



The letters pages are an important part of *Defender's* role in furthering informed public debate on defence and wider 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 300 words (ideally 150-250) and avoid personal attacks.

Sir: A recent Newspoll published in the *Australian* concerning our involvement in Iraq found that 31 per cent support the Government's position of staying, 40 per cent agree to a 'definite date' or mid-2008 pullout and only 23 per cent want the troops home immediately.

But the polling questions were narrow and did not permit more informed or nuanced responses. They could, for example, have included a balancing question about increasing troop levels based on an explanatory statement. Australia's current contribution is modest, particularly when compared to our wars of the 1914-1972 period. On a per-capita basis the US has one soldier in Iraq for every 2000 citizens, and is running a public deficit of over three per cent. In comparison Australia's contribution is one digger for every 40,000 Aussies with the federal budget in surplus.

If we matched the American rate of effort we would be deploying 10,000 troops. Ignoring that this would require 30,000 troops overall to sustain such a deployment cycle and we do not have them, it seems doubtful that there would be sufficient public support for such a contribution; with an estimated 50-100 war dead each year and a very large dent in the budget surplus.

It seems that the Coalition Government and Labour Opposition have an essentially bipartisan 'little bit more, little bit less policy' with both choosing to avoid the hard issues. Australia's military commitment in Iraq is therefore tailored as much to match the Newspoll result as it is to wider national strategic calculations.

This is one way to fight a war I guess. But is it the way to win it? Should we be fighting any war without the aim to win and investing the effort required to do so? Moreover, can we expect our troops to risk their lives on our behalf when the rest of us are not prepared to match the effort, share some of the national risk, or even bother to research the issues enough to provide considered questions or answers in opinion polls.

**Russell Miles
Victoria**

Sir: Whilst I must be starting to sound like a broken record player on this subject, the upgrade of our mid-1960s era armoured personnel carrier fleet really is becoming a farce. At best estimate it is now a decade behind schedule. This is not acceptable. In fact this is starting to make the Seasprite project look well conceived and well run. It is time to start thinking about tough decisions.

While the first handful of refurbished M113AS4 APCs will soon reach a mechanised infantry unit, by the time the

numbers are sufficient to allow the operational deployment of a tactically useable sub-unit, or the whole unit, the effective operational life of these vehicles will be very short. Not because the refurbished vehicles will wear out quickly but because they will simply not be capable of tactical use in modern battle against any moderately-equipped adversary.

Under-gunned and with no secondary weapon system, we might still be able to use them to bluff rioters in East Timor and in the South Pacific but not for much else. I cannot see us ever deploying them to Iraq or Afghanistan, or similar-intensity wars for example, because they are still not proper infantry fighting or cavalry vehicles. Even for South Pacific contingencies, apart from their tracked-propulsion and off-road mobility, the Bushmaster armoured truck is probably just as good.

I am curious that the Dutch, Turks, Israelis, Germans and the Americans all have variously upgraded M113s in service. Are there any lessons that perhaps we could learn from them? I also note that all these countries also have proper infantry fighting vehicles (IFV) and do not use their M113 variants in this role.

We will soon have a second mechanised infantry battalion operational among our future eight infantry battalions, but it will still not be able to deploy with its organic armoured vehicles to any serious conflict. We need to buy an IFV and scrapping the M113AS4 vehicles, or moving them into the Army Reserve, looks like a sensible preliminary step.

**Adrian Quilty
New South Wales**

Sir: Regarding the accusation that the ADA and *Defender* are biased against air forces you may be interested in an article on the Winograd Commission's interim report into the failures of the IDF in the 2006 Lebanon War. Haninah Levine, a science fellow at the World Institute's Center for Defense Information, translated the interim report which at the time, May 2007, was not available in English. In her analysis of the conclusions of the interim report she noted that they were relevant to the US situation. In my view they also serve as a warning to strategic analysts in Australia.

The first lesson drawn was '...that wishful thinking concerning the capabilities of precision weapon systems overpowered the (IDF) General Staff's analytical abilities.'

The second lesson was that the IDF from the top down had been overstretched during five years of operations; had failed to revise operational plans in the light of changed regional circumstances; and had cut back investment in the training

and equipping of reserve ground combat units which were essential to the success of contingency plans.

The third lesson was the need to avoid over-confidence in the ability of the IDF to respond militarily to the probability that Hezbollah would use kidnapping of soldiers as a tactic. The Commission found that the Chief of Staff of the IDF had made false statements to Prime Minister Olmert because he had '...excessive faith in the ability of the Air Force'.

Some of my best friends have been fighter pilots but I believe that the members of the Winograd Commission might smile sympathetically at your summary of the debate in Israel as deciding that fighter pilots are not best fitted to be Chiefs of Staff of the IDF. I hope that by now you are no longer distracted by the unfair criticism of your excellent publications.

Peter Day
Australian Capital Territory

Sir: The ADA has been accused of harbouring anti-air force biases. I do not see this but I can understand how such a perception might occasionally arise.

At a superficial glance, both now and over past decades, the Association's board of directors has perhaps included more former members of the RAN and the Army than the RAAF. Furthermore, no former RAAF officer has been executive director. But does this matter? The structure of the ADA and the checks and balances instituted from its earliest days mean the personal career backgrounds of its leaders surely have little effect because individual expertise (objective or subjective) is necessarily balanced by collective assessments and decision-making.

A longer look also at the Association's leaders is also reassuring. Two of the three founders of the ADA were former RAAF officers (one a retired Chief of the Air Staff). The civilian directors have often leavened the ex-military ones. Former directors with an air force background, such as Air Commodore John Macneil, were not exactly shrinking violets either. But it may be that it is the perception that counts for some, particularly if you want to believe it.

A bigger contributor to perceptions of bias may well be the ADA's laudable advocacy of a joint-Service approach to command and control, capability development and strategic planning. This will tend to be misunderstood by those who served in the navy, army or air force before the three Services became a properly teamed defence force relatively recently. If you are uncomfortable with the modern, integrated ADF, or are just simply used to a single-Service way of thinking and doing things, it can be hard to update the conscious and unconscious attitudes of a lifetime. This particularly applies when the joint-Service way of doing things rightly confronts sacred cows long sheltered by individual single-Service cultures.

Finally, there is the current context of considerable public controversy over the retirement of the F-111 and the introduction of the joint strike fighter. Both the public debate, and the professional debate within air force circles, have been acrimonious and, sadly, often unduly personal. There have also been splits between serving and former RAAF officers, between different generations of serving officer, and between fighter pilots and other specialisations. All against

defender

THE NATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE
AUSTRALIA DEFENCE ASSOCIATION

(ABN 16 083 007 390)

Published quarterly since 1983

Print Post Approved No. PP255003/06664

ISSN 0811-6407

PO Box 320, Erindale Centre, ACT, 2903, Australia

(02) 6231 4444 (International 61+2 +6231 4444)

defender@ada.asn.au

www.ada.asn.au

EDITOR

Dr Malcolm Kennedy

EDITORIAL BOARD

Ian Bostock

Patrick Gallagher

Professor Jeffrey Grey

Neil James

Michael O'Connor

Dr Hugh Smith

Printed by Industrial Stationers

53-57 Queen Street, Melbourne, VIC, 3000

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Australia and New Zealand: \$A50.00 (post paid)

Rest of the World: \$A65.00 (air post)

Together with *Defence Brief*: \$A100.00

ADVERTISING

(02) 6231 4444

advertising@ada.asn.au

Defender seeks to encourage informed public debate on defence and wider national security issues and includes articles from a broad range of Australian and foreign contributors. The views expressed in signed articles are those of the particular author and not necessarily those of the Australia Defence Association. The Association will not be legally responsible in contract, tort, or otherwise for any statement made in a signed article in this publication.

Standard permission to quote extracts from *Defender* is granted, subject to their accurate rendition and full acknowledgement of *Defender* as the source, including mention of its status as the quarterly journal of the Australia Defence Association. Permission to reproduce full articles and reviews should be sought from the editor.

Advertising in *Defender* does not mean the ADA necessarily endorses that product, or its manufacturer, and is kept strictly segregated from the formulation of ADA policy or editorial comment in Association publications.

Responsibility for election comment is taken by Neil James, of the above address, acting as executive director of the Association.

a technological background of profound change in how air forces have to fight, and a strategic background of having to envisage fighting wars where our control of the air might be seriously challenged for the first time since early in the Korean War.

My observation is that the ADA has trod gently through this disputation and tried to facilitate open and honest debate. Some holding firm views one way or the other may see otherwise, especially where *Defender* or *Defence Brief* have featured articles arguing or explaining the other side's case. I, for one, do not think the ADA is biased against the air force or against or in favour of any Service.

**Keith Scales
Queensland**

Sir: Recently, Don Middleton (*Defender*, Summer 2006/07) and Garry Bates (*Defender*, Autumn 2007) gave a comprehensive, if a very depressing, picture of how the capacity of Australia's defence industry to support the RAAF is being allowed to run down to a mere shell of its former capabilities. What is most depressing is that this situation, which will result in a loss of national strategic capability, has resulted from decisions taken both by the RAAF and the Department of Defence, but their importance does not seem to have been recognised or acknowledged by many within the RAAF and none within Defence.

If Labor wins office, an early review of the decisions that have been taken has been promised, and this would at least signal a determined effort to get to the facts. Of the six pre-requisites set in 2004 to be met before the retirement of the F-111 fleet, none have been achieved. One (JDAM on the F/A-18A/B) may be completed shortly, and two more (the A330 Tanker and the Wedgetail AEW&C) may come into service in the next three years or so, many years late. Of the remaining three pre-requisites, the Hornet Upgrade Program, JASSM on the F/A-18A/B, and JASSM on the P3C, the last has been scrapped and the other two appear problematic.

Meanwhile, the inflexible decision to retire the F-111 in 2010, and the contentious, 'interim' Super Hornet purchase (without supporting tankers and AEW&C support) do not meet Australia's stated requirements. In addition, the Joint Strike Fighter project continues to face serious delays, with the potential for cuts in numbers and the probability of cost over-runs, even assuming that it will meet our technical and operational requirements eventually.

On current plans (or what passes for planning), we are risking the loss of a large part of our current aerospace industry support capability and threatening its future viability, while at the same time reducing the RAAF's organic force sustainment capabilities. As a result, we will be sacrificing Australia's future air combat capability edge; a damning indictment of both current strategic planning and the capability development decision processes within the Department of Defence. We need open and professional debate within the ADF officer corps if we are to correct the present situation and prevent future failures in decisions on force structure and force composition.

**Ted Bushell
Victoria**

Editor's Note: Defender's coverage of the air combat capability debate is continued on page 32.

Sir: Grant Sanderson is to be commended for the candour, logic and humour of his account of policy development failings and policy oversight failure concerning our assistance to East Timor [*Defender*, Autumn 2007]. Even more impressively, he not only described the problem but analysed its many and nuanced causes and suggested eminently practical solutions.

Clearly there are fundamental and ongoing problems within the Department of Defence and particularly within its International Policy Division. But there was little mention of the contribution, or not, of other agencies involved such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Our future relationship with East Timor is proving to be a considerable strategic millstone with around five per cent of our deployable ground forces marooned there in seeming perpetuity. Yet it could have turned out so differently with some consistent policy, adequate resourcing, focused attention to the matter and, as Grant so ably argues, an actual plan.

Obviously some determined whole-of-government efforts are required to transform this strategic benefactor – mendicant relationship into a symbiotic one. But first it seems there is significant reform effort required in Defence so the left-hand-right-hand debacle described by Grant Sanderson does not reoccur.

Finally, I have to ask, have there been any explanations or denials received from International Policy Division concerning the obvious deep-seated problems within that organisation detailed in Grant's article?

**Pauline Walker
New South Wales**

Editor's Note: No.

Sir: I would like to take issue with two points set out in the comment *Understanding our strategic history, not perpetuating it* in the Autumn 2007 *Defender*.

The first point relates to the criticism of the 'Fortress Singapore strategy' and the drawing of a parallel with the 'discredited defence-of-Australia dogma'. That the Singapore strategy failed in early 1942 is obvious. But, did it fail because the strategy itself was flawed, or because of a failure to provide the forces needed to put it into effect? And, what was the alternative – Fortress Australia? With such a strategy Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies would still have fallen, and the course of the war would not have been changed one iota! (Except admittedly for the tragic loss of the 8th Division).

Likewise, what strategy would you suggest as an alternative to the 'discredited defence-of-Australia dogma' for the protection of Australian territory against military attack? Or is such a threat so remote that we can completely disregard it?

The second point relates to Curtin's reliance for strategic advice on General Douglas MacArthur. As the allied Commander-in-Chief South West Pacific Area, MacArthur was responsible for the conduct of military operations in his

area, not to the Australian Government, but to the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington. And, it was MacArthur who had operational control of all RAN, Army and RAAF fighting units in his area of responsibility, not the Australian Service Chiefs. Hence, what would have been the point of Curtin accepting their strategic advice, as against that of MacArthur?

Norman Ashworth Western Australia

Editor's Note: The point actually made was that all our defence resources were committed to a single strategy based on a single point of failure and that such failure had been predicted in detail by every Army, and most RAAF, chiefs of the interwar era. Moreover, between the wars the ADF was not configured as a balanced force, capable of defending the Singapore 'fortress', the direct defence of mainland Australia or executing any other option. The bulk of defence spending went to the Navy and even this was insufficient to sustain the RAN properly. A balanced ADF might have been able to help defend Singapore more successfully but without a balanced British Empire force (and priorities) overall the same fundamental weaknesses in the Singapore strategy would have remained. The bottom line is that the complete reliance on only the Singapore strategy resulted in a very unbalanced ADF. Consequently there was no range of strategic options available to the Australian government when such a choice was most needed in 1941-42. We had thousands of casualties as one direct result and had to be fortuitously rescued by the Americans as an indirect one.

As to Norman's second point, the comment stressed the gross impropriety and ineffectiveness of Curtin relying solely on MacArthur (and Shedden) for the Australian Government's strategic advice. This compromised our national sovereignty, enshrined insufficient contestability and, last but not least, meant the Australian Government improperly excluded independent, relatively unbiased and indisputably expert strategic advice from those Australians whose duty it was to provide it and who were best equipped professionally to do so. No-one seriously doubts, for example, the superb quality of the advice provided directly by Squires (a British officer), Brudenell White and Sturdee when each was CGS during the preceding 1940-1942 period. Finally, Norman's point that MacArthur's responsibility was to the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington surely strengthens, not weakens, the case that independent Australian strategic advice was needed to balance MacArthur's opinions and motivations.

Sir: With regard to the ADA's comments regarding comparatively high PTSD claims and rates from recent overseas deployments, I note that you have been quoted selectively and often out of context by those with particular barrows to push.

While the ADF and DVA are much better with the recognition and treatment of psychiatric casualties than they were in the past, the tragic problem of suicides by veterans needs further sustained attention.

The problem is not a simple one. In some cases the casualty refuses to accept his or her condition or is unable to recognise it or cope with the treatment needed. In other cases, the psychiatric conditions do not develop, or do not become chronic, until long after the period of military service that caused or exacerbated them.

In at least some cases, it also seems clear that no matter what the proximate cause of the suicide actually was or appeared to be, the individual's military service is going to be blamed by many because it is the most recognisable or socially acceptable common denominator. The actual cause can be a lot of things, including alcohol and drug addiction, chronic physical or mental illness, breakdown of family relationships, business failures, bankruptcy and so on.

Psychiatric casualties continue to present a complex issue in terms of both treatment and in maximising the operational effectiveness of the ADF. It is hard to get past the fact that anyone in the Services who reports in sick with a serious psychiatric problem is going to be in the same boat as someone with a long-term physical injury which precludes them from being fit for active service.

But the real issue is that there needs to be a much more co-ordinated approach to treating depression, PTSD and other psychiatric illnesses suffered by both serving and former ADF personnel, and particularly in the transition phase between the two. Too many serious problems and suicides are occurring in the first few years after discharge from the ADF.

On the separate issue of bogus claims by veterans, there are instances where individuals have been prosecuted for making false claims but they do not attract a lot of publicity. Evidence about a false claim was delivered to DVA recently under circumstances which arose when the Ex-Service Organisation advocate concerned realised that he had been given forged medical documents. The Training Information Program – Veterans Indemnity and Training Association link establishes ethical standards which should (and sometimes does) result in veteran representatives and advocates refusing exaggerated claims. Many though are loath to take the extra step and report suspected fraud.

There have also been occasions when exaggerated claims were systemically and systematically created from a single source. I am aware of at least two occasions in the last 15 years when this was reported to DVA together with somewhat limited evidence. Sadly, the lack of evidence meant that the activity was never tested in court.

Like the rest of Australia the veteran community is not without its crooks, although I think that the numbers are very low. At the same time, however, genuine cases are rejected because of the intricacy of DVA processes. The two problems are unfortunately inter-related to some extent because fraudulent claims just make it harder to get genuine ones accepted. Hopefully a balance will be established.

**Clive Mitchell-Taylor
New South Wales**