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Austral Peace and Security Network (APSNet)

Twice weekly report from the Nautilus Institute at RMIT, Australia.

Monday 27 August 2007

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1. [A Price Too High: The Cost of Australia's Approach to Asylum Seekers](#), Kazimierz Bem et al, A Just Australia, Oxfam Australia and Oxfam Novib, August 2007 [PDF] Since 2001, Australian taxpayers have spent more than \$1 billion to process less than 1,700 asylum seekers in offshore locations - or more than half a million dollars per person. The costs examined in this report are human costs, financial costs, cost to Australian rule of law and democratic system, costs to the

region and the cost to the international system of protection.

2. [Melanesian Want Standby Force](#), Fiji Times, 2007-08-25A concept paper on a sub-regional standby force for four Melanesian countries will be discussed at a security meeting in Lae, Papua New Guinea. PNG High Commissioner to Fiji Peter Eafeare said, "The rapid military force is to respond initially to the security needs of the four Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) countries - Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu."
3. [West Papua: Special Treatment](#), Erica Vowles, New Matilda, 2007-08-22The rights and revenue supposed to flow from West Papua's Special Autonomy Law - implemented by the Indonesian Government in 2001 - are yet to transpire for the majority of West Papuans, according to delegates at a conference in Sydney. And while Special Autonomy was supposed to lead to a reduction in troop levels, Agus Alue Alua, Chairman of the Papuan People's Assembly, says numbers have escalated sharply since 2001.
 - [Mysterious Killings Seek to Silence Papuan Voices](#), Tom Hyland, Age, 2007-08-26
- 4.
5. [Gusmao Offers Fretilin Cabinet Posts](#), Tom Fayle with Damien Kingsbury, ABC, 2007-08-24 [Audio]East Timor's new Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao has offered the disgruntled former ruling party Fretilin several cabinet posts.
 - [Report of the Solidarity Observer Mission in East Timor \(SOMET\) on the Timor-Leste 2007 Parliament Election](#), August 2007, Etan
- 6.
7. [US Wants Australia in Nuclear Group](#), Anne Davies, SMH, 2007-08-27President George Bush will invite Australia to be part of two plans aimed at guaranteeing future energy supplies: to produce ethanol from wild grasses, and a global nuclear partnership, which includes many of the main nuclear players. Mr Bush will raise the issues during bilateral talks with the Prime Minister, John Howard, before the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum meeting next week, senior officials said.
8. [NIE Cites 'Uneven' Security Gains, Faults Iraqi Leaders](#), Walter Pincus, Washington Post, 2007-08-24The report, however, concluded that although the increase has temporarily halted the overall security decline of six months ago, political reconciliation has come to a "standstill," said a senior intelligence official who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity.
 - [Prospects for Iraq's Stability: Some Security Progress but Political Reconciliation Elusive](#), Update to NIE, Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead, National Intelligence Estimate, US Government, August 2007 [PDF]
- 9.
10. [Canberra Boosts Afghan Aid](#), Mark Dodd, Australian, 2007-08-23Australia will increase aid to Afghanistan by \$115 million over the next two years, with a strong focus on health and education. The aid will be mainly disbursed in central Oruzgan province where a 385-strong Australian military reconstruction taskforce is based. It brings Australia's aid package since 2001 for Afghanistan to \$450 million.

Briefing note: Peace Initiatives in Afghanistan - Richard Tanter

There would appear to be little political space for peace initiatives between the Afghan government, the coalition, and the Taliban and other insurgent groups. In fact since 2003 a number of coalition countries have held secret peace talks with the Taliban. Local truces over limited periods have been established between ISAF forces and local Taliban and other insurgent groups, the best known of which was the Musa Qaleh agreement in Helmand Province supported by British forces. Angered by

continual civilian deaths resulting from coalition operations, the Afghan parliament passed a bill on 10 May 2007 calling for a truce with the Taliban and a timeline for the withdrawal of coalition forces. The Afghan and Pakistani government August peace jirga or council produced little by way of visibly effective results, except Pakistan's President Musharraf's remark that not all Taliban are terrorists.

Syed Saleem Shahzad has reported that a first round of talks recently took place in the Pakistani city of Quetta. Whether or not the Taliban and US leadership will allow these preliminary and tentative talks to move to the next stage is not yet clear. Both sides remain committed to military strategies in practice.

- [Taliban, US in New Round of Peace Talks](#), Syed Saleem Shahzad, AsiaTimes, 2007-08-21
- [Taliban Talks: Secret Negotiations with the Islamists Proved Fruitless](#), Matthias Gebauer and Holger Stark, Spiegel, 2007-08-20
- [Afghan Leaders Urge Taliban Truce](#), Al Jazeera, 2007-05-09
- [Peace Negotiations and Truces](#), Australia in Afghanistan, Nautilus Institute
- [Aid to Afghanistan](#), Australia in Afghanistan, Nautilus Institute

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Nautilus Institute

608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:
nautilus@nautilus.org