



Submission No 18

Inquiry into Australia's Defence Relations with the United States

Organisation: United Nations Association of Australia
Incorporated

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23 April, 2004

Stephen Boyd, Secretary,
Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs,
Defence and Trade,
Parliament House ACT 2600

Dear Stephen Boyd,

On behalf of UNAA I enclose a submission (in hard copy form and on disk) to the current Inquiry into Australia's Defence Relations with the United States of America.

If you have any queries, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,



David Purnell OAM
National Administrator

UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

SUBMISSION TO JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S DEFENCE RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A. INTRODUCTION.

1. This submission is presented by the Executive Committee of the United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA). The UNAA has a membership of around 2000 across Australia, and aims to encourage support within Australia for the aims and objectives of the United Nations Organisation. UNAA has a longstanding interest in Australia's foreign and defence policies and the way they interact with the United Nations role in maintaining international peace and security.

2. The Inquiry by the Joint Standing Committee focusses on how the Australia-US alliance should be developed to meet each nation's security needs, and includes such elements as (a) the role of ANZUS, (b) intelligence-sharing, (c) engagement of the US in Asia-Pacific region, (d) links between Australia's force structure and coalition operations, (e) missile defence, (f) the impact of space-based systems on self-reliance, (g) joint defence exercises, (h) Australian industry involvement in the US defence industry, and (i) research and development.

3. In this submission priority will be given to strategic and policy issues in relation to Australia's defence. UNAA is not in a position to make specific comments on operational matters.

B. GLOBAL CONTEXT

1. The challenge of achieving greater peace and security around the world remains critical. It goes alongside the need for international response to humanitarian crises and threats to human rights. We are only too aware of the traumatic impact of events such as the genocide in Rwanda ten years ago, the collapse of Yugoslavia, the emergence of terrorist attacks, the war in Iraq, and the uprisings in areas like Liberia, Chechnya and many other places.

2. A recent report by the Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty re-defines humanitarian intervention as 'the responsibility to protect' and analyses the situations in which such intervention might be appropriate by the international community. The report emphasises the importance of the United Nations in authorising such intervention, and the need to ensure that the UN has the capacity to respond effectively.

3. Ongoing broader challenges of poverty, injustice, health and education crises, unemployment, environmental degradation, and inequality – all these remain vital areas of focus in removing some of the causes of war and terrorism. UNAA accepts that solutions to these issues will rely increasingly on international co-operation and action.

C. AUSTRALIA'S POLICIES

1. UNAA believes that it is essential that Australia's policies reinforce the global trends to find ways in which the international community can respond to crises. In short, UNAA affirms that multilateral approaches have priority in dealing with current global challenges to peace and security. This means that Australia's defence and foreign policies should be judged by what they contribute to this global search for effective responses to global problems.

2. UNAA is concerned that the present defence and foreign policies tend to give greater priority to unilateral than to multilateral approaches. This is made clear in the strong emphasis by the present government on the Australia-US alliance in determining the way Australia's defence forces are developed and used. Equipment purchases, and the kind of military support given to interventions in Afghanistan and the Middle East, have shown the high stress placed on having forces that fit closely with alliance activity. The recent interest in being part of a missile defence system is an extension of the same approach.

3. There is an increasing perception within Australia that the defence policies are geared largely to the expectations of the US, and that intelligence information is accepted from US without significant local analysis being undertaken. As a result the appearance is that Australia will go along with US policies without question, and will adapt its own policies accordingly.

4. UNAA is especially disturbed that the current US administration has moved towards pre-emptive action and the use of force in ways that undermine the role of the United Nations and the international protocols that Australia has helped to develop over many years. If Australia is to follow the US lead, it runs the strong risk of being party to a process of destabilising the international community's capacity to work for more effective global responses.

5. It is important for Australia to set its own directions – based on our well-established commitment as a nation to peace and justice throughout the world - and then negotiate with others to work jointly towards international peace and security. The United Nations is the best channel for such negotiations, and Australia has used this vehicle for many years to good effect. Feedback to UNAA from UN sources these days indicates that Australia is increasingly seen as following rather than leading such international debates.

6. In this context, ANZUS has become more of a hindrance than a help. There has been some public debate about ANZUS, but there is apparently no inclination by the Government to renegotiate it in a way that brings it up to date. According to Daniel Fitton a researcher at Georgetown University, USA (*The Canberra Times*, 12 April 2004) ANZUS is outdated for several reasons – it no longer includes New Zealand, it makes no mention of terrorism, and it is very imprecise about the obligations of the treaty partners. “Australia should take the opportunity to make its formal security commitments relevant for today. If the current Government has courage and a genuine interest in the future defence of Australia, it should exercise its much-touted political capital in Washington to bring the alliance into the modern era”. UNAA supports a revision of the treaty, and notes that this could include reshaping and reinforcing the existing provision for use of the United Nations for action in the case of a problem arising for parties to the treaty.

D. ADF – PEACEKEEPING AND REGIONAL ROLE.

1. Australia has been involved in over 20 UN peacekeeping operations, and as a result thousands of Australians have had the experience of working for the United Nations. In its submission to the Parliamentary Enquiry in to Australia's Relations with the United Nations (in 2000), UNAA made the following points:

Chapter VI of the UN Charter gives authority for greater efforts to use mediation, conciliation and arbitration to prevent disputes from escalating. At the same time, peacekeeping operations need to be strengthened by better coordination, training, and attention to building civil society after conflicts. Australia should enhance its peacekeeping centre and encourage other countries to have such facilities.

UNAA believes that the conflict-resolving measures in the UN Charter should be used more, and supports the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the peacekeeping infrastructure. UNAA supports coordination of peacekeeping training within Australia, and the giving of appropriate recognition to peacekeepers for their service. The United Nations Security Council has passed Resolution 1325 which provides for the empowerment of women in the peace keeping and peace building process. UNAA believes that women should have equal representation in the peace keeper training to participate at national and international level.

2. The recent involvement of Australian defence forces in the Pacific to assist in restoring law and order and support peace building efforts in a regional context are applauded by UNAA as examples of how Australia can use its defence forces constructively in co-operation with other countries in the region. UNAA supports the development of the newly-emerging peace and conflict policy by AusAID to help work out appropriate forms of intervention in our region, and defence policy

should dovetail with this. In particular, there need to be clear parameters for intervention and exit. Joint peacekeeping exercises with countries of the region could be part of this policy.

3. The role of the US in the Asia-Pacific region is best defined in an international context. In other words, the United Nations (in which the US has a major role) sets the overall priorities and the US then indicates what it can contribute to the implementation aspects. Similarly, Asian and South Pacific regional bodies (eg ASEAN, South Pacific Forum) can set the priorities for this region, the US can be asked to contribute its expertise to the region within the Forum guidelines.

4. It would be desirable for Australia to apply the United Nations newly-established code of conduct for military and civilian personnel, and to encourage the US to do likewise.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS.

Australia should

- (a) determine its defence policies in the context of contributing to the multilateral approach to international peace and security;*
- (b) encourage the United States to work within international fora (especially the United Nations) to achieve effective responses to global challenges, and to contribute to peace and security in the Asia/Pacific region within agreed protocols set by regional and international bodies;*
- (c) make available its defence forces for regional and global peacekeeping within the guidelines of regional and global bodies, and engage in joint peacekeeping exercises with countries involved;*
- (d) provide training for women to have equal participation in Australia's contribution to peace and security nationally and internationally.*
- (e) adopt the UN code of conduct for military and civilian personnel;*
- (f) review the ANZUS treaty to bring it up to date, clarify the obligations of treaty partners, and strengthen the role of the UN in the treaty; and*
- (g) reverse the decision to become involved in a missile defence system.*

Canberra, ACT
April 2004