

New York Times

Afghanistan's Failing Forces

The news from Afghanistan is grim. In the first week of June, there were more than 400 attacks, a level not seen since late 2001. President Obama was right to send more American troops to fight. That violence will surely increase as strengthened ground forces step up the pressure on Taliban and Al Qaeda sanctuaries. But it is also true that there can be no lasting security — and no exit for American forces — until Afghanistan has a functioning army and national police that can hold back the insurgents and earn the trust of Afghan citizens. Neither comes close today.

We Don't Need the F-22

You would think that with all the legitimate and expensive claims on the government pocketbook — including two wars, an economic crisis and desperately needed health care reform — Congress would be extra judicious about how it spends the taxpayers' money. But no, at least not when it comes to the House Armed Services Committee and lucrative defense contracts.

The States of Iraq and Afghanistan

"Going forward, we will not blindly stay the course," President Obama said in unveiling his new Afghanistan strategy this spring. "Instead, we will set clear metrics to measure progress." Unfortunately, finding useful metrics for assessing counterinsurgencies is not easy. Getting the force size right is key to a successful counterinsurgency, but there is no exact formula — even when you get the numbers right the troops may fail because of poor training, difficult terrain or shifting politics.

The Washington Post

A Weak Spot in Our Defenses

Congressional computers have been penetrated, probably by the Chinese. The avionics system of the F-22 fighter may be compromised. Computers of our presidential candidates were hacked into -- and probably not by teenagers on a lark. Last year's advance of Russian tanks into Georgia was accompanied by the disruption of Georgian government computer systems.

Obama, Adrift On Sudan

Thirty Sudanese political leaders will meet in Washington today with 170 observers from 32 countries and international organizations, as well as four African former prime ministers, to confront the issues that are slowly pushing Sudan over a cliff. The United States ought to be in a commanding position to mediate in these negotiations, as it did in the 2005 Comprehensive

Peace Agreement that ended 22 years of civil war between Sudan's North and South. But disputes within the Obama administration are inhibiting U.S. efforts to stop Sudan's slide toward civil war at a time when unified American leadership is essential.

The Guardian

Let Iraq be the test of your openness, Mr Brown

It is the obvious conclusion from events of recent weeks: transparency matters. And yet that wisdom continues to elude the prime minister, as he demonstrated last week when announcing the terms of a new inquiry into the Iraq war.

Prospect Magazine

The sword arm of Europe

On a recent, endlessly delayed rail journey to Oxford I passed a military train loaded with jeeps and armoured vehicles—pretty inadequate ones too, to judge by the news from Helmand. It reminded me that Britain will soon have two aircraft carriers of impressive bulk and uncertain purpose, at a cost of £4bn. Their purpose is mystifying. The US doesn't need us to have them; it has far more, and far bigger ones too. If they are to allow Britain to fight independently, then where and against whom? Rumoured scenarios range from the highly unlikely (a military occupation of parts of Nigeria) to the ludicrous (a British war with China). Certainly, the two carriers will not help in Afghanistan—the last time I looked at a map it does not have a coast.

The Times

Without Trident, the second division awaits

In the search for spending cuts the Trident replacement is an attractive target. Politicians already dream of scrapping it and spending the greatly exaggerated "dividend". Meanwhile, its benefits in terms of our security and position in the world are ignored as an economic inconvenience.