
Correspondence

To the Editor

Dear Sir,

I was disappointed to read in Professor Desmond Ball's article, "Rushing Headlong to Infirmity: Australian Defence Policy and Force Structure Development" in your November [2007, the editor] edition of The Kokoda Foundation's "Security Challenges" a perpetuation of inaccuracies and mistruths about the Abrams tank. First, I was disappointed to see that Professor Ball used published but incorrect information about the Abrams tank without checking with Army. Second, I was disappointed with your own editorial efforts in allowing these inaccuracies and mistruths to be published in what is otherwise a high class journal with a considerable potential to both inform and shape the national debate on our future strategic environment.

The facts are:

- The Abrams tank in combat configuration weighs approximately 62,000kg or 62 metric tonnes.
- The Abrams tank can travel on roads in the Northern Territory including those in and around Katherine.
- The Abrams tank has already been moved across both rail and road networks in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Victoria and the ACT. (I have separately sent Professor Ball copies of photographs of the tank in the ACT, Melbourne, Mt Bunday - 130km south of Darwin by road, Puckapunyal, and Cultana in South Australia.)
- The Abrams tank can be carried on our current amphibious ships. (Photos supplied)
- The Abrams tank can be carried across much of our rail network. (Photos supplied)

Leopard needed replacing and the Abrams is a world class tank that is widely deployable should it be required. I hope we do not have to deploy Abrams but I fear at some stage in the future we will have to send it to support combat operations. When we do it will do what tanks do best, "tanks save lives".

No matter how much some would like to denigrate the Abrams tank I would much prefer that you and they dealt in facts rather than tired old mistruths and inaccuracies. I issue an open invitation to Professor Ball and others to come and see the tanks for themselves and to become better informed.

Yours sincerely,

P.F. Leahy

Lieutenant General
Chief of Army
29 February 2008