

Recognising

Australian peacekeeping

Tim Ford

Sixty years of peacekeeping

On 14 September 2007, Australia celebrated the 60th anniversary of the first deployment of four Australian military officers as United Nations peacekeepers to Indonesia as part of the first UN 'Good Offices' Mission. Since then, Australia has contributed over 35,000 Australian military and police personnel to more than fifty peace operations around the world (a list may be found at: <http://www.dva.gov.au/commem/commac/studies/anzacsk/res2.htm>).

A variety of events marked this important anniversary. These included a conference titled *60 Years of Australian Peacekeeping* at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, and commemorative ceremonies in most Australian state capitals and a number of regional centres. In addition, a 60th Anniversary of Australian Peacekeeping limited edition gold coin was released by the Royal Australian Mint, which will be followed later by a range of other memorabilia including a joint stamp/coin issue.

It is fitting that at this time, the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial has also moved into an exciting stage. In conjunction with the anniversary, the National Capital Authority (NCA) released the design brief for an international competition which will be used to select the final design for the memorial. This project, which has been some years in development, achieved its first major milestone in May of this year when the Prime Minister announced that the Canberra National Memorials Committee had allocated a site for this memorial on Anzac Parade. Finally the significance of Australia's peacekeeping record is to be appropriately recognised.

For many years Australian veterans of peacekeeping missions have felt that such a memorial should be built in Canberra to honour all those who have and will continue to serve on multinational peacekeeping operations. This memorial will represent all those from the defence force, the federal, state and territory police forces and other government agencies who have served, and in some cases died, on peacekeeping operations authorised by the United Nations or sanctioned by the Government of Australia.

Peacekeeping today

Today's peacekeeping activity around the world is more significant than ever before. At the moment, there are some 18 United Nations "blue helmet" peacekeeping operations

active, involving over 105,000 military, police and other international staff from 119 countries.

In addition to the traditional UN-led missions, there are quite a number of other multinational peace operations being conducted. These missions are being co-ordinated by various regional organisations or by 'ad hoc' coalitions of interested nations. Most have been authorised by a UN Security Council resolution and in many cases they operate alongside the UN missions.

The principal role of the military in such peace operations is to provide sufficient basic security to encourage and enable wider peace processes to take hold and/or strengthen. This security allows all the other actors, from a wide range of UN agencies, international financial organisations and various other international and local aid and humanitarian bodies, to effectively co-ordinate their activities and to work with the local communities affected to develop stable environments that lead to a sustainable peace.

While there is usually no specified enemy force operating against the military in such operations, the general situation is often very dangerous and volatile, and peacekeepers are often directly targeted by groups that do not support the peace process. Furthermore, the location of peacekeeping missions is often remote, the local infrastructure and utilities are normally destroyed, the areas to be covered can be vast, the forces available are usually stretched thin, and there can be scattered landmines and other hazards that need to be cleared. In many of these situations crime is rampant, there are serious inter-ethnic tensions and large, distressed populations are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

International police elements provide an increasing and critical contribution in modern peace operations. They assist in the establishment of the rule-of-law in areas and societies wracked by armed conflict, and at times are given executive authority for community policing where no other effective policing exists. They also help reconstitute local police forces or support existing ones to regain a position of control and respect in their local community through general confidence-building and improved training, structures and equipment. In some cases, international police provide formed police units that can assist a developing or failing state to counter internal disturbances and rioting.

Australian Peacekeeping

Australia contributes significant efforts to modern peace operations. This includes military and police contingents and civilian specialists in a wide range of supporting roles such as governance, institution building, electoral reform, and border control. Australia is presently supporting UN missions in the Middle East (Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt), Sudan, Cyprus, and East Timor, and is a partner in coalition peace operations in the Sinai, Solomon Islands, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Peacekeeping has been a long-standing commitment for the ADF with a variety of smaller contingents and individuals deployed across a wide range of missions over the years. This increased in the 1980s and 1990s with some significant unit-sized contributions to peace operations in Africa and Asia. More recently this has been followed by our major contributions in our immediate region in Bougainville, East Timor and Solomon Islands.

Australian police also have an excellent and long-term record in international peacekeeping, with a contingent in Cyprus continually since 1964, and more recently with much larger contingents deployed in Cambodia, East Timor, Bougainville and Solomon Islands. To respond to this surge, the Australian Federal Police has now created an International Deployment Group, comprising police from federal, state and territory police forces, who are specifically trained and prepared for offshore peacekeeping and stabilisation deployments.

Australian peacekeeping memorial

The proposed Australian Peacekeeping Memorial will commemorate these activities. The courage, sacrifice, service and valour of Australians in such operations will be honoured in the same spirit of service as do the other cenotaphs and memorials across Australia and, more particularly, on Anzac Parade in Canberra. The memorial will note and celebrate Australia's long and distinguished contribution to multinational peacekeeping over the past 60 years.

Multinational peacekeeping is a difficult and often dangerous activity. The record of Australian contingents in this regard, be they military, police or civilian, has been long, impressive and tragically not casualty-free. As with other memorials on Anzac Parade, those killed, wounded, injured or traumatised in such operations can now be honoured and remembered, as they should be, by the wider Australian community.

The site allocated on Anzac Parade for the memorial is the one nearest to Constitution Avenue (and the lake) on the Campbell side. The brief for the memorial's design describes the form of the memorial and the two-stage process that will be used to review submissions. This will involve a jury of peacekeepers, artists and architects who will initially select a short list for further consideration, and then in a second stage recommend a winner to the Canberra National Memorials Committee.

Entries for the design of the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial have been requested to ensure that the proposed memorial portrays appropriate messages about Australian

peacekeeping. The memorial should record with pride the achievement of our peacekeepers, it should recognise the difficult and often dangerous nature of peace operations, it should acknowledge the sacrifices those peacekeepers and their families have made and suffered, and it should help educate the community about the noble and positive impact of peace operations around the world.

The proposal for the memorial can be found on the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Project (APMP) website at www.peacekeepingmemorial.org.au. Veterans of Australian peace operations are encouraged to join the APMP to provide support and offer their comments on the development of the memorial.

The cost of constructing the memorial is estimated at over three million dollars. The Government has contributed an initial grant of \$200,000 and hopefully will provide further financial support. Donations are now being sought from corporate Australia, particularly those companies with a close association with our military and police contributions overseas. Support is also sought from across the Australian community and all donations are tax deductible. Peacekeeping veterans and their organisations are particularly encouraged to consider contributing a donation to the construction of this important national memorial.

The opening of the memorial is planned for September 2009. The activities recognising the sixty years that Australians have been contributing to international peacekeeping in September 2007 have provided an appropriate forerunner to this significant event. ♦

Major General Tim Ford retired from the ADF in 2003 after a 40-year career including command of 1st Division, command of the UN Truce Supervision Organisation in the Middle East, and duty at UN Headquarters in New York as the Military Adviser to the Secretary-General. He remains active as a mentor and adviser on peace operations and the Chairman of the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Committee.



AUSTRALIAN PEACEKEEPING MEMORIAL - AN INVITATION TO BE A SPONSOR OR MEMBER

The Australian Peacekeeping Memorial will commemorate and celebrate Australian peacekeeping. It will honour the sacrifice, service and valour of Australian peacekeepers given in the same spirit as in other conflicts honoured in cenotaphs and memorials across Australia and on ANZAC Parade, Canberra.

Progress to Date

The Federal Government, through the Department of Veterans' Affairs, has provided an initial grant of \$200,000 to assist with the construction of the Memorial, which experience indicates requires about \$2.5 million to fund such a major national memorial in Canberra. A committee for the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Project has been convened with duly elected office bearers and representatives from the ADF, the AFP, State and Territory Police, and peacekeeping veterans.

The APMP Committee welcomes membership and support from all peacekeeping veterans, interested individuals and organisations.

Full details of the project are listed on our website : www.peacekeepingmemorial.org.au