



Building constituencies all at sea

Controversy continues to build on the subject of where the ADF's new amphibious ships can or should be built. The matter follows closely on the Award to Adelaide-based ASC Limited of the contract to build the Navy's three new destroyers (due in service over the period 2013-2017).

The option of building the two amphibious ships (and eventually the as yet unspecified sealift ship) in Australia is a key part of keeping bids by overseas yards as competitive as possible. This is especially so when the Spanish contender, Navantia, needs the work so Spain can avoid being penalised by the European Union for the large state subsidy it currently provides the shipbuilder in clear contravention of EU laws.

On the other hand, there are concerns about industry capacity, project scheduling difficulties with building the new destroyers, and with a possible skills shortage in key trades. Furthermore, local construction really means the hulls would be built here (about 15 per cent of the cost) but most of the remaining work would involve the assembly and installation of largely imported components. Discussion of the likely fiscal, economic, industry, labour, technical, skills maintenance, taxation and foreign exchange aspects of the deal needs to reflect these basic facts.

Initial DMO estimates indicate that overseas construction could be up to 30 per cent cheaper. Even if built overseas, this would not prevent through-life refits and modifications being undertaken in Australia – assuming some degree of major Australian shipbuilding capacity survives.

The ships would be the largest vessels ever constructed in Australia. They would certainly be the only large vessels built since the virtual collapse domestically of large merchant ship building in the 1970s and 1980s, when the federal and state governments ceased their subsidies. While innovative Australian shipyards continue to compete internationally with smaller vessels, such as wave-piercing catamarans, any idea that a conventional Australian shipbuilding industry of any size can be sustained by the Navy's requirements alone is of dubious validity.

If a viable Australian shipbuilding industry is to be resurrected for the long term, serious attention needs to be given to rebuilding the Australian Merchant Marine as well. As discussed in the Summer 2004/05 and Autumn 2005 issues of *Defender*, such a policy would require flexible co-operation between governments, industry and the Maritime Union of Australia.

The new medium-sized amphibious ships are integral components of the modern, joint-focused and strategically mobile ADF we need. The bottom line is that the ADF gets the right type of vessel on time. The project must not be delayed one day by hesitation or bickering about home or overseas procurement, or by cost over-runs or delays of any kind.●

Highlights:

- Amphibious ship project brings out the vested interests
- A historical perspective on DIMIA's culture wars
- Intelligence professionalism continues to be threatened by trend in senior intelligence appointments
- Minor JI terrorist plays stereotypical role
- Malaysian hypocrisy comes to the fore again
- Public debate on multiculturalism catches up to reality
- Irony Corner: The experiences of Hon Danna Vale, MP

Culture war swirls around DIMIA again

Matters of immigration policy and practice rarely prompt ADA comment except where they have obvious wider national security implications. Recent examples include using the defence force to assist in enforcing immigration laws, and the need for greater national unity in the battle of wills at the heart of our struggle with Islamist terrorism.

On the current controversy concerning the degree of institutional culture change required in the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), the ADA's longstanding public interest role and policy monitoring practices do, however, offer a long-term perspective apparently missing in the debate thus far. Much of the public discussion about the culture change required in DIMIA appears to lack adequate historical and functional perspectives. This risks inappropriate or 'over-kill' solutions being applied.

From the functional perspective, for many decades there have been frequent tensions between the department's responsibilities for barrier law enforcement and its wider social policy purposes. This was exacerbated in the 1970s when applied 'multiculturalism' replaced national development economics as the prime social policy imperative. Similar tensions have always existed in the Customs Service between the law enforcers and the revenue raisers. DIMIA's law enforcement and social policy responsibilities are both essential exercises of national governance and neither should be subordinated to the other. If these imperatives continue to clash, rather than just compete occasionally, splitting the functions between separate departments becomes the best solution.

Even more importantly, when placed in a historical context, the department's current emphasis on strict legal interpretations and hard-line compliance policies, and the apparent abuses of power resulting, are simply the opposite pendulum swing from the situation of the mid to late 1970s and most of the 1980s. By the mid 1980s, for example, DIMIA's investigative staffs were deliberately and chronically understaffed. This was largely because at the departmental level cracking down on visa overstayers, bogus betrothals, sham marriages and illegal immigration rackets was perceived (rightly or wrongly) to contradict multicultural objectives. At the political level it was perceived by both main parties to lose votes among first-generation immigrants and some wider ethnic communities.

It is also worth noting that parliamentarians from both sides of politics with established and longstanding liberal humanitarian backgrounds, such as Chris Hurford, Gerry Hand and Phillip Ruddock, all became quite strict immigration ministers after a short period in the portfolio. The common experience appears to have been a growing disgust and impatience when confronted with the numerous fibs, rorts and rackets encountered in the immigration and ethnic community arenas on a daily basis.

At least part of the solution to improving DIMIA culture is to aim for the middle ground. We need to avoid a pendulum swing back to the opposite extreme through recreating the emasculated, impotent and short-sighted regulatory era of the mid to late 1980s and early 1990s. Perhaps another part of the solution lies in DIMIA divesting its responsibilities for multicultural and indigenous affairs and concentrating on its core business of law enforcement and assistance to economic development.●

Applying intelligence not cronyism

In the last issue of *Defence Brief* the ADA noted the record of Dennis Richardson as retiring head of ASIO. *Defence Brief* also recorded the unfortunate situation whereby both the new head of ASIO and his deputy were ex-diplomats, and called for a return to the previous time-tested practice where at least one of the two senior positions at the agency was always occupied by a through-career intelligence professional.

The appointment of Mr Paul O'Sullivan, formerly the Prime Minister's adviser on international security, to head ASIO means that the heads of ASIO, ASIS and ONA are again all diplomats, apparently by reflex bureaucratic action rather than justifiable policy. All are capable men but surely the merits of the individuals concerned are not the key point of the matter.

Diplomats, while often capable and frequently highly visible in the corridors of power, are surely not universally employable. If the current trend continues, perhaps we may soon see the appointment of a diplomat to the High Court or as Chief Medical Officer, Solicitor-General or Chief Scientist of the Commonwealth when those offices next fall vacant.

It is reassuring that at the next level down in ASIO through-career intelligence professionals are in the majority. But surely the continuing and seemingly permanent blockage to the career development of such professionals can only have unfortunate consequences to the long-term health of their profession, and its complex and nuanced security intelligence speciality.

The real problems involved are fourfold. First, it is an intellectually and morally dangerous practice to employ policy development practitioners in intelligence functions. This risks intelligence analysis or reporting being unduly skewed (even if only subconsciously) to meet desired policy outcomes. Policy and intelligence advice to decisionmakers, both bureaucratic and ministerial, should always be segregated as much as possible. It is simply insular thinking or arrogance to think such problems can be easily avoided, especially on an alleged personal integrity basis.

Second, DFAT has so many senior positions that the department cannot accommodate higher ranking staff returning from overseas appointments. The temptation therefore is to simply farm them out elsewhere in the Commonwealth bureaucracy. Interestingly, this policy seems to avoid some positions where their expertise is actually directly relevant, such as International Policy Division in the Department of Defence.

Third, there is a peculiar and unjustifiable belief that intelligence work is either not a profession, or that career intelligence officers are somehow never good enough or cannot be trusted to head intelligence and security agencies. Such queer notions are unsupportable by facts or logic, as can be seen by common practice in comparable countries such as the UK, Canada and New Zealand. As but one of many examples, it is rare for the United Kingdom Security Service (known colloquially as MI5) to be headed by other than a career intelligence officer.

Finally, the very people claiming that there is no problem in posting diplomats to intelligence positions are the very people recommending such appointments and often, the very people benefiting from such a policy. This is, at best, institutionally unsound if not always intellectually corrupt.

It is, of course, occasionally useful for outsiders to be appointed to senior positions in intelligence and security agencies. Operational cultures necessarily steeped in secrecy need to be shaken up from time to time to prevent intellectual incest setting in. We should, however, return to the policy whereby at least every second head of our intelligence and security agencies comes from within the ranks of through-career intelligence officers, even if not necessarily from the same agency.●

Shades of Mandy Rice-Davies

Captured Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist underling Iwan Dharmawan has claimed that recent bomb attacks against Australian targets in Indonesia were prompted solely by Australia's involvement in the war in Iraq. To echo Mandy Rice-Davies' immortal cynicism: He would say that, wouldn't he? ●

Malaysia strikes a post-emptive posture

As predicted, Australia has had to hold its nose and sign the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in order to be included in the emerging East Asia summit process.

As also expected, further Malaysian diplomatic and public posturing has occurred. Perhaps now might be a good time to prod Malaysia about the contradictions, incongruity and even hypocrisy of its position. After all, as has been made clear on numerous occasions, pre-emptive strikes against terrorists by the countries targeted by them would only be mounted if a government failed, or was unwilling, to prevent such attacks being mounted by terrorists operating from its territory.

The two leading Jemaah Islamiyah terrorists still at large, and who are responsible for various major bombings in Indonesia, are both Malaysians. Both owe their career development and much of their success thus far to official Malaysian complacency about Islamist extremism – especially when it was perceived to be directed at non-Malaysians.●

Crystal ball clarity a reflection of foresight

Calls by the ADA for Australian and New Zealand security assistance in Solomon Islands, the Association's coverage of the threats posed by the declining domestic security situation in PNG, and discussion of the legal situation pertaining to David Hicks, are recent examples of the two-year or so time lag before wider public debate and national action catches up. Recent public debate on the potential for aspects of multiculturalism to threaten national security confirms the trend.

In April 2003, in an address to a homeland security conference in Sydney, the ADA first suggested that some aspects of multiculturalism required a significant rethink if western liberal democracies were to win a likely prolonged and difficult conflict with trans-national Islamist terrorism. The conference address was published in the Winter 2003 issue of *Defender* and may be downloaded at >http://www.ada.asn.au/defender_index.htm<.●

Irony corner

A press release in late July trumpeted the participation by the Hon Danna Vale MP in the excellent ADF Parliamentary Program. The release noted that Ms Vale "is spending an intensive five days ... gaining in-depth knowledge of the processes involved in planning for the operations that our dedicated [ADF] men and women are called upon to participate in". The release went on to point out "It's [sic] programs such as these that give Parliamentarians a more informed perspective to debate on Defence and National Security issues." It does though seem a great pity to many that Ms Vale could not have sought to acquire such in-depth knowledge, and informed perspectives, before or during her previous sojourn as the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence.●

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