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To: White Paper
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Name: Marshall Hall

Submission: Submission of the issue of combating terrorism

In the Foreword to "KEY QUESTIONS FOR DEFENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY' A DEFENCE POLICY DISCUSSION PAPER", the Minister wrote: "The crucial starting point for the White Paper process will be a wide-ranging review of our security environment and our strategic interests..." and went on to list six questions that the White Paper will address. The question that I would like to contribute to is the fourth: "What should be the key tasks for Defence over these coming decades?"

The Paper states (page 1) that

"In the past eight years, the trends noted in the 2000 Defence White Paper have continued to see the ADF deployed for a range of tasks, such as" and lists seven activities, one of which is "combating terrorism in places such as the Middle East and Central Asia".

I infer that this alludes to the ADF operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and submit that, if so, this is a misrepresentation of the nature of the ADF tasks in those countries.

I acknowledge that Al Qaeda is a terrorist organisation, that it was based in Afghanistan during the reign of the Taliban Government, and that the military operations in Afghanistan immediately following 2001 September 11 combated terrorism. I acknowledge that Al Qaeda continues to exist, and seems to be primarily based near the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It seems to me however that the ADF operations conducted since around 2002/03 have had the objective of eliminating the Taliban as a political and military movement, rather than destroying Al Qaeda. Since most of the targets of Taliban operations have been military forces, it is a civil war that the ADF has been participating in, not combating terrorism. President Karzai has stated that he thinks there should be a role for the Taliban in the government of Afghanistan.

The key task for ADF should be to work directly with the Afghan Government to produce a sustainable political outcome, not necessarily to exterminate a political party because of its past governmental role of giving comfort to Al Qaeda. In due course, the task for the Australian Government in Afghanistan should evolve toward working with the government in combating Al Qaeda. This may or may not involve the ADF (as distinct from the AFP), depending on the attitude of the host government.

Another task for the Australian Government should be to work with the Pakistan Government in combating Al Qaeda within that country. Whether this will involve the ADF or AFP will again depend on the attitude of the host government.

With regard to the ADF operations in Iraq, the aims were:

- to eliminate "weapons of mass destruction",
- to remove Saddam Hussein and his sons from the country, and
- to introduce freedom and democracy.

In the disorder that followed the invasion, terrorism did arise, and seems to have been a combination of terrorist acts by the displaced Baath party, and by Al Qaeda (according to the US Government).

The key task for the Australian Government should be to work directly with the Iraqi Government to produce a sustainable political outcome, not necessarily to exterminate a political party because of its past behaviour in government, as repressive as that was. Whether this will continue to involve the ADF should depend on the attitude of the host government.

Far more Australians have been killed by Jemaah Islamiah than by Al Qaeda. I am not suggesting however that the ADF should be involved in that matter. It is properly a matter for the AFP to work with the Indonesian Government, as has been the case.

It is inaccurate and inappropriate to lump all the world's terrorist organisations together as an amorphous mass of terrorists. Some organisations have been dangerous to Australians, while others (such as the IRA) have not.

I agree to my submission being published on the Defence website

I agree to my submission being quoted in the Community Consultation Report