

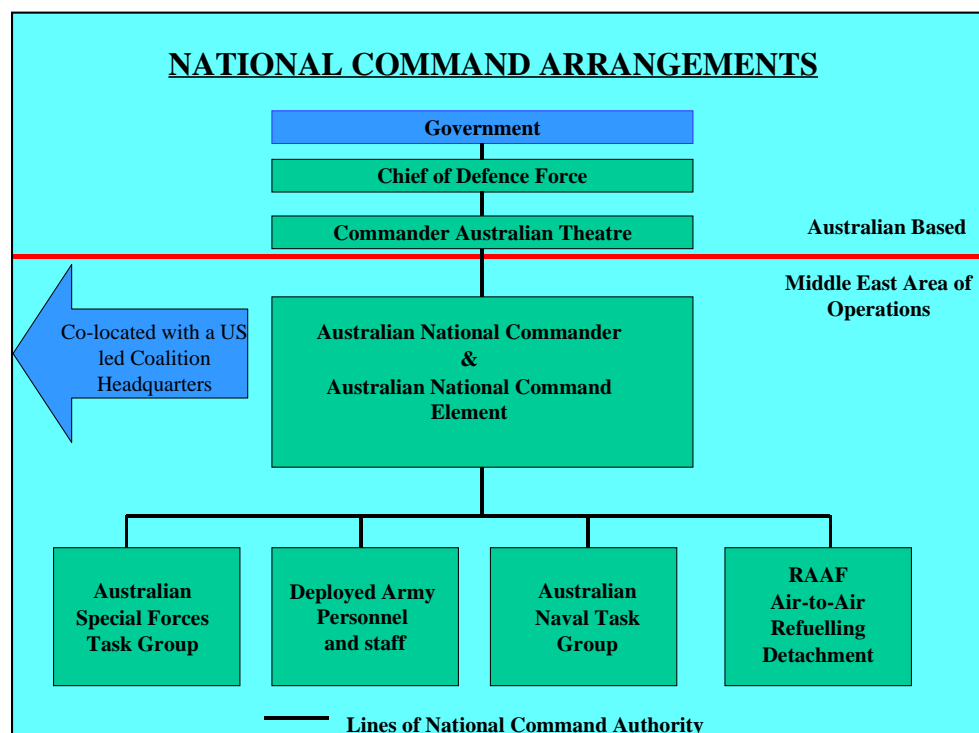
Command and control arrangements

Introduction

- 7.1 The delegation was briefed on the military command and control arrangements for the Australian forces deployed to the International Coalition Against Terrorism on two occasions during the delegation's visit. This chapter provides an outline of key aspects of the arrangement.
- 7.2 The establishment of effective command and control arrangements is a critical element in the successful conduct of military operations. Effective command and control requires:
- a responsive decision making process based on clear delineations of authority and responsibility; and
 - professional commanders supported by capable staff and information systems.
- 7.3 In his initial briefing to the delegation on this matter, Brigadier Bornholt remarked that the key issue in the success of any command and control system is to identify where accountability and responsibility lies - in essence, where 'the buck stops'.
- 7.4 The requirements of operating in a coalition environment, far from Australia and in multiple time zones adds significantly to the usual complexity of command and control arrangements. Coalition operations require the maintenance of structures to enable national command, as well as operational command and operational control.

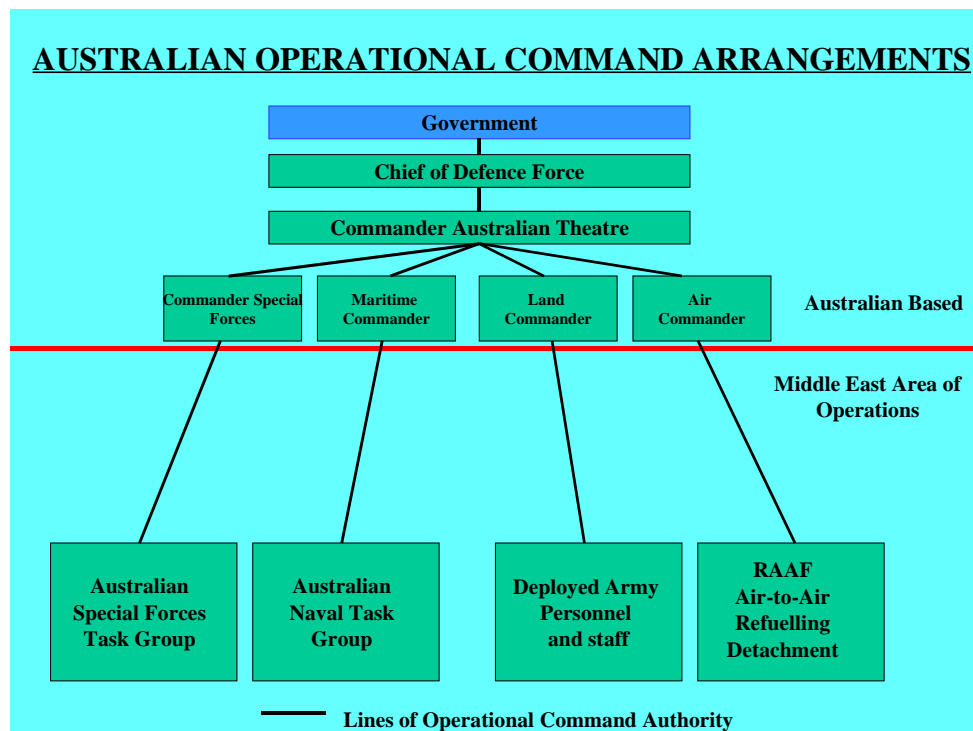
National Command

- 7.5 National command is a status conferred upon a national appointee to safeguard Australian national interests in combined or coalition operations. Brigadier Bornholt is the appointed national commander for Operation SLIPPER. He exercises national command at all times over deployed Australian forces. This requires him to monitor all the actions and operations of Australian forces to ensure they are conducted in accordance with Government policy and the directions of the Chief of Defence Force.
- 7.6 As National Commander, he retains the power of veto over any mission or task that threatens the national interest or employs our forces outside authorised national guidelines. Brigadier Bornholt argued that there is great value in being located in a forward position, within the area of operations. Such a location allows him direct access to senior Coalition commanders and the capacity to contribute immediately to operational planning decisions.
- 7.7 A key point emphasised by Brigadier Bornholt was that national command does not confer operational authority (neither operational command nor operational control) over deployed Australian forces. As noted below, in this deployment operational command is held by the Australian environmental commanders located in Sydney, while operational control is vested with the US-led International Coalition Against Terrorism.
- 7.8 The Australian National Command arrangements for Operation Slipper are represented below.



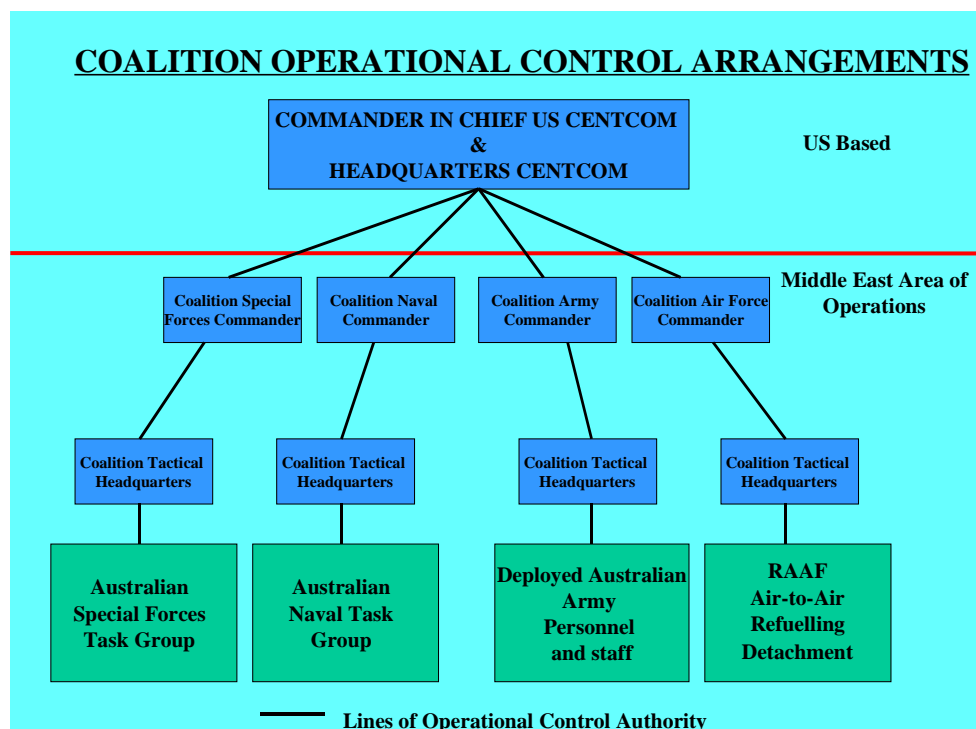
Operational command

- 7.9 Operational command is the highest degree of authority that can be assigned to a commander on a joint force operation. The Australian environmental commanders based in Sydney exercise operational command over the Australian force elements deployed to the International Coalition. For example, the Maritime Commander in Sydney exercises operational command of Australian naval vessels operating in the Persian Gulf. Similar arrangements are in place for the Special Forces, Army and RAAF personnel deployed.
- 7.10 These Australian-based commanders have primary responsibility for the operational employment, sustainment and support of their respective forces. They do not, however, exercise operational control over the deployed forces.
- 7.11 The Australian operational command arrangements are as follows:



Coalition operational control

- 7.12 Operational control of the deployed Australian forces has been allocated to the US-led Coalition. Operational control is a status that allows a nominated Coalition commander to directly assign missions to Australian forces within agreed limitations, usually related to function, time or location. Brigadier Bornholt explained that this is a common arrangement for nations which contribute to Coalition forces. For example, the routine tasking and resolution of issues involving the Maritime Interception Force would be immediately sent to the US Naval component headquarters in Bahrain for operational level direction and decisions.
- 7.13 While the Australian National Commander does not exercise detailed operational control of deployed Australian forces, he does monitor Australian involvement in operations. By virtue of his appointment, location and immediate contact with Coalition commanders, he is able to deal directly with and influence key decision makers within the Coalition chain of command.
- 7.14 The Coalition operational control arrangements are represented in the following diagram:



Overall command and control structure

- 7.15 Of course, these individual diagrams do not reveal the full complexity of the Australian command and control arrangements, let alone those of the International Coalition.
- 7.16 Combining each of the preceding diagrams into one would reveal some sense of the scale of the arrangements. But even such a complex diagram, with its overlapping lines of responsibility, would be incomplete and misleading – especially in the manner that it implied clear boundaries and discrete responsibilities.
- 7.17 For example, while the Australian National Commander in Kuwait is responsible for safeguarding Australia’s national interests, he is not the only commander with these interests in mind - the Australian environmental commanders in Sydney also consider the national interest in exercising operational command.
- 7.18 While such overlapping responsibilities provide useful checks and balances in the system, they also add significant complexity to the task of ensuring smooth and effective command and control.

Observations on command and control

- 7.19 The delegation’s main observations on command and control in OPERATION SLIPPER are:
- the National Commander plays a key role in ensuring that the Government’s objectives and interests are protected and advanced;
 - the deployment of the National Commander in the area of operations is of critical importance – it enables face-to-face, daily interaction with senior Coalition commanders. This means that concerns about national interest protection can be addressed immediately, greatly enhancing the value of Australia’s contribution to the Coalition. In a practical sense, undue delays in the resolution of such issues can mean that some coalition forces are sidelined rather than given meaningful tasks to perform;
 - as the National Commander neither commands nor controls the deployed Australian forces, his capacity to make operational decisions is limited; and

- the capacity of Australian-based environmental commanders to maintain up to the minute situational awareness, to maintain focus on the International Coalition Against Terrorism, and, if necessary, to respond immediately to a crisis on the other side of the globe and in a different time zone is limited.
- 7.20 We should make it plain that at no point were the delegation told of, or did they observe, any significant failings which could be attributed to the command structure of Australia's commitment to the International Coalition. To the contrary, they observed a system working extremely well: protecting Australia's interests and ensuring the safe and appropriate deployment of ADF personnel.
- 7.21 It is, however, a system that relies on extensively on goodwill, cooperation and a strong commitment to maintaining clear and effective communication between commanders. While this is perhaps true for all command systems, it may be appropriate to review aspects of the arrangement for any future commitment to Coalition operations.
- 7.22 For example, how would the arrangement work if a number of the Australian service force elements reported to a single Coalition component commander, rather than to different commanders, as is currently the case? In these circumstances, who would exercise operational authority over the Australian joint force and with which Australian commander, or commanders, would the Coalition commander liaise?
- 7.23 We acknowledge that command arrangements can be structured in various ways, each with advantages and disadvantages. We are convinced, however, that the lines of accountability, responsibility and authority must be clear and unambiguous to all. It is highly desirable also that commanders, especially those in forward locations, have sufficient operational authority to allow them to fulfil their responsibilities.
- 7.24 We note with interest that similar observations have been attributed to Lieutenant General Des Mueller, who recently retired as Vice Chief of the Defence Force:
- One can also wonder about the effectiveness of environmental component commanders in Sydney exercising command over relatively small-force elements deployed on the other side of the Earth, even when a national commander has been deployed in the area of operations.¹
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1 Brenchley, Fred "A Rocket for Defence", *The Bulletin*, 27 August 2002, p. 21

- 7.25 **These are important issues and the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade will, through its Defence Sub-Committee, consider and examine the effectiveness of the military command and control arrangements for the Australian Forces deployed to the International Coalition Against Terrorism, and of any other arrangements developed for similar deployments in the future.**