



**Opening Statement by  
General David Hurley, AC, DSC  
Chief of the Defence Force  
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Good morning Chair, Senators, thank you for the opportunity to make an opening statement. I remain extremely proud to lead the Australian Defence Force during a period of continued excellent performance amidst difficult days and challenges. This morning I will provide an operational update and report on the current status of the Defence Cultural Reviews.

On the 29th of October 2011, shortly after the last Estimates hearing, three Australian soldiers were killed in action when a member of the Afghan National Army opened fire following a regular weekly parade at Forward Operating Base Pacemaker. I would like to place on the record my condolences to the families of Captain Bryce Duffy, 4th Field Regiment, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery; Corporal Ashley Birt, 6th Engineer Support Regiment and Lance Corporal Luke Gavin, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment. Throughout their military careers, all three men demonstrated outstanding skills and a remarkable strength of character that continues to inspire their comrades.

You will recall seven Australian soldiers were wounded in action in this incident and three others were also wounded in action during another shooting on the 8th of November. I am pleased to say one of these men redeployed to Afghanistan in December, another has returned to duty at his Australian based unit and the other eight soldiers are currently undergoing rehabilitation as part of the ADF Rehabilitation Program - all are likely to return to full duties in the future.

At the time these incidents occurred, I indicated that we would conduct an extensive investigation into the circumstances. Over the past four months Defence has undertaken a significant body of work to establish the facts and increase our understanding of what motivates this type of attack. Our first priority is always to ensure the safety of our people. Since October we have instigated a range of measures at the tactical level to mitigate the threat to our personnel in Afghanistan however, we continue to operate in an extremely complex and dangerous environment and with this comes an element of risk.

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) data shows that at least half of these "insider attacks" are not linked directly to the insurgency but arise from an individual's personal grievances. Regardless of the rationale behind them, insurgents will seek to claim responsibility for these attacks in order to exploit them as part of a broader propaganda campaign. We know the Taliban's strategy is to try and undermine confidence in the Afghan authorities, but we cannot allow these events to distract us from our mission to mentor the Afghan National Army 4th Brigade so that they can take the lead responsibility for security in Uruzgan Province.

In addition to improving our force protection, our analysis of these incidents was used to assist a Campaign Design Review. The purpose of this review was to ensure that our approach to transition to Afghan leadership is conducted in an environment where the security of our personnel in Afghanistan is maintained.

Eight months ago, the first tranche of provinces began the transition to an Afghan security lead. Today this process is well advanced. The second tranche is underway and we are already seeing the shift from ISAF led combat operations in some provinces to a more advisory role known as "security assistance operations". When Tranche 2 is complete, Afghan National Security Forces will have the lead security responsibility for half the Afghan population.

In our own area of responsibility, Uruzgan remains on track for transition to Afghan security lead and we anticipate Uruzgan province will be included in Tranche 3 which we expect will be announced in the first half of this year. The ADF Afghanistan Campaign plan is on track and we expect a conditions based transition to occur by 2014, or earlier. The progression from a Tactical Support posture to one of Operational Support will see the individual kandaks of the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade capable of independent operations without a permanent ADF presence. At the brigade level, ADF advisors and forces will continue to support the ANA for the command and control of the province's security operations.

To this end, the 4th Brigade is increasingly taking the lead in planning, preparing and executing tactical operations. This has allowed Australian forces to concentrate greater effort on advising and partnering Afghan command and combat support functions. Australia is also making a lasting contribution to institutional training in Afghanistan by helping to develop the ANA Artillery Training School in Kabul. Australia is considering an invitation to support the UK led ANA Officers' Training Academy and we will continue to work with our Afghan and ISAF partners to identify further institutional training opportunities as we move through the transition phase.

Last month I attended the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Chiefs of Defence Staff International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) session on Afghanistan at NATO Headquarters in Brussels. I also accompanied the Minister to the NATO/ISAF Defence Ministers Meeting in Brussels. It is very clear we are at a decisive point in the transition from an ISAF to an Afghan security lead. The model is changing and this will be more clearly articulated by the NATO Summit in Chicago in May this year.

There is also still a great deal of work to do to determine what the international contribution to Afghanistan will look like beyond 2014 and how we get there. The Chicago Summit will shape the long term Strategic Plan for Afghanistan including the size and composition of the Afghan National Security Forces and the international community's enduring assistance.

Australia and indeed the ADF expects to play a role in Afghanistan post 2014. While we are still considering what that may look like, we can potentially expect the ADF to continue to contribute to capacity building with the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) with military advisers and a Special Forces presence.

Senators if I could turn now to other operations, as you would be aware; East Timor will hold Presidential and Parliamentary elections this year. At the invitation of the Government of East Timor, Australia's military contribution to the International Security Force (ISF) remains around 390 personnel. We do not anticipate any significant change to the level and force structure of the ISF until after the 2012 elections. The Minister for Defence has indicated a full assessment of a planned withdrawal of Australian troops from East Timor will be made in conjunction with the government in Dili following the elections.

In the Solomon Islands, the Government has agreed to maintain our existing commitment to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands or RAMSI until at least mid 2013. The ADF currently has a three Platoon size Task Force deployed. Continued stability in the region has allowed RAMSI's Participating Police Force, supported by the Task Force, to shift its focus from front-line policing to capacity-building. Defence is now working with RAMSI and other agencies to develop a drawdown strategy commensurate with the security situation and RAMSI's transition plans.

Finally Senators, I would like to address the issue of Defence Culture. As members of Defence we are united by our mission to serve Australia and support its interests. In doing so, we have earned national and international respect over many decades. The future of this organisation depends on the continued pursuit of excellence.

We have high standards to meet. All Australians rightly expect that we will deliver to consistently high standards, whether in theatres of operations, capability development, support to our operations, our everyday personal behaviour, and in how we treat our colleagues.

We have learnt, to our cost, that we do not always meet these high standards. More worryingly, at times we have tolerated shortfalls in performance. These incidences cannot be excused or justified under any circumstances. Against this background it is clear that we have work to do to evolve our culture and amend those practices which hurt our people, limit our performance, and damage our reputation.

The suite of Cultural Reviews is complete and we are now in the final stages of developing a comprehensive response to these reviews that compliments and builds on the wider Defence reform agenda. This includes Part 3 of the Giles report on HMAS Success which was provided to the Committee last week. Central to our response will be a statement of cultural intent. It will outline the actions that we must take to ensure that we remain the most trusted organisation in Australia.

This statement will not offer a 'quick fix'. It will however mark an important step in our evolution, starting with a five-year program of integrated and far-reaching efforts to tackle our cultural challenges at their source. We acknowledge it will require a sustained effort from all Defence staff over many years to achieve the kind of real and lasting change across the organisation.

Thank Senators for the opportunity to address the committee this morning - I look forward to your questions.