

From: [R](#)
To: [Committee, JSCFADT \(REPS\)](#)
Subject: submission: Inquiry into international armed conflict decision making
Date: Tuesday, 11 October 2022 5:33:03 PM

To the committee,

Traditionally cabinet, the responsible ministers and PM are meant to know about what military intelligence is getting up to and the executive takes orders. Democratically it is then possible to vote for elected officials. This is representative democracy and our constitution.

Obviously we can't go telling everyone about it or we'd lose the element of surprise. Since the beginning of the cold war we've been engaged in mostly non-war armed conflicts so this is a vague term. Large scale long-term deployments should probably in most instances defer to the Security Council as per our international obligations, various ratified treaties and legislation. The scale and reasonableness of such deployments should be able to withstand robust debate.

The British Intelligence report that gave a good reason for entering the war in Afghanistan/Iraq turned out to have some factual deficiencies and there was no explanation or accountability. This erodes public confidence in the authenticity of Australian democracy when elected officials do not even question how intelligence information can be incorrectly vetted, vouched for and confirmed as authentic. Possibly the solution is to have some sort of Federal Intelligence Bureau accountable to cabinet so that in the future reports can be sent for independent verification before making big decisions to commit resources so that at least decision makers can claim to have done their due diligence. Imagine public confidence in democracy to be like a stock price. A CEO of a company in which you hold an interest turned out to be making decisions based on advice from their palm reader. It reduces confidence.

How often can you get caught fibbing before nobody believes you? Loss of confidence in Australia damages our capacity for soft-power operations. This is contrary to the National Interest. Some sort of net National Interest equation needs to be applied to spending the political capital of the public purse.

Robert Heron

