

Response to ADF Defence Posture Review from Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition

Considerations prompting the Government to undertake the Force Posture Review (the Review), namely the growth of military power projection capabilities of countries in the Asia-Pacific, and the increasing global strategic significance of the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean rim, are reasons used by the government for its qualitative and quantitative expansion of the nation's military forces and its encouragement of a stronger US military presence in our region. The government's position suggests a contradiction. The military strength of both the US and Australia has increased massively in the past decade (by 75% for the former and over 50% for the latter). The past decade has also seen growth of US strategic primacy in Australia's wider neighbourhood. If the military capabilities of our Asia-Pacific neighbours, especially China and India, are an increasing source of alarm, as the Government claims, surely we must assume that military might has not worked as a deterrent nor a stabilising influence, and has in fact provoked a regional arms race.

In accordance with the Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition's rejection of the arms race and military approaches to Australian and world problems, we dispute the proposed considerations as legitimate grounds for the Review and oppose expenditure to change the posture or geographic positioning of the Australian Defence Force, such as transferring bases or forces westwards or northwards. We address the Review's terms of reference in the following points.

1. We urge the Review panel to attend to three security judgements outlined in the Defence White Paper 2009 (DWP 2009) that have not been acted on: i) Australia's defence policy should continue to be founded on the principle of self-reliance in the direct defence of Australia (Executive Summary and clause 6.5); ii) Australia is one of the most physically secure countries in the world (clause 3.7); iii) Any threat or use of force by Australia must be a last resort. The last-mentioned judgement must be given primacy in Australia's defence posture. As stated in the DWP 2009, "As a matter of policy, the Government seeks to avoid, wherever possible, having to employ force or *threaten its use*. We must be especially careful to recognise that not all responses to security challenges should be military ones involving the use of force. There will be many occasions when other means provide better responses" (clause 2.7; our asterisks for emphasis). In his announcement of the Review,

the Minister for Defence stated that the Review will be complemented by work being done with the United States on their own Global Force Posture Review. This is an indication that a greater concentration of the ADF in Australia's north-west would benefit US military plans. Along with Australia's increase in military spending, it is our closer military relationship with the US and the Government's commitment to technological and force interoperability with the US that are side-lining the above-mentioned judgements of the DWP 2009: the principle of self-reliance; the safety from major threat enjoyed by Australia; and the imperative of non-violent conflict resolution. [Term of Reference a]

2. Australia's security and strategic challenges are better met by non-military means. Peaceful diplomacy, international aid, and reducing the human and security impacts of global warming are more effective foci for expenditure. Impoverishment of Australia's

foreign affairs service, especially in comparison to our big military budget, has become a scandal (Lowy Institute: "Australia's Diplomatic Deficit - Reinvesting in our instruments of international policy." Blue Rippon Panel Report, March 2009). A possible consequence of this impoverishment is the narrowness of analyses informing defence policy. The world needs, and is beginning to see, an increasing emphasis on the concept of 'human security' and less on 'national security', especially in light of the urgency of environmental threats to humankind [http://www.unidir.org/html/en/human_security.html]. The Review presents an opportunity for Australia to start making this shift in thinking. [Term of Reference c]

3. Moving forces to the Indian Ocean or Australia's north would risk destabilising regional relationships and being perceived as threatening to China, Indonesia, India and other nations. The drain on the public purse would also be unacceptable. In the Review's terms of reference, it is intimated that consideration is to be given to imposing military bases on Australia's offshore islands, particularly Cocos and Christmas Islands. This would be a hostile, provocative development and expose the people of these islands, as well as those of the mainland's north-west, to unacceptable military risk and disruption to their natural environment, communities and economic life. [Terms of Reference d, e and g]

4. Positioning forces to defend fossil fuel resources would be short-sighted and wasteful. During the period to 2030, these energy sources will need to be phased down in favour of renewable supplies in order to combat climate change. Our international obligations, especially to the low-lying island nations in our neighbourhood, demand such a shift away from greenhouse-gas emitting energy sources, and this would also serve our own energy security. We refer the panel to the stationary energy plan "Zero Carbon Australia 2020" compiled by Beyond Carbon Emissions and the University of Melbourne's Energy Research Institute, a feasible plan for Australia to be independent of fossil fuels within 10 years through energy efficiency and conversion to renewable sources [<http://beyondzeroemissions.org/zero-carbon-australia-2020>].

In the short term, security threats to offshore energy resources are less likely to be manageable by ADF responses than by civilian police methods for forestalling terrorism, as well as being at least partly preventable by fair, well-regulated trade and corporate practices. [Term of Reference e]

5. The threat of natural disaster is a significant human security challenge for Australia and the region, and it is predicted to worsen. As an affluent nation and as the world's highest carbon emitter per capita, Australia is obliged to develop a capability to respond effectively to overseas disaster, as well as to increase its international aid generally. More robust funding for overseas and local humanitarian assistance is not only an obligation but also in our own security interest, as it would help reduce conflict arising from poverty, dislocation and scarce resources. However, Australia's military forces, given current defence policies, training and procurements, are not an appropriate channel. Public polling suggests that most Australians want the ADF to take a bigger humanitarian role, but it is incumbent on government to first ensure that military delivery of aid is

transparent, open to independent evaluation and not used for its own military ends
[<http://www.oxfam.org.au/resources/filestore/originals/OAUs-WhoseAidIsItAnyway-0211.pdf>]

For disaster relief in Australia, positioning near centres of population on the east and south coasts is important. Even with current base locations, ADF forces do not seem suitable or prepared: see <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/navys-rescue-ships-out-of-action-in-dry-dock/story-e6frg6nf-1225999037966> (3 Feb 2011). [Term of Reference c]

6. The Government is aiming for military capabilities arguably disproportionate to Australia's defence needs. With 'big military' comes big adverse impacts on the human population and the natural environment. The resource use of the ADF and its carbon footprint, yet to be made public, is undeniably high. Noise pollution (ground, sea and air), waste disposal, chemical spills, unexploded munitions and road accidents are only some of the risks to military personnel, civilians and non-human species alike. Relocating military bases to less densely populated areas will solve nothing. It will compromise the rights of Indigenous Australians, put precious and vulnerable north-west environments at risk and increase ADF resource needs and waste outputs. [Terms of Reference g & h]

Overall, establishing new bases or relocating defence forces will not enhance the safety of Australia and the world. The economic and environmental costs outweigh any benefits. Moreover, positioning military capability in the north-west at a time when the Government is building up military power and inviting the US to take a greater share in our bases will be perceived as hostile and fuel the arms race. The military power of the US and its allies has become a security threat in itself. The challenges of achieving peace, justice and sustainability require non-military solutions.