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APSNet for 20071029

Austral Peace and Security Network (APSNet)

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

There will be no APSNet bulletins from 1 - 8 November 2007 due to other Nautilus activities. We apologise for this break. APSNet will resume on Monday 12 November 2007.

Monday 29 October 2007

1. Afghanistan and Iraq: Quagmire or Strategic Priority?
2. Afghanistan: Diggers Say No to Allies' Plan
3. Undiagnosed Brain Injury - The Hidden Legacy of Iraq
4. Dispute Flares over Nuclear Dump Site
5. Making Modernity in Timor-Leste
6. Australian Customs Service Annual Report

Austral Policy Forum 07-20A: The Re-emergence of an Australian Nuclear Weapons Option? - Richard Tanter

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1. Afghanistan and Iraq: Quagmire or Strategic Priority? Hugh White, Neil James, Richard Tanter, ABC, 2007-10-28Australian troops are on active duty in many parts of the world including Iraq,

Afghanistan and even the Northern Territory, providing support to the federal government's intervention in indigenous affairs. The government and the opposition have committed themselves to increasing future defence budgets. In fact, there is little difference between their defence policies. What does that mean for Australia's future in overseas operations?
    - Fraser Calls for Vote on Taking Country to War, Sarah Smiles, Age, 2007-10-26

2.
3. Diggers Say No to Allies' Plan, Tom Hyland, Age, 2007-10-28Australian troops, fearing widespread civilian casualties, refused to take part in a Dutch-led assault on advancing Taliban militia - a battle that left dozens of innocent Afghans dead. After the battle, the ADF issued two statements stressing Australian troops were not involved in the fighting. Defence Minister Brendan Nelson and senior military officers expressed careful concern about civilian casualties in the battle.
    - Howard Targets Afghan Shirkers, Frank Walker, SMH, 2007-10-28
    - SAS Soldier Killed in Taliban Gunfight, Craig Skehan, Ben Cubby and Phil Coorey, SMH, 20007-10-26

4.
5. Undiagnosed Brain Injury - The Hidden Legacy of Iraq, Matthew Taylor, Esther Addley, Guardian, 2007-10-27The Ministry of Defence is conducting a major study into brain injury in troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan amid fears that thousands of soldiers may have suffered damage after being exposed to high-velocity explosions. The condition, 'mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI)', has been designated as one of four 'signature injuries' of the Iraq conflict by the US department of defence.
    - Traumatic Brain Injury, Emerging Health Concerns, Deployment Health Clinical Center, US Department of Defence
    - Better Brain-Injury Tests Planned for Troops, Gregg Zoroya, USA Today, US Navy Times, 2007-05-03

6.
7. Dispute Flares over Nuclear Dump Site, Lindsay Murdoch, Age, 2007-10-29Aboriginal owners of land surrounding the proposed site of Australia's first national nuclear dump have changed their minds about allowing trucks carrying waste to enter, as bitter argument rages among indigenous groups in the area about the Federal Government's plans.
8. Making Modernity in Timor-Leste, Damian Grenfell, Arena, August-September 2007 [130 kb, PDF]When analysis draws in a comprehension of the ways in which the tribal-traditional systems play an important regulatory role in Timor-Leste, it becomes possible to understand other social processes - such as urban drift - in terms of their political consequences.
9. Delivering Today and Building our Capabilities for the Future, Australian Customs Service Annual Report 2006-2007In the 2006 Budget measures were added to tackle the threat posed by illegal foreign fishing in Australia's northern waters, including: enhancements to detection and apprehension capacity and work with Indonesian authorities in fishing communities in Indonesia. The results included sightings of motorised foreign fishing vessels in high risk areas down by 58 per cent over those in 2006.
10. Austral Policy Forum 07-20A - The Re-emergence of an Australian Nuclear Weapons Option? - Richard TanterRichard Tanter of the Nautilus Institute at RMIT writes that "the first public crack in Australian political elite repudiation of nuclear weapons since the Canberra Commission, if not the signing of the NPT itself, has come from a surprising source: a former advisor to Gareth Evans and a disarmament policy specialist in the Department of Foreign

Affairs and Trade." Tanter notes that "after a brief, apparently tough-minded tour of the bleak nuclear proliferation policy horizon, [Martine] Letts concluded a review of post-election security policy options with a call for a Rudd government to consider the strategic circumstances under which an Australian government should 'revisit the nuclear weapons option'." In the light of Australia's almost two decades of secret pursuit of nuclear weapons until 1972, and the understandable residual Indonesian suspicion about Australia's real nuclear intentions, it would be hard to imagine a policy recommendation with greater risk of contributing to the strategic circumstances it seeks to avoid.Read the full essay.

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