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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# Defence Sub-Committee visit to the Middle East Area of Operations

**Report of the Delegation to the MEAO 14 to 18 May 2011**

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

March 2012  
Canberra

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### **Cover photograph captions – left top to right bottom**

Mr Stuart Robert MP, Ms Gai Brodtmann MP and LTCOL Stuart Kenny (at rear) arrive at PB Musaza'i Landing Zone, Mirabad Valley, Uruzgan.

The delegation at Al Mihad Airbase standing with a damaged Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicle, which was damaged in Afghanistan by an Improvised Explosive Device.

Mr Stuart Robert MP meeting senior Afghan provincial officials in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan, prior to the commencement of a Provincial Leaders Shura with the delegation.

The delegation with escort, COL Andrew McLean (in slouch hat), arrives at Multi-National Base Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan by RAAF C130J, is met by Commander CT-U, COL Jim Creighton



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## Foreword

In mid May 2011, a delegation of four members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade visited personnel from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and other Government agencies deployed on active service in the Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO).

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

- Headquarters Joint Task Force (JTF) 633 at the Al Minhad Airbase in the United Arab Emirates;
- Force Communications Unit-4, based at Al Minhad Airbase, providing personnel and communications support to Australian Defence Force and other Government agencies' elements deployed throughout the MEAO;
- Force Support Unit-4, based at Al Minhad Airbase, providing personnel and logistics support to ADF and other Government agencies' elements deployed throughout the MEAO;
- Air Component Command, based at Al Minhad Airbase, providing personnel and RAAF air support to ADF and other Government agencies' elements deployed throughout the MEAO;
- Headquarters Combined Team-Uruzgan, a United States of America led Coalition formation level headquarters commanding Australian and other Coalition forces in Uruzgan;
- The Uruzgan Afghan leadership team of: Provincial Governor, Governor Omar Shirzad; Commander 4<sup>th</sup> Afghan National Army (ANA) Brigade, Brigadier General Zafar; and the Provincial Chief of Police, Colonel Shirzad;

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- The Uruzgan Provincial Reconstruction Team, a Australian led Coalition team conducting and coordinating development throughout the province;
  - Mentoring Task Force-2, conducting security and mentoring of the Afghan National Army in Uruzgan Province;
  - Special Operations Task Group 16, which is comprised of elements of the Special Forces Units in Special Operations Command (SASR, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Commando Regiments and the Incident Response Regiment), conducting security operations in Southern Afghanistan;
  - Rotary Wing Group-6, operating CH47D Chinook helicopters from Kandahar Airfield in support of Coalition operations in Regional Command South;
  - Heron Detachment, operating the RAAF's Heron Unmanned Aerial Vehicle from Kandahar Airfield in support of Australian forces in Southern Afghanistan;
  - Kandahar Role 3 Hospital, providing level three health support from Kandahar Airfield to Coalition forces in Southern Afghanistan;
  - Force Support Team Kandahar, based at Camp Baker at Kandahar Airfield and providing logistical support to Australian Forces in Southern Afghanistan;
  - AUSAID and Other Government Agency Personnel working within Headquarters Regional Command South;
  - The Deputy Chief of Staff-Plans, Headquarters ISAF Joint Headquarters: Major General Michael Krause, AM (Australian Army) and other Australian embeds within the ISAF Headquarters;
  - The Australian Embassy in Kabul hosted a visit to the Afghan Parliament for a discussion with three members of Parliament, Khalid Pastoon (Deputy Speaker of the Afghan Parliament), Fawzia Koofi (Chairwoman of the Defence and Territorial Affairs Standing Committee) and Hasham Watanwal (Representing Uruzgan Province and Deputy Chair of the Defence and Territorial Affairs Standing Committee);
  - The Artillery Training Team-Kabul, an Australian Army led Coalition artillery training and mentoring team to the Afghan Artillery School, Kabul.

The visit to ADF units in the MEAO forms part of the Committee's wider program of inspections to ADF 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 Iraq, East Timor and the 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 Australian personnel deployed on these demanding operations.

Secondly the delegation, in meeting with ADF and other Government agencies' personnel and with key Afghan leaders at Village, Provincial and National level, was able to review the current situation in Afghanistan first hand.

Finally, it was to provide the Committee with situational awareness of the ADF's operations in the MEAO, in order to allow members to be better positioned to review Australian Defence and Foreign Policy.

The comprehensive delegation itinerary allowed the members to achieve all three of these aims. The delegation thanks the ADF for developing and coordinating a visit program that ensured the safety of delegates while giving them exposure to a wide range of issues, personnel and locations. The delegation thanks the Australian National Commander in the MEAO, Major General Angus Campbell AM, and his staff for coordinating the visit and providing it with the access it required to meet its aims. In particular, the delegation thanks the Chief of Staff Headquarters Joint Task Force 633, Colonel Andrew Maclean, for hosting the delegation throughout the visit. Colonel Maclean provided the delegation the benefit of his considerable experience during the visit, leaving the members confident in the leadership and organisation of the Australian Forces in the Middle East.

The Committee would also like to thank the Australian Embassy staff in the United Arab Emirates and Kabul for supporting the program. In particular the delegation thanks the Australian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Mr Paul Foley, for hosting the delegation's visit to the Afghan Parliament and sharing his wealth of experience with Afghan politics to the delegation.

Finally, the delegation expresses its appreciation for the efforts of the Committee's Defence Adviser, Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Kenny CSC, who accompanied the delegation and was intimately involved in the planning of the visit, and the officers and soldiers of 2<sup>nd</sup> Commando Regiment who provided the security to the delegation throughout its visit.




The delegation returned from the visit extremely impressed by the dedication, professionalism and competence of the ADF and other Government organisations' personnel conducting operations in the demanding and harsh environment in the Middle East. It was pleasing to hear of and observe the improving performance of the ANA's 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade in Uruzgan, and the increasing level of responsibility being taken by the formation under the tutelage of the Australian Mentoring Task Force. The delegation returned from the visit with cautious optimism about the progress of Australia's efforts in Uruzgan Province and ISAF's efforts across Afghanistan.

The Committee acknowledges with sadness the deaths of nine Australian soldiers in Afghanistan since the delegation returned from its visit. The Committee expresses its sincere condolences to the families of Sergeant Brett Wood MG, DSM, Lance Corporal Andrew Jones, Lieutenant Marcus Case, Sapper Rowan Robinson, Sergeant Todd Langley, Private Matthew Lambert, Captain Bryce Duffy, Corporal Ashley Birt and Lance Corporal Luke Gavin.


All Australians should be proud of the achievements of the Australian personnel on operations across the Middle East and the contribution they are making for peace and development in the region.

Senator Mark Furner  
Chair of the Defence Sub-Committee



## Membership of the Committee

Chair	Senator Michael Forshaw (to 30/06/11)	
	Mr Michael Danby MP (from 1/07/11)	
Deputy Chair	Mrs Joanna Gash MP	
Members	Senator Mark Bishop	Mr Nick Champion MP
	Senator David Fawcett (from 1/07/11)	Mr Michael Danby MP
	Senator the Hon Alan Ferguson (to 30/06/11)	Hon Laurie Ferguson MP
	Senator Mark Furner	Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP
	Senator Sarah Hanson-Young	Mr Steve Georganas MP (to 24/03/11)
	Senator the Hon David Johnston	Mr Steve Gibbons MP (to 7/02/12)
	Senator Scott Ludlam	Hon Alan Griffin MP
	Senator the Hon Ian MacDonald	Mr Harry Jenkins MP (from 7/02/12)
	Senator Anne McEwen (from 1/07/11)	Dr Dennis Jensen MP
	Senator Claire Moore	Mrs Sophie Mirabella
	Senator Kerry O'Brien (to 30/06/11)	Hon John Murphy MP
	Senator Stephen Parry (from 1/07/11)	Mr Ken O'Dowd MP
	Senator Marise Payne	Ms Melissa Parke MP
	Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens (from 1/07/11)	Mr Stuart Robert MP
	Senator Russell Trood (to 30/06/11)	Hon Phillip Ruddock MP
	Hon Dick Adams MP (from 24/03/11)	Ms Janelle Saffin MP
	Hon Julie Bishop MP	Hon Bruce Scott MP
	Ms Gai Brodtmann MP	Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP
	Hon Anthony Byrne MP	Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP




## Membership of the Defence Sub-Committee

Chair            Senator Mark Furner

Deputy Chair   Dr Dennis Jensen MP

Members	Senator Mark Bishop	Mr Nick Champion MP
	Senator David Fawcett (from 1/07/11)	Mr Michael Danby MP
	Senator the Hon Alan Ferguson (to 30/06/11)	Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP
	Senator the Hon David Johnston	Mrs Joanna Gash MP
	Senator the Hon Ian MacDonald	Mr Steve Gibbons MP (to 7/02/12)
	Senator Stephen Parry (from 1/07/11)	Hon Alan Griffin MP
	Senator Marise Payne	Mr Harry Jenkins MP (from 7/02/12)
	Senator Russell Trood (to 30/06/11)	Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP
	Hon Dick Adams MP (from 24/03/11)	Mr Stuart Robert MP
	Hon Julie Bishop MP	Hon Bruce Scott MP
	Ms Gai Brodtmann MP	Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP



## Membership of the Delegation

Chair	Senator Mark Furner
Deputy Chair	Dr Dennis Jensen MP
Members	Ms Gai Brodtmann MP Mr Stuart Robert MP
Defence Adviser	Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Kenny, CSC

# Committee Secretariat

Secretary	Dr Margot Kerley (to 10/6/11) Mr Jerome Brown (from 26/7/11)
Inquiry Secretary	Mr Robert Little
Defence Adviser	Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Kenny, CSC
Administrative Officers	Ms Gillian Drew Mrs Sonya Gaspar Ms Jessica Butler



## List of abbreviations

ACC	Air Component Command
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AMAB	Al Minhad Airbase
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ATT-K	Artillery Training Team – Kabul
BG	Brigadier General
CIED	Counter Improvised Explosive Device
CO	Commanding Officer
CRAM	Counter Rocket, Artillery and Mortars
CSU	Combat Support Unit
CT-U	Combined Team – Uruzgan
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DMO	Defence Materiel Organisation
FCU	Force Communications Unit
FSU	Force Support Unit
GIRoA	The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

HQ	Headquarters
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IJC	ISAF Joint Command
ISAF	International Stabilisation and Assistance Force
IT	Information Technology
JOC	Joint Operations Command (at Bungendore)
JSCFADT	Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
JTF	Joint Task Force
KAF	Kandahar Airfield
MEAO	Middle East Area of Operations
MNBTK	Multinational Base Tarin Kowt
MTF	Mentoring Task Force
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission - Afghanistan
OGA	Other Government Agencies
PRT - U	Provincial Reconstruction Team - Uruzgan
RAA	Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RAR	Royal Australian Regiment
RC(S)	Regional Command South
RSO+I	Reception, Staging, Onward Forwarding and Integration
RWG	Rotary Wing Group
SASR	Special Air Service Regiment
SOTG	Special Operations Task Group

UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
US	United States of America