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Sir: I am mildly astonished but not surprised that the Chief of Defence Force and the Defence Secretary have rejected the Proust committee's recommendation that their diarchic control, if retained, have its respective responsibilities more clearly defined and delineated.

The CDF and Secretary are interested parties and certainly may advise the Minister to reject the recommendation. But it is quite improper for them to be seen to be publicly refusing it.

*Defender* readers will be well aware that ADA has constantly proposed this reform both publicly and privately. Proust has now added the weight of her expert investigation and this should not be so summarily dismissed.

The committee was appointed by the Minister for Defence, Brendan Nelson, and it is for him to accept or reject the recommendation. Over to you, Dr Nelson.

**Michael O'Connor  
Victoria**

Sir: I enjoyed the Summer 2006/07 edition of *Defender*, in particular Robert O'Neill's perspectives on international security and Neil James' analysis of the David Hicks case. I agree with both articles. Neil has hit the nail on the head when he suggests '...many ostensibly championing Hicks are merely using him as a proxy issue for moral posturing in wider ideological feuding', although his case did drag on far too long.

On wider national security issues, and the ADF's operations in Iraq, the Federal Government's case for not moving ahead with a phased withdrawal is a weak one not shared by most Australians. On the other hand, Opposition Leader Rudd continues to give mixed messages on what his Government might actually do.

Regrettably, the Prime Minister has once again confused his substantial leadership qualities with an ideological obstinacy and is playing into the hands of those who argue that he is too close to the blurred strategic and tactical approach of President George W. Bush. Some of my former federal Coalition colleagues must be disappointed privately by the public intransigence of his stand.

**Bill Taylor  
Queensland**

*Editor's Note: The Hon Bill Taylor is a retired senior RAN officer, and a former member of parliament and Howard Government minister.*

Sir: The Military Commission judgement against David Hicks has not satisfied many Australians; some seeing it as politically expedient, while others believe Hicks is a victim of an unjudicial system. As I write this letter, I am reading a full-page advertisement in *The Australian* expressing outrage at both the Guantanamo detention centre and the Military Commission. Many doubt the validity of his confession.

The Howard Government must bear most of the blame for this. Hicks was but a foot soldier, however the Government has succeeded in elevating him from ratbag to a symbol for lack of due legal process.

Much has been written about the desirability of the civil court system, but such a system is designed to deal only with criminal matters before such a court. The rules of evidence, among other things, limit the scope of such criminal trials – which means that they cannot deal with the total range of Hicks' activities, especially his participation in a war. Only a properly constituted Commission of Inquiry can tackle such a task.

The Howard Government chose not to repatriate Hicks on the grounds that there was no legislation in place that would enable it to try Hicks for any criminal offences he may also have committed, and it did not believe in retrospective legislation.

In the hands of the Bush Government for five years, Hicks has become a martyr to many Australians and the strange antics of the Military Commission have not dissipated that view. Australian intelligence organisations know the scope of Hicks' activities but the Australian people do not. They have a right to know, otherwise an industry will develop to perpetuate Hicks' martyrdom.

Soon after Hicks arrives in Australia, Mr Howard should establish a Commission or Court of Inquiry to put on public record the facts of Hicks' military and criminal activities, including the conditions of his detention and the costs the Government has met as a result of his activities. Such an Inquiry would have no power to punish Hicks further.

**Phil Greville  
Queensland**

*Editor's Note: Brigadier P.J. Greville, CBE (Retd) was a prisoner-of-war in Korea and later the author of the chapter on the Australian PWs in the official history of the Korean War. His article on the treacherous activities of Wilfred Burchett during the Korean War was published in the Autumn 2006 *Defender*.*

Sir: I still find myself shaking my head at the continuing level of 'academic' and press commentary opposition to the recent purchase of a very limited number of Abrams tanks so our predominantly light infantry-based Army will no longer be quite so vulnerable in medium to higher intensity conflicts. As a former mechanised infantryman I find it difficult to credit that any serious commentator on Australian defence matters can readily reject, for example, the practical and professional arguments mounted for modern tanks in the Summer 2006-07 *Defender* article by former infantryman David Kilcullen.

The 'its too heavy' line of argument has been used since the Matilda II tank in World War II and ignores ADF experience in operating tanks across a wide variety of Australian, Pacific Island and South-east Asian terrain. It would seem that some of this criticism may be because such big-city commentators just do not know the economy and infrastructure of northern Australia, where 100-ton plus road trains and heavy mining machinery use the roads frequently. They also ignore that the rail link from Adelaide to Darwin allows long-distance movement of heavy loads without using the road network.

Much of the criticism also appears to be very much of the hearsay variety, relying on the repetition of supposed facts easily recognised as rubbish by anyone with real military experience – or who remain informed of world events and contemporary technologies. I suspect these jaded objections to the new tanks may be motivated more by their too-long delayed eventual procurement under a conservative government, or just blatant anti-Americanism due to their origin, rather than any genuine desire for rational and impartial discussion of the subject.

These so-called 'experts' who keep criticising the new tanks, or questioning whether the ADF really needs new, larger and more capable amphibious ships and destroyers, rarely even bother proposing genuine and workable alternatives to such force structure reforms and equipment acquisitions. Nor do they seem to grasp that best-practice procurement for the ADF means that maximising commonality of platforms with our major allies is an advantage not a disadvantage, tactically, logistically and in terms of through-life technical support and upgrades.

This does not mean we slavishly buy US-made hardware at all times (as several recent helicopter acquisitions show), nor does it mean that we buy US kit just so we can allegedly fight with them in every theatre they may have to fight in. The notion advanced in Professor Desmond Ball's recent Blake Dawson Waldron lecture that the new tanks are mainly intended for use in major US-led armoured operations in the Middle East and Korean Peninsula is plainly a ridiculous proposition. It would surely be recognised as such by anyone with any professional expertise in military operations, or indeed, real knowledge of how Australia has actually contributed forces to previous wars and current operations.

Professor Ball's lecture was notable only for its continued presentation of arguments about the tanks, new amphibious ships and new destroyers that have been long since refuted thoroughly in wider academic and professional debates. Was this just a case of the good professor yearning for the bad old

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days of the strategic policy dead-end brought on by the Dibb Report? Or is there a deeper problem with some academic strategists and pseudo-academic strategic commentators in Australia? Are they so lost in a past world view and belief system that they cannot recognise that their outdated viewpoints and erroneous judgements are no longer relevant to Australia's current and future strategic challenges? Just as importantly, can they not see that their outmoded views pose real, physical, dangers to the men and women of the ADF by denying them adequate firepower, protection and mobility when in combat?

**Adrian Quilty  
New South Wales**

Sir: Gradually the Australian public is warming to the concept of nuclear energy, thanks to the fact that only nuclear (at this stage in technology) can provide base-load electricity and replace dirty, coal-fired generators. While not an activist, personally I was doubtful about nuclear energy until I had the proverbial conversion when I read James Lovelock's second book, *The Revolt of Gaia*. Turn to page 91 for the reference.

Lovelock's Gaia concept is the anthem of greens and conservationists of all shades. Lovelock is their hero. Now, he says bluntly, nuclear power is the only way to save the planet. Australian debate, however, fell to the silliest political level: 'Where are ya gonna build a nuclear power station? Not in my electorate!'

This shift in public opinion is happening at a time when we need to start seriously considering what the next generation of our Navy's submarines will be. I consider submarines the capital ships of the Navy now and into the future.

The obvious way to go is for nuclear-powered submarines because of their range, speed and strategic flexibility. In contrast to previous generations, new nuclear-powered submarines are quiet, smaller and generally more efficient, hence cost effective. As with the US in the 1950s, nuclear submarine technologies will lead us into smaller and safer nuclear-generation systems for land-based power stations and the training of the engineers and technicians we need.

In the 1980s, when we were planning and building the *Collins* boats, a potent argument against the nuclear-powered submarine advocates (apart from the political opposition, of course) was that such submarines needed a home-grown nuclear industry to support them. This is the time, I believe, to reverse that argument and help build a national nuclear industry through building and operating nuclear-powered submarines.

The 'where are ya gonna put it' argument is largely taken care of by their Western Australia-basing at Garden Island. The minerals and energy attitudes prevalent in that State will provide a receptive political climate for nuclear-powered submarines. And Garden Island is sort of offshore (and federal land) as a home for them.

**John Stackhouse  
New South Wales**

Sir: If we are to address asymmetrical threats such as Islamist terrorism we need to take into account several trends which conspire to make them more problematic in the future.

The explosion in knowledge, and the interdependency and larger scale of society's physical and electronic infrastructure, mean more and more disruption is possible by fewer and fewer highly skilled individuals. Widespread access to information also means that unexpected knowledge and opportunity combinations can give rise to totally unpredicted or unpredictable actions by totally unforeseen actors.

This means that before any attack the initiative and, more importantly time, is often on the side of the terrorist or insurgent. When designing a response to this situation perhaps we should take a leaf out of our battle with commercial fraud. Forensic studies of fraud have identified that fraudulent acts generally occur when three factors are present; opportunity, rationalisation and pressure.

For this reason companies now employ a multi-pronged approach to combat fraud. These consist of strong internal controls to reduce opportunity, organisational culture development programs led from the top to align staff and organisational goals (often including corporate philanthropy), and systematic attitude surveys to identify and address emerging threats from employees feeling pressure and/or vulnerable to rationalising fraud as acceptable.

In combatting terrorist threats traditional security approaches are essentially akin to using internal controls only to prevent fraud. This is unlikely to stop asymmetrical terrorist threats or, just as importantly, destroy such threats at their source to prevent recurrences or escalation.

More needs to be done in the realm of cultural development and addressing rationalisation and pressure issues. This is especially the case with the internal threat from Islamist terrorism, where in some areas an unhealthy mix of fundamental or literalist religious fervour, poor education, social alienation, youth unemployment, inter-generational family breakdown, culturally-imposed sexual frustration, self-imposed social exclusion, and a historical reluctance and/or incapacity to act in these regards by much of the wider Islamic community, all contribute to quite dangerous pressure and rationalisation problems.

**Kevin Walsh  
Victoria**

Sir: I have noticed some of the concerns expressed by many in regards to psychiatric trauma disabilities, etc, among ADF personnel. Like you and ex-military I am also concerned as to the significant number of cases from our East Timor deployment. Given the percentage of apparent trauma casualties, the question is just how sustainable are we in future higher-intensity operations over long periods?

Regardless of the equipment shortages, and lack of warning before initial deployment, is the high percentage of psychiatric casualties due to lack of appropriate training? Were there many reservists and if so did they receive adequate training on a full-time basis before deployment?

There was a time when mental toughness was progressively developed in most aspects of military training, be it in the

field or in barracks. I certainly hope this is still the case. Or have we fallen victim to political correctness and pressure from well-meaning but interfering groups within our society who simply do not understand the physical and mental demands of a hostile operational environment?

Appropriate training will never eliminate such trauma but surely it will help reduce it. Clearly our young warriors are performing with sound professionalism but our military and political leaders must ensure every effort is made to reduce the chances of trauma. And ensure that those who do suffer are given appropriate recognition, total support and every possible opportunity to live a normal and happy life.

Our nation owes them nothing less. These young veterans must not be exposed to the pain of social isolation; or the humiliation of caps in hand; or the need for beggar bowls. When we will ever learn?

In my view the most effective way we veterans can pursue any goal is to first ensure we do not fragment into meaningless bickering tribes which would please all political parties. It is disappointing to note the ADA's good intent in this regard has been misunderstood by some veterans.

### **George Mansford Queensland**

Sir: Three years ago my younger brother, John, died suffering the extreme effects of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A Portsea graduate and popular engineer officer, behind the hard-working, hard-living facade lay a deeply tortured soul. He was my only sibling, and as his illness progressed and consumed him, I did everything I could to try to understand what was happening to him. To help him come to grips with it, whatever it was, and bring it under control. PTSD was the official diagnosis, though I suspect that he had at some stage descended into manic depression.

He didn't commit suicide by a single act, he simply went into a slow, excruciating, undignified, lonely, terminal decline. He need not have. I also suspect that he had been 'coached', by well-meaning individuals no doubt, to recite in medical terms to examining authorities both the symptoms of PTSD and the various chemical panaceas that he, and no doubt they, believed would restore him to health. They didn't, they simply exacerbated his condition.

The ADA was recently criticised by some for warning against such 'coaching'. My own family, military and wider veterans work experiences with the RSL lead me to agree with the warning. The consequences for veterans, many genuinely ill and in need of help, can be potentially disastrous.

PTSD has many causes and perhaps not all of them have yet been formally identified. In many cases, the underlying cause predates military service and there is usually a trigger which tips sufferers over the edge. I also believe there is a major issue for contemporary veterans which may be contributing to the incidence of PTSD but whose potential impact has not yet been recognised.

My brother's illness is a case in point. While at teachers college he crashed his car when he fell asleep at the wheel and his passenger, his best mate, was killed. He abandoned teacher training and joined the army. I now believe John was

struggling with unrecognised PTSD from that point. Those who knew him well may now understand the devil-may-care attitude to life he seemed to embrace so enthusiastically.

His career took him to the Middle East as a peacekeeper, to PNG and to the Peace Monitoring Group in Bougainville. Along the way there was a brief, failed marriage and another failed relationship which resulted in a child, all potentially causes and cumulative effects of PTSD. While in the Middle East he suffered serious head injuries in a fall. But it was after his return from Bougainville in December 1999 that his life really began to unravel.

Posted to command Headquarter Company at 3 Brigade, he nonetheless felt his career aspirations remained unfulfilled (another potential contributor) and almost immediately slipped into deep depression. In one of his decreasing lucid moments, he expressed a frustration that he had failed to make a difference in Bougainville, that just as he felt he was achieving results his three-month tour ended and he had to return home.

Now unlike World Wars I and II and some subsequent conventional conflicts, most peace-keeping missions have no precise conclusion, no armistice, no surrender ceremony. UNTSO, the organisation John served with in the Middle East was formed in 1948 and is still there. How many ADF personnel serving there, and in similar missions elsewhere, return frustrated that they have not been able to contribute more to a permanent solution to the problems of the Middle East or the Solomons or East Timor?

Does such a lack of fulfilment, the lack of a definite conclusion to the task contribute to many contemporary veterans feeling a sense of failure, or that their service has been of little value or, at worst, worthless. If we withdraw unilaterally from Iraq, or pull out to some precise but arbitrary timetable, might many of our current Iraq veterans be vulnerable to unfulfilled frustration?

The impact of such frustration, this lack of fulfilment, is not at odds with what the texts tell us are accepted causes of PTSD. But I am concerned that the coaching of veterans to be able to present convincingly that they are suffering from PTSD, even with the best intentions, can often mask the true causes of their all too often genuine but different illnesses. This leads to mistreatment and, of even greater concern in many instances, the risk of exacerbating the other conditions.

Knee-jerk denials that such coaching occurs – or claims that if does it is always helpful, legitimate and justified – do not solve the problem nor assist those in need. Perhaps it is time for the military to take a lead and to take another look at the multiple, underlying causes which lead to what we now call PTSD – and perhaps redefine its causes, effects, potential cures and even its description.

If that saves someone else's brother from spiralling down the tortured course which ultimately claimed mine, it will be worth the effort.

**Ross Eastgate  
Queensland**

*Letters continued on page 36*

*Letters continued from page 5*

Sir: The ADA has been an important voice in the defence debate for many years. Consequently, I believe it is time to reverse two unhealthy trends in recent commentary which, if continued, will diminish the Association. The first concerns bias; the second *ad hominem* attacks.

The August-September 2006 edition of *Defence Brief* included a piece on the Israeli Defence Force's militarily effective but politically inept operation against Hezbollah in Lebanon earlier in the year. While generally informative, the piece concluded with a curious swipe at a particular group of military professionals, as follows: 'One other observation commonly voiced among Israeli commentators is also worth noting. It will be a long time before another fighter pilot leads their defence force'.

As a former bomber pilot I have no particular brief for fighter pilots. However, this kind of self-indulgent generalisation has no place in any serious publication. The point here is that history records literally thousands of unsuccessful, even disastrous, campaigns and operations led by individuals other than fighter pilots, for example, soldiers. In Australia's case, the names of Gordon Bennett, Sydney Rowell and Stuart Graham come readily to mind; while at the coalition level an argument can be made that American-led forces were successful in the former Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999 and in Iraq in 2003 despite the leadership of army generals Wesley Clark and Tommy Franks, not because of it. Do these and similar examples mean that no soldiers should ever again lead a defence force?

Turning to personal attacks, the sarcasm evident in the item on Professor Des Ball's recent Blake Dawson Waldron address, reported as 'Well off the ball and far from the mark' in *Defence Brief No. 126*, does the Association no credit. Just because Professor Ball disagrees with the ADA's oft-stated preferences for expeditionary strategies (vice defence-of-Australia strategies) in general and main battle tanks in particular does not mean that he should be subjected to the kind of snide commentary contained in the ADA article.

Constructive debate is characterised by two features. First, it is balanced. And second, while all ideas and commentary are fair game for the most trenchant criticism, attacks on individuals are unacceptable. ADA will best serve its members and the defence debate by observing those characteristics.

**Alan Stephens**  
**Australian Capital Territory**

*Editors Note: The comment in the August-September 2006 'Defence Brief' faithfully summarised public debate in Israel on the future of their CDF, Air Force General Dan Halutz, after the 2006 war in Lebanon – and followed a visit to that country during such debate by the ADA's executive director. It was a very specific, factual and carefully worded reporting of the debate in Israel at that time, and since, and not any inference that fighter pilots axiomatically make poor strategic-level commanders generally. The term 'air force officer' was deliberately avoided to prevent readers wrongly believing that a parallel was being drawn with the situation*

*in Australia and New Zealand where the CDF post is, or has been recently, held by senior air force officers. The accuracy of the summation has been borne out by the conclusions of the Israeli Government's subsequent independent commission of inquiry into the conduct of the 2006 Lebanon War.*

*The claim that the ADA has an 'oft-stated preference for expeditionary strategies (vice defence-of-Australia strategies)' is unwarranted. The ADA view has long been that Australian defence strategy needs to incorporate balanced, adaptable and flexible defence capabilities that provide for both the defence of Australian territory and offshore resources, and for the protection of our wider national interests in the region and globally. This is especially so when various operations in support of our national interests continue to occur much more frequently than existential, or even serious, threats to our national territory. Neither category of strategic challenge can or should be ignored at the expense of the other.*

*The claim that the ADA is also biased, in supporting the Army's re-equipment with a quite limited number of modern main battle tanks, is similarly unwarranted. Our predominantly light-scale land forces require the greater protection, enhanced combat power, and increased operational flexibility that can only be provided by tanks. The sense of this overdue decision is clearly borne out by the recent operational experiences and similar decisions of our US, British and Canadian allies.*

*Finally, the claim that criticism of the recent lecture by Professor Des Ball was unbalanced and constituted an ad hominem attack is unfair. The item in the April 2007 'Defence Brief' overwhelmingly concentrated on a detailed and systematic rebuttal of the points advanced by Professor Ball. It also accurately recorded the considerable audience puzzlement at the lecture's content ignoring much recent informed debate on the topics concerned. The overall conclusion that an undergraduate advancing a similar standard of polemic '... would be swiftly told to resubmit it after appropriate academic effort' was, at most, a robust statement of the ADA's rejection of the points contained in the lecture.*

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