
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Visit to Australian Defence Forces deployed to Support the Rehabilitation of Iraq

Report of the Delegation 22 to 28 October 2005

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

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Canberra

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Cover Photos:

An infantry soldier from the Baghdad Security Detachment provides security from the hatch of his Australian Light Armoured Vehicle (ASLAV) while the delegation tours the ceremonial district of the former Iraqi regime.

Mr Kim Wilkie MP (left) and the Hon Mr Bruce Baird MP (right) travel by Bushmaster Infantry Mobility Vehicle from Ali Air-base to Camp Smitty in southern Iraq.

A soldier from the Baghdad Security Detachment provides overwatch for the delegation visit to the Baghdad International Zone

The delegation meets with the Speaker of the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly



Foreword

In late October 2005, a delegation of eight members from the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade visited Australian Defence Force personnel deployed on active service in the Middle East.

Thanks to first class support by both the Diplomatic and Defence Staffs in the Middle East the Delegation was able to meet with the following organisations or agencies:

- Two members of the delegation conducted an operational mission with the Royal Australian Air Force Maritime Patrol Aircraft Detachment over the Northern Arabian Gulf and Southern Iraq;
- Royal Australian Navy personnel deployed aboard HMAS *Newcastle*;
- Royal Australian Air Force personnel conducting C130 Hercules air lift operations in support of coalition forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan;
- The Al Muthanna Task Group conducting security operations and training for the new Iraqi Army in southern Iraq;
- The Australian Embassy in Baghdad's International Zone hosted the delegation for a meeting with the Speaker of the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly, Mr Hajim al-Hassani and members of the Transitional Assembly;
- The US Commander of Multi-National Forces Iraq, General George Casey; and
- The Australian National Commander, Commodore Geoff Ledger and his staff at Camp Victory Baghdad.

The visit to ADF units in the Middle East area of operations formed part of the Committee's wider program of inspections to Defence Force units and Defence Industry sites. Where it is practical the Committee has also sought to visit ADF personnel while they conduct operations. In recent years the Committee has visited Australian Forces in Afghanistan, East Timor and Solomon Islands.

The delegation had three specific aims in undertaking the visit to the Middle East. Its primary purpose was to demonstrate the Parliament's strong bipartisan support, and the support of the Australian community, for Defence Force personnel deployed on this demanding operation.

Secondly the visit allowed the members of the delegation to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the situation in Iraq, the tasks being undertaken by Australian personnel and the suitability of the training and equipment they receive.

Finally the delegation, in meeting with the Speaker of the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly, became the first delegation from the Australian Parliament to the Transitional National Assembly of Iraq, supporting Australia's engagement with the newly democratic nation.

The comprehensive delegation itinerary allowed the members to achieve each of these aims. Exposure to this range of issues and experiences could only be achieved as a result of a very well orchestrated program. The delegation thanks the Australian Defence Force for developing and coordinating a visit program that ensured the safety of delegates while giving them exposure to a wide range of personnel and locations. In particular the delegation thanks the Australian National Commander in the Middle East, Commodore Geoff Ledger, for his hosting of the delegation throughout the visit. Commodore Ledger provided the delegation the benefit of his considerable experience throughout the visit, leaving the members confident in the leadership and organisation of Australian Joint Task Force in Iraq.

The Committee would also like to thank Australian Embassy staffs in the Middle East for supporting the program. In particular the delegation thanks Dr Ralph King in Kuwait and Mr Howard Brown in Iraq. Both of these experienced officials operate under some of the most demanding conditions experienced by Australian Government personnel anywhere in the world.

The Committee returned from the visit extremely impressed by the dedication and professionalism of the Australian Defence Force personnel conducting operations in this demanding, often hostile environment. Australian personnel are working closely with the emerging Iraqi institutions and personnel, showing compassion in their daily dealings with the local people and considerable restraint when called upon to apply force. They are performing with distinction and have earned the respect and admiration of both the coalition and Iraqi forces with whom they are working.

All Australians should be proud of the achievements of the ADF on operations in the Middle East and the contribution they are making to the reconstruction of Iraq.

Bruce Scott, MP
Delegation Leader.



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Membership of the Committee

Chair	Senator A B Ferguson	
Deputy Chair	Hon G J Edwards, MP	
Members	Senator the Hon N Bolkus (to 30/6/05) Senator G. Campbell (from 23/6/05) Senator the Hon P Cook (to 30/6/05) Senator A Eggleston Senator B Harradine (to 30/6/05) Senator S Hutchins Senator D Johnston Senator L J Kirk Senator K Lundy (to 23/6/05) Senator J A L Macdonald (to 23/6/05) Senator C.M. Moore (from 23/6/05) Senator M A Payne Senator N. Scullion (from 17/8/05) Senator N J Stott Despoja Senator R.S. Weber (from 23/6/05) Hon B G Baird, MP Mr R C Baldwin, MP Mr P A Barresi, MP Mr M Danby, MP Mrs T Draper, MP Mrs J Gash, MP Mr S W Gibbons, MP Mr B W Haase, MP Mr M Hatton, MP	Hon D F Jull, MP Hon J E Moylan, MP Hon G D Prosser, MP Hon B C Scott, MP Mr R C G Sercombe, MP Hon W E Snowdon, MP Mr C.P. Thompson, MP Mr M B Turnbull, MP Ms M Vamvakinou, MP Mr B H Wakelin, MP Mr K W Wilkie, MP
Secretary	Dr Margot Kerley	
Defence Adviser	Lieutenant Colonel Fergus McLachlan	



Membership of the Delegation

Leader	Hon B C Scott, MP	
Deputy Leader (Deputy Chair)	Hon G J Edwards, MP	
Members	Senator D Johnston	Hon B.G. Baird, MP Mr B.W. Haase, MP Hon W.E. Snowdon, MP Mr C.P. Thompson, MP Mr K.W. Wilkie, MP
Secretary and Defence Adviser	Lieutenant Colonel Fergus McLachlan	



List of abbreviations

AATT-I	Australian Army Training Team - Iraq
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AOR	Areas of Responsibility
AMTG	Al Muthanna Task Group
ASLAV	Australian Light Armoured Vehicle
Bushmaster	Australian built armoured truck
C130	Hercules Transport Aircraft
CIMIC	Civil Military Cooperation
CO	Commanding Officer
ECSS	Expeditionary Combat Service Support
FLIR	Forward Looking Infra Red
GWOT	Global War on Terror
HMAS	Her Majesty's Australian Ship
HQ	Headquarters
JOC	Joint Operations Command
JTF	Joint Task Force
MBTs	Main Battle Tanks
MIF	Maritime Interdiction Force
MNF-I	Multi-National Forces - Iraq
MNSTC-I	Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq
P3C	P3 Orion Aircraft - upgraded to C specification
PRO	Parliamentary Relations Office
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force

RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RHIB	Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat
ROE	Rules of Engagement
ROCL	Relief Out of Country Leave
SAS	Special Air Service
SFTG	Special Forces Task Group
TNA	Transitional National Assembly
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
US	United States of America
USS	United States Ship
VCDF	Vice Chief of Defence Force
VBIED	Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (Car Bomb)

Visit to the Middle East Area of Operations

Background

- 1.1 On 18 April 2005 the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Senator Alan Ferguson, wrote to the Minister for Defence, Senator the Honourable Robert Hill, seeking his support for a Committee visit to Iraq. The stated aim of the visit was to demonstrate the Parliament's appreciation for the difficult work being performed by ADF personnel in Iraq. The Chair proposed possible dates to the Minister but acknowledged the uncertain security climate in Iraq and suggested that the Department of Defence should determine the safest period for the visit. He offered that the period selected should cause the least disruption to ADF operational activities.
- 1.2 The Minister for Defence supported the concept of a Parliamentary Delegation to the Middle East Area of Operations and sought approval from the Prime Minister. On 13 July 2005 the Prime Minister approved a Parliamentary Delegation of up to eight members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade to travel to Iraq. The Prime Minister directed that, in addition to visiting ADF elements, the delegation was to also meet with members of the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly to demonstrate Australia's support for the emerging democratic Parliament.
- 1.3 In consultation with Defence, the period 22 to 28 October, immediately after the Iraqi National Referendum on the draft constitution, was selected for the visit and volunteers from the Committee were canvassed.

Figure 1.1 From Left Mr Kim Wilkie and Mr Cameron Thompson MP are briefed on P3C survival equipment prior to an operational mission over the Arabian Gulf and southern Iraq



Planning

- 1.4 Planning for a delegation to a destination as dangerous as Iraq required significant amendment to the usual Parliamentary Delegation planning process and is worthy of discussion in this report.
- 1.5 Defence advised that they could only provide adequate security for the delegation while it travelled in Iraq if the existence of the delegation was kept secret until after the event. Should any insurgent groups in Iraq have known of the delegation in advance it would have provided a tempting target to any group seeking to influence Australian policy or simply further harm the democratisation of Iraq. It is likely that, had the existence of the delegation been exposed during the planning phase, it would have been cancelled to prevent the risk to the members and the Defence personnel providing them protection.
- 1.6 As a result of the need for high levels of security, planning for the delegation was limited to a small group within the Parliamentary Relations Office (PRO), the members and a small number of their key staff, and the Defence Joint Operations Command (JOC) staff.
- 1.7 These limitations presented significant challenges to both the organisers and the members of the delegation. That these challenges were overcome

brings great credit to all involved and resulted in a safe, effective delegation to a dangerous and uncertain location.

Delegation Aims

1.8 The delegation had three specific aims in undertaking the visit to the Middle East. These were as follows:

- Its primary purpose was to demonstrate the Parliament's strong bipartisan support, and the support of the Australian community, for Defence Force personnel deployed on this demanding operation.
- Secondly, the visit allowed the members of the delegation to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the situation in Iraq, the tasks being undertaken by Australian personnel and the suitability of the training and equipment they receive.
- Finally the delegation, in meeting with the Speaker of the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly, became the first delegation from the Australian Parliament to the Transitional National Assembly of Iraq, supporting Australia's engagement with the newly democratic nation.

1.9 The comprehensive delegation itinerary allowed the members to achieve each of these aims. Exposure to this range of issues and experiences could only be achieved as a result of a very well orchestrated program. The highlights of the program were as follows:

- 23 October 2005 - Mr Cameron Thompson and Mr Kim Wilkie participated in an operational surveillance mission with the Maritime Patrol Group of the Joint Task Force. They deployed in a P3C Orion aircraft for an eight hour operation over the northern Arabian Gulf and southern Iraq.
- 24 October 2005 - visit the Australian naval frigate HMAS *Newcastle*, deployed for six months on protection operations in the northern Arabian Gulf and visit the Australian Air Force Maritime Patrol Aircraft Detachment for briefings and a demonstration of the imagery collected on recent operations.
- 25 October 2005 - deploy to Iraq on Australian C130 Hercules aircraft and visit the Al Muthanna Task Group (AMTG) in Al Muthanna province southern Iraq. The delegation travelled in ASLAV and Bushmaster vehicles and stayed overnight with the AMTG.
- 26 to 27 October 2005 - deploy by US Blackhawk helicopter from Al Muthanna province to the Baghdad International Zone to visit the Australian Ambassador Mr Howard Brown and the Army Security Detachment charged with his protection. The delegation also met with the Speaker of the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly, Mr Hajim al-

Hassani, and members of the Assembly before flying to the main coalition command headquarters to meet with US General George Casey, Commander of Multi-National Forces Iraq.

- 1.10 To conclude the visit the staff of the Australian National Headquarters provided a comprehensive, classified briefing on the Australian assessment of the situation in Iraq at their headquarters in Baghdad.

Acknowledgements

- 1.11 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 the visit was successful.
- 1.12 The delegation was warmly received and professionally briefed at each location despite the demanding operational tempo faced by all members of the deployed force.
- 1.13 In particular, the delegation would like to thank Commodore Geoff Ledger, the Australian National Commander and his staff in Baghdad. Commodore Ledger escorted the delegation throughout their visit, giving them the benefit of his considerable experience of military operations in general and his impressions of almost six months in the Area of Operations. Thanks are also due to the VCDF and his Operations staff in Canberra and Sydney, particularly Colonel Michael Krause, Wing Commander Dick Larkin and Squadron Leader Rob Williams who were the Committee interface throughout the planning phase.
- 1.14 Special thanks must also go to personnel from the ADF Task Groups deployed throughout the Middle East, all of whom warmly received the delegation, were frank and professional in their explanations and gave significantly of their time during high tempo operations. While it is impossible to acknowledge all personnel the following personnel are representative of many others:
- Wing Commander 'Max' Heinrich, CO of the Maritime Patrol Group and his ECSS Officer, Squadron Leader Steve Laredo and the airmen and women of the task group;
 - Captain Trevor Jones and the ships company of HMAS *Newcastle*;
 - Lieutenant Colonels Roger Noble and Steve Tulley, Majors Bye, Garraway and Barras, and the officers and soldiers of the Al Muthanna Task Group;
 - Captain Kurt Black-Sinclair and the officers and NCOs of the Close Personal Protection Team from the 1st Military Police Battalion; and
 - Mr Josh Wiles, Majors Ed Smeaton and Malcom Wells, and the Command Sergeant Major WO2 Andy Hamilton from the elements of

the National Headquarters without whom the visit would not have been possible.

- 1.15 Thanks also go to the Australian diplomatic staff in the region. These officials operate under demanding conditions. Their understanding of the region and the local requirements were key to the success of the delegation:
- Dr Ralph King, Australian Ambassador to Kuwait;
 - Mr Howard Brown, Australian Ambassador to Iraq;
 - Captain Gorringe RAN, the Defence Attache from the Embassy in Riyadh (who is also accredited to Kuwait); and
 - Colonel John Mansell, the Defence Attache in Baghdad.

Report Structure

- 1.16 This report provides a record of the main issues arising from the various components of the visit. It is important to note that many aspects of the visit involved classified briefings and displays that cannot be reported in this document because of the requirement to protect the safety of deployed Australian Defence Force personnel and their coalition partners.
- 1.17 The report is structured as follows:
- Chapter 2 provides the context for Australia's current commitment to the reconstruction of Iraq;
 - Chapter 3 discusses Australia's Naval contribution to coalition operations.
 - Chapter 4 discusses the contribution being made by the Maritime Patrol Aircraft Detachment.
 - Chapter 5 describes the operations of the Al Muthanna Task Group.
 - Chapter 6 describes the observations made by the delegation in discussions in Baghdad with Iraqi, US and Australian leaders.
 - Appendix A includes the delegation itinerary.

Australia's Military Contribution toward the Reconstruction of Iraq

Australian Military Operations in the Middle East

Background

- 2.1 The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has deployed forces to the Middle East almost continually since the 1991 Gulf War. For the majority of this period the forces deployed were part of the naval blockade enforcing UN sanctions on Iraq. Following the terrorist attacks in the US in 2001 Australia deployed a Special Forces Task Force and airborne refuelling aircraft to central Asia as part of OPERATION SLIPPER.
- 2.2 In 2003 Australia joined the US led coalition that invaded Iraq. This deployment occurred in two parts - a deployment and preparation phase known as OPERATION BASTILLE and an offensive operations phase known as OPERATION FALCONER. Both phases included a Special Forces Task Group comprising troops from the Army's Special Air Services Regiment, the Commando Regiment and consequence management and helicopter contingents. They also included an enhanced F/A-18 Hornet squadron and Royal Australian Air Force Maritime Surveillance and C130 Hercules transport aircraft. The Navy provided an amphibious command ship and a surface combatant for tasking in the northern Arabian Gulf, which included Naval Gunfire Support for coalition forces during the attack to secure the vital port of Um Qasr. Navy clearance divers were also active in Um Qasr clearing mines and booby traps in the immediate aftermath of the attack to clear the facility.

- 2.3 At the conclusion of the combat phase of military operations Australia reorganised forces under a follow on operation, OPERATION CATALYST. In this operation Australian military forces transitioned to defensive activities and defensive rules of engagement. This phase continues.
- 2.4 Most recently on 22 February 2005 the Prime Minister announced that Australia's commitment to Iraq was to be enhanced with the addition of a task group to the southern Iraqi province of Al Muthanna. This additional commitment, known as the Al Muthanna Task Group (AMTG), deployed to Iraq in May of 2005 and commences rotation with a second contingent in November 2005. The task of the additional commitment was to provide a secure operating environment for the Japanese Self Defence Force reconstruction personnel operating in the Al Muthanna province and to continue with Australia's commitment to train new Iraqi army personnel in the province.¹

Current Operations

- 2.5 Australian forces deployed on OPERATION CATALYST are organised as Joint Task Force 633 (JTF 633). The elements of the JTF are assigned under the control of appropriate coalition command components, such as the Coalition Air Operations Centre in the case of Australia's C130 transport aircraft or the British Division Headquarters in the case of the AMTG. Concurrent with allocation of forces to coalition control Australia retains National Command of all forces. National Command is exercised by the National Commander or Commander JTF 633 through his headquarters in Baghdad. The specific issues associated with National Command will be explored in more detail in Chapter 6 of this report.
- 2.6 The Commander of the Australian JTF is a one star officer provided on a rotating basis by the three services at the direction of the CDF. The current Commander is Navy Commodore Geoff Ledger. Commodore Ledger acted as the host for the delegation throughout their visit to the Middle East Area of Operations.
- 2.7 Headquarters JTF633 interacts with the coalition through Headquarters Multi National Force - Iraq (MNF-I). MNF-I is a predominantly US organisation, reflecting the majority the US also exercises in the provision of combat troops, but also includes British, Australian, Polish and other coalition officers. MNF-I is commanded by General George Casey (US Army 4 star). The delegation met with General Casey in Baghdad.

¹ Prime Minister's Press Conference, *Deployment of Australian Task Force to Iraq - Cabinet Meeting*, dated 22 Feb 05, as quoted at <http://www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/Interview1251.html>

Australian Operations

2.8 JTF 633 currently comprises the following subordinate elements:

- A HQ and Security Detachment located in Baghdad. This group has responsibility for exercising national command and ensuring the safety of Australian Government and military personnel living and operating in Baghdad. The HQ element includes a logistic team with detachments in both Kuwait and Baghdad. The Kuwait element is responsible for receiving and on-forwarding incoming troops.
- A group of Australian officers is embedded in the main coalition HQs. Australian officers have filled valuable roles in these HQs since the outset of hostilities. Australia recently filled the billet for the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations in HQ MNF-I with Major General Jim Molan. Since General Molan's departure the senior Australian embedded officer is an Army Brigadier assigned as Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations at HQ MNF-I. Australia has also had a significant role in the development of the new Iraqi Security Forces. Through the Coalition Military Assistance Training Teams (CMATT) and more recently the Multi-National security Transition Command Iraq (MNSTC-I) Australia has helped train Iraqi Army combat brigades and logistic forces and the Iraqi Navy patrol boat crews. Australia continues to be represented in the leadership of MNSTC-I by Army Brigadier Stephen Day.
- Australia contributes medical and air-traffic personnel to reinforce the largest coalition logistic base in Iraq. This group of approximately 20 personnel are located at Balad airbase, just north of Baghdad in the high threat Sunni ethnic region.
- The largest single element of the JTF is the Al Muthanna Task Group (AMTG). The AMTG is made up of 400 personnel conducting security operations in the Al Muthanna province of southern Iraq and 50 personnel training and mentoring the Iraqi security forces in the region. The two tasks of the AMTG are to provide a secure environment for the Japanese reconstruction force and to develop and mentor the local Iraqi security forces.
- Supporting operations in Iraq and more recently Afghanistan are two RAAF C130 aircraft. These aircraft fly as part of the coalition logistics and aero-medical evacuation program. They provide exclusive service to Australian elements two days per week. The C130 detachment is located outside Iraq. Approximately 130 personnel are required to maintain very high availability rates for the two aircraft.

- Two RAAF P3C Orion aircraft also support operations in Iraq and the northern Arabian Gulf. The Maritime Patrol Aircraft Group consists of approximately 160 personnel and operates from a coalition air base outside Iraq. The aircraft have been very effective in support of both maritime operations over the Arabian Gulf and land operations over southern Iraq.
- Finally the Navy continues to rotate ships to the northern Arabian Gulf. The ships form part of the sea-borne force protecting the Iraqi gulf oil platforms and interdicting oil smuggling operations. Australia also rotates through the coalition command of Naval operations in the northern Arabian Gulf, having recently completed a very successful rotation under an Australian Navy Commodore. ²

Figure 2.1 The delegation is briefed on the capabilities of the ASLAV and Bushmaster vehicles at Camp Smitty, southern Iraq



2 <http://www.defence.gov.au/opcatalyst/>

Australian Naval Contribution to the Reconstruction of Iraq

Background

- 3.1 The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) has considerable experience of operations in the northern Arabian Gulf. Since 1990, the RAN has regularly provided ships to the multinational Maritime Interception Force (MIF), enforcing UN sanctions on Iraqi trade through the Persian Gulf (and at times in the Red Sea).
- 3.2 The RAN presence in the first Gulf War included two frigates and the replenishment ship HMAS *Success*, which, having no air defences of its own, relied on the army's 16th Air Defence Regiment. In January 1991 the replenishment tanker HMAS *Westralia* left Fremantle to relieve *Success*. Four warships, HMAS *Sydney* (IV), HMAS *Adelaide*, HMAS *Brisbane* and HMAS *Darwin* also served tours of duty in the Persian Gulf. During the operational phase of their deployment they formed part of the anti-aircraft screen for the carrier battle groups of the US Navy. A RAN clearance diving team was also dispatched for explosive ordnance and demolition tasks.
- 3.3 The RAN continued to rotate ships through the gulf as part of sanction enforcement for much of the period between the 1991 conflict and the terrorist attacks in the US in 2001.
- 3.4 Before and after 11 September 2001, the MIF, led by Australian frigate HMAS *Anzac*, worked hard to tighten the blockade and stem the flow of smuggled oil coming out of Iraq. Enjoying robust rules of engagement, and able to operate in shallow waters, *Anzac* undertook night operations

- to intercept smugglers close to the mouth of the Khawr 'Abd Allah waterway.
- 3.5 After September 2001, the Australian presence in the MIF was increased to three ships. Since then Australians have regularly commanded the multinational operation, the first time the MIF has had non-American command. By 2003 the smuggling of oil (and dates, another lucrative cargo) had been largely curtailed.
- 3.6 During the Second Gulf War, Australian Captain Peter Jones commanded coalition naval operations in the northern Persian Gulf. Operations included surveillance and inspection of all shipping in the area, clearing the Khawr 'Abd Allah waterway, and naval gunfire support by HMAS *Anzac* in support of British forces ashore. In a notable success, coalition boarding parties based in HMAS *Kanimbla* seized three tugs and a barge preparing to lay sea-mines to attack coalition shipping.¹

Current Operations

Naval Capability

- 3.7 The delegation visited the Australian Navy ship currently assigned as Australia's contribution to the coalition naval task force, HMAS *Newcastle*. The ship, nearing the end of a six month operational tour in the Middle East Area of Operations, was conducting maintenance in Port Rashid Dubai, in preparation for its return voyage to Australia.
- 3.8 HMAS *Newcastle* is a Guided Missile Frigate easily suited to its task in the Gulf. She was designed as a long range naval escort ship with roles including area air defence, anti-submarine warfare, surveillance, reconnaissance and interdiction. The ship is capable of countering simultaneous threats from the air, surface and sub-surface. These capabilities enabled the Captain and crew to monitor the dense picture of surface activity in the waterways of the northern Gulf and to liaise and track coalition surveillance aircraft, including Australia's P3C Orions. *Newcastle* is powered by modern gas turbine engines and two forward mounted retractable auxiliary propulsion units, making the ship fast and extremely manoeuvrable in the confined waters.
- 3.9 HMAS *Newcastle* is armed with surface-to-air missiles and the Harpoon anti-ship missile. The ship is also equipped with a 76mm gun, a close protection weapon-system, and can launch torpedos. To extend the reach of the ship it is equipped with a flight deck and two helicopter hangars

1 <http://www.awm.gov.au/iraq/ran.asp>

capable of housing S-70B-2 Seahawk Helicopters, though only a single Seahawk was deployed to the Gulf. The ship's sensor package includes long range radars for air and surface surveillance and Forward Looking Infra Red (FLIR) sights capable of surveillance in low light or poor weather conditions.

- 3.10 *Newcastle* is also equipped for the current deployment with two Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs) and has two dedicated boarding parties. These boarding parties were critical to the success of *Newcastle's* mission, providing the human element to security operations involving boats and trade that pre-date modern technology.

Figure 3.1 HMAS *Newcastle* conducting replenishment operations



Source <http://www.navy.gov.au/ships/newcastle/default.htm>

Visit Conduct

- 3.11 On arrival aboard the HMAS *Newcastle* the delegation was met by the ship's captain, Captain Trevor Jones. The delegation received a comprehensive series of briefs as follows:
- A classified brief on the day to day methods used by the ship to achieve its mission of protecting the Iraqi oil infrastructure. The brief also covered the operation of smugglers, pirates and patrol and boarding operations.

- An intelligence briefing on the risks posed by Ant-Coalition elements and the motivation of other risk groups in the area.
- A brief by the leader of the ship's boarding parties. The briefing demonstrated the quality of the young service people who are at the forefront of the ship's interaction with the people of the Gulf.
- The operations officer then escorted the delegation for a detailed tour of the ship.

Task and Threats Faced

- 3.12 Captain Jones and some of his key staff described the tactics and techniques used by the Maritime Interdiction Force to police sea-borne traffic in the Gulf. This report will not discuss the specifics of the techniques used to achieve the demanding mission but will comment on the demands placed on the ship and its crew.
- 3.13 HMAS *Newcastle* had conducted four 30 day patrols in the shallow waters at the northern extremity of the Arabian Gulf. The primary task undertaken during these patrols was the protection of Iraq's Gulf Oil Platforms. These terminals are used to load much of Iraq's export oil onto international vessels so are key to current and future prosperity of Iraq. The Australian Naval patrols were conducted amidst hundreds of local craft, many of which were legitimately conducting the trade that has sustained the region for many hundreds of years. Some of this traffic however has quite different motivation.

Figure 3.2 The patrol area for HMAS *Newcastle* in the northern Arabian Gulf



Source <http://www.awm.gov.au/iraq/ran.asp>

- 3.14 In 2004 a US ship, the *USS Firebolt*, operating in the same area patrolled by *HMAS Newcastle*, suffered three sailors killed when a suicide vessel exploded as a boarding party from the ship approached the unidentified dhow for inspection. As the seven-member boarding team approached the dhow in their RHIB, the dhow exploded, killing the two sailors and tossing the rest of the boarding team - three sailors and two coast guardsmen - into the water. A third member died later of wounds.
- 3.15 Captain Jones briefed the delegation on the demands faced by the crew as a result of such enemy suicide tactics. He and his crew faced uncertainty every time a boarding party left the ship to investigate local craft or when the ship itself manoeuvred to block the approach of vessels seeking to move close to the Gulf Oil Platforms. The threat from such attacks is not trivial, even in a ship as capable as the *Newcastle*. The effective destruction of the *USS Cole* by suicide attack using small craft in Yemen in September 2000 gives an indication of the dangers facing our sailors in such situations.

Figure 3.3 the Hon Graham Edwards is shown the weapons used by boarding parties from the *HMAS Newcastle*



International Sensitivities

- 3.16 Captain Jones also briefed the delegation on the issues associated with operating within metres of the maritime border between Iraq and Iran. This border has been the source of significant dispute between Iraq and Iran, much of which is unresolved. The Captain briefed that the RAN has no interest in causing an international incident with the Iranian Navy, but

at the same time has a responsibility to maintain the territorial integrity of the newly democratic Iraq. In this sensitive climate, where individual actions can have significant strategic consequences the delegation was briefed that the Australian Naval officers and sailors had operated with great restraint and sensitivity, easing tensions in a number of explosive situations.

- 3.17 The delegation was also briefed on the progress being made developing the new Iraqi Navy. British and Australian training and ongoing British mentoring have produced a small patrol boat force. The force is slowly developing the type of crew cohesion taken for granted in the UK and Australia but many challenges remain. The equipment being operated by the Iraqi Navy varies in standard from reasonably capable to dilapidated, which in turn means equipment availability rates are low. The type of vessels selected for the force is appropriate for the security tasks required of a defensive Iraqi Navy in the northern Gulf. However, despite the skill of many individual Iraqi sailors it will be some time before the Iraqi Navy can police the area independent of supporting coalition assets. In the current phase of security transition the coalition Navies provide logistic and maintenance support for the Iraqi patrol boats and mentoring for the Iraqi Naval planners and leaders.

Conclusion

- 3.18 HMAS *Newcastle* represents a long line of RAN vessels and their crews that have contributed to the security of this critical region. Like those before, the ship and its crew have excelled in this demanding environment. The delegation members were delighted to be able to visit the ship close to the end of a demanding tour to thank the officers and crew for their efforts.
- 3.19 The delegation made the following observations during the visit:
- The *Newcastle* and her predecessors are making a very substantial contribution to the rehabilitation of Iraq by guarding infrastructure critical to the economic prosperity of the nation and reducing criminal activity that could be used to support terror groups in Iraq.
 - The delegation observed that relatively junior members of the Navy are conducting boarding operations, which are often dangerous and sensitive tasks, with great skill, compassion and restraint. They have done this repeatedly with great success. While the technology embedded in the ship is sophisticated it cannot determine the motivation of the crewmen aboard hundreds of local dhows. To test the

motivation of local seamen and to ensure the coalition message deterring illegal activity is passed effectively, groups of young Australian's must repeatedly board these vessels. They are doing this in the face of significant threat and the risk of international incidents with a sensitive neighbour with mature awareness of the consequences of their actions, bringing great credit to themselves and to Australia.

- All the RAN personnel met by the delegation demonstrated a strong commitment to their task and high morale. They had no major complaints and were happy with the logistic and administrative support for their deployment.
- The delegation was impressed by the willingness of the ship's crew to contribute to the operation at many levels, beyond that expected in more routine circumstances. For example the ship had been responsible for feeding the coalition personnel embarked on the oil platforms. This involved significant effort in preparing and delivering three meals per day during all weather and under the pressure of numerous other tasks.

Figure 3.4 The delegation on the flight deck of HMAS *Newcastle* with CAPT Jones RAN, CO of HMAS *Newcastle* and Commodore Ledger, Commander JTF633.



The Maritime Patrol Aircraft Detachment

Background

- 4.1 Australian P3C Orion maritime surveillance aircraft were deployed to Iraq as part of Operations Bastille and Falconer in 2003. They were originally tasked with surveillance operations in support of the maritime interdiction operations in the northern Arabian Gulf but their task has expanded considerably as their significant capabilities have become better understood by coalition commanders.
- 4.2 An extremely versatile aircraft, the Orion performs well in a multitude of roles including Under Sea (anti submarine) and Surface (anti ship) Warfare, Maritime Surveillance, Naval Fleet Support and Search and Survivor Supply. The significantly upgraded Australian Orions currently deployed to the Middle East, designated AP-3C, were introduced into service in 2002 and are fitted with a variety of sensors, including digital multi-mode radar, electronic support measures, electro optics detection (infra-red and visual), magnetic anomaly detector, identification Friend or Foe and acoustic detection.
- 4.3 The aircraft has several characteristics that made it ideal for employment in the maritime patrol task in the northern Gulf. The Orions have the advantage of significant endurance, typically flying long 12-hour missions, especially at night, over the Persian Gulf. They have added significant clarity to the surface forces conducting naval operations in the Gulf by keeping track of the large number of small vessels in the area, both to curb smuggling and to guard against the danger that they could be suicide boats packed with explosives.

Figure 4.1 A P3C Orion from 92 Wing RAAF, currently deployed to the Middle East, testing its newly fitted Self Protection System



Source <http://www.defence.gov.au/media/download/>

- 4.4 The sophistication of the sensors on board the aircraft have allowed the Australian detachment to provide the Coalition with images of sufficient quality to observe the true nature of a large number of vessels operating in the area. The detachment can determine whether a vessel is configured for illegal oil or fuel smuggling, traditional fishing, or for collecting intelligence on coalition vessels in the area.

Conduct of the Visit

- 4.5 The visit to the Maritime Patrol Aircraft Task Group was conducted in two parts as follows:
- Two members were taken to the detachment on arrival in the Middle East and prepared for an operational mission with a crew from the detachment. The members conducted a day / night mission over eight hours;
 - The complete delegation visited the task group for a briefing by the CO, Wing Commander 'Max' Heinrich and his key staff. The delegation then had lunch with members of the task group before receiving a display aboard the aircraft of the mission systems.

Current Operations

Expanded Operations

- 4.6 Many of the capabilities present in the P3Cs remain classified and will not be described in this report. The members of the delegation however, received significant insight into the capability that is now amongst the most important Australia contributes to the coalition through two excellent activities. The first insight was provided through the inclusion of two members, Mr Cameron Thompson MP and Mr Kim Wilkie MP, on an operational surveillance mission with the detachment. The second opportunity was provided to the complete delegation in the form of a first class briefing at the detachment in which members were shown the surveillance products of recent operational tasks and given the opportunity to discuss the capability of the aircraft with the crews.
- 4.7 Significantly the role of the detachment has expanded considerably since its arrival in the theatre. The complex nature of the counter insurgency operation in Iraq has put pressure on the coalition surveillance assets in the operational area. Quite simply there are never enough eyes in the sky. As a result the Australian P3C is increasingly tasked over land as well as water. Again, while the exact nature of these tasks is beyond the scope of this report, the delegates were given graphic evidence of the effectiveness of the Australian contribution to the counter insurgency. The operational mission that included the two delegates included a significant portion over southern Iraq.
- 4.8 This expansion of the Maritime Surveillance role to include operations in support of ground forces is a first for the ADF. It represents a further example of the increasingly joint nature of military operations and is an excellent example of the flexibility or agility of the deployed ADF personnel as they develop the procedures for a completely new mission while on operations.
- 4.9 Like all ADF assets deployed to the Middle East the Australian aircraft are assigned under operational control of the Coalition. Tasking is therefore in accordance with a broad coalition priority system. The security of the Gulf Oil Platforms, protected in part by the Australian Frigate, is a high priority task and thus receives a significant component of P3C surveillance effort. Australian land operations are in areas considered more stable than insurgent strong-holds so coalition tasking of the aircraft in support of Australian land operations is rare.

Figure 4.2 Mr Cameron Thompson MP is fitted with his personal survival equipment before conducting an operational mission with the P3C Detachment



4.10 The members of the delegation were particularly interested in the development of the new component of the capability. They were briefed that lessons learned on the deployment were being fed back to the Australian capability development process and would inform the development of Australian doctrine and other capability decisions. The Chief of Army, LTGEN Peter Leahy, has visited the detachment and participated in an operational mission to observe the capability in action.

Conclusion

4.11 The delegation congratulates Wing Commander 'Max' Heinrich and his team for their exemplary performance. The principal conclusions and observations from the visit to the task group were as follows:

- The operations conducted by the P3C Orion detachment make a significant contribution to coalition operations to reconstruct Iraq.
- The delegation was delighted with the innovation and determination being shown by the Australian aircrews and support staff. The detachment continues to deliver a sophisticated and thorough output in its traditional area of strength over the waters of the Arabian Gulf. Concurrently it is developing a capability completely new to the ADF during a demanding operation.
- The detachment also draws significant praise from the coalition leadership for displaying the characteristics of a high quality Air Force

operation. The Australian ground crews are achieving very high levels of aircraft availability under extreme environmental conditions and the aircrews are achieving equally high rates of mission success in the face of complex environmental and operational conditions.

- The detachment staffs are adding considerable value to the products of their missions. They are analysing the results of the missions and producing high quality outputs to the supported forces.
- The complete detachment has maintained excellent relations with their host nation, despite major cultural differences. The delegation visited during the period of the Muslim Ramadan. The detachment personnel conduct themselves during such periods with high levels of cultural awareness and discretion.
- The robust size of the task group, based on complete capability elements, allows for the management of fatigue and ensures high standards of safety. This is a critical component in the success of this task group over two years of operations, under extreme environmental conditions.
- The delegation supports the proposal to construct shelters for the aircraft if the detachment is to remain in place over the next northern summer. Such shelters will allow maintenance personnel to work on the aircraft for longer periods during the heat of the desert summer.

Figure 4.3 The Hon Warren Snowdon MP and the Hon Bruce Baird MP inspect the cockpit of a P3C Orion in the Middle East



Visit to the Al Muthanna Task Group

Background

- 5.1 With the withdrawal of the Army Special Forces Task Group (SFTG) from western Iraq in 2003 Australia ceased contributing directly to the security situation on the ground in Iraq. Australia's military contribution within Iraq comprised the highly valued Australian Army Training Teams - Iraq (AATTI), a number of embedded military staff working with coalition Headquarters and a small group protecting Australia's diplomatic and military staff in Baghdad.
- 5.2 In February 2005 the Prime Minister announced that the Australian Government had agreed to a request from the British and Japanese Governments to assist with the provision of a secure environment for Japanese reconstruction work in the southern Iraq province of Al Muthanna. In response to the Government direction the ADF created the Al Muthanna Task Group (AMTG), an Army combined arms battlegroup based on units from the Army's high readiness 1st Brigade and also comprising an additional AATTI.¹
- 5.3 The Al Muthanna province is part of the British area of operations and had previously been secured by the Dutch. Al Muthanna is a very large but relatively poor rural province, mainly populated by the Shiite community. The regional capital, As Samawah, is a city of approximately 250,000 people. The province has been one of the more stable locations in Iraq but

¹ Prime Minister's Press Conference, *Deployment of Australian Task Force to Iraq - Cabinet Meeting*, dated 22 Feb 05, as quoted at <http://www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/Interview1251.html>

the security situation remains stable but unpredictable as locals remain frustrated with the slow pace of reconstruction.

Current Operations

The Al Muthanna Task Group

5.4 The AMTG deployed to Iraq in April / May 2005. It is made up of 450 personnel, approximately 400 of whom are involved in security operations with the remaining 50 personnel training the new Iraqi Army. The Task Group outline structure is as follows:

- A Task Group Headquarters based on the Regimental HQ of the Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment based in Darwin and augmented with offensive support coordination capabilities, additional intelligence staff and legal and policy advisers;
- Combat Team Eagle – a combined arms team with a mix of cavalry soldiers equipped with Australian Light Armoured Vehicle (ASLAV), and mechanised infantry soldiers for dismounted security tasks. Combat Team Eagle is described as “cavalry heavy” as the majority of its tasks are mobile security tasks such as convoy escorts, route clearances or mounted patrols;
- Combat Team Tiger – a combined arms team with a mix of infantry soldiers, supported by cavalry troops to provide armoured mobility. Tiger is described as “infantry heavy” as the majority of its tasks are dismounted security tasks such as facilities security and foot patrolling;
- A Combat Service Support company – a mixture of the sub elements needed to sustain Army operations such as maintenance personnel, medical staff and supply personnel; and
- A Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) unit tasked with the direct liaison with the local community and selecting and managing reconstruction projects provided by Australia.

5.5 The AATTI follows on from successful training team contributions in northern Iraq, northern Baghdad and in the initial teams which raised the first two Iraqi Army battalions in Kirkush to the east of Baghdad. Their methods and lineage can be followed further back to the Australian Army Training Team – Vietnam. The AATTI is broadly structured as follows:

- A Brigade Headquarters support team; and
- Two Battalion support teams.

Equipment

- 5.6 The AMTG conducts operations with the following major equipment types:
- The ASLAV family of vehicles which includes direct fire vehicles equipped with a 25mm cannon and sophisticated fire control systems, a Personnel Carrier suited to carriage of infantry or scouts and armed with a remote overhead weapon station, an armoured ambulance and an armoured recovery vehicle capable of towing a damaged vehicle to a safe location. The ASLAV has outstanding tactical mobility in the desert area of operations and has some of the most sophisticated night fighting aids available in Iraq.
 - The Bushmaster Infantry Mobility Vehicle – an armoured truck capable of carrying support and logistic personnel in a protected, air conditioned cabin. The Bushmaster has proved to be reliable and capable of matching the mobility of the ASLAV in most conditions. It offers a good level of protection and excellent comfort for troops who spend many hours in the vehicles in extreme temperatures. The vehicle is very popular with both its operators and those who ride in the back.

Figure 5.1 CO Australian Army Training Team Iraq, LTCOL Steve Tulley, briefs Senator David Johnston at Camp Smitty southern Iraq



Conduct of the Visit

- 5.7 The delegation visit to the AMTG was conducted as follows:

- the delegates were equipped with protective equipment and briefed by Close Personal Protection personnel at the Australian Force Level Logistic unit outside Kuwait city;
- the delegation flew by Australian C130 aircraft from Kuwait to Talil, a coalition airbase 90km south of the Australian area of operations where it was met by LTCOL Roger Noble, Commanding Officer of the AMTG and his Regimental Sergeant Major Warrant Officer Bob Aboud;
- the delegation was transported in Australian Bushmaster vehicles from Talil to Camp Smitty, home to AMTG;
- The delegation lunched with the local Japanese and British Commanders at Camp Smitty;
- The delegation travelled to As Samawah by Bushmaster, escorted by Combat Team Eagle, to meet with the provincial Governor;
- On return to Camp Smitty the delegation received a series of classified briefings from CO AMTG and his key leaders Majors Bye, Garraway, and Barras;
- The delegation had a BBQ dinner with those members of the task group that were not required for security tasks; and
- The delegation camped overnight with the Task Group before departing the following morning.

Figure 5.2 Mr Barry Haase MP and the Hon Bruce Scott MP are briefed on the equipment used by the AMTG at Camp Smitty in southern Iraq



Observations

- 5.8 The delegation made the following observations during its stay with the AMTG:
- The AMTG is well led by a very capable group of officers and senior NCOs, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Roger Noble. Roger is to be commended for his performance and for his frank and informative briefings to the delegation.
 - The AMTG has made a very positive contribution to the security of the Al Muthanna province. They are achieving their task of creating a secure environment for the Japanese reconstruction force by pre-empting problems in the area through a determined and well considered presence throughout the province.
 - The Iraqi Army Brigade mentored by the AATTI is developing steadily. The Australian team has been a significant factor in the successful development of the Iraqi Brigade capability – supporting the development of facilities, doctrine and sourcing equipment as well as conducting training and mentoring commanders conducting operations.
 - Morale in the task group is very high. The delegates were consistently briefed that the Australian Task Group had the best equipment in the coalition for the types of tasks being conducted and the delegates received no complaints about any of the support systems in place for the soldiers and their families despite pressing for such concerns.
 - The contingent has been stressed during the period in which members were released for their mid tour leave (Relief Out of Country Leave – ROCL). The AMTG command team strongly support the need for ROCL, a condition of service equal to the best provided by any nation and an important factor in the consistently high performance of Australian soldiers in Iraq. The delegation was also briefed by the Command team that the AMTG is a lean, efficient organisation which is adequately manned to achieve its mission. The delegation did observe however that the pressure on soldiers that remained in Iraq increased during the period in which personnel departed on leave. Defence has recently announced that it will provide a small reserve of personnel to alleviate this problem on the next AMTG rotation.
 - The delegation observed that a number of small safety related incidents had occurred in the task group that appeared to be avoidable. The delegation was briefed earlier in their trip that the more robust RAAF detachments outside Iraq may provide a useful template as to how the pressure on the AMTG could be eased, potentially increasing rest and

safety margins by increasing the size of the task group. The delegation understands this is an argument to be balanced against the need to minimise the number of ADF personnel exposed to the risk of service on the ground in Iraq but recommends that future such task forces be based on capability groupings that form the basis of existing Army Battle-Group structures.

- While the climatic conditions experienced by the delegation were relatively mild the task group briefed on the conditions experienced at the height of the northern summer. The achievements of the task group during this period are a tribute to the training conducted by the Army in Australia and the leadership of the task group in Iraq where soldiers are monitored closely and rotated through less arduous tasks.
- The delegation was able to observe some of the CIMIC projects sponsored by the task group. These so called “red kangaroo” projects (named for the red kangaroo painted on their project signs to identify them as Australian) have cost relatively little (~ \$AUD 2.25m) but have brought great credit and good will to the Australian Task Group. The delegation supports this approach and recommends that additional funding be allocated to similar projects in AMTG2. The CIMIC capability of the ADF, currently based in the Reserve, needs to be carefully nurtured as a potential force multiplier on future complex operations.

Figure 5.3 Lieutenant Colonel Roger Noble, Commanding Officer of the AMTG, and community leader Sheikh Abdullah Aziz (centre) discuss the benefits of the community centre at As Salman, a “Red Kangaroo” project



- The delegation was pleased to observe the extent to which the task group was cooperating with both the British and Japanese coalition partners. However the ADF and the Government will have to closely monitor the future re-deployment of key British military assets in the

south of Iraq to ensure Australian forces are not left exposed by British alterations to their force posture.

- The Governor of the Al Muthanna Province, Mr Mohammed al Hassani, made it clear to the delegation that the people of southern Iraq are becoming frustrated with the lack of progress on reconstruction in their area. He advised that Iraq should not be viewed as a whole when considering the security situation. In his words the south of Iraq 'is open for business'. The delegation observed the potential for Australia to establish a Whole of Government effort in the south, under the protection of Australian troops, to make a significant impact on the quality of life of the local population. Any Australian effort would be of a higher profile than that achieved in Baghdad where AusAid efforts are potentially swallowed up by the larger donor countries and security overheads.

Figure 5.4 The delegation meets with the Governor of Al Muthanna province, Mr Mohammed al Hassani



Delegation Observations from Baghdad

Background

- 6.1 The delegation concluded its visit to Iraq with a day and a half in the capital, Baghdad. The delegation flew to Baghdad from Camp Smitty in Al Muthanna province with the assistance of the US Army, who provided three Blackhawk helicopters and a pair of escorting helicopter gunships.
- 6.2 The delegation flew direct to the centre of Baghdad to the International Zone (or as it is often called in the media the Baghdad Green Zone). The International Zone occupies the leadership and ceremonial district established by the former regime. It is home to several palaces, the former Baath Party Headquarters and the famous Rashid Hotel. It is now home to the Interim National Assembly and a number of the new Government Ministries as well as the new site of the US, British and Australian embassies.
- 6.3 In the immediate aftermath of the defeat of the former regime the Coalition Provisional Authority, under the charge of US Ambassador Paul Bremer, made its base in one of the largest of Saddam Hussein's ceremonial palaces. Since that time the institutions of the newly democratic nation have grown slowly from this site. The Australian embassy recently moved to a site close to the centre of the zone after being earlier located at the site of the former Australian Chancellery, in the Karada district outside the International Zone. This site became untenable when it was subject to attack by anti-coalition forces using a Vehicle Based Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED or car bomb). The new embassy is in a property formally owned by one of Hussein's sons which was secured by ADF personnel in the immediate aftermath of combat operations.

Conduct of the Visit

- 6.4 The visit program in Baghdad was very full. It was conducted as follows:
- The delegation were met on arrival in the International Zone by the personnel of the Baghdad Security Detachment in ASLAV and taken to the Australian Embassy to change into business attire;
 - The delegation then travelled with the Ambassador, Mr Howard Brown, to the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly (TNA) where they met with the Speaker Mr Hajim al Hassani and members of the TNA. At the conclusion of the meeting the delegation leader, the Hon Mr Scott MP and the Australian National Commander, Commodore Geoff Ledger, gave a media interview to a local Iraqi news services;
 - The delegation returned to the embassy for lunch with the ambassador, his key staff and selected senior embedded Defence officers;
 - The delegation then toured the remainder of the International Zone and was shown the capabilities of the SECDET personnel and vehicles. The delegation stood on the famous balcony on which Saddam Hussein waved his gun over his parading military formations and then posed for a photo under the crossed swords marking the commencement of the Regime victory parade;
 - The delegation had a brief afternoon tea with the soldiers of the SECDET before flying by US helicopter to the HQ of the Multi-National Forces Command - Iraq;
 - On arrival at the Al Faw Palace (or Camp Victory) the delegation met with US General George Casey, Commander of coalition forces;
 - The delegation then spent the night in temporary accommodation at the camp before receiving a classified briefing from the staff of the Australian National Headquarters.

The Iraqi Transitional National Assembly

- 6.5 After the Hussein Regime was deposed by the coalition in 2003, a governing council set up by the Coalition Provisional Authority signed an interim constitution for Iraq which called for the election of a transitional National Assembly no later than the end of January 2005. This Assembly was to draft a permanent constitution which would then be submitted to approval by the Iraqi people in a general referendum.
- 6.6 Elections for this transitional National Assembly took place on January 30, 2005. The United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) Party won 48% of the popular vote,

resulting in 140 seats in the Assembly. Eighty-five members of the assembly are women.

- 6.7 Talks between the UIA and other parties to form a coalition government began soon after the election. The assembly had its first meeting on March 16, 2005. After weeks of negotiations between the dominant political parties, on April 4 2005, Sunni Arab Hajim al-Hassani was chosen as speaker; Shiite Hussain Shahrstani and Kurd Aref Taifour were elected as his top deputies. The Assembly elected Jalal Talabani to head the Presidency Council on April 6, and approved the selection of Ibrahim al-Jaafari and his cabinet on April 28.
- 6.8 The delegation met with the Speaker, Mr Hajim al Hassani, at the Iraqi National Assembly in Baghdad. Mr al Hassani is a moderate Sunni Arab and relative outsider, having spent much of his life in the United States. He was identified as a compromise candidate for the speaker's post after weeks of deadlock between Iraqi political parties. Al-Hassani had previously been a member of the Iraqi Islamic Party in exile and was industry minister under the interim government of Iyad Allawi.

Figure 6.1 The Hon Mr Bruce Baird MP and Hon Warren Snowdon MP meet with members of the Iraqi Interim National Assembly in Baghdad



- 6.9 Mr al Hassani received the delegation for an extended meeting. Some of his observations were as follows:
- The Speaker observed that the members of the new Parliament are learning the conduct of democratic practice “from scratch”. They have no experience of the processes required to conduct democratic exchange, to establish and conduct an executive Government and to

hold an executive to account, using a process of Parliamentary scrutiny. He indicated that he would welcome a Parliamentary exchange with the Australian Parliament to observe how Australia manages these issues.

- Mr al Hassani echoed the position stated by the Governor of Al Muthanna province when he said that Iraqis were frustrated by the lack of progress with reconstruction. He understood that western aid organisations and businesses would be discouraged by the impression of a lack of security for reconstruction tasks but he regarded this as a shallow view of Iraq. He encouraged the delegation to view Iraq's regions differently with the north and south as largely stable and "open for business". He understood that reconstruction operations in the central region or Sunni triangle would remain problematic for some time yet.
- The Assembly is seeking support from western countries to pressure Iraq's neighbours diplomatically to reduce uncontrolled or illegal movement across shared borders. Many of the suicide bombers causing terrible damage to the Iraqi population are foreign fighters arriving in Iraq through neighbouring countries.
- The Assembly would also welcome access to Australia's universities for Iraq's students. He described the advantage for the young people of Iraq in experiencing for themselves the advantage of living in a peaceful and stable democracy.
- Mr al Hassani understood Australia's expertise in dry continent agriculture. He identified this as a specific area in which Iraq would welcome Australian assistance.
- Mr al Hassani expressed his confidence in the democratic process. He described the Constitutional Referendum, the results of which had just been announced, as a great success. The electoral participation of the Sunni population was identified as a particular key to the success of the vote.
- Mr al Hassani expressed his gratitude for Australia's ongoing involvement in the coalition to reconstruct Iraq.

Current Operations

Headquarters Joint Task Force 633 (JTF 633)

- 6.10 Headquarters Australian JTF 633 exercises National Command over Australian Defence Force maritime, land and air elements deployed in the Middle East.

- 6.11 ADF military operations are normally conducted by one or more JTFs. A JTF for a particular contingency will be assembled from ready forces to meet the specific needs of an operation. The size and composition of a JTF Headquarters will be influenced by such things as force composition, mission, political considerations, concurrent operations, geographic location and coalition partnering arrangements. The aim when determining the best structure must be to make the command chain as simple, unambiguous and unified as possible.
- 6.12 To ensure that commanders at various levels are given command and or control of assigned forces commensurate with their level of responsibility, the ADF uses 'States of Command' to assign authority. These States of Command describe the degree of authority which exists between headquarters in Australia, Joint Task Forces, Task Groups, and formations or units.
- 6.13 The Commander JTF 633, Commodore Geoff Ledger, has a number of command authorities over assigned forces. The delegation was briefed on the implications of three of these:
- National Command. National Command is a standing authority conferred upon the senior Australian operational commander in the area of operations. Its purpose is to safeguard Australian national interests in coalition operations. This is sometimes referred to as exercising the National 'Red Card' when a proposed coalition tasking does not accord with the mission or Rules of Engagement (ROE) directed by Government at the time of deployment. Exercising the National Red Card prevents mission creep for Australian task groups and ensures Australian forces adhere to defensive ROE.
 - Tactical Command. Tactical Command allows a commander to specify a mission or task to subordinate units as long as they comply with the broad intent of the Government as directed by the CDF. Commander JTF633 has this level of command over those assets allocated to the operation that specifically support Australian interest such as the Baghdad Security Detachment. These forces do not respond to coalition tasking.
 - Operational Control. Most other Australian force elements are assigned under the operational control of the coalition. Operational control allows coalition commanders, such as the British Division HQ with authority over the AMTG, to direct assigned or attached forces but limited by function, time or location, all of which are agreed in advance.
- 6.14 To exercise his National Command Commodore Ledger has a staff of approximately 60 personnel. The Headquarters is divided using the standard defence functions as follows:

- J0 Command Spt Cell, comprising the Chief of Staff and the Command Sergeant Major;
- J1/4, personnel and logistics;
- J2, intelligence;
- J3, operations;
- J5, planning; and
- J6, communications and information systems.

6.15 The principal staff officers in each of these areas briefed delegates on their role and processes during a tour of the Headquarters. The J2 and J3, the principal operational staff officers, provided the delegation with classified briefings on their own impressions of the counter insurgency operation in Iraq and likely future scenarios.

The Baghdad Security Detachment

6.16 Australian diplomatic and military staffs in Baghdad are protected by the Baghdad Security Detachment (SECDET). SECDET has distinguished itself in the period since the end of conventional conflict. They have successfully protected the Australian Diplomatic staff from attack while facilitating the conduct of diplomatic operations. They have conducted many hundreds of foot and vehicle patrols through the city, earning the trust of the locals amongst whom they have lived.

Figure 6.2 Delegates pose with SECDET personnel and ASLAV under the ceremonial arch of the Hussein Regime victory parade in the International Zone, Baghdad



- 6.17 The detachment has been attacked at least twice. The first, a VBIED attack on an ASLAV patrol near the former Chancellery, wounded a number of soldiers and seriously wounded their commander, Lieutenant Callender. The second attack was a VBIED attack on the SECDET patrol base and accommodation facility next door to the Chancellery. A number of soldiers received relatively minor wounds in this attack but the building defences otherwise worked very well.
- 6.18 SECDET has recently relocated to the International Zone where it shares the former Baath Party Headquarters building with similarly tasked US units. SECDET is currently Commanded by Major Malcom Wells and its structure comprises the following elements
- A small HQ reinforced with intelligence and information systems personnel;
 - An infantry element for conducting dismounted security patrols and conducting static security of Australian facilities, including the Embassy;
 - A cavalry element, mounted in ASLAVs, for patrol and escort tasks outside the International Zone; and
 - A Military Police Close Personal Protection Team with specific responsibility for the safety of the Australian Ambassador.

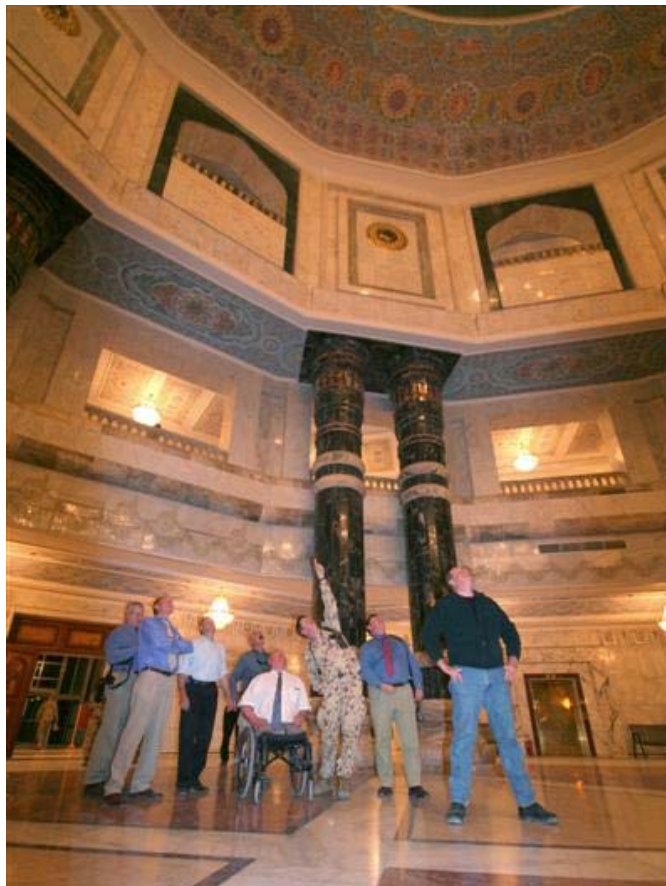
Multi National Forces Command – Iraq (MNF-I)

- 6.19 The delegation met with the Commander of all coalition forces in Iraq, US General (four star) George Casey. General Casey had discussions with the delegation in his office in the former Hussein Regime Palace known as the Al Faw Palace. The Palace, a massive, ornate facility was built by the former Regime to mark the occasion of its 'victory' over Iran on the Al Faw peninsular near Basrah. It has since been converted into one of the most sophisticated command and control facilities in the world.
- 6.20 MNF-I is a strategic level HQ, meaning General Casey's task is to operate at the political - military interface. He is charged with supporting the emerging democratic process, the development of indigenous Iraqi Security Forces, and setting the broad military objectives for the fighting force commanders in the country. As the Australian National Commander in Iraq, Commander JTF633 interacts directly with General Casey.
- 6.21 MNF-I military operations are conducted through a standing US Army Corps Headquarters capable of commanding multiple Division sized organisations. To put this in some perspective the entire Australian regular Army combat component equates to a single reinforced Division. The US Corps HQ commands subordinate Divisions which are allocated

responsibility for large portions of Iraq. Their responsibilities include security, training the new Iraqi security forces and administering large portions of the reconstruction program. The subordinate Divisions include the following:

- The Multi National Division – South East: a British led Division comprising Dutch, Italian and Australian forces (Al Muthana Task Group) based in the Shiite south.
- Multi National Division - Central South: a Polish led Division which includes a Ukrainian Brigade centred on Babylon and the Shiite religious heartland south of Baghdad.
- Multi National Force – North West: includes the South Korean contribution and is based in the predominantly Kurdish North.
- Multi National Divisions North Central and Baghdad: two large US Divisions with responsibility for the most contested areas in Iraq.
- Multi National Force – West: a predominantly US formation tasked with closing the infiltration routes from neighbouring countries to the west.

Figure 6.3 Delegates view the entrance to the Al Faw Palace, a former Regime palace now home to General Casey's Headquarters MNF-I



6.22 General Casey spoke at length with the delegation. He explored a range of issues, including expanding on his recent testimony to the US Congressional Committees. Some of his main observations were as follows:

- General Casey expanded on his statement to the US Congressional Committees that only a single Iraqi Army Battalion was capable of independent operations. He described the progress of developing Iraqi Army units through a three phase transition process from being under the control of coalition forces through to complete independence. In the first phase Iraqi forces were completely subordinate to the coalition, operating only as small teams within larger US formations. He explained to the delegation that this phase has largely passed. In the second phase, in which the majority of Iraqi units currently fall, Iraqi units have operational authority over large areas of Iraq but rely on the coalition for specialist support. This support includes planning, logistics, intelligence and air support.
- This description accurately reflects the status of Iraqi forces in the Al Muthanna province. Before Iraqi forces transition to complete independence they will need support building the remaining skill sets. General Casey commented that Australia's recent efforts in establishing a logistics training centre were extremely valuable in this regard and that Al Muthanna was one of the provinces closest to being ready for complete transition to Iraqi control.
- General Casey expanded on his view of the insurgency. He explained that insurgent attacks were now less frequent in Iraq but the attacks were more lethal. He explained this was not an unexpected outcome as the coalition had killed or captured many of the less skilful members of the insurgency while those that remained were now hardened by the conflict. He explained how Iraqi insurgents were using international Jihadists as fodder, setting up lethal attacks and then using those willing to die to conduct the attacks. The current coalition emphasis is on preventing the uncontrolled movement of foreign fighters across shared borders.
- The insurgency was described as having three parts. The majority part, which General Casey called the centre section of the bell curve, comprised 'rejectionists' or Iraqi nationalists who simply wanted the coalition to leave Iraq. General Casey described how this group needed to be managed until the coalition departed but that he did not expect this group to pose a major problem for the Iraqi Security Forces after coalition forces departed. At the extremes of the bell curve are two groups the coalition believes they must defeat before they depart. The first, the international terror groups such as al - Qa'ida, were the current

focus of coalition operations and are reported to be responsible for the majority of high profile attacks. The final group described by General Casey are the Shiite religious extremists. This group, he explained, had the ability to ignite large portions of southern Iraq into violent action within very short time frames if left unchecked.

- Like Speaker al Hassani, General Casey was very pleased with the outcome of the referendum on the Iraqi Constitution. He was particularly pleased with the voter turn-out amongst the Sunni population, who he believed were now aware that their earlier electoral boycott had been a mistake, leaving them without adequate representation.
- The delegation asked General Casey for his thoughts on the likelihood that the Japanese might withdraw their forces early in 2006. General Casey did not offer an opinion on the Japanese, rather he stated that he accepted that each member of the coalition needed to act in a manner that achieved their national interest. He then stated that additional Australian forces would be more than welcome because of their first tier skill levels in operating in a demanding counter insurgency environment.

Observations

6.23 The delegation made the following observations in Baghdad;

- The Australian doctrine in relation to National Command has been one of the keys to the success of the Australian military contribution to both the offensive phase of operations during Operation Falconer, and now the defensive phase – Operation Catalyst. The ability, and willingness, of the senior Australian military officer in the theatre to ensure that allied tasking requests meet Australia’s Rules of Engagement has ensured that all actions involving Australia in the theatre have supported Australia’s national objectives and successive commanders are to be commended for their diligence in this regard.
- The ADF support to the protection of Australian diplomatic operations in Baghdad is world class. Without the professional and courageous actions of successive Baghdad Security Detachments Australian Diplomatic operations would have ceased as the insurgency grew.
- Equally, the courage and determination of the Ambassadors and staffs of the Australian Representative Office and now the Australian Embassy to conduct business in the chaos of post war Iraq has been particularly noteworthy. That they have continued to function has not

been lost on the emerging Iraqi Government and institutions and will earn Australia great credit with Iraq for many years to come.

- The Australian National Headquarters in Baghdad is a valuable asset. It clearly enables the Australian Commander of JTF633, Commodore Ledger to exercise his National Command responsibilities. It also appears to be a valuable filter for Australia to enable the Australian military to provide the Government an accurate view of events on the ground in Iraq. The delegation welcomed the opportunity to receive an insight into this independent view.

Final Comments

- 6.24 The visit was a remarkable opportunity to meet with the soldiers, sailors and air men and women of the ADF involved in this most complex of military operations. The delegation is now able to better understand the nature of the operations in which they are engaged and to appreciate the circumstances and environment in which they are operating.
- 6.25 Although they are working in chaotic and frequently dangerous conditions and in an oppressive climate the members of the ADF are performing their duties with pride, commitment and professionalism. The members of the ADF from all three services are performing with distinction and attracting great credit to themselves, their service, the ADF and to Australia.
- 6.26 The visit was also an important opportunity to convey directly to all the personnel deployed to the Middle East, the bipartisan support of the Parliament for their performance under such demanding conditions. The service men and women are aware that differences of opinion exist in Australia about the merits of Australia's involvement in operations in Iraq. These differences do not impact on the regard with which our service people are held by the majority of members of the Parliament and the Australian public.

Bruce Scott, MP

Delegation Leader



Appendix A – Delegation Program

22 Oct 05 Delegation departs Australia by civil airlines from Perth and Sydney.

23 Oct 05 **Dubai**

0540h Edwards / Wilkie / Haase / Johnston arrive. Met by Commander Joint Task Force 633 (CJTF633) – Commodore Geoff Ledger

0545h Scott / Baird / Thompson / McLachlan arrive.

0615h Majority move to hotel for rest day

0800h Thompson / Wilkie depart for Australian P3 Orion detachment (location classified)

1400h Thompson / Wilkie participate in maritime and overland surveillance task

2300h Thompson / Wilkie return to hotel.

Commercial accommodation Dubai – Dubai Grand Hyatt Hotel

24 Oct 05 **Visit ADF Force Elements**

0500h CJTF633 / McLachlan depart hotel to greet Mr Snowdon (15min drive)

0545h Snowdon arrives (EK413)

0630h breakfast hotel

0730h check out of hotel

0745h Visit HMAS Newcastle – Port Rashid Dubai

1030h depart for Australian P3 Orion Detachment (location classified)

1130h Visit Australian P3 Orion Detachment
 1345h move to Dubai airport
 1415h check in for civ air flight Dubai to Kuwait (EK857)
 1615h Fly Dubai to Kuwait (1.35hrs) **Time Zone Change**
 1730h move from Kuwait airport to Australian Force Level Logistic Asset
 Kuwait (FLLA-K) at Ali Al Saleem airbase
 1815h visit logistic detachment - includes BBQ dinner
 2000h issue of protective equipment and brief by Close Personal Protection
 (CPP) team leader
 2045h move to hotel
 2130h check in hotel

Commercial accommodation Kuwait - Kuwait Sheraton

25 Oct 05 Deploy to Camp Smitty - Al Muthanna Iraq

0600h breakfast hotel
 0645h check out
 0715h move to Ali Al Saleem airbase
 0800h fly to Talil (Ali Base) by Australian C130
 0900h arrive - met by Commanding Officer Al Muthanna Task Group
 (AMTG) LTCOL Roger Noble.
 0930h Travel to Camp Smitty - Al Muthanna province. ASLAV and
 Bushmaster vehicles
 1230h Lunch with AMTG and Japanese Defence personnel
 1330h travel to As Samawah (provincial capital) to meet with Governor
 1500h return to Camp Smitty
 1530h briefings on AMTG - LTCOL Noble, MAJ Garraway (Commander
 Combat Team Tiger), MAJ Bye (Commander Combat Team Eagle)
 1800h BBQ diner with AMTG personnel

Overnight with AMTG

26 Oct 05 Deploy to International Zone Baghdad

0630h breakfast with AMTG Iraqi Army Training Team - Commander
 LTCOL Steve Tulley
 0800h attend AMTG morning briefing.
 0900h fly to Baghdad International Zone by US Blackhawk Helicopter

1000h met by Aust Security Detachment Baghdad, move to Aust Emb
1010h meet with Amb Howard Brown. Freshen up and change into business dress
1050h move to Iraqi Transitional National Assembly
1100h meet with Speaker of the Transitional Assembly – Mr Hajim al Hassani and members of the TNA
1300h return to Aust emb for lunch with staff and embedded Australian officers – Colonel Michael Tucker, Military Adviser to the UN Special Representative and Colonel John Mansell, Defence Attache.
1420h Security Detachment Display and tour, included visit to ceremonial balcony and crossed swords arch.
1600h meet with Security Detachment personnel at their barracks at the former Bath Party HQ.
1700h fly from Baghdad International Zone to Camp Victory (Al Faw Palace)
1730h meet with Commander Multi-National Forces Iraq – US General George Casey
1800h dinner
1900h rest

27 Oct 05 Briefings HQJTF633 / Travel to Kuwait

0730h breakfast DVQ
0830h vacate accom
0900h briefings at HQ JTF633 – Commodore Ledger and key staff
1000h morning tea with Australian National Headquarters personnel
1215h move to Baghdad International Airport
1300h fly to Kuwait by Australian C130 aircraft – lunch on aircraft
1430h move to FLLA-K (10mins) Shower, hand back equipment.
1515h move to civil airport (45mins)
1600h check in
1800h fly (dinner on aircraft)
2035h arrive Dubai
2105h move to hotel
2120h check in

Commercial accommodation Dubai- Dubai Grand Hyatt Hotel

28 Oct 05 Return to Australia

0630h breakfast
0715h check out Scott/Baird/Thompson/McLachlan
0745h depart for airport
0815h check in
1015h depart
2300h Remaining delegates check out.