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Can North Korea and Iran be prevented from bringing their nascent nuclear weapons to full operational capability if they are so minded? Probably not, and certainly not by military means – both powers have multiple dispersed facilities buried deep in geological formations which are not amenable to strategic strike; and land invasion of either country to eliminate the weapons currently is beyond the will/capability of any power or group of powers. Trade and similar sanctions have not proved effective in the past and are unlikely to be effective in the future, especially against North Korea. In short, North Korea and Iran have presented the world with a new *fait accompli*, just as India, Pakistan and Israel did before them, and the world's powers in the decade ahead will have to learn to live with and adjust to this new strategic and political reality.

David Leece¹

Lessons from the 1914 British Expeditionary Force for the Standby Reserve

Among the many reforms introduced by Lord Haldane, Secretary of State for War from 1905 to 1912, was the creation of a British Expeditionary Force (BEF); coupled with an increase in the Regular Army enlistment period from 3 to 7 years, followed by 5 years of reserve liability.

The BEF of 1914 is usually referred to as a 'regular army', implying that the BEF consisted of fully-formed units that simply mobilised and deployed from barracks to active service *en bloc*. The truth is that up to 60 per cent of the British infantry were reservists – former regulars with a reserve obligation, who had been recalled to the colours.

Home Army battalions were invariably under-strength since they were responsible for sending regular drafts to maintain full-strength overseas battalions. At the outbreak of war, home battalions were brought to full war-time strength by calling up reservists. At the time of call up, on average, the reservists had been out of the Regular Army for at least two years and the longer they had spent in civilian life the less professional was their soldiering. They were some 5-years older than the regulars and their physical fitness was far less assured. From 1912, the regulars had been exposed to a strict march discipline, whereas most reservists had missed out on this valuable physical conditioning. It was to sorely test them in 1914. The many tens of miles of forced marching by the BEF infantry during the retreat from Mons, and later in the movement to Ypres, resulted in widespread foot injury and disease. Commanding officers noted that units with high reserve numbers were more readily subject to lowered march and fighting discipline as the retreat continued.

There are lessons for Australia from the BEF's employment of reservists. Australia requires that all recruits to the Australian Defence Force from 1 July 2003 transfer to the Standby Reserve for five years after completing their full-time service. The Standby Reserve is intended to provide a pool of trained individuals who are available to 'round out' or back-fill positions in Regular

units when required. Standby Reservists, however, are not required to maintain their military proficiency or their physical and medical fitness, although they would need to meet these standards before they could deploy on operations. Under these arrangements, it is likely that many Standby Reservists would lack the physical and medical fitness and military proficiency needed should they volunteer or be called up for full-time service, as was the case in the BEF in 1914. The government, therefore, should re-assess the likely employability of Standby Reservists on call out and alter their present fitness and military proficiency requirements as warranted.

Bruce Short²

LETTER

A flag for all Australians

While Australians generally are accustomed to our current national flag, many are not happy with it and it is increasingly more a divisive, than a unifying, symbol. Some find the Union Flag (Jack) in the upper hoist canton offensive as it reminds them of colonialism and



many recent migrants do not understand why the British flag should be on the Australian one. Aboriginals have adopted their own flag and our international sporting teams sometimes prefer to use the 'Boxing Kangaroo' flag, which they feel provides greater international recognition. The Southern Cross, as depicted in stars on the two fly cantons, does not assist in this regard, for while it is only observed in the southern hemisphere, it is not unique to the Australian sky.

Personally, I like our current flag, but recognise that the time is fast approaching when a new flag would be in the national interest. I suggest the flag illustrated above as an option. I describe it as having:

- a deep-blue background, symbolising the sea that surrounds our island continent;
- on the two hoist cantons – a kangaroo in gold, standing alert and upright;
- in the upper hoist canton above the kangaroo's back – a large white star similar to the Federation Star on the current flag and with similar symbolic meaning; and
- on the two fly cantons – six smaller white stars in two parallel, downward-sloping lines, each one representing one of the states of the federation and with room for additional stars to be added should other states (such as the Northern Territory) later join it.

Our current flag fails to identify Australia to other nations and should be replaced by a unifying symbol which does.

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Asquith, 22 March 2010

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