

CHAPTER 6

DEFENCE CO-OPERATION PROGRAM BY COUNTRIES

South East Asia

The cornerstone of our strategic interests in South East Asia is support for ASEAN, which has been highly effective in enhancing regional stability and prosperity. The continuance of this friendly environment is seen to be essential if we are to ensure that Australia remains secure over the longer term. Recognition of the strategic importance of ASEAN is manifested collectively through treaties, and individually through the Defence Co-operation Program which Australia has with ASEAN.

Responding to recent changes in the geo-political environment, the ASEAN nations have upgraded their defence capabilities. To assist in achieving this, these countries have turned to Australia for assistance in achieving their goal of defence self-reliance. 'This goal is consistent with Australia's own national interest in the region.'¹

Vietnam

During the 1960's Australia's regional activities were dominated by our commitment to maintaining military forces in Vietnam.

A new program of military aid to South Vietnam, which formed a part of the co-ordinated program of overall aid by Australia, was included in the Defence estimates for the first time in 1970/71. The program involved: an expansion of the already existing Australian military training and advisory role;

the establishment of an Australian-sponsored jungle warfare training centre at Nui Dat; the supply of military equipment for the South Vietnamese forces; and an expanded participation by military personnel in civil action and related activities including projects to provide housing for units of the South Vietnamese armed forces by Australian engineers and the Civil Affairs unit.²

On 18 August 1971, the Prime Minister announced that the Government intended to withdraw all remaining Australian combat forces from Vietnam, most of whom returned to Australia by Christmas, 1971. However, the Government at the same time increased its defence assistance to South Vietnam with a proposed aid package totalling \$25m for the period 1971-74. This included civil aid projects and defence aid. The defence part of the package took the form of military training of personnel of the Vietnamese armed forces in Australia and the provision of equipment for the South Vietnamese armed forces. An advisory and assistance group of some 140 Australian personnel remained to assist in the training of South Vietnam's armed forces.³

At the same time, assistance in the form of training and equipment was given to Cambodia (now also known as Kampuchea). The 'Australian Army Assistance Group Vietnam' contributed to a United States program of training Cambodian Army battalions brought into South Vietnam for that purpose. During this period, more than 70 Cambodian specialist officers and NCOs, both Army and Air Force, were in Australia as trainees.⁴

Immediately upon coming to office in December 1972 the new Labor Government brought to an end Australia's military involvement in Vietnam. The supply of Australian defence aid to South Vietnam and the program of military training for Cambodian personnel were terminated. Defence aid to South Vietnam totalled \$2.2m in 1970/71, \$3.280m in 1971/72 and \$0.482m in 1972/73 (out of a budgeted \$2.164m for 1972/73) (see Appendix 6).

Malaysia

Australia's defence co-operation with Malaysia originated in 1963. From 1963 to 1970, the main emphasis was on equipment, training of Malaysian personnel in Australia and the secondment of Australian defence personnel to Malaysia. In 1969 ten Sabre aircraft were transferred to the Royal Malaysian Air Force and RMAF personnel were trained in the operations of the Sabre by the RAAF. From a commitment of \$0.144m in 1963, Australian defence aid to Malaysia reached \$6.520m by 1969-70.

In part, Australia's commitment to Malaysia (including Singapore) during this period can be seen in the context of the withdrawal of British forces from the region. Rather than attempt to assume the role that the British forces had previously fulfilled, the Australian Government at the time, believed it would be more effective in the long term if an indigenous military force in the region was developed.

Thus, while Australia retained a military presence in Malaysia and Singapore (consisting of two squadrons of Mirages, one ship of the RAN and a ground force of 1200 men) until 1975, greater effort was put into developing a more organised Defence Co-operation Program that would contribute to the development of the defence forces of South East Asia.

In 1971, a three-year program of defence aid to Malaysia began. During this period, the program emphasised the provision of equipment, projects such as an armed forces manufacturing workshop, target ranges, a defence research centre and training in Australia.

In November 1971 the Five Power Defence Arrangements came into effect and replaced the arrangements of earlier years under the Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement. The Five Power

Arrangements provided that the Governments of Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, the United Kingdom and Australia, would co-operate in the field of defence, in accordance with their respective policies. In particular they undertook to assist in the development of the armed forces of Malaysia and Singapore. The agreement also provided that in the event of any form of armed attack externally organised or supported, or the threat of such attack, against Malaysia or Singapore, their Governments would immediately consult together for the purpose of deciding what measures should be taken jointly or separately in relation to such an attack or threat. Australia's significant commitment to Malaysia (and Singapore) is still seen as part of Australia's undertaking to honour the terms of the Five Power Arrangements.

By 1975 a change in emphasis emerged with more consideration being given to advisory assistance, study visits, training and exercises rather than equipment oriented projects, which had previously dominated the program.

As was noted in Chapter 3, the main consideration in the development of the defence force structure of the ASEAN states, until the mid-1970's, was oriented towards counter-insurgency operations. However, with Vietnam's intervention in Kampuchea in 1979, the emphasis of some regional defence forces changed from one of dealing with internal aggression to expanding and upgrading their defence forces to deal with an external aggressor. As a result of the sense of urgency that was expressed by all ASEAN nations, Australia's overall Defence Co-operation Program in 1980-81 increased by 25% over the previous year. For Malaysia the figure was 50%. The areas that were expanded were primarily in military training. Thus in 1979-80, 238 Malaysian personnel undertook training in, or made study visits to, Australia. In 1980-81 the number jumped to 521 (see Appendix 5).

Training still dominates the Program's expenditure on Malaysia, however the expansion of the Malaysian armed forces has meant that assistance is currently being sought to develop new capabilities and assisting in the establishment of new facilities. There are currently 15 Australian advisers on loan in Malaysia (see Appendix 3) - 12 of these advisers are involved in the establishment of an armoured/artillery centre and support facilities.

Singapore

Australia's Defence Co-operation Program with Singapore began in 1963 as part of Australia's program of defence aid to Malaysia. The 1966 Appropriation Bill No. 1 provided, for the first time, separate funding for defence aid to Singapore. Like Malaysia, funding initially concentrated on the provision of equipment for the Singaporean armed forces. Assistance included C130 flight simulators, microwave communication systems and Landrover ambulances (see Appendix 6).

The first trainees arrived in Australia in 1965. Since then some 470 Singaporean personnel have undertaken training in Australia under the Defence Co-operation Program. By the early 1970's training in Australia and the secondment of Australian service personnel were the main areas of co-operation with Singapore (see Appendix 5).

As a result of the heightened defence awareness that occurred in all ASEAN countries, expenditure on the Defence Co-operation Program with Singapore increased by some 43% in 1980-81 compared to the previous year (see Appendix 1). The main area of increase was in the number of trainees being brought to Australia. In 1979-80, there were 21 trainees, in 1980-81 there were 34 and by 1981-82 this had increased to 82. The number of

study visits requested by the Singapore Government also increased considerably. In 1979-80, there were 8 study visits, in 1980-81 these had increased to 60.

A further important development during 1982 was that for the first time Australian facilities were used by the Singapore armed forces for their own national training. In February 1982, six Singapore Air Force Skyhawk aircraft and a detachment of personnel began a training deployment for an indefinite period at RAAF Williamtown. The Singapore Army conducted a battalion group exercise in the Shoalwater Bay training area in Queensland in March and April 1982.⁵

Indonesia

Limited defence co-operation activity with Indonesia began in 1968. This mainly involved Indonesian defence personnel being trained in Australia. In June 1972 the Government announced Australia's first formal Defence Co-operation Program with Indonesia. \$20m was provided for the period July 1972 to June 1975. The program included the transfer of ex-RAAF Sabre jets (\$6.1m), mapping in Indonesia (\$2m), target ranges (\$0.870m) and training assistance. At the time it was seen as a model for future arrangements of its kind. Its guiding aims were to help develop self-reliance and the capability to resist external threats, through technical aid, training assistance, joint exercises and continuing consultations (Defence Report 1973:6). This was followed by a second three-year program from 1975-78 for which \$25m was committed.

By 1973, Indonesia had become the largest recipient of assistance under the Defence Co-operation Program, receiving more than all of the other ASEAN countries' combined (this continues to be the case today) (see Appendix 1).

The second three year program was dominated by the provision of Nomad aircraft, 16 metre craft, attack patrol boats and survey and mapping (see Appendix 6). Since then the program has been conducted on an annual basis.

In line with other ASEAN states, in 1981 Australia increased the number of trainees coming from Indonesia. Nonetheless, the number of trainees coming to Australia still has not returned to the level of the early 1970's. For example, in the period 1972 to 1975 there were 571 trainees from Indonesia who attended courses in Australia; for the period 1980 to 1983 the figure is 187. Indonesia was the only country receiving assistance under the Defence Co-operation Program to record a significant increase in project assistance in 1979 as a result of the Australian Government's reassessment of contact and co-operation with ASEAN countries. This increased level of assistance has remained constant since 1979. It should be noted that this reassessment of assistance to other countries in the ASEAN region resulted in an increase in funds for training and study visits rather than for project aid.

Philippines

Australia has maintained a Defence Co-operation Program with the Philippines since 1973. Until 1980, the program was dominated by the exchange of Defence personnel and Australian participation in joint army and naval exercises.

As with other ASEAN countries, Australia expanded the program with the Philippines significantly in 1980 in the area of training and by more direct involvement in project aid. Examples of such projects include the provision of an electronically controlled target range, assistance in the maintenance of 12 Nomad aircraft that the Philippine Air Force purchased in 1975 and the supply of medical kits (see Appendix 6).

Thailand

Though Australia has had a Defence Co-operation Program with Thailand since 1972-73, the level of involvement remained limited until the invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam and the emergence of the refugee problem. Until 1980 defence co-operation with Thailand was dominated by training and study visitors. However, more attention is now directed toward providing project aid, mainly in the areas of new equipment for training schools, provision for the refurbishing of tracker aircraft and assistance in the maintenance of Nomad aircraft in service with by the Thai Air Force (see Appendix 6).

Because of Thailand's proximity to areas of instability in South East Asia, it is anticipated that Thailand will receive increasing support from Australia through the Defence Co-operation Program. Australian aid increased from \$0.65m in 1980-81 (ranking 8 in the level of assistance received), to \$5.09m in 1983-84. It is now ranked third in terms of the level of assistance provided (see Appendix 1).

Papua New Guinea

Like other nations of South East Asia and the South Pacific, the maintenance of Papua New Guinea's independence, territorial integrity and stability is in the best interests of Australia. However, the historically close and unique relationship that Australia has had with Papua New Guinea makes our commitment to Papua New Guinea special. This is reflected in the joint statement issued in 1977 by the Prime Ministers of Australia and Papua New Guinea on the future defence relationship between the two countries.

The joint statement said that both governments will 'consult, at the request of either, about matters affecting their common security interests and about other aspects of their

defence relationship' (see Appendix 4). This statement remains the basis of Australia's defence relationship with Papua New Guinea, including the Defence Co-operation Program. While the joint statement affirmed the importance that both Governments attach to continuing close co-operation in defence matters⁷ it falls short of a formal defence treaty.

Faced with limited budgetary resources, Australia's Defence Co-operation Program with Papua New Guinea is particularly important if that country is to become militarily self-reliant.

During the 1960's and early 1970's before independence, Australian defence forces were involved in the establishment of a Papua New Guinea division of the Navy and the development of the Pacific Islands regiment which, by 1975, consisted of 2 infantry battalions and support units.

Since attaining independence in 1975, Papua New Guinea has been the main recipient of Defence Co-operation Program funds. At the time of independence, some \$70m worth of Australian defence assets that were in Papua New Guinea were handed over to the Papua New Guinean defence forces. A further \$4m worth of assets were transferred to Papua New Guinea in 1975-76.

From the commencement of a program with Papua New Guinea an important element of the program has been the provision of Australian servicemen to assist in the functioning of the Papua New Guinea defence force. At the time of independence, there were some 679 Australian defence force personnel in Papua New Guinea. Since then the Australian defence force presence has gradually been reduced to 146 (as at 31 March 1983). The cost of loan personnel remains the most significant single cost in the program in 1983-84.

Papua New Guinea's main requirement for defence assistance continues to be for skilled manpower. This can be seen both in the number of defence personnel from Australia that are still on loan in Papua New Guinea and the numbers involved in training and study visits in Australia. One hundred and ninety-seven (197) Papua New Guinean defence personnel visited Australia in 1982-83, second in the number to those from Malaysia that trained in Australia in 1982-83 (see Appendix 5).

There is a growing use of short-term consultative visits to provide expertise not available from within Papua New Guinea's present defence resources. In 1982, for example, visits of this kind were made by Australian Defence personnel, including: a RAN and Defence Science and Technology Organisation team to study future requirements of the Papua New Guinea defence force maritime element; a combined Australian services team to assist in planning and running a command post exercise; and by Australian defence officers to study management and financial systems.

Major project assistance to Papua New Guinea has been of increasing significance since 1979. This has included provisions and maintenance of 6 Nomad aircraft and provisions for engineer advisers, improvement of a PABX telephone system, 6 Dakota aircraft, and assistance in survey work (see Appendix 6).

South Pacific

The island states have always had an important place in Australian strategic planning. All of the states are close to Australia and lie across our main lines of communication in the Pacific, from Japan in the north to the Americas in the east. Australia also has significant economic and commercial interests in the region.

Australia's interests are best served by ensuring security and stability in the region. Many of the countries are newly independent and politically fragile and, as the Jackson Committee noted, some face a difficult future. It is important that these states remain cohesive and independent and that the region generally be free of super-power rivalry.

Too much emphasis should not be placed on Australia's defence program with the South Pacific. Many of the countries have minimal or no defence force structure. In such cases it is argued that the Defence Co-operation Program is being used as an adjunct with other bilateral programs between Australia and the South Pacific. As the Department of Foreign Affairs says:

In enabling small island countries to draw on the considerable expertise available in the Australian Defence Forces (e.g. in the engineering, surveying, medical and music fields), which would otherwise be unavailable to them, the defence cooperation programs are often able to make a very effective contribution to general economic and social development.

Many of the defence cooperation projects undertaken in the South Pacific accordingly have little or no military focus and are distinguished from our other development assistance activities only by the involvement of Australian Defence Force resources.⁸

Fiji

Australia has maintained a modest Defence Co-operation Program with Fiji since 1972 (see Appendix 2). Until 1978, assistance was in the areas of training and advisory support.

In 1978 a decision was made to expand defence assistance with islands of the South Pacific. For Fiji, this involved project assistance, survey and mapping activities and

the supply of rifles and ammunition to equip the Fiji peace-keeping force in the Lebanon. Most of the assistance has been of a civil rather than a military nature.

Solomon Islands

A Defence Co-operation Program with the Solomon Islands has been in operation since 1978 (see Appendix 2). From 1978-83, 43 defence personnel trained in Australia under the Defence Co-operation Program (see Appendix 5). Projects and activities have been of a civil nature involving channel clearance, hydrographic survey work, police communications and malaria control. Australia also provided a 16 metre patrol boat for surveillance work in 1979 and Australian advisers have included three Army bandsmen who provided instruction for the Solomon Islands Police Band (see Appendix 6).

Tonga

A Defence Co-operation Program with Tonga was initiated in 1978. Since then, there has been a steady increase in the number of trainees attending courses in Australia. Australian advisers, vehicles and an ex-Army landing craft have been provided (see Appendix 6).

Vanuatu

The lack of a defence force in Vanuatu is reflected in Australia's program with this country. Australia has provided a bandmaster to train a police band, an adviser and equipment to develop catering skills in the police force and equipment and specialist training for the newly established police mobile force. Australian defence personnel also have been involved in the production of maps, a malaria control program and a rural water supply project (see Appendix 6).

Kiribati

Australia's Defence Co-operation Program with Kiribati is typical of Australia's defence assistance with other South Pacific nations where there is no military force. Assistance is of a civil nature involving channel clearance work and survey work for their Exclusive Economic Zone (see Appendix 6).

Western Samoa

An example of how defence assistance can cover all areas is seen in Western Samoa. In 1983 Australian army catering experts assisted in the catering for the South Pacific Games. There was also preliminary work undertaken to provide search and rescue equipment to the Police. Assistance to Western Samoa commenced in 1982/83 (see Appendix 6).

Other countries (other than the South Pacific and ASEAN)

Since 1976 Australia has provided modest funds under the Defence Co-operation Program to allow training and study visits by defence personnel from countries beyond Australia's primary areas of strategic concern. Countries that have been involved include India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Nigeria, Burma and the Seychelles.

ENDNOTES

1. Submission, (Foreign Affairs), p. S134.
2. Defence Report, 1970, p. 5.
3. Defence Report, 1972, p. 5.
4. Defence Report, 1972, p. 5.
5. Defence Report, 1981-82, p. 5.
6. Defence Report, 1973, p. 5.
7. Submission, (Defence), p. S54.
8. Submission, (Foreign Affairs), p. S132.