesia understands that Australia's nuclear debate is still in its early stages and it is a domestic issue, but it may have regional implications and we would like to ensure there are consultations," Indonesian embassy spokesman Dino Kusnadi said.
* Subscription required.

2. The National Radioactive Waste Facility, Brian Lloyd, Northern Territory Parliamentary Library Service No.1/2006 (via APO)The 2005 legislation to facilitate the establishment of a National Radioactive Waste Facility in the Northern Territory sets aside an existing consensus-based process, established with states and territories, to create a central facility. On consideration, it becomes clear that these are matters which hold wider implications about the level of Australia's nuclear involvement in the future.

3. East Timor Ends Emergency Measures, AAP, Nine News, 2006-08-23East Timor's president has suspended emergency measures he introduced two months ago following widespread violence sparked by a split in the country's armed forces, a government statement said. The statement from President Xanana Gusmao said the situation in Asia's newest democracy remained "vulnerable", but there had been an improvement since the arrival of a foreign intervention force.
   - Australian Police Injured in Dili Attack, Lindsay Murdoch, SMH, 2006-08-24

4.
5. Caught in the Crossfire, Paul Daley, Bulletin, 2006-08-29Indonesia's covert action against West Papuan rebels could easily trigger a firefight between Indonesian and PNG forces. The Indonesian province of West Papua shares a porous and hopelessly guarded border with Papua New Guinea. Troops from Indonesia's special forces, Kopassus, are operating covertly and with virtual impunity on both sides of the border, as they track down and assassinate OPM guerrillas.

6. Overseas Federal Police Unit Doubles, Patrick Walters, Australian, 2006-08-22Australia will double its international police force including the formation of a crack anti-riot squad. In a $500 million investment the AFP international deployment group will grow to around 1000, an extra 420 to 430 positions. Expansion of the group is designed to avoid situations where heavily armed soldiers have to perform lengthy law and order missions better suited to well-trained police.
   - International Deployment Group, AFP, 2006-08-22
   - Public Risk as Police Poached, Dan Oakes, Age, 2006-08-23
   - Howard to Increase Size of Army, AAP, SMH, 2006-08-24

7.
8. Shifting Sands in Iraq, Tony Walker, AFR*, 2006-08-23A number of high-profile supporters of America's intervention in Iraq have changed their minds. George Will, the columnist who supported the war, as did most conservative commentators with the notable exceptions of Pat Buchanan and Robert Novak, may well come to be credited with breaking open the debate in a syndicated column last week under the headline "The Triumph of Unrealism".
   * Subscription required.
   - The Triumph of Unrealism, George F. Will, Washington Post*, 2006-08-15
     * Free subscription required.

9.
10. Jihad Jack' Set Free, Damien Carrick and Andrew Palmer, The Law Report, ABC Radio National, 2006-08-22The Victorian Court of Appeal has overturned the convictions of Jack Thomas, known as Jihad Jack. Andrew Palmer, an expert on evidence law, says, "the simple lesson is, you can interview somebody overseas [to gather] intelligence but if you want to get evidence that's

admissible in an Australian court, you need to meet the standards of Australian law".

11. Physicists Back Claim that U.S.-Indian Deal Could Allow for 50 New Indian Nuclear Weapons a Year, Jon Fox, Global Security Newswire, 2006-08-23A panel of international physicists from Princeton University's Science and Global Security Program is supporting the claim that the pending U.S.-Indian civilian nuclear deal would allow New Delhi to significantly increase its annual production of nuclear weapons.

Austral Policy Forum 06-30A: Burma and Its Neighbours: The Geopolitics of Gas - Åshild Kolås and Stein Tønnesson

Åshild Kolås & Stein Tønnesson of the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) note that offshore natural gas is now the major source of income for the Burmese military regime. A wider concern is "the current Sino-Indian rivalry over Burmese natural gas from the Shwe field", which, they suggest, "may give rise to further competition to assist the Burmese."

The authors conclude that

> "while countries in the neighbouring regions - particularly India and Thailand, but also Australia and Japan - may have important roles to play, China wields far more leverage. For those who wish to influence Burma in a positive direction, it is therefore essential to consider ways that change could be stimulated with the active participation of China, whether through sanctions, constructive engagement and/or any form of dialogue."

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Austral Peace and Security Network is issued late on Mondays and Thursdays (AEST) by the Nautilus Institute at RMIT, Melbourne, Australia.

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- EASSCNet: The Nautilus Institute East Asia Science and Security Collaborative Network.

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