

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—Some questions were raised yesterday, one of which was from Senator Faulkner, who asked the name of the DIMIA area that deals with intelligence. The question was really for DIMIA but we found the name: it is the Intelligence Analysis Section and it is inside the Border Protection Branch. There was also a question—I think from Senator Faulkner; I am not sure—on contacts between the embassy in Jakarta and Strategic Command with respect to SIEVX. There were two such contacts. On 22 October there was an email from the naval attache talking about information they had received from the Rescue Coordination Centre in Australia with reference to an overdue SIEV that was supposed to be inbound for Christmas Island. The naval attache was asking us what was going on, because he thought it was quite an unusual request. The following day there was a telephone call from Brigadier Millen, who heads up our Defence staff. He reported over the telephone the arrival back in Indonesia of a naval vessel with survivors on board. I will read you the transcript of the telephone call. It said:

An Indonesian naval vessel arrived in Tanjungpriok Jakarta port at approximately 14.45 Zulu on the 22nd October with approximately 45 survivors on board thought to have been on a SIEV that departed from Western Java a.m. Saturday, 20th October. It is believed the SIEV, which was thought to have as many as 400 PIIs on board, sunk in Indonesian territorial seas.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—When was it that the boat arrived back in port?

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—At approximately 14.45 Zulu on 22 October. The telephone call came in on the 23rd, just after midnight our time.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—What does Zulu time equate to in our time?

Dr Hawke—At the moment, you need to add 10 hours to our time.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—So it was just after midnight on the 23rd?

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—Correct.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Can we be provided with a copy of the email you are referring to?

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—There is some classified information in that email, which deals with other things that were not resolved with SIEVX. If I can take it back, declassify it and seek the approval of the minister at the table, I shall do so.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Is that something that could be done fairly quickly?

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—Reasonably quickly—in fact, my staff are no doubt watching at this moment—

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—They are getting quite proficient at this process, despite a recent hiccup.

Dr Hawke—We are learning from the senators.

Senator HOGG—That is a real efficiency dividend.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—How to alter documents.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—That is my next issue.

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—There were some questions on Operation Coracle, the de-mining in Mozambique, from Senators Hogg and West. We are really not in a position to answer some of those questions. I will paraphrase the questions. One was: what was the cost of Operation Coracle? The additional costs in 2001-02 were \$0.159 million. Another question

was: what was the reason for Australia ending its commitment? I will read a short statement on that. The accelerated de-mining has gradually evolved from a UN operated and managed program, which we supported with our de-miners, to an independent project with minimum United Nations involvement. It is now in the process of being transformed to a national non-government organisation. It is also one of the most successful indigenous de-mining programs in the world. So it does continue. We were there supporting the UN and the UN is backing out so that is why we are withdrawing our contribution.

There was also the question: has there been a reduction in the number of mines left and who is there still de-mining? I think the latter half of that question was answered by the statement I just made. In terms of the reduction in the number of mines, they measure it in areas rather than mine reductions. I have some figures that in 2000 just under five million square metres of land was cleared, including over 317 kilometres of road. It is measured in areas cleared rather than the number of mines. There was a question on how well trained the Mozambique army is in de-mining. That is really a question that you would have to put to the Mozambique army. I suspect that Foreign Affairs would be in a much better position to answer or find the answer to that one than Defence. Similarly, the UN's timetable for completing the job would once again be an issue for the UN to answer. I suggest that question would be better put through our appropriate people in Foreign Affairs and Trade. There was a line of questioning, I think from Senator Faulkner, on the interface with strategic command in DIMIA and another committee.

Senator HOGG—It would have been.

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—The only formal interface we had in committee terms was the people-smuggling task force or IDC or high level group that has been discussed quite regularly in various fora. Of course, we have a lot of informal contact with DIMIA and a range of other departments. I trust that answers those questions on notice.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Air Vice Marshal Titheridge, can I go back to the Jakarta matter?

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—Certainly.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—In case seeing the email does not answer these questions, I ask whether the email was a response to the embassy receiving a copy of the AMSA warning?

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—It sounds like it was. I am reading through the email. I will read the relevant section of the email and that might solve the problem of getting it declassified. This part is not classified. The naval attache says in this email:

In regard to a fax I have just received from RCC Australia—

that is the Rescue Coordination Centre—

re an overdue SIEV bound for Christmas Island, I find it unusual, to say the least, that we are sending out such vessel overdue reports to BASARNAS for action based on our sketchy intel of boat departures.

It goes on to say:

Does RCC Australia want to do the same for every SIEV we think is departed and has not turned up yet?

He says, 'I think this is a precedent we do not wish to go down,' or words to that effect. The email was in response to a fax from RCC obviously to the embassy.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—So this naval attache is referring to sketchy information which we now know from Coastwatch was the subject of discussion back to the Federal Police. We are now told that at the time that fax went off there had in fact been confirmation of the departure. Was there no communication back to the naval attache indicating that there was now a confirmed departure and that the information was less sketchy?

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—This was on the 22nd we are talking about? This was a couple of days after the sinking.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Yes.

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—I cannot answer that question.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—It was not a couple of days after the sinking, 22 October. You believe the sinking occurred earlier than 22 October?

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—I am not sure of the date of the sinking. I would have to check that. It is not a question I can answer.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—All I am asking is: there was no further contact back to the naval attache in relation to his concern?

Air Vice Marshal Titheridge—Not that I have a record of, no.

Dr Hawke—We were about to move to some answers to questions that Senator Collins asked yesterday. The inspector-general, Mr Claude Neumann, will respond to those.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS—Those questions were from the day before, I think it was.

Dr Hawke—The day before, sorry.

Mr Neumann—I can confirm that information supplied by Mr Byrne to the former Minister for Defence relating to Ridgewell Pty Ltd was passed to my office for examination and consideration in the context of findings made in a previous internal audit. Advice was given to Mr Luke Donnellan, of Mr Byrne's office, in January 2002 that this examination of the Ridgewell documents was not able to determine the claims of unfair dealing, unreasonable change of scope and undue delay. In regard to the issue of whether the Commonwealth should pay Ridgewell a debt that Ridgewell claims it is owed, the auditors found that 'it is not clear whether any entity owes Ridgewell money'. However, it is not clear to my officers or me whether these documents are the same documents as those in your possession.

The two other questions related to the scope of the internal audit and the external audit. In terms of the external audit, in the media release by Minister Reith the first paragraph says:

In response to the continuing concern over facilities management at HMAS *Cerberus*, I have asked the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) to conduct an independent investigation.

That leaves it wide open. At the bottom, in the last paragraph, it says:

Public accountability and the maintenance of public confidence in the efficient employment of resources by Defence is important. To that end I have now asked that the ANAO conduct an investigation into the matters associated with facilities management at HMAS *Cerberus*.

To that extent they are open. In terms of the original internal audit, they were similarly open. The secretary wrote back to a particular person saying:

I have referred your letter to the Inspector-General of Defence for his attention.

I actually wrote internally within the department asking my auditors to look at the matter.