

Marrickville Peace Group
c/- 17 Riverside Crescent
MARRICKVILLE
NSW 2204

Senator the Hon David Johnston
Minister for Defence
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA
ACT 2600

August 11, 2014

Dear Mr Johnston

Marrickville Peace Group has become intrigued by the role being played in Australia's defence, by Major General Richard Burr.

General Burr is an officer in the Australian army. However, we understand that he is currently deputy commander of the United States' Army in the Pacific. <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/australian-general-gets-key-us-army-post>

We do not understand how this arrangement works and would appreciate an explanation. From which government (the Australian or the US) does General Burr receive instructions? To which country does he owe his primary allegiance? How does he manage to 'serve two masters'?

Recently, a photograph of General Burr was observed on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/khaanquest/photos/a.656763241065951.1073741845.154261931316087/656763701065905/?type=1&theater>). The text indicates that the General was photographed in Mongolia, during joint US/Mongolian exercises. However, General Burr is dressed in what appears to be his Australian uniform. This photograph illuminates the questions in the previous paragraph. Which country is General Burr representing, Australia or the US?

The group is not alone in pondering this matter. It notes that ex-PM Malcolm Fraser has also raised concerns about General Burr's role in his book 'Dangerous Allies'.

The group is aware that the military alliance between the US and Australia is extremely close. In General Burr's case it seems to have reached a situation where, as President Obama once remarked, 'You can't tell where our guys end and you guys begin'. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-us-and-australian-service-members> .

Marrickville Peace Group is of the view that Australia stands altogether too close to the US, militarily. The military interests of the two nations do not necessarily always co-incide. Like ex-PM Fraser, the group believes that Australia should seek greater strategic independence. Hence our questions about the general.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Deane
For Marrickville Peace Group.