

SUBMISSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS YOUTH ASSOCIATION (UNYA)

Introduction

UNYA and This Submission

The United Nations Youth Association (UNYA) is a national organisation run by young people for young people. Our aims are to facilitate the expression, empowerment and education of young people.

This submission is designed to provide an opportunity for young people to express their opinions on Defence and National Security Affairs. Moreover it allows Defence policy makers to consider the views and opinions of the young people who will eventually inherit the infrastructure; policies and international ramifications of today's decisions.

UNYA has previously made submissions to a broad range of Inquiries and Consultations including the Senate Inquiry in Australia's Involvement in Peacekeeping Operations and the 2000 Defence White Paper Community Consultations.

The Survey

This submission is based on the responses for survey conducted of 119 young people on their opinions about defence issues. Like any demographic the views of young people will emerge from different ideological standpoints however responses demonstrated a clear interest amongst young people of defence issues and policy. This submission is a distillation on some of the more common views.

The role of the ADF: A broader mission

Respondents to the survey were asked to rank "to what extent should the ADF be designed to undertake" different tasks.

Rank	Task	Average rank (1 = very important 5 = not important at all)
1	Humanitarian Missions and Peacekeeping	1.50
2	Disaster Relief	1.88
3	Deterring and Defending Attacks on the Australian Territory	2.05
4	Conducting Operations against Terrorists	2.63
5	Domestic Security Operations	2.74

This clearly demonstrates that the nature and relative importance of tasks that we ask of the ADF has changed. The ADF must now be trained and equipped to perform a more diverse range of tasks.

The roles of the ADF has diversified as we have begun to appreciate the many pillars on which Australian security rests. The risk of Australia territory being attacked by another nation has not increase or decreased substantially since the 2000 Defence White Paper. However the past eight years have demonstrated the dangerous variety of threats to Australian security; from terrorism to SARS. Defence will not be the lead agency in tackling many of these threats however having a flexible and multi-skilled ADF is a requirement for a thorough and considered national security strategy.

The ADF must retain the ability to defend Australian territory however we now demand a much broader set of tasks from the ADF. As such, the policy that conventional war should be the only determinant of force structure must be discarded. In its place is a new methodology must be implemented which critically assesses what capability is required to perform each task in its broader mission.

What kinds of armed forces should we develop?

If the ADF is to achieve the broader mission it will need to build a number of new capabilities and discard outdated practices.

Peacekeeping and Peace building Capability

Australia must build its capability to conduct peacekeeping and building missions. The myth these operations will be able to rely on equipment and training developed for conventional warfare must be discarded. The ADF must adequately resource and train its soldiers for all elements of its mission including peace operations.

Contemporary Peace Operations require a whole-of-government response. The ADF has made significant improvements in joint operations between the three services, we must move towards integrating the role of other government departments into both doctrine and training. Joint exercises including members of the ADF, AFP, DFAT and AusAID should be regular. It is imperative that senior ADF members have deep understanding of the workings of Australian Government. If our national security infrastructure is work together, as highlighted in the national security statement, they must train together.

Peace operations require the ADF to work extensively with local populations and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). We must expand our capacity to engage in Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC). Moreover we need to equip all officers of the ADF with a basic knowledge of CIMIC practices and procedures.

Our capacity to engage constructively with local populations and authorities increases with our skill in Languages Other Than English (LOTE) and cultural awareness. Our experience in East Timor demonstrated the dearth of language skills available amongst ADF members. The ADF's capacity to train and retain LOTE skills must be improved.

Many peace operations will take place in a multi-national and multilateral context. Interoperability must be considered in the development of tactics, techniques and procedures. Material choices must be aimed to facilitate integration into multi-national forces

The ADF must continue to maintain units at a high state of readiness so to have the ability to respond quickly to incidents within the region.

Counter-Insurgency Warfare

The ADF's recent experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq highlight the importance of having a defence force which is structured, equipped and trained to undertake counter-insurgency. The operational tempo of the Commandos and SAS Regiment is currently unsustainable. We must move towards equipping our light infantry to undertake tasks that were once exclusively task of Special Forces.

Counter-Insurgency is likely to occur in urban environments amongst civilian populations. The success of counter-insurgency operations rests on maintaining the support of the local population. As such Australia needs doctrine, training and weapons designed to discriminate between belligerents and other civilians. Our capacity to reconstruct civilian infrastructure in both low and high-intensity environments must be increased.

The ADF along with other government departments must focus on building the capacity to win the 'battle of ideas'. Our media liaison capabilities and psychological operations must be geared to presenting Australia and our ADF members in the best possible light.

Strategic Approaches

The 2000 Defence White Paper argued that no country has the "intent or the ability" to conduct a full-scale invasion of Australia. Moreover a major attack on our infrastructure or population was described as "only a remote possibility". Given these assessments which are equally accurate today, unnecessary importance should not be placed on defending an attack on Australian territory.

Australia however, must retain the ability to dominate the air-sea gap in order to deter and defend any attack from our north. Maintaining an air combat capability edge, particular a well-developed interdiction capacity remains important. However the capability to undertake airstrikes deep into our region is of a lesser priority. Respondents believed that Australia should be able to undertake this mission independently without large-scale support from allies. In order to do this we must retain our Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) advantage over all other regional powers.

What funding should Defence Receive

Respondent's demanded the ADF undertake a broader mission however generally respondents were willing fund the new capabilities required. Only 18.6% of the respondents thought that Defence spending as a proportion of GDP should be decreased, of the remainder 50.4% thought it should remain the same and 29.2% believed it should increase.

Many respondents criticised the inefficient allocation of current funding however the accurate forecasting of future defence funding was considered a beneficial program. Future funding should be allocated to gain to retain a required capability. Australia should never raise defence funding merely because defence spending has increased by other regional powers.

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