

CALFS PODCAST – SUMMARY OF SESSION 3

Commentary Team: LTCOL Leon Young, MAJ Cate Carter, Dr Charles Knight, Dr Lyndal Thompson

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0:00

LEON YOUNG: Well, welcome to this third podcast in the series where we're looking at the third session being *Generating Land Power through Partnering*, and today we had the pleasure of Major General Greg Bilton who's the Deputy Chief of Joint Operations and then the Commander of the PNGDF, General Toropo and followed by Mr Richard Sadler, First Assistant Secretary within DFAT, and we finally finished up with Deputy Commissioner Glen Dunbier from the New Zealand Police. With me you've got Cate Carter, Lyndal Thompson and Charles Knight, and we're just going to have a quick discussion over what we heard today and how it was different in some of the recurring themes that we've seen. And look, quite frankly, from my point of view, I saw it as a two-speed sort of session today. The majority of it really felt like a bit of a resume of the organisations represented today where they were really went over what they did - it didn't really provide much in the way of new material and with the real exception being Glen Dunbier who really provided a good personal perspective which I would like to cover later. But I guess I'm going back to what the others covered, we really saw the emergence again of building trust and relationships.

1:30

CHARLES KNIGHT: That comment that I was talking about – about 'trust can't be surged' - it was made earlier today.

CATE CARTER: Yeah that's right. I think... I think the theme of *equality in partnerships* was possibly a variation on the theme today, so that we had some nations, particularly PNGDF which reiterated the idea that there are no big or small partners. We are past that and we really need to not play one partner against another as well, and we need to bring what is our expertise to the table in the partnership and the particular crisis that we are responding to.

LEON YOUNG: Yeah, it's a great point Cate, and particularly reinforced. I think what we're really got out of today were some really good examples of successful partnerships and how they

could work well, and certainly General Bilton talked about three requirements for a successful partnership from his experience, and one is that *being respectful of sovereignty*; second, *being respectful of culture*; and the last thing - last one *being respectful of needs and wants of the partners* which we saw that theme flow into question time as well.

CATE CARTER: Just one point on that 'needs and wants of partners' - I found that really fascinating from Greg Bilton - that the one point of difference that I hadn't seen before in conversations such as this was really a kind of inductive approach to partnerships versus a deductive approach. So, rather than coming to a partnership, for instance a joint exercise or activity, with a pre-designed plan and imposing it on the partners, we see what they want to do, and we see what everyone's priorities are and it might not be - it might not fit the paradigm. It might not fit the exercise paradigm. It might not fit our foreign policy paradigm, but it's really responding to their needs and designing an engagement activity to suit that.

3:24

CHARLES KNIGHT: It was an interesting point that came out in question time about the preparation to engage and the suggestion that it's not sufficient to just be prepared - to be willing to do it - you actually need certain skills. And one of the seniors acknowledged that he'd sort of learned on the job how to work through a translator - fairly basic things like look at the person to whom you're talking, rather than the translator who's going to translate it for you. Put your message down into bite-size chunks that will be coherent when they're translated, so you know, real practical skills support engagement.

LEON YOUNG: Yeah, and I think what really came out of this session whilst a lot of the previous sessions all highlighted the importance of relationships and international engagement, this one really focused on how to do that better. And we saw, I think, two of the quotes: one was from General Toropo about to *ensure you are in the wakka* - that you, you are part of the group, part of the journey along the way, which is absolutely echoed by Glen Dunbier who said '*we're all in this canoe together*' and therefore we need to be. It's all... for them, it was really about the journey, and I think what I'll do is quickly cut to his discussions about culture there - where we, certainly in the military and the police, he reflected that we have an *action bias* and I know Cate, you made a few comments about that previously, would you like to...?

CATE CARTER: Well, I just think that the point about listening was emphasised today and that the way we could change our engagement strategy, is a focus on listening rather than sharing. That's - sharing is a kind of - an active activity: listening's a passive. It's to do with the ethic of attention that we need to give others in the region so that we identify their needs and then we can respond to them. I think, I think there was an encouraging turn in that kind of language that was used today about listening and I haven't heard that as strongly as today.

CHARLES KNIGHT: And I think that reflects the mood of this entire conference compared to previous conference as we mentioned yesterday, there is the whole tone of the Australian engagement with the region is frankly more respectful. We are seeing that again.

LEON YOUNG: Absolutely. And in fact, I was going to say, Deputy Commissioner Dunbier's comments were really insightful when he talked about the different - understand the different cultures and this goes back to General Bilton's point about being respectful of culture, so when General Bilton mentioned that, he didn't really go through the detail, whereas I feel Glen really addressed that quite well. And talking about... he highlighted the, the difference between military and policing, but on top of that particular about planning and they loved to just react really quickly, where we love a good plan, and we like to do that first. But then compared to a lot of our civilian agencies which we're... which we asked to partner with, we're very action biased, and that can then lead to a domination of that partnership to the, which can then in fact degrade and never actually achieve, whilst you may achieve the objectives, you never actually achieve that long-term partnership that we all actually after.

6:37

LYNDAL THMPSON: And that's where culture actually spoke not just to international engagement and understanding of culture but understanding of the culture within different agencies and where they might contribute to a domestic combined, I guess, operation, and I think Richard Sadler from DFAT spoke to that well when he was talking about the connection between diplomacy and the Army, and talking about bringing in ideas such as the role of markets. And that was something different that I think he brought in. It's been referred - we've had a slight reference to that in terms of the engage - the importance of engagement with Defence industry and other civilian organisations, but I think what Richard brought in was the idea of open markets as, I guess, a conduit for working together.

LEON YOUNG: Yes, that's right - and that's not one we saw before. Most of the other sessions talked about either the Defence institutions themselves being in the separate Services, or the Defence industry as that conduit, whereas it was good and refreshing to hear Richard Sadler talk about the other arms of government and the other places that we can actually start to build on those. And I think I guess I must reflect that General Bilton's comment about respect for culture for, I think, the way he phrased it and was talking about it is more about different national cultures as you say, Lyndal; whereas Glen was very much about internal cultures within, within your own nation. There were so many different organisational cultures we have to be cognisant of. So, for us, you know, an Australian team is not necessarily a team yet - just because you're Australian, you kind of have to build that common understanding.

8:19

CATE CARTER: Yeah, I think Richard Sadler's observation about what he - what DFAT's view of what the ADF offers to their activities: he said the ADF have the following: pers, log, security support, air/sea lift and relationships. So there was an assumption once again, that the ADF is in the position - gets great opportunities to make relationships where no one else should, and if you have the opportunity then you should. So that was the direction we got out of DFAT.

LEON YOUNG: Yep, absolutely. And then I guess one of the other things that came out in question time about partnerships were, I guess, some of the constraints we have with our partnerships. That whilst we have these higher ideals, we want to generate partnerships in our region and across different...in multilateral forums, that there was two things: one is that relationships are often, often hindered by policy, so that whilst we may want to do that, our own political settings do not allow us to fully embrace those partnerships. And the second one is I guess - and this reflects a lot of the conversations that we've had separately - it is about the capacity for our other partners to be able to actually take on more, sort of, activities in even though we want them to do more, they don't actually have the capacity to do so.

CHARLES KNIGHT: I think there was an important point that came out there about policy, because the speaker described a situation where (this was the American speaker) when the Canadians had to go out of the room when the classification level...and the rest. Now we...Australians sometimes experience that from the Americans, but then when *we're* leading a coalition, the same thing happens and that, we need to be mindful of that. The point, the point

was made that it isn't - it's the policy that's excluding the individual or the group not the individual behavior or the relationship, but the strong inference was we really have to think about managing that so that the message - so that it's understood by all parties. It is only a policy thing – and it's very easy to say that in a, in a forum like this but actually when you're out in headquarters and you've got to get some of the, some of the people from another nation who are actually providing a capability that's really useful and the two captains have to be moved out the room, that needs management, it needs exercising and it needs thinking about.

CATE CARTER: Nothing personal. There should be a 'nothing personal' light that comes on as well. That leads into another certainly, bigger idea that I'm starting to hear a bit of a theme - I'm starting to hear the phrase 'like-minded nations', 'like-minded groups' and, and I know you'll both have something to say about this too, Lyndal and Charles, because of your experience with different groups. But I've been hearing that we need to integrate with countries and organisations with whom we have like minds; and I'm wondering whether that's, that's going to be easy, but what we really should be doing is trying to find people who *aren't* like-minded and engaging with them; and this is all about understanding cultures.

LEON YOUNG: It almost goes back to Katja's point on identity dynamics as well.

11:17

LYNDAL THOMPSON: I was just going to say in relation to that, through my previous academic experience, when you're looking at community engagement the people who you most want in the room are those with dissenting voices because that's your opportunity to engage with them. Your like-minded partners are already on board, so you don't have to put in a lot of effort. It's the other players in the game who you really need to work with, and put your effort into and if you're restricting yourself to like-minded partners then you're actually not going to get too far in implementing change and developing security...

LEON YOUNG: It'll always be 'us' and 'them', won't it?

LYNDAL THOMPSON: Yeah, and you know, you kind of want the 'them' in the room to some extent as much as that is possible.

CATE CARTER: Every speaker in these coalitions and and, and international engagement starts with the similarities. They say ‘we’ve been partners because we share this’, and they list the things we share, and maybe that it’s time to focus on the differences so that we actually start with the differences and tackle them first and understand the differences - not try and make them into similarities, and then we will have a greater understanding of other people.

CHARLES KNIGHT: I think that may be important in the region as we... if you look at the geopolitical big picture relationships, particularly with China, because we need to acknowledge and that, you know, we have different, different interests, but that doesn’t preclude constructive relationships. But those things need to be front and centre, rather than skirting around them and pretending they don’t exist, because skirting around them and pretending they don’t exist leads you into decisions that you may later regret.

CATE CARTER: I think we form partnerships very quickly the easy way with countries we identify with – perhaps in an old colonial model – don’t know. I think, I think you’re right. We avoid the engagement with the countries, the cultures that are different from us.

LEON YOUNG: Well I think that’s probably a good point to finish up on. I think it was a very good session - it reinforced a lot of the ideas we already have. Tomorrow we’ve *got The Character of Future Indo-Pacific Land Forces* where we’re led by Major General Toohey, Dr Yu, Professor Genevieve Bell and General Robert Brown. And I guess I wanted to finish on, if I can, on the observation made in question time (so I can’t exactly attribute this one unfortunately), but about the, that all this is about relationship building. It’s about people centric capability. Trust is a capability we’ve heard that that many times and that relies on people and their relationships. And if that’s a capability, then when we look around the floor and we walk around this conference, how many of those stands are people-based and not platform-based capability?