

what such a coalition withdrawal would risk in the region, in terms of intervention by neighbouring states, and more broadly in terms of the security of Middle East oil supplies and the ongoing global threat from trans-national Islamist terrorism.

Second, there is no alternative Iraqi government, real or even purported, behind the various insurgencies so it is not a civil war in the standard context of two or more governing authorities competing for sovereign power over the whole country. Nor is it, at least yet, a civil war along secessionist lines – indeed the main motivation for the Sunni-Arab insurgents (both Islamist and secular) is the desire to stop any fragmentation of the existing Iraqi state.

Third, except for the security forces of the Iraqi government on one side, the fighting is not between formal armies. The insurgency principally involves attacks on civilians not battles between opposing forces.

Most of the fighting among Iraqis, bloody though it is, involves power struggles between sectarian and sub-sectarian or tribal factions. One issue worth contemplating is that there is a high likelihood the civil strife in Iraq would swiftly mutate into a full-scale civil war if the coalition forces were withdrawn before the Iraqi government is strong enough to restore a reasonable degree of law and order on its own.

There is no doubt that the mere presence of coalition forces is part of the problem but it is also still part of the solution. A fine line must be trodden between the two. Simplistic descriptions of the undoubted carnage in Iraq do not assist in walking this fine line, or in helping the Iraqi government and people grope towards a political and military solution to Iraq's many problems. ♦

Honouring our casualties

In the Winter 2006 *Defender* the ADA again protested the professional and moral disgrace whereby *wounded* soldiers were described as *injured* in Department of Defence Media statements and general media reporting. The practice has unfortunately continued, even to the extent where both terms have been used in separate paragraphs of the same departmental press release. This is not just a matter of sloppy proof-reading. We dishonour the personal risks and sacrifices of our wounded Service personnel by not properly distinguishing that they have been wounded in action when on active service in the defence of their country, rather than merely injured as a result of household, industrial or automobile accidents.

Some members of the veteran's community have expressed the belief that this increasingly frequent misuse of the term *injured* is deliberate and not just accidentally or ignorantly disrespectful. They have voiced the suspicion that it is all part of some economic rationalist agenda to reclassify veteran's benefits as simply another form of workers' compensation, with the onus of proof completely reversed on the veteran. The longer the sloppy and disrespectful use of *injured* rather than *wounded* continues the more wind is put into the sails of such fears. ♦

Vale ArFFA

As forewarned in the Spring 2006 *Defender*, the Armed Forces Federation of Australia (ArFFA) ceased operations on 28 December 2006 after 21 years due to falling numbers of ADF members who bothered to join. It may be some time before defence force personnel realise what the absence of a representative professional association means to them personally, but realise they will in due course. The speed of this realisation depends only on the speed that the lag between ADF salaries and conditions of service, and civilian community norms, continues to widen.

The federation could and should have been saved. It should have been given the opportunity, for example, to address courses at the Australian Command and Staff College in order to explain to the ADF's future unit commanders what it did and how it fitted in to defence force remuneration processes. This used to occur throughout the 1980s and 1990s but has not happened for some years for reasons that remain hazy. Similarly, ArFFA's request for accommodation for its national office in surplus Defence office space was refused – even when it was known that a refusal would mean the end of the federation's financial viability. Given the number of defence force-related private organisations that Defence does host in this way, this did not seem an unreasonable request.

The hierarchy of the ADF has long professed support for ArFFA and acknowledged its worth as an independent voice for defence force personnel, in a unique occupation, where the military 'system' is both the employer and the representative of the employees. The obvious conclusion is that the decision to deny ArFFA the accommodation assistance willingly provided to other organisations was therefore taken at a political level.

If true, this would in turn indicate a triumph of ideology over commonsense. ArFFA was a responsible representative professional body not a trade union of any description. Its constitution specifically forbade industrial action of any kind. Furthermore, most of the types of assistance the federation provided to ADF personnel will inevitably have to be picked up by another body because the problems ArFFA dealt with will not just go away. Indeed without the safety valve of ArFFA they may get worse. The most likely candidate for such requests for assistance is the Regular Defence Force Welfare Association (RDFWA), which already rightly benefits from Defence assistance with accommodation for its national and state offices.

This is the second example recently where important decisions appear to have been taken on ideological rather than practical grounds. The recent rejection of HECS waivers as an incentive for defence force recruitment and retention was apparently due to a refusal to accept that HECS could possibly be a disincentive generally. Given the undoubted success of the old Ready Reserve scheme, where the payment of tertiary fees was a key part of the remuneration package, the rejection of HECS waivers seems plain silly. ♦