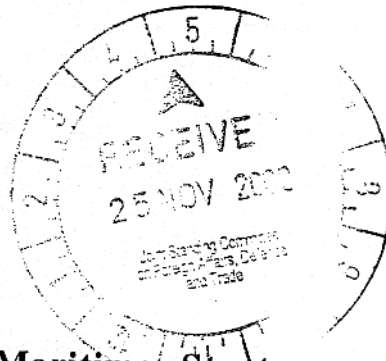


15 Fishburn St.  
Red Hill,  
ACT 2603

20 November 2002

The Secretary,  
Defence Sub-Committee,  
Joint Standing Committee on  
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade,  
Parliament House,  
Canberra, ACT 2600.



Dear Mr Harrison,

**Inquiry into Australia's Maritime Strategy**

Further to your invitation to make a submission to the inquiry, and to my telephone conversation with Leslie in which I explained that my submission could be expected, please find enclosed my personal submission to the inquiry into Australia's maritime strategy.

This submission is made in my private capacity, as someone conversant with and experienced in maritime strategic issues, and not in my capacity as a member of the Defence community.

The submission consists of two parts: an outline of particular issues and an enclosure of four essays on maritime strategic themes. Copies of this covering letter and of the outline are also being sent by email.

Yours sincerely,

John Reeve, MA PhD FRHistS  
Member, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London)

## Australia's Maritime Strategy: Outline of Particular Issues

### 1. A Maritime Strategic Outlook

The Government White Paper *Defence 2000*<sup>1</sup> represented a stage in Australia's movement towards a maritime strategic view of its national security needs. Since its publication there have been dramatic and far-reaching developments in the international security situation, particularly in relation to the threat of transnational terrorism. At the same time the possibility of conventional inter-state conflict potentially involving Australia remains alive. The Parliamentary enquiry is an opportunity to promote discussion and stimulate further development of an overarching maritime strategic policy framework for Australia. Such a framework should combine the principles of maritime strategy established by long historical experience with the needs of our particular national circumstances, as well as combining the high- and low-end operational capabilities of our joint maritime forces, which capabilities are needed in the context of a complex and evolving strategic environment.

The development of Australia's maritime strategic policy must take account of the wider context implied by the maritime environment. Modern Australia since the eighteenth century is the product of a great global maritime diaspora, and in the twenty-first century it remains situated in a regional and global environment in which the seas are one and in which sea power, both commercial and military, to a great extent annihilates distance. Maritime routes must be seen as efficient interior lines of communication within a highly mobile strategic environment: one which faces and profoundly affects the land masses and which must be controlled - locally or generally, alone or in conjunction with allies - to ensure national security. A maritime strategic outlook necessitates this wider view, rather than one focused on continentalism and more limited sea denial. The latter risks confusing national interests with landward territory (our maritime sovereignty is actually larger than our landward), and endangers national security by risking exposure to potential attack.

Such a maritime outlook, which recognises the oceanic breadth of our national interests, is not a rationalisation for offensive posturing, adventurism, or any role of footsoldiering for the great powers, nor is it an invitation to carelessness with our people and assets, but rather a recognition of the nature of our strategic environment and the needs of our national security. It is significant that the person who did most to threaten Australia after 1788, Admiral Yamamoto during the 1940s, appreciated the

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<sup>1</sup> *Defence 2000. Our Future Defence Force* (Defence Publishing Service: Canberra, 2000).

breadth and interconnectedness of the maritime military environment as well as Australia's dependence, as a maritime nation, on local and international seaborne trade. At the end of the twentieth century, over 70% of Australia's imports and exports by value and over 95% by volume travelled by sea within the maritime strategic environment which surrounds us.<sup>2</sup> Home defence and wider interests intersect on the ocean.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. The Flexibility of Maritime Forces

The development of maritime strategy in an era of strategic uncertainty must take advantage of the inherent flexibility of maritime forces. This flexibility, demonstrated by centuries of history, is an invaluable strategic asset in the face of an unstable world. Maritime units possess graduated force in their ability to operate at and move swiftly between different levels of conflict escalation. They can successfully act as a deterrent, as in the early stages of the Interfet operation in East Timor (which the commander, General Cosgrove, found very reassuring)<sup>4</sup>, or utilise military force, short of war, as in the Gulf blockade against Iraq. Their readiness, reach, controllability, sustainability, and capacity to take advantage of the diplomatic immunity of international waters are notable elements of their flexibility.

Maritime forces thus afford a variety of options to Government in situations of crisis or emergency, for example when action is needed but provocation is dangerous, when conflicts must be prevented, or when problems should be kept at a distance. Maritime forces in war can perform a wide range of operational roles, traditionally acting as a critical enabler and providing strategic leverage over an opponent.<sup>5</sup> The classical maritime strategists Mahan and Corbett understood the versatility of sea power and, informed by historical studies, provided the theoretical basis for its use. Their ideas and their contemporary relevance are outlined in the enclosed essay on 'Mahan, Corbett and Modern Maritime Strategy'.

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<sup>2</sup> *Australian Maritime Doctrine: RAN Doctrine 1* (Defence Publishing Service: Canberra, 2000), p.14.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Roger Spiller, US Army Command and General Staff College, speaking at the Chief of Army's History Conference, Canberra, 9 March, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> (Then) Major General P. Cosgrove, AM, MC, 'The Anzac lecture at Georgetown University, Tuesday, 4 April 2000', *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute*, vol. 26, 2, April/June 2000, p.9. The relevant passage from this lecture is reproduced in *Australian Maritime Doctrine*, p.58.

<sup>5</sup> On the flexibility of sea power and its ability to apply graduated force see G. Till, 'Maritime Power and the Twenty-First Century' in Till (ed.), *Seapower. Theory and Practice* (Frank Cass: Ilford, Essex, 1994) and N. Friedman, *Seapower as Strategy. Navies and National Interests* (US Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, 2001). On seapower in warfighting roles see C.S. Gray, *The Leverage of Sea Power. The Strategic Advantage of Navies in War* (Free Press: New York, 1992).

### 3. Sea Control and Sea Lines of Communication.

History demonstrates that sea control, established and used by maritime forces, has long been the essential vehicle of maritime strategy and operations. Since the emergence of state navies and fleet strategy in the seventeenth century, through the two world wars, the Cold War, and the complex post-Cold War era of the twentieth and twenty-first, two strategic themes have guided the fortunes of maritime states. Such states, when lacking sea control, are defeated. When possessing it - whether as great or medium powers, individually or in coalition - they have succeeded in defending themselves and overcoming their enemies. In the five hundred years since the coming of the modern warship at the beginning of the sixteenth century, maritime powers controlling the sea have never lost. Some of this historical experience is outlined in the enclosed essay on 'The Rise of Modern Naval Strategy c.1580-1880'.<sup>6</sup>

Temporary loss of sea control in the Pacific by the Allied powers was the critical factor in the threat to Australia in 1941-42: the most dangerous moment in our national history. The regaining of sea control in 1942 meant that our homeland and shipping were secure, and that offshore operations in conjunction with allies could defeat our enemies. The maritime strategic aspects of that chapter in our history - and their relevance to current national security concerns - are discussed in the enclosed essay *Maritime Strategy and Defence of the Archipelagic Inner Arc*. Sea control has been the major strategic factor in Australia's defence outlook since 1788 and in its successful series of defence policies since 1901.

Maritime strategy revolves around sea lines of communication (SLOCS): the arteries for commercial shipping and military logistics in peace and war.<sup>7</sup> Sea control allows a maritime state such as Australia to protect these communications, which are essential to our economic well-being and strategic security, as well as to deny the SLOCS to enemies in time of war. In military terms, one does not need to invade an island such as Australia to defeat it (as the fall of Japan in the 1940s shows), but merely to cut off its SLOCS and project power against it: both achieved by sea control. In commercial terms, our vital SLOCS run through the wider Asia-Pacific region which, for centuries, has been characterised by geographical, economic, political, cultural and technological complexities. Some of these issues are explored in the enclosed essay on 'The Development of Naval Strategy in the Asia-Pacific Region 1500-2000'.

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<sup>6</sup> And see in general Gray, *The Leverage of Sea Power*.

<sup>7</sup> On this issue see in general J. S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, ed. E. Grove (Brassey's: London, 1988).

#### 4. Maritime Strategy and the Threat of Transnational Terrorism.

The new threat of terrorism which has arisen in recent years implies a need to view conflict and the use and threat of force in broader and more flexible ways. The terrorism of the current era differs from traditional national insurgencies in being very significantly international in character.<sup>8</sup> The counterterrorist war must also be prosecuted in a world in which conventional inter-state conflict remains possible. Within these contexts, there is an urgent need for sustained discussion of the relationship between maritime strategy and counterterrorism.

One can begin such a discussion by recognising the contribution which maritime forces can make to an international counterterrorist war. Wars against terrorists and guerillas tend to be long wars and maritime forces are well suited to such wars. Established principles of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency include minimal use of force, winning over populations and isolating insurgents.<sup>9</sup> Each of these is a *modus operandi* in which maritime forces are potentially valuable. While such forces combine reach and logistical independence with diplomatic immunity and graduated force, they add the nuances of forward presence, relative invisibility, and power projection and withdrawal. Such collective characteristics suit well the political and military complexities of a war against international terrorism. Maritime power projection against terrorist bases and safe havens in sponsor states was effectively demonstrated in the recent conflict in Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> At the more operational level, maritime forces can readily perform such functions as surveillance and intelligence-gathering, special operations, and harbour and mine clearing. In constabulary mode, these forces can set up quarantine regimes, conduct interception activities, and guard against acts of maritime terrorism.

There is a need to connect the strategic and operational requirements of a war against terrorism with traditional principles of maritime strategy. The best historical illustration and parallel may be the British naval campaigns of the nineteenth century, which combined warfighting and power projection roles with policing against piracy and slave trading as well as naval diplomacy. In the theoretical sense, the best basic construct would seem to be the widely recognised trinity of naval roles: military,

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<sup>8</sup> 'Countering Terror after 11 September. Early Lessons, Future Challenges' in *The Military Balance 2002-2003* (International Institute for Strategic Studies: London, 2002), p.237.

<sup>9</sup> J.Baylis, J.Wirtz, E.Cohen and C.S.Gray, *Strategy in the Contemporary World. An Introduction to Strategic Studies* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002), pp.221-2.

<sup>10</sup> M.Vego, 'What can we learn from Enduring Freedom?', *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, July, 2002, pp.28-33.

constabulary and diplomatic.<sup>11</sup> In combination they are applicable to the various operational levels required by current and foreseeable circumstances. Maritime strategy and forces may be most relevant to these circumstances in their ability to change operational gears in this sense very rapidly.

Enclosed:

J.Reeve, 'Mahan, Corbett and Modern Maritime Strategy' in H.Smith (ed.), *The Strategists* (Australian Defence Studies Centre: Canberra, 2001)

J.Reeve, 'The Rise of Modern Naval Strategy c.1580-1880' in D.Stevens and J.Reeve (eds), *Southern Trident. Strategy, History and the Rise of Australian Naval Power* (Allen and Unwin: Sydney, 2001)

J.Reeve, *Maritime Strategy and Defence of the Archipelagic Inner Arc*, RAN Sea Power Centre Working Paper No.5 (Australian Defence Publishing Service: Canberra, 2001)

J.Reeve, 'The Development of Naval Strategy in the Asia-Pacific Region 1500-2000' in G.Till (ed.), *Seapower at the Millennium* (Sutton/Royal Naval Museum: Stroud/Portsmouth, 2001)

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<sup>11</sup> On these see K.Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy* (Croom Helm: London, 1977).