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September 7:

With upcoming general elections in December holding out the possibility of a return to democratic rule, Thailand's military is poised on the brink of a political reshuffle. The *Asia Times* reports that the army's top three officials, assistant army chiefs General Saprang Kalayanamitr and General Anupong Paochinda and army chief of staff Lieutenant-General Montrri Sangkhasap, are jockeying for the post of army chief. The outcome, observers say, will have everything to do with the military's envisioned future role in national politics. "If the army is going to take a full step into politics, then it will be Saprang," says Panitan Wattanayagorn, a military scholar at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University and a personal adviser to Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont. "If only a half-step, then Anupong. And if it intends to beat a full retreat or take one step back, it will be Montrri."

The Australian reports that new initiatives have succeeded in tempering Thailand's bloody Muslim insurgency and giving hope that a peaceful settlement for the country's troubled south may be in the offing. "Peace will return to the south. The number of killings has reduced greatly and we want to right some of the wrongs committed there," Thai Foreign Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram has said. How will the Thai government do so? Officials in Bangkok gave an early indication of their plan for "progress" in the late summer, when they announced plans to consider the implementation of a variant of sharia law in Thailand's southern provinces.

September 8:

The *Daily Times* reports that the United States recently delivered two used F-16B jets to Pakistan, and has plans to donate another two dozen to the South Asian state. The deal, announced last September, also includes plans to sell Pakistan eighteen new F-16C/D fighters to be delivered in 2010, as well as the implementation of upgrades for its existing fleet of thirty-four F-16 combat aircraft. The planes are "symbolic of our commitment to assist Pakistan in improving its ability to secure its territory," U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne Patterson has said.

September 10:

In an unexpected confirmation of rumored naval development, the former chairman of India's Atomic Energy Commission has announced that the country is building a nuclear submarine. "Indian scientists and technologists are capable of making light water reactors and we are already constructing an LWR at Kalpakkam in south India for (the) submarine," P.K. Iyengar was quoted as saying in comments carried by *The Canadian Press*. India reportedly has been trying to build its own nuclear submarine for decades. For years, however, it is said to have been stumped in its efforts produce a suitable nuclear reactor – a technical hurdle New Delhi now appears to have overcome. The 5,000 ton submarine, which will be capable of launching nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles, is currently expected to be ready for sea trials next year.

September 14:

The *Asia Times* reports that the man in charge of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) international arms-procurement network in Sri Lanka, Tharmalingam Shanmugan (alias Kumaran Pathmanathan), has been detained in Bangkok. Regional media outlets, as well as both Indian and Sri Lankan officials, are claiming that Pathmanathan is in custody. Thai officials, however, have formally denied apprehending him. If they have, the arrest would mark a significant blow for the LTTE; in addition to equipping the Sri Lankan separatist group with the state-of-the-art military hardware, Pathmanathan was also allegedly involved in the 1991 assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.