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## **JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN NAVAL INSTITUTE**



# AUSTRALIAN NAVAL INSTITUTE INC

The Australian Naval Institute was formed and incorporated in the Australian Capital Territory in 1975. The main objects of the Institute are:

- a. To encourage and promote the advancement of knowledge related to the Navy and the maritime profession,
- b. to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas concerning subjects related to the Navy and the maritime profession, and
- c. to publish a journal.

The Institute is self-supporting and non-profit-making. All publications of the Institute will stress that the authors express their own views and opinions are not necessarily those of the Department of Defence, the Chief of Naval Staff or the Institute. The aim is to encourage discussion, dissemination of information, comment and opinion and the advancement of professional knowledge concerning naval and maritime matters.

The membership of the Institute is open to:

- a. Regular Members. Regular membership is open to members of the RAN or RANR and persons who having qualified for regular membership, subsequently leave the service.
- b. Associate Members. Associate membership is open to all other persons not qualified to be Regular Members, who profess an interest in the aims of the Institute.
- c. Honorary Members. Honorary membership is open to persons who have made a distinguished contribution to the Navy or the maritime profession, or by past service to the institute.

## DISCLAIMER

Views expressed in this journal are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of the Department of Defence, the Chief of Naval Staff or the Institute.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Australian Naval Institute is grateful for the assistance provided by the corporations listed below. They are demonstrating their support for the aim of the Institute by being members of the "Friends of the Australian Naval Institute" coterie.

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# Journal of the Australian Naval Institute

August 1991

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*Front cover: Submariners at work.*

*Back cover: Twilight time . . . Another summer's day draws to a close as work on the HMAS STIRLING — homeported submarine HMAS OXLEY ends for the day. The 2100 tonne OXLEY was undergoing a \$1.5m refit on Australian Shipbuilding Industries shiplift facility located at South Coogee in Cockburn Sound, Western Australia.*

*Photo: LSPH Scott Connolly RAN.*



## **From the President**

The 1991 Vernon Parker Oration will be delivered by Commodore Teo Chea Huan, Chief of Navy, Republic of Singapore, at the Joint Services Staff College, Weston on Tuesday 17 September 1991 commencing at 2000. Commodore Teo was promoted only recently to the position of Chief of Navy.

The Republic of Singapore Maritime Forces have acquired many new capabilities over the past decade. The Navy recently has commissioned six Victory class corvettes equipped with Harpoon anti-ship missiles and anti-submarine torpedoes and the Air Force has E2C Hawkeye early warning and F16 fighter aircraft in service which are capable of supporting the Fleet in a power projection role well into the South China Sea. With this demonstrated ability to integrate the capabilities of its maritime power assets, Singapore arguably is assuming leadership of regional maritime defence matters. Accordingly I have asked Commodore Teo to talk to the subject of maritime power in South East Asia to the year 2000. He will enhance the reputation of the Vernon Parker Oration. I hope you can join us.

On Friday 1 November the Institute will dine the Friends of the Institute and their ladies. Sir John Gorton, the longest serving Minister for the navy and recently an octogenarian, has agreed to attend as Guest of Honour. The dinner will be in the wardroom, HMAS *Harman*, at 1930 for 2000. Members of the Institute are invited to join with the council for this event. Space is limited and those wishing to attend should ring the Secretary, Lieutenant Annette Nelson on (06) 265 1156 as early as possible.

Sincerely

Ian Callaway.

## From the Editor

This issue of the Journal contains some of the May 1991 ANI Seminar presentations, and together with the text of an address by Senator Jocelyn Newman make good reading.

Letters to the Editor and articles submitted for publication should be laser printed where possible - otherwise scanning can be difficult - so please read the **Guide To Authors** at page 4.

This issue has been prepared with a larger typeface, but identical style, compared to the previous journal - in response to some informed consumer comment. Some of you will have noted that the previous journal was labelled **Volume 18, .., Number 2**. This is incorrect - it should have read **Volume 17 ....(Librarians please note)**. You will find a self-adhesive label enclosed in this journal with which you can amend the May journal.

Note the date for the **ANI Dinner at HMAS HARMAN on 1 NOVEMBER**

Regards,

Don Agar



## Guide for Authors

### General

All readers, whether members or not, are invited to submit articles for publication. Articles should deal with interesting recent developments in maritime matters which have a direct or indirect bearing on naval matters.

Contributions from overseas are welcome.

Articles specially written for the ANI, and accompanied by a statement to that effect, may be eligible for prizes from time to time.

The Editor reserves the right to reject or amend articles for publication.

Articles from 2500 to 6000 words are welcomed and the Institute will pay for original articles at \$10 for each 1000 words published.

Long articles should be subdivided appropriately and accompanied by an abstract of up to 75 words describing the scope of the article.

The Journal's established style is for impersonal, semi-formal, prose. Where a published work, whether serial or book, is directly quoted, due acknowledgement should be given. Specific numbered references should be used where appropriate and a suitable bibliography appended to the article.

### Illustrations, photographs, graphics etc.

While glossy black-and-white prints are preferred, colour prints with good contrast are often acceptable. Attach caption and other information to the back of the print with a small piece of tape. A width/height ratio of about 5:4 is ideal. The Editor likes to include a mix of vertically (portrait) and horizontally (landscape) oriented photographs. Tables, diagrams and graphs should, if complex, be carefully drawn in black on white paper and treated as photographs. Simple tables can be reproduced in the typesetting process, but it is the author's responsibility to ensure the clarity of the information presented.

### The typescript

As much of the journal as possible is entered from computer disk or via an optical scanner. The preferred disk format is Macintosh but popular MS-DOS packages are welcome. If in doubt, submit ASCII text format. **The preferred typescript format for scanning is laser or daisy-wheel printer output**, single-spaced on A4 paper. High-quality dot-matrix (24-pin) output may be acceptable. Lesser quality (9-pin) which might need to be entered by hand, should be double-spaced. Three hard copies of the article are required whether submitted on disk or otherwise.

### Copyright and clearance to publish

In submitting material to the Journal, authors are granting the ANI a non-exclusive licence to publish. It is the responsibility of authors to obtain from the appropriate source permission to publish material that may be regarded as sensitive in any way. If an author ventures a personal opinion, the context should make it impossible for any reasonable person to infer official sanction for that opinion.

### The cover sheet

The author's name, address, telephone number, present position and brief biographical particulars should appear on a cover sheet. If an article has been previously published, a publication history should be included. Any outside assistance accorded the author in research or preparation should be acknowledged.

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## Book Reviews

**ACTION STATIONS CORAL SEA: The Australian Commander's Story, by Chris Coulthard-Clark, is published by Allen & Unwin Australia, PO Box 764, North Sydney NSW 2059 RRP \$29.95.**

*Reviewed by Alan Zammit*

1992 is the 50th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea, fought off Australia's north-east coast on 7-8 May 1942. This action was the largest naval battle ever fought in close proximity to Australia's shores and the first action fought at sea in which the opposing surface forces did not actually see and directly engage each other. (It was fought out solely by aircraft — some land-based but mostly launched from carriers which formed the principal units on both sides).

The action itself is still often described as "the battle that saved Australia", but this book goes to some lengths to describe the precise limits to the Japanese operation which brought about the clash, and shows that a direct invasion of the Australian mainland was not actually under contemplation, rather the Japanese were aiming to isolate Australia and prevent its utilisation by the United States as a base for the build-up of allied forces against the southern perimeter of the area conquered by Japan by February 1942.

Had the Japanese succeeded in capturing the real object of their operation (Port Moresby) at little cost — as well they might had their intended blow been delivered — the question of planning an invasion of Australia may have been revived, but this prospect was frustrated by the even more decisive naval action fought off Midway in the month after Coral Sea. The damage suffered by the two fast fleet carriers deployed by the Japanese at the Coral Sea ensured that these important units were absent at Midway on 4 June, and may have helped

swing the naval balance in the Pacific in America's favour.

Apart from providing a full general narrative of the whole action, the special focus of this book is on the part played by the support force comprising Australian and American cruisers (HMAS *Australia* and Hobart, and USS *Chicago*) with escorting destroyers, under the command of the Rear Admiral Commanding the Australian Squadron (RACAS), J.G. Crace.

Although detached during the main carrier clash on 8 May, Crace's squadron had a significant role to play. On 7 May it was sent without air cover to intercept the Japanese troop transports escorted by Japanese warships as they made their expected passage around the eastern tip of Papua en route to Port Moresby.

The ANZAC squadron presence as a blocking force resulted in it coming under very heavy torpedo and bombing attack on the afternoon of 7 May, during which the flagship (HMAS *Australia*) narrowly escaped being hit by a salvo of bombs which landed all around her (dramatic photographs of which are reproduced in the book).

At 3.06 p.m. when about 70 miles south of De Doyne Island about 12 twin-engined torpedo bombers attacked Rear-Admiral Crace's ANZAC squadron.

It is recorded in "Action Stations Coral Sea" HMAS *Australia* found itself in the path of two torpedoes. Crace wrote:

"They can only have missed by a matter of feet. Captain Farncomb handled the ship extremely well and it was entirely due to him and a great deal of luck that *Australia* was not hit."

The ANZAC squadron had so far sustained no direct hits and escaped any serious damage. Not that the ships were totally unscathed. After releasing their torpedoes, the bombers had continued to



fly straight on at the ships, strafing with machine gun and cannon fire as they came.

Five torpedo bombers were destroyed. No sooner had the torpedo bombers left, than in Rear-Admiral Crace's words from the book:

"We were all congratulating ourselves on a marvellous escape from the T.Bs when all of a sudden up above in perfect formation against the blue sky were nineteen silvery H.L.B.'s (high level bombers). Almost as I saw them I saw the bombs drop and again Captain Forncomb did the right thing and put the wheel hard a starboard. The ship had just started to swing and list when down whistled the bombs all around us and all on the Compacs Platform crouched down. I think most fell on the port bow and starboard quarter so that we would have bought it good and hearty if the wheel hadn't come over when it did."

The Officer of the Watch on the *Australia* remembered that:

"The weight of that water, as it came down over us on the Bridge, and we were 52 feet above the waterline, was sufficient to force us to our knees." Crace himself was remembered, standing on the bridge, his face and immaculate white uniform now drenched with water, blackened by smoke and stained by the explosive content of the bombs.

The *Hobart* had seen a lot of high level bombing in the Java Sea and the attack on HMAS *Australia* seemed no big deal.

At 3.19 three B17 American bombers above the Japanese aircraft dropped their bombs aimed at the ANZAC squadron thinking the ships were Japanese.

An American B17 aviator, Captain Speih, reported:

"We thought they were our Navy bombers attacking Japanese warships and we were preparing to lend them a hand when we found they were Japanese bombers, and the warships were ours, so we kept fairly high and cruised around watching the fight. One Australian cruiser was taking everything the Nips had, weaving in and out among the bomb bursts so neatly that you would think she knew where they were going to fall. One salvo fell right around

her, and it looked like the end, but she rode out of a smother of foam just the same as ever. It was a grand bit of seamanship. The Japs just could not hit any of them "

The above is a small sample of the standard of "Action Stations Coral Sea". The book also covers the aircraft carrier action and the loss of USS *Lexington* on May 8.

As its sub-title indicates, the book is not just a description of the battle but also gives a biographical account of Crace himself. Although he was a Royal Navy officer, it will surprise many readers to learn that his origins lay in Australia and he still considered himself an Australian. Born at Gungahlin, in what is now within the Australian Capital Territory, he was raised near the site of the future national capital and educated at the King's School at Parramatta before going to England to become a naval cadet. In 1908-10 he served on board HMS *Powerful*, the flagship of the British squadron on the Australian Station. In 1913 he was loaned to the infant Royal Australian Navy, and returned to Sydney as torpedo lieutenant on the flagship HMAS *Australia*, on which he served for most of the First World War, until 1917. In 1924 he again visited Australia — this time with the British Special Service Squadron led by HMS *Hood*.

Although this story is narrated as background, the emphasis of the book is on the period beginning on 1 November 1939 when Crace took up the appointment as RACAS. From there it follows him through the next two and a half years before he leaves (shortly after the Coral Sea) to return to England where he eventually retired as Admiral Sir John Crace.

Among the revelations contained in the book are:

Crace's bitter feuds with the Naval board over what he considered to be improper interference with his duties as RACAS, which resulted in his attempts to resign in October 1941 and to press for his relief right up to the Coral Sea action.

Crace's involvement in the aftermath of the loss of HMAS *Sydney* to the German raider *Kormoran* off Western Australia in November 1941.



A description of the events which followed after Crace was informed that US land bombers had joined Japanese aircraft in attacking his squadron during the first day of the Coral Sea action.

The book is the work of a retired Army officer better known for his books on Australian Army history, though in recent years he has also branched out into studying the history of the Royal Australian Air Force – Chris Coulthard-Clark is both objective and controversial.

What makes this book so important is because much material and many photographs in the book have never been published before. They have come from Admiral Sir John Crace's private papers. Much assistance was given by Vice Admiral Sir Richard Peek, the Gunnery officer of HMAS Hobart, together with other Coral Sea Battle participants from the cruisers *Australia*, *Hobart* and *Chicago* who not only provided material but read draft sections of the manuscript.

#### *The Reviewer:*

Alan Zammit is an amateur Naval historian with a special knowledge of HMAS *Australia*, having spent from 1945 until 1948 in the cruiser. His father was in HMAS *Australia* during the Battle of the Coral Sea.

**"THE DISCOVERY OF THE BISMARCK – Germany's greatest battleship surrenders her secrets" by Dr Robert D. Ballard (232 pages, recommended retail price \$49.95) Distributed in Australia by Hodder & Stoughton Australia, 10-16 South Street, Rydalmere, NSW 2116**

*Reviewed by Vic Jeffery*

*Bismarck's* final resting place is some 4785 metres below the surface of the Atlantic Ocean on the side of an underwater mountain which rises sharply on the Porcupine Abyssal Plain off the

coast of France. The exact location of the wreck remains Mr Ballard's secret.

She sits majestically upright, giving the appearance that she is ready to enter the fitting out yards to have its upper superstructure and main armament fitted.

Dr Ballard describes how along with the main armament, almost all the ship's superstructure was missing. "Nonetheless if you put the turrets back on, the ship would have looked amazingly like she did in her heyday. *Bismarck* was indeed a wreck, but a dangerous looking one — still sleek, still armed and lethal [still carrying her secondary armament], still confident of her power".

It took two years, two separate expeditions in 1988 and again in 1989 in different ships, *Starella* and *Star Hercules*, with the same equipment and a painstaking survey of 300 kilometres of the seabed before the princely German battleship was finally located.

Ballard's guiding light was the steel framed *Argo* attached to the end of a five kilometre cable which carried side-scan sonar, control mechanisms, lights and television cameras.

Despite having the positions given by the British battleships HM Ships *King George V* and *Rodney*, along with the heavy cruiser HMS *Dorsetshire*, finding the *Bismarck* was described Dr Ballard as "comparable to looking for a needle in a haystack, at night, in a blizzard, with only a torch".

How the *Bismarck* sank is fascinating in itself. As the battle waned she slowly sank by the stern. Rolling over, her weakened stern broke away. The four 15-inch gun turrets and much other debris fell away and with the ship. Now fully flooded, it righted itself and picked up speed as the final plunge continued. Some 10-20 minutes after leaving the surface the hull hit midway up the side of a submarine mountain, setting off a massive landslide, with the ship and other heavy pieces of wreckage being carried down the slope coming to rest about two thirds of the way down the slide area.

The clever way in which *Bismarck's* history has been interwoven with the



present is excellent. There is a tremendous insight into life onboard the ship and a begrudging regret that such a magnificent fighting ship should be lost on her first deployment.

Some 29 years before, the RMS *Titanic* was also lost on her maiden voyage when she struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic. Both these vessels have now been located by Dr Ballard of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute and their locations remain a secret. There is now talk of finding the Japanese battleship, *Yamato*.

Although she only made the one voyage into the Atlantic, *Bismarck*, the pride of the German Kriegsmarine, commissioned only the year before, is one of the best known warships of World War Two. Still, when one considers her successes in sinking the battle cruiser HMS *Hood* and damaging the battleship HMS *Prince of Wales* with her magnificent gunnery and her efforts in tying up a large percentage of the British fleet, it was in the proudest German naval traditions. She fought magnificently against superior odds and went down fighting.

Lavishly illustrated, this book contains some 400 colour and black & white photos, along with paintings, some specially commissioned, maps and diagrams with many shots showing sections aboard *Bismarck* prior to its loss and the same locations today. Many of the underwater shots of the *Bismarck* can only be described as "hauntingly eerie".

This is unquestionably one of the finest books I have ever sighted. Apart from being a darn good read, it is a superb book to just peruse. The quality of the layouts design and contents are of the highest standard. Clearly a great deal of thought, time and consultation have gone in to this publication.

Dr Ballard's previous book, "The Discovery of the *Titanic*", I believe was an international best-seller. There is absolutely no reason why "The Discovery of the *Bismarck*" will not equal or even surpass the sales of his previous work.

If you only buy one nautical book this year, I recommend this be the one.

The Reviewer:

Vic Jeffery is a keen amateur naval historian and a frequent contributor of reviews to this journal. He works at HMAS *Stirling* as Naval Public Relations Officer.

**"LES BALEINEURS FRANÇAIS DE LOUIS XVI À NAPOLEON: J Thierry Du Pasquier, 1990, Henry Veyrat, Paris; 228 pages; price Fr140; ISBN 2-85199-521-9**

Reviewed by A G E Jones

The history of the French whaling trade to Greenland, Davis Straits and the South Seas in the 18th and 19th centuries is, in a small way, a lesson in the influence of sea power. When the American War of Independence began, the whaling trade of Nantucket was sixty years old. When the war started some of the American masters sailed to London and Dartmouth, Nova Scotia and later to Milford in Wales. During that war, British whaling ships suffered little from American and French attacks.

In 1784, soon after the peace, New England masters sailed for Dunkirk and other French ports, establishing the trade there. All went well till the war between Britain and revolutionary France, then the whaling ships were swept from the seas, some being taken by the Royal Navy and privateers. The British whaling fleet suffered few losses by comparison. There was a short revival after the Peace of Amiens, but when the war started again the French ships did not leave port. After the peace of 1814 the French whaling fleet was employed again as was told by M. du Pasquier in his book of 1982, "Les Baleiniers Français au XIX Siècle".

The present book deals with the French whaling trade in Greenland, Davis Strait and the South Seas, including New Holland, up to 1803, with a short chapter on the last hundred years. The great merit of this book is that it was written very largely from original documents, with



some use of published books, so it has the mark of authority. It has been written with great care and full references are given.

There are two dozen apposite illustrations. Much of the story is summarised in tables of ships, masters and catches, season by season. This book fills a gap in French maritime history and does it well.

**INNOVATIONS TECHNIQUES  
DANS LA MARINE, 1641-  
1817, by Philippe Henrat;  
1990, Archives Nationales,  
Paris; 396 pages, no price  
stated.**

*Reviewed by A G E Jones*

This is a reference work by the *conservateur en chef*, who also has charge of old naval records at the *Archives Nationales*, an indication of the vast amount of material held there. It is a calendar of 6700 documents dealing with a wide range of subjects: Hydrography, navigation, the methods, tables and instruments, compasses, chronometers, barometers, astronomy, medicine at sea and more mundane matters like lighthouses, signals, capstans, levers and steam propulsion.

Names such as Bougainville, La Perouse and Cook, Cuvier, the Forsters and Benjamin Franklin indicate the range of subjects.

It has a full index which gives brief biographical details.

It is well presented.

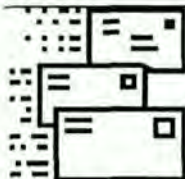


*A Standard anti-aircraft missile being fired from a RAN FFG during RIMPAC 90*



*HMAS Brisbane after Phalanx fit*





## Letters to the Editor

The Editor  
Journal of The Australian Naval Institute  
Dear Sir,

I was delighted to see the cover of the February 1991 Issue of our Journal, where the Phalanx Close-In-Weapons System of HMAS *Brisbane* was displayed. The fact that the planning of many people over the past decade has resulted in the RAN DDG's still having a weapons outfit which is consistent with the age and the environment in which they operate is testimony to their efforts.

I was not directly involved with the DDG Modernisation Programme, and perhaps was regarded as a hindrance by being a member of the Fleet Technical Staff by those who were, but this enables me nevertheless to congratulate the past members of the RAN DDG MOD Project Team — well done.

On a different subject, I read with interest in the same journal reference to there being a need for some variety in your articles, and your desire for "a pleasant change from the normal maritime strategy articles received". As one who at one time enthusiastically contributed with technically based articles, and by subsequent Presidential editorial implication was made to feel that they were inappropriate for the higher planes sought by this journal, I find your comments somewhat ironic. Perhaps with the wheel having turned somewhat your technical members could now come in from the cold and be allowed to contribute? Technical people have often been regarded as a bit of a joke by many within the RAN and I would have thought that at the very least their attempts at journalistic splendour would at least enable a few more jokes to propagate?

D.L.Stevens

LCDR RNZN  
Auckland,  
New Zealand

The Editor,  
Journal of the Australian Naval Institute,  
Dear sir,

I read with interest Tom Frame's recent article "The Ships History — Recording or Distorting the Navy's Past?" in ANI's February Journal, and cannot help but agree with his conclusions.

The ship history is an essential part of the overall history of the RAN, however it needs to be well researched using both official records and information gained from personnel who served in the vessel. Ship histories are difficult to do well and easy to do poorly.

Frank Walker's "HMAS *Armidale* — The Ship That Had To Die" is one of the latter varieties of Ship Histories and joins the company of such books as "Who Sank The *Sydney*" by Michael Montgomery a near work of fantasy on the loss of HMAS *Sydney* in November 1941 and Iris Nesdale's rambling account of the Tribal Class Destroyers "ACTION STATIONS"

The last decade has seen a spate of ship histories, some good, some very average and some such as Walker's particularly poor. These ship histories tend to be written by those who served in the ship, those who are ex-naval personnel, or have some association with the service (eg, Michael Montgomery's father was Navigator in the *Sydney*). Unfortunately many of these tend to be a "Why let the truth spoil a good story" version. Rumours become fact memories are dulled over time and factual events are over embellished — perhaps the authors are thinking more with their heart than with their head.

Walker makes several wild allegations and fails to adequately support any of them. This is especially evident in his speculation as to what happened to the missing raft of *Armidale* survivors. Walker states that the men were spotted by a RAAF Catalina aircraft but "It was too rough for the plane to land and next day there was no trace of the men, the



raft or even wreckage from the raft. The only logical assumption is that they were taken onboard a Japanese ship and executed".

Really, if it was too rough for the Catalina to land perhaps the raft was swamped by a wave and sunk and its occupants succumbed to exposure and died. The Timor Sea is a particularly large area and the chances of spotting a small raft are remote, maybe just maybe, they were not spotted on the next day by searching aircraft. To say that the only logical conclusion is that they were executed by the Japanese is to step into the realms of fantasy.

As stated previously the ship history is essential to the overall history of the RAN and thus it must be well written. It must contain the facts as gleaned from official records as to what the ship did, and it must contain anecdotes from those who served in the ship (both officers and sailors) to give the reader the human side of the ship.

If the author wishes to put forward an opinion on why an action occurred or what may have possibly happened then they need to back it up with facts or a logical argument, not as in Walker's case with sarcastic ramblings, half baked speculations, and throw-away one line quips.

Walker's "HMAS *Armidale* - The Ship that had to die", however does provide one useful purpose. That is being an excellent example of how not to write a ship history.

G.J. SWINDEN

Lieutenant, RAN

HMAS *Creswell*,

Jervis Bay,

NSW.

The Editor,  
Journal of the Australian Naval Institute,  
Dear sir,

I read with interest and appreciation Larry Noye's short biography of Admiral Sir Victor Smith.

In the interest of historical accuracy I must point out that, although Sir Victor was the first graduate of the RANC to reach the rank of full Admiral on the active list of the PNF, he was not the first officer to reach the rank of full Admiral.

That distinction belongs to the late Admiral Sir George Francis Hyde KCB, CVO, CBE. The Navy List shows that he was promoted to the rank of full Admiral on the active list of the Australian Permanent Naval Force on 12 July 1936. At that time he was serving as First Naval Member, Australian Commonwealth Naval Board, in which post he continued to serve until his death on 28 July 1937. Hyde originally joined the Royal Naval Reserve, transferred to the Royal Navy and to the Royal Australian Navy shortly after its formation.

Several Royal Navy officers were loaned to the RAN in the rank of full Admiral. However, Hyde was not on loan. He was a permanent RAN officer.

These facts do not detract from Sir Victor's achievement, the magnitude of which Larry Noye describes very well.

A W Grazebrook,

CMDR RANR

Mansfield,

Vic.





## Washington Notes

### From Tom A. Friedmann in the United States

Practitioners in the art of war, like all other artists, require extensive practice to perfect their art. Unlike other disciplines, however, no contrived combat can replace the real thing. Because of the effect of the "fog of war", it can be helpful for the military to periodically engage in minor combat operations to test people, equipment and tactics.

Operation Desert Storm provided the United States opportunity galore to prove many new weapons systems and tactics at a mercifully low loss of American lives (the ratio of accidental to combat deaths incurred by American forces was about 2:1). Analysis of the campaign has begun and, while some of what we've learned is new, some, unfortunately, is not.

Stand-off and "smart" weapons and stealth technology worked remarkably well. Navy Tomahawks are estimated to have hit 85% of their targets, while "smart" bombs once again showed their worth. Although the latter is considerably more expensive than gravity bombs, their ability to "cleanly" hit targets in populated areas as well as enhancing the proficiency to destroy specific targets on one mission justifies the additional expenditure.

F-117 stealth fighters and B-2 stealth bombers were instrumental in the destruction of the Iraqi air defence system. But despite the B-2's operational success, value for the dollar must be considered when acquiring a weapons system and I for one still find it hard to justify spending some \$800 million per aircraft, according to current estimates. Identification-friend-or-foe problems occur in every conflict but were

highlighted in Desert Storm because of the high number of deaths caused by "friendly fire". The effective application of modern technology should bring about their reduction if not their extinction. Our electronic warfare capabilities were remarkable. The ability of AWACS to control the skies not only checked the enemy but managed air traffic so brilliantly that there was not one mid-air collision out of the thousands of sorties flown round-the-clock by at least a dozen air forces. Navigation satellites allowed land forces to outflank the enemy by moving through parts of the Iraqi desert so desolate and remote that the Iraqis themselves never venture into them for fear of getting lost.

One of the great revelations of the campaign was the accuracy and effect of the 16-inch guns of the Iowa class battleships. This of course was the fourth such "revelation". The first was during World War II, the second was Korea and the third was in Vietnam. Despite proving their value once again the Department of Defense has ordered that the last two active battleships be decommissioned at the end of the current fiscal year.

FLASH! Mines pose a significant threat to sea communications! You did **not** read it here first! By doing precisely what they were supposed to, mines hindered navigation throughout the Gulf. One \$3000 mine put the new \$1billion Aegis cruiser *Princeton* out of action, while another severely holed the helicopter carrier *Tripoli*.

To circumvent mines, mine countermeasure ships and aircraft were



required. WOW! Is this news or what?! The entire November 1984 issue of the *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute* was devoted to the problems and the potential of mine warfare. Apparently the Journal was not circulated to the powers that be in the USN, who thereby missed a sage dissertation on the deplorable state of mine warfare in the United States Navy, along with several suggestions on how to remedy the situation.

In the seven years since, billions of dollars have been spent duplicating strategic weapons systems like the B-1 bomber, an aircraft so riddled with defects that it could not participate in Desert Shield. And still mine warfare continued to languish. A high price was paid for our persistent failure to make a major investment in mine warfare. This time no-one was killed. Next time, we may not be so lucky.

The fact that the Air Force still cannot transmit bombing target lists to Navy carriers because of incompatible communications links is not surprising. Outrageous but not surprising. However, published reports of the Navy and its accompanying problems to communicate with other navies and with our own ships are amazing.

The USN had exercised with ships of all nations it worked with in the Gulf so communications problems should have been minimal. More troubling was the fact that the unusually large size of the naval force deployed caused the Navy to scramble to organise command and control lines among its own commanders and ships. The Navy projected it would need half a dozen carriers to combat the Soviet fleet in the North Atlantic. Why didn't naval planners establish command and control lines that could have been activated for use in the Persian Gulf?

The Navy and Air Force needed more troops and cargo-carrying capability and aerial tankers. Again, no news here. Additional transport and tanker capability are like mine warfare: They lack sex appeal. There's always something more exiting in the budget for constituencies in the Pentagon and Congress to support. But this is an easy excuse that absolves Joint Chiefs of Staff from their responsibility to support "orphan" programs without which the deployment of expeditionary forces is impossible.

"Orphan" programs are as critical to the nation as those with high profiles and the Chiefs should be their guardians.

And what would a war be without complaints about mail and food? The Army's mail system dates from World War I and virtually collapsed under the strain of Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Parcels that I sent to HMAS *Darwin* via Australia arrived in less than half the time it took to send similar packages from the United States to the Gulf.

The army's new way to feed people in the field, MREs (meals ready to eat) proved at least as unpopular as the infamous K ration. Marines and soldiers were forced to rely heavily on them despite the fact that the operation was static for six months and fluid for only six days.

Servicemen and women make many sacrifices for their country. Good mail service and decent food are the foundation of good morale in any fighting force. Those who serve our country deserve, at the very least, regular, prompt mail delivery and good, hot food.

Concededly the public usually doesn't hear of the success of intelligence services. Failures, however, do have a way of becoming public and the Persian Gulf conflict was disconcertingly riddled with them.

The Central Intelligence Agency (1) failed to predict the invasion of Kuwait, (2) underestimated the number of Scud missiles in the Iraqi arsenal, (3) predicted that the Iraqi army would overthrow Saddam Hussein, (4) underestimated the amount of enriched uranium that Iraq had available to make nuclear bombs and (5) underestimated the amount of armour left to Saddam to reconstitute his army. (Much was in storage in unmarked and thus not bombed warehouses.)

Intelligence reports provided to General Norman Schwarzkopf and battlefield commanders was so couched in qualifying terms that they could not obtain timely information they needed to prepare for war.

The enemy is relied upon to disclose arms caches, disarm and stay disarmed. If it violates the provisions of the



armistice, resumption of the conflict will be all but impossible because of the precipitous withdrawal of military forces before we have verified compliance with the terms of the cease-fire agreement. Sound familiar? Iraq in 1991? Post World War I Germany?

One can only wonder who is advising President Bush on his handling of Saddam Hussein and why the President is taking his advice. How could a man supposedly so well versed in world affairs pass up the opportunity to eradicate "another Hitler"? If the countries we called our allies did not want to eradicate "another Hitler", why did the President align us with them in the first place?

How could the President believe that "another Hitler", a man who broke his word to numerous world leaders and slaughtered his own people, be trusted to adhere to a cease-fire agreement once the threat of total destruction had been removed? Why did the President put so much faith in the belief that the Iraqi army would overthrow Saddam Hussein when the German Army could never put its act together to overthrow Hitler?

The result of these diplomatic and intelligence failures may cause the armed forces to repeat the most painful lesson of all: If you don't properly secure the peace, you will have to re-fight the war.



*Oberon class submarine "on top"—Jervis Bay, NSW*



*SH70B-2 in battle colours — Nowra NSW*



## Sea Power and the Gulf War

by Eric Grove, Naval Research Director, Foundation for International Security, UK.

*Based on a presentation to the Australian Naval Institute at HMAS Watson on 16 May 1991*

All wars are unique and it is always dangerous to draw general conclusions from them. The Gulf War was perhaps the least maritime of conceivable conflicts outside Europe. However therein lies the point. For, if such a non-maritime war depended so much on a capacity to use the sea and strike from it how much more might future conflicts in a less favourable environment for ground and air forces be affected by the sea?

Without sealift the war could never have taken place at all. The deployment by February 3 1991 (180 days after the President's deployment order) of three million tons of dry cargo and 4.2 million tons of petroleum products by sea in 397 voyages by ships owned or chartered by the Military Sealift Command [MSC] provided the wherewithal for American forces to fight and win. Ninety four per cent of the total cargo brought in for American forces by February 3 had come by sea. Other countries also relied on sealift. Ships used by the United Kingdom had brought in 260,000 tons of general cargo, 102,000 tons of ammunition, and 11,700 vehicles by January 15. In order for these cargoes to arrive ports in Saudi Arabia had to be made secure. The rapid deployment of two carrier battle groups and the Marine Expeditionary Force flown in to marry up with equipment held in prepositioning ships helped prevent Iraqi attack at a crucial time.

Although sealift worked remarkably well there were problems. Several of the American Ready Reserve Force [RRF] ships broke down after their years in mothballs and took more time than expected to get out of reserve. Even the impressive fast sealift ships (FSS) were not entirely reliable, although USNS *Capella's* activation within 48 hours as

against the required 96 and her beginning offloading less than three weeks after starting activation were both significant achievements. When she arrived with 27th Mechanised Division's equipment she brought more cargo than the entire airlift up to that date.

It was hard to obtain crews for the RRF ships as their obsolete steam engines do not reflect current shipping practice. One reactivated officer was over eighty! By February 3 almost forty per cent of the dry cargo delivered had come in non-US flag ships and the USA had run out of available Roll on /Roll off vessels. On February 3 there were in total 84 foreign flag dry cargo ships on charter at that time. Given the nature of the crisis there were few problems in resorting to foreign tonnage but the Americans regard this level of dependence as undesirable. Vice Admiral Donovan, the commander of the MSC told The House Armed Services Committee on 19 February of "the absolute surge requirement for more RO/ROs in the early months of a contingency involving sealift of forces." Whether anything can be done to improve US national surge sealift capacity given the continued decline of the American mercantile marine and its personnel is another matter. It must be said, however, that the national assets available to MSC were not fully stretched, not all RRF ships were activated and neither were the US Navy's seasheds and flatracks employed to allow container ships to carry military cargo. It was easier to use Allied tonnage, and this could well be the pattern for the future.

Indeed, British logistics authorities are much more relaxed about their almost complete reliance on foreign shipping. Apart from five ships of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (four landing ships logistic and



a replenishment ship) British equipment and supplies were carried in 142 chartered merchantmen of which only eight flew the red ensign. For the first time much of the material was containerised which made shipping in modern merchantmen easier and meant that goods arrived in a better and more organised state. The British were also less impressed by the performance of prepositioning. The Americans consider the performance of their prepositioning ships at Diego Garcia and Guam to have been one of the great successes of Desert Shield. Mobilised on 7 August they were unloading within ten days and their equipment was rapidly married up with the Marine Expeditionary Force flown in from the USA. The condition of that equipment, however left something to be desired. Lessons were learned which imply levels of expenditure on care and maintenance of stocks held in PREPO shipping which are unrealistic for other countries. The Americans, however, consider the advantages of prepositioning to be worth the cost.

One little known aspect of the war was the effort put into safeguarding the Coalition sea lines of communication. There were consistent worries about Libyan unpredictability during the crisis and a significant naval presence was maintained in the Mediterranean to guard against any trouble. Italian, Spanish, British and German vessels, carriers, escorts and mine countermeasures vessels, were deployed to guard the Mediterranean SLOCs as were two NATO integrated forces the Standing Naval Force Channel of mine countermeasures vessels and the Naval On Call Force Mediterranean of escorts. Blockading ships in the Red Sea kept a watch on Yemen and there was also anxiety over the security of the Suez Canal.

It was not just a question of the Coalition using the sea. It denied the use of the sea to the Iraqis. The sanctions campaign depended on a remarkable international blockade carried out by the ships of thirteen NATO navies plus Argentina, Australia and Poland. Almost 7,000 ships had been challenged by 15 January and over 800 boardings had taken place; fifty ships had their voyages diverted. The blockade may not have been able to force Iraq out of Kuwait on its own but it weakened Iraq's capacity to fight. The

efficiency of the blockade reflected the power of modern navies to exploit modern integrated ocean surveillance systems; the helicopter also made boarding easier. The major European contribution to the blockade was co-ordinated by the Western European Union which built on the procedures established to concert European action in the previous Gulf War. WEU coordination ensured a highly effective coverage of the Straits of Bab El Mandeb and Tiran as well as of the Middle Gulf and by January 15 WEU ships had been responsible for about two thirds of the interceptions. In January as war seemed likely, Admiral Bonnot the local French naval commander was appointed WEU Co-ordinator for activities outside the immediate war zone. Here, as Desert Storm loomed, from January 12 onwards, began, ships were placed under American operational control to form the battle force. Although the USN provided the core of the combat forces in the Gulf the US carriers and battleships were supported by ships of the British, Dutch, Italian, French, Australian, Canadian, Danish and Argentine Navies as well as by their own cruisers and destroyers.

If sea power made Desert Storm possible it also played a far from insignificant part in it. Contrary to pre war prognostications US carriers operated in the Gulf. *Midway* began to make initial short probes before the end of 1990 and finally took up station on January 11; *Ranger* joined her in the Gulf on the 15th and *Theodore Roosevelt* on the 19th. *Saratoga*, *John F Kennedy* and *America* operated from the Red Sea but the last named entered the Gulf on February 13th bringing the Gulf carrier group to four ships. By this time the carriers were operating closer to Kuwait with positive effects on both sortie rate and tanking requirements; on the 14th the carriers moved fifty miles further north still. All six carriers flew a wide range of missions, strike and strike escort (F-14s escorted RAF Tornados), battlefield preparation and interdiction, close air support (the priority during the ground war), combat air patrol (CAP), surface combat air patrols (SUCAP), electronic warfare, tanker, airborne early warning, reconnaissance, and on board delivery. Naval aircraft proved especially useful in being able to fly air defence suppression missions at short notice and flew the



majority of such missions. For the defence suppression task the new TALD glider decoys adopted by the US Navy proved useful. The new SLAM stand off land attack missile was also combat proven but more important was the contribution made by F-14 carrier based fighters equipped with the TARPS recce pods to adding to the inadequate air reconnaissance capability available to the air command for battle damage assessment. The only real problem was a shortage of laser guided bombs in the carriers which meant that naval aircraft were sometimes deemed unsuitable for certain missions.

By 6 March the USN and US Marine Corps had flown together some 28,929 sorties of which 36% were strike and 30% fleet air defence and CAP. They had dropped 4.4 million tons of bombs and other ordnance. Some of the Marine sorties were Harriers from the assault ship (LHA) *Nassau* used as a light carrier, a concept in which the USN is showing greater interest as its numbers of large decks reduces.

A major contribution to the air campaign was made by Tomahawk conventional land attack missiles both in the TLAM/C and TLAM/D (cluster warhead) variant. The latter reportedly proved especially valuable in taking out air defence radars. In all 291 TLAM were fired (196 in the initial strikes) and estimates of effectiveness vary from about 60 to 85 per cent. The missiles only proved significantly vulnerable when misused tactically by being fired in a stream sequentially on the same course rather than to approach the target from a number of different directions. Most came from surface ships - the first was launched by the cruiser *Bunker Hill* but from January 19 onwards, a few Tomahawks were fired from submarines in the Red Sea and Mediterranean; the USS *Louisville* was the SSN thus to go into action. One Aegis cruiser, the USS *San Jacinto* was reportedly sent to the Red Sea as part of the *Kennedy* group in the strike role with her vertical launch system filled with 122 Tomahawks. In addition to the two battleships Tomahawk was carried by six Aegis cruisers, two "Virginia" class nuclear powered cruisers and six "Spruance" class destroyers (five with vertical launch systems one with armoured box launchers). Three cruise missile equipped

US surface ships, *Philippine Sea*, *Virginia* and *Spruance* operated as part of the British carrier group with HMS *Ark Royal* in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Naval forces cleared the Iraqis off the off-shore oilfields and the small islands in the Gulf and denied the Iraqis any use of the sea. The Iraqis may have tried one or more small amphibious landings as part of the Khafji offensive. A force of small Iraqi assault boats was certainly found near Umm al Maradim island on 29 January. The boats were spotted by American helicopters and the radar of the British frigate *Brazen* and attacked by Lynx helicopters from *Brazen* and *Gloucester* with Sea Skua missiles, British Sea King armed helicopters and US Navy LAMPS III helicopters using machine guns and hand grenades. Carrier based A-6 Intruders also joined in and the convoy was completely destroyed, 14 being sunk and 3 driven ashore. The following day a group of larger ships was spotted leaving Iraqi ports. This may have been a reinforcing convoy but it is more likely that the Iraqi Navy, assailed by air attack in its bases was trying to flee to Iran. Among the ships identified was a Soviet built T-43 minesweeper/layer, three captured Kuwaiti German built TNC-45 missile armed fast attack craft and the three Polnocny class tank landing ships. US LAMPS III helicopters directed Lynxes onto the targets and Sea Skua hits were scored after which RAF Jaguars followed up with rockets and US Navy A-6s and F-18s with cluster bombs. Almost all the Iraqi vessels were sunk but a damaged Osa class fast attack craft managed to reach Bandar Khoment.

The campaign to seek out and destroy Iraq's Navy continued. Attacks were carried out both against bases and against targets found at sea. A surface combat air patrol (SUCAP) was kept in the air using both carrier and shore based aircraft to deal with targets of opportunity. A particular worry to Coalition naval forces were the half dozen German built Exocet fitted fast attack craft (FAC) captured from Kuwait; five TNC-45s and one FPB-57. The Lynx/ Sea Skua combination was especially successful against this threat and five FAC were hit by Sea Skua missiles. The missiles disabled the craft even if they did not actually sink them at the time. The fate of these excellent FAC must cast doubt on



the whole concept of the small missile boat. Apparently vibration is so bad on these vessels that they have difficulty in engaging airborne attackers with their defensive armament. They are thus sitting ducks to aircraft of all type. The bluff of the FAC, the great naval "equaliser" of the 1970s and 80s has been finally called. The main threat to Lynxes came from missiles fired from the shore which caused at least one pilot to take violent evasive action and deploy flares and chaff.

In all the Lynx/Sea Skua combination claimed fifteen vessels sunk or disabled during the war, two Polnochny LSTs, the salvage ship Aka, both T-43 minesweeper/layers, five former Kuwaiti FAC, three patrol boats and two small assault craft. Both *Cardiff* and *Gloucester* flights claimed seven hits each. The American LAMPS III helicopters with their longer range radar were better for targeting near the coast but the British escorts and their embarked surface strike helicopters were useful "niche fillers" in the coalition naval force. *Gloucester* also carried out on 25 February a successful close range Sea Dart missile interception of a Silkworm coast defence missile fired at the American battleship *Wisconsin* it was escorting. The British and other Coalition ships with the right link equipment were fully integrated into the wider air picture provided by AWACS, Aegis cruisers and E-2Cs.

Britain also deployed two conventional submarines to the Gulf which may have been used for special forces insertion. On 27 January the *Observer* newspaper of London carried a plausible report based on unauthorised interviews with "a marine source" referring to an operation code-named "Sea Turtle" that had run into trouble. First two Iraqi tankers had been attacked by US naval aircraft, a raid "which damaged a British submarine hiding underneath" one of them. The report said the oil slicks had created problems for the maritime special forces operations indeed the unidentified source was quoted as saying the pollution had "ruined near shore reconnaissance".

Whatever the truth of this unconfirmed report the slicks must have made minehunting more awkward. It was also difficult for minehunters to operate close to the Kuwaiti shore until the threat from

Iraqi guns and mobile shore based Silkworm missiles had been dealt with and the Iraqi Navy neutralised completely. The missiles were a difficult problem. They were mobile and hard to locate and were indeed never entirely neutralised. The UK-US mine countermeasures force did not begin to move into the operational area until mid-February and began operations on the 16th to clear a fire support area south of Faylakah island. Originally it had been planned to make an amphibious landing on the Kuwaiti coast in early or mid February but the concept was rejected partly out of fear of severe casualties being caused in Kuwait by the supporting bombardment. Options against Iraq itself were also considered and rejected. About the time MCM operations began the decision was taken to try nothing more than a raid on Faylakah Island and to use the amphibious forces mainly as a diversion. Two Marine Expeditionary Brigades (about 18,000 men) were embarked and no less than 31 amphibious ships were available, two LHAs, five LPHs, seven LPDs, seven LSDs, eight LSTs, and two LKA assault cargo ships. Amphibious rehearsals and other acts to publicise the presence of the task force to the Iraqis made the point and six or seven Iraqi divisions were tied down guarding the coast.

It was yet another coalition success but the Iraqi mining campaign must be ascribed some success also in contributing to the decision not to assault from the sea and in preventing even the Faylakah assault taking place. The Iraqis laid at least 1200 mines in ten fields around Kuwait, deliberately set free floating mines and just threw others over the side in several types both contact mines and magnetic/acoustic influence mines of various sizes. Some were locally made and some imported. Two ship casualties were caused by Iraqi mines. One was the LPH *Tripoli* which struck a 100-140 kg contact mine that caused poor welding in the vicinity to fail. A hole 20-30 ft wide has blown in the ship. The LPH was acting as mother ship for American MH-53 mine countermeasures (MCM) helicopters which it continued to operate for a time before retiring for repairs. More serious was damage inflicted on the Aegis cruiser *Princeton* that ran over a large 400 kg influence mine in shallow water of



optimal depth for such a weapon to be effective; the damage was made worse by the effects of a second mine exploding 300 yards away. The lightly built cruiser suffered bad "whiplash" effect and almost broke her back. One propeller shaft was also seriously damaged and the repairs were estimated at \$100 million.

The five British MCM vessels of the "Hunt" class played the key role in mine clearance both during and after the war. They were supported by three old American "Agressive" class MSOs and the brand new American minehunter *Avenger* that suffered teething problems and had to be withdrawn from the post-war clear-up for repairs. Other European MCM assets co-ordinated by the WEU arrived for this latter operation. Before their arrival the combined US-UK MCM force assisted by Australian divers located 270 mines and had the Kuwaiti port of Al Shaiba open by 12 March. Moored mines close to the surface were detected by a new helicopter borne minehunting video system and remotely controlled equipment was used by the British vessels to deal with floating mines. Some escorts were fitted with mine avoidance sonar that allowed them to lead other units such as battleships into position for bombardments; alternatively British MCM vessels prepared safe channels for the big ships.

The battleships *Missouri* and *Wisconsin* came into action on 3 February and 6 February respectively using their massive guns to destroy prefabricated Iraqi bunkers and to destroy Iraqi artillery. The heavily protected battleships could be put in areas where more lightly protected vessels might have been at greater risk. The battleships were in action in the cleared area south of Faylakah from February 23. Ground observers were used for spotting as were the battleships' drones. The latter proved good general reconnaissance assets for the advancing Marines once the ground was begun. Something of a naval first was established when a group of Iraqis tried to surrender to one of the drones! The drones were also used to call in air strikes on Iraqi small craft. During Desert Storm the two battleships fired over a thousand rounds of 16-inch ammunition, both conventional and cluster shells - over a million pounds of ordnance - and they were of great assistance in helping the Marines ashore advance on their

frontal axis up the coast through prepared Iraqi positions.

The lessons of the Gulf War as they affect sea power can be summed up as follows:-

- a the need to be sure that there is enough sealift readily available to deploy heavy forces globally and rapidly;
- b the utility of maritime prepositioning to get relatively heavily equipped forces into place quickly - if one is willing to pay the price of giving this equipment the proper care and maintenance;
- c the continued power of naval blockade;
- d the ability of naval forces from many countries to operate together effectively;
- e the continued progress made in building a co-ordinated European navy capable of operating "out of area" on close co-operation with the United States;
- f the continued importance of carrier air power to give rapid response and complementary strike and anti air warfare capabilities independent of host nation support;
- g the utility of the conventional land attack sea launched cruise missile;
- h the utility of amphibious forces to exert leverage without actually being used;
- i the limitations of the missile armed fast attack craft and the utility of the missile armed helicopter (all suitable ship - borne helicopters should be given anti-ship missiles if they do not have them already);
- j the effectiveness of heavy naval gunfire support; and
- k the key importance of mines and mine countermeasures

As was stressed at the outset, the trouble with drawing lessons from historical experience is that all such scenarios are unique. Nothing quite like Desert Storm may recur again. Next time there may well not be a "red carpet" of a friendly host nation with a developed infrastructure of ports and airfields. Next time the emphasis might be on more or less immediate action without the opportunity for a rapid build-up. Next time the enemy might deploy submarines which would demand a major anti-submarine warfare (ASW) effort - if there had been a submarine threat in



Desert Storm then the Coalition navies would have had to operate in a very different way. Desert Storm was a campaign that did not require much of the operational flexibility that sea power can provide. That, despite this, it relied such

a great deal on sea power to succeed is testimony to the continuing fundamental importance of a capacity to use the sea for military purposes. Countries neglect their capabilities to do so at their peril.



*Many Happy Returns — reunion on homecoming of HMAS Success*



## IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM THE MINISTER'S STATEMENT ON THE DEFENCE FORCE STRUCTURE REVIEW

**An address by Senator Jocelyn Newman, Opposition spokesperson on Defence Science and Personnel to HMAS Harman on 8 August 1991**

There is a clear perception in the Defence Force and in the community generally that this Government's defence policy has lost its direction.

Since the Vietnam War, debate on Defence has tended to be "unfashionable", but our commitment to the Gulf war started to focus public attention back on to Defence – in particular, on some of the real limitations of our defence capabilities.

Many of the strategic assumptions in the 1987 Defence White Paper, the Government's blueprint for Defence, have been overtaken by events, although the Defence Minister, Senator Ray, refuses to admit it. Even more significantly, the White Paper has locked the Government into a \$25 billion (in 1987 dollars) capital equipment purchasing program, despite the fact that the Government has failed to live up to the Budget allocations which the White Paper identified.

The consequence is that other areas of defence spending, namely, manpower and operating costs, have to be squeezed to pay for the equipment. That is the real reason why the Government has brought down the Force Structure Review.

The defence review which the Coalition is currently undertaking will base any changes or additions to our Defence Force structure on the reassessment we are making of Australia's strategic circumstances and outlook. We will not be party to the same half hearted review the Government has undertaken and nor will we be endorsing or amending any aspects of the uncoded equipment list the Government has produced. When our defence review is completed we will detail our force structure proposals in a

comprehensive way and one that is directly related to our strategic requirements.

A ministerial statement such as the Force Structure Review which proposes a radical restructuring of Australia's Defence Force, should be carefully based on a strategic assessment of Australia's national interests. The Force Structure Review is not. It lacks any sort of clear assessment of the strategic realities facing Australia. It lacks an analysis of the implications of these realities for Australia's national security situation. It lacks an outline of the restructuring of the Defence Force that flows from that changing strategic and security outlook. It lacks credibility because it refuses to make any kind of strategic reassessment.

The Minister for Defence says that a strategic reassessment is not necessary because the 1987 White Paper continues to provide the strategic basis for the structure of the Defence Force. He sanctioned this in a speech to the National Press Club on February 6th this year when he said:

"I believe the careful approach to our security based on a rigorous analysis of our enduring strategic circumstances, detailed in the White Paper ... and endorsed in the classified Government paper ... remains fundamentally appropriate as we tackle our role in a changing world." (can it be correct that the strategic situation really was endorsed in a classified Government paper – which the Opposition has not seen.)

This attitude not only ignores the reality of the dramatic changes that have taken place in regional and international security over recent years; it is also clearly contrary to the views of the Prime



Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth Evans. The Prime Minister told the Asia-Australia Institute on the 24th of May this year that:

"the last five years have seen the most profound changes in global strategic circumstances in nearly half a century". He said that this would require Australia to "reassess our strategic relationship with Asia."

Senator Evans expressed a similar attitude on the 24th of February this year, when he said:

"There can be absolutely no doubt that the easing of superpower competition has had great effect in our own Asia-Pacific region; nor can there be doubt that new approaches to security now opening up have direct application in the region."

The changes to which the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade refer, the rising defence expenditure of countries in the Asia-Pacific region; the changing role of the United States in that region; the rapidly growing spread of defence technologies and the end of the Cold War.

The Force Structure Review is at odds with the line taken by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. In essence, the Government is asking us to accept massive changes to the structure of the Australian Defence Force without any reference to developments in Australia's strategic environment.

I, and others in the Opposition called on the Minister to issue a green paper to promote public debate on strategic changes affecting Australia, but he has quite deliberately refused.

The reason why is simple, but it is a vitally important one. Dr Hewson pointed it out in his response to the Ministerial statement on the Force Structure Review. If Australia's requirement for defence equipment and force structure have changed as a result of changed strategic circumstances — as the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister have emphasised — why has the Government refused to release a new public strategic assessment? If, on the other hand, as the Minister claims, the Defence White Paper provides a

sufficiently accurate assessment of Australia's strategic circumstances, why is there a need to depart from the force structure which the White Paper outlines? The simple answer is that the Force Structure Review is driven by budgetary considerations and not by strategic changes.

It is a review of defence policy that has been driven by the need to make cost savings because the funding projections made in the 1987 White Paper have not been met. Since the 1987 White Paper, the Government has consistently failed to deliver the funds for defence that it has promised. The White Paper stated:

"If we are to achieve the levels of defence capability and the priorities reflected in this Paper, there is a need over the life of the program, for an allocation of resources generally within the order of 2.6% to 3% of GDP."

This level has never been achieved. For the last four years, defence spending has been kept to the historic low of 2.3 per cent of gross domestic product. In fact, since 1987, real growth in the defence budget has been kept at or close to zero, and in 1987/88 it actually shrank by 1.8 per cent.

There is little flexibility in the Defence Budget. Defence's forward commitment to capital expenditure is currently at its highest level ever at approximately 80 per cent of the capital expenditure component of the budget. This, when taken together with the salaries component of the budget, means that 80 per cent of the entire defence budget is already allocated well into the future and thereby the problems with flexibility.

Not since the White Paper was produced in 1987 has the Labor Government provided the funds on which it was predicated and which were necessary to meet the tasks set out in the White Paper. Yet the capital procurement which was set in motion proceeded without apparent concern for the dislocation of the other priorities in that White Paper. What we see with the introduction of the Force Structure Review is, in essence, an admission of the failure of the Labor Government to achieve its White Paper's objectives and, even worse, signals an inability to do so in the future.



One of the major priorities to be achieved for Australia, according to the White Paper, was a mine countermeasure capability. Yet after 15 years of the Mine Hunter Inshore having been accorded a high priority, we still today have little or no mine countermeasures capability. This is only one of the capabilities set out in the White Paper which we still lack. Others include, of course, the ability to maintain surveillance of our maritime and air approaches; the ability to rapidly deploy our forces by land, sea and air, and an amphibious capability for the Army.

Yet two years ago the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade made a number of recommendations about our mine countermeasure inadequacies, and only now is the Government finally acknowledging the failure of the program. Not only is this serious for the defence of Australia but it is also a matter of great concern that nearly \$100 million has been spent and we still don't have a mine countermeasure capability.

I mention this because, to me, it is one of the more sizeable examples of poor management in the Department of Defence. The other examples are many and varied, and they have gone on for a very long time, ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous.

When debating the Appropriation Bill in the Senate a few months ago, several more examples of poor management by the Department were raised. These included spending \$350,000 recruiting engineers overseas before the necessary clearance had been given in Australia to allow the entry of those engineers into the country, and the mismanagement of a trust fund of \$100,000 which was given to the Department of Defence in 1983 and remained for four years without being invested, losing value each year: hardly good management of a trust fund bequeathed by a Polish Australian to be used in the interests of the defence of Australia.

Senator Ray and I debated the need for Defence to have good information systems so as to know how it is spending its money. Late last year, in a very important report, the Auditor-General revealed that it was almost impossible to get information on the cost

of a soldier. He was not alone in having difficulty in getting financial information from the Department. Ever since I arrived in Parliament I have had that difficulty, as have my predecessors. I recognise that the devolution of financial authority to commanders will go some way to improving the management of resources, and I welcome those moves, but there is still a need for senior management to know how that authority is being exercised.

Currently that seems to be too hard for Defence to manage, even though there are 24,000 civilians in the Department of Defence. The Defence Act provides that the Secretary to the Department of Defence is responsible to the Minister for financial planning and programs of all elements of Defence outlay and for financial administration and control of expenses, including the correct and proper use of public funds. One wonders what those 24,000 people are doing if this information is not available and cannot be made available cost effectively to the Parliament. Also, what has been their role in the mismanagement of the projects that we have seen over the years? We could almost run an army if we put the 24,000 of them all into uniform. We do not have a great deal more in the regular army at the moment — approximately 27,000 — and that figure will shrink by 5,220 over the next decade.

The Government is proposing to reduce the size of the Public Service elements of the Defence Department by 3,800 people. This immediately raises questions. If financial control is actually being devolved to Defence Force personnel down the line, why are we still retaining 20,200 civilians many of whom will no longer have their previous financial responsibilities?

In addition, what confidence can we have that these 3,800 reductions are real? We have seen number shuffling with this Department in the past. I understand that 200 people in the Defence Science and Technology Organisation in Adelaide are part of the 3,800, yet the phased restructuring of DSTO was announced by Minister Kelly on 18 November 1987. I believe that these people have been counted once already. How many of the remaining 3,600 are in the same boat?



I have put questions on notice about these cuts, and I note that there has been no similar civilian structure review as there has been with the force structure review. Even if the 3,800 positions are not being recycled, it would appear that the civilian reduction is 16 per cent when the people we actually recruit to defend us are being cut back by 15.4 per cent, almost the same amount. One would have expected the civilian cuts to be proportionately greater. Especially since the military are the people who are actually supposed to do the fighting for us. Perhaps this is really what is meant by civilianisation!

The two elements which give me most concern in this whole exercise are the impact on our readiness and, therefore, our ability to defend Australia, and the financial footing on which the exercise is based. I believe that the savings which are discussed in the Force Structure Review are questionable on many scores, which I will speak about later.

The Opposition has made it very clear that it opposes any force structure cuts which impact on combat capability but, despite the Government's rhetoric to the tune of "our cuts will not affect combat capability", this is precisely what it is doing. It is clear, despite the Minister's claims, that combat capability will suffer and the sharp end will be considerably blunted.

Although Navy has come out better than the other two services at face value in the Force Structure Review, I believe any thinking person would realise that in the totality of the statement there is a certain vagueness about when many of the naval projects will in fact be achieved — and I think that is something that needs to be kept in mind.

The electronic media when reporting the Minister's statement made much of the fact that there was going to be a great burst of capital equipment procurement. What a sad commentary that was on the professionalism of the media. In fact, the equipment procurement items that were referred to by the Minister are ones which were set out in the White Paper back in 1987. So four years down the track we are no closer to achieving them and in fact the Minister's statement referred to them as being achieved by the year 2000. That means those capital

equipment items are being pushed further down the track with no announcement as to achieving them soon.

There have been cuts in the logistics areas, some of which can probably be quite justified, and the Minister has spent a great deal of time in the weeks leading up to the statement to tell us that our teeth to tail ratio is completely out of kilter. Perhaps it is, but some of the arguments he has been using don't hold water.

I draw your attention to the fact that when we went to Vietnam and when we went to previous wars, we relied on great and powerful friends for a great deal of our logistics support. Self-reliance which has been the bi-partisan policy from at least 1976 means inevitably that you will have a greater tail. Therefore it will also be more costly in terms of money and in terms of manpower. So some of the logistics changes may not allow us in the long term to achieve self-reliance. There are however some decisions which are valuable. I think the plan to reinstate the Chinook capability, even though it is a reduced one, is welcome. It is also welcome that there is a commitment to give more attention to mobilisation planning and there are a great number of areas where contracting out or civilianisation of base tasks could probably be achieved for less cost and hopefully without a reduction in our combat capability.

There have been cuts in flying time — cuts to the flying time of the F111s and to the Sea King helicopters. There is a reduction in our Caribou fleet, there is a reduction in the operating costs for 25 Squadron at Pearce. These cuts come after steady reductions in RAAF flying hours over recent years — with an increasing problem for Army and Navy to achieve air support when needed. There is a reduction in our capability as far as tanks are concerned. One squadron is to go to the Territory, another squadron is to stay at Puckapunyal in the Reserves. The third squadron is not mentioned and I am concerned for that squadron.

If I can turn now to the Ready Reserve. I have some serious concerns about that. First of all, with its name. I think it is offensive to the existing Reserve and certainly it is a misnomer because they will **not** be ready. Secondly, I have



doubts about our ability, except in the initial stage, to recruit. I say in the initial stage because there has been a block in the processing of recruits through Kapooka for the last few months and so there is now a back log of people tested and ready to go to recruit training. They may be persuaded to go in as the initial batch of Ready Reservists, (quite a smart move if you think about it), but after that I have some concerns about whether we will be able to get the recruits.

I certainly have some concerns about employers. It has always been difficult to get employer support, and I cannot see any changes in that. But it will be even greater during the recession, especially when you consider that the Ready Reserve project is to require one year full-time away from the civilian job followed by 50 days per year for the next four years away from the civilian job. Can you imagine how many employers are going to want their employees to have 50 days away, plus four weeks annual leave? I can't see too many myself.

The financial inducements to employers will be costly to the taxpayer, and the absence of the employee for two, two week periods of Ready Reserve training plus four weeks annual leave will have a significant effect on businesses, which should not be underrated.

Most importantly, what legislation does the Government propose to enforce these requirements? The Minister has made no mention of it and it is my understanding that there is none. How can we possibly be reducing our regular personnel component without any guarantees that those we are replacing them with will do the job if required?

As a layman, I have always believed that the Navy, but more especially the Air Force could make more use of reservists and I am keen to hear from you what impact you believe the Ready Reserve proposal will have on those services.

How available will Ready Reservists be if there was an emergency? There seems to be no commitment to providing the sort of legislation that is going to be needed to make sure that these people are available, and some of you will remember what happened in the Second World War when people were in reserved occupations. The question of

incentives is a serious one which we should consider. There will be incentives to both the recruits and to their employers, and they will be very costly if we look at the American example from which Mr. Wrigley and the Government took their information.

This is not a cheap option and is likely to be very costly in the sense that employers are to be encouraged through financial means to release their employees, and employees to sign on for this long commitment. Education allowances and things like that are some of the measures that the government is mentioning. Yet universities are now pressed for places and increasingly are refusing students the right to defer their studies.

I think that one of the serious outcomes of the Ready Reserve proposal will be the effect it will have on the existing Reserves and their morale and the ability to both recruit and retain. They are clearly going to see themselves as second class citizens which they do already, as you know.

I have a dribble of letters all throughout the year from Army Reserve Units pointing out that they want to train, they have run out of man-days, that the training days are not sufficient for their unit. They are very keen people and they are being asked to undertake certain parts of their training for free. So not only are they committed people who are working in a civilian workforce all year and giving up their spare time away from their families, many of them are doing it for free.

The promotional and career advancement opportunities for the Ready Reserve are likely to be greater than those for the existing Reserve and so we will see people streaking ahead in the promotion stakes leaving the existing Reservists behind. That will add to the retention problems in the existing reserve.

Many reserve units do not have sufficient equipment now. If the sort of money that is to be put into the Ready Reserve had been put into the existing Reserve, it could have had a marked impact on morale and retention.

Turning now to the Regulars, some of you will remember what happened to the 52,000 total Regular force during the



early 1950's when we had the National Service Training Scheme. This was a time when our Regular Force was reduced substantially and they spent a great deal of their time simply taking people through and through and through the training cycle. There were few people left to do the other jobs that were required of the Defence Force.

It had a serious impact on Army morale at that time and I fear that that's what we're likely to get again.

In early 1942 Lieutenant General Sir Ivan Mackay, GOC Home Forces, advised the Government that it might become necessary to concentrate Australia's defence in south-east Australia. Similarly General Douglas Macarthur's plans for the defence of Australia included abandoning the north and the west. It was this advice which led to the fierce political controversy of what came to be known as the Brisbane Line. The basis of this advice was that the Army in Australia then consisted of about fifty infantry battalions, and it was assessed that this number was insufficient to do little else than centre the defence of Australia around the eastern seaboard.

Although this advice was rejected by the then Labor Government, now it is generally appreciated that it is difficult to see what else could have been done, given the state of Australia's army at that time.

It was reported recently, that information obtained under the 30 year rule revealed that the Australian Government had intelligence information during the War detailing a Japanese attack on Australia and of India. The information showed that the plans were very advanced and indicated how the main Japanese force would set out from Christmas Island to Perth, take over the railways and the infrastructure and proceed east. Very simply, it demonstrates how important it is not to put all our defence eggs in the one basket, we should be more flexible with the locating of our forces — we cannot guarantee an enemy will come from where we tell them to come.

Up until the Force Structure Review our Army could muster six regular infantry battalions and fifteen reserve infantry battalions. However most of these units

are under strength and in the case of the reserve battalions, badly equipped and insufficiently trained. As you know, the six regular battalions are to be reduced to four by converting two battalions to reserve units manned by the new Ready Reserve.

This means that since 1972/73 our first line of defence, the highly trained and effective regular battalions have been slashed from nine to four. Since 1942 northern Australia's population has grown to almost 1.2 million people, with many major cities and key resource developments located throughout.

As well, in defence terms most of our major bases are, or are about to be sited in northern Australia. But our ability to deploy sufficient ground forces in the defence of Australia is now less than we were capable of in 1942.

The paucity of ground defence resources which bedevilled our defences in 1942 still applies today. However, instead of 50 battalions we now have 21, of which only 4 can be said to be combat ready.

Similarly, we remain unable to detect illegal entry into our country, we remain unable to protect our shipping from mines, and we remain unable to effectively go to the rescue of our nationals in neighbouring countries because we lack the adequate surveillance, a mine counter measure capability, and an appropriate helicopter carrier.

I turn now to the financial integrity of the Force Structure Review which is in doubt. I have very serious reservations about the costing of the Ready Reserve. The Auditor-General experienced difficulties in getting reliable figures for his audit of the Army Reserve last year. But his report claimed that the cost per day of today's reserve soldier is more than 50 per cent higher than that of a regular soldier. Imagine my astonishment when I find that the Government has costed a ready reservist at only 42 per cent of a regular soldier and that the Army itself costs a ready reservist at 60 per cent of the cost of a regular soldier. They obviously cannot all be right.

I understand that the Auditor-General stands by his costs of last year for the existing Reserve and I understand that the Army figures were not wildly



different from the Auditor-General's figures. It can only mean that the figures of 42 per cent and 60 per cent of a regular soldier do not include all the costs which should be included to arrive at the true cost of a ready reservist.

We have been waiting for the last couple of years to see the results of the previously announced assets sales. The continuing depression in the real estate market has meant that Defence has not received the benefit that these sales were predicted to bring to the Defence budget. I would not place too much reliance on any prediction of buckets of money from the sales of bases announced for closure.

For example, the long term closure of HMAS Platypus may well result in a pretty small return for the Defence budget if, as appears likely, it ends up as a waterfront park rather than a valuable subdivision.

I understand that the planned staged sale of Zetland, much of which will take place prior to the building of the new Navy stores at Moorebank, will also be very difficult to achieve, due to problems with essential services if the site is subdivided.

There are several internal uncertainties in the statement in the financial area. What is not spelt out by the Minister is the context in which these decisions have been taken, which I spoke about at the beginning of my speech.

The Force Structure Review announcement is predicated upon no real growth in the Defence budget. However, the Force structure review also looked at options based on an increase of one per cent and a decrease of one per cent in the Defence budget. It recognised that, even with one per cent real growth, the Government's White Paper was not affordable. It also recognised that only 70 per cent of the White Paper initiatives could be funded without any growth, and that if there was a reduction of even one per cent in the budget, less than half of the White Paper program could be funded.

I am most fearful that, taking together the suspect figures for the Army Reserve, the uncertain returns from the facilities sales and the bulge which will shortly hit us in the capital procurement inheritance

from Mr Beazley in a year or so, the budget will once again be up for radical cuts. There was a clue to this in the fine print relating to the Ready Reserve in the Defence statement, which had a clear implication that more regular forces could well become Ready Reserve forces within the next three years.

How much more can Australia's Defence Force be cut before we decide to lay down our arms and have no force at all? We are doing nothing short of surrendering Australia. How long must we wait before we see substantial and meaningful cuts to the dinosaur of the Defence bureaucracy? When will our combat capability truly take priority over the brown-suited bureaucracy?

In conclusion, you would need no reminder that the lack of readiness in Malaya led to the fall of Singapore and to the capture of thousands of Australians and Brits, and their incarceration by the Japanese. That is the lesson we need to get across to the public about the lack of readiness.

We had the Fiji deployment in 1987, in a hurry. We had the Gulf deployment in 1990, in a hurry. We have instability continuing in our region and that in Papua New Guinea concerns us very much. Only recently a book titled *The Coming War with Japan* by Friedman and LeBarb has been released which tells the fascinating and very credible story of the coming war between the USA and Japan, with Australia caught up in the wash, and having to choose who to ally with. The scenario is not an overcoloured one and its reasoning is spelled out as follows: "If there is one thing that the 20th century ought to have taught us, is that the common sense approach to history is almost invariably doomed to be wrong and that the most preposterous expectations are usually closer to the mark."

We have a commitment to the United Nations Peace Keeping role and we have a commitment to defence co-operation in our region. We need to retain highly specialised dedicated forces with a high level of training and an ability to react quickly to the contingencies spelled out in the Defence White Paper.

The Defence Statement will seriously jeopardise our readiness to defend our

homeland. But our media were pre-occupied with who would win the leadership stakes on the day the statement was made. It received singularly little

attention. Yet in the long term it may well prove to be the most important decision of the Hawke Government.



*The former CNS, Admiral M W Hudson RAN (Ret) being rowed ashore at the Fleet Base*



# The South West Pacific — Strategic Backwater or...?

by LCDR Wayne Gobert

*This article won second prize in the Officers' section of the 1990 Peter Mitchell Essay contest.*

'...we should approach the region within a framework of regional partnership, not dominance. We do not regard the South Pacific as our sphere of influence...Such influence that we do exercise we want to be in the context of close, confident and broadly based bilateral relationships, in which we promote regional stability through economic development and the encouragement of shared perceptions of common strategic and security interests". Senator Gareth Evans <sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The region known as "The Pacific" has meant different areas to the policy makers of different countries at different times; however the region has long been an area of vital concern for Australia. The depth of Australian interest in the Pacific has been demonstrated on several occasions since white settlement, by various examples of Australian colonialism at Norfolk Is, and in the New Hebrides, Fiji and New Guinea. Indeed, although Australia refused to accept any independent external policy making capacity at Federation in 1901, the Constitution specified that Australia did accept power over "Pacific affairs".<sup>2</sup>

In 1919 the extension of Japanese authority into the former German

Pacific territories<sup>3</sup> and the predominance of Japanese naval power in the Pacific, led Prime Minister W.M. Hughes to create the Pacific branch under E.H. Piessie, to "keep Australia informed of developments in, and international incidents pertaining to, the Pacific."<sup>4</sup> Although this branch was abolished in 1922, its establishment supports the thesis that the Australian Government kept its eyes firmly fixed upon Japan and the Pacific, despite publicly arguing that external affairs were a British responsibility.

This essay will examine Australia's geo-political interests in the Southwest Pacific in the light of the region's strategic significance. The dissertation will briefly define regional parameters, the strategic significance of the South West Pacific, geo-strategic developments in the region and Australian policy responses.

## AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC POLICIES AND THE SOUTHWEST PACIFIC

### Regional Boundaries.

When the northern hemisphere nations talk of the Pacific they are usually concerned with the northern Pacific and the area within the Japan-USSR-Korea-China axis. When their concerns spread south they are usually confined to the

<sup>1</sup>Evans, Senator G. *Australian Foreign Affairs and Trade* No.4, Vol.60, April 1989, p 142

<sup>2</sup>Further details can be obtained from closer examination of The Constitution.

<sup>3</sup>The major possessions were: The Marshalls and Carolines, Samoa, German New Guinea and Tsingtao.

<sup>4</sup>R.Thornton, 'Invaluable Ally of Imminent Aggressor?', *Journal Of Australian Studies*, No. 12, June 1983, p 6.



Pacific rim and South East Asia<sup>1</sup>. For the purpose of this essay the South West Pacific Area (SWPA) will be defined as widely keeping to the island states encapsulated by the ethnically delineated sub-regions of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.<sup>2</sup>

At its largest extent the SWPA covers 35 million square kilometres of ocean but only about 552,000 square kilometres of land. Micronesia lies at the north western boundary of the area and includes those island nations north of the equator and to the west of the International Dateline (the Marianas, Federated States of Micronesia [FSM], Kiribati and the Carolines). Melanesia extends from New Guinea through the Solomons and New Caledonia, to Vanuatu and Fiji. Polynesia completes the region's southern and eastern boundaries and incorporates the nations of Niue, the Cook Is., Western Samoa, American Samoa and the French Polynesian territory. Ethnically, Melanesians are of negroid descent, and the Micronesians of Indo-Malay lineage, while the origins of the lighter skinned Polynesians remain a mystery<sup>3</sup>. These ethnic boundaries are not rigidly defined, and a fourth ethnic group, the Fijian Indians, constitute a large proportion of the South West Pacific's population.

### Early Strategic Interest in the SWPA

Throughout the 19th century the various Australian colonies maintained a steady interest in the South West Pacific. New South Wales interests were predominantly motivated by free trader activities and the gaining of markets, while Victorian activities in the SWPA were largely driven by Presbyterian

missionary zeal<sup>4</sup>. At various times the colonies felt threatened by a range of stimuli in the SWPA including: French convicts (recedivists) in New Caledonia percolating onto Australia, French "Papism" gaining the upper hand in the New Hebrides<sup>5</sup>, German naval bases in New Guinea and Samoa, and Russian designs upon Australian gold. The Australian colonial press of the 19th century were also concerned with strategic issues in the South West Pacific<sup>6</sup>. Indeed Australia's first military foray overseas was into the Pacific<sup>7</sup>, while the federation movement itself, sprang from the Annexation Society<sup>8</sup>. This preoccupation with the strategic significance of the Pacific stemmed from simple geography; the Pacific is contiguous to Australia, and any aggressor had to possess a relatively proximate operational base.

**"Forward Defence"** Up until the 1870's the Australian colonies relied predominantly upon direct British protection, however as the twentieth century approached and British interests became increasingly Euro-centric, the colonies were called upon to make a contribution to Imperial defence. In return for British diplomatic services and the ultimate application of British power, particularly sea power, the Empire became a reservoir of manpower ready to fight upon the side of the mother country. As John McCarthy observes, "The sending of colonial forces to South Africa and the Middle East saw the beginning of that long enduring axiom of Australian Defence policy later known as 'forward defence'<sup>9</sup>."

<sup>1</sup>For an example see: US Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power* 1987-88, US Defense Intelligence Agency, Washington, 1988, pp 135-139.

<sup>2</sup>Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's Relations With The South Pacific*, AGPS, Canberra, 1989, p 1.

<sup>3</sup>Some anthropologists have advanced the theory that the Polynesians originated from the Marquesas Islands.

<sup>4</sup>R. Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in The Pacific*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1980, pp. 222- 229.

<sup>5</sup>loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup>The Maori Wars of the 1850's.

<sup>8</sup>Thomson, op. cit, p. 223.

<sup>9</sup>McCarthy, J. *Dependency?*, University College ADFA, Canberra, 1989, p 3.



**Focus on The SWPA.** The Pacific War and the beginnings of a British withdrawal from East of Suez changed the "big brother", but policy remained essentially the same <sup>1</sup>. Australia's deep concern towards Pacific matters was clearly expressed in the declaration of the long forgotten (and still current!) ANZAC Pact of 1944 <sup>2</sup>. Regardless of opposition from the great powers Australia declared its willingness to have its own "Monroe Doctrine" in the Pacific <sup>3</sup>. As the Cold War deepened Australia's interests became more firmly aligned to the support of allies and the need to commit them directly to the Pacific region.

The *Dibb Report, The Defence of Australia 87* and *Australia's Regional Security* (1989) are now the basis of our Foreign and Defence Policies and emphasise self reliance, global stability and regional defence <sup>4</sup>. They have geographically refined and clarified Australia's strategic neighbourhood by identifying two sections; the area of direct military interest and the area of broader strategic interest. Nonetheless, the basic tenet that a major ally be encouraged to remain in the Pacific is as valid in 1990, as it was in 1870. History, modified and supported by modern thinking, reinforces the axiom that the SWPA must loom very large in defence strategy. It is certainly no backwater, as the region is neither remote, inconsequential or unchanging.

### Strategic Significance of the SWPA

Before proceeding with an analysis of policy responses, it is worth considering why the SWPA is worthy of strategic attention. Indeed it could be argued that due to its small population, the SWPA is an irrelevant distraction. Yet Australia has a deep

historical connection to the SWPA, and the SWPA has long been the only part of the globe in which Australia has been consistently involved. The SWPA is contiguous to Australia and in particular to the vital eastern seaboard.

Approximately 25-35 % of Australia's trade passes through the region <sup>5</sup>, and approximately 20% of Australia's exports are intended for Pacific markets <sup>6</sup>. The overwhelming majority of the SWPA's nations maintain warm relations with Australia, and none could be considered to be genuinely hostile. Australia provides leadership to the region in cultural, educational, medical, scientific, and almost all other social fields (this influence is reduced in the remaining Pacific colonial territories). Finally, the security forces of the SWPA are almost exclusively aligned with Australia or New Zealand.

It is an inescapable conclusion that Australia is a dominant power in the SWPA, and that the present status quo, is very favourable to Australia's economic, cultural, political, and military interests <sup>7</sup>. In the face of declining US interests, and increasing third nation and non-government pressure group activity <sup>8</sup> in the SWPA, Australia cannot afford to ignore the region. A favourable status quo, in a contiguous area, boasting considerable national investment in a variety of forms, must be maintained.

<sup>5</sup>Shipping and Air Cargo Commodity Statistics Australia 1989', Australian Bureau of Statistics, AGPS, Canberra, 1989, p.16.

<sup>6</sup>ibid., p.15.

<sup>7</sup>Strategic Survey 1986-87, International Institute of Strategic Studies, Brassey's, London, 1987, pp. 174-179.

<sup>8</sup>Examples of growing external interests include:

- a. The opening of a Soviet Embassy in Port Moresby,
- b. USSR - PNG fishing agreements,
- c. Greenpeace activities over drift-net fishing,
- d. Taiwanese overtures to Tonga and PRC links with Fiji, and. World Council Of Churches call for social justice in the Pacific.

<sup>1</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>2</sup>T. B. Millar, *Australia in Peace and War*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1978, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Department of Defence, *Defence Report 1988-89*, AGPS, Canberra, in 'Defence Program Overview'.



## Regional Vulnerabilities

**The Emergence Of South West Pacific Nations** The SWPA was the last section of the globe to see independence extended to a large number of former colonial possessions. The period 1962 (Western Samoa) to 1978 (Tuvalu) saw the emergence of ten new nations and several "semi-independent and freely-associated" states (eg: FSM and The Cook Islands).

<sup>1</sup> This expansion of nationalism was also accompanied by the establishment of a host of regional bodies including: the South Pacific Forum (SPF), the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Development (SPBED), the South Pacific Commission (SPC), the Pacific Islands Development Programme (PIDP) and the Committee for South Pacific Mineral Resources (CCOP-SOPAC).<sup>2</sup> However, the creation of a large number of comparatively inexperienced and economically fragile nations has led to a rise in strategic uncertainty.

**Military Vulnerability.** In recent years it has become fashionable for the more hysterical defence analysts to advance the notion that the SWPA faces threats from external military forces.<sup>3</sup> These writers claim that Gorbachev's 'Vladivostok Speech'<sup>4</sup> and the acquisition of some Soviet naval forces, particularly naval aviation, are clear indications that the USSR is posing a greater threat to Australian interests in the SWPA. However as Coral Bell

observes<sup>5</sup>, the SWPA is remote from areas of superpower competition and the present "Communist threat" is little more than an attempt by several nations (certainly not all Communist) to recognise, often for the first time, that the SWPA exists at all. The notion that the Soviets could somehow maintain a Pacific "fortress" in the SWPA during a period of genuine superpower conflict is ludicrous. However, the one inescapable military strategic development in the SWPA, is that the US presence will decrease, while other third parties will attempt to increase their regional presence<sup>6</sup>.

**Economic Vulnerability.** However while the SWPA is unlikely to be faced with any direct external military threats, security is a multi-faceted issue, and instability in any shape must be of concern to Australia. The region is extremely vulnerable to a host of non-military influences that could lead to threats even more serious than the military "threats" imagined by those predicting a Soviet military base in Vanuatu. The Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB), believes that the major problems facing the Pacific "mini-states" are: small land size, high population density combined with low total population, limited revenue base and geographical remoteness<sup>7</sup>. The economies of the micro states are small, ranging from Tuvalu with a GDP of \$3.9 million, to PNG's \$3.8 billion<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, only the Melanesian states have any significant non-marine resources and almost none have a positive balance of payments account<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Several Pacific nations exist in a state of semi-independence described as "free-association". Generally this involves local autonomy with the former colonial power retaining citizenship, defence and external powers.

<sup>2</sup> See: *Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, (JCFADT) op.cit.*, Appendix 3.

<sup>3</sup> For an example see: *Soviet Influence in the South Pacific*, A McAdam (ed), Captive Nations Council, Melbourne, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> In 1986 President Gorbachev's "Vladivostok Speech", declared that the USSR was a Pacific nation and would take greater interest in the region (ie: the entire Pacific).

<sup>5</sup> Bell, C. *The Strategic Interests of The Major Powers In The Pacific*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1987, pp 57-67.

<sup>6</sup> See: Congress of The United States, House Foreign Affairs Sub Committee on Asia and the Pacific, *Problems in Paradise: US Interests in the South Pacific*, S. Solarz (Chair)

<sup>7</sup> AIDAB, *Australia's Overseas Aid 1983-88*, AGPS, Canberra, 1988, pp 26-27.

<sup>8</sup> South Pacific Commission, *South Pacific Economies Statistical Summary* No. 10, 1986.

<sup>9</sup> loc. cit.



This places significant strain on the micro-state economies and fosters unavoidable economic dependency.

**Other Vulnerabilities.** As well as inherent economic and resource base vulnerabilities other factors are exacerbating the potential for destabilisation in the SWPA. These other problems include urban drift, erosion of the "home village subsistence safety net", rising youth expectations due to exposure to the wider world, and external threats to fragile marine resources from distant water fishing nations (DWFN's) <sup>1</sup>. Other developments that may influence regional stability are external power rivalry spilling into the SWPA<sup>2</sup>, ethnic confrontation between native groups and later migrants (eg: Kanak/Caldoche, Melanesian/Indian-Fijian), tribal/clan rivalries (eg: PNG Highlands), potential schisms between traditional rulers and the younger generations (eg: Tonga <sup>3</sup> and Pongera <sup>4</sup>), criminal activities and environmental issues. Given the smallscale and unsophisticated nature of the governments of the SWPA, these destabilizers could lead to external involvement in regional matters <sup>5</sup> over even comparatively minor matters. Recent examples of relatively minor incidents that could have led to major upheavals include, the expulsion of "Christian evangelists" from Tonga <sup>6</sup>,

and the plan to resettle Vietnamese refugees in Vanuatu.<sup>7</sup>

## Regional Trends

**Strategic Developments.** Several trends that could impact upon the vulnerabilities of the SWPA have been identified. These can be broadly described as socio-economically based and coincide with objectives declared at the Oceania Security Seminar in Canberra in July 1989 <sup>8</sup>, and at the 1989 security seminar in Washington <sup>9</sup>. Island leaders believe that unless addressed, these trends will lead to regional destabilization, and the fostering of external competition and influence in the SWPA.

One of the major problems presently emerging in the Pacific is urban drift. This is distorting the traditional subsistence village structure of the islands and its erosion may have dire consequences for societal order and "traditional welfare support" in the event of economic hardship. The seriousness of this problem was recognized at a regional seminar in Lae this year <sup>10</sup>. A further challenge to traditional structures is the increasing education level of Pacific citizens, media exposure and contact with the outside world. This must inevitably lead to greater demands for material goods, racial equality, and universal suffrage and democratization. This trend has emerged in Fiji and is now arising in Tonga were challenges to the Monarchy, and more particularly the "nobles", are arising <sup>11</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Centre for Maritime Studies (ACMS), *Maritime Studies* 35, ACMS, Canberra, July/August 1987, p 21.

<sup>2</sup> Biddick, T. V. 'Diplomatic Rivalry In The South Pacific', *Asian Survey* Vol. XXIX, No.8, University of California, Berkeley, 1989, pp 800-815.

<sup>3</sup> Sharma, D. 'The Peoples Call', *Islands Business*, May 1990, pp 12-14.

<sup>4</sup> Connell, Dr J. 'Mining The Rim Of Fire', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, March 1988, pp 20-23.

<sup>5</sup> N. Rothwell, 'Gaddafi's Pacific Intrigues', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, June 1988, p.18.

<sup>6</sup> Sharma, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> D. North, 'Leadoro and the Vietnamese Affair', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, February 1990, p.15.

<sup>8</sup> Conference Notes, *The Security of Oceania in The 1990's*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1989.

<sup>9</sup> Ashton, C. 'Washington listens but does it hear?', *Pacific Defence Reporter*, September 1989, pp 50-51.

<sup>10</sup> 'Population Pressure', *PNG Post Courier*, May 14 1990, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Sharma, op cit, pp 12-14.



Economic strains are also growing with threats being posed to fragile economies by DWFN's, pollution and large scale foreign investment. The micro-states are faced with an inevitable choice between heightened foreign aid and subsequent dependency, or reduced infrastructural growth and independence.

Another major category of potentially disruptive influences are the tribal, anti-colonial, ethnic, criminal and politically based triggers for violence identified by the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade's report of March 1989<sup>1</sup>. If allowed to develop, these triggers may eventually involve external power involvement and support to aggrieved parties. Examples are: Libyan involvement in Vanuatu<sup>2</sup>; Chinese/French support for the Fijian junta, external activities by government and non-government bodies against nuclear testing; the declaration of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ); the emergence of the Bougainville Republican Army (BRA) and the Republic of Meekamui; demands for legislative representation in the US Pacific Trust Territories; heightened awareness by islanders of pollution related issues (this is typified by the JACADS debate over Johnston Atoll); and the simmering conflict between the forces of colonialism and nationalism.

### Pacific Island Perceptions Of Regional Trends

Islander attitudes towards regional destabilization are difficult to gauge, as there are few major regional journals<sup>3</sup>, they have very few diplomatic representatives, and the micro-states have relatively unsophisticated tertiary institutions (which devote their few resources to vocational training, rather than philosophical pursuits). In July

1989 the clearest view of Pacific islander attitudes was demonstrated at a workshop at the Australian National University entitled "The Security of Oceania in The 1990's".

This cross section of Pacific island society, both government and private, indicated that their definition of "security" was broader than traditional western interpretations, and was related directly to economic security. From this economic security, it was argued, would flow cultural and societal stability. Security was seen as being directly linked to economic matters and it was stressed that a country cannot be politically independent if it is not economically independent. Internal threats are seen as having their roots in the distribution of economic wealth and the consequent well being of the population. John Dorrance cogently summarized the attitudes of the Pacific Islanders as follows: "...foreign invasion is seen as extremely remote...aside from region-wide economic problems, such threats as do exist are largely internal and mostly non-ideological"<sup>4</sup>.

The goals or objectives of the regional states were summarized by the conference as follows:

- a. economic independence,
- b. social welfare enhancement,
- c. national cohesion,
- d. efficient administration,
- e. territorial integrity,
- f. harmony in society, and
- g. maintenance of economic and welfare interests<sup>5</sup>.

### Australian Responses.

This paper has argued that the predominant aspirations of the peoples of the South West Pacific revolve around socio-economic issues. If these aims are realised, the Pacific nations

<sup>1</sup>CFADT, op cit, p 5.

<sup>2</sup>Rothwell, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Only Fiji and Papua New Guinea have large daily newspapers and there are only three regional news magazines, *Pacific Islands Monthly*, *The South Seas Digest* and *Islands Business*. The first two are published in Australia.

<sup>4</sup>Dorrance, J. C. 'Oceania and the United States: An Analysis of US Interests and Policies in the South Pacific', *National War College*, June 1986, p 19.

<sup>5</sup>Conference Notes, *The Security of Oceania in The 1990's*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1989.



argue that internal stability will follow which will in turn foster regional security.

**Policy Responses.** Australia's challenge is to adopt a policy direction tailored to the SWPA that also accounts for our own limited resources base. Australian defence and foreign policies programmes should be closely coordinated and centred upon internal economic growth and those issues perceived to be important by the SWPA's people. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the policies adopted should be discreetly applied so that the small and unsophisticated structures of the micro-states are not upset by overbearing aid programmes.

In June 1989 The Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade delivered its report upon future directions in the region. This report drew upon submissions from bodies ranging from the Council of Churches to The Australian Maritime Studies Centre<sup>1</sup>. The conclusions of the committee support the contention that Australian policy in the Pacific must develop along the following lines:

- a. small scale increases in economic self-sufficiency,
- b. bolstering local capacity for surveillance and sovereignty enforcement,
- c. disaster relief,
- d. education and training in Australia and development of local facilities,
- e. infrastructural and transport development,
- f. support in international fora,
- g. fostering a positive balance of trade,
- h. providing specialist advisers as required,
- i. increase the number of ADF visits, and
- j. ensure that Australia has a significant regional diplomatic profile.

## CONCLUSION

Australia's historic interest in the SWPA is no mistake or quirk of fate. It

is the result of geography and extensive economic, cultural, and security ties. The SWPA is neither remote, unchanging or inconsequential. Presently the status quo is highly favourable towards Australia's vital interests, but that balance has a real potential for change. In Tonga Bishop Finau, the kingdom's Roman Catholic Primate, has warned King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV that, "...there will be a coup d'etat if there is no change...the people want power sharing, and I think that they must have it"<sup>2</sup>. In Port Moresby, Melanesian Solidarity (MELSOL), a radical student body devoted to "an independent and nuclear-free Pacific"<sup>3</sup>, has staged PNG's largest and most violent demonstration. Australian foreign policy makers must heed these regional developments.

The situation in the South West Pacific is one of dependence; dependence on foreign aid, dependence on a small range of either non-renewable resources or traditional produce with little scope for either expanding production or expanding markets, dependence on imports for fundamental products and dependence on overseas capital. The problem for Australia in the Pacific, is formulating strategies appropriate to the islanders' aspirations for economic independence and internal stability. Australian policies must engender maximum participation by local populations and raise their levels of self-sufficiency, while simultaneously heightening an awareness of Australia's role in the Pacific. If this fine balance can be struck and domestic stability maintained in the region, challenges to Australia's position in the South West Pacific will be minimized.

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<sup>2</sup>Tonga heading for revolution: Bishop', *PNG Post Courier*, March 6 1990, p.8.

<sup>3</sup>G. Korei, 'Stolen goods found in students' office', *PNG Post Courier*, May 16 1990, p.5

<sup>1</sup>ACMS, loc. cit.



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*Giving the Army a lift — The SH70b-2 Seahawk shows its paces*



## The Effects of Technology on Defence Manpower Needs

by CPOQMG J Cleary, Fremantle Port Division, RANR.

*This essay won first prize in the sailor section of the Peter Mitchell Essay Competition in 1989.*

The effects of technology on Defence manpower needs depend to a large extent on the time frame one chooses to examine. Most informed observers in specialist fields can fairly accurately assess conditions likely to exist 4-5 years ahead, and ought to be able to plan their equipment, maintenance and training needs accordingly. Beyond such a time frame the future is less certain. It takes a brave man or woman prepared to make budget estimates for equipment procurement more than a couple of years ahead.

In many respects, the Armed Forces operate at the leading edge of technology, and the planning associated with technological change is generally dealt with fairly effectively in the short term. However, the rate of change is accelerating, and if one takes a long term view, technology is going to create, and indeed has already created revolutionary changes in Defence manpower. It is how a traditionally conservative defence structure copes with this revolution that is the subject of this essay.

Consider the major equipment items to the year 2000. It is a matter of public knowledge that for the Navy, the submarine project and Anzac frigates will form the backbone of the fleet to the year 2000 and beyond. The Air Force will have its F/A18, F111 and Orion aircraft, and the Army the Blackhawk helicopters. The over-the-horizon-radar will be a major drain on funds, as will a large amount of Defence establishment infrastructure such as Naval facilities in Jervis Bay. But although millions of dollars will be spent on relatively minor equipment, these will remain the big ticket items. Defence manpower planners can therefore accurately project recruitment, training and logistical support based on these items for the next decade and beyond. One assumes during

the lifetimes of these projects there will be no catastrophic social or military crisis such as a depression of the magnitude of the 1930's, or World War III.

The former would certainly see technological change come to a dead stop, and the latter probably producing the same effect, with the emphasis on dead. In either case events would develop their own momentum and revolutionary change would occur, but not as a result of orderly planning.

I have stated that, in my opinion, new technologies will cause a revolution in Defence manpower, but by what measure am I able to make such an assertion? The answer is fairly simple. By looking back at the changes which technology has created, and the effects it has had in society in general, and the military in particular, it should be possible to predict some trends which will occur in the future.

To achieve this, I intend chronicling the social, technological and military changes which have occurred during the unbroken service lifetimes of just three Senior Army Officers, one of whom is still serving. Then attempt to project the changes which will occur during the service lifetime of an unknown junior officer.

General Peter Gratton is the Chief of the Australian Defence Force. He began his Army career in 1952, giving service to date [1989] of 37 years. At the time he joined the Army the then Senior Army Officer was Lieutenant General Sir S.F. Rowell, who joined the Army in 1914, a career of 38 years. In 1914 the most senior Army officer in Australia was Brigadier General J.M. Gordon, who joined the British Army in 1877.



We now have a period of 112 years unbroken service representing the careers of just three men, during which time truly revolutionary changes occurred, brought about mainly by technology. Of course the great political upheavals which have occurred during this period have really shaped the world, but I suspect the technological changes, particularly in transport and communication have really been the trigger. 112 years might seem an eternity, but in historical terms it barely represents the blink of an eye, so let us start by looking at the time of Lt Gen Gordon, and when he began his career.

**1877-1914** It was the year after Victoria had been proclaimed Empress of India (without any reference to the Indian people). It may well have been one of the years when, according to legend, Victoria took one of the three baths she had during her reign. Victoria ruled over the greatest empire the world had ever seen, protected and projected by the 'Wooden Walls of England' as the Royal Navy was affectionately known. Young Gordon, a loyal soldier of the Queen, would live to see those walls crumble.

During his Army career he would see the introduction of Breech loading, quick firing artillery, an all khaki Army, an all steel, all steam propelled Navy, submarines, aircraft and the birth of the Royal Air Force, radio, machine guns, torpedo's, mines, motor cars, X-rays, electric light, gramophone records, refrigeration, film, vaccination... He would see the creation of scores of new nations, the decline of the rigid British class system and the practice of the upper class purchasing commissions abolished.

Fired by the industrial revolution, this period was one of truly momentous change in which development piled upon development. For the British Army, developments in artillery, small arms and tactics were painfully slow to be introduced, resistance to change being led by the Commander in Chief of the Army, HRH the Duke of Cambridge, who held this position from 1856 to 1895. A series of actions against the Zulus and the Egyptians preceeded the Boer war. It was this war which forced the greatest changes in the British Army. At the start of hostilities the British infantry were still practising close order drill, standing shoulder to shoulder in

full view of the enemy and firing massed volleys. By the end of the war nearly half a million troops had taken part, including thousands of sailors who took the guns from their ships and transported them thousands of miles across Africa with great success. The standard of musketry can be gauged by the fact that in 1902 'the 12 best shots (in the British Army) fired 1210 rounds at targets from 210 yards to 2600 yards distant, and had scored a total of ten hits! Nevertheless for all the experience of the Boer war, and the lessons of the subsequent enquiries, all of the European Armies were unable to adapt to the modern, mechanised conditions that obtained in 1914. We now know that the slaughter of the 1914-18 war was due to a great extent to brave, but poorly trained soldiers, being led by officers as poorly trained and ignorant as themselves.

During this period the Royal Navy was also slow to change. As late as 1850, following gunnery trials against an iron hulled vessel, the *Simoon*, the Admiralty concluded that 'Iron is not a material calculated for ships of war.' The Admiralty's reluctance to convert to iron ships is perhaps understandable given the experience of HMS *Megaera*. She was forced to beach on St Paul's island while en route from England to Australia in 1871, the result of unchecked rust in her hull. Nonetheless by 1861 the first all iron warship, HMS *Warrior*, was launched and although fitted with an engine and screw, she was fully rigged for sail. Once out of harbour and in favourable winds, the propeller was unshipped and hoisted on deck by 600 men.

The development of the Bessemer converter allowed the production of steel, a much more suitable material for ship construction than iron, and in the very year the young Gordon joined the Army, the Royal Navy's first steel vessel, a small packet boat, was launched.

In gunnery, poor results with early breech loading guns led to the reversion of muzzleloading for all British guns until 1881, although they were using the PAIXHAM shell, an explosive shell designed to be fired from smooth bore guns. British ships were still only able to fire their main batteries in broadsides (at 90° to the ship's head) and muzzle loaders had to be run in for reloading.



Early attempts at turret guns were not a success and one of the first ships, HMS *Captain*, turned turtle in the Bay of Biscay in 1870. Her loss, due in part to the tallest and heaviest masts of any ship in the Navy, hastened the passing of rigging and steam became the only means of production. The standard of gunnery also left a lot to be desired. During a trial in 1871 a carefully laid gun on HMS *Hotspur* missed a target battleship at 200 yards range in flat calm with both ships stationary.

It could be said that the development of the warship reached a new plane with the launching of HMS *Dreadnought*. Built in a year and a day at a cost of £1.75 million, she represented a revolution in ship design and set the pattern for all future battleships. At the turn of the century the major nations began building submarines, so that by 1914 over 200 were in commission. The problem was that the speed of their development outpaced the means of detection and the best method for their employment, and nations were unwilling to accept they might be used against merchant shipping.

However it was on the sands of Kittyhawk, North Carolina, that the most significant technological breakthrough occurred in Gordon's military career. In 1903 the Wright brothers achieved powered flight and the speed of development was such that only seven years passed before the first military application (aerial photography) of aircraft occurred.

Two years later, in 1911, the first bombing from an aircraft occurred.

When Gordon enlisted in 1877 what possible preparation could he have had for this new form of warfare. Like everyone else he hardly had time to marvel at the achievement of flight before he was faced with its incorporation as an instrument of war. How did the military establishment cope with the need for thousands of engineers to maintain these new ships, submarines, motor vehicles and aircraft. That so many were able to be pressed into service to basically learn on the job was more a function of a traditionally subservient working class, and a genuine desire to defend Britain, than any orderly planning on the part of the military hierarchy.

And in 1877, what of the rest of the world? In the United States, the Southern States were finally re-integrated into the Union, thus officially ending the agony of the Civil War. For some of the Western States, it would be another 30 years or more before they would be admitted to the Union. The Army went to war against the North-West Indians following Custer's defeat at the battle of the Little Big Horn the previous year.

In Australia the colonies had responsible self government and fears of invasion and immigration were the spurs to commence moves for a Constitution convention. The first test match was played between Australia and England at the MCG. Australia won by 45 runs. Ned Kelly was beginning his career as a bushranger. Thomas Mort raised £2000/- to fit out a refrigerated ship, the *Northam*, to transport frozen meat to Britain (she broke down). A rush of Chinese wanting work in the goldfields caused fear that Australia would be overrun and Queensland passed legislation imposing a heavy licence fee on 'African and Asian aliens'. Attempts to employ Chinese at half the pay of Australian seamen caused the first maritime strike and Ernest Giles had just returned from his successful expedition to the interior of Australia.

And so in 1914, Brigadier General Gordon, now the Senior Army officer in Australia returned to Britain. World War I had been declared and Australian Forces had been placed under the command of Britain. The most senior Australian officer was a Colonel and as a young man S.F. Rowell begins a career in the Army which will last 40 years and see him retire in 1954 as Lieutenant General Sir S.F. Rowell, Chief of the General Staff of the Australian Army.

**1914-1952** This was a period of great change, but not as dramatic as had occurred during the previous 37 years. The main reason for the slower rate of change was the stockmarket crash of 1929, and the great depression of the 1930s, a time when funds for research and innovation were not available. As a consequence, in military terms, the US, Britain and Australia entered World War II with hardware not greatly advanced on those in use at the end of World War I.



What had changed was that the Armed Forces had become much more professional and technological change had produced a much more skilled work force. Mass communication, through film and radio, meant a much better informed population, and events were reported almost immediately. In Britain particularly, World War I brought about massive social change. The traditional master/servant relationship broke down in the carnage of the trenches, and returning servicemen and women were no longer content to work as servants to the upper classes. There was a great shortage of 'help' and it is no accident that appliances such as automatic washing machines, spin dryers and electric kettles gained wider acceptance. Besides many of these men now had newly acquired skills badly needed by post-war industry. Surplus aircraft, and personnel, help create passenger flying, pioneered by QANTAS in 1920.

The technology of World War I also began the start of a change in relationships between officers and men. Generally the enlisted man was unskilled, came from the poorer sections of society and learned the simplest tasks by rote. However, the introduction of complex machinery, communications equipment and a much more involved logistical support system meant that the enlisted man now had the power of knowledge and this was the beginning of the end of autocratic rule and blind obedience. The end of World War I also saw the beginning of the democratic revolution, as people fought for political equality. Oddly enough, Britain, the Mother of Parliaments did not achieve absolute political equality until 1949, as certain businessmen and university graduates were entitled to a second vote.

In spite of the great depression the period 1914-52 saw many dramatic social and technological changes. These included the vote for women, the Russian revolution, pneumatic tyres, television, colour film, nuclear power, penicillin, plastics, the jet engine, tanks, radar, sonar, the electron microscope, rocketry, aircraft carriers, transistors, microwave cooking, ball point pens, kidney dialysis, open heart surgery, farm mechanisation, supersonic flight, skyscrapers, and the discovery of the DNA double helix. Because of the lessons of World War I, and the pause in progress brought about

by the Depression, there was much less trauma in mobilising the thousands of skilled workers necessary to fight the relatively high tech World War II. Much is made of the mechanisation of the German Army at the start of the war, but what is forgotten is that the majority of transport was still carried out by horse-drawn vehicles. It was the ability of Britain and America, adapting the mass production techniques of Henry Ford, to exploit the vast raw material resources of the allies which finally defeated Germany and Japan.

But, in 1914, who could have foreseen the need for the thousands of aircraft navigators, radio operators, radar and sonar technicians, minesweeping specialists, divers and parachutists? Did Cadet Rowell receive any instruction in what the strategic and tactical implications of these new professions would be. The fact is, in many cases they were in operational use before most people were even aware of their existence. In the years following World War II, all of this was common knowledge. Bombarded by a flood of films, magazine articles, radio broadcasts and memoirs, the young Peter Gratton would have known all about this shining new technology when he entered the Army in 1952.

1952-1989 For Cadet Gratton 1952 must have been an exciting time. Australia had a modern, well equipped Army, Navy and Air Force with highly skilled servicemen and women. It was the year George Jorgenson became Christine after the world's first sex change operation. 3D movies were being released, with the bizarre sight of the audience wearing cardboard glasses with one eye red and the other green. It was a time when post war migration was at its peak, and thousands of new arrivals from the devastation of Europe would be housed in huge camps as cheerless as a Stalag. Milk was still delivered fresh in a billy left at the front door and children would rush to see who could get the cream first. Most homes had an ice chest, the ice delivered twice weekly by burly individuals with hessian bags to protect their shoulders, and entertainment revolved around the radio, live theatre and dances. Jack Davey, Bob Dyer and Roy Rene were the undisputed kings of Australian entertainment, and Allan McGillivray would broadcast cricket



matches, tapping a pencil on a coconut to simulate the sound of bat hitting ball. To develop Australia, forests are torn down with the same passion they are defended today and giant engineering projects, typified by the Snowy River Scheme, are commenced. Australian troops are in action in Korea.

Technological change really begins to accelerate and General Gration has seen organ transplants, computers, fibre optics, space travel, man on the moon, and a man made object passing out of our own solar system, satellite technology, mass transportation, colour television, nuclear propulsion, intelligent weapons, contraception, lasers, genetic engineering, solar and wind power.

And what of the social changes. The Soviet Union, which in 1952 was regarded with almost paranoia, today gets more sympathy than the United States. There has been the trauma of the cultural revolution in China, the emergence of true democracy in the Warsaw pact. Some African nations have gained independence in bloodbaths that would have made Caligula blush, and if Cadet Gration had been told he would see action in Vietnam, he could not have found it on a map. The motor car has become as common as the bicycle 50 years ago and pollution threatens life itself. Science has eradicated some diseases entirely, but nature, not to be outdone, has introduced new ones.

The effects of technology on Defence manpower today are dramatic. Our ships and aircraft are so sophisticated that manning is a real problem. The FFG frigates have a miniscule crew for so large a vessel and senior specialist technicians quite rightly resent having to carry out basic ship husbandry tasks. In a world desperate for skilled engineers, trained personnel have the certain knowledge that much higher paid jobs are available outside the Service. For this reason they simply will not put up with the meaningless ceremony of the last century. They expect, demand and get respect for their skills. They also demand a high standard of conditions and pay levels similar to their civilian colleagues. In most service units today officers and men work as part of a highly professional, highly trained team, each dependant on the other. Social interaction is present to a level absolutely not

possible when Gordon joined the British Army in 1877. If he could sit down and talk with General Gration today what would he make of it all? I suspect he would find it all as unlikely as the notion Cadet Gration would have had that Japan would be the dominant economic power in the world of 1989.

So on to the fourth, and unknown member of this chronology. It is possible that a young man or woman studying at the Defence Force Academy today will be the Chief of the Australian forces in 37 years' time. What technological changes will occur, and what social changes will shape his [or her] attitudes.

**1989-2026** By this time the only F/A18s will be found in museums and the Anzac frigates long since recycled. Will the world of 2026 be that of a shining future where science and technology has combined to cure all the ills of society? Or will it be a world of desperate hunger and rampant pollution where the resource rich nations like Australia are forced to grimly defend the food producing areas with weapons beyond our comprehension. Consider this, in 1877 the total world population was estimated at something over one billion. In 2026 it will be over 8 billion, the vast majority in Africa and Asia. Indonesia's population will exceed 180 million, with 30 million in Jakarta alone, about the same as the total population of Australia. In India, the urban centres alone will total some 660 million, while in Africa, it is estimated the birth rate will be over 42 million a year.

What will be the technological changes over the next 37 years and how will they affect Defence manpower needs? The answers are as unknown today as they were 37 years ago, but it is certain the rate of change will continue to accelerate. I suspect that fossil fuel pollution and future energy crises will see a re-emergence of nuclear power. Probably all transport of the future will be nuclear or solar driven. For many countries the age of the private car has already reached its peak. Huge increases in fuel and road rental taxes will see them the preserve of the very rich and influential. Future generations of computers will be so powerful that they will be self programming. Languages such as Cobol and Fortran will be as ancient as Etruscan. An excellent time essay some



years ago proposed that today's computers are the beginnings of a new life form on earth. The high cost and sophistication of weapons systems will certainly see the Armed Forces becoming a very small elite unit maintaining stocks of equipment capable of being brought into service during times of national emergency. They will be supported by a more active and more integrated Reserve Force. Most servicemen will have degrees and civilians will be employed for the more menial tasks. At the same time civilian consultants will play an increasing role, the military having given up the effort to train its own instructors. We will need instructional designers, genetic engineers, electronic warfare specialists and possibly people trained in morals and ethics to approve entirely computer initiated responses.

Environmental pressure will increasingly restrict the areas available for exercise purposes and Australia could possibly finance its Armed Forces by renting out exercise space to countries like Singapore and Malaysia where such space will be totally unavailable. In such a case environmental specialists and possibly botanists will become military occupations. My gut feeling is Australia will be a Republic by 2026 with all past loyalties forgotten. I also suspect we will form a United Nation comprising Australia and New Zealand.

Whatever the social and technological changes over the next 37 years, only one

thing is certain, the world is going to be as different from today as it was in 1877. I can't help but wonder what the cadet of 2026 will face.

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# John Curtin and a Maritime Strategy circa 1941

by Commander J Sherwood, RAN

*"...there was no greater figure in Australian public life in my lifetime than Curtin. I admired him both as a man and as a statesman....As Prime Minister he worked unceasingly for Australia and suffered much personally over the wartime decisions he was obliged to make..."*

## INTRODUCTION

Did the above accolade penned by Sir Arthur Fadden go far enough in describing John Curtin? Was John Curtin not only a much respected political leader, who guided his country through perhaps its most threatened years, but perhaps also a shrewd strategist, who at a time of a changing international strategic power base, ensured Australia's sovereignty and voice on the world stage? As one historian, E.M. Andrews has suggested; Australians have tended to look for a strong and powerful protector to oversee their security interests in the broader international strategic arena. This because of a combination of; the vastness of the island continent it comprises, it's seemingly remoteness from the main strategic centres of the world and it's desire to allocate a primacy of resources towards economic development and social welfare.

Prior to the Japanese entry into World War II, the reliance was primarily on the United Kingdom and post 1941 on the United States. Although these have been fairly broad trends, they cannot be seen as being an immutable base on which the nation's foreign and defence policies have been formulated. Alfred Deakin as early as 1907 muted the idea of greater American involvement in the Pacific, no doubt as a means of ensuring a broader protective umbrella to Australia's interests. From time to time between the wars, it was again raised, as various political and military figures expressed

doubts over the strength of the United Kingdom's conviction to fully protect Australia's interests or if not conviction then at least that nation's ability to do so. Since 1941, questions have also been raised about the strength of the relationship with the United States of America. As Andrews so rightly points out, the policy of relying on alliances with great powers leads to serious external weaknesses, especially if that great power's interests are not fully strategically aligned with those of Australia. History now suggests that this existed in 1941, when Great Britain's strategic priorities were at odds with Australia's and placed Australia in a position of having to go it alone in the world strategic arena. This coupled with events that were beyond the nation's control, raised the real possibility of Australia's sovereignty being imperiled.

In more recent times another historian has suggested that this danger didn't exist because the United Kingdom and the United States virtually negotiated between themselves Australia's transfer to an American security sphere. This however may be an oversimplification of what was an important milestone in Australia's history, and especially that of her foreign and defence policies. Perhaps for the first time Australia was able to play a more mature role in making sure her interests were noted by her great and powerful friends. The question is; how important was the part played by Australia's politicians, diplomats and defence representatives, and more importantly the role of John Curtin as the guiding strategist.

## AUSTRALIA'S WAR STRATEGY

At the outbreak of war in 1939, Australia's traditional ties with Great Britain through her cultural, social,



political: economic and more importantly defence links were still extremely strong. It is only understandable then, that Australia's considerable commitment (although criticised as insufficient in some quarters) was aimed towards supporting the defence of the Empire as it did in 1914. Nevertheless, the government of the day did recognise that the strategic problems facing Australia were quite different from those of 1914 because of doubts over Japan's intentions.

As the fighting in Europe and the Middle East increased in tempo so did Australia's commitment in support of Great Britain. This was a commitment generally decided on by the Advisory War Council (AWC) of which by October 1940, Curtin was a member, and with the general support of all political parties. Commitment to Europe - or specifically in this instance to the Middle East - was Australia's historic commitment, stemming from it's membership of the Commonwealth and it's close ties with the United Kingdom. As time passed and war in the Pacific became an imminent possibility, Australian's found themselves so heavily committed in the Middle East that very little of their armed strength-in-being was available for use in the Pacific, or for defence of the home country. This had been a natural policy to follow and was in part due to a belief in the ability of the British Fleet, based on Singapore, to halt any Japanese expansion in the island chain to the north.

This perception, was, towards the end of 1940, beginning to change. Australia was represented at a Far Eastern Defence Conference held in Singapore from 22 - 31 October 1940 and although the general outcome was one supporting earlier British appreciations that Singapore was the key to the British Commonwealth's defensive position in the event of war with Japan, it had highlighted to Menzies and through him the AWC "the alarming position in regard to the defence of Singapore", and of a need for closer consultation with British authorities. This was to take Menzies out of the country in early 1941 and leave Arthur Fadden as the Acting Prime Minister.

## **John Curtin and Maritime Strategy**

Remarkably, in what appears to be have been a policy independent of this assessment, John Curtin was embracing a new strategy based on the need for greater Australian naval strength, not only to the north but also in Australian waters. Thus at the AWC meeting of 5 February 1941, Curtin expressed the view:

"that the danger to Australia would come in the first place from the sea and secondly from the air, while the army would only be brought into full action if both the navy and the air force failed".

Hasluck has dismissed this as Curtin's private brooding over the war rather than the receipt of new information. Perhaps it may have been a greater willingness on Curtin's part to note the advice of senior Australian military officers, rather than be mesmerised by that coming from London, that gave him a keener appreciation of the true situation. It is of significance that although Lieutenant General Sturdee was the only Australian among the Chiefs of Staff, all three deputy/assistants were Australian officers, and who had been the Australian delegates at the October Singapore Conference.

More importantly Curtin was able to win the support of Fadden, and on 12 February 1941 a cable was despatched to the Dominions Office requesting a clarification of the naval defence situation in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and recommending the return of all Australian and New Zealand "naval" forces now serving overseas. These concerns expressed by Curtin and accepted by the AWC were further exasperated by concern over where America stood in relation to a southward thrust by Japan as reinforced by a cable from the Dominions Office of 7 February 1941, and read to the AWC by Fadden on 12 February. As Fadden has subsequently pointed out in writing about the Council's deliberations:

"We were most concerned and very disturbed about what we could expect America to do in the event of a southward thrust by an increasingly aggressive and pro-axis Japan. America had not committed itself to a



firm course of action and showed extreme reluctance to do so."

Additionally, at the 12 February meeting, Curtin stated that he thought that if the war was going against the Allies, the United States might concentrate in the first instance on strengthening Great Britain in the Atlantic and leave until later "to get back the outposts of the Empire." Once again Hasluck expresses doubt about Curtin's knowledge of conversations along those lines, being pursued in Washington at the time, between President Roosevelt and the British Ambassador, Lord Halifax. Contemporary documentation shows that this possibility was raised by the Australian representative (Commander Henry Burrell) in Washington, in a cable to the Chief of Naval Staff on 7 February and shown to Fadden on 13 February 1941. Fadden further postulates that the message referred to earlier from the Dominions Office:

"advised that President Roosevelt left serious doubt as to whether the United States would enter the war if Japan attacked only British or Dutch possessions and that the President had also indicated that even if America were involved in a war with Japan, he felt that to fight an active war in the Pacific would be a dangerous diversion of forces from the main theatre of operations - Europe and the Atlantic."

This again raises the question of whether the AWC and or Curtin had access to information either not kept as a public record or not yet found. Of further significance is that in his statement to the AWC on 12 February, Curtin also raised concerns over the possible transfer of American Naval Forces from the Pacific to the Atlantic. This is noteworthy in that it was an American proposal not formally made known to Australia until 3 May by the Dominions Office although the new Australian Naval Attache to Washington (Commander D.H. Harries) had cabled an outline of such a proposal to the Chief of Naval Staff on 1 May. It was a proposal that had been in the planning stage within the United States for some time.

## **American Strategic Planning**

Whilst during the period from 1921 to 1939 American national policy had been profoundly influenced by an ideology that the United States should not enter into military alliances or maintain an offensive capability, the exchange of ideas between military staff of the US and the UK had commenced in the early 1930's. In fact US and British Staff had been discussing in quite definitive terms the possibility of war with Germany, Italy and Japan and the US Navy's role in such an eventuality since 1934. The outcome of these discussions was a staff presentation to the Joint Board (the Chief of Staff and the Chief of Naval Operations), of the Rainbow series of Plans on 30 June 1939, which were based on the assumption of the United States not supporting a war in Europe but carrying out allied democratic power tasks in the Pacific.

It would appear that this strategic plan did not have the full support of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Leahy, who was reluctant to commit the US Pacific Fleet west of Pearl Harbor. As 1940 progressed, US military planners certainly became concerned with what they saw as two underlying assumptions in British strategy; that Great Britain was a country relying on rapidly increasing material aid from the US and that British naval planners were hoping to rely on a token commitment of American Naval forces to the South West Pacific. In September 1940 the First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound, remarked:

"that it was very much in the British interest, that the United States Fleet should stay in the Pacific".

At about the same time use of the Singapore base was offered to the US Navy.

However, the US had other interests, or at least saw the strategic situation slightly differently. In October 1940 the new CNO, Admiral Harold R. Stark, working on the premise that the defeat of Great Britain and consequent disruption to the British Empire would greatly weaken the military position of the United States not only directly, by exposing the Western Hemisphere to attack, but also indirectly, by its constricting effect on the American



economy, proposed a new strategic plan. Known as "Plan Dog" it in essence called for a limited war with Japan (in the eventuality of one occurring) and was essentially the precursor to the Atlantic first strategy. All this occurring at a time, when those already at war, were attempting to get the US involved in military talks not only in Singapore but also in either London or Washington. Casey, as Australia's representative in Washington, was aware of this and arranged for a naval officer, Commander Burrell to be sent to Washington. Unfortunately domestic political considerations in Washington had prevented or at least put on hold talks in that city and US Naval Officers attended the Singapore conference as observers only.

### **A Naval Attache in Washington**

The arrival of Commander Burrell at least gave Australia first hand contact with US Naval authorities, most notably the Director of Plans USN, who gave him some hint as to US Naval plans to reinforce forces in the Far East in the event of hostilities. Barclay argues that neither Burrell nor Casey were shown "Plan Dog" and were thus unaware of the proposed Atlantic first strategy. It is of note that the official US war historian, notes that this plan had not been endorsed by Roosevelt at this stage, the President having only authorised the conduct of bilateral military discussions with the United Kingdom which were to take place in January 1941. Vice-Admiral Burrell in his autobiography highlights that he also had discussions with the head of naval intelligence and accompanied Casey for talks with the Secretary of the Navy (Knox) and the Chief of Naval Operations.

As both the official cable from Casey highlights and Vice Admiral Burrell alludes to, his final day of this visit to Washington was spent at the United States Navy Department being briefed on American strategic proposals in the Pacific area. In December, Burrell, on the recommendation of Casey was appointed as the Naval Attache in Washington to whence he returned, to take up this post, in January 1941. One

of his first tasks was at the end of January, along with the Canadian Naval Attache, to be present at discussions held between senior United States and United Kingdom military staff. Burrell reported by cable to Australia and New Zealand in nine progress reports the general thrust of these discussions. As he points out, his first cable of 7 February noted that some portion of the United States Pacific Fleet, based on Pearl Harbor would be transferred for operations in the Atlantic and Mediterranean areas. The latter part strongly suggesting that there would be agreement over the "beat Hitler first" strategy.

This period highlights that Australia was not completely left in the dark as to the higher strategic planning being undertaken by her great and powerful friends, in all probability due to the foresight of Casey. Most importantly, the consequences on America resulting from her participation in these conferences, noting that she wasn't at war, were both practical and moral :

"To give effect to the jointly approved strategic conception, warships were moved over the seven seas, planes were shifted between combat points. Scare fighting units and weapons of other countries were distributed in accordance with its term. Had the American government refused to play its part in their execution, loss and trouble would have followed. The British and the Dutch would have felt themselves wronged. The problem is not peculiar to this instance. If a nation (or individual) enters deeply, as adviser or sharer, into the troubles or dangers of others, it must accept the duties of partner or the name of shirker. Public figures in their public statements and memoirs do not usually enter into subtleties such as this. But the President and Secretary of State were perceptive men and I think it safe to conclude that they appreciated this point."

By early 1941, Australia if still dealing through her traditional links with London, at least now had both diplomatic and military representation in Washington. Both Burrell and Harries dealt through diplomatic communications channels and there is enough evidence to suggest that at least the acting Prime Minister Fadden was seeing some of the information being passed back on future



allied strategic directions and appropriate military staff appreciations. As could be expected it was mostly highly classified, undoubtedly limited in distribution and probably much of it destroyed after dissemination. P.G. Edwards has aptly highlighted the problems faced by historians attempting to collect the records of the period, and authors who have looked at the period, in time since, can be excused for having made some assumptions based on either incomplete records or through inadequate access to records.

### **Internal Influences**

If political considerations were a feature of how public statements and professed policy were not perhaps a true reflection of reality in America, then in all probability the same was applicable in the Australian context. Menzies on his return from the United Kingdom in May 1941 found himself increasingly under attack from both the opposition and within the government parties for the way he had handled Australia's war involvement to that date. Curtin himself was under pressure from within his own party, with views ranging from those of Eddie Ward, who desired stronger action against the government, to those of Evatt, who was advocating acceptance of a Menzies proposal for a national government. Curtin's political shrewdness is shown in these circumstances by advocating a long term view that Labour would govern, and there would be no need to misjudge the dynamics of history by debate. Perhaps also from the knowledge he had gained as a member of the AWC, and perhaps elsewhere, (reflected in his statements of 12 February and 8 May) he was taking a long term strategic view of Australia's circumstances. It may well have been something more than Hasluck postulates; that Curtin, in the face of an actual threat, was coming round to accept the proposition which he and his party had been denying for twenty years

"British sea strength was still of vital importance.....and similarly sea strength was the only force on which Japan could rely if she entered the war. From this aspect we should be in a position to counter at sea any action which Japan might take."

This was not just a greater understanding of the dynamics of global strategy, and the deterrent value of sea power, but a realisation that the only real avenue left for Australia was a hope that the United States Pacific Fleet, elements of which visited Australia in early 1941 would assume the role of the Royal Navy in protecting Australia's approaches. Sworn to secrecy as to the proceedings of the AWC, Curtin would have been forced to play his cards close to his chest.

If one assumes that the government shared the same knowledge as Curtin, then the key difference is in the way they continued to pursue the country's diplomacy and defence policy.

Notwithstanding the separate entity of Australia's diplomatic and military representatives in Washington, they continued to essentially deal through London, seeking British government and military staff appreciations. In dealing with the problem of Japan, Australia did not seek to bring its influence to bear directly, but in concert with British diplomats in Washington. The British for their part, after Churchill came to power, left the diplomacy largely in the hands of the United States so that Australia suffered the disadvantage of acting with a party taking a more passive role. This in an area which was of vital strategic interest to Australia. Additionally, throughout 1941 the government continued to commit forces to the Middle East and Europe, despite their concerns over what appeared to be a non-committal approach from United States leaders to the defence of Australia's northern approaches and the lack of adequate British Naval and Air Forces to defend Singapore.

The dynamics of the domestic political situation was undoubtedly a constraint felt by some in power as to what could become public consumption. The Australian population through their government had from 1939 focused their attention on events occurring half way round the world. Their relatives and or neighbours were fighting alongside their forebears in the Middle East and Europe. As one commentator has put it, the foreign policy was Menzies', and what the foreign policy of Australia addressed itself to was the image of the world in the mind of its maker. He had committed Australians to their British heritage and to faith in the Royal Navy to defend their



interests. For reasons of his own, but perhaps driven by the economics of the time, he had failed to sufficiently alert them to the dangers faced in their 'own backyard' and from the outset had promoted a "business as usual" attitude to the war. He was unwilling to impose a heavy demand on the Australian population and saw the problem as one of time and patience, to educate the Australian public to the demands of war.

In this atmosphere it is not surprising that both Curtin and Fadden were hounded from all sides when they made elements of their War Council deliberations open for public consumption early in February 1941. Curtin and Fadden were both no doubt perturbed by briefings given by the Chiefs of Staff and the developing industrial troubles in defence related industries. Although the statement released did no more than highlight correctly the gravity of the situation facing Australia and call for greater efforts in preparedness, it was perhaps the shock needed to head off any apathy among the population in general with respect to possible situations facing the nation. Curtin was the author and instigator of the statement and once again, may have here taken the opportunity, to ease some of the burden he would have to deal with as Prime Minister and foresaw as facing Australia in the not too distant future. Menzies, on the other hand, continued an adherence to the British view, one that the threat of Japan could be neutralised by victory over the axis powers in Europe. A view, in light of Australia's interests, far too narrow in strategic outlook and one that led him not to make the demands he should have made and did not help to foster his countrymen's confidence. As Hasluck has put it:

"Perhaps the one quality that was lacking was demand - a hard strong, unrelenting demand for sacrifice - a demand that was itself the voice of mutual confidence - a confidence of a leader in his people and an expectation of their confidence in him."

It was to ultimately lead to his downfall and within a short period thereafter the ascension of John Curtin to the position of Prime Minister of Australia.

## **John Curtin as Wartime Leader**

The assumption of this mantle of leadership in early October 1941 was in all probability made easier for Curtin by his prior membership of the AWC and his awareness of the dangers lying ahead. Yet he did not radically overturn the policies of the previous government, not only implementing the best of Menzies policies but enforcing them quickly, ruthlessly and continuously. Domestically, they were policies implemented by Menzies in July 1941 to increase Australia's war effort and required by now little if any fine tuning.

In the area of strategic policy Curtin continued to support the policy of reinforcing the Middle East and as late as November 1941, considered the movement of the 8th Division and the newly formed 1st Armoured Division to there as well. Perhaps the continued support of these policies may have been the result of more favourable strategic advice been received from both London and Washington. In early September, the Dominions Office had cabled Fadden that the situation with regard to Japan was not only more favourable but as less tense. A view interestingly not shared by Australia's High Commissioner to London, S.M. Bruce, who regarded these views as somewhat over optimistic. It was however supported in a cable from Casey reporting discussions with the Director of Naval Plans, United States Navy, who suggested that Japan was unlikely to be able to take aggressive action for 3 months and in all likelihood would focus her attention on Russia. This of course did not mean that he gave in to Churchill over the relief of the Australian garrison at Tobruk, which had been ongoing since July nor the provision of capital ships to the defence of Singapore. On both instances he received Churchill's assurances on the 27 October.

## **An Independent Stance**

What Curtin did attempt to do was to take a more independent stance for Australia, with the view to greater cooperation with nations outside the Anglo-Australian-American link. Not only diplomatic



representation to China set in place by his predecessors, but also an unsuccessful attempt in November to set up a series of quasi alliances involving the Netherlands, British Commonwealth, America, China and Russia as a means of deterring further Japanese aggression. His views on what he saw as Australia's right to have a say in all decisions affecting her own interests were reflected in a speech made to members of his party, in Melbourne, shortly after assuming the role of Australia's leader:

"the real issue at stake in this war.

What this country does must be done by its own consent. We shall not suffer from dictation from without. And to resist it we must have greater strength within. Only by standing together with those who are with us and for us can victory be won."

Through both Casey in Washington and Bruce in London, Curtin attempted to ensure that Australia played a role in strategic developments and that she had her say in the strategy being planned for deterring Japanese aggression. In respect to Casey it was an attempt by him in late November, with the government's approval, to try and play the role of intermediary between the Japanese and the United States. At the same time Curtin was giving the United Kingdom a chance to provide some direction, questioning Churchill with regard to what policy was being pursued. Churchill's response, that it was the United Kingdom's policy "to march in time with the United States", led Curtin once again to propose an Australian strategy for deterring Japanese expansion. Although it involved close collaboration with the United States, it was not dependent on war between the US and Japan, before the British Empire should take action. Proposing the fullest support for China, occupation of the Kra Isthmus (strategically important for the defence of Malaya) it included a policy of providing assurances to the Russians, Dutch and Portuguese that any attack by Japan on their territories would automatically bring the British Empire to war with Japan or invoke armed assistance. From the Australian perspective it was making sure that Churchill's mind remained focused on not only the Empire's interests but most importantly Australia's.

We now know of the rapid pace at which global events were moving, a pace

perhaps because of the communication technology of the period, that was not readily apparent to all players. Yet Curtin showed a good appreciation of the deterrent policies required, and more importantly he was not afraid to be heard on issues vital to the defence of Australian interests. While it can be argued that Churchill did not reply directly to Curtin's proposals, he did move towards a military understanding with the Dutch and on 5 December informed Australia of an assurance of United States armed support in the event of a Japanese southward thrust. The War Cabinet had on 4 December recognised that the primary requirement was to prevent an enemy from reaching Australia and had instigated a review as to whether the navy and the air force could be strengthened by the militia. Although they had access to some degree of intelligence, which was enough to keep Curtin in Melbourne during early December, the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and the swiftness of the Japanese advance southward, no doubt came as shock to Australia's leaders. What it had done was to get the United States into the war, the only ally by 1941, with the necessary resources to defend Australia's maritime approaches.

## **At War with Japan**

It provided the catalyst to bring Australians to action. Curtin's declaration of war, unlike that made by Menzies in 1939, was made independent of the United Kingdom and in a national address he made clear his government's strategy:

"We Australians have imperishable traditions. We shall maintain them. We shall vindicate them. We shall hold this country, and keep it as a citadel for the British speaking race; and as a place where civilisation will persist."

The loss of HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* on 10 December was not lost on Curtin, nor the fact that the allies had temporarily lost command of the sea in the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions, or that the strategy of the United States was of vital importance to Australia. On 13 December he cabled Roosevelt with assurances that Australia, already playing



her part in the defence of Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies as well as in Europe and the Middle East, warmly welcomed the opportunity of cooperating with United States forces in the provision of a naval base at Rabaul and aerodrome facilities in territories under the control of the Commonwealth and in New Caledonia.

It would appear that Curtin was showing shrewd judgement in his recognition of the importance of the north east approaches to Australia through the Coral Sea and the need to keep the minds of United States strategic planners focused on their importance. Earlier events no doubt had highlighted to him, the fact that in Washington, Australia only enjoyed at best a low visibility, and that she was now competing with the "mother country" for the resources of the "older cousin". Perhaps also known to Curtin, was that at this time American Army planners were beginning to recognise Australia's importance as a base from which to consolidate allied defences and ultimately launch the counter-offensive. On 12 December, the Pensacola convoy bound for Manila, was re-routed to Brisbane and on 17 December, Marshall (Chief of Staff) approved Eisenhower's plan for the establishment of a base in Australia.

### **The Arcadia Conference**

Of more importance was that Australia had learned through Casey of an indication from Roosevelt of high level staff discussions between the Americans and the British to formulate a generally acceptable strategic plan for the conduct of war in the Pacific and Far East. This provoked immediate Australian concern over separate representation, recognising that British and Australian interests were not necessarily the same and that the Government was far from satisfied with the results of the policy of subordinating its requirements to those of others. Australia was however denied representation at what was to be known as the Arcadia talks, and which commenced in Washington on 22 December. Curtin cabled his strategic concerns to both Churchill and Roosevelt on 23 December and again highlighted

Australia's commitment to global strategy and her fears about her own interests.

Certainly the Dominions Office cable of the same date, outlining future British naval strategy would have been of grave concern to Australia. It highlighted an Atlantic first strategy, with a second priority of holding the Indian Ocean. It is with these events in mind that one must look at Curtin's so called "plea to America" published in the Melbourne *Herald* on 27 December.

Notwithstanding the key lines: "without any inhibitions of any kind I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America free of any pangs as to our traditional links of kinship with the United Kingdom", it went further and clearly enunciated Australia's position, and highlighted to both "mother and cousin" that Australia in playing her part did not intend to be servile to either and expected to have a voice in strategic decision making. It is of note that the official United States War historian points out that American army planners at Arcadia were surprised at the lack of Australian representation, among others, and it may only be coincidental that following the publishing of comments on the points explored in Curtin's article that the British and American staffs focused some of their attention onto the security of Australia and New Zealand. As since revealed by the drafter of the article it had been framed in light of efforts to secure additional US assistance and public apprehension in Australia that the UK Government believed that Australia might be lost and recovered later.

### **Conclusion**

By the outbreak of war with Japan, John Curtin had only participated in the strategic decision making process for a little over twelve months. Yet during that time he had increasingly exhibited a breadth of vision, perhaps not seen and certainly not articulated by his predecessors. It is perhaps unfortunate that his early death has denied historians the chance to establish the full basis on which his strategic outlook was formulated. Perhaps it may have been just the private brooding of a brilliant man.



Despite its comparatively small size, Australia did have a body of men, both civilian and military, in a position to provide strategic appreciations to their leaders, and Curtin's access to information may have been more than official records now show us. What he most certainly did do, was to develop a more uniquely Australian view, one with a sense of independence, which while not denying the need for strong and powerful friends, made it quite clear that in playing her part Australia also expected to be heard. While history has already shown him to be a shrewd politician perhaps he should also be given more recognition as a shrewd strategist. Despite Australia's low visibility from a political point of view, the campaign waged from 1941 onwards for recognition and acceptance, led to that recognition as a leading small, or middle power, with a primary interest in Pacific affairs and a significant stake in global affairs.

It was a campaign orchestrated by John Curtin. In 1941 he had been quick to recognise the critical importance of defending Australia's maritime approaches by whatever means. A fact borne out in that the crucial operation in the Pacific War, in so far as the safety of Australia was concerned, was the Battle of the Coral Sea. He had also recognised that Japan's strength could only lie in her sea and air power and once again history has shown us that Japan's defeat was inevitable once she lost control of the sea and the air.

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## Of Ships and the Sea

by Robin Pennock

It saddens me to report that the Sailing Vessel *Carrick* (ex *City of Adelaide*) sank at her moorings in Glasgow some three months ago. The story of the *City of Adelaide* was published in Volume 10, Number 4 of the Journal of the Australian Naval Institute.

From information obtained during a recent visit to Glasgow and that provided from the *Glasgow Herald and Evening Times* it would appear that *Carrick* was purchased by the Glasgow Ship Trust in March 1990 (for the princely sum of £1) with a view to her becoming the centrepiece of a proposed Maritime Heritage Museum. To relocate her was a massive feat of pilotage as four bridges had to be negotiated, none allowing much clearance.

The relocation took place on Tuesday 28 August 1990 and was well reported in the (local Glasgow) press. Masts and bowsprit were removed and a small amount of dredging took place in the Clyde. There were only three days of the year that the move could take place and the time frame was limited to about one hour, due in the main, to the tides.

In moving *Carrick* from her long time berth at Customs House Quay there

were three of the bridges that caused concern. These were: Suspension Bridge: 3 inches clearance above the deck of the vessel and 10 inches of water under the keel; Glasgow Bridge: 12 inches clearance on either side with 6 inches of water under the keel; and KG V Bridge: 2 inches of water under the keel.

The move was carried out without a hitch and all appeared well after the move. However in February of this year, whilst lying at the Govan Docks awaiting restoration *Carrick* sank at her moorings. Moves have been made by the Glasgow city planners to have the vessel broken up and removed, but fortunately the Scottish Office have refused to remove her status as an 'A' Listed Vessel.

There are plans to have her refloated and restored and for other sailing vessels to be acquired, the more important being *County of Peebles* (at Punta Arenas, Chile) and *Galatea* (Spain). The envisaged total cost for the complete Maritime Heritage Centre will be in the vicinity of 20 million pounds.



Out of the past — On 19 April 1976 USS Olkahoma City became the first foreign warship to visit the West Coast naval facility that was to become HMAS Stirling more than two years later



## NEWS UPDATES

### RUSI Seminar — Amendments to brochure

The Royal United Services Institute is holding its National Seminar at ADFA, Canberra, on 27 and 28 September 1991.

- The organisers have asked us to point out to attending readers of this Journal some amendments to the brochure: Registration is now between 0830 and 0950, not 0800 and 0900 as advertised;
- General Colin Powell, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States Forces, will be replaced by Admiral David E Jeremiah, the Vice Chairman.
- His Excellency Mr Sabam P Siagian, Ambassador of Indonesia, will address the seminar;
- Mr Gerald Hensley, New Zealand Secretary of Defence designate, has been invited to speak; and
- there will be no speaker from China.

### An Occasion To Celebrate

At a special ceremony held in Oslo on June 24 Swedish Ordnance (formed by the merger of Bofors and FFV Ordnance) handed over a 75 mm boat and landing gun to Admiral Torolf Rein, Commander-in-Chief of the Norwegian Defence Forces, commemorating 100 years of cooperation between them and Bofors.

The gun was one of eight made by Bofors in 1891: the time when the company was on its way to becoming one of the world's leading manufacturers of armaments.

Of the eight boat and landing guns produced seven were made under the contract, dated June 24 1891, to the Royal Norwegian Navy and the eighth was used by Bofors for testing ammunition. This is the gun that will mark the great occasion.

The cooperation that began with the delivery of the first guns 100 years ago has involved many different projects, some of the most notable have been in the fields of coastal defence and air

defence systems, including extensive joint ventures with Norwegian companies.

### Swedish Ordnance Takes Home Ammunition Order

The Swedish Defence Forces have placed an order for small arms ammunition with Swedish Ordnance worth SEK 172 million. The order will secure production for the next five years at the company's ammunition plant at Karlsborg.

According to Mr Anders Olsson, Head of Swedish Ordnance's Small Arms Division, it is the biggest single order they have ever received. The order will also increase the division's prospects of continuing to be a stable supplier to the Swedish Defence Forces.

There are about 230 people employed at the ammunition plant at Karlsborg and almost as many at Eskilstuna manufacturing automatic rifles under licence.

### A famous name passes into history

With the formation of Swedish Ordnance and now with the change of name of Bofors Electronics Pacific Pty Ltd to NobelTech, the century-old name of Bofors has disappeared from the commercial scene. No doubt it will continue to grace makers plates on various weaponry around the world for many years to come, however...

### "Observation Balloon" reaches 10,000 hours

In the November 1990 issue of this journal we reported on a step forward into the past — tethered balloons being tested as airborne observation/surveillance devices.



SASS 1 (Small Aerostat Surveillance System) has now completed ten thousand hours of operational service, operating in all weather and surface conditions.

SASS1's manufacturers, TCOM, are promoting the tethered balloon as a more cost effective alternative to fixed- or rotary-wing aircraft for some surveillance tasks.



*RIMPAC 90 — On the flight deck of HMAS Success*



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Printing process	- Offset litho
Full page size	- 50 picas deep by 33 picas wide
Half page size	- 50 picas deep by 16 picas wide
	- 25 picas deep by 33 picas wide
Material form required	- B&W: Clean artwork or negatives
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Screen size:	- 133 preferred but 125 - 150 acceptable

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	Standard	Discount	Bulk
<b>Colour</b>	SA	SA	SA
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Centre double page	330	330	270
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