

### **SUBMISSION IPAN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**

In this submission our church seeks to address most of the terms of reference of this Inquiry, in particular the economic, social and community, environmental, military, foreign relations, political and workers rights as they relate to the US/Australia Alliance.

### **Background To The Alliance**

In discussing the US/Australia Alliance we need to consider the types of war that the two countries have been involved in. It was to our advantage that the US was our ally in the Second World War and we needed support because of impending invasion of Australia by Japan. However history shows US intervention whilst welcome was late into this war. Despite a long campaign led (amongst others) by then US Ambassador to the USSR Joseph Davies warning of the dangers of Fascism prior to and during the early stages of WW2, the US adopted a hands off approach. The bombing of Pearl Harbour led to a rapid escalation in their involvement in the Pacific. Up until that time the US had taken a wait and see approach and was more concerned about the economic benefits to their country.

### **Alliance Or Subservience**

Unfortunately Australia's involvement in US wars since WW2 has been to unquestionably support the US nation which is constantly pursuing an imperialist agenda. This support includes upfront wars in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq (Gulf Wars 1 and 2) and Afghanistan. Not to mention the covert wars waged by the CIA and front organisations against any group or nation not to its liking. The most spectacular example of this policy was the ousting of our democratically elected Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in 1975. The Whitlam Government sought to take a mild independent nationalist position which was unacceptable to the US, particularly the future of their US military bases in Australia. We well remember the 1973 talk at our Melbourne church by the late Senator Bill Brown highlighting an "Australian" newspaper's report of a Melbourne meeting between new US Diplomat to Australia Marshall Green and the extreme right wing of Australian politics. Green had cut his teeth in both military and soft coups the most brutal being his involvement in the military ousting of Indonesia's democratically elected Dr Sukarno. Various estimates placed the massacre of the Indonesian people at more than one million dead. US Government archives confirm that Green himself endorsed the Indonesian military executions. In an October 20, 1965 telegram from Djakarta to the US State Department Green states "I for one have increasing respect for its determination and organisation in carrying out this crucial assignment." Green held the leading US diplomatic post to Australia from 1973 to 1975, coinciding with Whitlam's dismissal. Hardly the basis for a friendly alliance between Australia and the US.

### **Big Business Interests Drive Wars**

The US war policy and its links to imperialism and big business can be best summed up by US Major General Smedley Darlington Butler, At the time of his death in 1940 he was the most decorated marine in US history. During his 34 year career as a marine he participated in military actions in the Philippines, China, Central America, the Caribbean and in France. In November 1935 Major General Butler wrote a trenchant condemnation of the profit motive behind warfare as follows...

“I spent 33 years and four months in active military service and during that period I spent most of my time as a high class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the Bankers. In short I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism. I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. I helped purify Nicaragua for the International Banking House of Brown Brothers in 1902-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for the American Sugar Interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for American Fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went on its way unmolested. Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents.”

### **US Foreign Policy And Human Rights**

It is difficult to see what has changed in terms of the benefits to Australia arising from the US/Australia alliance. Former ALP MP and Church member Joan Coxedge states “US foreign policy has nothing to do with morality, but everything to do with making the world safe for US corporations, to prevent the rise of any society that might offer an alternative to their capitalist model and to extend US political and economic hegemony over as wide an area as possible”. In other words, under conditions of capitalism, especially in its highest stage (imperialism) war is not an aberration, a break from the norm of political struggle. On the contrary, under capitalist imperialism, wars are normal business. One of the major basic features of imperialism, that of transition from pre-monopoly free competition capitalism to its monopoly stage, is that it marks the completion of the territorial division of the world among the most powerful capitalist states. Once this partition has been affected, there can only be re-division and re-partition, consequent upon change in the relative strength of the various imperialist countries. If as happens often, those countries who were economically weak yesterday, such as China and therefore whose share of global booty is relatively meagre, race ahead of their rivals and become more powerful. This rendering the old division obsolete, they cannot fail to demand a new division, a new partition on the basis of war. Within our church we are in a united front with pacifist groups and others seeking world peace. However the dominant church view prevailing is not that peace is something in essence distinct from war, because war is a continuation of politics by other forcible means.

### **The Vietnam Experience**

The Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church in the late 1960's and 70's took a leading stand against Australia's involvement in the US Vietnam war under our then Minister the Reverend Victor James. Victor himself a veteran of trench warfare in the First World War. At a very early stage our church spoke out publicly against the war, printed and distributed leaflets exposing the lies about the war, worked with other churches/groups like Save Our Sons and Trade Unions. Our church defended and supported draft resisters. Some of our church members were conscientious objectors, draft resisters and others went to gaol because of their opposition to this war. The war in Vietnam should never have happened. The US opposed internationally supervised free elections following the defeat of the French colonialists by the Vietnamese. This was because they knew that 80% of the Vietnamese would have united behind Ho Chi Minh against former emperor and pro western puppet Bao Dai. This commitment to “guided democracy” was backed up by the US launching a massive war against this

country. By early 1968 there were more than half a million US military personnel fighting the Vietnamese with 30,610 killed in action. The cost of this alliance was a commitment of 60,000 Australians, including ground troops, naval forces and airmen, with 521 killed and 3,000 wounded.

Massive numbers of Australians and their families suffered from the after effects of the war. US military sprayed more than 21 million gallons of lethal defoliants and herbicides across Vietnam. US and Australian veterans were exposed to dioxin which leached into their bodies, their food and groundwater, causing deformities, miscarriages and cancer. Not just for them but for their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. For the Vietnamese all this, as well as today 2.1 million acres are still barren and unproductive. It is estimated that it will take more than 100 years of intensive replanting to bring the forests back to their original state. This year a French court is set to hear a landmark case against companies that supplied the US with Agent Orange defoliant. Agent Orange contains a lethal byproduct dioxin, that was used by the US in the Vietnam war. Vietnam says several million people have been adversely affected by this chemical, including 150,000 children born with severe birth defects.

### **Australia/US Iraq War**

On Jan 17, 1991 the US began its invasion of Iraq. This began what the Pentagon described as the most destructive military action ever carried and a model for future wars. The US formed an international coalition that sent an army of 750,000 troops to the Gulf under the Command of US General Norman Schwarzkopf.

Bombs with a total explosive power equal to 7 Hiroshima nuclear blasts had crumpled the sewerage lines, water pipes and electricity grid. A vast modern industrializing society built on a fragile vulnerable network was devastated. Vast modern housing developments with wide boulevards, built so proudly on the outskirts of Baghdad became foetid swamps, lacking pumps or sewage lines for drainage. Chlorine to purify water and pesticides for the swarms of mosquitos and flies became banned under UN sanctions. As former US Attorney General Ramsay Clark stated at the time. "The lawless and cruelty of death dealing sanctions must be recognised as genocide and a crime against humanity and must be prohibited." With all this Australia was a willing participant and our leaders must shoulder their responsibilities. During the Iraq war, the US use of radioactive depleted uranium weapons increase from 375 tons used in 1991 to 2,200 tons. Geiger counter readings at sites in Baghdad record levels 1,000 to 2,000 times higher than background radiation. The pentagon has bombed, occupied and contaminated Iraq. Millions of Iraqis are affected. Over 1 million US soldiers have rotated through Iraq. Today half of the 697,000 US gulf war troops from the 1991 war have reported serious medical problems and a significant increase in birth defects among newborn children. The Iraqi population has been even more devastated. In comparison to immediate casualties, longer term impacts on Australian Gulf War veterans have been numerous. The most widespread physical health problem reported has been chronic fatigue syndrome, with up to 66% suffering from this condition. 30% of our veterans also suffered Gulf War Syndrome which denotes patterns of unexplained symptoms from the late 1990s. These include nausea, mental disorder, digestive problems, breathing difficulties and skin ailments. It has been variously linked with exposure to chemicals, dust, smoke from oil well fires, vaccines or pathogens. On the ABC Gulf War veterans have spoken out about their health. "Anxiety, depression, anger. I've developed rashes, general fatigue. Every now and then I bleed from my anus. I bleed from my nose, my mouth." (Philip Steele 7.30 Report 2004) "I was one of only one or two Australians that were involved in the

combat phase of the first Iraq war in 1991....the destruction of the first layer of Iraqi's defences certainly worked. It was pretty brutal and it managed to kill by burial, alive or dead, hundreds, perhaps thousands of Iraqi soldiers and I did find that troubling. And one of the images of a hand reaching out of the sand of a buried Iraqi was one of the images, the many images that I carried from that war." (Major General (Rtd) John Cantwell, ABC Lateline Sept 2012)

### **Afghanistan/US War End Game**

This is the longest Australian war in history and again we fall in behind the US as its faithful servant. Neither the US or Australia learned anything from the USSR experience where it committed half a million troops to Afghanistan and still failed to subdue the population. This is a particularly unpopular war and every foreign troop member is seen as an invader and the Taliban grows. As we withdraw from Afghanistan, at least 2,400 US soldiers were killed along side 41 Australian soldiers, and the Taliban is seen as the victor. Then there is the ongoing cost of the war on veterans. On average one Australian veteran dies from suicide in Australia every 2 weeks. At this point more veterans have lost their lives by suicide than have been killed in active duty since 2001 when Australian troops were first sent to Afghanistan. This year the Morrison Government was dragged kicking and screaming into a Royal Commission into Veteran Suicides.

You cannot simply invade and attempt to impose your will on a local population. This war is shrouded in the illusion that we were bringing freedom and democracy to this nation. As PM Morrison announced the Australian troop withdrawal he stated "freedom is always worth it". In her book "3 Trillion Dollar War", Linda Bilmy explains how having a US soldier in Afghanistan costs the US Taxpayer around \$800,000 per year. In Iraq it was even less at \$500,000 per year. We might expect Australian troops costing similar amounts on the taxpayer here. \$36 billion is spent by the US annually on military action in Afghanistan. In contrast the US spends \$1.5 billion average on reconstruction and humanitarian aid. How many schools, hospitals and other meaningful jobs could be created both here and in the US with that sort of money. Afghanistan desperately needs support in education and health e.g. more than 11 million Afghans over the age of 15 cannot read or write. (source US Aid) The unemployment rate in Afghanistan in 2008 was 40%. (source CIA World Watch) The Taliban provides paid employment for its soldiers so there is no shortage of recruits. Between June 2007 and June 2009, 2,515 Afghan civilian deaths occurred in this war. (source UN Assist Afghanistan) No wonder they hate us !

A public inquiry has been initiated about 39 disturbing and barbaric alleged war crimes committed in Afghanistan by Australian defence Forces from 2005 to 2016. Whistleblower and Australian Army lawyer, Major David McBride, who shared top secret information about these war crimes with the ABC in the report "The Afghan Files" has been charged with theft of Commonwealth property, breaching the defence Act and unlawfully disclosing Commonwealth documents. Thanks to whistleblowers like Major McBride, Julian Assange and others, Australian military personnel have been exposed as complicit in war crimes in Afghanistan and elsewhere. The Australian government response to these whistleblowers has been to jail them. So much for democratic rights.

### **Not All Wars Should Be Opposed**

We do not oppose all wars. Apart from Imperialist wars, there are other wars. Wars which are just, which move the people forward and therefore deserve our support. Should we not have supported the frontier wars of our indigenous brothers and sisters against British colonialism ? What of the wars of national liberation waged by the oppressed nations against colonialism and imperialism. Such were the wars waged by the Chinese people against Japanese imperialism, the Korean and IndoChinese peoples against Japanese, French and US imperialism. Such are the wars presently being waged by the Philippines people against the fascist Duterte, or by the people of Syria, Libya, Lebanon and Palestine against Anglo-American imperialism and their surrogate, Israeli Zionism.

### **The Next War**

No one can say with certainty who the next war will be between. Currently US imperialists and their hangers on are engaged in encircling Russia and China. The imperialists are attempting to encircle Russia because it is the only country with the armaments that can challenge the armed might of US imperialism and because of the vastness of its resources, China is targeted because it is well on course to become the largest economy in the world and this economic might is enabling China to become the dominant power in Asia. As well as through its economic aid to Africa, Latin America and “belts and roads” activity in the Pacific, China is encroaching on imperialism’s traditional ability to loot unhindered.

IPAN is performing a great service to humanity by providing this forum/inquiry and educating people at every turn. Knowledge is power and there is a stark choice, change the system, or suffer war and barbarism. The motto of our church is seek the truth and serve humanity, we hope our submission contributes to that process.