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"Enhancing" the Australian-U.S. Defense  
Relationship: A Guide to U.S. Policy

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**"ENHANCING" THE AUSTRALIAN-  
U.S. DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP:  
A GUIDE TO U.S. POLICY**

**Thomas-Durell Young**

**November 17, 1997**

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Comments pertaining to this monograph are invited and should be forwarded to: Director, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5244. Comments also may be conveyed directly to the author, Dr. Thomas-Durell Young, by calling commercial (717) 245-4058 or DSN 242-4058. Copies of this report may be obtained from the Publications and Production Office by calling commercial (717) 245-4133, DSN 242-4133, FAX (717) 245-3820, or via the Internet at rummelr@carlisle-emh2.army.mil

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## FOREWORD

Notwithstanding the end of U.S. basing in the Philippines, a revised defense framework with Japan, and starts and stops in Chinese-American military contacts, U.S. security relationships in the Pacific have enjoyed remarkable continuity since the end of the Cold War. The United States has promoted, thus far successfully, its role as the region's stabilizing power to justify at home and abroad a sustained Pacific rim presence and engagement.

Whether this role has staying power for the coming decade is another matter. The frictions of basing in Japan and Korea, as well as the anticipated transformation in North Korea, are but two of a number of emerging challenges to the current U.S. posture. Concern about future directions of Chinese, or for that matter Japanese, military power might or might not be sufficient to smooth such frictions. The early 21st century could see a reordering of things.

Out from the shadow of the Cold War, most Pacific nations are reassessing their defense postures. Australia is no exception. Among the closest of U.S. allies, Australia shares a number of concerns about potential change in the western Pacific balance. It is thus natural that the two countries look to their own cooperative defense relationship for hedges against an uncertain future. That is the genesis of the current study by Dr. Thomas-Durrell Young. Based on his extensive knowledge of Australian security affairs and recent in-country field work, he examines prospects for enhancing existing bilateral security ties. He does so with a sense for the feasible, offering both guiding principles and practicable approaches that take careful account of the interests of both nations.

RICHARD H. WITHERSPOON  
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THOMAS-DURELL YOUNG is Research Professor, National Security Affairs, Strategic Studies Institute. His most recent SSI publications include two edited works, *Force, Statecraft and German Unity* and *Command in Europe after the Cold War*. He holds a Ph.D. in international relations from the Graduate Institute of International Studies, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland. He is also a 1990 graduate of the U.S. Army War College.

## **“ENHANCING” THE AUSTRALIAN- U.S. DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP: A GUIDE TO U.S. POLICY**

A remarkable aspect of Australian defense policy since the mid-1970s has been the bipartisan support it has enjoyed among the three principal national political parties. Building upon a more modest 1972 white paper, in 1976 the then-Liberal/National Country Party coalition government outlined a defense policy based upon self-reliance, reorienting the Australian Defence Force (ADF) from operating with allied forces distant from Australia to the defense of Australia, and the rejection of the use of “threats” in the defense planning process.<sup>1</sup> Although successive Labor governments, which enjoyed power between 1983 and 1996, refined these policies to make them more comprehensive and sophisticated, in almost every way the defense policy tenets which emerged from the politico-military catharsis in Southeast Asia in the early 1970s remained intact.

It is with an understanding of this recent historical background that one should assess the defense policy initiatives which have been introduced by the Liberal/National Party government led by John Howard, which took power on March 2, 1996. Since coming to office the Howard government has embarked upon a review of national strategy, strategic guidance, and force structure which can only be described as unparalleled by its rapidity and breadth in modern Australian history. For example, the Howard government has:

- 1) established the objective of achieving a closer defense relationship with the United States;
- 2) initiated a fundamental review of strategic guidance to the Australian Defence Force (ADF) with a view toward its reorientation;

3) encouraged an ongoing effort to study the reorganization of the Army called for in the previous government's 1994 defense white paper; and,

4) established the Defence Efficiency Review of the Department of Defence to identify savings in programs and practices which could be shifted to expanding the combat capabilities of the ADF.

As seen by the Howard government's move to implement the many controversial recommendations of these reviews, one would have a difficult task constructing a strong argument that this government is not both sincere and determined to change aspects of Australia's security policy and the structure of the ADF. For instance, at the government's first Australian-United States Ministerial meeting held in Sydney in July 1996, the Howard government committed itself to a reinvigoration of the U.S. security alliance.<sup>2</sup> The government's forthcoming strategic basis paper could call for the ADF to improve its ability to engage in power-projection operations in its region *and beyond*, in conjunction with Australia's allies.<sup>3</sup> The government has endorsed key elements of the "Army in the 21st Century Review" which will restructure the Army within the context of the emerging "revolution in military affairs" in order to improve its quantitative and qualitative combat capabilities.<sup>4</sup> And lastly, the government has endorsed the findings and recommendations of the Defence Efficiency Review, despite strong protestations from traditional conservative constituencies, and the Defence Reform Program envisages to effect a 10 percent shift in resources away from support activities to improving the ADF's combat capabilities.<sup>5</sup>

In view of these changes in Australian security policy, two key questions arise. First, what has been the cause of this sea change in Australia's security and defense policies? An understanding of the Howard government's defense initiatives and *objectives* is essential for U.S. defense officials in approaching "enhanced" cooperation with Australia. Second, and following directly from the first point, how could these policy changes effected by Howard

affect Washington's long-term security relationship with Australia? The purpose of this essay is to proffer a modest explanation for this change in policy and assess its possible implications for both Australia and the United States. The thesis of this essay will be to argue that some of the changes implemented by Minister for Defence Ian McLachlan are less significant than they may appear (i.e., willingness to engage in coalition expeditionary operations) and quite far-reaching in others (the Defence Reform Program). Perhaps most important, however, is the still unaddressed question of how Canberra and Washington intend to achieve the objective of "enhancing" an already intimate defense relationship. "Enhancing" an already close defense cooperative relationship in a substantive manner that is *beneficial* to both countries over the long term could well prove to be difficult. The essay will conclude with recommendations to guide U.S. policy, as well as some specific areas of cooperation for consideration.

### **Australian Defense Policy: Continuity and Change.**

The admixture of the coalition government's public pronouncements to implement change, while also claiming to maintain some key long-standing principles of defense policy, has made ascertaining the exact degree to which the Howard government will change defense policy a challenging task indeed. It would appear that these initiatives are predicated upon an expansion in an already close defense relationship with the United States. Just as creating the ADF's ability to defend Australia has been greatly aided by U.S. military cooperation,<sup>6</sup> so, too, the Howard government's objective will depend upon achieving an improved ability to contribute militarily to coalition efforts. What needs better appreciation is the actual degree to which the Howard government has moved to *change* existing national strategy. As will be argued below, that which the government has changed is its declared intention to engage in coalition operations, while aligning the ADF the better to conduct these type operations, which they have long undertaken.



*Security Policy.* The key assumption which has emerged to underwrite the Howard government's security policy is its less than sanguine assessment of East Asia's security outlook. A similar, but more modest, view was evinced in the previous Labor government's 1994 defense white paper.<sup>7</sup> Where the Howard government differs with its predecessor is: 1) the consequent need to forge closer security ties with the United States (e.g., the "Joint Security Declaration" issued after the 1996 Australian-United States Ministerial Meeting),<sup>8</sup> and 2) an improved ADF capability to participate in coalition expeditions to defend common Western interests, without strict geographic limitations.<sup>9</sup>

While still embracing a policy of regional dialogue and cooperation (e.g., accepting the 1995 "Agreement on Maintaining Security with Indonesia"), Minister for Defence Ian McLachlan has argued that the previous government's policy of regional "Constructive Engagement" was pursued at the expense of maintaining an effective and credible defense structure,<sup>10</sup> i.e., an over-emphasis on regional dialogue, vice maintaining a credible deterrent capability. Bolstering McLachlan's position, Desmond Ball has found that by the mid-1980s, military-to-military contacts between the ADF and its regional counterparts had reached almost *one* per week. This situation has had the negative effect of diverting resources and time from the ADF's efforts to develop and maintain capabilities suitable for national defense requirements.<sup>11</sup> In short, dialogue and contacts, in the Howard government's view, should not be a replacement for an expanded defense capability which could be required in a region with a potentially volatile Korean peninsula and a China, in the words of Paul Dibb, "which continues to use a muscular approach to international affairs."<sup>12</sup>

Not surprisingly, critics of the government's policies have been quick to decry these initiatives as a return to an atavistic policy of "forward defense," reminiscent of the 1950s and 1960s. "Neo" forward defense, these critics claim, will make Australia dependent upon allies and will be done at the expense of maintaining an independent national

defense structure.<sup>13</sup> Given that one of the previous Labor government's achievements in international affairs during its long tenure was its regional policy of "Constructive Engagement,"<sup>14</sup> Labor opposition officials have been critical of a security policy orientation which they see as deprecating regional ties for a new, but ambiguous relationship with the United States. No less an authority than Kim Beazly, head of the opposition, former Minister for Defence, and an individual with impeccable pro-American credentials, has argued that the government has over-sold the U.S. alliance, while damaging ties with regional powers, like China.<sup>15</sup> Desmond Ball has even argued that the government has changed defense policy without explaining it to the nation and has initiated a course of action which will spell the end of the policy of self-reliance.<sup>16</sup> Minister for Defence McLachlan has responded to these criticisms by strongly denying the government was resurrecting a forward defense strategy.<sup>17</sup>

*Defense Policy.* In assessing exactly what the intention and implications of the coalition government's security policies are, it would appear that they promise to have the most important impact on the linkage between security and defense policies, in particular as they relate to force development. Paul Dibb presciently wrote in the early months of the new government that "The main deficiency that the Howard Government identifies in the Keating government's 1994 Defence White Paper is the mismatch between its strategic guidance and the lack of a blueprint for defence reform."<sup>18</sup> Dibb's observation is reflected in Minister McLachlan's statement that the government wants to be "an active participant, not just a spectator" in international affairs.<sup>19</sup> In fact, such an ambitious policy is not that dissimilar from the practice of previous Labor governments of sending the ADF well outside of Labor's established "area of direct military interest."<sup>20</sup> By no means can one argue that Somalia, Rwanda, or the Persian Gulf are within Australia's immediate geographic area; yet it was for the defense of Australia that the Labor government directed the ADF to be structured.<sup>21</sup> In short, the long-standing policy that the ADF be structured and equipped

solely for the defense of Australia has been abandoned by the new government. To continue McLachlan's argument, "A narrow perspective on Australia's security focused solely on continental defence would sell us short."<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the current writer is of the view that the Howard government's most significant departure from past defense policies is its objective to align its directives for force development with the ADF's likely missions, i.e., improved combined interoperability. In other words, the government wants to have better options when contemplating contributing forces to coalitions. Whether this is indeed a departure from the "policy" of self-reliance could be simply a matter of semantics.<sup>23</sup> While perhaps a contentious interpretation, it would appear that the most important impact of "self-reliance" by Australian governments has been the discipline it has had on forcing the individual services and HQADF to develop forces which are capable of conducting joint operations, optimally suited for responding to low-level and short-warning contingencies in the defense of Australia.<sup>24</sup> But important shortcomings remain, in terms of the ADF's ability to conduct independent operations in the defense of Australia, which cast serious doubt whether "self-reliance" should continue to direct the ADF's force development.<sup>25</sup>

In a sharp departure from the previous government's "steady as she goes" approach to defense structure, to quote Steward Woodman,<sup>26</sup> the Howard government has moved to increase the combat capabilities of the ADF, either in the defense of Australia or within a coalition in the following ways. First, albeit an initiative of the Keating government in its 1994 Defence White Paper,<sup>27</sup> the government continued the review of the structure of the Australian Army. The resulting report, "The Army in the 21st Century," provided the basis for the subsequent plan, "Restructuring of the Australian Army."<sup>28</sup> The government has endorsed the reorganization of the regular and reserve elements to improve the army's combat capability and ability to deploy within, and outside, Australia. What is remarkable is that this restructuring will be along new

organizational lines (self-contained Joint Task Forces) which has brought the government into conflict with some of its traditional conservative supporters, e.g., the Returned Services League.<sup>29</sup>

Second, the Defence Reform Program was launched by the government because of its inability, for financial considerations, to expand the defense budget.<sup>30</sup> In consequence, in order to expand the ADF's combat capabilities, it was necessary to conduct a review of current management practices and programs in defense to identify areas for redundancy. In endorsing the findings of the DER, the government anticipates saving approximately one billion Australian dollars (\$A)<sup>31</sup> or some 10 percent of the current Defence budget<sup>32</sup> which can be shifted to expanding the ADF's combat capabilities.<sup>33</sup> Again, the endorsement of the DER's recommendations (some which are quite draconian)<sup>34</sup> has not been done without domestic political cost.

*In Sum.* In terms of policy change it is clear that the Howard government has initiated a series of far-reaching policy changes and reforms with the objective of expanding the combat capabilities of the ADF. As regards continuity, the government has arguably built upon some long-standing defense policies. The most significant area of change is in the government's envisaged employment of ADF, i.e., an external, vice solely continental, application. Whereas the Hawke and Keating Labor governments (from 1983-1996) proved themselves not at all ill disposed at contradicting their own self-imposed limitations in their numerous extra-regional deployments of the ADF, the Howard government's *a priori* acknowledgement of its intention to participate in such deployments appears to have become the most rancorous point of dispute causing an apparent end of bipartisanship in defense policy.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps after the government has issued a defense white paper outlining and compiling all of its reforms and objectives, then the stage will be set for a formal national strategy debate. Only after such a process can one can hope to see a coalescing of views recreating a bipartisan

understanding on defense. One would hope that the government's emphasis on enhancing bilateral defense cooperation with the United States will not become a topic of domestic political debate.<sup>36</sup> However, unless the Howard government and the United States fulfill their commitment to "enhance" the existing relationship and explain these new initiatives to the opposition, Canberra runs the risk of encouraging an unintended and possibly uninformed debate over the value of the U.S. alliance in the new strategic environment.

### **"Enhanced" Defense Cooperation: Defining the Issue.**

Irrespective of whether one accepts Kim Beazley's aforementioned criticism that the Howard government has over-sold the U.S. alliance, the fact remains that the current government is now in the position of expanding the defense relationship with the United States. Failing this, the Howard government could find itself in the difficult position of having only met one aspect of its policy; i.e., improving the ability to deploy the ADF, but without a closer defense relationship with the United States for which the ADF is being restructured. To be sure, given the already long-standing close bilateral defense relationship,<sup>37</sup> the ADF essentially already has the capability to support the government's policy. Yet, given that the government has stated that it intends to "enhance" the bilateral defense relationship, the government could well be challenged by the opposition to identify where it has expanded the relationship and explain how this has improved Australian security.

To date, the only substantive initiative for which the government can claim credit is the release of the "Joint Security Declaration" following the 1996 Australian-U.S. Ministerial Meeting held in Sydney. Outside of the announcement reaffirming the continued 10-year operation of the Joint Facility at Pine Gap and the announcement of new arrangements to replace the closing of the Joint Defence Facility at Nurrungar around 2000,<sup>38</sup> the greatest

attention in Australia has been directed toward the document's statement that Australia will "provide additional training opportunities for United States Forces." Unique for such a high level communique, a specific exercise, TANDEM THRUST 97, was mentioned as a manifestation of closer defense ties. In reality, of course, this exercise had been planned long before the Howard government came to power.

Probably the most important aspect of the Joint Security Declaration is the simple fact that both countries signalled that, notwithstanding the altered Asia-Pacific security environment, the bilateral security and defense relationship remained central to both countries ". . . because it reflects fundamental shared interests and objectives." Whereas some might opine that this merely states the obvious, the statement that the security relationship has transcended the end of the Cold War is not without significance. The crucial, if indeed, implied point in this joint statement is that the long-standing close defense relationship will be continued. And in this respect, what must be one of the most important aspects fostered by this relationship has been what it *allows* both countries' defense forces to undertake.

However, the operative word, "allowed," is not without an important problem it portends for both countries as they work to "enhance" the defense relationship. The simple problem, if one so desires to characterize it as such, is that since 1951 both countries' armed forces have developed extensive cooperative ties among themselves, not to mention their respective departments of defense.<sup>39</sup> It was not with hyperbole that in 1987 a U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense characterized the extensive defense relationship among the ANZUS partners which developed out of the 1951 treaty as "nearly unique in the U.S. experience."<sup>40</sup> In short, just as there are sound rationales for existing bilateral defense ties, there are reasons (which have been regularly revisited over the years) why both do not cooperatively engage in some other areas.

Thus, the question which both countries must now address is exactly *where* could and should defense cooperation be expanded? Given the value that both countries place on the relationship, a major consideration must be that initiatives "enhancing" the existing relationship not contain controversial provisions which could have negative reactions on long-standing, mutually beneficial ties. The Joint Security Declaration specifically identified the continued operation of the Joint Space Facility at Pine Gap and Australia's decision to provide additional training opportunities as manifestations of the "enhanced" defense relationship. As the particulars related to the former are classified, one is left to ponder the wisdom of a greater number of U.S. "training opportunities" in Australia. After all, in view of the wide press coverage in Australia given to the TANDEM THRUST 97 exercise,<sup>41</sup> it would appear that "exercises" are seen by the Howard government as an important manifestation of this "enhanced" defense relationship. However, a review of the facts surrounding the issue of increasing U.S. exercise tempo in Australia is more problematic than it may appear at first blush.

### **Exercises in Australia: Problematic Aspects.**

As a general observation, existing ground exercise areas in Australia are already being used to their maximum extent, or suffer from so many physical and infrastructure limitations as to make their use of little value. Although the ADF has made a considerable effort to open up exercise areas for use by the U.S. armed forces, a confluence of factors will limit Washington's ability to expand its exercise series in Australia.<sup>42</sup>

There are three (some of which are immutable) factors that limit field exercises in Australia.<sup>43</sup>

1) Existing suitable exercise areas are already being used to capacity. Indeed, an environmental impact exception had to be made to conduct TANDEM THRUST 97 at Shoalwater Bay, Queensland. Environmentalists have

expressed concern regarding the over-use of this area, which is located in the Great Barrier Reef Maritime Park. Clearly, the United States should not anticipate such exceptions in future.

2) During the wet season in the north (November through April), it is not feasible to conduct field exercises. Ground movements are restricted to sealed roads, of which there are few in the north, and even they are subject to wash-outs.

3) The north is an inhospitable region, which explains the small population and limited civil infrastructure. Extreme heat, oppressive humidity during the lead up to the wet season, dust, bush fires, massive numbers of flies, and the ubiquitous presence of severely misanthropic saltwater crocodiles in coastal waters, estuaries, and rivers *well* inland (i.e., 100 kilometers), all make operating in the north difficult. Naval operations are also limited in coastal waters because of massive tidal ranges and incomplete hydrographic surveys outside of high traffic sea lanes.

As difficult as it may be to understand or accept, there are actually few areas in Australia where the ADF can exercise. Although the north and northwest of the country appear desolate and uninhabited, these areas are privately owned or rented long term from the government. The region's extreme environmental fragility is strictly protected by Australian federal and state laws, which severely limit repeated use. In the Northern Territory, where there are large pasturage tracks, the ADF has been forced to obtain permission to use private lands to deploy to exercise areas and given the increased tempo of ADF exercises there, some land owners are becoming less willing to allow access. Yet another limiting factor is the presence of many Aboriginal sacred sites which are federally protected.

A final complication to exercising in the north of Australia is the Northern Territory government in Darwin. Albeit there is wide-spread and deep-felt affection for the United States in the Northern Territory (due in large part to the role played by the United States in the defense of the



north during the Second World War), the Territorial government sees "defense," either Australian or foreign, as a needed economic boon. Yet, the north has limited infrastructure and even less industrial capacity to support the ADF, let alone visiting U.S. and Singaporean forces. Most importantly, it would be inaccurate to assume that the Territorial affection for visiting forces exercising in the north is shared by the Australian populace to the southeast. Indeed, as the ADF and foreign forces increase their exercise and training presence in the north, there has been an increase in public criticism in Darwin of the stationing and temporary presence of military forces.

As a result of the July 1996 Australian-U.S. Ministerial Meeting and the ADF's shift to the north, new and old areas are being developed and/or considered for exercises by the ADF. However, just as there are a number of general limiting factors concerning exercises in Australia, so are there specific restrictions. One shared both by Bradshaw and Yampi Sound is that they are located within heavily used civil air corridors.

*Bradshaw Station.* The former Bradshaw Station in the Northern Territory has recently been purchased by the Australian Department of Defence. It is approximately 600 kilometers from Darwin by road. Bradshaw's mission will be to support 1st Brigade which is moving to Palmerston, NT from Holsworthy, NSW. The area comprises 1 million acres, is located between the Fitzmorris and Victoria rivers and is reputed to have good training terrain. The area has sea, air and land access. The ADF will have to upgrade existing infrastructure in the area (estimated to be \$A50 million), and the Commonwealth will need to improve infrastructure leading to the area, which it has been slow to plan, according the Northern Territory government. Improvements include new sealed roads, simulation systems, construction/improvement of three airstrips which can operate C-130s, and three training camps similar to that being constructed at Mt. Bundi, southeast of Darwin. These improvements must be effected before the area can be used—current projections are that it will be ready in 1999.

Of fundamental ADF concern regarding Bradshaw is that, despite its size, Bradshaw may not be sufficient for 1st Brigade's training requirements. A key inhibiting factor is the area's extreme environmental fragility. For example, it can take up to 10-years for the terrain to return to its normal state after it has been crossed by an armored tracked vehicle. As 1st Brigade is the test bed for new operational and organizational concepts which will affect the entire Army as outlined in "Army 21," it is predictable that the area's usage will be severely restricted to outside forces.

*Yampi Sound Defense Training Area.*<sup>44</sup> Yampi is located approximately 130 kilometers by highway/minor sealed road northwest of Derby, Western Australia. Defense officials claim that the Department of Defence purchased this area in the mid-1970s without a survey, let alone a visit by ADF personal to ascertain if it were suitable for exercises. One-third of the area is suitable for dismounted maneuver.

Yampi's limitations are formidable. It is located within the cyclone belt. There is only one limited sealed road from the Gibb River Road from Derby, but that only gives access to Oobagooma in the southwest of the range. This access road is currently prone to wash-outs. There is no cross country driving ability. Defense infrastructure development is essentially nonexistent. From the 1970s until recently, the range has only been used by reserve Regional Surveillance Force Units and the Special Air Service Regiment. The 2nd Cavalry Regiment, based at Robertson Barracks, deployed to the range in 1994. Following this deployment, the Australian Army determined that the area was unsuitable for mechanized operations. Amphibious operations are difficult due to extreme tidal ranges and the lack of suitable hydrographic surveys. Tidal ranges are so severe as to require ships to stand seven miles off shore to conduct naval gun fire support. Due to the area's unsuitability for ADF exercises, the Australian Army determined the requirement to purchase a new range which led the purchase of Bradshaw Station.

*Delamere Air Weapons Range.* Located 80 nautical miles southwest of RAAF Base Tindal (which itself is 330 kilometers south of Darwin), is the RAAF's principal air weapons range. Delamere is approximately one-half million acres (approximately 30 miles by 40 miles). It has the advantage of having no significant environmental limitations and is located well outside of the cyclone belt. On the downside, the RAAF finds its flat terrain a limit to training. The RAAF is planning to expand the range by purchasing the rest of the Delamere Station. The Department of Defence has not yet endorsed the concept and the RAAF is considering going alone as did the army in pressing for the purchase of Bradshaw. The RAAF's reluctance in the early 1990s to having U.S. aircraft using RAAF Base Tindal and Delamere has softened markedly. Senior RAAF Base Tindal leadership stated that U.S. access and usage are welcome, Australian resource limitations considered.

*In Sum.* At present, there is some expansion capacity for training exercises in Northern Australia, notwithstanding a variety of significant limitations:

- 1) Environmental concerns and restrictions will increase as training exercises in the region grow.
- 2) Civil infrastructure development continues to lag behind the development of defense training areas.
- 3) U.S. training exercises must not exceed the ability of the ADF to participate and they must be seen as useful to Australia.
- 4) Civil-military relations in Northern Australia are in a state of transition to where military activities are becoming less welcome than in the past.<sup>45</sup>

#### **"Enhanced" Defense Cooperation: Opportunities.**

The constraints which will confront increased training opportunities by U.S. armed forces in Australia, while formidable, should not be construed as obviating any possibility for growth in existing operations tempo. Rather, what political officials in both countries need to appreciate

is the fact that increasing U.S. exercises could come at a cost to the ADF. This can be expressed in terms of the limited time made available to the ADF on their own ranges, as well as in what one senior ADF official privately described as the force's exercise overload. Because of the intensive military-to-military program with Southeast Asian states, in addition to regularly scheduled maneuvers with the United States, the ADF, according to one Australian official, is becoming "over-exercised, but under-trained." When combined with the simple geographic fact that Australia is not well-located to U.S. forces forward deployed in the Northwest Pacific, and the high costs involved in transporting them and their equipment to Australia for training opportunities, it would be injudicious for either country to make a greater number of exercises as the principal embodiment of enhanced defense relations.

In light of these restrictions on expanding combined exercises in Australia, it is evident that other areas of cooperation should be explored, in addition to the matter of exercises. Clearly, future cooperation should not be limited to what has been successful in the past; but remaining mindful of past successes and failures could be helpful in identifying future initiatives. In reviewing the record of bilateral defense cooperation, three principles emerge which should be considered when assessing new initiatives:<sup>46</sup>

1) Mutually beneficial. From the perspective of Australia with its limited defense budget and already stretched exercise schedule, any new initiatives for cooperation need to pass the test of benefiting *both* countries. Cooperation should not come to be seen as constituting a burden to defense forces and/or without value to either Australia or the United States.

2) Avoidance of incongruent linkages. Related to the issue of mutually beneficial cooperation is the matter of ensuring that new cooperative initiatives do not create disjointed cooperation. In defense cooperation to date there has largely been a direct linkage between the mutual benefits each side has received from each activity. The

creation of incongruent cooperation could develop into partisan political issues and, therefore, become detrimental to the relationship. It is instructive to note that Australian concerns in the 1960s and early 1970s over the presence of sensitive U.S. communications facilities in Australia were largely mitigated by the creation of the Defense-to-Defense Talks, which enabled Australian defense officials the better to understand the relevance of these facilities in the strategic balance.<sup>47</sup>

3) Pay to play. U.S. legislation regarding defense cooperation with formal allies which are economically developed is very clear on this point: they must pay for any assistance they receive. Australia has long recognized this reality and, therefore, procures equipment through FMS cases.<sup>48</sup> If training aids/facilities are required for U.S. forces on Australian ranges, then the United States must be prepared to pay for them. Although the international security environment has changed since the enactment of this U.S. legislation, continuing this principle would insulate the relationship from political criticism and a destructive burden-sharing debate.

There follows a list of possible areas for new defense cooperation. It is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather these proposals should be seen as merely a selection for consideration and which meet the principles outlined above.

1) Ascertaining the state of defense ties. The defense relationship that has evolved between the two countries has done so in a very decentralized manner. There is no standing secretariat that manages defense cooperation; oversight is provided by a large number of meetings between defense and service officials. As a result, the exact extent of defense cooperation is not well-known, particularly to American defense officials, nor is it properly documented. In consequence, the most important step toward "enhancing" the defense relationship would be to establish a small *ad hoc* working group of Australian and U.S. defense experts to establish a base line document which assesses the current state of defense cooperative

activities and programs. With this in hand, the group should then review cases where cooperation has not been successful, as the time for such initiatives may now be more fortuitous, determine where additional cooperation could be relevant, and where existing oversight arrangements could be improved.

2) Combined and joint exercises. There is scope for a slight increase in the tempo of training exercises. However, political, environmental, financial, and logistical realities will mitigate against a substantive increase in exercises. In view of all the factors related to this complex issue, a deliberative and coordinated approach to this matter between the respective *departments of defense* will ensure that long-term interests of both parties are protected from short-term political expediencies.

3) Revolution in military affairs. Australia is one of America's few Western allies that has embraced, in part, the concept of the revolution in military affairs, as well as finding funding to support forward-looking initiatives. The Australian Army under the "Army 21st Century Review" plan will be restructured from its previous division-based organization to one that employs Joint Task Forces which are self-contained. This new structure should enable the army the better to defend Australia, as well as to develop greater versatility to undertake a wider range of operations, ranging from low- to high-intensity. It is very likely that the other two services will undertake similar reviews in the near future. These restructuring efforts, combined, will be based upon exploiting new information technologies. Although the Australian defense procurement budget is modest, it is clear that the ADF is intent upon exploiting new technologies and experimenting with new (and less expensive) concepts and organizations as it restructures and reorganizes.<sup>49</sup> Thus, there is an opportunity for the U.S. armed forces to engage in mutually advantageous cooperation related to the revolution in military affairs.

4) Coalition warfare. Related to the revolution in military affairs is the issue of future coalition warfare. That Australia has been a stalwart ally to the United States in

this century there is no question, nor is there any indication that this will not continue into the 21st century.<sup>50</sup> There is an opportunity for the United States to capitalize on the new defense relationships Canberra has assiduously built with regional states, particularly their military forces. In many cases, the ADF enjoys a closer working relationship with its regional neighbors than the U.S. armed forces. As it would seem judicious to assume that the United States can rely upon Australia to support it in times of international crisis, as well as contribute forces to Western coalitions, it would make sense to assist the ADF in introducing *interoperable* revolution in military affairs technologies, concepts and organizational structures. This would enable the ADF to operate effectively with the U.S. armed forces, as well as enabling the ADF to serve as a conduit between less technologically-advanced East Asian military forces and their U.S. counterparts.

5) Wargaming and simulations. Given the financial and physical challenges that exercises present to the ADF, for the past few years the Australian Defence Force Warfighting Centre has been given the responsibility to improve the ADF's wargaming and simulations capabilities. The ADF has reviewed U.S. capabilities and would like greater cooperation and assistance. Thus, there may be room for future cooperation and division of responsibilities.

6) Consultations. Since the late 1980s, Australia has moved in a significant way to improve its relationships with regional neighbors. In contrast with Canberra's previous reputation in the region, Australian officials and analysts have excellent professional and private access to senior regional defense leaders. Indeed, the ADF has been in the forefront of making and maintaining Australian special access in the region. While a political boon to Australia, this has been at the cost of maintaining an expensive bilateral training and exercise program with regional states. Given Australia's access and expertise in the region, it would make eminent sense to ensure there is closer coordination with Canberra of U.S. defense activities in the region.

It must be noted that the initiatives suggested above are far from being headline-grabbing manifestations one might associate with a more muscular defense relationship. Nonetheless, what they do represent are some substantive recommendations with potential long-term benefits for both countries' defense postures. While exercises like TANDEM THRUST 97, the largest combined and joint exercise held in Australia in 20 years, are indeed observable evidence of heightened defense cooperation, more tangible and valuable representations of cooperation are not necessarily easily manipulated into press sound-bites.

### **Conclusion.**

There can be little question that the Australian government under John Howard has substantively changed a key aspect of Australia's security policy. The Liberal-National Party coalition government has made it perfectly clear that it will participate in the defense of Western ideals and interests, irrespective of their location. In consequence, two important implications follow. First, the ADF will be restructured to enhance its capabilities for participation in power projection missions. Its combat capabilities will be augmented by a shift in resources from support activities and programs toward expanding and improving combat forces. Second, the government has stated its intention of enhancing Australia's long-standing security relationship with the United States. Lacking at this point is a blueprint expounding how the bilateral defense relationship is to be expanded.

Also lacking is a national strategy debate in Australia. Given the changes the government has effected in terms of defense policy, one could expect an intense debate in Australia over the government's new security and defense initiatives. It is essential that this debate take place so that one would hope to see a coalescing of a new bipartisan approach to defense. However, before this can be expected to come to pass, one could assume that the Labor Party will want the government's defense policy and its objectives explained, particularly how defense ties with the United



States will be “enhanced.” For the Howard government to stay accusations that it is over-selling the American alliance, a systematic outline of how the relationship will be expanded and an explanation of how it will benefit Australian security will be required. Without such a statement, the government runs the risk of politicizing the U.S. alliance, with all of the attending destructive consequences therein.

And it is surely the reemergence of a strong element of bipartisanship in defense policy that the United States would like to see develop. Washington will assuredly applaud efforts on the part of Canberra to expand the combat capabilities of the ADF, either for the defense of Australia or for power projection missions. But one must be aware of the fact that Washington enjoyed very close defense ties with the previous Labor governments and supported their efforts to improve the ADF's ability to defend Australia. Washington, over the years, has proven itself capable, therefore, of accepting and working with whatever defense policy Canberra determines best meets its national objectives and interests.

If there is a point that both countries should have extreme reservations about transgressing, it is in the value they place on maintaining defense cooperation. This “nearly unique relationship” has heretofore proven itself capable of transcending the vicissitudes of the odd diplomatic contretemps between Washington and Canberra. Indeed, defense relations have even grown closer during such periods<sup>51</sup> and have continued to grow despite the lack of identifiable threats to Australia's immediate national security. The reason for this, as stated in the Joint Security Declaration, is that the relationship “. . . reflects fundamental shared interests and objectives.” Such a closeness in views and interests has served as the means where cooperation has reached its current level of intimacy. Therefore, perhaps the most sagacious principle the Howard government and Clinton administration should follow in exploring close defense ties is adherence to

Hippocrates's admonition to physicians, "First to do no harm."

### **Recommendations.**

1) U.S. Department of Defense should take very seriously indeed the Howard government's objective of achieving closer defense cooperative relations.

2) U.S. Department of Defense should not unilaterally recommend to Australian Department of Defense any specific defense cooperative initiatives at this time. To do so places the onus on the United States to divine what the Australians might find acceptable.

3) Rather, U.S. Department of Defense should suggest to Australian Department of Defence creating a small *ad hoc* bilateral working group of politico-military experts to:

a) establish a base line document ascertaining the current state of defense cooperative activities and programs;

b) review cases where cooperation has not been successful with a view toward revisiting such initiatives;

c) ascertain from respective services and defense agencies where additional cooperation could be relevant in the new security environment; and,

d) identify where existing defense cooperation oversight procedures/arrangements can be improved and/or expanded.

4) New initiatives should adhere to the principles of:

a) being mutually beneficial;

b) avoiding of incongruent linkages; and,

c) paying to play.

5) Specific areas which should be considered for "enhanced" cooperation include:

a) additional combined/joint exercises as ascertained by *departments of defense* as being in the best interest of both countries;

b) revolution in military affairs-related R & D initiatives, to include their testing and evaluation;

c) revolution in military affairs technology as it may be applicable to ensuring that the ADF could provide a linkage in interoperability between the U.S. armed forces and Australia's regional states in coalition warfare/peace operations;

d) wargaming and simulation; and,

e) enhanced consultation to improve the coordination of both countries' defense activities in the Far East.

6) U.S. Department of Defense should suggest to Australian Department of Defence improving bilateral defense coordination arrangements to include one of the following options:

a) posting of an American defense official in Department of Defence in Canberra with the mission of coordinating and overseeing expanded cooperation and ensuring daily management. In the Australian case, the Head of Australian Defence Staff already fulfills that role in Washington. Enhanced defense relations with Australia should be balanced with centralized U.S. Department of Defense oversight and management.

b) emulating the standing Canada-United States Military Cooperation Committee (preferably located in Canberra, vice Washington) to provide working level oversight in Washington of increased defense cooperation.

## ENDNOTES

1. Australia, Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1972; and, Australia, Department of Defence, *Australian Defence, November 1976*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976.

2. See *The Washington Post*, July 27, 1996.

3. See *The Canberra Times*, December 4, 1996, and April 30, 1997; and *The Age* (Melbourne), November 27, 1996. More recent press reports indicate that the strategic planning review could well continue the previous governments' strategic guidance in order to fund the modernization of the Australian Army, vice funding power-projection capabilities. Cf., *The Canberra Times*, June 12, 1997.

4. See *The Canberra Times*, October 16, 1996.

5. See Report of the Defence Efficiency Review, *Future Directions for the Management of Australia's Defence*, DPUBS: 26975/97, Directorate of Publishing and Visual Communications, Defence Centre Canberra, March 10, 1997; and, *The West Australian* (Perth), April 30, 1997.

6. For instance, the presence of sizeable American forces for the KANGAROO field exercise series has enabled the ADF to develop operational concepts and procedures for the defense of Australia more quickly than it could have on its own. See *The Australian* (Sydney), October 14, 1976; *Pacific Defence Reporter*, Volume 13, No. 4, August 1986, p. 23; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 2, 1990; *The Age* (Melbourne), May 9, 1990; *The Canberra Times*, February 26, 1992; *The Weekend Australian* (Sydney), April 4, 1992; and, *The Courier Mail* (Brisbane), August 1, 1996.

7. "The region [Asia] is now comparatively peaceful . . . . Yet the relative peace in Asia may not last. The pattern of stable strategic relationships which has underpinned Asia's security in recent years is changing." Australia, Department of Defence, *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994.

8. "Australia-United States: A Strategic Partnership for the Twenty-First Century," Joint Security Declaration, Sydney, July 27, 1996.

9. This point will apparently be stated in the government's strategic guidance document. See *The Courier Mail* (Brisbane), April 28, 1997. This new document will supersede current guidance which can be found in *Strategic Review 1993*, DPUBS: 8009/93, Canberra, Defence Centre, December 1993.

10. "Efforts to enhance our relationship with the U.S. will not be at the expense of activities with the region. I want to be perfectly clear. These two strands of our policy are not a zero-sum game, but are mutually reinforcing and complementary." The Hon Ian McLachlan, MP, AO, Minister for Defence, "National Defence: A Government's Requirements," Address to the Australian College of Defence and Strategic Studies, Canberra, July 15, 1996, p. 5.

11. See Desmond Ball and Pauline Kerr, *Presumptive Engagement*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1996.

12. See *Weekend Australian* (Sydney), May 18, 1996.

13. For an argument that Australian defense policy has been evolving toward a return to forward defense, see Alan Thompson, "Australia's Strategic Defence Policy: A Drift towards Neo-Forward Defence," *Working Paper* No. 29, Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, Australian Defence Force Academy, November 1994.

14. See "Australia's Regional Security," Ministerial Statement by Senator the Hon Gareth Evans, QC, Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, December 1989. For an assessment of this policy, see my essay "Assessing Australia's Southeast Asian Strategy", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 15, No. 4, March 1994, pp. 367-384.

15. See *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), December 18, 1996.

16. See *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 8, 1996, p. 18.

17. See *The Courier Mail* (Brisbane), May 2, 1997.

18. See *Weekend Australian* (Sydney), May 18, 1996.

19. McLachlan's comments are found in *The Canberra Times*, December 4, 1996.

20. Australia's area of direct military interest was announced in the 1987 defense white paper. The 1994 white paper was silent on this issue. See Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia 1987*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987, p. 2 (n. 1). Cf., *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, *passim*.

21. "Our highest defence priority is therefore to build, maintain and support forces for the defence of Australia." *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, p. 14 (point 3.6).

22. See *The Courier Mail* (Brisbane), May 2, 1997.

23. For a critical and rigorous assessment of self-reliance, see Graeme Cheeseman, *The Search for Self-Reliance: Australian Defence Since Vietnam*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire Pty Ltd., 1993.

24. For an explanation of the Australian defense planning and force development systems, see my essay, "Capabilities-Based Defense Planning: The Australian Experience," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 21, No. 3, Spring 1995, pp. 349-369.

25. Notwithstanding previous governments' adherence to a policy of self-reliance, there have been reports issued with frequent regularity over the years identifying serious lacunae in the readiness and sustainment capabilities of the ADF. Recent examples include reports of the RAAF having only a 30-day supply of munitions for its front line aircraft, and a National Audit Office report that found that the Chief of Defence Force's Operational Preparedness Directive was seriously deficient. See *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), April 11, 1997; and, *The Financial Review* (Sydney), May 2, 1996.

26. *The Australian* (Sydney), June 21, 1996.

27. *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, p. 49 (point 5.50).

28. *Restructuring of the Australian Army: A Force Structure for the Army of the Future*, DPUBS: 24432/96, Canberra: Directorate of Publishing and Visual Communications, 1996.

29. It is interesting to note that not all of the recommendations in "Army in the 21st Century Review" were accepted. The recommendation to reduce the Army by 3,000 to find savings to fund modernization was rejected by the government. See *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 16, 1996. For two of the more thoughtful critiques of the Army's reorganization, see Peter Rose's op-ed piece in *The Canberra Times*, October 21, 1996; and, Peter Charlton's report in *The Mercury* (Tasmania), October 17, 1996.

30. It should be noted, however, that the government exempted Defence from its efforts to cut overall government spending. See *The Australian* (Sydney), June 21, 1996.

31. All financial figures are given in Australian dollars.

32. See *The West Australian* (Perth), April 30, 1997.

33. For details on defense hardware purchases to enhance combat capabilities, see *The Herald Sun* (Melbourne), May 1, 1997.

34. For the actual numbers of individual positions, facilities, etc., recommended for redundancy, see *Future Directions for the Management of Australia's Defence, Addendum to the Report of the Defence Efficiency Review, Secretariat Papers*, DPUBS: 27118/97, Canberra: Directorate of Publishing and Visual Communications, Defence Centre Canberra, 1997.

35. On Network Ten's *Meet the Press* on April 27, as regards a mismatch in force development directives and actual deployments of the

ADF, McLachlan accused "the Labor government of saying one thing and doing another." See *The Canberra Times*, April 1997.

36. The issue of "enhancing" defense ties with the United States was a key agenda item during Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer's first official visit to the United States as foreign minister. See *The Australian* (Sydney), May 30, 1996.

37. For a study of this bilateral defense relation up to 1986, see my work, *Australian, New Zealand, and United States Security Relations, 1951-1986*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992.

38. See *The Australian* (Sydney), July 22, 1996.

39. See *Australian, New Zealand, and United States Security Relations*.

40. Statement by Karl D. Jackson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, before House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *United States Policy toward New Zealand and Australia*, Hearings, 99th Congress, 2nd Session, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987, p. 20.

41. Press speculation and coverage of TANDEM THRUST 97 was considerable, if not remarkable. See, *The Courier Mail* (Brisbane), August 1, 1996; February 26, 1997; March 11, 1997; *The Canberra Times*, July 27, 1996; and March 10, 1997.

42. Excluded from this brief survey are the Learmonth Range in Northwest Australia and the Lancelin Naval Gunfire Support Range, north of Perth.

43. Information concerning exercise conditions in Australia was gained from briefings and interviews I conducted during September and October 1996 at Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT; Northern Command, Darwin, NT; RAAF Base Tindal, Katherine, NT; HMAS Stirling, Perth, WA; HQ Australian Theatre, Sydney, NSW.

44. The author had the unique "pleasure" of visiting Kimbolton at Yampi in the lead up to the wet in December 1992.

45. This is an issue which has not received the proper attention by U.S. and Australian officials it clearly deserves. It would appear that gone are the days when Australians in Northern Territory, Queensland and northern Western Australia accepted a military presence or exercises with little complaint. Even Darwin, which has grown in recent years in very large part due to the ADF's shift northward, has seen a changing attitude toward defense activities. See *N.T. News* (Darwin),

October 26, 1996, for a report concerning a dispute between the Northern Territory government and Canberra over Chief Minister Shane Stone's desire that the Darwin naval base be moved to the new East Arm of Darwin. See *The Courier Mail* (Brisbane) March 11, 1997 for a very critical view of the TANDEM TRUST 97 exercise where the author claims, "The exercise was primarily conceived by the Americans for the Americans."

46. I have derived these principles from my study of the defense relationship found in *Australian, New Zealand, and United States Security Relations, 1951-1986*, see particularly pp. 188-200.

47. On this issue see my essay, "The Australian-United States Strategic Relationship: Merely an Issue of Suitable Real Estate?," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1989, pp. 125-138.

48. See Young, *Australian, New Zealand, and United States Security Relations, 1951-1986*, pp. 86-91.

49. For a background on the "RMA," see Steven Metz, "Racing Toward the Future: The Revolution in Military Affairs," *Current History*, Vol. 96, No. 609, April 1997, pp. 184-188.

50. Former Secretary of Defense William Perry described Australia as the "southern anchor" of America's Asia-Pacific security arrangements. See *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 8, 1996.

51. It is interesting to note that the Defense-to-Defense talks, which address strategic nuclear issues and their possible implications for Australian security, were established by the Barnard-Schlesinger agreement, which was agreed to during the reign of the Whitlam Labor government in 1974.



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