

The decision to reinforce Australia's military commitment to rebuilding Iraq has naturally excited further argument over the validity of joining the March 2003 coalition intervention. Much of this argument is not 'public debate' because each side tends to talk at each other rather than about the real issues. The overall effect is an unfortunate degree of political polarisation and subjective emotion that has not been seen since the early 1970s Vietnam controversies.

Vietnam neutered effective public debate on defence for years afterwards and still echoes among those whose strategic perceptions are still shaped by that war, rather than today's strategic realities. Political polarisation always threatens the detached and long-term perspectives needed to consider, plan and resource our defence effectively.

Back in 1975 the ADA was founded, as an independent and non-partisan public interest watchdog, in an attempt to mitigate such polarisation and further genuine debate over the long term. We believe the following points are worth making.

In war circumstances change quickly and commitments by any government not to become more or less deeply involved can only ever be provisional.

Irrespective of how or why we became involved in Iraq, dwelling on the claimed rights or wrongs of the matter only obscures objective consideration of the current strategic question; whether we have a responsibility to assist with resolving the current situation in that country and, if so, how we could best do this?

Geostrategic and operational similarities and differences between the Iraq and Vietnam wars were discussed in the Winter 2004 *Defender*. In general, claims that the insurgency in Iraq resembles the 'insurgency quagmire' of Vietnam tend to be made by those with an insufficient knowledge of either war.

Of crucial importance to the wider defence debate is the main reason why we have not contributed large conventional ground forces—because we can't!

Our long-term neglect of defence resourcing means the Army, for example, is not suitably equipped to deploy and sustain a brigade, or even a battalion group, in a mid to high intensity conflict.

We can only send a small force, without tanks or attack helicopters, to a relatively quiet area of Iraq for a comparatively short time. The disgraceful neglect of our defence revealed by these inadequacies must be urgently reversed before the Army has to be committed in greater numbers in a similar or worse situation, and probably one closer to home.

We cannot avoid 'foreign entanglements' by configuring the defence force so it is incapable of being deployed overseas. In most cases, threats to Australian national interests will normally mean the ADF will have to be deployed anyway.

Service personnel should not be exposed to harm unnecessarily because Australians sitting safely at home seek to avoid 'foreign entanglements' by keeping the ADF ill-

## contents

### Comment and Information

Leading Article	1
Letters	2
Current Comment	5
Major Furphy	10
The Sharp End	31
Association Update	17
Conference Calendar	17
Course Calendar	21
Subscriptions and Privacy Policy	9

### Articles

Whole-of-government Reform:	
A Practical First Step <i>Neil James</i>	11
Rising China: Risk of Miscalculation <i>Robyn Lim</i>	13
Dangers Every Bit as Great: Remodelling the paradigms of Australian Strategic Policy Debate <i>Paul Monk</i>	18
Danger on our Doorstep:	
Organised Crime Takes Hold in PNG <i>Mark Forbes</i>	22
Matching Performance to Promise:	
Rebuilding the Army Reserve <i>Warren Glennly</i>	25
Going Down to the Sea in Big Enough Ships <i>Billy Ruffian</i>	31
ADF Tactical Airlift Options <i>Ian Bostock</i>	35

### Reviews

Ancient Warfare: A Very Short Introduction <i>Harry Sidebottom</i>	37
Quinn's Post, Anzac, Gallipoli <i>Peter Stanley</i>	38
The Royal Australian Navy in World War II <i>David Stephens (ed.)</i>	39
Facing Asia: A History of the Colombo Plan <i>Daniel Oakman</i>	40
Asian Alternatives: Australia's Vietnam Decision and Lessons on Going to War <i>Garry Woodard</i>	41
The Cruel Legacy: The HMAS <i>Voyager</i> Tragedy <i>Tom Frame</i>	42
In the Shadow of Swords: On the Trail of Terrorism from Afghanistan to Australia <i>Sally Neighbour</i>	43
Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton <i>Martin van Creveld</i>	44

### Our cover

A Tiger armed reconnaissance helicopter, delivered to the Australian army in December 2004, flying over Brisbane.

*Photo courtesy DoD*

equipped or understrength. There is, of course, always the opposite risk of governments being tempted to use the ADF unnecessarily if it is configured to maximise its strategic utility. The bottom line of the conundrum is surely that the greater risks and deeper moral dangers lie in the first rather than the second temptation.

The inadequacies in our defence preparedness revealed by the Iraq war should be a fundamental part of a new and real defence debate. ♦