
Sent: Saturday, 7 June 2008 19:33
To: White Paper
Subject: SEC: UNCLASSIFIED WWW enquiry: Submission: 13. Miscellaneous

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Submission: Unrelated to the prime purpose of the Community Consultation process, I would like to take issue with the author/s of the paper: "Key Questions for Defence in the 21st Century" on two items from Chapter 2, which gives an historical perspective on Australia's defence policy

The first point of issue is with the contention that, before the Second World War the Royal Australian Navy was "expected to take its place within the resultant 'Singapore strategy'". This is incorrect. All three Australian Services had as their prime role, "local defence against small raids". There was no Australian commitment, formal or implied, to the defence of Singapore, which was, and remained until the fall of Singapore in January 1942 an Imperial (ie, British) responsibility. The Australian Navy, Army and Air Force commitment to the defence of Singapore in 1941 was designed to relieve British forces to fight elsewhere, not to bolster the Singapore strategy. Such a commitment was not part of any pre-war plans.

As an aside, in regard to the Singapore strategy: was the strategy itself flawed, or did Singapore fall as a result of a failure to provide the necessary forces to give effect to the strategy? Also, what alternative did the Australian government of the day have to reliance on the Singapore strategy?

The second point of issue is with the statement that: "Air defences in Australia were poor, and, as a consequence of the Empire Air Training Scheme, thousands of Australians served as part of the Royal Air Force in the strategic air offensive in Europe rather than as part of the Australian Forces." The poor state of Australia's air defences had nothing to do with the EATS. Rather, it was due to a lack of suitable aircraft. Notwithstanding the Government's every endeavour, including a visit by Prime Minister Menzies to the UK, the RAAF was unable to obtain the aircraft it required for Australia's air defence. At no stage, either before or after Japan's entry into the war was the RAAF short of either aircrew or ground staff. As to the EATS, it was because of the vast aircrew and ground staff training system set up in 1940 and 1941 to support Australia's EATS training commitment that the RAAF was able, when it did start to receive front line aircraft from the US and local production from 1942 onwards, to get these aircraft into front line service with a minimum of delay. Also, after the entry of Japan into the war, Australia was able to maintain the flow of aircrew to Europe, at much the same rate as before, as well as meeting its own needs here in Australia.

The failure of the Singapore strategy and the adverse effect of the Empire Air Training Scheme on Australia's air defences are two myths from Australia's military history that need to be exposed.

I agree to my submission being published on the Defence website

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