

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