MEDIA MONITORS

Transcript

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Item:	**MAJOR GENERAL JIM MOLAN TODAY DELIVERS AN INSIGHTFUL SPEECH ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES AS CHIEF OF OPERATIONS IN THE WAR IN IRAQ.** **INTERVIEWEES: MAJOR GENERAL JIM MOLAN**		

Demographics:	Male 16+	Female 16+	All people	ABs	GBs
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

JIM MOLAN: It's a - it is difficult subject to speak on. The title *Running the War in Iraq* was a working title and I was assured by the publishers that the last thing that comes out of the process of writing a book is the final title and we finished the editing processing and we had the same title. And I said: What about the title? And they said: We like *Running the War in Iraq* and I said: Well, General Casey probably thought that he was running the war in Iraq.

But, I guess, General Casey was commanding the war in Iraq and as chief of operations, I think it's fair to say that I was running the war in Iraq. And for an Australian, that was a great honour and it's a great honour for Australia to fit in to such a circumstance.

And it's always problem talking to people, and this audience maybe typical or not, it's a problem talking to people about the war in Iraq because the way that they look at the way is invariably formed

by a couple of things. The first thing is whether or not you supported the invasion. If you didn't support the invasion, anything that followed it is not worth considering.

And the second most common thing is our humanity and in the detail with which wars are now reported, we see the death and destruction and the violence and the tragedy of war all the time. And we've seen it for some time now. But most good people think that anything that involves such appalling violence cannot be good.

It has been difficult, I must admit, to talk to most audiences about the war in Iraq because the war in Iraq to most people is the invasion. And if I leave you with one thing, I would like to leave you with the view that at the risk of sounding like Rumsfeld, there are many wars in Iraq. And I will talk about the second war in Iraq which was the counter-insurgency. I did not invade Iraq. I was sent to the counter-insurgency that followed the war in Iraq.

If I may, I'll use this more for myself than for you. But I really want to speak today about certain themes and I want to start with a disclaimer and that disclaimer is that, even with the problems that we've got in the ADF, I acknowledge that we have never been better since the end of the Vietnam War - we have never been better since the end of the Vietnam War. However, there are still an awful lot of problems.

I believe that we're as well led strategically as we have been for as long as I know and I'm not critical at all of our leaders or our soldiers. I believe that the recovery point following 30 years of financial neglect of the Australian Defence Force was East Timor in 1999 and the situation we found ourselves in, in 1999, we were worse than even we thought in 1999. Our capability as a defence force has deteriorated even more than the Australian Defence Force thought and the bar for current military performance has in fact lifted.

The degree of capability that you need to fight in a war like Iraq, in a modern urban counter-insurgency, is far higher than I had ever imagined. Now we've done superbly, everything the Government's asked and we are a security provider and a security leader as the Government asks us to be. Exactly what this means, and I think it will continue into the current government and the current white paper, maybe not in those words, but in some words, a security provider and a security leader. It really comes down to what you mean by those words.

On the downside of what I'll talk about, we have limited experience of joint offensive combat operations. You don't win wars by being defensive and it is a totally different game if you're conducting offensive operations in any area than if you're conducting defensive operations, if you're in a particular area, just to protect yourself.

It's ironic that as soon as you go to war you stop training because you focus narrowly on the task that you are given, and you stop training across the wide basis that defence force needs - that most defence forces need to be to then be able to adapt in any unpredictable direction. So we do lose a bit because we're at war but the balance is normally that you're gaining extraordinary experience in your officer and NCO core in combat operations and, at this stage, we're gaining very little of that experience.

There's an awful lot in the Australian Defence Force that just doesn't work and that should be a concern to us. Thirty years of neglect, 10 years of spending and we're still not back to where we should be. What frightens me is what will happen in the next 10 years of the DCP, the Defence Capability Plan, as it goes into the next 10 years. I'm sure the major items will survive, whether the connectors and the enablers that make the whole thing work will survive, is a question.

Our two weaknesses, and I will illustrate them when I talk about the book, compared to the demands of modern war are our inability to conduct, or our less ability to conduct, joint tactical combat operations and our general-ship, that is how to run campaigns. And the last point I'll make is that I believe that our rhetoric is dangerous. We're confusing talking up the roles of our soldiers and paying them their due with our ability to criticise ourselves internally.

I've written a fairly simple straightforward book, I think, about one person's story and one person's story in modern warfare. What that provides is a view on how modern warfare is conducted. The mixture between the digits and the high technology and the human interactions and a range of other things that I think most people will find interesting. But you can't talk about that without talking about the big issues that underlie warfare, about why we're there, the legality, the morality, the violence et cetera, and I do that, but I do try and limit myself to one particular chapter.

Although we may have gotten ourselves into Iraq in a way that is very, very controversial, the worst thing that could ever have happened to us would be to have then lost the counter-insurgency. So regardless of how we got in, I don't think there was ever a choice about not winning the counter-insurgency.

I didn't know much about Iraq. I had a couple of weeks' notice to go to Iraq. I found out that Iraq - two times out of three I could pick it on a map. It's an extraordinarily big country. It is so like the majority of Australia, I found it unbelievable, even to the eucalypts, even to the gum trees.

It's 1000 kilometres across and 1000 kilometres north-south. It's got 27,000 million people. It's got a [indistinct], it's got mountains, it's got deserts. If 40 years of defence white paper policy had produced a defence force that was optimised for Australia, you

would have thought that it couldn't fight in Iraq. And we should be able to say to ourselves, did that white paper defence policy produce the defence force that could operate in Iraq because Iraq has everything that we need for operations in Australia and around our region? If we're not optimised for Iraq and/or Australia, I wonder what we are optimised for.

Iraq is big, but the point I would make is that just because it's a big war, in a big country being fought by a lot of big armies, the lessons that lie at the centre of this war as they relate to combat are no different for the Australian Defence Force. Even though the war was unpopular, even though it's a big war, we must learn from the operations that are being conducted in Iraq.

The global war on terror is a worldwide activity and I would suggest that Iraq is a long way, away from us but I put to you that one country in the world that would have suffered most, had there been a precipitous withdrawal of US forces, would have been Australia, on the simple basis that what I saw a tiny number of people do in Iraq, to disrupt that society, if it had have been applied in due course, as the Chechens and the Afghans moved to Iraq, if they had have moved to other Islamic countries, particularly in our region, the impact on a new fragile democracy, such as Indonesia, I believe would have been quite spectacular. And I think we've got to learn - we've got to learn from this war

even though many of us opposed it and even though it has extraordinary violence attached to it.

The Australian Government sent me to Iraq with that brief. I received a directive, a confidential directive, the basis of which was to carry out other tasks as directed by the Commanding General of the Multi-National Force - Iraq, nothing specific in it. I was to go there and be chief of operations and do whatever he said as long as it was legal.

The Prime Minister made a speech in parliament and he said Molan's going to Iraq to plan military operations, find insurgent cells, destroy those cells and protect the coalition and the Iraqi people. And it's a demanding statement to say the least, but it wasn't bad in that I played my part in a role - my part in a force, a very big force, that did exactly that.

I went to Iraq as the chief of operations and this picture shows me standing on the Iraqi-Iranian border pretending that I'm Macarthur. The experience I had in Iraq was not an Australian experience, it was an American experience. I replaced an American two star that went into the - that was in the chief of operations job and I was replaced by an American two star.

And although the US got itself into Iraq - it always had the choice of not doing it - once it was in Iraq it was in a war of necessity. It was not a war of choice

for the Americans at that stage. And a lot of our misunderstanding of how the Americans operate and why they operate and what they do was because we, as an Australian force, a very small Australian force on the edge of a very big war, in a war of choice and highly restricted in what we were doing, were looking at an enormous American force conducting a war or necessity.

And the ideas, the tactic and the attitudes, although always legal - except for individual failures - institutionally legal and moral, were totally different from the Australian approach to this war yet the two lots of soldiers were standing side by side.

I guess, I tried to make sense of the war when I came back and I apologise for the detail of this but it certainly suits my purposes admirably and I offer it to you. The average counter-insurgency in the 20th century went for nine years, yet the screams for us to have solved the war in the second year were quite extraordinary. And I don't expect us to learn anything, as a society, but certainly specialists in those areas must know.

Now, I've put along the bottom there the years. That's the year that I was there, roughly the second year of the war and, of course, we've heard in the last of couple of days that the Americans - or there is talk between the Iraqis and Americans - that their forces will be out by 2011 and that's pretty well an average period of time for a counter-insurgency.

But if you look at the different parts and, again at the risk of sounding like Rumsfeld, the invasion went swimmingly. In the first year after the invasion we missed opportunity after opportunity and the Americans are the first to acknowledge that and they've done it in a magnificent written document which has just come out.

In the second year of the war, we learnt the war; because you must learn the war and adapt. No war is every like the previous war and you've got to learn and adapt from what you are. So we learn, we fought and we built institutions.

In the third year of the war we ran three elections, extraordinary events, three elections. We tried to transition the fight to the Iraqis and we fought continually. In this year you might notice that V there shows where the - when we thought at the end of 2005, we were probably doing relatively well, our noses were just above the water.

And, of course, our enemies didn't sit back and applaud us, they changed the war entirely and went for the sectarian issues, which meant that we then had to totally relearn a new war, re-focus, re-equip and change things entirely. The surge came up about here and has now been running through to about this time here.

And the surge, of course, was an extraordinarily brave thing for President Bush to do. And for all the

criticisms that he might receive, when his congress was against him, when the proportion - 70 per cent I think of the American people were against the surge, and against the war - I thought we would lose the war about there. I thought that this will not happen. We won't surge, we'll back out. He didn't, he put the surge in and at the same time as 25,000 US troops went in and came home, 100,000 Iraqi troops more were formed and they're not going home and ultimately they will win the war.

The policy now at this stage is that I certainly hope that the provincial elections will occur at the end of this year and the next level of national elections will occur some time next year.

We are now back to a stage, I would suggest, about now where we were at the end of 2005 trying to transition the fight back to the Iraqis in its fullness and the Iraqis now, with a military of 500,000 people, have taken over an awful lot of the conflict.

And I keep asking myself, what is the surprise? We are doing - I would never say we're winning. There are distinct signs of success and in that case we would expect to be surprised. And I wonder if the surprise will be in Iraq or if it will be somewhere else?

As I looked at this period here from the post invasion to right now, I think to myself, we tried to reconstruct this company in almost - this country in

almost a total absence of security and if we made an error that was our error.

We went in with less troops, we tried to reconstruct when there was no chance of reconstruction because we've only got to a start now - to a stage now where we've established the security in order to apply counter-insurgency theory and that counter-insurgency theory is that you touch the hearts and minds.

Prior to now if you touched an Iraqi's heart and mind he would wake up dead the next morning and that's quite literal.

I was a member of coalition of 28 nations. Our legality was that we were there under a United Nations Security Council resolution. Twenty eight nations, only two were fighting. Parts of other countries fought on occasions.

If you look at these two soldiers, and with our own experience, we were fighting a bunch of insurgents. And we all think of a bunch of insurgents as being, you know, they can't be as good as us.

But we have spent billions in our own military and the Americans and the Brits have spent billions raising the individual capability of a soldier to actually fight a modern urban insurgent and I'll talk about that a little bit more later on.

The Iraqi military - the Iraqi security force when I first arrived in Iraq in April of 2004, had five battalions. I arrived in the middle of the first battle of Fallujah and we tried to get four of those battalions to go to Fallujah. Three immediately deserted.

We were asking them to do something that was totally unreasonable. In the year that I was there we went from five Iraqi battalions to 113 battalions and it cost $5 billion. We spent $5 billion to create those 113 battalions.

You may be aware that the Australian Defence Force at the moment is creating two battalions, hardened and networked, two battalions over many years at the cost of many billions of dollars. And people wonder why we haven't created a super combat force.

The Iraqis now have 189 combat battalions and they're now building their support organisation. It is an internal security force and it will ultimately win the war in Iraq.

The Afghan National Army is about 60,000. The Americans have just announced they're putting $20 billion over five years to bring it up to about 120,000.

There is a number of troops - when you try to solve a counter-insurgency, there is a minimum number

of troops below which you will not win. You may not lose immediately but you'll just stagger on for years and years and years and I think there's a real lesson in that for Australia.

The enemy we fought in Iraq was a very complex enemy and the old saying that a terrorist is someone who has a bomb but doesn't have an air force, well, I had both a bomb and I had the best air force in the world. And I used them very, very frequently because it's one of the fewer areas of true asymmetry that we can apply to an enemy.

The one consistent thing about our enemies in Iraq was their abuse of their institutionalised abuse of the laws of armed conflict. Their misuse of mosques, of medical institutions such as the ambulance we see there and of cultural institutions, a total abuse of the laws of armed conflict at an institutional level.

The individual enemies we fought were very impressive. Look at the faces of these soldiers. These aren't 17 year old kids opposing us. Seventeen year old kids were there and often they were sacrificed but there are a lot of very, very smart fighters. And they were fighting defensively in an urban environment which gives them an extraordinary advantage.

Of the four groups that we identified the Sunni insurgents, of course, were fighting for what had

gone on in the past and they have now, through the Sunni awakening and the Sons of Iraq movement, generally come across to our side.

The al-Qaeda terrorists were fighting for something that occurred in about the 11th Century and they have been solidly defeated on the battlefield. The Shia militias have been - and they were fighting for, I was never too sure exactly - they were fighting for an individual. They were fighting because they hated an occupational army - an occupying army. They were never more than 10,000 strong in the first instance. Then they went up to about 30,000 strong but they have effectively been disarmed this year and we'll see whether they do rearm and come back again.

And the criminals were there as they are at the end of every dictatorship, every break down in law and order, and they'll stay there forever.

The enemy's major tactic was the use of violence in a way that impacted on world media that then impacted on our humanity and that impacted upon our resolve to fight in the war. And the major tactic within our opposition then is fundamentally illegal.

Now we had individual breakdowns of the law of armed conflict, individual illegalities, and people will criticise us for that. At least we invariably took action and, of course, if some guy is put before a court, examined and then released, those that don't

like the war will say that he was obviously guilty and he should have been thrown into gaol.

But at least institutionally we applied it and 99 per cent of our soldiers, if not more, acted legally. The fundamental activity of those we oppose - this is not Rob Roy or Robin Hood or Ned Kelly. There is a lot of evil in the forces that we face and it's war amongst the people.

By the most generous methods of calculation, I guess, something between sixty and ninety thousand Iraqis have died according to the Iraq body count website, to the UN and to the Iraqi Government. And others maintain up to 650,000 and more may have died. Regardless, it's an appalling activity to conduct war amongst the people. It's illegal and the reason that our enemies conduct it there is for exactly that reason.

I was chief of operations and in that position I controlled the operations of all the forces across all of Iraq from the strategic level. I went to Iraq with two bodyguards which to me indicated a naivety about what the war was on the Australian part that was mind boggling.

When I left Iraq I had 12 bodyguards and four armoured vehicles had been attacked 15 times, four of which were serious attacks on the ground and one in the air. I had four magnificent members of our special forces as my bodyguard and four

American reservists and four American full time air force ground personnel in my bodyguard.

And being a little bit taller than the average bear my bodyguard was concerned about how they were going to protect me because I was definitely a bit target. I carried a rifle only because I'm not very good at pistols. They tried to teach me how to fire pistols but I gave up in the end and carried a rifle.

If I was going to be the one person standing at the end of the car bomb as they came to make me a video star then I was going to have a pistol - I was going to have a rifle in my hand. The general carrying a rifle caused great consternation amongst my bodyguard.

The sergeant in charge of my bodyguard came up one day and said: Sir, we're a bit worried about you carrying a rifle. And we know that if something happens you'll want to have a shot but our job is to keep you alive and if something happens we'll get you away as fast as possible and if it's going really well we might let you fire a shot or two.

I've got to say I thought that was a fair deal. But my duties - my responsibilities covered the full range of modern warfare from what we call the three block war type responsibilities - humanitarian operations, peacekeeping operations and combat.

But as distinct from what most of us expected a three block war to be about, it's now significantly more and, when I look back, Vietnam was exactly the same. On top of the traditional three block war you have conventional operations and we conducted conventional operations on many, many occasions.

I point this out often and a number of Vietnam veterans have come up and said, it's no different. It's exactly what we did in Vietnam. So my responsibilities went from providing essential services to the Iraqi people to day to day combat within places like Saada city, Basra, Mosul, all throughout.

That's a shot there of an M1 tank which has been destroyed by those relatively simple insurgents and you can destroy these tanks and they will be destroyed. But there is no way in the world would I ever conduct military operations in an urban environment without tanks, in anything above the Solomon Islands or East Timor.

Because of the fact that if you're conducting war amongst the people you always take the first hit. You always take the first hit unless you're doing a Chechnyan type Russian model, so you must absorb the first hit.

When you've absorbed the first hit you can get out and get around and do things that are very clever, but you must absorb the first hit. And, of course, the

enemy has a say in this and they fight very, very well and - which makes it difficult for me to ever take seriously the continual desire amongst the commentariat to take us back to a light infantry option in this country.

Light infantry are more than adequate, as is the Australian Federal Police, in places like the Solomon Islands. Anything above that and you must have militaries that can fight.

Fallujah was - the second battle of Fallujah was a fine example of a conventional operation conducted by heavily armed troops against an insurgent and terrorist force which, much to our amazement, absolute amazement, decided to stay and fight and we thought that they would take off. Now we tried to stop them taking off whilst permitting the population of Fallujah to go but this was a conventional World War II type of attack used when the enemy could actually be held in one place.

And it succeeded brilliantly and allowed us to conduct the election that was following. We conducted the election and a lot of my responsibility was the conduct of the first Iraqi election for many, many years - the first relatively free Iraqi election for many, many years - in January of 2005.

And a lot of people criticised us for the election and they said, Iraqis don't understand democracy. Well

that's a great shot of an Iraqi woman who had just voted. Yes she probably didn't understand democracy. There's a lot about this building that I don't understand. She probably voted along sectarian lines.

Well, so did my parents and millions of Australians in the '50s voted along sectarian lines. But she knew, as did eight and a half million people in this activity, out of 12 million voters, and on the second and third elections in 2005, there were 14 million voters eligible. In the first election, eight and a half million voted. In the second and third, about 12 million people voted.

Now, that's an extraordinary expression by a people who may not understand the intricacies and the institutions don't exist but they want a say in how their country is being run. And I guess I'll conclude by just looking very quickly at so what? And I guess the biggest so what is the upcoming white paper and the point that I'd make is the defence white paper is not defence policy - is not Defence capability - it's just words. For the 40 years I spent in the Defence Force we've used roughly the same words - self-reliance, ANZUS, warning time, balance force, sea air gap, defensive Australia-type concepts. And if you look at them I've never - and they have always been in our white papers. They've always been our defence policy.

I have never been in a defence force which by any logical definition of the term self-reliant has been

self-reliant - never. ANZUS - of course, ANZUS should be the centrepiece of our security policy. If it is, it would be my view that at some stage we've got to pay our dues.

The El Salvadorians fought more in Iraq than we did and they got a lot of kudos out of it. The Italians fought more in Iraq than we did. We were there, but we didn't do much. There is - there are limits around all of this and every visiting American to Australia will say what a fantastic job we're doing, no two ways about it, because they're very polite.

Warning time is an interesting concept. If it ever existed, I believe it is much shorter now than it ever was. A balanced force is a fine thing to have and generally across the ADF we have a balanced force but, of course, it's only balanced if it actually works and so much of it doesn't work. And if you've got a big block in the centre that doesn't work you can't have a balanced force and, of course, the sea air gap - if you're defending Australia the sea air gap's probably 4000 kilometres. If you're defending the interests of Australia the sea air gap's probably 10,000 kilometres.

So, for 40 years now we've had a white paper policy and we've produced our current Defence Force and I guess we'd have to ask ourselves, are we happy with it?

On the left-hand side of that slide I'd be relatively happy with that. I think we should be happy with those things. On the right hand side I would question each and every one. Each and every one - and if you would like to - we could save discussion, I guess, on that for question time. However, I have great faith in the DCP - in the Defence Capability Plan. I would say that it's still my hope that the ADF of 2018 should be able to fight but can we fight now?

At the moment we have a range of individual, single service, dislocated capabilities that are sent to low combat areas under foreign control to conduct limited defensive operations with, of course, the exception of a very small number of special forces. What should the ADF be able to do? Well, I tried to make that even smaller than I've made it there because it's appallingly esoteric military gobbledygook but there's a PhD in every word. We think we're joint but we don't do anything sophisticatedly joint.

Complex terrain - we must be able to operate in complex terrain. At the moment we're - the need is to operate in urban complex terrain because most of the western nations in the world can kill you if you stand out in the open. If you stand next to the woman who you saw in the picture before who's just voted, it's much more difficult for us to get you and sustained operations and sustained combat change everything. Anyone can do anything small. Anyone can do anything for a very short period of

time. If you try and sustain it as an operation, or particularly if it's combat and people are being killed, it's a whole new game.

I have some faith in the future because the DCP didn't just arise. It's come up in a pretty good way and we should be able to conduct sophisticated joint operations in complex terrain if the major items in the DCP are maintained. Now, they seem to be. That seems to be the case. If the RAAF and the RAN receive more manpower. If the enablers such as logistics and intelligence and the connectors such as the - such as communications and command and control are also obtained. If we develop war amongst the people capabilities.

We - everyone in this room knows exactly what happened in relation to Abu Ghraib. Surely we should have in Australia a detention capability proportional to our overall needs. If we invest in our commanders and our command and if there is a statement - a basic statement - of what we want the ADF to do, not defend Australia and its interests. It's - that's almost totally useless for force structuring. We must say how and we must say with what.

A last comment, if I may, on Afghanistan in 2008. The biggest error that we made in the second year of the war in Iraq in 2004 was that we didn't have unity of effort or command, we didn't have a comprehensive plan and we didn't have sufficient troops. Apart from that it was going swimmingly.

We are making exactly the same mistake now and - although none of us have done much. The Americans have moved in, have sold the unity of effort by putting one of their people in command of everything.

There's a chance now they'll get a comprehensive plan up. It's going to be difficult working with NATO. A comprehensive plan and I think we are years away from getting anything that approaches sufficient troops into Afghanistan. Under the old fashioned computations, you might look at Afghanistan and say, we probably need half a million people there. We've got roughly 65,000 foreign troops and 62,000 Afghan National Army troops. That's just a little bit short. It doesn't mean we'll lose tomorrow. What it means is that we will mush on for an indeterminate period of time. One more French battalion is not going to make any difference at all.

In March of next year hopefully we'll get two new American brigades and I suggest the year after that we'll probably get another three brigades if it's still needed. So if we do nothing our friends will come in and solve it for us.

So. If I could close by making the following observations. What's going on in the Middle East is very, very relevant to Australia. Militaries must still be able to fight. The warning time which is the time that you need to fix everything that you've got before you can actually use it, if it ever existed, is

very short. And if Australia is to express its sovereignty and not build a defence force designed to be handed to the Americans or the Brits, its defence force should be able to work with itself. Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much for that, and I'll be very happy to take any questions.

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