

## **Appendix 5**

### **EXTRACT FROM TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE 28 NOVEMBER 2003**

Mr Bill Paterson (DFAT) giving evidence concerning the ONA briefing with Foreign Minister Downer in June 2002 based on contemporaneous notes taken at that meeting

**MATERIAL REFERRED TO IN ADDITIONAL  
REMARKS BY GOVERNMENT SENATORS**

*Extracts from transcript of evidence**28 November 2003*

Senator BRANDIS—Mr Paterson has prepared a note, which he has verified before us, as to what was said.

Mr Kemish—It is important to note here from the department's perspective that we have a situation where the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has a record; ONA has a recollection. We have very carefully examined our records of both the conversation and follow-up meetings surrounding this event and can speak about those issues. It may not necessarily be in quite the terms you have suggested.

ACTING CHAIR—Perhaps it would be helpful if you could provide us with a copy of those notes, and there would be no reason for us to be in any kind of confusion. Do you have them here today? Could they be tabled?

Mr Paterson—Yes, I do. I have to tell you that a very large part of that briefing involved highly classified information and obviously I cannot release that. In any event, that is not the case with the relevant part.

Senator BRANDIS—So you are able to table for us your note of the relevant portion of the conversation?

Mr Paterson—Yes, I am prepared to do that. This note is an abbreviation in my handwriting. If it were helpful to Hansard, I would be happy to provide any clarification which they need. It may not be immediately clear from the nature of what I have written down in abbreviated form what precisely was meant, but I would be happy to take you through it if need be.

Senator BRANDIS—Can we do that now?

Mr Paterson—It would not take me long to read it out.

Senator BRANDIS—Before you do, Mr Paterson, can I ask you this: presumably, you have refreshed your memory of the conversation by having referred to the note.

Mr Paterson—Yes.

Senator BRANDIS—Do you independently of the note have some recollection of the conversation?

Mr Paterson—In general terms, yes. But of course it is some time ago.

Senator BRANDIS—Of course. Are you able to tell us that you are satisfied that the note, albeit in summary form, is an accurate rendering of the conversation?

Mr Paterson—Absolutely, but with one very minor exception—the word 'Riau' does not appear in my notes. On reflection, I am inclined to think that that was just because my notes were in an abbreviated form and that the pace of the conversation was

simply so fast that I did not record that. That is not to suggest that the word ‘Riau’ was not said; it just does not appear in my notes. My notes speak of Bali and Singapore but not Riau.

Senator BRANDIS—On the basis of that—that being the state of your knowledge and your recollection of the conversation—and with reference to your note, can you tell us what was said?

Mr Paterson—Mr Downer asked the ONA analysts present if they could speak to him about what were the objectives of Jemaah Islamiah in South-East Asia. An analyst replied that it was to destabilise local governments to allow Islam to gain more hardline adherents. Mr Downer followed that up with a question about what targets they had. The ONA analyst said that they had principally Indonesian Christian targets; that Indonesia was a frontier of Islam on the defensive within the global jihad; that the terrorism was as much internationally inspired as it was locally sourced and Indonesian inspired, if you like; and that local rather than Western targets were most likely. There was then some reference to bin Laden’s public utterances in which he mentioned Australia in the context of East Timor, to the effect that Christians were stealing the lands of Islam. I cannot precisely recall the context as to how that came up.

The conversation went on, with the ONA analyst pointing out that Western targets such as in Singapore were also possible. Expanding on that, the ONA analyst said that the possibility of attacks on US or Australian aircraft in Indonesia could not be ruled out, or Bali or Singapore. And, as I have said to you, I think Riau was probably in there, but it does not appear in my notes. At that point, Mr Downer, in a general way to those present, in effect said, ‘Well, I wonder whether that means we should be changing the consular advice,’ to which the ONA analyst replied that there was no specific intelligence to warrant that.

Senator BRANDIS—Dealing with the suggestion of possible targets, was it your understanding of what was being said that Bali, Singapore and Riau—or localities in those places—were being identified as targets in respect of which there was information about potential terrorist activity, or was it your understanding that those places were being referred to in an illustrative way as being the sorts of places in the region that terrorists might attack if they were to mount a terrorist operation?

Mr Paterson—It was clear to me that it was absolutely in the latter context.

Senator BRANDIS—If terrorists were going to attack localities in Australia, what sorts of places do you think they might attack?

Mr Paterson—I think that is hypothetical—

Senator BRANDIS—Yes, it is.

Mr Paterson—but the Australian media has singled out places like airports, the Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It is common parlance in the media.

Senator BRANDIS—Was the observation that you have just made in response to my last question of the same character as the observation in relation to Bali, Riau and Singapore recorded in this note?

Mr Paterson—I think that would be a fair characterisation of it. In the case of Singapore, of course, there had been earlier intelligence relating to possible action against the Australian, US and UK embassies. That was a slightly different case but that is certainly the gist of the discussion.

Senator BRANDIS—You know what I am getting at, don't you? It has been suggested by some that this note records the conveying to Mr Downer of intelligence about Bali, Singapore and Riau. What do you say about that?

Mr Paterson—No. I am absolutely adamant on this point. It was clearly just illustrative examples given by ONA analysts. They were precise about the fact that there was no specific intelligence information relating to a particular threat in any particular place in Indonesia—or Singapore, for that matter.

Senator BRANDIS—Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR—I have a couple more questions in relation to this. Over what period of time did this conversation take place? I see that you have about 10 lines of writing. Was it a two-minute conversation, or did this take place over an hour?

Mr Paterson—My recollection is that it was something like an hour.

ACTING CHAIR—These notes that you took were over a period of an hour?

Mr Paterson—Yes, the whole conversation—

ACTING CHAIR—The entire conversation.

Mr Paterson—which we had with Mr Downer, yes.

Senator BRANDIS—What about the bit of the conversation you have just taken us through—how long did that take?

Mr Paterson—Not very long, indeed—probably no longer, really, than my reading it out to you, I suspect.

ACTING CHAIR—So, at the conclusion of it, when Mr Downer asked whether or not consular advice should be changed, ONA mentioned, as you said, that there was nothing specific, and that was the end of the conversation? There was no further follow-up?

Mr Paterson—No, the conversation moved on from there, but to unrelated topics....

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ACTING CHAIR—I want to ask about this other reference, which is something I had not been aware of before. Mr Paterson’s handwriting says, ‘US or Australian aircraft in Indonesia/Bali/Singapore,’ and ‘Bali’ is underlined.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—I want to know why you underlined it.

ACTING CHAIR—Why did you underline Bali? That is one question but, perhaps even more interesting: what is this reference to US or Australian aircraft in Indonesia?

Mr Paterson—Let me deal with the Bali question first. Before there was any inquiry here, I simply went back over my notes after the events of 12 October, and I think I underlined it at that time. It was not underlined during the meeting. I did not envisage, at that time, that that element of my notes would be tabled in this committee. As to the reference to US or Australian aircraft in Indonesia, I think that is simply a general reference. In terrorist operations, there is a long history of hijacking of aircraft, and indeed of course in the World Trade Centre bombings aircraft were used in effect as a weapon. It is neither any more nor any less than that I think. In contemporary history, aircraft quite often have been used by hijackers—and most recently in the World Trade Centre—in a bombing capacity.

ACTING CHAIR—Indeed.

Senator BRANDIS—On that line that Senator Kirk has drawn to your attention, is the first expression ‘e.g.’?

Mr Paterson—Yes, that is correct: ‘for example’.

Senator BRANDIS—Thank you.

