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Protecting Australia's Maritime Borders: The MV Tampa and Beyond

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Protecting Australia's Maritime Borders: The MV Tampa and Beyond

Abstract

The protection of Australia's maritime borders and sovereign interests at sea has, in recent times, increasingly become a leading national security issue. The arrangements for surveillance and enforcement in Australia's maritime zones have seemingly been in almost constant review in what has become a highly politicised issue. Furthermore, the increased incidence of seaborne illegal migration attempts in late 2001, together with the events of 11 September of that year has focused public, as well as official, attention upon all aspects of what has come to be known as "homeland security." Homeland security is a complex issue, and the problems associated with the protection of our maritime borders have important operational, legal, administrative, political and diplomatic implications.

The new emphasis on maritime border protection and the debate over the best organisational arrangements with which to safeguard Australia's sovereign interests at sea thus have become a most pressing national interest. The confluence of the events of 2001, a heightened public awareness of, and concern with, border protection issues and the ongoing evolution of our national policy and legal frameworks for the protection of the offshore estate, influenced the Centre for Maritime Policy to hold a conference on this most important issue of public policy. The conference, "Protecting Australia's Maritime Borders," was held in Canberra on 20 March 2001. This volume is a product of that conference, including all the papers that were presented on the day, an expanded conclusion and two extra chapters: the first, by Mitchell Evans, who was unable to make the trip to Canberra from Norfolk Island at the last moment, on the perspective of the Offshore Territories; and the second, by Bruce McLennan, based on research undertaken as part of his studies in the Centre's Masters degree programme in Maritime Studies.

The aim of the book (and preceding conference) is to address the issue of maritime border protection in a holistic fashion, from the perspective of how maritime border protection works as a system, thus avoiding a sectoral, specific interest-based approach. The prevalence of border protection issues in the mass media, often covered in a sensationalised and politicised manner, has probably hindered rather than assisted the national debate. Maritime border protection is too important an issue for the future of Australia's security to be left to such unruly examination. The Centre for Maritime Policy thus was prompted to promote the production of this more considered set of analyses in the wake of the hype resulting from the voyage of the MV Tampa. We should be clear, however, that the book is not about seaborne asylum seekers, specifically, or immigration, more generally. Nor does the Centre itself advocate any particular organisational design for the surveillance of, and enforcement within, Australia's maritime jurisdiction. Rather, the book is intended to provide a more reasoned forum for the discussion of those maritime border protection arrangements. The result, we hope, has been to collect a range of expert opinions, which will help to advance the debate on maritime border protection in Australia.

It is important that we acknowledge the assistance of those who have made this book possible, particularly given that the entire project was undertaken at quite short notice. Firstly, we are grateful to all paper presenters, session chairs and authors, who have been most supportive by supplying written papers in good time. We appreciate, in particular, the contributions of Derek Woolner, who was willing to replace another conference speaker at short notice and whose thoughtful and knowledgeable chapter has added much value to the contents of this volume; and Ray Funneii, who agreed at extremely short notice to make time in his busy schedule to open the conference, and provide the Foreword to the book. We must also thank the Royal Australian Navy for their support and participation in what was, politically, a difficult time for the Australian Defence Force, in general, and the Navy, in particular. The positive response to Navy participation is proof, however, of the benefits of the continued engagement of the three services (and Defence generally) with such professional forums as the one held in Canberra in March 2002. Specifically, we thank Commodore Warwick Gately, Captain Peter Jones, Captain Peter Leschen,

Lieutenant Commander Cameron Moore, Dr David Stevens in his role at the time as Acting Director of the Navy's Sea Power Centre and, since taking over that Director's job, Captain Richard Menhinick.

As usual, little gets done at the Centre for Maritime Policy without the assistance of Myree Mitcheii, who was involved in organising and running the conference, and putting the book together in its final stages. The Centre's Visiting Naval Feiiow, Commander Barry Snushall, helped with liaison with the Sea Power Centre and at the conference, and Vina Ram-Bidesi also assisted on the day of the conference.

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THE MV *TAMPA* AND BEYOND**

MARTIN TSAMENYI AND CHRIS RAHMAN
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Unless otherwise stated, publications of the Centre for Maritime Policy are presented without endorsement as contributions to the public record and debate. Authors are responsible for their own analysis and conclusions.

Contents

Preface	xi
Contributors	xiii
List of Acronyms	xxi
Foreword	
<i>Ray Funnell</i>	xxiii
1. Australia's Evolving Maritime Border Threat Environment	
<i>Clive Williams</i>	1
2. Australia's Maritime Border Protection Regime	
<i>Derek Woolner</i>	11
3. Protecting Australia's Maritime Borders: The Operational Aspects	
<i>Warwick Gately and Cameron Moore</i>	37
4. Tampering with Border Protection: The Legal and Policy Implications of the Voyage of the MV <i>Tampa</i>	
<i>Stuart Kaye</i>	59
5. Maritime Border Protection and the Offshore Territories: A Norfolk Island Perspective	
<i>Mitchell Evans</i>	83
6. Future Organisational Directions for Australia's Border Protection: The Case for an Australian Coast Guard	
<i>Michael O'Connor</i>	93
7. Maritime Border Protection and the Royal Australian Navy: Threat or Opportunity?	
<i>Bruce McLennan</i>	117
8. Conclusion: Maritime Border Protection after the <i>Tampa</i> and 9/11	
<i>Anthony Bergin, Martin Tsamenyi and Chris Rahman</i>	145

Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone

