



The letters pages are an important part of *Defender's* role in furthering informed public debate on national security issues. Letters to the Editor of *Defender* are submitted on the condition that the Australia Defence Association as publisher may edit all letters and reproduce them in electronic form. Emailed letters should be sent to <defender@ada.asn.au>. All writers must supply their name, address and daytime telephone number. Identification of writers will be withheld where justified. Letters should be kept to a maximum of 250 words (ideally 150) and avoid personal attacks.

Sir: You spoiled us in the Spring issue of *Defender* with two columns by the inestimable Major Furphy. Or is Mrs Furphy as good a satirical diarist as her husband? Thank you in any event for a dream narrative that quite made my day.

Leaving aside the satire, my only concern is with the essential accuracy of the comparison between what Tange was actually allowed to do to the ADF, with what the allegorical CDF did to DFAT in Mrs Furphy's dream. This truth may be lost on those Ministerial readers needed to fix this longstanding problem.

**Bob Noble
New South Wales**

Sir: Once again the unerring aim of your Russell Hill columnist has cut close to the bone. His satire concerning various city-slicker 'artists' from the 'music industry' chickening out of entertaining the troops in the Middle East over Christmas has hit hard and true.

It is more than life imitating art when the only musicians and singers brave enough to join the *Tour de Force* trip to the Middle East were the country music trio, the McClymont Sisters, the country music singer Alan Caswell and a didgeridoo player, Adrian Ross.

If Little Patty could sing at Nui Dat as the battle of Long Tan began only kilometres away, you would think at least a few of her modern contemporaries could display the same spirit and sense of perspective. Those precious (at least to their own egos) singers who refused to do their bit by entertaining our diggers over Christmas are nothing but cowards.

Their freedom to chicken out individually, and posture ignorantly about war generally, is only possible because of the exertions over generations of better men and women than themselves – the members of the Australian Defence Force.

**Simon Rowe
Queensland**

Sir: Thank you for the ADA's stance on those pop singers who refused to entertain our troops in the Middle East.

It was poetic justice, in both senses of the term, to subsequently see a real Australian entertainer, Beccy Cole, win Female Artist of the Year at the Tamworth music festival, and her song *Poster Girl* about pride in our diggers named as Single of the Year and Australian Performing Rights Association Song of the Year.

I wonder if the idiots who criticised her for performing for our diggers in Iraq even understand what they inspired. Beccy certainly does. As she noted in her acceptance speech:

"I'm absolutely thrilled, thrilled beyond belief. I don't want this to be my moment, I want it to be a moment when we think about the diggers past and present who do such a great job for our country. They're incredible people."

**Stuart Kirkpatrick
New South Wales**

Sir: If Air Vice-Marshal Peter Criss, AM, AFC, is only partly right in his article 'State of Denial' [*Defender*, Spring 2006] this country has a gigantic problem. This is not the first time over the last twenty years of my ADA membership that similar assessments have been made. Perhaps we should make his article compulsory reading for all politicians of both persuasions as well as all the bureaucrats. Could we then hope the squandering of valuable assets will cease.

**Allan Quartermaine
Queensland**

Sir: With the signing of a Production, Sustainment, Follow-on and Development (PSFD) memorandum of understanding for the F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter (JSF), Australia has been committed to spend in excess of \$A500 million to participate in the System Development and Demonstration (SDD) and follow-on phases of the JSF program. The bulk of this money goes overseas, the remainder to cover the costs of the Australian project office.

This does not include any of the substantial costs of actually acquiring the JSF capability when it is finally developed. We are being told by Defence that this acquisition is intended to start in 2012; that it will be spread over 'a long period of time', possibly 5-8 years; and that it will cost around \$A15.5 billion in 2006 dollars. We are also being told that Australian Industry has already been signed up to contracts worth around \$A100 million and that, overall, stands to get contracts worth \$A800 million through the life of the JSF program (expected to go past 2025).

Recapping, Australia will spend upwards of \$A16 billion dollars and this may result in Australian Industry getting contracts worth, overall, around \$A800 million. Assuming a somewhat generous margin on earnings (EBIT) of, say, 15 per cent, these JSF contracts would result in Industry generating net earnings (after costs) of around \$A120 million, spread over a 15 to 20 year period. This works out to average profits of approximately \$A5 million per year depending on finance and tax charges.

Can someone please explain the economic logic behind all of this? Particularly when Australian Industry could instead, for example, upgrade our F-111s over the next 5-6 years, and evolve them into a capability that would be

competitive in the region well beyond 2020, for less than \$A2 billion. Furthermore, over half this money would be spent in Australia by Australians for Australians.

In other words, in a comparison of best-case and worst-case outcomes, Australian industry would have \$A2 billion dollars of work over 5-6 years through retaining and updating the F-111s, as opposed to \$A800 million over 15-20 years through the JSF program (which costs the taxpayer \$A16 billion to participate in).

As to replacing our existing F/A-18 fighters. Even if the unit procurement cost of the F-22 Raptor was the \$US153 million per copy that the CDF claimed was the cost back in 2004, fifty of these true, multi-role, fifth-generation, Tier-1 fighters would cost around \$A10 billion. Buying at the current unit procurement cost the USAF are paying (\$US133 million) would cost around \$A9 billion. Buying at the end of the current USAF production run under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program (which is when and how we could buy Raptors) would cost around \$A8 billion. Why not buy the F-22 instead of spending \$A2.7-plus billion on upgrading the Hornets, \$A3 billion on the interim Super Hornets, and \$A16 billion on the F-35 itself?

Now, before anyone tries to dismiss this stark 50 per cent cost difference between the F-22 and the F-35 by claiming that the F-22 is not for sale to Australia, how do we really know this if we never formally ask? Surely, the US might be willing to sell the F-22 to a good mate even if not at mate's rates.

**Peter Goon
South Australia**

Sir: Zhivan Alach's measured analysis of what went wrong with New Zealand's initial reactions to the mid-2006 East Timor crisis [*Defender*, Spring 2006] was a humiliating read. But I would argue the tardy responses were not just a case of someone taking their eye off the ball or just the result of long-standing insufficient funding of the NZDF.

The fact we had nowhere near enough troops nowhere near enough ready to help, nowhere near fast enough when really needed, is also the result of a deep-seated cultural attitude among New Zealanders. This mindset simply dithers at the very thought of Kiwi diggers possibly having to shoot people any more or even having to bluff that they might.

The same problem bedevilled our troops sent to help in Tonga in November. They were not even allowed to drive from the airport into downtown Nuku'alofa without permission from Wellington, let alone really help the hard-pressed and exhausted Tongan security forces re-establish public confidence and order after the riots. They were also withdrawn from Tonga with undue haste.

If we are to take ourselves seriously as the leading South Pacific country then we had better get used to sending in the NZDF to help our neighbours, because the law and order problems and social chaos of the region are only going to get worse not better for years to come.

Or did we gut the RNZAF and turn much of the RNZN into a coastguard, supposedly in order to strengthen the Army, for nothing?

It is not a solution to simply let Australia bail us out in each crisis. It is particularly humiliating when this happens in our backyard. Every New Zealander needs to sit up and take

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notice of what is happening to the NZDF, not just in terms of its limited funding but also the wider governmental, political and electoral complacency that lets this continue.

David Paratene
New Zealand

Sir: Reference *Yet Another Defence Review* in the Spring 2006 issue of *Defender*. Might I suggest the Defence Management Review changes the name of the Department of Defence to the Department for Defence, in the hope that a department for doing something would be more focused and productive than a department for being something.

Tim Slattery
South Australia

Sir: I thought Neil James' review of the Patrick Lindsay biography of General Peter Cosgrove was a careful appraisal of Cosgrove's record at the top and a very accurate dissection of a shocking book. Random House obviously lost the contract for the Cosgrove autobiography and brought the Lindsay book out quickly as a spoiler. I look forward to *Defender's* review of the autobiography, but agree that it is far too soon for a proper account of the man and his record.

Chris Brookes
New South Wales

Editor's Note: Michael O'Connor's review of General Cosgrove's autobiography is on page 41.

Sir: In the November-December *Defence Brief* the ADA outlined 'the paucity of Labor frontbenchers with a good background (and much interest) in defence and foreign affairs issues'. The bulletin also protested the strange trend within the conservative parties whereby the pre-selections of certain senators and MPs who are interested in defence issues have been threatened and, in at least one case, overturned.

The ADA is undoubtedly on target with both warning shots and suitably impartial in the firing.

Kim Fleming
Queensland

Sir: Thank you for the detailed obituary for Joan Dowson in the Spring 2006 *Defender*. Her obituary in the *West Australian* gave prominent mention to her work with the ADA. Joan served on the committees of so many organisations concerned with international affairs, defence and veteran's matters, and yet still found time for so much charity and community work.

As well as being a thoroughly determined link to the early days of the ADA in the mid 1970s, Joan was admired and deeply respected for her continuing dedication to the Association for over three decades. If only a handful of people attended a meeting you could guarantee one would be Joan.

It was a privilege to know her and to work with her for so long. Joan was one of whom we can honestly say we will not see her like again.

Noel Monks
Western Australia

Sir: When I was in primary school I thought the victory by little David over big Goliath was a miracle. Later as a tactics instructor I reasoned that fleet of foot David with his stand-off strike capability was always going to beat slow, heavily-armoured Goliath who could never get close enough to do

David much damage. It was a perfect case of asymmetrical warfare.

Nowadays in the Middle East the mismatch is rocket and car bomb strikes in vulnerable civilian centres, combined with Vietnamese-style bunker system defences and booby traps in complex urban ground we do not have the numbers of combined-arms troops to dominate properly.

All this in a hyper-connected media environment that distorts commonsense and portrays false moral equivalencies to Western audiences via television and the Internet. The numerous, large-scale, daily atrocities by the enemy do not seem to count. But infrequent and minor lapses in battle discipline by allied troops are somehow meant to indicate our innate moral inferiority or sustained hypocrisy.

Our adversaries among the Arabs appear to have a better understanding of Western thought than we do about them. This should not be surprising as far more Arabs speak English and have visited the West than Westerners speak Arabic and have visited Arab countries. But we have done little to overcome this natural disadvantage. On the score of know your enemy we have been criminally negligent.

Kevin Walsh
Victoria

Sir: Simply because something is popular does not necessarily make it right. I find it difficult to reconcile the apparent majority position of public opinion on Iraq with public support for action taken to resist Islamist fascism elsewhere, such as Afghanistan, Sudan, Philippines, and Indonesia.

The public expresses little or no disquiet about these countries. In Australia's case we have peacekeepers, police or combat troops in over a dozen countries; should we retreat from them all?

Irrespective of one's view on removing Saddam Hussein, at the end of the day, the death toll in Iraq has been largely driven by Islamist extremism. As the previous UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan identified, the international community cannot afford to lose in Iraq. The Islamists will not give up anywhere until they are defeated. If the world fails to resist the new 'ism' do not be surprised when it gets stronger and more threatening. In effect, majority public opinion on Iraq fails to appreciate that it seems willing to accept our (global) defeat and an Islamist victory.

In World War II the allies had many bad days in a war of six years duration; fortunately they did not give in. The short-term tendency of public opinion to shy away from fundamental issues is, as always, a dangerous tendency based on a mistaken belief the problem will disappear without effort.

There are those in the Opposition who appear tempted to reap short-term political benefits over the Iraq dilemma. If they do this they will soon confront the longer-term problem of a stronger, more confident and potentially victorious enemy.

Martin Gordon
Australian Capital Territory

Sir: Recruitment and retention in the ADF is a perennial problem, particularly in times of low unemployment, with initiatives usually aimed at improving perceived deficiencies in Service pay and allowances.

As most long-term ADF members will acknowledge, salary is not the whole story and the reward for service in the ADF has never and will never be simply about dollars and cents. Other factors count too, such as the underlying

appreciation of mateship, camaraderie and team effort, and above all family security in the event of death or disability resulting from military service.

The Government has publicly stated its support for the 'Defence family' and responsibility for caring for the vulnerable in our society. However, while continually emphasising the need for fairness and equity, the proposed superannuation plan and the Tax Laws Amendment (Simplified Superannuation) Bill 2006, is demonstrably unfair in the treatment of members of the ADF who are medically discharged and in receipt of invalidity pensions.

The Government's introduction of tax exemption into the superannuation agenda warrants recognition of the extenuating circumstances facing members of the ADF forced to retire on invalidity pensions. As part of a comprehensive conditions of service, retention and recruitment package, there needs to be a similar tax exemption for all those defence force members medically discharged on to military superannuation invalidity pensions as a result of disabilities caused or aggravated by their defence force service.

Training and operational incidents involving death or disability of servicemen and servicewomen are unavoidable in the context of normal ADF activities and employments. Whether from preparatory activities in Australia or from an operational deployment, some servicemen and servicewomen are medically discharged from the ADF with the type of permanent, employment-terminating disabilities, that preclude them from further employment not only in the ADF but in many instances all future civilian jobs.

While the Government is to be commended for its general superannuation initiatives, recipients of invalidity pension payments from the military superannuation schemes have not, and effectively cannot, benefit from the wide range of government incentives and initiatives available to civilian tax payers in both taxed and untaxed superannuation schemes. As well as being inequitable in itself, this lack of recognition of the special exigencies of defence force service is a disincentive to ADF retention and recruitment.

A comprehensive submission in this regard has been presented for consideration by the Senate Economics Committee. It recommends amending the Government's proposed superannuation plan and associated taxation legislation accordingly. The intention is to enable all future invalidity pension payments to be tax-exempt, for those medically discharged from the ADF as a result of disabilities caused or aggravated by military service. The complete submission may be viewed at: www.aph.gov.au/.

Colin Wade
Western Australia

Sir: This letter is written with considerable trepidation and I declare a divided interest from the outset. As an ex-serviceman (RAAF 1978-84), I agree that certainly no Australian government, instrumentality or corporation has the right to risk the well-being, safety and loyalty of the defence force in the manner that occurred when certain elements in the Australian Wheat Board deliberately evaded the very UN sanctions against Iraq that the ADF were helping enforce.

However, as a wheatgrower, I ask leave to quote some figures. Readers of *Defender* can then decide just how level the 'level playing field' of the international wheat trade actually is. The EU subsidises its wheatgrowers \$US450 per hectare under crop per year but a farmer may only plant 40-

75 hectares. European farmers admit they would not survive without subsidies.

The US Department of Agriculture export credit programme subsidises buyers of American wheat on a sliding scale. At the maximum level of credit US wheat can be sold at less than the cost of production. This provides an effective subsidy of \$US240 per hectare – an average of \$US200,000 per farm. Canadian wheatgrowers, who receive some \$US36 per hectare, complain that the US can virtually give their wheat away. Any suggestion that these export credits are a form of bribe is hotly denied by US wheat lobbies.

The US cites the efficiency of Australian wheatgrowers as the rationale for its subsidies. The Australian wheatgrower is widely considered the most efficient in the world, with Australian grain regarded as being of the highest quality.

The only government assistance Australian wheatgrowers get is under the fuel tax credit scheme of about \$US8 per hectare under crop which totals some \$US5500 per year for a medium-sized farm.

Members of the Australian Defence Force are entitled to feel themselves the 'meat in the sandwich' over the whole AWB-Alia kickbacks affair. Their professionalism and loyalty were taken for granted, or ignored, in the name of ostensibly wider interests. Even though my life was not on the line readers may forgive my opinion that the ADF was not alone in the sandwich.

Geoff Brown
Western Australia

Editor's Note: Whether Australia should bribe foreigners to buy Australian wheat is a matter of political and personal ethics. As an apolitical organisation the ADA has no position on this issue. The Association has, however, objected strongly to the situation whereby a government instrumentality (later privatised but still strongly government-supported) could deliberately and illegally evade the same UN sanctions that another arm of government, the defence force, was helping to enforce in difficult and at times dangerous circumstances for the ADF members involved. How this could apparently occur without being suspected or detected at official or Ministerial level remains a case of either corruption or serious incompetence. The ADF must never be put in such a position again.

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