
Sent: Tuesday, 30 September 2008 12:11
To: White Paper
Subject: WWW Submission: 1. Strategy/International [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Name: Associate Professor Tilman Ruff
Organisation: International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Submission:
20 September 2008

Defence White Paper Team
Defence Establishment Fairbairn
F4-G-015
26-28 Fairbairn Avenue
Canberra
ACT 2600

Submission to the Defence White Paper Review

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the defence White Paper review process.

ICAN is an international initiative launched last year at the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty meeting in Vienna. In Australia it was launched by Malcolm Fraser and Gareth Evans, and includes a coalition of 50 civil society groups committed to re-engaging the Australian community on the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear disarmament must go hand in hand with nuclear non-proliferation

The Defence Policy Discussion Paper acknowledges nuclear proliferation as a significant concern. However, the failure of nuclear disarmament also constitutes a major and intimately related threat, which must also be considered in our defence policy. Nuclear weapons pose a unique threat to the whole of humanity, and as long as nuclear weapons exist there remains the risk that they will be used. As Kofi Annan stated last year: "We cannot choose between non-proliferation and disarmament. We must tackle both tasks with the urgency they demand."

The Australian Government recognises the need to combat both proliferation and disarmament together in the recently announced International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament. The Commission has the potential to engage governments worldwide to decrease the role of nuclear weapons. This is more than a foreign affairs issue, it is also a vital defence issue.

The best way to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons is by eliminating them altogether. As stated in the report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission chaired by Dr Hans Blix: "So long as any state has such weapons - especially nuclear arms - others will want them. So long as any such weapons remain in any state's arsenal, there is a high risk that they will one day be used, by design or accident. Any such use would be catastrophic."

Australia should adopt a nuclear weapon free defence posture

In response to a parliamentary question on notice earlier this year, Senator Faulkner stated:

"It is longstanding Defence policy to rely on the extended umbrella of US nuclear forces to provide a comprehensive deterrent to nuclear attack on Australia. There are no US bases in Australia. However, as part of Australia's close alliance with the United States and our joint commitment to maintaining global security, Australia hosts joint facilities including the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap.

The Government understands and respects the longstanding US policy to neither confirm nor deny the presence or absence of nuclear weapons at any specific or general location."

This bipartisan position implicitly endorses the legitimacy of nuclear weapons, and places them at the core of Australian government policy. This contradicts Australia's commendable aspirations as an active middle-power seeking to rid the world of these worst weapons of terror, and undermines our credibility in calling on other states to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies.

An Australian statement to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Conference on 30 April 2008 indicated: "Australia supports efforts {for nuclear weapons states} ...to reduce their reliance on nuclear weapons in their national security policies." Australia should do the same.

ICAN submits that Australia should adopt a nuclear weapon free defence posture. We should not allow the placement or transport of nuclear weapons on Australian land, ports, or territorial waters. Further, we should distance ourselves from any threat or use of nuclear weapons by our allies; and not allow any of our facilities, resources, personnel or territory to be used for the preparation, threat or use of nuclear weapons.

For many years, a significant driver of Australian defence policies and equipment acquisitions has been interoperability with US forces. We urge that this not extend to any materiel or operations directly related to nuclear weapons.

The best way to ensure Australian and global survival and security is to lead and work strenuously and consistently for the eradication of nuclear weapons. The most feasibly and logical path to this goal is through the commencement of negotiations towards a comprehensive, verifiable, binding and irreversible Nuclear Weapons Convention.

Australians need a less militarily focussed defence policy, comprehensively addressing the many dimensions of human security - including environmental, climate, food, water, human rights, economic, health and other aspects of social security, as well as security from physical violence including military attack.

Yours sincerely,

Tilman Ruff

Chair, ICAN Australian Management Committee Chair, ICAN Working Group and member, Board of Directors, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War Associate Professor, Nossal Institute for Global Health, University of Melbourne

A confirmation copy of this submission follows by mail.

ICAN is generously supported by the Poola Foundation (Tom Kantor Fund)

I agree to my submission being published on the Defence website

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