

Jump TO Article



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Jump TO Article

LETTERS

Australia's role in the ANZUS Alliance

I enjoyed David Leece's editorial in the December 2012 journal [*United Service* 63 (4), 7] on the future of the ANZUS Alliance and Australia's impending Defence White Paper. My sense is that the United States would prefer to provide support to regional coalitions rather than step forward in every instance. Following the East Timor intervention 12 years ago, the discussion was about restructuring the Australian Defence Force to be able to regularly command multinational coalitions in regional contingencies. Sadly, many of our force-level capabilities, including a deployable joint task force headquarters, have withered away over the intervening decade.

An 'advanced' nation, it is entirely appropriate for Australia to be able to lead and provide the force-level support to regional coalitions, not only in the military domain but also in the diplomatic, development and law enforcement domains. Significant advances have been made over the last decade developing deployable capabilities such as the Australian Federal Police's International Deployment Group and AusAID's Australian Civilian Corps. The United States would value this type of national capability.

Marcus Fielding

Councillor, Royal United Services Institute of Victoria
31 January 2013

Assessing the War in Iraq

I enjoyed Dr Albert Palazzo's paper in the December 2012 journal on Australia's contribution to the War in Iraq [*United Service* 63 (4), 13 – 16]. A less generous observer might suggest that Australia was inconsistent in its level of military contribution over the period 2003–2009, that our absence in the period 2003–2005 may have contributed to the deterioration of security, and that we did not bear an appropriate share of the burden, but nevertheless, I can see the argument that Dr Palazzo makes in his article.

His closing sentence, however, is an unsubstantiated assertion regarding the United States' objectives and performance that sadly detracts from the rest of his argument. Junior coalition partners with lesser national objectives and concomitant risks should be careful to claim 'success' at the expense of the senior partner's 'failure'. Having worked as an embedded staff officer in two United States-led joint task force headquarters, such a view is not constructive to coalition building.

Marcus Fielding

Councillor, Royal United Services Institute of Victoria
31 January 2013

Japanese submarine attacks on Australian merchant shipping in 1942–1943

In Captain B. L. Swan's paper on Japanese submarine attacks on the Australian coast, 1942–1943 [*United Service* 63 (4), 23 – 25, December 2012], on page 24 the author reports the sinking of the *Malaita*. This is not correct – the *Malaita* was damaged and 'laid up' for a considerable time, was repaired and resumed the New Guinea service after the war.

Doug Curtin

Lindfield, NSW, 4 February 2013

There is a further error in Brian Swan's paper. On 23, it states that the *Age* was sunk off Norah Head on 3 June 1942. She was not sunk, and in fact did not sustain any damage from enemy attack during the Pacific War. The publication, *The History of The Seamen's Union of Australia 1872–1972*, includes lists of war casualties to merchant vessels in Australian waters. There is no mention of the *Age*. The only reference I am able to find regarding any enemy action against *Age* is that she came under fire from Japanese submarine I-24 but was undamaged. *Age*, a vessel of 4734 gross registered tons, was built for Howard Smith Limited in 1936 and was operated as a unit of their fleet until she was sold by them in 1968 to the Collin Navigation Company of Panama when she was renamed *Collin Rose*.

Keith Pryor

Chatswood, 14 March 2013

Australia's nuclear-powered submarine option

In the March 2013 issue of *United Service*, I took particular note of the excellent argument put forward by Dr Tom Lewis [*United Service* 64 (1), 5,7] for the purchase of the United States Navy's Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarine rather than spending \$40 billion, waiting 30 to 40 years and finishing up with 12 conventional-powered submarines verging on obsolescence. Dr Lewis is to be congratulated for presenting the case so clearly. Sooner or later, Australia will be compelled to bite the nuclear bullet, so let me be one of the first to support his views.

Laurie Hindmarsh

Turramurra NSW, 17 March 2013

Thank you for keeping me updated on Australia via your splendid *United Service* journal. In the March issue, I read with interest Tom Lewis' opinion piece on Australia's nuclear submarine option. Having served on SSNs and conventional submarines, I believe both are needed. So far the public debate has been 12 domestically-built conventional submarines versus 12 Virginia-class SSNs on 30-years-lease from Uncle Sam. Not being an Australian, it is none of my business, but I wonder if other alternatives like half of each, or four leased SSNs and eight domestically-built conventional submarines, were publicly debated.

Vice-Admiral Arun Kumar Singh (Ret'd)

New Delhi, India, 30 March 2013

Institute's submission to the 2013 Defence White Paper

In the March 2013 *United Service*, I took particular note of the summary of the Institute's submission to the 2013 Defence White Paper [*United Service* 64 (1), 9 – 11], in particular the section about the Australian Army. On 4 February 2013, I wrote to the editor of the *RAA Liaison Letter* about certain events affecting the Royal Australian Artillery and asked: "Is the Australian Army a properly balanced force capable of dealing with any situation up to and including a regional war?" The Institute's submission answers my question.

Laurie Hindmarsh

Turramurra NSW, 17 March 2013