

Australia's involvement in peacekeeping

Australia has a proud history of involvement in peacekeeping operations for the United Nations. The Australian Defence Force has contributed to more than thirty peacekeeping operations worldwide since the end of the Second World War.¹ Most recently, it has led regional responses to conflict in Bougainville, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and East Timor.² By far the largest Australian peacekeeping operation was the deployment of 5,500 Australians to East Timor as part of the International Force East Timor (INTERFET).³

In recent years, the role of peacekeeping operations has broadened. Peacekeepers are increasingly required to undertake investigations into human rights abuses, train local police officers, verify elections, help to rejuvenate or devise a local justice system and undertake a range of humanitarian tasks.⁴ Australian peacekeepers are currently involved in these activities. For example, a 2002 ASPI policy report noted Australian peacekeepers' involvement in East Timor:

AusAID's projects cover education, health, infrastructure and governance, water supply and sanitation, and rural development. The Department of Defence is providing support to East Timor's Defence Force, and the Australian Federal Police is providing assistance as part of the UN Civilian Police Force.⁵

This broader role of Australian peacekeepers has required a 'whole-of-government' response involving the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, AusAID, the Department of Defence, the Australian Federal Police and the Department of Health and Ageing, among other agencies.

1 The Defence Force Peacekeeping Centre, <http://www.defence.gov.au/adfwc/peacekeeping/>

2 'Australia and the United Nations: Peacekeeping', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, http://www.dfat.gov.au/un/aus_un13.html

3 <http://www.defence.gov.au/Raaf/history/peacekeeping.htm>

4 'Australia and the United Nations: Peacekeeping', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, http://www.dfat.gov.au/un/aus_un13.html

5 'New Neighbour—new challenge: Australia and the security of East Timor', *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*.