

Conduct of the inquiry

On 24 March 2003, the Senate referred the following matters to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 26 June 2003.

Terms of reference

The performance of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and other relevant agencies of the Commonwealth Government in the assessment and dissemination of threats to the security of Australians in South East Asia in the period 11 September 2001 to 12 October 2002, including:

- (a) The assessment made by DFAT and other relevant agencies of the Commonwealth Government of the threat to Australians in South East Asia from al Qaeda (and associated terrorist organisations) prior to 11 September 2001.
- (b) Any change in the assessment of the threat to Australians in South East Asia from these terrorist organisations arising from the terrorist events of 11 September 2001 and the decision by Australia to participate in military actions with other coalition partners against al Qaeda in Afghanistan in November 2001.
- (c) Any further changes in the assessment of the threat to Australians in South East Asia from these terrorist organisations arising from the arrest and interrogation of the so-called 'Singapore bombers' in the period December 2001 to February 2002.
- (d) Any further change in threat assessments to Australians in South East Asia arising from the arrest and interrogation of Omar al-Faruq.
- (e) Any subregional variations on the assessment of the threat to Australians in South East Asia in the period 11 September 2001 to 12 October 2002, in particular within Indonesia including Jakarta and Bali.
- (f) Any differences between the assessments of the threat made by DFAT and other Commonwealth Government agencies, and the assessments of the threat made by the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand, Singapore and Canada over the security of their nationals for the same period.
- (g) Any differences between the assessments of the threat made by DFAT and other related agencies of the Commonwealth Government and the content of the travel advisories, embassy bulletins and travel bulletins provided by DFAT over the period 11 September 2001 and 12 October 2002.
- (h) Any differences between DFAT travel advisories, travel bulletins and embassy bulletins between the period 11 September 2001 and 12 October 2002.

- (i) DFAT's conclusions of any deficiencies in the assessment system and the system for preparing travel advisories, travel bulletins and embassy bulletins in the period 11 September 2001 to 12 October 2002.
- (j) DFAT's conclusions on improvements to the dissemination of travel advisories, travel bulletins and embassy bulletins to the Australian travelling public in the future.

Through late 2003 and early 2004, Committee sought and received a number of extensions of time to report. The Senate eventually agreed to a final reporting date of 12 August 2004.

The Committee advertised in *The Australian* newspaper on 9 and 23 April 2003 and on its home page. It also wrote to relevant Commonwealth agencies and other stakeholders inviting submissions. It received 8 submissions and 2 supplementary submissions. With the exception of one submission received *in camera*, the remaining submissions were published and made available on the Committee's website. A list of submissions is at Appendix 1. The Committee also received significant amounts of other material as answers to questions on notice (most notably from the Department of Defence, which did not lodge a submission) and copies of travel advisories from Australia and its consular partners over the period 11 September to 12 October 2004.

The Committee held 10 public hearings in Canberra and Adelaide from 19 June 2003 to 5 August 2004. The Committee also held one *in camera* briefing with the Director-General of ASIO on 2 December 2003 which gave it an opportunity to explore some questions in greater depth without jeopardising future intelligence gathering. A list of the witnesses who appeared at public hearings is at Appendix 2. Hansard transcripts of the public hearings are available on the parliament house website.

The Committee thanks all those who have given generously of their time to assist its inquiry. While most of the witnesses to this inquiry were government officials and academics with an interest in intelligence, the Committee also heard from a number of victims of the Bali bombing and their families. To these people in particular, the Committee extends its deepest sympathy and best wishes.