



Submission No 3

Inquiry into the Economic, Social and Strategic Trends in Australia's region and the consequences for our Defence Requirements

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Disarmament

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Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Inquiry into Australia's regional strategic defence requirements

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The Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament (CICD) would like to make a contribution to the committee's inquiry into "The economic, social and strategic trends in Australia's region and the consequences for our defence requirements".

The C.I.C.D. is of the view that Australia's involvement in our region should be a constructive one. Australia's foreign and regional policy should be such that it promotes the peaceful development of our region, and actively discourages recourse to militarism, whether this takes the form of outright hostilities, or arms races and distrust between potential regional partners. In order to play a constructive role in our region, Australia's foreign policy must necessarily be independent. While co-operation between nations is paramount, and discourse healthy, Australia must not allow itself to be tied to foreign policies for the sake of preserving alliances when instead, Australia's interests could be better served by using our own initiative to promote peaceful relations between our neighbours.

Australia's foreign policy must be geared towards finding peaceful solutions to required problems. The roles of the Australian Defence Forces are to protect this country, and when requested (by, for instance, the United Nations), provide assistance. We should neither seek dominance nor provide a launching pad for powers planning aggressive actions in our region.

There are deep concerns about whether or not Australia is working to the best of its capacities in promoting a peaceful and stable region. Some of Australia's actions have created distrust of our intentions from our neighbouring governments, and they have also been met with staunch opposition from our voting public. Recent policy decisions create doubts about Australia's independence in making foreign policy decisions and Australia runs the risk of being seen by our neighbouring countries as a base for superpower operations in this area.

According to the Australian Budget papers 2005/06 the estimated spending on defence is \$16,462,450,000 – nearly \$743 ½ million more than the previous estimate. The government is committed to increase defence spending 3% each year to 2010, however the United States and the Kokoda Foundation think tank in Canberra have urged Australia to increase it further.

No country in our region threatens Australia, but recently our neighbours have voiced their alarm over Australia's new strategy of a pre-emptive strike (the taking of military action if it is thought that danger exists or will exist) and the introduction of long-range missiles into the area.

The recent decision to purchase long-range missiles, which will be fitted to warplanes and the spy-planes that can cover thousands of kilometres, gives Australia an enormous range of targeting area in South East Asia.

The new air warfare destroyers, pilotless spyplanes and Australia's decision to become part of the United States 'missile defence' system together with the increased involvement on Australia's soil by the United States' military have all added to this expansion of military activity leading to the destabilisation of our area. The introduction of weapons such as these into the area could provoke an arms race.

There is an increasing number of military facilities for United States' use in Australia, the most recent include:

Sea Swap, WA	An agreement between the U.S. Navy and the Australian Government to allow the rotation of U.S. Navy crews at the Port of Fremantle.
Lancelin Training Area, WA	Live firing range, which has now been extended to accommodate United States bombing practice from fighter jets and shells from ship bombardment.
Pine Gap, N.T.	This important electronic war base has expanded activities for missile defence (Star Wars) and the direct targeting of U.S. missiles on countries.
Delamere Air Weapon Range, N.T.	U.S. warplanes to practice live bombing raids in regular strategic bombing aircraft training.
Darwin Base, N.T.	Darwin base being upgraded to accommodate U.S. tank units and probably stationing of U.S. marines and/or equipment.
Munitions Wharf, N.T.	There are plans for a high-explosive factory and munitions loading wharf for either Queensland or the Northern Territory to be used for joint military operations.
Shoalwater Bay, QLD	A war games training area for U.S. and Australian troops. Includes sea-landings, sea detonations and submarine activities. The area has national listed sites and heritage area, and is a sanctuary for endangered species as it includes parts of the Great Barrier Reef.
Training Area, S.A.	Early in 2006, six pastoral leases were acquired by the Federal Government to add to the already existing military area in the north of South Australia, making it one of Australia's largest military training areas and will support joint training needs.

In an interview with a West Australian paper in 2005, United States Vice Admiral Archie Clemins said that the U.S. was running out of sites to conduct war games and was relying heavily on Australia to fill the gap.

Also of concern is Australia's decision to join the United States 'missile defence' or Star Wars programme and the close co-operation with Japan and the U.S. on this controversial military space system.

The re-organisation of Australia's military forces into heavily equipped battlegroups capable of being quickly deployed anywhere in the world.

The involvement of universities in research for military application under the Defence Science and Technology Organisation, while universities and civilian research institutes have financial difficulties.

As Australia becomes ever more integrated with the United States military and planning, it becomes very difficult to have an independent foreign policy of our own.

It is well known that the United States has polluted war zones and its practice areas in other countries by using depleted uranium munitions and the Abrams tanks are constructed with a layer of uranium metal plates. This adds to the environmental cost and is a risk to the personnel even at peacetime. Using these weapons in a regional conflict would cause grave damage.

The close military alliance with the United States has led us to take part in wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, all countries that did not pose a threat to Australia and through the 'War on Terrorism' Australia and the 'coalition of the willing' could be thrust into another overseas war.

The recent Quadrennial Report by the U.S. Defence Department states that it may be necessary to "wage war in countries we are not at war with", which underlines the U.S.'s 'pre-emptive strike' doctrine.

Preparations for war serve to make our neighbours uneasy and suspicious when we need to build bridges and prepare for peace. An example of a 'bridge' is the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Co-operation, a non-aggression compact with South East Asian countries. At first Prime Minister Howard was extremely reluctant to sign this non-aggression treaty and only acceded to it prior to attending the ASEAN conference in 2005. Russia, China and India have signed this treaty, however the United States has refused and now, because of our close military co-operation with the U.S., our position has been severely compromised.

The strengthening of the United Nations is another 'bridge' and abiding by its resolutions and international treaties has to be a cornerstone of Australia's foreign policy.

Other confidence building measures would be, non-provocative defence and the development of 'common security'. It would also be desirable to create nuclear weapon free zones and zones of peace as more weapons do not guarantee 'security'. At the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference in the year 2000, the United States together with the other recognised nuclear weapons powers renewed their pledge to undertake gradual nuclear weapon disarmament; but this is not happening and in fact new nuclear weapons are being developed by Britain and the United States. Such disregard of the treaty makes it virtually impossible to stop the spread of these weapons of mass destruction.

Poverty, inequality and injustice fans global insecurity and efforts to address these scourges would be a positive step. Redoubled efforts are needed in this direction along with efforts to create a comprehensive global security system. Australia opting out of participating in the United State missile defence system 'Star Wars' would be a contribution towards confidence building with our neighbours. This system is still in

the experimental state, is enormously expensive, very controversial and will involve Australia in the United States' plans to militarise space.

A reduction in Australia's defence expenditure would also be seen as a positive move. Such a reduction could be spent on aiding our poorer neighbours and attending to the Australian peoples' needs.

Some major and immediate concerns have been given coverage in the media...

- 4/12/05, Age The scandal of elderly who go hungry. Aged care facilities are inadequate, and alarming number of elderly have been found to be malnourished.
- 4/12/05, Age 650,000 Australians are on waiting lists for public dental care.
- 5/1/06, Age Severe shortage of engineers, doctors and dentists.
- 1/3/06, Age Families turned away from support accommodation.
- 6/3/06 Australian hospital emergency departments are dangerously overcrowded.
- 23/3/06 The school system is failing the poor.

An injection of funds into all aspects of hospital care, aged care and education is urgently needed. University fees for students are so high it deters many young people from entering university and causes students to drop out rather than start their working life with a huge debt. Low paid trade apprenticeships are also causing dropouts.

The pilotless aircraft that has upset our regional neighbours, will cost \$145 million, money that would be better spent to defend the Australian people's needs. The long-range missiles, another provocative introduction into the area, are likely to cost \$350 million, also money that would be better spent on the Australian people's needs.

Security does not only mean military security.

The Kokoda Foundation in Canberra is a 'think tank' that advises the government on military defence, its Chairman, Professor R. Babbage recently published a booklet entitled 'Preparing Australia's Defence for 2020'. The booklet calls for an increase in defence spending and states that "In the 2020 timeframe there is a serious risk of the Australian Defence Forces becoming engaged in a major war in Asia for which very few elements of the Australian defence structure are likely to be adequately prepared". What is 'adequate'? From bows and arrows to weapons of mass destruction, no country has ever claimed to be secure. It is clear that in this 21st century efforts must be made to create a new system of security because security cannot be guaranteed by ever increasing armaments.

As this submission has discussed, Australia's defence spending is rising while the basic security of the Australian people is neglected. Basic securities such as access to healthcare and education, steady employment, housing *et cetera* are being overlooked. Rather than ensuring that Australia's military functions beyond the capacity required to defend our nation and our region, money and effort could be better spent ensuring that basic human needs and essential services are delivered to our own populace. Further, by ensuring that such basic needs are delivered to the citizens of our region, Australia could lessen one of the root causes of terrorism, economic disparity, and consequent resent. Australia should work to assist countries in our region to overcome problems

creating unrest, such as poverty, inequality and lack of infrastructure etc. so that potential problems do not occur.

Australia, through our territorial, economic and historic position, is in the awkward situation of having the ability to create or further arms races in our region. A significant arms build up undertaken by Australia, could, if not by design then possibly by misadventure, cause distrust from our neighbours and encourage them to seek equivalent armaments of their own. As damaging to our regional stability would be any Australian stance or posture that our neighbours perceived as threatening, again this would likely lead them to seek an increase in their defence capabilities.

Non-aggression pacts guaranteeing that we are not a menace, would strengthen our region by removing, or at the very least seeking to constrain, the threat of force from our international relations. The conclusion and extension of nuclear free zones would also promote co-operation, remove fears, and ensure that if an arms race were to occur in our region, it would not end with the development, in our region, of a nuclear weapon, such a development would be catastrophic. Australia was host to the internationally acclaimed Canberra Commission, and we could usefully contribute to solving the nuclear weapons problem by pursuing the recommendations of the Canberra Commission.

Australia's role in our region should be to promote the peaceful relations between the countries that make up our region. Australia must use its position of influence and trust to remove fears and suspicions between our neighbours and create harmonious relations, and must also be the exemplar of a state committed to a solid, independent, foreign policy underpinned by the valuation of peace.

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