



Government Response
to the
Joint Standing Committee on
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Report

'Australia's Defence Relations with the United States'

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The ANZUS alliance

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ANZUS Alliance be maintained in its current form and that the treaty be viewed not just as a specific set of requirements, rather as a statement of shared values capable of being acted upon in the face of evolving contemporary threats.

Response

Agreed. The ANZUS Treaty, underpinned by shared values, remains vital to Australian security. The alliance has proven to be adaptable and relevant, and has provided the foundation of our defence and security relationship since 1951. The continued utility of ANZUS was demonstrated by its invocation in the days following the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001. The capacity of Australia and the United States to respond to evolving contemporary threats is underscored by Australia's ongoing cooperation in military operations in our immediate region and beyond. The breadth of the relationship was demonstrated when US and Australian militaries united to respond to humanitarian disasters, such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and severe earthquakes in Pakistan in 2005. The high levels of trust and common purpose manifest in all of these endeavours are firmly based in the shared values which underpin the alliance.

Australian force structure, interoperability and intelligence

Recommendation 2

The Committee acknowledges that the free passage of information on the internet is likely to ensure that threat techniques faced by western forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are transmitted to disaffected groups in our region, meaning future regional conflicts may become increasingly violent and lethal. The Committee recommends that force structure decisions must therefore be based on the provision of the best possible protection for Australian Defence personnel.

Response

Agreed. The Australian Government agrees that Australian Defence personnel should be provided with the best possible protection, based on the principle that force protection should be optimised in accordance with operational requirements, without compromising other functions or elements of capability. This will often involve, inter alia, preparedness, doctrine, tactics and rules of engagement in addition to force structure decisions on major platforms or systems. These decisions will assess the current and future risk posed by a full range of conventional and non-conventional threats, rather than focusing solely on specific techniques used presently by threat groups in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Recommendation 3

The Committee supports the continuing enhancement of cooperation between Australian and US intelligence agencies; however, sufficient investment must be made in Australian analytical capabilities to ensure Australian analysis of US raw intelligence material is always undertaken.

Response

Agreed. The Australian Government supports the Committee recommendation. The Intelligence and Security Group in Defence, and its component agencies, continue to develop strong relationships with their US counterpart agencies and with the wider intelligence community. The Australian Government applies analytical resources to meet Australian intelligence priorities and conduct independent analysis of US intelligence material in accordance with those priorities.

Combined defence exercises

Recommendation 4

The Committee supports the continuation of joint training between the Australian and US Defence Forces and recommends that the Joint Combined Training Centre (JCTC) concept be codified in a Memorandum of Understanding before Exercise Talisman Sabre 2007.

Response

Agreed. A Memorandum of Understanding on the Joint Combined Training Centre was signed by US Secretary of Defense and Australian Minister for Defence on 18 November 2005.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Australian Defence Force continues to apply the most appropriate rules of engagement consistent with the Australian assessment of application of force.

Response

Agreed. The Australian Defence Force continues to apply the most appropriate rules of engagement consistent with the Australian assessment of application of force.

Australian defence industry development

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government make every effort to obtain exemption from ITAR from the United States Government in respect of defence goods and services purchased from the United States for Australian Defence Force purposes.

Response:

Not Agreed. The Australian ITAR exemption agreement has been stalled in the US Congress since early 2003. As an alternative to the ITAR exemption, The Australian Government is working with the US Administration to develop more extensive capability arrangements that might better deliver the interoperability outcomes both nations want.