

officers and, to a lesser extent, representatives of defence industry driven by entrenched marketing habits rather than an up-to-date grasp of 'jointery' and modern warfighting

Now is the time for further refining ADF command control and for more reinforcing of Joint-service integration. The experiment of combining the VCDF and Chief of Joint Operations appointments has not worked despite the efforts of the incumbent. The recent recreation of a two-star Head of Military Strategic Commitments (the latest name for ACOPS) is further evidence of this. The CDF is worked too hard and there is not enough overall redundancy built into the system at its highest levels. The understudy, project-direction capacity, gross-error check, representational, protocol and other duties of the VCDF would be better constituted as a stand-alone position again. It is also time to formalise the obvious logic that the Chief of Capability Development appointment could never be effectively undertaken by a public servant and that the position, by professional necessity, will always need to be held by a senior ADF officer.

Odd as it may now seem, there has been reluctance in the past to create new military three-star positions on the grounds that there would be 'too many three-stars' or that there would somehow be an 'imbalance' with the six civilian deputy-secretary and equivalent positions. However, given the near doubling of deputy-secretary positions such an objection now would be simply ridiculous. ♦

Understanding our strategic history, not perpetuating it

Recently the ABC broadcast a controversial dramatisation of historical events. It aroused renewed concern among historians that viewers might wrongly believe it was an accurate recreation of the period and the historical figures concerned. We refer of course not to the two-part television program *Bastard Boys* on the 1998 waterfront dispute, but to the 90-minute telemovie *Curtin* covering our worst wartime crisis in late 1941 and early 1942.

The last time these events were recounted via television was, much more comprehensively, in the 360-minute mini-series *The Last Bastion* in 1984. That series includes several historically accurate, crucial and evocative scenes that are sadly missing from or skated over in the story told in *Curtin*. It is simply entertainment or myth-making, not history, when any one man is trumpeted as the saviour of the nation for the strategic decisions taken at that time. Those with a good knowledge of Australian history, for example, know that another key figure was the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) from September 1940 to July 1942, Lieutenant General Sir Vernon Sturdee. Moreover, Sturdee's relationship to Curtin, and the trust Curtin, the War Cabinet and the other two Service Chiefs placed in him, is central to any thorough understanding of the period and the lessons to be drawn from it.

Dr W.E.H. Stanner, research adviser to Ministers of the Army, Percy Spender (conservative) and Frank Forde (Labor) during 1940-42, and a member of the Prime Minister's Committee on National Morale 1942-44, has noted that Sturdee was 'one man who kept his head when the government lost its head after the Japanese attack'.

Professor David Horner, the Professor of ADF history at the Australian National University and the author of some 25 books on Australian military history and strategy, notes in his chapter on Sturdee, in *The Commanders: Australian Military Leadership in the Twentieth Century*, that Sturdee was '... the rock on which the Army, and indeed the government rested during the weeks of panic in early 1942'.

It is also worth remembering that in February and March 1942 Singapore and then Java fell to the Japanese, pretty much as senior Army and RAAF officers had regularly forecast since the Chauvel Report 20 years previously. These professional strategic judgments continually embarrassed and annoyed both conservative and Labor governments in the inter-war period. This was chiefly because governments preferred to champion the 'Fortress Singapore strategy' alone, because it was the cheapest defence-spending option and appeared politically expedient. in the short run. Several parallels with the discredited defence-of-Australia dogma of the 1985-2000 period are obvious.

Furthermore, in the early years of World War II the Chiefs of the RAN and RAAF were British officers on secondment. In matters of major strategic advice to the Government, especially where Australian decisions might be at variance with British strategic preferences, these two Chiefs had advised Sturdee, the prime-minister and the cabinet that they would stand by any professional advice the CGS provided and back him to the hilt.

Sturdee consequently acted as quasi-CDF. He led and supervised preparation of the strategic appreciations that convinced the Curtin Government to bring the Australian Army's three surviving battleworthy divisions home from the Middle East for the direct defence of Australia.

In *The Last Bastion* there is a highly accurate and moving scene where Sturdee, brilliantly portrayed by the distinguished Australian character actor Vincent Ball, addresses Curtin and the full War Cabinet. With consummate professional deliberation Sturdee summarises the strategic situation and advises that, in his professional opinion as their senior strategic adviser, the request by Churchill to divert the Australia-bound convoys carrying the 6th and 7th Divisions to Burma and Java instead needs to be refused unequivocally. Exemplifying the high principle and resolve of the man and his responsibilities, Sturdee adds that if this decision is not taken, he will have no professional alternative but to resign as CGS and the Government's principal military adviser.

There is naturally a tendency for scriptwriters to concentrate on Australia's prime-minister in that period, John Curtin, and his great efforts at leading Australia at a time when a Japanese invasion appeared imminent. Curtin was a reformed alcoholic, a former pacifist and an undiagnosed sufferer of bipolar disorder who nevertheless became our war leader. He is a scriptwriter's dream as a character and the temptation to overstate his role, or discount the contributions of others, is obvious. But cinematic portrayals of this period that do not accurately record events merely reinforce bad lessons and encourage detrimental attitudes and beliefs that linger to the current day.

We need instead to concentrate on the institutionally correct formal relationship between Sturdee and Curtin, and the

confidence the latter rightly placed in the former, so that the real and enduring national security lessons of late 1941 and early 1942 can continue to resonate. Curtin may have made the final decision on returning the AIF divisions from the Middle East, and about standing up to Churchill, but it was Sturdee who put the intellectual and professional steel in his spine at a time when panic gripped most of the War Cabinet.

During this period the strategic-level politico-military interface in Australia worked correctly and indeed properly in constitutional and professional terms. It probably worked the best it ever has, not least because it had to. Unfortunately, Curtin subsequently adopted a flawed structure for receiving strategic and military professional advice. For various reasons, not least self-doubt, he came to rely for strategic advice solely on a foreign general, Douglas MacArthur, and a civilian bureaucrat intriguer, Sir Frederick Shedden, rather than his own Australian military advisers.

Elements of the flawed politico-military interface that resulted have unfortunately persisted down to the present day. They underly many of the institutional and organisational culture problems embodied in the perpetually troubled and unbalanced diarchical organisation of the Department of Defence. They have encouraged the unwarranted belief that widespread interference in military professional matters by public servants is somehow normal and not contradictory to the Westminster principle of civil control of the military by Ministers. They have led to the increasing and inexcusable side-lining of the Service Chiefs as senior advisers to the Government, and to the demise of the former inter-departmental Defence Committee that included the CDF and the Service Chiefs to properly balance civilian advice to the Government. They have also meant the accretion of defence responsibilities by bodies, such as the Secretaries' Committee on National Security, that are beyond the professional capacity and legitimate authority of such bodies to handle.

All because we remember Curtin but forget Sturdee, and forget they worked as a team. And when we remember Curtin we forget his improper dependence on MacArthur and Shedden. ♦

Blaming the victim again

Once again the myth is being pushed that the Government's (really the community's) attitudes to Islamist extremism are somehow too 'hard-line' and supposedly to blame for a purported lack of co-operation by Australian Muslims with the federal police and ASIO. Similar claims are made regarding a supposed reluctance by Muslims to join our police and security intelligence agencies. The recruiting challenges are, in fact, more to do with citizenship requirements and security clearance difficulties, and with protecting staff and their families from potential intimidation, than any marked reluctance by Australian Muslims to help or serve.

The AFP and ASIO have a difficult job to do and they are generally undertaking it with considerable professionalism, tact and restraint. They are treading a delicate line in order that their necessary activities in monitoring extremism and countering terrorism are not unduly exploited by Islamist propaganda. The aim of such propaganda, of course, is to wrongly paint any security measure as 'anti-Muslim' and somehow aimed at all Muslims.

Describing common-sense counter-terrorism policies as 'hard-line' is simply more of the 'blame the victim' denial reaction that unfortunately still persists among some Australian Muslims, especially self-styled community leaders doing a bit of grandstanding. It also emphasises the unwillingness by some Muslims to concede that if moderate Muslims had done more to denounce and discourage Islamist extremism early enough, Australia would not still have anywhere near the same problem with combatting it.

Countering the Islamists is as much a spiritual and intellectual battle for the heart of Islam as it is a law and order problem for Australia as a whole. Moderate, mainstream Muslims are an essential part of this spiritual and intellectual battle. But they must become engaged in it because only they can shoulder much of the effort. Denying the problem or blaming their fellow Australians for being 'hard-line' is merely ceding the initiative and the spiritual middle ground to the Islamist extremists.

The bottom line in the argument as to whether current counter-terrorism policies and laws are 'hard-line' or 'anti-Muslim' is to acknowledge the overall tolerance and democratic maturity of Australian society in how it has carefully reacted to Islamist extremism. Despite 100 terrorist murders by Islamist there has been no serious backlash against Australian Muslims from the wider Australian community. This is a tribute to Australian society generally and, indeed, to the good sense of many Australian Muslims. But such tolerance will obviously be stretched if Muslim community leaders refuse to face reality and help Australians as a whole to defend ourselves against Islamist terrorism.

While there are Australian Muslims who support, sympathise, or are even prepared to excuse Islamist terrorism here or overseas 'in principle', the wider Muslim community must expect some degree of concern and even justifiable suspicion from their fellow Australians. Constant 'blame the victim' reactions from some Muslim spokesmen only increase such concerns and suspicions. At the very least they smack of an unwillingness to help fight the problem. At worst, they smack of apologia for the terrorists. ♦

A veteran fix for ADF recruiting and retention

The ADA does not normally enter debates on matters affecting war veterans, or other groups of former ADF personnel with grievances, unless a major matter of public importance involving our current defence efforts is involved. The Association generally leaves such matters up to the specialist veteran or other representative organisation concerned.

Continued controversy about the inadequacy of the compensation being paid to surviving war veterans and the families of dead veterans has, however, now clearly reached the stage where it is affecting recruiting for the current defence force. If the broader Australian community believes that the veterans of previous wars are not being treated appropriately then families will continue to discourage their younger members from enlisting in the ADF. Even when they enlist anyway, through youthful enthusiasm and the perennial belief that 'it will never happen to me', they are less likely to