

CHAPTER 8

AUSTRALIA'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE INDIAN OCEAN
AND THE REGION

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The Indian Ocean has been significant to Australia since our earliest history. The recent trend is for an increasing Australian interest and involvement not only in the Ocean but also with the littoral states. Australia's role in the Indian Ocean has many facets including politics, trade, aid, cultural and scientific co-operation, our national defence and an awareness of the need to have stability and security in the area.

A Significant Trade and Communications Link

As a trade route the Indian Ocean is significant to Australia, demonstrated by the fact that well over 50% of our total trade, by tonnage, passes through the region. But our trade with the region itself amounts to only 13.5% of total Australian trade, valued in 1974/75 at \$A2,271 million. Oil is Australia's biggest import from the Indian Ocean region and the balance of trade is in the favour of those oil exporting states. The balance of trade with the other littoral states is in Australia's favour, our principal exports being foodstuffs.

Air Transport

As well as the importance of the Indian Ocean sea lanes to shipping to and from Australia the littoral is vital to air transport. Australia has Air Services Agreements with seven littoral states, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka and South Africa. The purpose of the Air Services Agreements is to provide regular air services between

. Australia and the other contracting country. Australia also operates through Iran and Mauritius by special commercial arrangements.

An important consideration in addition to the Air Services Agreements is the granting of overflight rights to aircraft of Australia's national carrier (in all cases Qantas). Without the permission of overflight rights to the airspace of Bangladesh, Burma, Oman, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia it would be very difficult to conduct a viable air transport operation on existing patterns. The need for favourable relations with such states is important and as additional air routes are devised the co-operation of the littoral nations concerned will be required. The requirement for stability in the region was illustrated in 1973 when the Yom Kippur war forced Qantas to divert around Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Lebanon and use a route over India, Pakistan, Iran and the northern Mediterranean to Europe.

Shipping

Australia has no bilateral shipping arrangements with the littoral states of the Indian Ocean but is a signatory to the 1958 Geneva Convention on the High Seas which affirms that the high seas are open to all nations and no state may validly subject any part of them to its sovereignty and that every state has a right to sail ships under its flag on the high seas.

An important method of carrying high value goods is liner shipping and although the littoral states account for only 5% of our liner cargoes the major sea route to Europe via the Cape of Good Hope carries around 30% of our liner cargoes. If

the southern Indian Ocean route around the Cape were to be disrupted the Panama Canal or the Suez Canal would need to be used. The long term closure of the Suez Canal and the advent of containerisation has reduced the importance of the Suez route, with the exception of cargoes to and from eastern Mediterranean ports. Only one in seventeen container vessels on the UK/Europe route uses the Suez route, the distance advantage being offset by canal dues and the higher insurance charges applicable to that area.

Australia's dependence on the viability and security of Indian Ocean sea lanes is demonstrated by the fact that 77% of our bulk imports and 87% of our oil and oil product imports originate from the littoral states. Only 2.5% of our bulk cargoes are exported to the littoral states but with a large proportion of our bulk exports consisting of Western Australian iron ore as well as other minerals, these cargoes need to use the Indian Ocean for a part of their journey. Our coastal iron ore shipments, in the same way, need to use the Indian Ocean.

Australian Participation in Regional Transport Bodies

Air, sea and land transport affairs of the Indian Ocean region are considered by organisations which are regional offshoots of parent United Nations specialised agencies. Civil aviation matters are handled by the Far East and Pacific office of the International Civil Aviation Organisation which deliberates on such topics as future international air routes, communications facilities, meteorological networks and air navigation requirements.

Land and sea transport matters are the responsibility of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), one of the commissions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The Transport and Communications Committee of ESCAP considers highway matters, inland water transport, railways, telecommunications and shipping services in the area.

Australian Aid and Assistance in the Transport Field

As part of Australia's general aid program assistance is given to regional nations, on a continuing basis, in the transport field. Australian experts have been seconded to states to give advice and training in civil aviation fields. Trainees from regional countries come to Australia for training in air traffic control and related subjects and grants of funds and equipment are made to assist transport development in the region.

Australia as an active supporter and participator in the aforementioned regional organisations and conferences is able to contribute both expertise and assistance to the development of improved facilities and better understanding of regional problems in transport matters.

Immigration to Australia from the Indian Ocean Region

Australia has no separate or distinct immigration policy in regard to the countries of the Indian Ocean littoral, including the Commonwealth countries. Citizens of former Commonwealth countries in the region no longer have the status of British subjects under Australian law and are regarded as aliens.

Persons from the Indian Ocean region, including those from Commonwealth countries, who have resident status in Australia may apply for the grant of Australian citizenship under identical conditions, usually three years residence here, good character, a knowledge of English and of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship. Immigration from the Indian Ocean region countries to Australia has declined since 1971/72 from 10,851 to an estimated 5,918 in 1975/76. The main source countries have been India and South Africa but the numbers from those countries have also declined. Malaysia and Thailand are two sources of migration to Australia from where the number of immigrants has increased in the last five years. Appendix shows the countries of origin for settlers from the Indian Ocean littoral who have arrived in Australia in the period 1971/72 to 1975/76.

The Indian Ocean region is a traditional source of private overseas students who come to Australia for study or training which may not be readily available in their home countries. The Australian Government has a ceiling limit of 10,000 overseas private students in Australia at the one time. The majority of overseas private students come from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and India. Until 1974 Singapore was the second highest source of overseas private students but at a meeting of the Australian and Singaporean Prime Ministers the latter requested that Singaporean private students be no longer permitted to study in Australia. The policy of taking overseas private students is not an aid undertaking nor a backdoor migration policy. Entry is on a temporary basis with the expectation that applicants are expected to return home at the completion of studies. Successful students may however apply

for resident status and be assessed against immigration criteria.

Control and Surveillance Against Smuggling

A real problem confronting Customs authorities is the increasing illicit trafficking in narcotics to a growing Australian market for such merchandise. Although the majority of drug importers and traffickers arrive at international terminals using recognised routes, considerable use is made of ships' cargo and air cargo for concealment. The risks of detection and the ensuing penalties are high and have led to smugglers making use of the large tracts of Australia's remote and sparsely settled north and north-western coastline for the importation of drugs. Light aircraft, yachts and small surface vessels are used in the areas to land illicit drugs. International drug traffic to Australia began with marihuana and hashish from the Middle East and the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. These areas are still a source of supply but now Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia are also major sources of supply to the Australian market.

While there are no indications of trafficking in drugs from Australia there is active smuggling of Australian fauna and gemstones to the Indian Ocean region and elsewhere. The most popular and lucrative traffic is in parrots, finches and reptiles which command prices ranging from hundreds to thousands of dollars overseas. Australia's strict quarantine laws have resulted in a degree of two way traffic being established for some exotic birds and reptiles. Singapore is the usual entrepot for such trafficking and there are indications of a growing trend

to smuggle fauna from Western Australia to South Africa. There is also a market for Australian gemstones in South East Asia, mainly Thailand. The gemstones are purchased legally but undervalued for export permits and either smuggled into their country of destination or introduced at their undervalued prices. The low labour costs in South East Asia make the finished gemstones attractive for smuggling back to Australia, thereby avoiding sales tax, or reimporting at the declared undervalued price and avoiding duty and sales tax at the true value of the item.

Australia's sparsely populated and vast west and north-western coastline with its proximity to the traditional sources of illicit drugs and markets for our fauna make it particularly vulnerable to smuggling operations but exceedingly difficult to police.

This Committee has received the following evidence from the Department of Business and Consumer Affairs on the problems of effective controls against smuggling on our Indian Ocean coastline:

"The remoteness of this coast and the impracticability of providing a permanent Customs presence in such areas indicates a need for a Customs surveillance reaction capability. But three launches, unresolved proposals for more, a communications network, a CASOS Group of five men, and utilization of Defence vehicle resources where practicable doesn't even provide adequate surveillance, let alone the reaction capability necessary to effectively counter smuggling by small seagoing craft and light aircraft.

As matters stand, Customs enforcement in remote coastal areas is a problem which will continue to increase rather than begin to diminish. There is a pressing need to continue the development of Customs enforcement resources for air/sea surveillance and reaction. The Bureau of Customs will continue to provide argument for the priority of this development".

The Committee fully endorses the need for improved and expanded resources to be made available for the effective surveillance and interdiction of craft and vessels engaged in illicit practices or unauthorised incursions into Australian territorial waters and coastline.

Australia is a member of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs and a party to the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as well as a contributor to the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control. In 1973 Australia was elected to chair a United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on Illicit Traffic in the Far East Region, founded to foster bilateral co-operation in data exchanges and law enforcement techniques. The Australian Narcotics Bureau also co-operates with counterpart policing agencies overseas, particularly in South East Asian countries. The Australian Government also provides Customs training courses in Australia for trainees from developing countries as part of our overseas aid scheme and is investigating the development of foreign in-country training courses in developing countries. A joint U.S.-Australian team conducted such a course in Customs techniques in Djakarta in 1975 and a similar program in Malacca the same year. The Bureau of Customs provides 'on the job' training for overseas officers by attachment to its offices for up to three months, and a number

of Indian Ocean regional countries have sent officers for this form of training.

The Committee considers that it is vital to encourage and support the efforts being made to stem the increasing flow of illicit drugs into Australia. In this regard support and assistance should be given to multilateral and bilateral co-operation between countries attempting to curtail not only the entry but also the export of drugs from one country to another.

Scientific and Oceanographic Research in the Indian Ocean

Australia participates in some bilateral and multilateral scientific and oceanographic research in the Indian Ocean.

In 1975 Australia and India signed an agreement for co-operation in science and technology with priority to be given to agriculture and food technology, earth and environmental sciences, energy and radioastronomy. So far no work has been undertaken. Australia is also a member of the Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council, the Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission and the International Whaling Commission, on an active and contributory basis. Fisheries research is also carried out on a national and international interest level. The CSIRO Division of Fisheries and Oceanography conducts studies of the waters and currents off the Western Australian coast and uses satellite tracked buoys for ocean current and sea surface temperature studies. The Ionospheric Prediction Service, a part of the Department of Science, conducts ionospheric research in the Indian Ocean region and co-operates with a number of nations, including the Soviet Union

in work such as ionospheric measurements, conjugate points experiments and radio wave propagation conditions.

Generally there has not been a great deal of Australian scientific activity in the Indian Ocean but interest in marine science and the sea as a source of resources is increasing. If the 200 mile economic zone proposal is adopted either as a result of the Law of the Sea Conference or by unilateral action, Australia will need to become more involved in resources management within the zone.

Political Implications for Australia

During the Committee's deliberations it became increasingly apparent that the Indian Ocean region is an area of the world which is in a state of flux and instability. The eventual outcome of the unsettled condition of the region is far from clear and Australia as a member country of the littoral cannot disassociate itself from the events that will determine the history of the region.

At present Southern Africa holds the focus of world attention in the region and it is to be hoped that the potentially volatile situation there can be resolved with moderation prevailing and not a solution by bloodshed. It is still too early to forecast the outcome of political developments in Southern Africa and what relations will ensue with other African states and the superpowers. The recently independent island states such as the Seychelles, Madagascar and Mauritius are trying to establish their economies and as yet it is unclear what direction their political development will take.

The Horn of Africa is another potential flashpoint where differences between Ethiopia and Somalia may erupt over the independence of the French Territory of Afars and Issas. The Gulf States including Iran with their newly acquired oil wealth are transforming their economies to an industrial base and developing their armed forces. The shadow of the unsolved Israel-Arab dispute spreads to the Gulf States and involves the superpowers in the region. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have differences and a recent history of conflict which holds no guarantees of having been settled. South East Asia's stability cannot be taken for granted, with Thailand, Malaysia and Burma confronted with continuing insurgency problems.

The presence of the superpowers in the region is decried by many of the Third World states but accepted by other states who feel that dominance by one superpower is less desirable, or they are apprehensive of future struggles amongst the larger littoral states to be the dominant powers if both superpowers withdraw.

The 1970s have seen the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean increase significantly, especially for the littoral nations and the non-littoral nations which are dependent on oil from the Gulf states. Unfortunately this importance has brought added uncertainties and pressures to the region including an escalation in the procurement of arms and more sophisticated weaponry by littoral states from the superpowers and other external sources. The potential for an outbreak of regional conflicts exists but the overriding awareness among the leaders of the littoral states for peace and stability is prevailing, at least in the short term.

It is then in this atmosphere of regional uncertainties and complexities that Australia, as a member nation of the littoral is seeking to develop and strengthen its political, economic and social relationships. In the countries of the region where Australia has formal relations these relations are for the most part cordial or at least correct and where we do not have relations we are interested in pursuing their establishment. However there are limitations to the extent to which relations can be established, it is easier with countries where a commercial basis for relations exists but more difficult where there is no such common interest. In Australia's case the latter is true with many of the African littoral and island states and we would need to adopt the role of an aid donor country to develop relations. At this particular time there are severe restrictions on the amount of aid our economy is able to allocate and while the sentiment is there, the available resources do not cover the potential demand.

Irrespective of which major party has been in government in Australia during the 1970s, the Indian Ocean region has presented a dilemma for our foreign policy. We recognize the importance of the ANZUS treaty and retain close ties with the United States. On the other hand we seek good relations with the Indian Ocean littoral states many of which support the Zone of Peace concept or profess to be non-aligned and want the Ocean free of superpower presence. Therefore Australia is faced with the contradiction of being aligned with the United States, supporting its presence in the Indian Ocean and sharing military facilities in Australia while serving as a member of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee seeking to establish the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

Australia's close links with the United States are well known to the littoral states and are accepted as such. Over-emphasis of Australia's posture on the United States presence in the Indian Ocean carries with it the possibility of misinterpretation by other states and may not be in the best interests of furthering and developing good relations, particularly around the littoral and generally on a world-wide basis. Various littoral states share Australia's views on the United States presence and facilities in the Indian Ocean but their support is expressed in guarded terms or privately, being mindful of their regional and global position. Other states are opposed to a United States presence. The general consensus of the littoral states is that the Indian Ocean should be kept free from superpower rivalry but how or when this can be achieved remains the issue without a solution.

The Soviet Presence in the Indian Ocean - Australia's Reaction

Since 1968 when the Soviet Union first established what has now come to be regarded as a permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean, respective Australian Liberal Governments have commented on that presence with varying degrees of apprehension. The Labor Government did not single out the Soviet naval presence, instead it supported the Zone of Peace proposals for the Ocean and spoke out against the two superpowers escalating their military presence and promoting their rivalry in the Indian Ocean.

The present Government's stand on the Indian Ocean was given by the Prime Minister on 1 June 1976:

"The Indian Ocean is of considerable political and strategic importance to Australia. It is crossed by sea and air communication routes vital to Australia. Much of the vital flow of oil to our neighbours, friends, and trading partners passes through it. The entrance to the Persian Gulf has become a major focus of international attention. The objective of a neutral zone in the Indian Ocean, while admirable, has little chance of success with the U.S.S.R. significantly increasing its permanent presence in the vital north west sector of the Ocean. It is clearly contrary to Australia's interests for the balance in this area to move against our major ally, the United States.

It is also against our interests for both superpowers to embark on an unrestricted competition in the Indian Ocean. We seek balance and restraint. We have supported the United States development of logistic facilities at Diego Garcia so that the balance necessary to stability in the area can be maintained. It cannot be maintained without those facilities. We also strongly support the recent appeal by the United States Administration for restraint so that the balance can be maintained at a relatively low level."

In reply the Leader of the Opposition said:

"The Australian Labor Party is as concerned as anyone else about military build-ups - Soviet or otherwise - in nations or waters adjacent to Australia. But if we are going to base our whole defence and foreign policy on such assertions let us at least have the evidence for them. Let us keep the facts in perspective. The Americans themselves refuse to be panicked on this issue. They see no threat to themselves or anyone else.

Dr Kissinger stated on 22 March this year in a speech in Dallas:

'We will not be deflected by contrived and incredible scenarios, by inflated versions of Soviet strength'.

The focus of Soviet attention has always been in the northwest of the Indian Ocean in the area around Somalia and Aden. It would be absurd to base Australia's defence efforts on developments at such a distance from us. The distance by sea from Aden to Fremantle is 4914 nautical miles. The distance from New York to Leningrad is slightly less, about 4600 nautical miles. Does the Australian Government suggest that the United States Coast Guard should base its planning entirely on local developments in the Baltic? The Prime Minister knows - as every other head of government knows - that the presence of Soviet shipping in the Indian Ocean is inevitable. The Indian Ocean is the shortest warm weather route linking the eastern and western sections of the Soviet Union. Geography alone ensures that the Soviet navy will remain in the Indian Ocean as long as the Soviet Union remains a maritime power".

It is an accepted fact that the superpowers have established a continuing presence in the Indian Ocean and any realistic measures to remove that presence depends on the inclinations of the two superpowers to vacate the Ocean. This Committee does not see the Soviet Union's naval presence in the Ocean as a direct threat to Australia and recognises this presence as an example of the projection of a global power manifesting its interests in a secondary area, compared to the other oceans, by means of a moderate naval commitment and a land commitment, e.g. Somalia, where invited. The number of naval vessels present is not so important as what these vessels represent in the areas and states where they are

seen. This consideration can in times of peace be used very effectively to avoid any criticisms of escalation or undue influence. By these means it is possible for the Soviet Union to maintain a visible but moderate presence, without causing alarm, and yet be able to state as Brezhnev has, "The Soviet Union has never had, and has no intention now, of building military bases in the Indian Ocean. And we call on the United States to take the same stand". The facilities enjoyed by the Soviet Union on Somalian territory at Berbera, Kismayu and Mogadishu, do not qualify in the strict sense as Soviet owned facilities. Although Soviet built and manned, Berbera may not have, using the Egypt-Soviet Union break-as an example, the permanency of tenure that the United States has on Diego Garcia. Nevertheless under existing circumstances these facilities, others in Aden, on Socotra Island and elsewhere in the north western region of the Indian Ocean provide the Soviet Union with back-up facilities which can effectively support a much larger deployment of naval vessels and aircraft, if necessary. The lack of any bases or facilities on Soviet territory, ignoring any facilities on client states' territories, is also a useful propaganda weapon against any establishments such as Diego Garcia.

The Committee has received a great deal of material, heard evidence and read official and news media pronouncements referring to the need for, or conjecture about, whether there is a "balance of power" between the two superpowers in the Indian Ocean. From the outset the Committee decided that the pursuit of an assessment of whether a "balance of power" exists or how it can be measured would be a futile and hypothetical exercise in the Indian Ocean context and to use the size of the existing

United States, Soviet Union, French and littoral states' navies, ship days, weighted ship days, port calls or respective fire power, present in the Indian Ocean at any given time, would not be a worthwhile undertaking. In a crisis situation or general war conditions these fleet sizes would not remain static and so many other factors vital to such events would come into consideration. The Committee has therefore not undertaken any such assessment and has not concentrated on measuring whether a "balance of power" exists or does not. Instead there is a general consensus among the members of the Committee that if a description of the superpowers naval and military deployments is necessary, the term a "matching presence" most befits the current situation. The sophistication of modern weaponry together with the relative strategic unimportance of the Indian Ocean to the superpowers would inhibit them turning the area into a focal point of major naval deployment in the event of a generalised global conflict. The restrictive points of quick access to the Ocean, the lack and vulnerability of supporting facilities further detract from the viability of the region as a theatre of war.

The Committee acknowledges the vital political, commercial and cultural importance of the Indian Ocean region to Australia and the value of our ties with the United States but in this regard it is also very aware of the reality that Australia's interests in the region do not always coincide with those of the United States. Australia is a member of the Indian Ocean littoral, the United States is not, and it is therefore necessary for Australia to formulate and pursue active foreign and defence policies suited to what we see as a constructive contribution to the promotion of stability and security in the region. The

pronouncements of the Nixon or Guam doctrine and the United States withdrawal from South East Asia are a strong indication of the United States expectation for its allies to accept more responsibility.

Generally Australia's relations with the Soviet Union are satisfactory and with particular reference to the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean this Committee reiterates that under current circumstances it can see no direct threat to Australia or interdiction of Australia's ocean trade routes by the Soviet navy. The findings of the 1971 Report of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs on the Indian Ocean Region were that "the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean represented no direct threat to Australian security or our lines of communication unless under the possibility of a situation of general war or just short of general war". These findings are still true today and this Committee concurs with that conclusion. While there is some disquiet or unease over the Soviet presence its over-emphasis, whether from official sources or through sensationalism by the news media, can only exaggerate the issue and serves to assist the cause of Soviet propaganda. That is not to say that we should ignore or dismiss the Soviet presence in the region. It is in Australia's interests to be vigilant of Soviet activities.

Australia regards the Soviet presence in the Ocean and its activities in the littoral as one of strategic concern but it must be realised that we are in no position that can unilaterally influence or diminish its status quo in the region. The Soviet presence is a matter of strategic concern to Australia because our interests do not coincide with Soviet political philosophies

and motives for developing their influence in the region. Australia can lend its voice to any regional aspirations or manifestations that will give emphasis to the need for stability and an avoidance of superpower rivalry in the area, apart from that it would be unrealistic to expect us to have a greater influence. It is in this way that Australia should work to increase its standing as a member of the littoral, seeking to foster a cohesive approach from member states which are genuinely committed to the welfare and advancement of the region as a whole. The Indian Ocean region may be secondary in strategic importance to the superpowers at the present time, as witnessed by the size of their deployments, but viewed on a regional basis its security can be threatened by limited conflicts among member states acting independently or as clients of the superpowers. The superpowers can enhance or inhibit the security and stability of the region by restraining their client states or by supporting local ambitions on extra-territorial ventures.

The Indian Ocean region is one area where the Soviet Union and China compete for influence and the propagation of their respective brands of communism. Again the Sino-Soviet dispute and its export to the Indian Ocean littoral is a dispute that Australia cannot influence and yet by appearing to align with one or the other of the disputants could do considerable harm to its own relations with the other, and even further afield. China's recent switch of foreign policy calling for the expulsion of both the superpowers from the Indian Ocean, instead of just the Soviet Union, suggests the dilemma that exists in its foreign policy. The Soviet Union accepts Australia's ties with the United States but any

inclination towards China in a dispute that does not involve Australia can be of no benefit to Australia and could stimulate a reassessment by the Soviet Union of its relations with Australia.

Australia should concentrate on contributing to its alliance with the United States by continuing to support United States' efforts to maintain a presence with the Soviet Union in the Indian Ocean to encourage mutual restraint.

Australia's Defence Role

Australia has been fortunate that the crises which have affected the Indian Ocean region over the years have been, in terms of distance, far removed from our territory. It may well be that this situation will continue or even improve with a growing awareness among the leaders of the littoral states for the need to curb instability and concentrate on the peaceful development of their nations. Unfortunately many uncertainties still prevail and mutual suspicions in the region have yet to be quelled. The increasing economic importance of a number of the regional countries, particularly as sources for oil and raw materials, adds to their status which in turn brings with it a growth in their military capacity. The acquisition of power backed by sophisticated new weaponry can heighten tensions in areas of the region which are presently unstable and can lead to other nations in these areas turning to the superpowers for assistance to offset the weaponry of their wealthier neighbours. In such instances the superpowers can act to either lessen or aggravate these tensions without being able to necessarily control the initial outburst of hostilities. Evidence received by the

Committee shows that there is a growing number of littoral states which appreciate the presence of the superpowers as a counter-vailing measure against the aspirations of the stronger regional powers and as a moderating influence on potential local conflicts. However any mutual escalation of this presence would destroy the benefits their existing levels have and generate regional suspicions and hostilities.

The withdrawal of firstly the United Kingdom and then the United States forces from the Asian mainland has confronted Australia with the reality that a dependence on "great and powerful friends" is no longer sufficient to guarantee an effective defence of Australia and its territories. As a consequence Australia must develop and sustain a much greater responsibility for its defence. In the Indian Ocean context the growing importance of our sparsely settled yet mineral wealthy western and north western region adds to our defence requirements. The island territories of Cocos (Keeling) and Christmas Islands are our responsibility and if the concept of a 200 mile economic zone as proposed at the Law of the Sea Conference becomes effective, our surveillance commitment will virtually be doubled.

It is not possible to discuss in detail Australia's Indian Ocean defence requirements in isolation from our overall national defence requirements and the latter is beyond the scope of this current examination. It has however been pointed out to the Committee, both in evidence and during field visit briefings, that apart from other shortcomings that there may be in our defence deployments, our Indian Ocean foreshores are lacking in defence manpower and equipment. Australia's Indian Ocean coastline is remote, sparsely settled, economically and

strategically important but vulnerable. Possible incursions into Australian coastal waters, land, territories and airspace can come in a variety of ways; illegal entry and smuggling in isolated locations; politically motivated guerilla attacks on isolated settlements or installations; attacks on population centres, defence establishments and industrial sites; and the interdiction of shipping and aircraft. Even though a number of these possibilities appear remote under present circumstances the responsibility to meet such threats rests with Australia and the ability to counter them cannot be attained nor implemented at short notice if the means do not exist. If the defensive capacity does not exist near or on site, the time lost in marshalling forces from elsewhere to serve such isolated areas as the west and north west of Australia may be critical and mean the failure of the operation. While it is possible to deploy defence units from such centres as Perth, Learmonth, Darwin, Cocos (Keeling) and Christmas Islands as well as HMAS Stirling when completed, the Committee recommends that there is an immediate requirement for the stationing of permanently based units at defence establishments in Western Australia, and for providing them with an increased capacity to effectively conduct naval patrols and maritime aerial surveillance. Where gaps are found in the efficient coverage of patrolling capacity plans should be implemented to establish additional locations from which these operations can be undertaken.

As a nation genuinely concerned with the development and stability of the Indian Ocean region Australia should demonstrate that it is prepared to undertake the responsibilities for its own defence and in so doing will work and co-operate with all other nations interested in achieving the same goals.

Australia is involved with SEATO and the Five Power Defence Arrangements and has bilateral defence co-operation programs with Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.