

Australis is a collective name for a number of individual contributors to *Defender*.

Intelligence Inquiry

In early July 2003, the Association was invited to make a submission to the inquiry being conducted by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD into certain matters relating to intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. We believe the Association was the only public body to be so invited. The Association submission was prepared by a team of retired intelligence specialists and other experts with extensive experience of working in, or with, all six intelligence and security agencies.

The 13-page submission addressed the wider problems facing these agencies rather than just concentrating on the Iraqi WMD issue. It may be downloaded from the parliamentary website at: <<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/pjcaad/WMD/subs/sub11.pdf>>.

An uncorrected *Hansard* transcript of the Executive Director's subsequent oral testimony to the inquiry may be downloaded from the same website at: <<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/pjcaad/WMD/proof.pdf>>.

Due to the very nature of intelligence work, staff from Australia's intelligence and security agencies often have difficulty in airing professional issues in a public domain. After the committee authorised the posting of the ADA submission on the parliamentary website, the Association received numerous telephone calls, emails and other contacts from staff within the agencies. We also had numerous contacts from retired staff, and from several senior 'customers' of intelligence over the last thirty years. All expressed strong support for the ADA submission.

The Association also strongly supports recent public comments by the Director-General of ASIO, Dennis Richardson, pointing out that additional funding alone will not increase the capacity of his agency as Australia cannot simply conjure up experienced intelligence officers overnight. DGASIO's comments mirror a key thrust of the ADA submission, which stresses the operational importance of respecting and nurturing career professionalism among intelligence and security agency staff. The Association notes that this means offering such professional staff viable career paths that include senior management at all levels of each agency.

The strong and supportive response from within the intelligence community to the ADA submission was somewhat unexpected. The submission attracted national and international media coverage, with both CNN and the BBC seeking interviews because of the parallels to the British House of Commons Inquiry into similar matters. ♦

Casting stones from our grimy glasshouse?

Is it hypocrisy or ignorance that leads so many Australians, from the prime minister to the cacophonous disputants on Iraq, to avoid any reference to Australia's ability to do much more than talk about the problem? As a community, we have become expert at pointing the finger of scorn at the United States in general, and President Bush in particular, but rather reluctant to look at ourselves, except perhaps to abuse Prime Minister Howard, usually for all the wrong reasons.

As a member of the coalition of the willing, Australia contributed some 2000 military personnel to the liberation of Iraq and has some 800 ADF personnel still in the region. That contribution to the liberation was particularly niggardly and certainly not reflective of the public relations balderdash that accompanied it. A contribution proportional to that of the British would have seen 15,000 Australians on the job.

That the United States misjudged the scale of the post-conflict security problem in Iraq is hardly surprising and the task remains a major challenge. Australia, however, true to its traditions of getting out before the job is finished, has all but walked away from Iraq.

For its part, the government denies that it has been asked for additional troops. This is probably true in the formal sense because it told the Americans it was no longer very willing. In public, it has suggested that its ongoing but diminishing commitment to East Timor (450 soldiers) and the new task in the Solomon Islands (2000 troops) leaves us unable to do more in Iraq.

To sustain indefinitely the combined commitment of 3250 personnel of all three Services would require around 10,000 personnel. However, the irreducible military infrastructure of administration, training, specialised units