



## THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by: FIONA EWINGTON – 2017 Churchill Fellow

### **Incorporating Maritime Trade Operations to Military Operational Doctrine – where do niche warfare capabilities belong?**

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Signed: Fiona Ewington

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Australia is highly reliant on transnational maritime trade for its economic security and prosperity. In 2016-17 Australia's seaborne trade was worth \$445 billion, approaching 30% of national GDP when capturing associated activity that goes beyond the value of goods. Recent Government department policy papers discuss the trend of deepening and diversifying our geopolitical networks. A key focus of Defence policy is the imperative to protect Sea Lines of Communications given the importance of seaborne trade for economic and strategic security, particularly those in our near region of the Indo-Pacific.

The national maritime strategic context meshes seaborne commerce and naval power. The merchant marine provides the business of the sea; naval vessels provide the security of the sea. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) delivers this through interaction with Australian Defence Force (ADF) assets and foreign militaries to achieve similar goals employing similar capabilities. The interoperability of military relationships focuses on doctrine as much as tactics, techniques and procedures.

Military doctrine is the expression of how military forces contribute to campaigns, operations and battles. The RAN uses doctrine that clearly details the strategic and capability picture, however maritime battlespace management and contribution to joint maritime operations is not well articulated. Maritime Trade Operations (MTO), also known as Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) within allied navies, is the interface between the military and commercial maritime industry. MTO is the only capability within the ADF with the commercial maritime expertise necessary to inform military operations on sea lanes crucial to national interests. As a complementary warfare discipline, the lack of maritime operational doctrine within the ADF's joint framework complicates MTO's development of tactical guidance on how to engage and use its subject matter expertise.

Research for this study compared current methods of integrating operational maritime doctrine into the United Kingdom (UK), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and United States (US) joint military architecture with present Australian practice. Techniques employed among allied maritime trade organisations to promote capability to the warfare community and military commander were also assessed for adoption within Australian MTO. Report aims propose an approach to address the absence of application level Australian Joint Maritime Warfare Doctrine and identifies options for MTO contributions to warfare capability.

The operational level of warfare provides the bridge between military strategy and tactics and the structural layer in which commanders and their staff plan and conduct campaigns. The UK draws upon NATO joint maritime operational doctrine *Allied Joint Maritime Operations* and provides further guidance through a series of operational level guides. The UK uses joint doctrine to promote domain effects to other military services, a difference to

the Australian definition of joint doctrine as that which involves two or more of the services (Navy, Army, Air Force).

The United States contributes to NATO outputs, but maintains a separate joint doctrine development process. Their principal joint maritime publication *Command and Control of Joint Maritime Operations* provides principles and guidance to plan, execute and assess joint maritime operations. The US Navy Warfare Library hosts operational doctrine, amplified by supporting national tactical level documents such as that of the US NCAGS capability.

In the Australian context, the Sea Power Centre - Australia sponsors maritime strategic and high-level operational doctrine, while the Australian Maritime Warfare Centre provides expertise to tactical level instructions and generates tactical doctrine. A gap exists in the operational architecture in how the RAN expects to contribute to a joint contingency operation. There is a paucity of maritime domain application level doctrine in the ADF, due in part to reduced resources compared with allied militaries. The NATO approach to influence the joint and maritime space provides a credible outline for future force capability within doctrinal concepts of maritime force projection and supports a shift from tactical to operational maritime doctrine.

Many of the challenges experienced by Australian MTO in promoting the operational effect and value-add to the warfare commander were also experienced to varying degrees by each allied NCAGS capability consulted. A number of methods used by allied forces to provide NCAGS employment guidance include:

- a. incorporation into complimentary Allied Joint Doctrinal Publications
- b. capturing direction and guidance to tactical teams within a recognised framework
- c. use of national tactical doctrine
- d. promulgation of experimental tactics within NATO publications
- e. handbooks
- f. Best Practice Libraries
- g. educational documents on maritime battlespace management.

Australian MTO can benefit from several of these mechanisms. This includes incorporating maritime trade effects into existing Australian joint doctrine publications of related capabilities via the scheduled review cycle. The existing Australian supplement to NATO doctrine is well regarded by international NCAGS communities but should be hosted within a recognised framework. At the tactics, techniques and procedures level, the detailed information required ensures that contemporary handbooks, standard operating procedures and Best Practice Libraries have their place but should not be confused with

doctrine. Educational tools and programs to benefit the wider warfare community should be exploited for influence in battlespace management.

The following recommendations represent an opportunity for the ADF to enhance capacity for coordinated joint maritime warfare planning and execution, and provide a platform for Maritime Trade Operations employment as a niche warfare capability.

1. Joint Doctrine Directorate to develop Application level Joint Maritime Warfare Doctrine within the ADF joint doctrine hierarchy to guide maritime tactical development warfighting initiatives.
2. Australian MTO to maintain contributions to existing MTO tactical level doctrine and progress incorporation to a recognised framework.
3. Australian MTO to initiate contributions to existing joint doctrine and ensure interoperability of MTO foundation documents with complementary warfare disciplines.

Due to the classification of source material, the full report will not be publicly available.

#### **Author Details**

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