

The Secretary
JCPAA
Parliament House
Canberra

I refer to your recent advert. regarding the function of Coastwatch, although tardy, I submit for your consideration the following comments.

- I would expect that Coastwatch has a role statement. I would trust that, as a minimum, that the Government is monitoring this performance and that the role goals are being achieved. This would monitor allocation of resources as a matter of course and take remedial action to ensure that Coastwatch met the required targets.
- It appears that both the current social and political situations in the immediate Australian area of interest would dictate an intensified surveillance operation be in force. The general feeling as perceived by the public is one of too little too late whereby Coastwatch is not meeting expectations. From press reports the impression is one of detection of foreign incursions as they are about to land on the coastline. Not desirable.
- As a member of the above public it seems to me that the coast monitoring role is spread over Coastwatch, the RAN, the RAAF and to some extent, Customs. This is not a desirable situation. Control spread is control suffering from both duplication of effort and, almost certainly, gaps in operations and control. A single homogeneous entity having unified command and control is essential. No successful business would survive in a shared / spread control environment.
- In this day of economical rationalism it will be difficult to form, man and operate a homogeneous force tasked with the role of patrolling / protecting the Australian coastline. However, some of "us" out here feel that there must be some means of creating and manning a force dedicated to protecting the coastline. It is an imperative which the Government must implement as a priority. It only requires the political will and some budget magic.
- The logical armed service to form the nucleus of such a force is the RAN. This would have the advantage of having an initial pool of seagoing skills, with an ongoing role of training new intakes. There would be a requirement for an input of RAAF skills to operate and control the air element of the force. The Army would have a role in the logistical and support of the new force. There would be a liaison role with the existing ARA which have the task of forming a reaction force to contain illegal incursions on the mainland.

- The manning of the force is not a high expense in the implementation stage when compared with the equipment acquisition, however, ongoing salaries, together with infrastructure maintenance, would be a considerable sum which, no doubt, would be in danger of becoming a political football at subsequent budgets. In my circle of acquaintances the chance for former members of the Reserves and ex-Regular force personnel on the Retired List to serve on an expenses only basis is a popular option which would provide considerable cost savings. In fact, this option would be available to the current organisation, if considered feasible. Possibly some market research on this topic is warranted
- The subject of the role / future of Coastwatch is too complex to be addressed in a missive such as this. I trust that my few comments are of some use to your Committee. Be aware that there is a pool of retired, skilled and happy to work for board and lodging former officers who are willing to work on part time / full time basis. A potential cost saving.

yours faithfully,
R. G. Stevens,
Grace St.
Corinda
Qld, 4075.
07 3379 1201