



THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP Minister for Defence

Saturday, 2 May 2009

THE AUSTRALIAN – UNITED STATES ALLIANCE

The Defence White Paper, released today by the Rudd Labor Government, reaffirms that the alliance with the United States remains an indispensable element of Australia's security. Australia will continue to pursue new options for enhanced cooperation between the two nations.

The Minister for Defence, the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP said the alliance relationship with the United States is an integral element of Australia's strategic policy and "is our most important defence relationship."
"In day-to-day terms, the Australia – United States alliance gives us significant access to equipment, intelligence, research and development, communications systems, skills and expertise which substantially strengthen the Australian Defence Force. Without access to US capabilities, technology, and training, the Australian Defence Force simply could not be the advanced force that it is today, and must be in the future." Mr Fitzgibbon said.
The Government has reaffirmed that Australia and the United States will continue to look for ways to deepen defence cooperation. Under the umbrella of the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Initiative (agreed in 2007), both countries are exploring ways to develop a combined Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief capability to build on our joint responses to catastrophic regional events.

Significant collaboration is also underway in the Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance field, with Australian and US officials actively pursuing new options for enhanced cooperation. Australia and the United States have also agreed to continue development of the Joint Combined Training Capability which both reduces the cost, and improves the quality, of unilateral and bilateral training. Australia will continue to provide access to training and exercise facilities for US forces.

The United States and Australia will continue collaboration on satellite communications. The US-Australia Military Satellite Communications Partnership Statement of Principles of 2008 commits both nations to exploring further technical collaboration and joint access to satellite communications capabilities. Without this collaboration, Australia would have to devote significantly more resources to develop the intelligence and communication capabilities it needs.

A Defence Force for the 21st Century

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Both countries are also committed to fostering cooperation in other areas, such as: strategic planning; the harmonisation of capability requirements and interoperability; technology access and acquisition; combined operational planning; regional engagement; research, development, test and evaluation; and logistics and materiel support.

The 2009 Defence White Paper represents the most comprehensive statement on Defence ever produced. It affirms the Government's commitment to the defence of Australia, the protection of our sovereign interests and the security and stability of our region.

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