

Watching Brief on the War on Terrorism

Introduction

- 1.1 On 22 May 2002 the Joint Standing Committee Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) announced that it would conduct a Watching Brief on the War on Terrorism. The purpose of the Watching Brief is to enable Parliament to monitor, consider and report on Australia's ongoing commitment to the War on Terrorism.
- 1.2 We intend to examine:
 - Australia's military contribution to the US-led International Coalition Against Terrorism;
 - Australia's ability to prevent and respond to domestic threats; and
 - Australia's contribution to international law enforcement efforts aimed at disrupting terrorist operations and finances.
- 1.3 To date we have discussed these issues with:
 - Air Vice Marshal Alan Titheridge, AO – who at the time was the Head of Strategic Command (representing the Chief of the Defence Force);
 - Brigadier Ken Gillespie, DSC, AM, CSM, - the initial Australian Commander of ADF forces deployed with the International Coalition Against Terror;
 - His Excellency Mr J Thomas Schieffer, United States Ambassador to Australia;
 - Ed Tyrie, Director of the Protective Security Coordination Centre;
 - Paul de Graff, Head of Security and Counter-Terrorism in the Attorney-General's Department;

- Brigadier Duncan Lewis, DSC, CSC, Commander of Special Forces;
 - Clive Williams, Director of Terrorism Studies, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University; and
 - Denis Richardson, Director-General of Security, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation.
- 1.4 Further briefings will be held over coming months with domestic and international counter-terrorism experts.
- 1.5 As part of the Watching Brief, we sought and obtained approval for a delegation of committee members to travel to the Middle East and Central Asia to meet with and express support for the Australian forces deployed in Kuwait, the Persian Gulf, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. The visit took place in the period 21 July to 1 August 2002.

Visit to the Middle East Area of Operations

- 1.6 The aims of the visit were to:
- contribute to Parliament's understanding of Australia's commitment to the International Coalition Against Terrorism;
 - enhance wider public awareness of the nature and value of Australia's commitment to the International Coalition; and
 - actively demonstrate Parliament's bipartisan support for the Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel deployed on Coalition operations.
- 1.7 The visit program was designed to cover all the major ADF force elements deployed in the Middle East Area of Operations at the time of the visit. The highlights of the program were:
- 21 July to 22 July – transit to the Middle East Area of Operations from RAAF Base Pearce via an ADF chartered resupply aircraft;
 - 22 July to 23 July – visit to the Australian National Command Element and Australian forces deployed in Kuwait, including a visit to the US Armed Forces base, Camp Doha, north of Kuwait City;
 - 24 July to 25 July – visit to and overnight stay on Australian naval frigates, HMAS *Arunta* and HMAS *Melbourne*, deployed on maritime interception operations in the northern Persian Gulf, including a visit to the Australian Naval Task Group Commander embarked on the United States Navy destroyer, *USS Hopper*;

- 26 July – visit to Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) 84 Wing Detachment conducting air to air re-fuelling operations from Manas, Kyrgystan (GANCI Air Base); and
 - 27 July – visit to Australian Special Forces, from the Special Air Service Regiment, based at Bagram Airbase, north of Kabul, Afghanistan.¹
- 1.8 Conscious of minimising the cost of the visit, the delegation used RAAF or ADF charter aircraft throughout the visit. Travel to and from the Area of Operations was by a standard Defence resupply flight (using a Russian built Illuyshin 76T). This aircraft is chartered on a regular basis to fly Australian personnel, supplies and equipment into the Area of Operations. Within the Area of Operations, including the movements into and out of Afghanistan, the delegation travelled by RAAF C-130 Hercules tactical airlift aircraft.
- 1.9 At the completion of the ADF component of the visit, and prior to the scheduled Defence charter return to Australia, the delegation was able to conduct a series of trade-related visits in Dubai, one of the emirates that comprise the United Arab Emirates. This section of the program involved:
- 28 July – briefings on and tours of the Dubai Ports Authority, the Jebel Ali Free Zone and ‘The Palm’ development, and a reception with members of the Australian Business in the Gulf group; and
 - 29 July – meetings with the Chief Executive Officer of Dubai Aluminium Ltd and senior officials of Dubai Internet City, Knowledge Village and Media City.

Acknowledgements

- 1.10 The delegation members are very appreciative of the considerable effort made by ADF personnel, both in Australia and in the Area of Operations, to ensure that the visit was successful.
- 1.11 The delegation was warmly received and professionally briefed at each location, notwithstanding the fact that our soldiers, sailors, airmen and women were in the midst of a heavy operational schedule.
- 1.12 In particular, the delegation would like to thank Brigadier Gary Bornholt, Commander of the Australian National Contingent and his Chief of Staff, Commander Mike Noonan, from the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). Their support and expert advice throughout the visit was central to the success of the visit. Thanks are also due to the staff officers of Strategic Command

1 A delegation’s full program is reproduced at Appendix A.

and Headquarters Australian Theatre, especially Squadron Leader Paul Bastin, for their combined efforts in coordinating and developing the visit program.

- 1.13 Special thanks must go to personnel from the various force elements deployed on operations in the Middle East and Central Asia, all of whom were generous with their time and expertise:
- Lieutenant Colonel Rick Burr and the men of the Special Air Service Regiment based in Bagram, Afghanistan;
 - Captain Peter Sinclair and Commander Peter Stafford from the Maritime Interception Force Task Group;
 - Commander Steve McDowall and the ship's company of the HMAS *Melbourne*;
 - Commander Ray Griggs and the ship's company of the HMAS *Arunta*;
 - Group Captain Dave Richards, Wing Commander Trent Breeze, Flight Lieutenant Kathy Stamp and the airmen and women of RAAF 84 Wing Detachment at GANCI Airbase in Kyrgyzstan; and
 - Captain Noel Gilby and the ADF Public Affairs Team who travelled with us in Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan.
- 1.14 The delegation greatly appreciates the time taken by senior Coalition commanders for meetings and briefings, and would like to thank:
- Colonel 'Snooky' Parker, Chief of Staff, US 3rd Army, Camp Doha, Kuwait;
 - Commander Ken Auten, captain of the *USS Hopper*;
 - Lieutenant General Dan McNeill, Commander Combined Joint Task Force 180, Bagram, Afghanistan; and
 - Brigadier General George Patrick, US Air Force, Manas (GANCI Airbase), Kyrgyzstan.
- 1.15 Thanks also to the Australian diplomatic staff based in the region who assisted in the development and delivery of our program:
- His Excellency Mr Robert Tyson, Australian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia (who is also accredited to Kuwait);
 - Colonel Roger Tiller, the Defence Attaché from the Embassy in Riyadh;
 - His Excellency Mr Les Rowe, Australian Ambassador to Russia (who is also accredited to Kyrgyzstan);

- Kevin Magee and Daniel Emery, from the Australian Embassy in Moscow;
- Paul Morgan, Peter Linford and Alex Fraser from the Australian Embassy in Abu Dhabi; and
- Ian Wing, Austrade's Executive Manager for the Middle East and Indian Ocean Region.

Report structure

- 1.16 This report provides a record of the main issues arising from the various meetings, visits, briefings and tours conducted by the delegation. It is structured as follows:
- Chapter 2 sets the context for Australia's commitment to the War on Terrorism, with an emphasis on the ADF contribution;
 - Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 summarise key aspects of the visits to Kuwait, the Persian Gulf, Kyrgyzstan, and Afghanistan respectively;
 - Chapter 7 canvasses the military command and control arrangements in place for the deployed Australian forces;
 - Chapter 8 consolidates the major conclusions and observations arising from the visits to the Middle East Area of Operations; and
 - finally, Chapter 9 records the main activities undertaken during the delegation's brief visit to Dubai.