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United Service

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National Security Statement

The Prime Minister made a statement on national security to the Commonwealth Parliament on 4 December 2008¹. Twelve months in the making, the statement was wide-ranging covering threats to national security, such as terrorism, cyber attacks, weapons of mass destruction, failed states, transnational crime, people smuggling, climate change, pandemics, and the effect of population increases on food and water supplies². It provided for national security policy to be overseen and coordinated by a national security adviser, Mr Duncan Lewis³; and for increased intelligence sharing between the Australian Federal Police, Customs and the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation. The national security adviser is to be associate secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet; and is to chair an expanded Secretaries Committee on National Security, which is to ensure a whole-of-government response to national security issues, including immigration and customs. Sensibly, earlier proposals for a department of homeland security and a separate coastguard service have been abandoned.

The Government also committed to developing over time a more activist and diverse diplomatic corps; changed the name of the Australian Customs Service to Australian Customs and Border Protection Service; and commissioned a new counter-terrorism white paper, a national energy security assessment, an energy white paper, and a national security science and innovation strategy.

Counter-terrorism featured prominently as expected and people smuggling received new emphasis, but other threats to human security which are just as important as, and are closely related to, conflict and state instability – such as climate change, the global food crisis, natural disasters, pandemics, piracy, transnational crime, law and order breakdown – featured less prominently than many security analysts consider was warranted. Disappointingly, the statement contained little forward thinking, analysis, prioritisation of threats, actual policy or strategy, or much other guidance for the national security agencies. Indeed, these weaknesses need to be addressed promptly by the national security adviser.

¹*The First National Security Statement to the Australian Parliament* – address by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. Kevin Rudd MP, 4 December 2008 [available at www.pm.gov.au/docs/20081204_national_security_statement.pdf]

²According to the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 7 January 2009, this section of the statement was informed by a special study titled *Climate Change, the Environment, Resources and Conflict* which was undertaken by the Strategic Policy Division of the Department of Defence and completed in November 2007.

³Major General D. E. Lewis, AO, DSC, CSC (Retd), an infantryman with a special forces background

Defence White Paper

The national security statement, *inter alia*, will set the context for a new Defence white paper that the Commonwealth Government is due to release before the middle of this year. In this issue, we feature several articles that are relevant to the white paper. First, commencing on page 12, Neil James of the Australian Defence Association examines past Defence white papers and observes that they have been driven by the funding thought to be available politically, instead of by robust assessments of our strategic situation. Further, there have been illogical and unsuccessful attempts to predict the future in detail and then to narrowly configure the defence force accordingly – with disastrous results as in East Timor in 1999. Mr James considers that prospects are better for the 2009 white paper, particularly as the Defence Chiefs have been fully consulted throughout the paper's development, even if they have not been permitted steerage of the process. He also provides his own views as to the current strategic context and the type of Defence Force needed to meet those strategic circumstances.

Commencing on page 26, Rory Medcalf of the Lowy Institute reviews the principal events of international security interest which occurred in 2008. From these events, which constitute much of the context that should inform the development of the white paper, he concludes that:

- Australia's interests are much more extensive than our capabilities, so a go-it-alone strategy is not an option. Hence, the United States alliance will remain crucial, but we will need to be clever, self-interested allies.
- Power is shifting with the rise of China and India, so we must prepare for a multipolar world and look for ways to work with the new giants.
- We cannot afford to gear our national security strategy and capabilities for one type of threat or contingency alone, but to avoid spreading ourselves too thinly, decisions about defence capabilities will require constant balancing.
- Finally, strategic shocks will happen, but their timing and cascading effects will be hard to predict.

A key lesson to have emerged from 20th century conflicts is that, if Australia wishes to remain independent, it must create its own diplomatic profile and develop the defence forces required to support that profile. Australia cannot simply supplement the defence operations of a great ally and hope that our national interests and those of our ally will always coincide. Indeed, the principal lesson to emerge from Graham Freudenburg's recently published book, *Churchill and Australia*, which is reviewed on page 33, is how much Australians must rely upon themselves.

One of the key challenges facing the Defence Force is recruitment and retention, particularly of highly-skilled specialists. A recent book that deals with this issue – *Soldiers without borders: beyond the SAS a global network of brothers-in-arms* by Ian McPhedran – is reviewed on page 35.

Permit me a few personal observations. While Australia does have world-wide interests and needs the capacity to work with the United States and other allies to protect them, we bear the principal responsibility for our near

region – the Indonesian-Melanesian archipelago, frequently referred to as the ‘arc of instability’. In the structuring of our defence force, some priority should be given to providing the forces needed, independently of an ally, to support nation-building, natural disaster relief, peace-keeping and, if necessary, warfighting in the archipelago. A force structured for independent warfighting is likely to be qualitatively and quantitatively different to one structured for augmenting the warfighting capacity of an ally.

The global financial meltdown may lead to the easing of some of our recruitment and retention problems, at least in the short term, but our permanent personnel are not, and are never likely to be, sufficient to satisfy our needs, particularly if we are forced to face a go-it-alone warfighting situation in the archipelago. Inevitably, then, we must develop a much more substantial Reserve⁴ for all three services and need contingency plans for the re-introduction of compulsory service should voluntary recruitment become inadequate.

We also need robust mobilisation plans in place should a sustained warlike situation arise. A key element of mobilisation preparation is the maintenance in peacetime of a credible military expansion base, including: a personnel training capability; reserves of trained personnel – especially middle-ranked officers and senior non-commissioned personnel (the development of whom can take a decade or more); certain long-lead-time equipments; and a defence industry capable of maintaining and replacing the weapons platforms and systems, ammunition and other *matériel* upon which the Defence Force relies.

While a white paper would not be expected to address these issues in detail, it should provide the policy basis that empowers the Defence Organisation to undertake the necessary planning, budgetary prioritisation, and defence force/industry development.

Rebuilding Australia’s Shipping Industry

In October last, the relevant standing committee of the Commonwealth Parliament reported on an inquiry it conducted last year into coastal shipping policy and regulation⁵. The Institute made a submission⁶ to the inquiry based its earlier research already published in *United Service* and was represented at the public hearings by Vice Admiral David Leach.

A number of the Institute’s proposals were similar to those that others also made to the inquiry. These various submissions clearly reinforced one another and the issues

raised feature prominently in the inquiry’s recommendations for legislative reform and more equitable taxation treatment of Australian seafarers. Of the issues we raised that were more specific to the nation’s defence and security requirements, three in particular are reflected in the recommendations:

- Recommendation 10 provides for the creation of a national maritime training authority and a unified training system that embraces new training methods and harmonises international, national and industry-specific training and certification requirements.
- Recommendation 11 proposes that the new training authority should also implement joint strategies designed to allow for greater transfer of personnel between the Royal Australian Navy and the civilian maritime industry.
- Recommendation 12 proposes the introduction of a national training vessel.

The inquiry’s recommendations are designed to foster a viable coastal shipping industry in a competitive domestic transport sector. The Institute supports all of them, including the creation of a national port development plan and the oversight of the reform initiatives by a restructured Australian Maritime Group to include the Royal Australian Navy.

Unfortunately, though, the Committee did not pick up our more ambitious proposal that, once the Commonwealth Government has the appropriate policy settings in place, its attention should turn to the actual re-building of the Australian merchant fleet, including the types of merchant vessel needed and how they might be owned, funded and crewed. We proposed that the Commonwealth should catalyse the re-building by developing its own small merchant fleet comprised of a few multi-purpose merchant trading vessels, each one suitable for providing defence logistics support and crewed by Royal Australian Naval Reserve personnel. We continue to assert that this should be the next step.

David Leece

Letter

Infantry Morale

I have just read your editorial on infantry morale in the last issue of *United Service* [*United Service* 59 (4) 5-6, December 2008]. As an academic during the 1970s and 1980s, I was quite involved in research and consulting on morale in large organisations, including the Australian Army⁷. I can well appreciate Major Jim Hammett’s concerns and, by implication, yours. Interestingly, I seem to recall that it was a Colonel Tony Hammett (Jim’s father?) who encouraged and facilitated my interviews at the Infantry Centre.

Dr Kevin Smith
Armida, 16 December 2008

⁴For ideas on developing reserve capability, see: Andrew Davies and Hugh Smith (2008). *Stepping Up: Part-time Forces and ADF Capability* (Australian Strategic Policy Institute: Canberra) 24 pp.; and David Leece (2006). A critique of Army’s proposed “hardened and networked” Army Reserve. *United Service* 57 (3), 27-34.

⁵House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Local Government (2008). *Rebuilding Australia’s Coastal Shipping Industry: Inquiry into Coastal Shipping Policy and Regulation* (The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra) October 2008, 98 pp.

⁶The submission was reproduced in *United Service* 59 (2), 9-10, June 2008.

⁷Kevin R. Smith (1985). Understanding morale, with special reference to the morale of the Australian infantryman in Vietnam. *Defence Force Journal* 52 (May/June), 53-62; and K. R. Smith, and J. C. M. Baynes (1987). Morale: a conversation. *Defence Force Journal* 64 (May/June), 43-46.