



Submission No 21

Inquiry into Australia's Defence Relations with the United States

Organisation: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

*Ligue internationale des femmes pour la paix et la liberté
Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad
Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit*



**Consultative Status with United Nations ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO
Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO and UNICEF**
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Mr Stephen Boyd
Secretary
Defence Sub-Committee
Email : stephen.boyd.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Boyd,

Re: Joint Standing Committee's inquiry into Australia's defence relations with the United States

Thank you for the extension granted to our organisation for sending the attached submission.

The Australian Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is an international non-government organisation in consultative status with United Nations ECOSOC and UNESCO. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom also has special consultative relations with the FAO, ILO and UNICEF. This submission is made on behalf of the Australian Section of our organisation. WILPF welcomes the opportunity to make this second submission to the Committee's Inquiry in relation to comments sought in the Issues Paper, March 2005.

We thank you and Committee members for your kind attention and look forward to the Committee's report.

Ruth Russell
National Coordinator - WILPF Australian Section

**Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Defence and Trade: Inquiry into Australia's Defence Relations
with the United States**

**Submission made on behalf of the Women's International League
for Peace and Freedom (Australian Section) Inc**

**WILPF's response to the supplementary questions as outlined
in Issues Paper, March 2005.**

ANZUS Alliance –

**2.30 Comments sought on Australia's independence and acquiescence to US
strategic policy.**

Australia can regain our high international reputation by becoming more forthrightly independent and less acquiescent in supporting the strategic interests of the US. It is clear that the Australian people have strong reservations concerning Australia's overly zealous support for US actions in recent years. (Cf the recent Lowey Institute survey of Australian public opinion on this matter). It is necessary for Australia to move from a position of compliance to equal partnership status with the US. WILPF believes that Australia should develop a defence policy clearly delineating how we will build peaceful relations with other nations, especially our close neighbours, and in what situations we would take military action to defend Australia. Such a statement could give notice to the US that Australia does not see itself as a totally compliant partner to be drawn into US military interventions in countries that are not an immediate threat to Australia.

Equal partnership status with the US would provide opportunities for genuine advice to be proffered and the possibility of non-compliance with an action that might be detrimental to Australia's interests. For instance, tensions in the Taiwan Straits hold potential difficulties for Australia in negotiating around our perceived obligations under the ANZUS Treaty. Recent statements by Richard Armitage (until recently US Under-Secretary of State) reveal these difficulties. In public statements, Mr Armitage has maintained that the US believes that ANZUS would oblige Australia to join the US if armed conflict were to arise between the US and China over Taiwan.

Australia can and should take the initiative in influencing Washington by setting out clearer boundaries under which we would refuse to take part in military action. Australia can for instance require certain conditions to be met before joint military action would be countenanced. Such conditions should include compliance with the UN Charter and Security Council resolutions., Acting in accord with international law would thus restrain tendencies to military adventurism. In addition, mediation attempts must have been undertaken and, most importantly, Australia should act in partnership with the US only

after they have made themselves legally accountable through joining the International Criminal Court.

WILPF believes that Australia should also take a lead in nuclear disarmament. Australia can urge the US to de-alert current nuclear weapons thus putting pressure on other nuclear weapons states to do likewise. Australia can also urge the US not to develop mini nuclear weapons. These two actions would reduce the threat of nuclear war and nuclear accident for Australians and for all people.

Recommendations

1. Australia should enhance our independent defence strategies interpreting the ANZUS Treaty to avoid “Alliance entrapment” which is detrimental to our national security, international reputation and relations with our neighbours in the Asia-Pacific..
2. Australia should review our participation in the ANZUS Treaty. While it is unlikely under this present Government, that we would withdraw from the Treaty, we can manage the Alliance better. Australia should refuse to take part in further military exercises with the US on Australian soil, , until the US is prepared to make itself accountable through the International Criminal Court . The US needs also to allow their military personnel to be accountable in Australian courts by amending the Status of Forces Agreement.
3. Australia should communicate to the US that we will not engage in any military action unless it is in accord with international law and also in accord with the UN Security Council resolutions.
4. Australia should more vigourously support conflict resolution measures to resolve any perceived threat.
5. Australia should urge the US to take the initiative in setting dates by which to complete the 13 steps of nuclear disarmament as set out in the 2000 Review of the Non -Proliferation Treaty.

2.38 Comment on the need to increase public knowledge of the ANZUS Alliance.

There is a need for less secrecy and more openness and accountability which could be enhanced with greater public awareness of the ANZUS Treaty, its aims, actions taken to date and wider debate on the consequences of those actions, ie military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq. WILPF’s concern is that a balanced view be presented.

Recommendations

1. Further public information and debate be encouraged around the ANZUS Treaty and its effects on global affairs, Australia and our neighbours. Encouraging Education Departments and tertiary courses to take a lead in such discourse would be useful but broader public debate is also necessary.
2. Specific funding provided by the Australian Government to fund tertiary research on the effects of the Australia-US relations, with research results made public, would enhance Australians' knowledge and understanding of the ANZUS Treaty.
3. WILPF does not support the development of a Cooperative Research Centre on the United States with the aim to develop new commercial, research and innovation links with the US, while US defence policy is dominated by the interests of arms corporations and is seen to be upholding the ideologies espoused in the *New American Century* documents. (see www.newamericancentury.org.)

2.44 Comment on New Zealand and the ANZUS Treaty

New Zealand has taken a principled stand on nuclear powered and nuclear armed ships and this stand should be respected. WILPF supports the NZ stand and would like to see Australia taking a similar principled and courageous stand. It is in Australia's interests to work more closely with New Zealand and to adopt a less provocative and belligerent position than that currently taken in partnership with the US. WILPF welcomes good defence relations with NZ if they are consistent with the independent defence policies of each country.

Recommendations

1. Australia maintain good defence relations with New Zealand.
2. Australia not pressure New Zealand to drop their stand on nuclear powered and nuclear armed ships.
3. Australia work with New Zealand and US to ensure the ANZUS Treaty operates strictly in compliance with international law, the UN Charter and Security Council resolutions with the US agreeing to make itself accountable through the International Criminal Court, before resumption of any tri-nation defence exercises and increased information sharing occurs.

Australian Defence Force –

3.21 Comment on Australia's force structure and part in US alliance

The Australian Defence Force has contributed far above its sustainable resources in engaging in the initial invasion of Iraq and sending further troops. WILPF believes that the purchase of the Abrams tanks would have been made with this commitment in mind as such heavy armour is inconsistent with Australia's light infantry needs.

The Australian Defence Force should be just that – a Force that focuses on the needs for the realistic defense of Australia, rather than engaging in far-flung and unsanctioned US military adventurism. The temptation to be drawn into further US unilateral military operations should be avoided. We believe that the comments of Dr Lyon where she mentions Australia’s role in “rebuilding and reconstructing societies” (p.21) go far beyond the legitimate defence of Australia.

Australia has exceeded its alliance responsibilities by its participation in the US unilateral invasion of Iraq. The ongoing violence in Iraq is in response to the continued occupation by the Coalition of the Willing. The Coalition is the problem, not the answer and should withdraw immediately.

Recommendations

1. Australia should set a date by which to withdraw all Australian troops from Iraq.
2. Australia assess the full impact of our involvement in invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq which include military, humanitarian, environmental, financial and reconstruction costs as well as the impacts on our relations with neighbouring countries and our international reputation.
3. Australia develop a more independent defence policy, which should include a review of the Defence White paper of 2000, with the focus on legitimate defence of our land and neighbouring region..
4. Engagement in any “rebuilding and reconstructing societies” (p.21) would best be undertaken only as part of a UN multilateral program, rather than Australia acting unilaterally or being seen as the “deputy sheriff” of the US.

Interoperability

3.38 Comment on achieving effective interoperability

WILPF supports the RSL position in the Issue paper (p.24) where they note the significance of the application of the laws of war and rules of engagement as applied by the Australian forces and US forces. The compliance with international standards in the “Rome Statute’ and International Criminal Law are essential to any engagement. Australia can and should refuse operational requests from the US which do not comply with these standards.

The choice of Abrams tanks with their consequent use in Iraq and further purchase of US defence equipment need to be reexamined in the light of increasing alliance entrapment. A review of the interoperability with the US and whether this is purely for defence of Australia or wider unilateral military operations needs to be considered. Decisions on suitable equipment can be made that limit Australia’s engagement to legitimate defence.

Intelligence

3.48 Comments on intelligence sharing arrangements.

Australia's readiness to accept unverified US intelligence has proven detrimental where unreliable intelligence was used to justify involvement in Iraq.

WILPF believes that the intelligence sharing arrangements between the US and Australia are not serving Australia's security needs. In fact, the present arrangements are actually jeopardizing Australia's security. Excessive secrecy measures prohibit Australian control of the Joint Defence Facility at Pine Gap, Australia. Australia should be provided with information on a *need to know* basis, without taking the high risk of Pine Gap being a prime target in any US military activity. Pine Gap facilities are more likely than not to support nuclear engagement. The US policy of *neither confirm nor deny* any nuclear capacity, does nothing to diminish concerns of nuclear war activities.

WILPF reaffirms our earlier recommendations that Australia review the necessity for the Pine Gap Facility and set up an Ethical Advisory Committee to monitor intelligence operations at Pine Gap.

Combined defence exercises

4.18 Comments on combined US-Australia Defence Training facility

WILPF reiterates all the objections outlined in our earlier submission to combined defence exercises with the US. The likelihood of 'training operations' leading to permanent US military base/s in Australia is high. The "foot in the door" principle applies here and training bases should therefore be rejected as Australia risks becoming a prime target for future attack.

If the benefits of combined exercises are overwhelming, can they not be held on US soil? Why should Australia accept the full detrimental environmental and marine impact of such exercises when we are aware of the fragility of our ecosystem? What assurances are there that no nuclear, depleted uranium or other toxic material will be released into our biosphere?

The need to clearly establish "National Command" and "Rules of Engagement" that comply with international law is also imperative.

Combined defence training should relate only to matters of genuine defence, not preemptive attacks, interdiction of ships on the high sea, missile defence in space operations or other unilateral offensive military operations.

The objectives and cost effectiveness of such operations should be reviewed, monitored and approved by the parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade or similar parliamentary authority.

US Missile Defence

5.51 Comment on Australia's involvement in the Missile Defence program.

It is disingenuous to claim that the US Missile Defence system is defensive only. The Missile "Defence" system is by its nature provocative and destabilising. Building the "missile defence shield" will leave nations such as China no option but to increase their nuclear arsenal. China has already said as much. The Missile Defence program should thus be viewed more accurately as an offensive system.

Australia's 'in principle' support for involvement in this program should be put on hold until wider Australian debate occurs on this important topic. The full implications of our involvement, including potential violation of the Outer Space Treaty, potential threat to non-participants, operational effectiveness and costs, have yet to be widely debated and accurately assessed.

Australia's defence budget has increased markedly with involvement in East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Solomon Islands. There is no capacity for further defence budget increases as these must be balanced against community needs such as health, education and welfare which would face further decreases in Commonwealth funding.

Australia should constantly be assessing any potential future threats and investigating the issues that give rise to them. Through good diplomatic relations with all nations, and a demonstrable record of goodwill potential future threats could be diminished. Supporting a multilateral approach and rejecting the concept of "preemption" would be two immediate steps toward decreasing potential future threats. The *deterrence* factor only comes into play when good neighbourly relations break down and offence is seen as the only way of resolving conflict.

Australia should put a higher priority on diplomatic peacekeeping measures than development of military responses. There is a strong temptation to look for the financial and commercial benefits (such as jobs, research through DSTO etc) while downplaying the essential fact that military weaponry can only be used for destruction, not benefit humankind. Our focus should be on research and jobs that provide beneficial outcomes.

Australia's ability to influence the US strategic position has been minimal. It is assumed this is because Australia shares common goals with the US rather than voicing objections which have been overridden. Australia's close alliance with the US will continue to cause suspicion and regional mistrust. It is highly unlikely that Australia could ever represent regional concerns as it is widely perceived as being too entwined with US global interests. WILPF believes that ultimately Australia should withdraw its support for the US Missile Defence system, adopt a more balanced position and uphold the integrity of the Outer Space Treaty.

Recommendation

That no specific Defence budget allocation be given for participation in the US Missile Defence system until the likely political, social and environmental implications are analysed and publicly debated alongside peaceful alternative options.

Deterrence works best through improved diplomatic relationships with all nations and support of multilateral solutions through the UN. Diplomatic and peaceful solutions should be actively pursued.

WILPF believes that ultimately Australia should withdraw its support for the US Missile Defence system, adopt a more balanced position and uphold the integrity of the Outer Space Treaty.

US-Asia Pacific relations

6.40 Comment on Australia-US alliance as viewed by China, India, Japan and ROK

The need for Australia to adopt a more independent stance and clearly state its support for the UN principles and processes (as opposed to unilateral preemption) is important in maintaining good regional relationships. Australia's participation in the US Missile Defence program will be seen negatively by most regional nations.

Australia's military involvement in recent US invasions under the "war on terror" has heightened fears of US hegemony, especially in Muslim countries. The growing number of US military bases (now around 700) and Australia's embrace of combined training exercises and new training bases will not be allaying those fears.

It is important to develop fair, socially just, economic and cultural relationships with our Pacific and Asian neighbours to build trust and cooperative approaches to regional issues. Full participation in regional forums such as ASEAN is essential to building regional solidarity and security through peaceful means.

Defusion of any potential future threat, through ongoing dialogue with regional countries should be our paramount consideration. Ultimately, regional security and safety will depend more on us building an enduring close and fair relationship than on military might and uncritical compliance with US hegemonic ambitions.

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Submission prepared for the Australian Section of WILPF
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