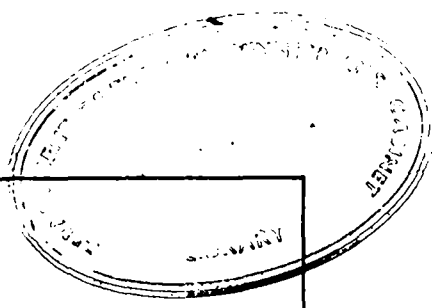




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PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE GRADUATION PARADE
DUNTROON - 11 DECEMBER 1990**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

For those who are being commissioned today as officers of the Australian Army, this ceremony represents the successful conclusion of a tough, demanding course that has prepared them for the responsibility of military leadership.

Let me say directly to those officers: as you embark on the challenges ahead, you can rely with confidence on the physical and intellectual skills you have acquired here. They will stand you in good stead and you will always have cause for gratitude to the instructors of this College, and to your fellow cadets with whom you have shared so many experiences here.

Today marks a great personal achievement by each of you, and your friends and family who are here to support you today are right in feeling very proud of you.

So this is an important ceremony for you personally.

It is also a very important ceremony for Australia. As Australia's Prime Minister, let me explain to you why I believe that all Australians are entitled to share your pride in your achievement.

This College at Duntroon was established only ten years after Federation, and one year after this district was selected as the site for the national capital.

That the College was established so early in the life of our nation was significant. With Federation came the responsibility for Australia to provide for its own defence, not with a group of colonial forces, but with a national defence force. An essential part of that national defence force was this College, providing our Army with quality leadership from its earliest days.

Just three years after the College was established, Duntroon graduates were departing for Gallipoli.

At the flagpole in the parade ground where your march past took place earlier this morning are recorded the names of those Duntroon officer graduates who gave their lives at Anzac Cove and in France and in all the subsequent conflicts in which your predecessors have fought.

So it is that for nearly eight decades, including through two World Wars, the skills, the sense of duty and where necessary the capacity for sacrifice, instilled here at Duntroon have enabled the Australian people to fulfill the most fundamental requirement of nationhood - national security.

But of course the role of the defence forces has extended well beyond their valourous service to the nation during those times of grave threat. Our Armed Forces have served not only in times of war but in times of peace - they have served the national interest not only directly, but also by helping maintain a peaceful and secure international order.

With professionalism and honour, the Australian Army has supported United Nations peacekeeping initiatives throughout the world since 1947.

Today, our commitment to the principles of the United Nations is exemplified by our contribution to the multinational force in the Persian Gulf: three vessels of the Australian Navy are currently on duty in the area, with an Army Air Defence detachment on board HMAS Success.

Australia has many interests at stake in the Gulf, as I said in my Statement to Parliament last week. Uppermost of these is the establishment of an international order based on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations: that international disputes must not be settled by force; that national borders must be respected; that aggressors must not be permitted to prevail.

In the fluid international scene that has emerged in the wake of the Cold War, such principles must become the firmest of guidelines for international behaviour.

Yet these principles are flouted with every day that Iraq remains in occupation of Kuwait.

Let there be no illusion about the hazardous nature of the task which our forces may be called upon to perform. But let there be no doubt either, about the fundamentally important nature of their task.

Because, whether it is in a peacekeeping role or in conflict, it is on the individual men and women of the Defence Force - on their dedication, professionalism and courage - that Australia depends for its security and for its national contribution to global security. Our technology and equipment cannot operate without well-trained and committed personnel. It all comes down to people like you, and to your peers, and to the people you will lead.

That is why I say this ceremony is of importance not just to those of you receiving their commissions today but to Australia as a whole.

Since the first officer cadets departed from this College bound for Gallipoli, Australia has changed and the world has changed, in ways which our forefathers could not have foreseen.

But the underlying principles still hold firm. We are still a free nation, still a proudly democratic nation. We still need to be able to look after ourselves - to be self reliant in defending our vast continent - in a challenging world. We still have an important contribution to make to protecting global peace and stability. So we still rely on our defence forces to meet the fundamental need of national security and to help attain the fundamental goal of world peace.

All of us here today salute your achievement in reaching graduation. This is a day for you to be proud - proud of your personal achievements as you enter the next phase of your careers - proud to add to the traditions of the forces which have served this nation well in the past and will do so into the future - and proud, I am sure, to be Australians and to know that you will serve your nation at all times with dedication and resourcefulness. As your motto so aptly puts it "Learning Promotes Strength".

To those receiving their commissions today, I extend my heartiest congratulations. On behalf of the Australian people I wish you every success in your careers - careers which are concerned with the possibility of war, but which we trust, by our preparedness to be strong in defence of peace, will be served in peace.

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