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President's Column

This edition of United Service includes the proceedings of our Inaugural International Defence and Security Dialogue, incorporating the 2011 Blamey Oration, held on 26 May; and an update on the Australian Fleet.

In late 2009, Council decided to hold the next Blamey Oration in May 2011, to focus it on the strategic issues facing our region, and to bring an expert from overseas to Sydney to deliver it. Council appointed a team led by Vice-President David Leece to plan and conduct the event. A large team of Institute volunteers worked on the project for 18 months. The Inaugural International Defence and Security Dialogue, with the Blamey Oration as its keynote address, was the result. Its success demonstrates the commitment many have to the Institute’s objectives.

The Blamey Oration was delivered by Vice-Admiral Arun Kumar Singh who, since retiring from active naval service in India, has become a widely-respected strategic analyst and commentator. His insightful presentation, “The Global Strategic Outlook from a South-Asian Perspective”, provided the foundation for the event. Following it, a panel of four Australian experts – Hamish McDonald, Andrew Shearer, Rod Lyon and Ross Babbage – presented their perspectives on the global security outlook. The audience then participated in dialogue with the expert panel. The event concluded with a summary by Peter Leahy. I commend the insights provided by this eminent group of defence analysts to all readers.

Vice-President Bruce Short has reviewed the planning and conduct of the event. His report identified a number of lessons and recommended that we should hold this event biennially. The Council has accepted his report and has agreed to hold the 2nd International Defence and Security Dialogue in May 2013 and the 3rd in April 2015 to coincide with the Anzac centenary.

The inaugural Dialogue provided many benefits to our Institute. Two were particularly important. It has enabled us to establish a direct professional relationship with the United Service Institution of India, which will be to our mutual advantage. In furtherance of that relationship, I plan to visit USI India next year. The second benefit arises from the special relationship the Royal United Services Institute of Australia and its
concerned constituent self-governing state and territory bodies have with the Department of Defence. We particularly value this relationship and have agreed to assist Defence by actively and professionally engaging in the debate on defence matters and by correcting public misconceptions. To this end, our Inaugural International Defence and Security Dialogue addressed an important consideration for the next Defence White Paper. We trust it will prove valuable to the White Paper development process and the associated public debate.

The Council has decided to follow up the event by establishing a Special Interest Group to continue to review and consider the strategic issues facing our region and to contribute to the public debate on such developments.

On behalf of the Institute, I thank all members who worked to make the event so successful, to those members who attended it and to the non-members who joined us on the day. I particularly thank Admiral Singh and the Australian experts who provided the intellectual basis for the event; John Leece who first suggested the event to Council and provided the funding for it; and the Australia-India Council, which provided supplemental funding, primarily to enable Admiral Singh to visit Australian experts while here.

Doug Roser

Queen's Birthday Honours 2011

The Institute congratulates the following member who was recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2011:

Awarded a medal in the General Division of the Order of Australia

Daniel John Whitty – for service to the community of Lithgow.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, 27 September 2011 at 1.00 pm
Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street,
Sydney
September luncheon-lecture
Speaker: Associate Professor Brian Boettcher,
FRANZCP
Subject: “Eleven bloody days – the battle for Milne Bay”

Wednesday, 5 October 2011 at noon
Visit to Fort Scratchley, Newcastle
Train departs Central Station Platform 14 at 9.15 a.m.
Train departs Newcastle at 3.24 p.m., arriving at Central at 6.04 p.m.
Cost: $25.00, includes lunch and guided tour of the fort, museum and tunnels.
Bookings essential – contact the Institute office on 9393 2325 by 26 September.