

CN SPEECH  
BORDER SECURITY CONFERENCE

Good morning distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a great pleasure to be here today with the Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Customs and Border Protection, Mr Mike Pezzullo and to have the opportunity to discuss current Royal Australian Navy Border Security operations and some of the challenges and future opportunities that we face together in the domain of Australian Border Security.

As Mr Pezzullo has already explained, Border Protection Command provides security for Australia's offshore maritime areas, combining the expertise and resources of the Australian Defence Force, the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and other agencies, including the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority and the Australian Federal Police.

It is an obvious point that what constitutes border security means slightly different things to different people and, at the agency level, this perception is determined through government direction on responsibilities, capabilities, and also jurisdictional factors. Thus, it will not surprise you to learn that navies view border security through a different lens from most frontline agencies, as our primary responsibilities or involvement may be many hundreds or thousands of nautical miles from the coastline.

To explain where the Royal Australian Navy fits into border security, I will first provide the broader naval and maritime security picture to give you the context,

and will then narrow my focus to border security issues and also discuss some of the challenges we face and issues that we need to think about. But it is important to note that the RAN is involved because, along with the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, we have the only assets that can be used to effectively enforce Australian jurisdiction at sea.

So, why do we have a Navy? It sounds like a pretty obvious question and one that you would think that we might have answered time and again in a nation that since 1788 has been utterly reliant on the sea. We are often referred to as an island continent, our national anthem talks about being girt by sea, but I would contend that, in terms of our collective thinking, we are more accurately girt by beach. We, like many other maritime nations, suffer from what has become known as sea-blindness, a term first coined in the UK but now in regular use in countries such as India, Canada and, of course, here. Sea blindness refers to the lack of understanding and awareness about the importance of the sea and, as part of that, the importance of the Navy in maintaining national security and more importantly, prosperity.

At its heart the Navy is about operating as part of a Joint Force to maintain our sovereignty, defend our territorial integrity and protect our national interests wherever they are threatened. Traditionally of course many used to take a quite narrow view of security and by default of our territorial integrity and sovereignty. This was never completely true for the RAN – indeed, one of our first operational deployments as far back as 1911 was to deal with illegal fishing around Ashmore Reef off North West Australia – a very familiar patrol area over my 33 years in the Navy. Over many years since 1911, RAN units have conducted maritime security and fisheries patrols, particularly in our northern waters. But, over the last 30 years or so it has been necessary for all of us to take

a broader multi-dimensional view of just what security means – and maritime security in particular. Globalisation, of course, has had its impact too and has forced our strategic planners and thinkers to consider beyond the traditionally geographically based ‘concentric ring’ approach to security thinking. I would suggest to you that this has helped a little in removing an element of ‘sea blindness’ which has been prevalent within the Australian strategic community itself.

In the words of President Clinton, it really is all about the economy stupid. Our global economic system is underpinned by the ability to safely and freely move raw materials and finished goods around the world. The bulk of that is on the world’s oceans. In Australia’s case 99% of all our external trade (by volume) and 76% by value is moved by sea - you might say well, of course it is, and I would agree with you. But that link between our national prosperity and the sea is not self evident to all in our nation and this is why I have spent a few minutes focussing on the issue.

What is the Navy’s job in this? As a navy we obviously have a span of tasks that we undertake, they are divided up into three broad functional groupings often referred to in the quasi-religious title the ‘trinity of naval roles’. The first of these is the classic *military* role of applying combat power when and where needed, this includes traditional combat operations at sea and combat operations from the sea largely in support of a joint force ashore. We will often depict this trinity of roles as a triangle with the military role its base. That is, of course, quite deliberate as it is the core military capabilities and skills that underpin what we are about and enable us to execute the other roles. The second of these is the *diplomatic* function, where our presence, either subtly, or sometimes not so subtly, assists in shaping the circumstances around a particular outcome

sought by Government acting in the national interest. This ranges from Humanitarian and Disaster Relief through to presence (visible or otherwise) right through to coercion. Finally, and most relevant to this discussion today, is our long standing *constabulary* function, which includes search and rescue, aid to the civil community and maintaining the physical integrity of our borders, protecting our offshore resources and generally maintaining good order at sea so that our global economic system can continue to effectively function.

The thing about navies is their flexibility and adaptability, often the same ship can perform the three roles, if not simultaneously, then certainly in the same day. The concept is not unlike the notion of the three block war which has come into vogue in the land domain. Navies add greatest value however in contributing where our specialist skills in the use of force provide capabilities that are typically not available from civil maritime capabilities. For constabulary operations, we provide unique capabilities for counter piracy, maritime counter terrorism and complex or large scale operational incidents.

Certainly, there has been an understandable tendency to focus on the constabulary and diplomatic roles over the last decade. We have had illegal fishing, unauthorised arrivals, devastating tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, cyclones and bush fires to contend with. Contrary to popular belief, Navy has been involved in all of these - heavily involved in fact. These operations are not benign, we have sadly lost people on these operations and seen acts of tremendous courage, resilience and professionalism from Navy people. Notwithstanding, it is vital to understand that, while we bring some unique capabilities to these very difficult situations, they are not our reason for being.

We are at the end of the day a combat force. We can never let ourselves forget that, our culture and our capabilities must enable our people to do the things they need to do when we go into harm's way. Our ethos as a professional warfighting service is not negotiable; the people of Australia are right to demand it and it is our job to ensure that we use the resources provided to the very best effect and are always ready for this eventuality. These warfighting skills take many years to build and significant effort to sustain, we must resist the temptation to put them aside for now and come back to them at a later time, we must also resist those who would redefine what it is navies are designed and structured for. Australia needs to be able to perform maritime civil security roles and naval combat operations concurrently - this applies regardless of whether the combat operations are near Australia's waters or located outside of our region.

That said, we of course provide Government with real options to use in situations short of conflict; this is something else we must always be ready to do. Parts of our force structure have been developed with this in mind, that in and of itself is not problematic. And I would argue, despite the increasing complexity of the issues that we face, that the Navy's long experience in these areas does give us a good perspective on how to achieve the right balance with the 'trinity'. The issue of this balance is one that occupies my mind almost daily.

Against that backdrop, I would like to turn to the issue at hand today. Together with other parts of Government, our ultimate goal is the protection of our national interests including prevention of possible exploitation of our resources and illegal activity such as the illicit movement of people or goods across our border, acts of maritime terrorism and piracy; and from compromises to our bio-security and marine ecology.

The operational focus of Border Security with respect to the RAN is on awareness, response and prevention. Our approach is twofold. Firstly, we provide a functional defence of Australia's immediate maritime environment. This is exercised through the use of an effective blend of sea denial and sea control, that is to say we aim to ensure that the use of the sea by other parties is in line with our national interests and policy and that we ourselves can use the sea to satisfy our interests and needs.

Secondly, we aim to provide an effective deterrent through our presence and our potential to project maritime power. This entails the deployment of ADF and civilian resources around Australia and further afield, such as into the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean in order to protect our trade routes and sea lines of communication (SLOCs), all of which ultimately has an impact on our border security.

## CHALLENGES

Traditional borders are becoming increasingly opaque at times as a result of globalisation. Isolated geographical areas and traditional boundaries are no longer simply a line of clear demarcation. One of our big challenges is of course in the language that we use domestically and the implications of this language use elsewhere – some of which has a direct impact on the Navy. Something you might like to ponder over the next couple of days is the notion of the use of the term border, when do we use it and what do we mean by it? What do we mean when we add the term protection, security or management to it and what are the implications of that. Have we got our terminology right?

This comes back to my earlier comment about the lens that we look through in thinking about some of the concepts at play here.

The notion of freedom of the seas – the right of ships to sail the seas for legitimate, lawful purposes and go unhindered - is part of most mariners and certainly all navies closely held set of core beliefs, it is probably only matched by our common approaches to the safety of life at sea. Quite understandably the historical concept of the freedom of the seas has been moderated by the introduction of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982. The moderation has been quite specific and allows in particular for special geographic configurations such as the archipelagic sea-lanes regime and the use of international straits. It also attaches certain conditions to the use of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of a coastal state.

We, even at this conference, are lumping a range of issues under the banner of border security that I would contend are not strictly border security issues but broader maritime security issues which represent the maritime threats to border security. If we entrench these issues under the tag ‘border security’ we run the risk of subtly reinforcing the basis of the claims of nations who may seek to go beyond what was envisaged under UNCLOS; claims that have the practical effect of limiting the notion of freedom of navigation and therefore limiting the free movement of goods that underpin our economic prosperity. I’ll grant you it’s a philosophical point, but it does have a practical edge that I think is worth thinking about.

The interconnectedness of the global economy means that we are all dependent on open SLOCs and we are increasingly vulnerable to any disruption to them. For an island continent, wholly reliant on open SLOCs, that disruption can occur anywhere in the end-to-end system from point of origin of an import or an export through to the final destination. So having defined exactly what the term ‘border’ means, we also need to embed the notion that activities that contribute to effective border security are not tethered to our established notion of

territorial zones or boundaries. This applies as much to the movement of weapons as it does to people smuggling. Hence navies invest considerable effort in the maintenance of good order on the global commons - often quite a way from their home waters. The Horn of Africa is a useful example at present – navies from around the world are operating in that region. On the face of it this is about piracy, but of course it really comes back to economics, the free flow of trade, the cost of shipping, the cost of insurance and the ultimate cost of those goods. There is no doubt that for those countries in close proximity to the Horn of Africa it is very much about their own border security and integrity – just ask the Kenyans, or even the Yemenis. Activities that are allowed to fester take root and will impact surrounding jurisdictions – and sometimes can just keep expanding. The counter piracy and counter sea robbery efforts of Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia in the Malacca Strait are a testament to their recognition of this reality.

Another key challenge that we must overcome is communicating the scale of the surveillance task at sea that contributes to border security. The fact that you cannot possibly watch every square kilometre of the domestic area of operations is a well understood notion to those of us who do this for a living. Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone alone is 8.2 million square kilometres (and this does not include the 2 million square kilometres attached to the Australian Antarctic territories) – compared with Australia's landmass of 7.7 million square kilometres. The Maritime Security boundaries of Border Protection Command encompass nearly 12% of the earth's surface. It is not about Over the Horizon radars, satellites, long endurance UAVs or flooding the area with surface ships – it's about understanding the sheer size of the task and the practical limitations that are involved. We use a range of sensors combined with intelligence to understand the area we need to work in, but we will never have perfect coverage – no organisation on the planet could (or does). The main area of interest to our



north and north west for unauthorised arrivals is around 2.85 million square kilometres – a single DASH 8 sortie covers around 75,000 sq km – that is a simple example of the scale of what we are dealing with. Defence and Customs have finite resources and clearly must work within them.

Technology will not necessarily provide the answer either. Perhaps a another national misunderstanding that we need to correct – and in doing so we will need to overcome the efforts of dozens of Hollywood spy movies – is that there is a God-like eye in the sky which has perfect vision and perfect knowledge. There isn't and I do not think that there ever will be. What we can do – and the Australian Maritime Identification System is a world leader in this respect - is to bring together *all* our data sources, classified and unclassified, and use them to develop as comprehensive an understanding as possible of what is going on within our maritime zones – and in their approaches. That picture will never be perfect – but it will be essential in supporting our work and Navy will continue to do its best to contribute to it. What these challenges reinforce is the importance of intelligence cueing and of the network of international relationships and information exchange arrangements that we maintain.

The threat to our natural resources through illegal fishing has almost receded from the public consciousness. As I have explained, we in Navy have had a long involvement in countering illegal fishing in our waters. But our major and continuing contribution to this task goes back to the late 1960s when Australia legislated a 12nm Declared Fishing Zone on 30 January 1968, considerably extending the nationally owned fishing grounds from the old 3 mile limit. The Navy was given the civil surveillance role and our new *Attack* class patrol boats, which incidentally were designed at the time of the Indonesian Conforntation, were deployed to carry out this task. Navy is now on its third generation of patrol boat (progressing though the original *Attack* class, the *Fremantle* class to

our current *Armidale* class), each bigger and more capable than the last in order to deal with the challenges in our maritime zones. I would add though, that none of our patrol boats are quite as capable as ‘Sea Patrol’s’ HMAS *Hammersley*.

It is hard to believe that only 5 years ago the illegal fishing issue was so difficult that we conducted ‘direct fire’ into foreign fishing boats – our people at the time were under significant physical threat from blocks of concrete being thrown at them and weapons such as machetes being brandished as the boarding parties were trying to board vessels, a number with anti-access features such as spiked poles protruding at all angles from the fishing vessel. This firm response had a clear impact in preventing illegal incursions by the more capable and sophisticated illegal fishing vessels which could do the most damage to our fisheries.

My point is that many of our maritime security threats are cyclic in nature and illegal fishing may well be in the ascendancy once again, - as may bio-security or environmental protection. So we need to retain the systems, skills and flexibility to swing from one task to another as the threats that we face evolve or re-emerge.

I would be ignoring the elephant in the room if I did not touch on the issue of unauthorised arrivals. Navy has been involved in this for over 40 years, starting with the reception of the Vietnamese boat people from the mid 70s through to the situation today. This is a most thankless, difficult, confronting and relentless task and our people, along with their Customs and Border Protection colleagues,

do an amazing job, day in day out. They do it without fanfare and with little recognition of its challenges – they all do us proud.

You will all have seen the footage from that awful day in December 2010 when SIEV 221 foundered on the rocks of Christmas Island – the actions of all of those on the water, be they Navy, Army or Customs and Border Protection Service, were simply outstanding and prevented an even more horrific loss of life. Just last week five sailors were presented with bravery awards at a ceremony at Government House in Brisbane following the aftermath of the explosion in SIEV 36 in 2009. When I am told that Navy has a poor culture, I take my mind back to those incidents and what I see is the truest indicator to me of where we are as an organisation and of the intrinsic nature of the people who wear this uniform. I also see in the case of SIEV 221 a magnificent example of how closely we work with our Customs and Border Protection colleagues, particularly under periods of extreme stress.

Since the mid-1970s the Navy has also been involved in the protection of offshore oil and gas installations. You may recall the media flurry a few months ago with the release of Fraser government cabinet papers concerning the possible threats posed to the Bass Strait oil rigs and the appropriate responses. While terrorism was mooted as a possible threat, a major concern then and now has been the safety of navigation through the Bass Strait, so for, nearly 40 years, the RAN has conducted routine transits and patrols in Bass Strait to ensure commercial shipping does not intrude into the safety zones of the rigs. Last year I instituted a similar patrol regime in our north west, increasing the visibility of RAN warships transiting through and operating in that region. This will remain an ongoing maritime security issue that Navy is involved in, particularly with the rapid expansion in the number of platforms in northern Western Australia.

## FUTURE

Looking to the future there are a number aspects of the border security challenge that we need to be working on and thinking about. Retaining skilled people is perhaps the greatest challenge for Navy in its border protection role. The grinding nature of the work and the pace of the NT and WA economies take their toll both on the manning of the boats themselves and the organisations both military and civilian needed to support keeping the capability on the line. In Navy at present we are working with both the Defence Materiel Organisation and our prime contractor DMS to meet this challenge. We also need to work with Customs and Border Protection Service to coordinate our efforts, most notably as Customs brings on line the much-improved *Cape* class patrol boats, with their larger crews and operational capabilities.

By comparison with the people challenge, it is arguable that technology is the 'easy' bit. But, as I said earlier, technology is not the panacea. Notwithstanding, several lines of development offer the potential for better outcomes, particularly for surveillance. From a Navy perspective, one area that we have not embraced as quickly as I think we should is the Uninhabited Aerial vehicle or UAV phenomenon, particularly as sea based platforms. As an ADF we have operated the Scan Eagle UAV in the land domain, yet it was a UAV that started its life on a fishing trawler. We have been doing some low level trials for a number of years and are using the next White Paper process to fully explore this area of our force structure and the benefits that it might bring to the border security mission, particularly when the number of manned fixed wing surveillance platforms will remain limited. The ADF is, of course, planning to introduce High Altitude Long Endurance UAVs such as the Global Hawk as part of the military

maritime surveillance mission; they will have a very useful constabulary role too. There are other technological developments such as Hybrid Air Vehicle or HAV which have potential to better manage the maritime surveillance task. This HAV, which is in prototype phase, could provide a low cost option to provide persistent wide area surveillance. When operated unmanned from either ashore or a larger maritime platform, the HAV is planned to remain aloft at about 20,000 feet above a host frigate for 21 days providing around the clock surveillance over about 325,000 square kilometres of ocean. When piloted the HAV has the same ability to transit controlled airspace as a traditional aircraft and being able to utilise a maritime platform as a 'base of operations' means that the deployability of the HAV in either mode provides us with ultimate flexibility at a fraction of the traditional cost.

One of the major trends we are seeing across navies is the move away from specialist vessels to multi-role vessels. We are no different in moving in this direction, not least because of the additional operational flexibility that multi-role ships provide and also because of the much lower cost of ownership that they offer by comparison with maintaining multiple different types and classes and their associated disparate maintenance and training regimes. Under our Offshore Combatant Vessel (or OCV) program, the intent is to amalgamate the capabilities of the Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) patrol boat, mine countermeasures (MCM), hydrographic and oceanographic forces into a single modular class of around 20 OCVs. This initiative will provide significant operational efficiencies, enhanced capability and long term cost savings.

There is no doubt that, regardless of any technology solution, there will be an increasing integration of the different agencies, organisations and workforces involved in border protection. The new maritime law enforcement legislation is just one indication of our determination to achieve greater alignment and

flexibility. We will need to keep working on this issue and there will always be room for improvement. Indeed, just as maritime security challenges will never disappear from the national horizon, so will our need to keep adapting, to keep innovating and to remain flexible.

What I have tried to do today is to give you a little of the context surrounding the Navy itself and its involvement in maritime security. I hope that I have given you something to ponder over the next couple of days from a slightly different perspective as you consider the challenges we collectively face and the potential ways forward. Border security is of course not only a Government endeavour, it is a national one, and Navy looks forward to continuing to being very much part of this national endeavour in the years ahead.