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AUSTRALIA EXPANDING OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN AS IT WINDS DOWN OPERATIONS IN IRAQ, TANTER SAYS

In an interview with ABC radio Australia, Richard Tanter, Director of the Nautilus Institute's Melbourne Office, discussed the visit of Stephen Smith, Australia's foreign minister to the US and Japan, noting, "I think in fact they are expanding the commitment in Afghanistan, and this is probably in line with Bush administration wishes. The Bush administration's been pressing its NATO and non-NATO allies, including Australia and Japan to expand its commitment in Afghanistan where the war is really going very badly, much less is known about it, and it's more urgent for the Bush administration to bolster the campaign there." Mr Rudd and probably Mr Smith are convinced that if Iraq is the bad war then Afghanistan is the good war.

[AUSTRALIA: New Foreign Minister in mission to US and Japan - 24/01/2008](#)

APSNET TOP STORY: FOREIGN MINISTER TO VISIT US AND JAPAN

Mr Smith is going to Washington. On his first trip as Foreign Minister, Stephen Smith will meet top US officials to defend the Federal Government's plans to pull Australian combat forces out of Iraq. Mr Smith is also expected to canvass Australia's military deployment to Afghanistan, and possibly flag an increase in Australian troops to combat Taliban fighters.

Read the article here.

THE NEXT NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH NORTH KOREA: PROSPECTS AND PITFALLS

David C. Kang, Professor of Government at Dartmouth College, writes, "Although the past year has seen substantial progress in capping and ultimately eliminating North Korea's nuclear weapons program, there remain many obstacles that could derail the progress made so far, and slow or even halt continued improvement in relations. The reciprocal actions laid out in the February 13,

2007 agreement are genuinely the first step in a long process for all countries involved in the negotiations, and sustained U.S. attention at the policymaking, executive, and legislative levels will be critical for the process to continue in a manner which enhances U.S. interests.□

Read the article [here](#)

A NEW POLICY TOWARD N. KOREA CAN SERVE JAPAN

Robert Dujarric, director of the Institute of Contemporary Japanese Studies at Temple University Japan Campus in Tokyo, writes, "But at this point it is most unlikely that North Korea, which receives aid from China and South Korea and achieved a major breakthrough with America, will make concessions to Japan on the issue. Moreover, there is unfortunately little evidence that the unaccounted for abducted victims would be set free, assuming they are still alive. Consequently, Tokyo can use the U.S.-North Korea agreement as an opportunity to follow a more flexible strategy that will better serve its national interest."

Read the article [here](#).

NAPSNET TOP STORY: RICE SAYS N.K. CAN STOP BEING ENEMY

Yonhap reported that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the U.S. "can imagine" a better relationship with the DPRK, pressing the DPRK to provide a full accounting of its nuclear activities. "It is because America desires no permanent enemies that we can imagine a better relationship with North Korea, and we are working to build it through the six-party talks," she said. "Still, we continue to believe that we can use the six-party talks for even larger purposes," said Rice. Those goals include an official end to the Korean War, forging a regional security mechanism, and improving the DPRK's relations with the international community, she said. This, she said, "would benefit no one more than the North Korean people themselves."

Read the article [here](#).

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