



01 MAR 2010

**Office of  
Senator the Hon John Faulkner  
Minister for Defence**

24 FEB 2010

Mr David Allan RFD  
1 Larnook Street  
PRAHRAN VIC 3181

Dear Mr Allan

Thank you for your letter of 12 November 2009 to the Prime Minister concerning Australia's involvement in the conflict in Afghanistan. This matter falls within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon John Faulkner, who has asked me to respond on his behalf.

I regret the delay in responding.

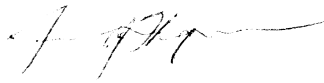
The decision to deploy Australian forces overseas is never taken lightly and is based on a clear assessment of Australia's national interests. As the Prime Minister has said, Australia has two fundamental interests at stake in Afghanistan. First, we need to deny sanctuary to terrorists who have threatened and killed Australian citizens. Second, we have an enduring commitment to the United States under the ANZUS treaty, which was formally invoked following the 11 September 2001 attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

With regard to your call for a greater Australian troop contribution to Afghanistan, I would note that late in 2009, the United States President, Barack Obama, outlined his country's revised strategy for Afghanistan, with a commitment to surge an additional 30 000 troops to help turn the tide against the insurgency. Other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) countries have committed an additional 9 000 troops to support this strategy. Australia supports these increases and has called on other NATO countries to assist within the means available to them. As the largest non-NATO contributor, Australia is making a significant contribution to the overall mission, with around 1 550 troops deployed to Afghanistan. In making this contribution, the Australian Government conducts regular reviews of our commitment to Afghanistan to ensure it is appropriate to the mission.

The Australian Defence Force is also working with our international and Afghan partners to build the capacity of the Afghan National Army. As Senator Faulkner reaffirmed in his 26 November 2009 statement to the Australian Senate, building the capacity of Afghan security forces will eventually set the conditions for the withdrawal of Australian combat forces. I enclose a copy of Senator Faulkner's statement for your information.

Your interest in Defence matters is appreciated.

Yours sincerely



**GEORGE THOMPSON**  
Senior Adviser