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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Energy Security; Islamic Extremism; Military Innovation; Terrorism; India; Russia; South Asia; Southeast Asia

August 31:

Muslim rebels in Thailand's volatile south are expanding their violent secession campaign from the predominantly Buddhist state. *Der Spiegel* reports that daily attacks are being directed at monks and representatives of the government of Prime Minister Surayut Chulanon. More than 2,400 civilians have been killed over the past several years in Thailand's troubled Songkhla, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces, and thousands of others have been displaced.

September 3:

The BBC reports that the newly-formed "Quadrilateral Initiative," made up of the U.S., Japan, India and Australia, has begun a week-long wargame in the Bay of Bengal. The exercise, dubbed "Malabar 07-02," is expected to include ship, aircraft and submarine maneuvers in what many see as a new "strategic partnership" in Asia. Despite official denials, observers say the goal of the emerging security bloc is at least in part the containment of a rising China – an objective that has not been lost on Beijing. In recent months, the PRC has formally registered its concerns over the activities of the new alliance to each of the four governments involved.

In an effort to ensure a new generation of members, Indonesian radical Jemaah Islamiah terrorist group has established a number of kindergartens and primary schools. Located in Solo, the home town of the group's spiritual leader, Abu Bakar Bashir, the five schools enroll about 100 children between the ages of five and 13, *The Australian* reports.

September 4:

Muslim clerics have rallied against the construction of Indonesia's first nuclear power plant, the *Herald Sun* reports. Scholars from Nahdlatul Ulama, the country's largest Islamic organization, have termed the plan by the government of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to be haram, or forbidden by Islamic law. The power plant, to be located in Central Java, is currently expected to be completed by 2017, and to have a capacity of 4000 MW by 2025.

After fourteen years of political wrangling, a set of guidelines has finally been issued by Myanmar's constitutional convention. According to the *New York Times*, the agreement is a victory for the country's ruling military junta, guaranteeing its continued dominance by enshrining its right to "control major industries, hold large blocks of unelected seats in all legislative bodies and... to declare a state of emergency and seize power at any time." While the military has labeled it a "road map to democracy," the document severely limits the rights of political parties and conditions human rights and political guarantees on the basis of "national security." One Western diplomat has termed the agreement "a sham process."

September 5:

Hoping to further entrench itself as Asia's leading arms supplier, the government of Russian President Vladimir Putin is planning to ink a \$1 billion arms deal to supply Indonesia with two Kilo-class submarines. The *International Herald Tribune* reports that Russia is making a steady comeback in the region with aggressive arm sales to Indonesia, Malaysia and other Asian nations. "The West and the Pacific community must come to terms with the fact that Russia is back," says Alexey Muraviev, the author of several works on Russia's military presence in the region. "Russia no longer wants to be driven by a Europe-Atlantic agenda alone."