



Australia's defence relations with the United States are being examined by federal parliament's Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. United States Ambassador to Australia, J Thomas Schieffer, gives an American perspective on the US-Australian alliance.

A unique alliance

The alliance between the United States and Australia spans the distance between the Cold War and the War on Terror. In a world that is increasingly interconnected by globalisation, yet still torn by violent ethnic and religious differences, we now face the most fluid international situation we have encountered since the end of the Second World War. It is therefore an appropriate time to take stock.

For most of the period since World War II, our perception of the common dangers facing us was shaped by conventional concepts of military force at the disposal of nation-states, deterrence, blocs, and the balance of power. In responding to security challenges of the 1990s—such as the 1991 Gulf War, the interventions in the former Yugoslavia, and INTERFET in East Timor—we formed diverse international coalitions by adapting the tools of alliance structures and the UN. But we continued to base our assumptions about national security and defence relationships on existing paradigms.

September 11th and October 12th changed those assumptions decisively and permanently. We now know that terrorists operating across national boundaries can be as lethal as national armies, that rogue states can be their deadly partners, and that failed states, wherever they are, can provide a safe haven for their operatives and funds. We need to consult and work with our Australian allies, with their exceptional capabilities and experience in this region, to develop new strategies and doctrines to meet the threats posed by this diabolical trinity. That necessity has reaffirmed the importance of our defence and security relationship.

The ANZUS Treaty remains the cornerstone of this relationship. The Australian government's decision to invoke the mutual defence clause of the ANZUS

Treaty after the September 11 attacks in the United States, and the substantial contribution it made to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan based on that commitment, were tangible, courageous steps that demonstrated the continuing relevance of the treaty—actions that the US government and people profoundly appreciate.



*United States Ambassador to Australia, J Thomas Schieffer.
Photo: US Embassy Canberra*

Together, we are continuing to re-define and renew our alliance and partnership in a variety of ways that respond to the new security challenges of our age. These include tireless efforts to combat the spread of weapons of mass destruction and defeat terrorists through multilateral diplomacy; initiatives to get North Korea to dismantle its nuclear program and end its illicit activities; the informal US/Australia/Japan security trilateral consultations (now expanded to include counterterrorism); Australian and US assistance to the Indonesian police; and coordination on Indonesia and East Timor policy—just to name a few areas.

Photos opposite page: AUSPIC and Getty Images

Continued page 20

In addition, Australia and eight other countries are actively participating with the United States in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). We have been able to coalesce around common interests, pool our resources, and create a good division of labour with Australia and other close allies in the region because of the practical habits of cooperation we have developed.

Alongside active diplomacy and practical cooperation, we are making sure that our armed forces can operate together effectively, and that they have the equipment and training to

regional multinational exercises give our forces a chance to rehearse all the skills required to deploy and operate within a large coalition, and to work with neighboring defence forces that might not otherwise pursue training with us. The exercise program also gives Australian forces a chance to hone their skills and doctrine for leading multinational coalitions, something they have successfully done in East Timor and the Solomon Islands, making Australia one of the few countries besides the United States to have created and led a non-UN multinational coalition since World War II.

As the United States begins to alter its military "footprint" in Asia, and as we develop the capability to deploy our troops more quickly from home to confront today's less predictable threats, our commitment to preserving stability in the Asia-Pacific area will remain unchanged. Consulting with Australia,

propulsion, to development of the next generation of front-line fighters and advanced torpedoes. Our work together is not limited to weaponry, but also involves the protection of civilians. For example, the US Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) have signed an agreement to cooperate on developing technologies and systems to protect our citizens and soldiers from biological and chemical attacks. We welcome continued ADF interest in the US Department of Defense transformation process because we know it will pay dividends for both US and Australian forces to share technology and keep Australia involved in our ongoing development of new weapons technology and systems.

Cooperation is not limited to science and testing. The Joint Strike Fighter is an outstanding example of technical cooperation to meet future operational needs. As a partner in the development of the aircraft, Australia brings technical and industrial expertise to the table. By pooling the best ideas, technologies and capabilities of the partner countries, the program not only will provide the best possible capability at the lowest possible price, but also will ensure that successful industries are a part of the program throughout the life of the system. Only a few months into the Joint Strike Fighter program, Australian industry has won at least 11 contracts with the expectation of many more, and the potential of continuous work for the next 30 years.

While all of the forms of cooperation I have mentioned thus far are vital to the alliance, there is much more to it than that. Our military, diplomatic and technical cooperation can only flourish if it is enmeshed in a broad foundation of shared values and shared commitments that enjoy broad public support. Both of our countries are committed to the spread of democracy and human rights, and both our governments have extensive assistance programs to advance human development and dignity around the world. Working together, our scientists are seeking to push out the boundaries of human knowledge and understanding. For example, the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex, one of only two such National Aeronautics and Space Administration facilities outside the United States, is providing ongoing communications with NASA's twin Mars Exploration Rovers as they navigate the surface of Mars. When Australians and Americans work

We will continue to rely on Australia's advice and capabilities.



Australian and United States defence personnel working together in Qatar. Photo: Newspix

accomplish their mission. Australia is one of our most interoperable allies, as evidenced by the success of recent coalition operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The robust schedule of joint US-Australian exercises has traditionally been our most important tool for ensuring we can operate side-by-side during real world operations, and this clearly paid dividends during the heavy schedule of high-intensity combat operations we have conducted together since September 11, 2001. Bilateral exercises in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as some of our top-level training outside of the region, give both our armed forces an opportunity to train their personnel to the very limits of current capability. In the same way,

we will endeavour to maintain a balanced military presence in Asia that corresponds to today's and tomorrow's needs. We will continue to rely on Australia's advice and capabilities in this region and beyond.

Defence cooperation between the US and Australia has both a depth and breadth enjoyed by few countries. Our defence and industrial cooperation has reduced the costs of defence, enhanced our military capabilities, and contributed to the economic security of our two countries. Today our two countries are participating in many bilateral and multilateral agreements for defence cooperation, ranging from basic research in areas such as insect vision, advanced command and control and hypersonic

side by side on these great endeavours, they inspire future generations to carry on the tradition and continue to add value to the relationship.

The newest addition to the growing number of initiatives that link our countries is the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that our negotiators concluded in early February. The FTA makes our relationship with Australia unique: with

and closer economic ties, the United States and Australia are doing much to complement each other's strengths, enhance each other's security, and promote universal values that foster hope around the globe. We have shared both triumphs and disagreements over the past 60 years, and I believe our relationship has never been stronger. As long as we share the same values, we will

when our descendants look back on what we will have accomplished together 50 years from now, they will still be committed to the same values, and have the same determination to work together to address the great issues of their day. ■

J Thomas Schieffer has been the United States Ambassador to Australia since 2001.



A United States parachute infantry regiment landing in Singleton NSW during a joint Australia-US defence exercise. Photo: Newspix

no other ally or trading partner do we have the breadth of treaty arrangements—security, intelligence, scientific and economic—that we have with Australia. This agreement is the most sweeping we have ever negotiated to provide reciprocal market access for manufactured goods. Its services and investment clauses stand second to none. Our negotiators have set the stage for unimpeded opportunities for our entrepreneurs to exchange goods, ideas and capital.

Through formal alliance commitments, close political consultations on regional and global issues, intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, interoperability, cooperative research and development,

share a commitment to advance and defend those values together. When Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, a great personal friend of Australia, was here last December, he put it this way:

"I can't imagine . . . any great endeavour in the world going on without some sort of collaboration between Australia and the United States...it's certainly possible and Australia is going to make decisions which are in your own national interests; but it's hard to imagine [that] two allies like us wouldn't be involved in the great issues of the day together."

I share this sense of commitment and optimism about the future of our alliance. It leads me to believe that

Defence cooperation between the US and Australia has both a depth and breadth enjoyed by few countries.

For further information on the parliamentary inquiry into Australia's defence relations with the United States, visit www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt or email jscfadt@aph.gov.au or phone (02) 6277 2313.