



THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP Minister for Defence

Saturday, 2 May 2009

COOPERATION WITH SOUTH EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC NATIONS

The Australian Government has reaffirmed, through the new Defence White Paper, its deep commitment to engagement with South East Asia and the Pacific.

“Deeper engagement with South East Asian and Pacific nations is a pillar of the Government’s foreign policy. Defence will continue to play a constructive role in developing Australia’s network of security relationships in the region,” the Minister for Defence, the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP said.

“Australia and our neighbours in South East Asia and the Pacific share a range of common security challenges which we must confront together. Challenges like terrorism, people smuggling, and narcotics trafficking all lend themselves to cooperative responses, and through the new Defence White Paper, the Government is re-committing itself to Defence support for such efforts,” Mr Fitzgibbon said.

In South East Asia, Defence cooperation will continue to focus on supporting the development of regional military capacity in areas such as counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and peacekeeping. Defence cooperation will also assist these militaries to develop greater capacity to jointly contribute to regional security when necessary.

In the Pacific, the Government will continue to lead efforts to promote economic security, good governance and internal stability. The new Defence White Paper reaffirms the role for Defence in supporting these efforts, and that success requires that these efforts be genuinely whole-of-nation.

Through the new Defence White Paper, the Government has committed itself to enlisting the support of both regional governments and institutions, and other donor countries, to enhance the capacity of Pacific countries to enforce their sovereignty, protect their resources, and counter transnational crime.

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.

A Defence Force for the 21st Century

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