

SEMAPHORE

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THE ROLES AND TASKS OF MARITIME FORCES

Over the last year, the Sea Power Centre – Australia (SPC-A) has conducted research in order to develop a database of Royal Australian Navy (RAN) operational activities. This research clearly demonstrated the flexibility of maritime forces and illustrated that the nature of the roles and tasks undertaken in any given operation can change rapidly. Some of the research results were published in *RAN Operations Other than War, 1900-2004* (Semaphore Issue 6, July 2004). It is intended that a complete database of operations for the period 1990-2004 will be published as an SPC-A Working Paper in early 2005.

Doctrine development is a dynamic, iterative process that is informed by both history and the current activities of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). Accordingly, the results of SPC-A's operational research have been reviewed against the RAN's current philosophical doctrine ('the body of thought on the nature, role and conduct of conflict'¹). This newsletter focuses specifically on a review of the roles and tasks of maritime forces, and of the 'triangle of sea usage'², referred to here as the 'Span of Maritime Tasks'. This diagram broadly illustrates the relationship between the military, diplomatic and constabulary roles and subordinate tasks of maritime forces, with specific reference to the RAN.

Single Service doctrine, such as *Australian Maritime Doctrine* (AMD), is subordinate to ADF Joint doctrine, in particular to *Foundations of Australian Military Doctrine*. Joint doctrine is aimed at supporting the creation of a seamless, integrated Australian force over time, while AMD explains what the RAN contributes to this Joint force. The difference between terms used in single Service doctrine and Joint doctrine is necessarily large, and there are a number of different ways of classifying operations. In ADF Joint doctrine, a distinction is made between combat operations, military support operations, and shaping operations. The 'Spectrum of Conflict' in ADF doctrine refers to the variety of actions in which a military force may be engaged, ranging from general war to peacetime national tasks. These can be divided into two broad categories, based on the level and types of threat faced. 'Warlike operations' are military activities where the application of force is authorised to pursue specific military objectives, and there is an expectation of casualties. 'Non-warlike operations' are military activities where there is a risk associated with the assigned tasks, where the application of force is limited to self-defence, and where casualties could occur but are not expected.³

While these categories are useful in classifying specific ADF operations, a broader classification system based on the

distinction between military, diplomatic and constabulary operations has proven useful in the maritime environment. The utility of this system is emphasised by its wide application across Western navies with which the RAN operates; while the RAN's doctrine is not identical to that of our major allies and friends, it has enough similarities to provide a common philosophical frame of reference.

The 'Span of Maritime Tasks' originates from the trinity of naval functions posited by Ken Booth,⁴ developed by Eric Grove,⁵ and adapted to the Australian environment in AMD. SPC-A's operational research revealed several potential anomalies in the existing diagram. A simplified diagram, shown overleaf, was then developed in an attempt to clarify the interrelationships between maritime roles and tasks while avoiding the anomalies that can develop in a comprehensive visual representation of all the tasks that the RAN undertakes.

However, it is important to remember that the diagram is not the doctrine. The diagram illustrates relationships, rather than definitively describing them. Similarly, the diagram does not describe how any of the roles and tasks assist in achieving any of the maritime strategic concepts, such as sea control, or how those concepts will be achieved in any given circumstance.

Maritime forces possess considerable utility in a wide range of situations that span not only the spectrum of conflict, but also much peaceful human activity. The capability of the RAN to fulfil its diplomatic and constabulary roles is largely a by-product of the resources and core skills developed for warfighting, and the diagram retains the military role as its foundation.

The idea of a constabulary role is particularly valuable because it emphasises the historically close – and continuing – relationship between maritime forces and domestic and international law enforcement. The benign and coercive categories within the diplomatic role are also important because they illustrate the different types of diplomatic operations that the RAN has the capability to undertake, according to the amount of force applied. Both involve exerting influence over a foreign government through the demonstration of military power, but coercive diplomacy involves a more overt threat. This differentiation helps to demonstrate just how flexible navies can be.

This flexibility has been demonstrated by the RAN's activities since 1990 in the Persian Gulf region, pursuant to Australia's commitment to enforce long-standing United Nations



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sanctions against Iraq, as well as supporting the ADF contribution to the International Coalition against Terror (Operation SLIPPER). During the recent Iraq conflict the RAN initially had a constabulary role in supporting operations as part of the multinational Maritime Interception Force, a role that it has undertaken since the initial deployment to the Persian Gulf in 1990 following the invasion of Kuwait (Operation DAMASK). With the pre-deployment of forces to the Middle East (Operation BASTILLE), the RAN's contribution became a coercive diplomatic operation, supporting pressure on Iraq to disarm. With the shift to combat operations to disarm Iraq (Operation FALCONER) as part of the international coalition of military forces, the RAN's role then became military in nature. Following this, the RAN has supported Australia's contribution to stabilisation and recovery operations in Iraq (Operation CATALYST) - another coercive diplomatic operation. This transition between roles is a prime example of how the RAN's contribution depended on its inherent military capability; that is, the ability to use force, and the ability to escalate or reduce the use of force as necessary for each different operation.

The significant difference between military and constabulary activities is that the latter depend upon legitimacy deriving

and enforcement of good order. A recent example of this is Operation RELEX II where, since March 2002, the RAN has conducted regular patrols intended to deter unauthorised boat arrivals. The maintenance of good order may thus be considered as a differentiated category in the constabulary role, as is the benign application of maritime power in the diplomatic role. The transition in these roles from benign to coercive and from maintenance to enforcement is demonstrated on the triangle by superimposing an arrow to indicate the gradual escalation of force potentially required.

Governments use naval diplomacy to influence the policies and actions of other states. Benign diplomatic tasks involve the use of naval capabilities not directly associated with combat. Coercive tasks involve the use of force, or the threat of force, to persuade other states to adopt a certain pattern of behaviour. The 'Span of Maritime Tasks' outlines the interrelationship between navies and foreign policy through the use of the sea. There are many examples of the RAN's diplomatic role. These range from benign port visits to show the flag to a more coercive role; such as in 1987 when RAN warships exerted a coercive influence during the Fiji coup (Operation MORRIS DANCE) to ensure the safety of Australian citizens.

The categorisation of a task as either diplomatic or constabulary depends on the international standing of the action. UN sanctioned embargoes are part of an internationally agreed order and are not aimed at supporting foreign domestic governments. They therefore fall within the constabulary role. When the ADF provided support to The United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda (Operation TAMAR) the RAN performed a constabulary role, which included providing medical support to the UN force and humanitarian assistance to the Rwandan people. However, unilateral operations fall within the diplomatic role, because they are defined primarily by national interest. Australia's second strategic objective is to help foster the stability, integrity and cohesion of our immediate neighbourhood.⁶ The RAN's involvement in the ADF contribution to the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (Operation ANODE) was therefore a diplomatic one; helping to restore law and order in the Solomon Islands in accordance with Australia's own national interest.

The experiences and thoughts of military practitioners must shape doctrine. Accordingly, we strongly encourage you to comment on points discussed in this Semaphore to inform the review of AMD, which is scheduled to commence in 2005. This review will include a more detailed discussion of each task that the RAN undertakes.



Figure 1: Revised Span of Maritime Tasks

from a legal domestic mandate or an internationally agreed order, while the former, whatever the degree of force implied, threatened or exercised, is defined primarily by the national interest. In its constabulary role, the RAN enforces national or international law, in a manner in which minimal force is only used as a last resort when there is some evidence of a breach or intent to defy. The level and type of force that is permitted will frequently be specified in the law, mandate or regime that is being enforced. Maritime barrier operations are listed on the constabulary side of the triangle and aim to prevent unauthorised incursions into maritime areas subject to Australian sovereignty or sovereign control. These operations target illegal immigration, weapon and drug smuggling, illegal fishing, piracy and maritime crime, maritime terrorism, and quarantine infringements. In its constabulary role, the RAN is involved in the maintenance

¹ Australian Defence Force, *Foundations of Australian Military Doctrine*, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2002, p. 1-1.
² Royal Australian Navy, *Australian Maritime Doctrine*, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2000, p. 57.
³ Australian Defence Force, *Foundations of Australian Military Doctrine*, p. 3-2.
⁴ Booth, K. *Navies and Foreign Policy*, Croom Helm, London, 1977, p. 16.
⁵ Grove, E. *The Future of Sea Power*, United States Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1990, pp. 232-236.
⁶ Department of Defence, *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force*, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2000, p. 30.

