

Today in politics: Wednesday, November 27

November 27, 2013

Coleman signs defence deal with Vietnam

More than 35 years after 3500 New Zealanders fought in the Vietnam War the two countries have signed a new defence agreement.

Defence Minister Jonathan Coleman, who is in Vietnam, says the agreement formalises the defence relationship between the two countries and allows for increased future co-operation. It sets out a non-binding framework for defence engagement, visits, exercises, exchanges and ship visits.

Free trade talks 'the end game'

Anti-free trade academic Professor Jane Kelsey has been on the sidelines of Trans Pacific Partnership talks in Salt Lake City and says ministers of the 12 countries are "deadly serious about this being the "end game", as they look towards a crucial meeting in Singapore in December.

Claims they are close to a deal seem incredible, she says, given the number of issues yet to be resolved. She believes "fast track" moves will push a deal well into 2014.

Intellectual property a 'political liability'

Meanwhile, a paper from influential libertarian think tank the Cato Institute argues the intellectual property part of the TPP should be dumped as it devalues a trade deal.

There is growing concern in the US about what concessions will be made for progress on IP. "Imposing intellectual property rules through trade agreements has become a political liability that serves special interests at the expense of free trade," the

NZ backing giant radio telescope

New Zealand scientists and researchers are to help build the world's biggest and most technologically advanced radio telescope – the Square Kilometre Array (SKA). Science and Innovation Minister Steven Joyce says the SKA is a global effort involving more than 350 scientists and engineers from 18 countries, and more than 100 institutions.

The Government is investing \$1.717 million in the project, with New Zealand institutions providing matching contributions.

