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Submission: The Defence 2000 White Paper defined Army's capability goal in terms of the ability "to sustain a brigade deployed on operations for extended periods, and at the same time maintain at least a battalion group available for deployment elsewhere." This level of capability, while representing a significant leap forward at the time, is no longer sufficient to meet the potential threats Australia faces today.

Over the last twenty years Australia has been involved in operations in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, South-East Asia and the South Pacific. These have included a broad spectrum of operations from peacekeeping and humanitarian relief to involvement in wars against nation-states and non-state actors. This indicates that our capability requirements are not limited by geography or the type of operation, and that we must be able to undertake several operations simultaneously.

Until recently, Australia had combat forces deployed in four operational areas: Iraq, Afghanistan, East Timor and the Solomon Islands. Despite the withdrawal of combat troops from Iraq, our total operational commitment at present remains quite significant. However, compared with the commitment of our major allies, the United States and Britain, Australia's contribution to recent coalition operations has been relatively small. In the case of the Iraq War the US has maintained in excess of 140,000 troops in the Iraq theatre. If Australia were to have contributed in proportion to our national population, our contribution would have been over 10,000 personnel. If a similar scenario were to occur in our region, our allies might well expect us to contribute a division-size force. Clearly, our present force structure would not be able to sustain such a force for an extended period. Indeed, Army is currently unable to deploy a division without significant call-up of Reserve members.

There has been a tendency in recent years, because of the small scale of many of Australia's operational commitments, to focus Army's capability on supporting battalion- and company-size deployments. However, as was demonstrated by the Interfet operation, a brigade-size deployment may be required at relatively short notice. It is therefore essential that Army maintain the capability to support large-scale, high intensity operations.

In developing a new capability goal for Army, a two-tiered approach is required. Firstly, the capability of the regular Army, which can be deployed at short notice (1-3 months) and sustained without needing large-scale reinforcement from the Reserves. Secondly, the capability of the whole Army, which may require longer notice to deploy initially (3-6 months) and would require large-scale mobilisation of the Reserves to sustain.

The regular Army capability goal should address two alternate cases: 1) to sustain a brigade (at least three battle groups) deployed on operations for extended periods, and at the same time maintain a second brigade available for short-notice deployment elsewhere; or, 2) to sustain at least four battle groups deployed simultaneously on independent operations for extended periods, while maintaining an adequate force level domestically for the defence of Australia. The whole Army capability goal should be to sustain a division (at least three brigades) deployed on operations for extended periods, while maintaining an adequate force level domestically for the defence of Australia.

In announcing the Hardened and Networked Army initiative, the Chief of Army spoke of creating an 'Army of twos'. This underestimates the level of capability required to sustain a meaningful and effective contribution to major coalition operations. In order to achieve the capability levels proposed above, an Army of threes and fours is required.

In considering the number of manoeuvre units required in the regular Army, there are

four basic manoeuvre elements, each of which represents a fundamental land warfare capability: Armoured/Mechanised, Armoured Reconnaissance, Motorised Infantry, and Light Infantry. In this analysis the Armoured Regiment and the Mechanised Infantry Battalions are taken together to represent a single manoeuvre element since these units are ideally suited to being task organised into combined Armoured/Mechanised Infantry battle groups.

To sustain a deployment of any particular capability over an extended period it is generally accepted by Army that a total of three such units are required: one deployed, one pre-deployment, and one post-deployment. To maintain a sustainable capability in each of the four basic manoeuvre elements, a total of 12 battle groups are required: three Armoured/Mechanised, three Armoured Reconnaissance, three Motorised Infantry, and three Light Infantry. The 12 battle groups will also fulfil the second of the proposed regular Army capability goals - to sustain at least four battle groups deployed simultaneously on independent operations.

Regarding the number of brigades, in order to achieve the first of the proposed regular Army capability goals - to sustain a brigade deployed on operations for extended periods, and at the same time maintain a second brigade available for short-notice deployment elsewhere - a total of four regular Army brigades are required: three brigades to sustain the first deployment, plus one brigade available for a second deployment.

The structure of brigades should enable the brigade to operate as an independent formation. It should also be able to provide support elements to battle groups deployed independently. The current standard brigade structure - a headquarters, three manoeuvre units, artillery, engineers, combat support and combat service support units - does enable the brigade to operate independently. However, to effectively support the manoeuvre units operating as independent battle groups, the brigades supporting units should each be organised into three sub-units, which can be attached to battle groups.

Finally, to fulfil the proposed whole Army capability goal - to sustain a division deployed on operations for extended periods, while maintaining an adequate force level domestically for the defence of Australia - six Army Reserve brigades are required, organised into two divisions. In a major war scenario, the four regular Army brigades would enable a division of three brigades to deploy initially with the fourth brigade remaining in defence of Australia, while the mobilisation of the Reserve divisions would provide for reinforcement and rotation.

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