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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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SPEECH AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF WORK ON THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE ACADEMY

The proposal for tri-service tertiary education originated in the 1960s, and in the years that it has taken for the idea to come to fruition, the world has undergone considerable changes.

It is not just that our strategic perceptions have altered, but that the strategic environment in which we live has also changed dramatically. The security, thought to be conferred by detente, was shattered by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. While it would be an exaggeration to suggest that this invasion was the single cause for the strategic instability in which we live, that invasion is the clearest recent example of the Soviet Union's basic rejection of the accepted concept and necessity of international stability. That rejection is fraught with consequences for the security of all nations; and it certainly has clear implications for our attitude to national and regional defence.

These fundamental changes in Australia's national circumstances require a number of re-assessments and responses. In the past, single-service contingents have operated, more or less, as self-contained tactical forces. But advances in technology, and radical changes in operational situations and methods have led to a blurring of the lines which formally separated the individual services.

As we develop our defence capability in the light of strategic changes and advances in technology, we must recognise, more and more, the need for our armed services to operate jointly, as the Australian Defence Force. The old and costly single-service arrangements are no longer appropriate to modern circumstances and to the course of defence development in this country.

Tomorrow, it will be a year since I announced the Government's decision to allocate a greater proportion of our resources to defence. The decision to invest in modern weapons systems and to increase research and development funds was the beginning of a long, sustained haul to enhance our defence preparedness.

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Our efforts to secure the nation's defence, through a well-developed defence infrastructure, necessarily place a premium on technological capacity, well-trained manpower, and an officer corps which is sensitive to the kinds of co-ordinated tactical responses which a modern defence capacity requires.

We cannot enhance our security, however, without due regard to the security of our friends and allies. Defence is not simply a national endeavour. It is a co-operative effort, in a regional sense as well. Among other things, this has important implications for the training of our service officers.

Our armed forces - the Navy, the Army and the Air Force - must be able to operate together as a united Australian Defence Force. They must also be able to co-ordinate their efforts with those of our allies. Our service officers' vision must extend beyond the traditions and daily pre-occupations of the single services.

This is one important reason why we are gathered here today to mark the commencement of the building of the Australian Defence Force Academy. The Academy will instil into its members full dedication to their parent services. It will foster in our military cadets loyalty to the national force. But more fundamentally, it will encourage a basic sense of national mission and of interdependence between our three services.

There are very few circumstances in which Australian servicemen will be committed in the future which will involve only one service; which will not require the active and co-operative support of elements of the other services. The need to establish an integrated training system for the three services stems from a recognition of the need to establish one integrated, concerted, committed, hard hitting and effective defence force.

The responsibility for national defence and for an independent national contribution to the security of our allies and friends, places new and taxing demands on the personnel of our defence force, and particularly on its leaders. Officers of the defence force must be able not only to meet the complex requirements of their daily duties, which call increasingly for a high degree of proficiency in a range of professional specialisation. But also, they must be able to take their place in the councils of State, and make their contribution to the discussion of problems and policies along with representatives of other areas of the State service, both Parliamentary and administrative.

There must be an understanding in the defence force of our history and institutions, our social values, our national situation and our international circumstances and prospects. Such requirements demand an education of a high order.

With the co-operation and partnership that we seek from the University of New South Wales, we can look forward to support at the highest levels and in the highest traditions of university teaching.

I take this opportunity to offer my thanks to the universities, and other organisations, and to all the people who have contributed to the development of ADFA to the point we have reached today. I would particularly like to pay tribute to the work of Sir Henry Basten, as Chairman, and of the other members of the ADFA Development Council, many of whom are with us today. In particular, I want to acknowledge the contribution of Professor Rupert Myers, without whose continuing advocacy, there would have been no project.

The planning teams from the Department of Housing and Construction and the Department of Defence also deserve praise for their efforts - particularly for keeping within the limits of the cost targets set in 1976.

We now take a major step towards the establishment of a new institution of real significance to Australia. On occasions such as this, one naturally looks to the future. I do so today with great satisfaction that this project is launched at last; and with great confidence that we are making the best possible provision for the leaders of Australia's defence force for many, many years ahead.

With much pleasure, I now unveil this plaque to mark the start of work on the Defence Force Academy.