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## LECTURES AND PRESENTATIONS

# *Sixty years of Australian peacekeeping and peace operations today*



an address<sup>1</sup> to the Institute on 27 November 2007 by  
**Major General Tim Ford, AO (Retd)<sup>2</sup>**  
Chairman, Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Project

*Over the past 60 years, peacekeeping has ranked alongside war-fighting and the provision of humanitarian aid as vital functions of the Australian Defence Force and it is now just as important a function for the Australian Federal Police. Over the past decade, Tim Ford has led United Nations peacekeeping operations and has been a high-level advisor on peacekeeping at United Nations headquarters in New York. In this paper, he traces the history of Australia's involvement in peacekeeping, describes how the role has taken on a more robust and integrated (military, police and international civilian peace-builders) nature since the end of the cold war and concludes with a brief description of the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Project which he now leads.*

### **Introduction**

I thank the Institute for inviting me to speak about developments in peace operations and about 60 years of Australian peacekeeping. It is important that we all appreciate the commitment of Australians to peacekeeping over the last 60 years and how we are likely to continue to contribute to peace operations in the future.

Earlier this year we celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Australian peacekeeping. On 14 September 1947, four Australian officers were deployed to monitor the ceasefire and assist the repatriation of Dutch forces from the newly established Indonesian Republic as part of the Good Offices Commission. This mission subsequently became the United Nations Commission for Indonesia. In Australia, we claim this was the first United Nations (UN) military observer mission, a precursor to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNSTO) deployed in Palestine in June 1948, and to the more than 60 UN peacekeeping missions deployed since. A conference was held at the Australian War Memorial from 12-14 September to examine our experience as peacekeepers in over 50 missions over the last 60 years. The event was also commemorated at various services around Australia.

### **Historical Context**

Much has occurred with respect to international peace and security over the intervening six decades. I will discuss the experience of Australian peacekeepers over that period later, but first I wish to address the broader perspective of international peacekeeping, its

experience and development, particularly in the recent past and where it might be heading in the future.

Since June 1945, the UN Security Council has been conferred the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security under the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter, originally signed by some 51 nations (including Australia), is now supported by 192 Member States and some 55 Observer Organisations.

Between 1947 and the end of the Cold War in 1989, the ability of peacekeeping missions to have a major impact on the overall international environment was limited, with only 15 UN peacekeeping operations being authorized by the UN Security Council. These missions were primarily tasked to monitor compliance with ceasefire agreements and report violations to the Security Council. They normally comprised "Blue Beret" military observers and lightly armed units whose presence provided confidence to assist the political development of limited peace agreements between States.

From 1990, at the end of the Cold War, the UN Security Council became increasingly willing to act more decisively to address a number of long-running regional and intra-state conflicts. Increased exposure through the media of the humanitarian tragedy arising out of a number of ethnic and nationalistic conflicts raised expectations of solutions that were often unable to be delivered. As a result, the UN found that its peacekeepers were deployed in a range of more difficult environments where there was little consent by the combatants to the presence of the "Blue Berets", which were poorly matched to the tasks being asked of them. It became increasingly apparent that there was a need for UN forces to become "Blue Helmets" and to be

<sup>1</sup>Attended by 110 members and guests

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more robust in their presence and response, and for the international response to be more multi-dimensional. There are numerous reports about the experiences and difficulties that the UN faced in that period. They include both the achievements in such missions as Cambodia and Angola, and the “failures” of the international community to respond effectively with appropriate resources and support in countries such as Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda. There were also many lessons that were drawn from the UN experiences in that critical decade leading up to the Millennium Summit in 2000.

### **Peace Operations Today**

Today peacekeeping activity around the world is more significant than ever before. At the moment, there are some 18 active United Nations “Blue Helmet” peacekeeping operations, involving over 105,000 military, police and international civilians from 119 countries. There are also some 10 UN special political missions and peace-building support offices adding their support to various peace initiatives around the world. While some of these are small, long-established, traditional peacekeeping missions and offices, the focus today is often on large integrated UN peacekeeping missions and complex peace-building activities. We see these reflected in the UN missions in Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Sudan, and Timor Leste.

There are also some 30 additional peace operations being conducted around the world by organisations other than the UN. Most of these regional responses are authorized by UN Security Council Resolutions under Chapter 8 of the Charter. Although no two peace operations are the same, they normally:

- operate under a UN or regional authority;
- have complex mandates (peacekeeping and peace-building);
- are often hybrid, *i.e.* adjacent to other missions;
- are fully integrated across political, security, developmental and humanitarian sectors;
- are multinational, multicultural and multi-dimensional;
- involve transitions between different authorities;
- support a peace process that is often fragile; and
- deploy into a very difficult environment.

From July this year, we are seeing an experiment into a truly coordinated mission with UN Security Council Resolution 1769 authorizing a UN/AU<sup>3</sup> hybrid operation in Darfur (called UNAMID<sup>4</sup>) which will entail some 26,000 international military and police. The new mission incorporates the personnel from the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and the UN heavy and light support packages to AMIS. Are these operations possible? They are certainly difficult and complex. They are also often volatile and take time and considerable

commitment by the international community to achieve a sustainable situation.

The UN has made significant progress in clarifying the principles and standards that Member States should meet in preparing individuals and contingents for UN peace operations. This is important to develop trust and confidence between the various components, contributors and actors taking part. Among a range of initiatives over the last 18 months or so, a draft Capstone Doctrine for Peacekeeping has been developed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in consultation with Member States and key partners. These partners include regional and inter-governmental organisations and the humanitarian and developmental actors, UN and others, involved in international crisis management. Australia has been actively involved in this process. The doctrine outlines the spectrum of operations that has evolved over the last six decades and the role of UN operations. It suggests an evolution in the principles that should guide contemporary UN peace operations. These now include the original three:

- Consent,
- Impartiality, and
- Minimum Use of Force;

plus three new principles:

- Credibility,
- Legitimacy, and
- Promotion of National and Local Ownership

### **Integrated Missions**

There has also been a clearer understanding in recent years that one cannot separate peacekeeping from peace-building. In 2005, the then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, noted in his report, *In Larger Freedom*, that roughly half of all countries that emerge from war lapse back into violence within five years. Even in our nearby region, in Timor Leste, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, we have seen how difficult it is to develop a secure and sustainable environment that supports a lasting peace. The issues associated with building a sustainable peace require time and a major contribution by regional and international actors. This need has seen the development of an integrated approach to UN peace operations. This is one where all components of the mission closely integrate their activities, and which encourages close cooperation with the UN Country team and other international, regional and local actors, including NGOs<sup>5</sup>. The various international, regional and local actors need to be fully involved and integrate their contributions to ensure effective progress to a stable situation.

### **Police in Peace Operations**

I would also like to highlight the increased role of international police in peace operations. In 1997, there

<sup>3</sup>African Union

<sup>4</sup>United Nations-African Mission in Darfur

<sup>5</sup>Non-government organisations

were only about two hundred CIVPOL<sup>6</sup> (as they were then called) in a few UN missions. Today, there are some 9600 UN police, men and women, deployed in 14 missions. UN police have operated in an executive role in Timor and Kosovo, and in a support and training role in a wide range of other missions. They have been shown to be particularly useful in the early stages of a deployment to provide an important visual presence to the community, to relieve the military of arrest and detention tasks, and to develop confidence in the local police through mentoring, training and support to reform. In many UN missions today, UN Police are providing formed police units, sometimes called police stability units, that can assist in controlling civil disturbances and demonstrations that often arise in the developing state. Within DPKO, there has also now been established a UN Standing Police Capacity (SPC) with an initial team of 25 hand-picked officers, chosen for their skills in all aspects of law enforcement to form rapid-response teams ideally suited to undertake mission assessments and organise the start-up of police components of peace operations.

Australia has recognized the importance of a police presence in peace operations. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) has established an International Deployment Group that is well prepared to deploy at short notice principally within our region. They have already demonstrated their usefulness in Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands, and are providing elements elsewhere, including to our long-standing international police commitment in the UN Mission in Cyprus. Australia's professionalism in these tasks has been acknowledged by the recent choice of AFP Commissioner Andrew Hughes as the Police Adviser in the UN Headquarters.

### **Australian Peace Operations**

Let me now talk a little about Australian peace operations. There has been an evolution in Australia's approach to peace operations over the last 60 years. Our record and performance is strong. As part of the official history of Australia's peacekeeping and post war operations being compiled by Professor David Horner, one of the authors, Dr Peter Londey of the Australian War Memorial, has developed a list of peace operations that have involved the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and AFP. It records over 50 operations in more than two dozen theatres of conflict. These have involved over 40,000 Australians.

Prior to 1990, we generally deployed small contingents overseas to UN missions in areas such as UNTSO, the MFO<sup>7</sup> (helicopter unit), UNEF<sup>8</sup> II, and some Commonwealth missions in Rhodesia and Uganda *etc.* From the 1990s on, we saw a period of larger commitments – for example to Cambodia, with

communications, transport and coordination elements; to Somalia, with a battalion group; and to Rwanda, with a medical hospital plus security. These were more testing and difficult deployments and raised awareness in Australia about the need to be well prepared for such missions, and to understand the nature of large multinational operations.

Then, post 1998, we have seen a focus on regional peacekeeping operations alongside our regional neighbours, starting with Bougainville, initially with the South Pacific Peacekeeping Force, followed by the Truce Monitoring Force and then the Peace Monitoring Force. There have been the series UN and coalition deployments in East Timor (UNAMET, INTERFET, UNTAET, UNMISSET, UNOTIL, and UNMIT). At the peak, Australia had some 5000 troops deployed there and today still has 850 ADF plus police deployed in Timor Leste. Since 2003, we have also been involved as a leader in the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) involving some 1650 Australian police and military.

Today, we see a wide range of deployments supporting both stability operations in our region and robust coalition peace operations, mainly in the Middle East. We also see a whole-of-government approach to Australia's commitment, involving military, police and other government departments. We are currently in UN operations in the Middle East (UNTSO), Sudan, Cyprus and Timor Leste, plus the MFO in Sinai. We continue to be involved in regional coalitions in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville; and we have a major commitment to coalition operations in support of UN Mandates in Afghanistan and Iraq. These are all difficult and volatile deployments where quite high levels of capability are being used by the police and the ADF. In the case of the Middle East, they are also politically difficult and often involve intense levels of combat, as we have unfortunately seen recently with several Australian casualties.

### **Australian Peacekeeping Memorial**

Over the past few years, veterans of these peacekeeping missions have felt that an Australian Peacekeeping Memorial should be built in Canberra to honour all those who have served, and those who will serve, on peacekeeping operations. The memorial would represent all those from the ADF, the federal, state and territory police forces, and government agencies, who have served and died on peacekeeping operations commanded or authorized by the UN or sanctioned by the Government of Australia.

The proposed Australian Peacekeeping Memorial will be designed to both appropriately commemorate and celebrate all aspects of Australian peacekeeping. It will commemorate the courage, sacrifice, service and valour of Australian peacekeepers. It will reflect the same spirit of service as do other cenotaphs and memorials across Australia and on ANZAC Parade in Canberra which honour the service of Australians in

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<sup>6</sup>Civilian police

<sup>7</sup>Multinational Force and Observers, Sinai

<sup>8</sup>United Nations Emergency Force, Egypt

other distinguished campaigns. It will celebrate Australia's long and distinguished contribution to international peacekeeping since its commitment to the very first UN peacekeeping mission in 1947.

This proposal has now developed into the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Project (APMP). A site for the memorial has been allocated on ANZAC Parade in Canberra, and a design competition and fund raising are underway. You can find out much more about the project and plans for the memorial by visiting the APMP web site at [www.peacekeepingmemorial.org.au](http://www.peacekeepingmemorial.org.au).

In September, the Royal Australian Mint launched an uncirculated one dollar gold coin to celebrate 60 years of Australian peacekeeping. It is selling well. In November, the Mint will release a lapel pin and that will be followed by a joint stamp and coin release in 2008 to coincide with the announcement of the design for the APMP. Finally, a commemorative ten dollar gold coin is planned to mark the completion of the memorial in September 2009.

### **Conclusion**

I have tried to give you some perspective of what is happening with peace operations today and Australia's contribution to such operations over the past 60 years. I trust I have made you aware of the complexity of the

integrated missions conducted today and the critical relationship that exists between the UN, its regional partners and the Member States of the world to address international peace and security.

**The Author:** Tim Ford, a member of the Institute, is based in Sydney as an international peace and security consultant. After graduating from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, into the Royal Australian Artillery, he served in a wide variety of command, staff, and training appointments in Australia and overseas, including operational service in South Vietnam. He was promoted to Major General in 1996 and commanded 1st Division. From 1998 until 2002, he served as Head of Mission of UNSTO in Israel/Lebanon, and as Chief Military Adviser in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at UN Headquarters, New York, before retiring from the Army in 2003. Over the last 5 years, he has undertaken a wide range of projects for the Australian Government, the UN, the African Union, and other international organisations as a mentor, adviser and consultant on international peace and security issues. At present, he is also the Representative Colonel Commandant of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, and Chairman of the APMP. He is an Officer in the Military Division of the Order of Australia. Photo of General Ford: Tim Ford.