Submission to the 2015 Defence White Paper

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Note: We give consent for this submission to be published in its entirety and for the names, “Adam Schaffer and Hamish Wagstaff” to be published in connection with it.

Executive Summary: This submission to the 2015 Defence White Paper deals with selected strategic threats to Australia, Australia’s strategic interests, combating terrorism and the proposed necessary modifications to the Australian Defence Forces in order to fulfil the strategic and operational details discussed in this submission.

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PART I – STRATEGIC INTERESTS

REGIONAL DEFENCE

Australia is one of the biggest nations in the region, but has one of the smallest defence forces. In a world of uncertainty, Australia should not only be able to defend itself and its territories, but also be a dominant regional power. This objective cannot be achieved at the moment. Our Defence Force comprises of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), the Army, and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). At the moment, our manpower consists of around 83,681 people, 25,542 of whom are reservists. This is dramatically contrasted with our neighbour Indonesia’s armed forces (TNI), which has around 400,000 active duty personnel. As Indonesia is around 200km away from our closest land border, and has such a large defence force, it remains a threat to Australia and to its sovereignty. It is therefore essential that Australia has a defence force capable of dealing with any threat, large or small.

While at the moment the Indonesian-Australian relationship is strong, it is quite possible that it may be weakened in the near future as a result of current and future problems including phone hacking claims, people smuggling policy and the uncertainty of the relation considering the result of the recent Indonesian general election, in which Joko Widodo was voted into power. Thus, the time to act on the measures outlined below is now. It is imperative that changes are made to the Australian Defence Force sooner rather than later in order to address the real threat a strong military power like Indonesia poses if international relationships become strained.

Despite the increased size of the Indonesian defence force in comparison to that of Australia, Indonesia’s defence spending in the national budget was US$7.3 billion, and is controversially supplemented by revenue from military commercial interests and foundations. Furthermore, the defence force in Indonesia has a great political influence which, in a time of threat, could further weaken its ties with Australia. Australia’s defence spending is $29.2 billion and is thus, superior to that of Indonesia. With such funds available our military, while it is smaller in size than that of Indonesia, can be better equipped and stronger tactically.

Furthermore, the 2002 Bali bombings and the 2004 Australian embassy bombing in Jakarta are both examples of terrorist attacks directed at Australia and carried out on Australians within Indonesia by terrorists in Indonesia. This demonstrates the need for security from terror in Australia from a neighbour. The high prevalence of terrorism in Indonesia amplifies the necessity of action in terms of our defence from Indonesia. If a close neighbour like Indonesia is the root of terrorism, then we in Australia need be mindful of such insurgency and must be prepared to deal with this threat appropriately. This too requires the full use of the Australian Defence Force.

ANTARCTICA AND THE SOUTHERN OCEAN

While it may seem far-fetched, war in Antarctica could be a possible outcome of growing global tensions. This would cause a significant problem for Australia which controls 42% of Antarctica
in the Australian Antarctic Territory. While war on the Antarctic mainland would be impractical for any country which has interests in the resources that exist there, a naval war in the Southern Ocean is possible. This would arise most probably over the illegal tapping of resources or fishing. As a signatory of the Antarctic treaty, and a holder of vast territory on the Antarctic mainland we have an international obligation to protect the natural beauty and scientific value of Antarctica. This would require the coordination of aircraft and naval vessels. Currently the Australian Defence Force does not have these capabilities and must make the changes proposed below to ensure we are ready to fulfil our international obligations.

COMBATING ISLAMIC STATE

Quite apart from any threats brought about by foreign nations, terrorism is a problem that plagues the world. The Islamic State poses a very large and real threat to the world. Recently, the Islamic State issued a decree, urging Muslims worldwide to kill unbelievers in “any manner or way, however it may be”, especially those in France, Canada and Australia or any country allied with the United States. In combating Islamic State extremists, it is essential that ASIO, ASIS, AFP and the ADF all work together. That means information, the control of home grown terrorism and defence strategy must be used in unison to prevent acts of terror against or within Australia.

Already, policy has been introduced in regards to the prevention of funding and support for terrorist organisations. This should be extended to the further cancelation of passports for Australian jihadists and the refusal of entry back into the country for those retuning from Iraq, Syria and other terrorist hotspots without proof of legitimate purpose (e.g. humanitarian support or media coverage) for travel. This can also be extended to the storage of metadata and the access of ASIO and ASIS to such data.

It is clear, however, that intelligence operations alone cannot destroy the threat that Islamic State poses. As a terrorist organisation the dispute between the all those, including Muslims, who denounce Islamic State and Islamic State itself cannot be resolved through diplomatic means. It is therefore important that Australia joins in the military strikes against Islamic State, and also provides humanitarian aid for those who wish to seek asylum in Australia. The current airstrikes in Iraq are a step in the right direction. However, as Islamic State has grown over the border into Syria, it is essential that our airstrikes reach Islamic State regardless of its location be it in Iraq or Syria. Furthermore, as Islamic State militants grow in number and collateral damage becomes too high as a result of airstrikes, the introduction of ground forces may be required to reduce civilian mortality and ultimately defeat Islamic State.
PART II – MODIFICATIONS TO THE ADF

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY (RAN)

As an island nation, we have a profound need for a substantial and strong Navy, a Navy that we do not have at the moment. Apart from the size, the majority of our ships are behind today’s optimal technological standards. The Adelaide Class Frigates (although some are decommissioned), HMAS Tobruk and HMAS Success are all from the 1980s, and are well out of date when compared against their equivalents in other world navies. Even our ANZAC class frigates are behind in today’s best technological standards. New ships should be acquired, preferably from the USA or the UK. ADV Ocean Shield should be retained. Below is listed the proposed changes to the RAN:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW:</th>
<th>REPLACING:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 guided-missile destroyers (based on Type 45 design- UK)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 multi-purpose frigates</td>
<td>ANZAC and Adelaide Class Frigates</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 offshore combat ships</td>
<td>Armidale Class Patrol Boats, Huon Class Minesweepers + survey ships</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 amphibious assault ships (based on Albion-Class- UK)</td>
<td>HMAS Tobruk, Choules</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 diesel-electric submarines</td>
<td>Collins Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 replenishment ship to support HMAS Sirius</td>
<td>HMAS Success</td>
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The Canberra Class Amphibious Assault Ships (LHD) on order will also greatly improve our naval capacity. However, they are not set up for fixed wing aircraft, only rotary as the deck is not “heat proof.” This puts us at a disadvantage in comparison to the aircraft carriers of other modern navies which can support fixed wing aircraft. This problem can be rectified through the modification of these vessels which, in an aircraft carrier configuration, will be able to carry the already ordered F35A joint strike fighters.

The modifications to the RAN as listed above would certainly assist Australia in areas of both defence and combat. Furthermore, these proposals would be beneficial in fulfilling and addressing Australia’s strategic threats and interests as described above. A strong naval fleet equipped with the technology of the 21st century would help in securing the threat from Indonesia, ensure the protection of Antarctica and play a support role in the Persian Gulf in defeating Islamic State.
AUSTRALIAN ARMY

The Army is currently capable of performing the humanitarian, defence and combat duties and procedures required of it with the equipment and strategy currently in place and thus, does not require reformation in order to protect Australia regionally and to carry out combat against Islamic State.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE (RAAF)

While the Air Force is currently capable of performing the tasks required of it the current F18 fighter jets will soon be outdated and incapable of performing to the ability required in modern warfare. This includes air strikes. Thus, the acquisition of the F35A joint strike fighters is a step in the right direction which will benefit the RAAF. However, the acquisition of vertical take-off and landing fixed wing aircraft will be essential in the future. In LHD configuration the commissioned Canberra class Amphibious Assault Ships will only be able to support rotary aircraft. Modifications must be made to these in order to allow aircraft carrier support for the F35A joint strike fighter fleet. This would allow for air strikes and the like to occur in areas where an airfield is not at hand nor safe to use. Therefore, this modification would be beneficial to the RAAF in defending Australia from regional threats, help in upholding international obligations in protecting Antarctica and carrying out air strikes against Islamic State with support in the Persian Gulf.

In conclusion, the above changes to the ADF must be made as soon as is economically viable in order to ensure the safety of Australia and her territories from strategic threats, uphold our international obligations to the conservation of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean and to defeat Islamic State and beat terrorism.