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'The future of Security Intelligence in Australia'

- It is a pleasure to be here in Brisbane to address the Annual Conference of the Australian Institute of Professional Intelligence Officers.
- From my perspective it is most appropriate that the theme of this conference is 'Current State, Future State'.
 - As intelligence professionals, it is timely that we pause to reflect on our current circumstances given all that has occurred in the last five years in particular.
 - And it is a useful intellectual exercise for us to consider current trends and a variety of possible future developments so we are aware of and understand the issues that will shape the important work that we do.
- Other presenters at the conference also have a strong focus on the future.
 - One of our objectives as a community of intelligence professionals should be to build a shared understanding about the role and contribution of intelligence to government, business and the wider community so that individually and collectively we can provide real value to our various clients.
- I have titled this presentation 'The future of security intelligence in Australia' to set the tone for the comments I want to make about what ASIO is doing now to develop its capability and to remain effective into the future.
- By way of background, security is defined in relatively precise terms in the ASIO Act. It includes the protection of the people of Australia from espionage, sabotage, politically motivated violence - including terrorism and protest violence, the promotion of communal violence, attacks on Australia's defence system and acts of foreign interference

- Security is not geographically confined to the Australian mainland, so it extends to wherever such attacks occur, that is whether they are directed from, or committed within, Australia or not.
 - While counter-terrorism is a clear focus, the other threats to security present their own challenges now and will continue to do so into the future.
- ASIO's Report to Parliament for 1992-93 – around the time of the first of conferences of this Institute – noted the decision by the government of the day that, against the backdrop of the end of the Cold War, ASIO's staff should be reduced by 120 over the two years from mid-1992 to mid-1994 taking ASIO to 520 staff.
 - There were also other budgetary reductions.
- The challenges ASIO faces in 2006 are very different from those of the early 1990s. ASIO has undergone strong growth in the years since 2001 and the resources that have been committed to ASIO by government over the next five years will allow the Organisation to grow to around 1860 staff by 2010-11.
- On one level this reflects the impact of a security environment in which Australia, Australians and Australian interests continue to be at threat from terrorism and a range of other security threats in a way which was inconceivable in the early 1990s.
- The main terrorist threat globally over the past decade has been associated with an Islamist ideology that espouses 'global jihad'. This doctrine can trace its origins back many years and pre-dates the rise of al-Qaida.
 - The clearest formal statement of the core doctrine, in its current manifestation, of global jihad can be found in the February 1998 fatwa – signed by al-Qaida and four other jihadist groups - announcing the formation of the 'World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders'.
 - That states – 'to kill Americans and their allies – civilian and military – is an individual duty of every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it'
 - Western civilians are regarded as complicit in the actions of their governments and thus legitimate targets for attack.
 - In August 1998, some 6 months after the issue of this Fatwa, the United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were attacked.
- The terrorists cite various reasons as to why their violence is justified. Commentators also identify reasons, sometimes suggesting or implying that there is a single, simple reason for the rise of jihadist terrorism, and for Australia being a target for that terrorism.
 - But there is no single reason why Australia and Australian interests are seen as legitimate targets for attacks by Islamic extremists or why they are intent on taking innocent Australian lives.
 - And the answer does not lie solely in the rhetoric of al-Qa'ida leaders or other extremists;
- Neither is Australia's involvement in the war on terrorism, or in Iraq – the current 'cause celebre' for jihadists – the single driver of the threat we face. Before this current 'cause celebre' arose, there were other sources of jihadist rage – for instance, the US presence in

Saudi Arabia and of course the ongoing dispute between the Israelis and the Arabs over Palestine.

- We have seen since 2001 a series of planned or actual attacks against Australians, either as part of attacks against generic ‘Western’ targets such as in the two Bali bombings, or specifically as in the attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta.
- The rhetoric has followed the planning and attacks. From late 2001 al-Qa’ida leaders, including Usama bin Laden have issued a series of statements identifying Australia and Australians as targets for jihadist attack.
- Let me remind you that by 2000 Australia was being considered as a location for attack by al-Qaida. We now know:
 - In 2000 there was the reconnaissance by Jack Roche of the Israeli embassy in Canberra and Consulate in Sydney at the direction of al-Qa’ida for a proposed terrorist attack. Mr Roche pleaded guilty to the charges and remains in prison;
 - There was the reconnaissance of an Australian airport by al- Qa’ida before 11 September 2001; and
 - There were the statements by Usama bin Laden broadcast in November 2001, and again in November 2002 following the attack in Bali the previous month, that referred to Australia’s role in East Timor in 1999 and involvement in the war in Afghanistan;
- Factors identified in jihadist doctrine and propaganda as justifying violent jihad against the West include, but are not limited to:
 - supposed intent by Western powers to dominate the Muslim world – evidenced by ‘Western invasions of Muslim lands’ in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and East Timor. This is portrayed as a continuation of a history of Western attempts at conquest and domination dating back to the Crusades;
 - the risk of ‘apostate’ and un-Islamic lifestyles and practices being spread through the West’s powerful cultural organs;
 - Western support for ‘apostate’ regimes ruling Muslim lands, which is blamed for the slow pace of sustained economic, social and political reforms in a number of countries, and for the alienation and powerlessness felt by many in those countries.
- These ‘reasons’ feed into and are supported by pervasive anti-US sentiment in the Muslim world, despite US and other Western action in defence of Muslims in Kuwait, Kurdish areas, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo.
- These factors were in play before September 11, before the invasion of Afghanistan and before Iraq and will likely persist for as long as we can envisage.
- They arise from an absolutist ideology, which says that there is only one acceptable form of government and way of life, and those who reject it are to be destroyed. Any attempt by governments to accommodate those who hold such beliefs are bound to fail – they will be rejected, re-interpreted or exploited by jihadists. So, debate within Western countries about particular current foreign policy choices have to be seen in this context.
- The extent to which such underpinning ideological issues – or other factors including purely personal issues – plays a part in an individual ‘signing up’ to jihad varies from person to person.

- But global jihad, both as a structure and as an ideology, continues to attract new adherents and to evolve new ways of spreading its message and realising its objectives. Thus we have seen, and will continue to see, regular actual or thwarted attacks directed against the West.
- That is why the role of intelligence in the security architecture that has been put in place or enhanced by governments at all levels in Australia will remain central.
 - There is little prospect of security intelligence diminishing in importance; indeed it is likely to become even more important.
 - So there will be no let-up in the responsibility placed on security intelligence professionals to continue to discharge their duties with diligence, imagination and commitment against a threat that is dynamic, multi-faceted and increasingly complex.
- One of the key findings of the 9/11 Commission Report into the attacks in the United States was that intelligence agencies failed to understand the gravity of the terrorist threat.
 - Although officials seemed to recognise that the danger existed, there was a lack of imagination in conceptualising the threat.
- I believe this goes to the very heart of the challenge facing all intelligence professionals.
 - The intelligence business is not just about what you do, what tools you have, and how much or how quickly you are able to digest and disseminate information.
 - The most effective intelligence officers now and into the future will be those who are able to challenge conventional thinking and to bring imagination and flair to the task at hand.
 - In many cases a fresh approach to addressing intelligence gaps may be what is needed to generate the impetus to break new ground.
- If we look at a cross-section of terrorist attacks that have occurred since 1998 we have seen:
 - attacks on land, sea and air;
 - there have been attacks against official and military targets and unprotected civilians;
 - some attacks have been conducted by ‘outsiders’ while other perpetrators have come from within the community;
 - some have been large scale, coordinated and spectacular while others have been relatively simple but deadly;
 - transport modes have been a particular focus (London, Mumbai, Sri Lanka, Israel) as have been tourist areas (Bali, Sharm el Sheikh, Dahab);
 - a significant proportion has involved suicide bombers while others have involved remotely detonated bombs.
- Clearly, the threat of terrorism is not evolving in a linear fashion.
 - The sample of events I have just mentioned point to diverse, innovative and even adventurous developments.

- Within this complexity and diversity there are some markers that should continue to inform and extend our thinking about the ongoing security intelligence challenge.
- Firstly, the threat is global:
 - The list of cities where attacks have occurred or planning for attacks has been identified and disrupted continues to grow.
 - In the last year or so attacks have occurred in London, Mumbai, Sharm el Sheikh, Dahab, Iraq, Tel Aviv, Sri Lanka, Southern Thailand and Turkey while others were apparently planned in Australia, Britain, Germany, Denmark and Canada to name a few.
- Attacks can occur almost anywhere. It is a shared problem throughout the international community – not just limited to Western countries – and will continue to require cooperation and resolve to counter.
 - That is why ASIO's focus and reach must remain global.
 - I have said previously that ASIO's responsibilities are not limited to Australian shores and our work extends to wherever threats against Australian citizens and Australian interests occur – this will not change.
- Secondly, the threat is diffuse:
 - It does not depend on a single group or any formal organisation.
 - There are linkages between the diverse array of terrorists and terrorist groups in the world but they do not appear to form any single definable network. Fluidity and decentralisation are key characteristics of modern Islamist terrorism.
 - These individuals and groups may draw inspiration from key figures but they can also act without formal guidance or instruction from any central command and control body.
 - A shared state of mind or a view of the world, rather than any affiliation with an identifiable group in a traditional sense, shapes their behaviour and drives them towards their lethal goals.
 - That is why, in part, seeking to identify and investigate only known entities will not be enough.
- Thirdly, terrorists are becoming more sophisticated:
 - Some terrorists, particularly the leaders and those who seek to draw others under their influence, are educated and influential individuals who will continue to learn from their own mistakes and those who have gone before them.
 - They are driven by an absolute commitment to achieve their objectives, even if it may take several attempts and refinement of plans to achieve a result.
 - And they do not fit neatly into categories or conform to particular models or theories.
- Fourthly, advances in technology and accessible international travel make it easier for like-minded extremists to share ideas and knowledge.
- Finally, the threat is enduring:

- Terrorism and the threat from Islamic extremists will remain a defining element in Australia's security environment for some time with no sign that the number or frequency of attacks around the world will abate.
- It is almost certain that small groups of motivated and like-minded individuals who are intent on achieving widespread and indiscriminate death and destruction will continue to evolve and to develop new capabilities.
- So what does this mean for ASIO and security intelligence in the future?
- It is unrealistic to expect that we will always have prior intelligence that will enable us to prevent all terrorist attacks.
 - It is inevitable that some threats will remain hidden from us.
- But if we are to keep the equation in our favour by having intelligence that underpins sound assessments and supports appropriate action by intelligence and other agencies we need to take deliberate steps to stay at the leading edge.
 - Having technology, processes and procedures that ensure protective measures remain effective is essential.
 - Such protective measures need to be the subject of regular review and ongoing innovation in order to counter the efforts of extremists who are intent on defeating them.
- While technology is an essential element of the intelligence business – and can be a force-multiplier – the intelligence business is fundamentally a human endeavour that is focussed on human activity.
- While intelligence agencies can provide unique insights, the responsibility for understanding the drivers of extremism and countering them at their source also rests with the wider community.
- The primary focus of intelligence work in connection with terrorism must necessarily be on countering the threat from those who have already become radicalised and who are intent on realising their deadly ambitions.
 - That is why ASIO's counter-terrorism and other security intelligence efforts ultimately are directed at detecting and disrupting at an early stage the behaviour and activities of individuals and groups who are a threat to Australia and Australians.
 - It follows that the challenge for security intelligence officers is to have the intellectual acuity, cultural awareness, and the social proficiency to be able to obtain and assess actionable intelligence about planning for attacks before they occur.
- Following the Government's announcement on 16 October 2005 of its commitment of additional resources to ASIO over the next five years, ASIO is in the position of being able to plan strategically for its growth and developing capabilities to give it the best chance of being able to prevent harm.
- A fundamental element of that growth and developing capability is the considerable investment ASIO is making in the expansion of its human and intellectual capital.

- By 2011 staff levels will be three times higher than they were 10 years ago with a staffing profile that seeks to broadly reflect the diversity in the Australian community.
- The work of ASIO officers across the range of functions performed by the Organisation will become increasingly complex and require flexibility and sophistication in approach.
- In the case of intelligence officers, ASIO will continue to seek out and recruit people who may not have previously considered a career in intelligence but who have the skills and qualities that are required to be effective in the role. We need a range of people, including:
 - people from a range of academic disciplines or backgrounds and who can bring a variety of intellectual capabilities and tools to the mix;
 - those who can bring innovative and rigorous approaches to analysis at all levels;
 - those who have travelled abroad and who have both an interest in diverse cultures and the ability to engage effectively with people from a variety of cultural, ethnic, social, professional and educational backgrounds;
 - individuals who are already proficient in one or more foreign languages or who have the capacity to learn languages that are relevant to the work of a contemporary security intelligence agency;
 - those who are IT savvy; and
 - people who are committed to their own personal and professional development through ongoing formal and on-the-job training and by being geographically mobile throughout their career.
- As it happens, ASIO will be advertising for Intelligence Officers in the coming weeks. Further details will be available on ASIO's web site.
- One of the particular challenges for ASIO over the next five years is to integrate new staff with the qualities I have mentioned into the Organisation in a way that taps into the existing wealth of experience and highly developed skills of longer serving officers.
 - It will be this blending of the experience and commitment of currently serving ASIO officers with the energy, enthusiasm and new approaches that new recruits will bring to the mix that will make ASIO a very rewarding and satisfying place to work for years to come.
- Just as important will be the role that all officers must play in nurturing and developing the culture of ASIO as an organisation:
 - that is based on mutual respect, professionalism and behaving ethically and lawfully at all times;
 - one that encourages initiative and individual achievement and which values cooperation and teamwork; and
 - one that engenders pride in serving the community by fulfilling our role of assuring them, as far as we are able, that we are protecting them from those who would do us harm.

- I have focussed today on the threat of terrorism because it is the most immediate threat we face and the one that has the greatest potential to cause death or physical injury to Australians and others.
 - As I mentioned at the outset, terrorism is not the only threat we face, nor is it the only source of harm to Australia's security.
 - But the principles and qualities that I have spoken about are equally applicable to the other security threats and will ensure that ASIO is well-placed to meet the full range of its responsibilities under legislation.
- Let me conclude with the following comments.
- Projecting the current security environment 5 – 10 years into the future suggests that the challenges for security professionals will increase in magnitude and complexity.
 - The centrality of the role of security intelligence in informing and shaping government policy responses and the work of other law enforcement and other agencies will continue.
 - The expectation by key clients that they will receive timely and high quality security intelligence and assessments will increase, particularly when the safety of Australian lives and the protection of Australian interests here and abroad are at stake.
- The diffuse nature of the threat of terrorism and the speed with which attacks can be conceived and conducted means there can be no let-up in the urgency with which agencies such as ASIO conduct their business.
- Continued investment in a well-educated and well-trained community of intelligence professionals is essential if we are to be effective in keeping Australia and its people safe.
- Thank you.