

The New York Times
Old soldiers never cash out
For all the stars of ranking generals and admirals in Washington, it turns out there's still a higher grade ♦ "senior mentor." These are retired brass enjoying lucrative compensation as part-time Pentagon advisers, who, in most cases, also draw V.I.P. pay from companies seeking defense contracts.

Washington Post
A blue line in Afghanistan
As President Obama wrestles with whether to send more troops to Afghanistan despite widespread corruption in the government of Hamid Karzai, little attention is being paid to a promising dimension of our efforts to foster reform - a much better approach to building the Afghan police force.

A Plan C for Afghanistan
When there is no good solution to a problem, a president has three options: to avoid the problem, to pick the least bad of the available options, or to mix and match among the proposed solutions and minimize the long-term damage any decision will cause.

Was the Iraq war worth it? A divided city tries to answer.
Samarra, Iraq - The Shiite pilgrims arrive in crowded buses and are dropped off just outside the shrine's gate. They walk down a narrow path patrolled by security guards and lined with tall cement walls to pray at the al-Askari mosque, the resting place of two of the most revered figures in Shiite Islam.

The Guardian
We cannot allow this foul insurgency to triumph
There is a low shelf deep in the stacks of the London Library that holds the sad story of this country's engagement with Afghanistan. Its dusty contents come alive in the claims of those who say the British campaign in Helmand was doomed by history from the start: just another imperial expedition in a place we do not understand and in which we are always defeated.

Face down the militarists and get out of Afghanistan. No strings attached
Go to Washington any time in the past eight years and ask what influence Britain has over America's Afghan policy. The answer is a thumb and forefinger joined in a simple zero. The same was true in Iraq. Ever since Tony Blair kowtowed to George Bush at Crawford in April 2002, Britain has been the patsy, the poodle, the dumb ally in Washington's wars of ideological empire.

Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Another way out of the mire
The case for continuing the war effort in Afghanistan is buttressed by negatives: the west can not afford to cede al-Qaida the space to regroup; there will be a civil war if foreign troops leave; Pakistan's fight against the Taliban would be undermined; Afghanistan would be abandoned for the second time in eight years.

The Times
Win hearts and minds in Afghanistan to win the war
Three years ago I travelled across Afghanistan to make a film about what conditions for ordinary Afghans were like. We wanted to make it in the winter of 2006-07 because there was talk of a spring offensive from the Taleban ♦ which indeed came, and came, and has kept coming ever since.

The Daily Mail
Obama gives us an Afghan escape route
The phrase 'exit strategy', with its overtones of defeat, has been almost taboo in the Government's pronouncements on Afghanistan until now. Thanks to President Obama's instructions to his advisers to include an exit strategy in the various options available, it has become possible for Gordon Brown and Foreign Secretary David Miliband to talk some sense, though still not enough.