

Australia's commitment to the War on Terrorism

September 11 and Australia's response

- 2.1 The attacks which resulted in the destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York and the partial demolition of the Pentagon in Washington D.C. on 11 September 2002 have been acknowledged widely as the worst international terrorist attacks in history. More than 3 000 people from 85 countries were killed in these attacks. Ten of those who died were Australians.¹
- 2.2 The Australian Government was quick to denounce and respond to the attacks. Immediately following the attacks, the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP, offered condolences to the American people on behalf of Australia and, on 14 September, stated that:

The Australian people have been shocked and outraged at the enormity of the terrorist attacks on the United States. These heinous crimes have caused catastrophic loss of life, injury and destruction. We anticipate that a significant number of Australian nationals are included among those who lost their lives.

The Government has decided, in consultation with the United States, that Article IV of the ANZUS Treaty applies to the terrorist attacks on the United States. The decision is based on our belief that the attacks have been initiated and coordinated from outside the United States.

1 US Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism – 2001, Released by the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 21 May 2002, <http://www.state.gov> ; and <http://www.cnn.com/specials/2001/trade.center/victims.section.html>

This action has been taken to underline the gravity of the situation and to demonstrate our steadfast commitment to work with the United States in combating international terrorism².

2.3 The response received bipartisan support, with the then Leader of the Opposition, the Hon Kim Beazley MP, remarking:

The attacks on New York and Washington DC have fundamentally changed the modern threat of terrorism. Mass terrorism is now a reality. Governments world wide must respond to this new reality.

National leaders must demonstrate that they are prepared to deal with a fundamentally new level of threat and that they will ensure that people can go about their lives in peace and security. There must be a fundamental re-commitment to public safety.

Labour has already committed itself to: an international intelligence, police and military effort against those who committed the atrocities in New York and Washington and those who supported and harboured them. Labour will support this in a bipartisan fashion ... ³

2.4 The Australian response was consistent with that of many other nations.

2.5 On 12 September, the United Nations Security Council condemned the attacks and affirmed the inherent right of collective self-defence in accordance with the UN Charter. The Security Council also adopted three resolutions (numbered 1368, 1373 and 1377) aimed at countering and limiting the threat of trans-national terrorism. In addition, the General Assembly adopted two anti-terrorism resolutions condemning these 'heinous acts of terrorism'. Specialised agencies within the United Nations, such as the International Civil Aviation Organisation, have also acted to limit the freedom of movement of terrorist groups.

2.6 On 5 October 2001, member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which states that an armed attack on one or more of the allies in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all. A broad range of international bodies, including the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and ASEAN, have also condemned the terrorist attacks of September 11.

2.7 An essential element of Australia's initial response was the commitment to 'respond to US requests for military support within the limits of our

2 Prime Minister of Australia, Media Release – Application of the ANZUS Treaty to Terrorist Attacks on the United States, 14 September 2001

3 Leader of the Opposition, Media Release – Fighting Terrorists Today – Ten Things Australia Needs to Do and Labour's Commitment To Do Them, 13 September 2001

capability'.⁴ Initial military support commenced almost immediately, with a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) C-130J aircraft ferrying emergency response personnel to New York to assist with the rescue and consequence management effort. In addition, all ADF personnel assigned to United States and United Kingdom military units were authorised to deploy, as required, with their host-nation units on counter terrorist operations

- 2.8 Australia's efforts to combat terrorism have since expanded well beyond the initial military response, with action being taken in the areas of law enforcement, intelligence collection and analysis, financial regulation and domestic counter-terrorist response capabilities. This approach mirrors the trend internationally, which recognises that defeating terrorism requires cooperative and integrated responses (both nationally and internationally) across a wide range of policy areas.

Australia's military contribution to the International Coalition Against Terrorism

Building the contribution

- 2.9 Immediately after the September 11 attacks, the United States began to assemble an international coalition of forces to be deployed in operations against the Al Qaida terrorist network, which was held responsible for the attacks, and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which provided shelter and support for Al Qaida and its leader, Osama bin Laden.
- 2.10 Following the Australian Government's indication of support, the ADF began to liaise with the United States Central Command (the US military headquarters responsible for coordinating US military action in Central Asia) about the potential nature of Australia's commitment.⁵

4 Minister for Defence, Media Release – Further Australian Military Support to the United States and the United Kingdom, 20 September 2001

5 The United States Central Command code name for the operations of the International Coalition Against Terror is OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. The Australian Defence Force subsequently adopted the code name OPERATION SLIPPER for the Australian contribution to the International Coalition Against Terrorism.

The United States has recorded that 136 countries have offered a range of assistance to the International Coalition Against Terrorism. Military forces from 55 countries were involved in the Coalition in one form or another; 89 countries have granted overflight status for US military aircraft; 76 countries have granted landing rights; and 23 countries have agreed to host US and Coalition forces involved in military operations in Afghanistan. (Source: US Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism – 2001, Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, 21 May 2002, www.state.gov)

- 2.11 On 17 October 2001 the Prime Minister announced the detail of Australia's military contribution to the International Coalition Against Terrorism, indicating that the following forces were available for deployment:
- two P-C3 Orion long-range maritime aircraft to augment maritime patrol and reconnaissance capabilities;
 - an Australian Special Forces detachment to deploy to locations decided by the Chief of the Defence Force, in conjunction with Coalition Commanders;
 - two Boeing 707 tanker aircraft, to support air to air refuelling operations;
 - a naval task group, comprising one amphibious command ship with helicopter capability, and a frigate as escort;
 - four FA-18 strike aircraft, to provide support for the air defence of Coalition forces; and
 - one frigate, with embarked helicopter capability, to assist in the Coalition's naval protection of shipping effort.⁶
- 2.12 The Prime Minister also indicated that Australia would continue to provide one guided missile frigate to support the Multinational Interception Force implementing UN Security Council Resolutions in the Persian Gulf. At the time of this announcement, HMAS *Anzac* was conducting this task and HMAS *Sydney* was earmarked as the relief vessel. The Prime Minister indicated that the RAAF FA-18 aircraft were not expected to operate over Afghanistan.⁷
- 2.13 Importantly, it was announced that Australian forces would at all times operate under Australian National Command in support of Coalition operations. While the Australian forces would be assigned operational tasks on a daily basis by Coalition commanders, the tasks would be within parameters agreed by the Australian National Command.
- 2.14 This commitment received bipartisan political support, with the Prime Minister indicating that he had personally consulted with the Leader of the Opposition before making the announcement.
- 2.15 After six months, the Government reviewed its original commitment, altering the balance of forces somewhat and reporting that:

6 Prime Minister of Australia, Media Release – Force Deployment, 17 October 2001

7 The FA-18 aircraft were deployed to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, providing protection to Coalition assets at that base. They did not operate over Afghanistan and have since completed their tour of duty.

While we have achieved considerable success on the ground in Afghanistan, the broader war against terrorism will be a long one.

Australia is in for the long haul. Part of our commitment is ensuring that our defence forces are ready to meet any new challenges that may arise.

Australians can continue to be proud of the efforts of our men and women in the ADF, who have successfully demonstrated once again they are willing to contribute to peace and security throughout the world.⁸

The contribution from each Service

Royal Australian Navy

- 2.16 The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) has maintained a task group in the Persian Gulf for the majority of the campaign. HMAS *Anzac* had deployed to the Gulf in June 2001 as part of the Maritime Interception Force. Following September 11, her operations were subsequently combined with OPERATION SLIPPER and her tour of duty extended at the request of US Central Command. HMAS *Anzac* was eventually replaced by HMAS *Sydney*. The Australian naval force was further augmented by HMAS *Kanimbla*, an amphibious command ship, and HMAS *Adelaide*, a guided missile frigate. The *Kanimbla* completed her tour and was replaced by her sister ship, the HMAS *Manoora* which, after her tour, returned home as the last scheduled deployment of an Australian amphibious command vessel. HMAS *Sydney* and HMAS *Adelaide* were relieved by HMAS *Newcastle* and HMAS *Canberra*, which in turn have been relieved by the original ANZAC class frigate, HMAS *Arunta* and the guided missile frigate, HMAS *Melbourne*.
- 2.17 The RAN has also deployed an Australian Naval Task Group command team headed by an Australian naval officer at the rank of Captain. This task group headquarters has exercised tactical command of the Maritime Interception Force at various times between October 2001 and July 2002. Overall operational control of the Maritime Interception Force has remained with the US Navy.
- 2.18 The deployed vessels have been supported by a small naval logistics element based in the Gulf States responsible for assisting the Australian naval vessels operating in the Persian Gulf.

8 Minister for Defence, Media release – Australian Defence Force contribution to the war against terrorism, 19 April 2002

Australian Army

- 2.19 The Army's primary contribution to the International Coalition Against Terrorism has been the provision of a 150-man Special Forces task group to support coalition combat operations against Al Qaida and Taliban forces in Afghanistan. The Special Forces Task Group is primarily drawn from the Special Air Service Regiment based in Perth, Western Australia.
- 2.20 The initial Special Forces deployment commenced on 22 October 2001. This first group was formally farewelled from Perth by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. The Special Force Task Group deployed into Afghanistan on 3 December 2001 and commenced combat operations in early December. Australian troops were amongst the first Coalition forces to deploy into Afghanistan and commence operations against Al Qaida and the Taliban. Throughout their deployment the Special Forces Task Group has been fully integrated into the Coalition force, working with United States forces and contingents from other Coalition nations.
- 2.21 The Special Forces troops have participated in operations in different regions of Afghanistan, performing a wide variety of tasks. Their performance has been highly praised by Coalition and Australian commanders. Of particular note was their performance during OPERATION ANACONDA in March 2002. On this operation Australian Special Forces, along with other Coalition troops, were heavily engaged with Al Qaida combat forces in the Shahi Khot Valley. Following the battle a number of Australian officers and soldiers were decorated for their conduct and performance by both the United States and Australia. On 8 March 2002 the Minister for Defence noted:
- The efforts of Australian forces during the current Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan reflect great honour on the Australian Defence Force and on our nation.
- Members of Australia's Special Forces have performed their duties with the skill, ingenuity and tenacity that have become the hallmark of the Australian Defence Force.⁹
- 2.22 The operations in which the Special Forces Task Group have been engaged continue to be, arduous, difficult and dangerous. These operations have unfortunately resulted in the death of one Australian soldier, Sergeant Andrew Russell, who was killed in a mine incident on the night of 16 and 17 February 2002.
- 2.23 We wish to pay tribute to the sacrifice made by Sergeant Russell and to offer our heartfelt condolences to his family.
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9 Minister for Defence, Media Release – Statement by the Minister for Defence on Australia's Involvement in Operation Anaconda, 8 March 2002

- 2.24 We acknowledge also the suffering of a second Special Forces soldier who was seriously wounded in a separate mine incident. We wish this soldier a swift recovery and rehabilitation.
- 2.25 At the time of the delegation's visit to Afghanistan, the Special Forces Task Group operating in Afghanistan was the second rotation of personnel. The original rotation returned to Australia in March 2002. On 16 June 2002 the Minister for Defence announced that a third rotation would take place.¹⁰
- 2.26 The Army has also contributed a number of staff and liaison officers and soldiers to Coalition headquarters in the United States, the Middle East and Afghanistan. These personnel have performed a key role in shaping and supporting Australia's operational contribution to the War on Terrorism.
- 2.27 The Army also deployed an RBS70 Air Defence Detachment from 16 Air Defence Regiment to provide air defence to both HMAS *Kanimbla* and HMAS *Manoora* during their respective operational tours in the Persian Gulf.

Royal Australian Airforce

- 2.28 The RAAF has made a number of commitments in support of the International Coalition Against Terrorism.
- 2.29 The RAAF 84 Wing Detachment was formally farewelled from Australia and commenced a six-month deployment on 15 March 2002. This force operates Boeing 707 refuelling aircraft that conduct air-to-air refuelling operations over Afghanistan. Air-to-air refuelling operations are essential in maintaining fighter and bomber coverage over Afghan airspace. This coverage is essential for the force protection of Coalition ground troops, including Australian Special Forces. The Detachment operates from GANCI Airbase at Manas International Airport, near Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan.¹¹
- 2.30 RAAF C-130J Hercules aircraft have regularly supported Australian and Coalition forces, providing tactical airlift to facilitate the movement of personnel, equipment and supplies.

10 Minister for Defence, Media Release – Rotation of SAS troops to Afghanistan, 16 June 2002

11 The deployment has since ended, with the two Boeing 707 aircraft and 80 crew returning to Australia on 29 September 2002. In welcoming the aircraft and crew home, the Chief of Defence Force, General Peter Cosgrove remarked that Australia was now 'in the planning stages for the deployment of two P3C Orion [long range maritime surveillance aircraft] to conduct maritime patrols in the Persian Gulf in support of coalition operations against terrorism' (source: Defence Media Release, Air Force Personnel Home Safely from Kyrgyzstan Deployment, 29 September 2002).

- 2.31 The RAAF also deployed four FA-18 aircraft to the United States military base at Diego Garcia to conduct air defence operations from November 2001 to May 2002.

Other deployed and Australian based units

- 2.32 The ADF has also deployed a number of joint units and staff to a variety of locations to support the Australian contribution to the War on Terrorism.
- 2.33 Australian national command is maintained through the deployment of a formally appointed Australian National Commander. The initial Australian Commander, Brigadier Ken Gillespie, successfully completed his tour of duty in late February 2002 and was replaced by Brigadier Gary Bornholt. The Australian Commander is supported by a small headquarters known as the Australian National Command Element. Following an initial deployment to the United States in October 2001, this headquarters moved forward into the Middle East Area of Operations in late November 2001 to monitor, command and support the deployed Australian forces. The headquarters is made up of personnel drawn from all three services.
- 2.34 The ADF has also deployed a range of liaison officers to the key US and Coalition headquarters controlling the War on Terrorism. Detachments are deployed to the United States Central Command in Tampa, Florida and to the forward operational command centre in Bagram, Afghanistan. These small teams and individuals perform a vital role in managing Australia's contribution to the campaign.
- 2.35 In addition, the Committee acknowledges that ADF personnel serving at home are making a vital contribution to the War on Terrorism. In particular, the Commanders and staff of Headquarters Australian Theatre and the four component headquarters in Sydney and Strategic Command in Canberra, who work continuously to support the commitment.

Potential future operations

- 2.36 The focus of the delegation's visit was to visit the personnel currently deployed as part of Australia's commitment to the War on Terrorism. The visit was, however, conducted during a period of intense international and domestic debate about the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein, especially about the extent to the regime is continuing to develop weapons of mass destruction, and, if so, what action should be taken.

- 2.37 Since the return of the delegation, this debate has intensified as international pressure is brought to bear on Iraq to allow the return of United Nations weapons inspectors. In Australia, Senators and Members, including members of the JSCFADT, have participated in lengthy parliamentary debates on these matters.