



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**World War II: Japanese Troops,  
Australian Defence Force**

**QUESTION**

**Thursday, 17 July 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## QUESTION

**Date** Thursday, 17 July 2014  
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**Questioner** Lambie, Sen Jacqui  
**Speaker**

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**Responder** Johnston, Sen David  
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### World War II: Japanese Troops, Australian Defence Force

World War II: Japanese Troops

Australian Defence Force

**Senator LAMBIE** (Tasmania—Deputy Leader and Deputy Whip of the Palmer United Party in the Senate) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Defence, Senator Johnston. I refer the minister to his Prime Minister's comments where he described Japanese troops of World War II as 'honourable'. Does the minister agree with his Prime Minister's description of World War II Japanese troops?

**Senator JOHNSTON** (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:38): I thank Senator Lambie for that important question. For 70 years now Japan has conducted itself in stark contrast to its history in the 1930s and 40s, and is a peace-loving country that has a constitution that has set it on a path of peace and harmony with both its neighbours and the rest of the world. The fact is we have served in a number of places with Japanese troops. We have been in Cambodia, we have been in East Timor, we have been in Iraq and we are currently in South Sudan with Japan Self-Defense Force members. Those Japan Self-Defense Force members are very, very honourable people. They have conducted themselves in difficult circumstances, in ways where they have extreme restrictions on their rules of engagement. They have participated in harm's way in a way that has been very honourable. Indeed, recently, as I am sure Senator Lambie knows, we have sought to have an increased defence relationship with Japan.

Currently, Japan has for at least 25 years been participating with the United States and with Australia in various trilateral exercises. Currently, Japan participates in RIMPAC every second year, an exercise put on in Hawaii by the United States Navy, by the Central Pacific Command. In all of those instances, Japan has conducted itself with great honour and integrity, and, I say, in contrast to what has gone before historically. Indeed, commercially, our relationship with Japan, more widely, has been a very successful one for Australia. (*Time expired*)

**Senator LAMBIE** (Tasmania—Deputy Leader and Deputy Whip of the Palmer United Party in the Senate) (14:41): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Is the minister concerned about the high rate of suicide of former members of the ADF and will he support my call for a royal commission into the conduct and procedures of Veterans' Affairs?

**Senator JOHNSTON** (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:41): Thank you, Senator Lambie. Let me pull up my brief on this matter.

**Senator Conroy**: Oh, dear. You should have done that first!

The PRESIDENT: Order, Senator Conroy!

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order on my left! Senator Johnston has the call.

**Senator JOHNSTON**: The fact is that we have a serious issue with post-traumatic stress disorder in the ADF. I have taken the time to compare the suicide rates known to us inside the ADF, and with recent veterans members leaving the ADF and going into the Veterans' Affairs jurisdiction, with those of the United States. The comparison is much more favourable for us. The rate is very, very disturbing in the United States. We leave no stone unturned in getting the transition right and in managing the mental health of our people. It occupies our mind every day for several hours. (*Time expired*)

**Senator LAMBIE** (Tasmania—Deputy Leader and Deputy Whip of the Palmer United Party in the Senate) (14:42): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Would the Minister for Defence agree that the transition period between defence and into veterans' affairs is an absolute failure?

**Senator JOHNSTON** (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:42): Senator, I do not agree with that. Senator Ronaldson and I spend an awful lot of time looking at how we take veterans away from defence on their departure from active service, particularly in Army, into the jurisdiction of Veterans' Affairs. We have a huge responsibility to our men and women who have served us so well, particularly in Afghanistan. Of course, we take a great amount of time and put great effort into making sure that that transition, particularly where they have ongoing health issues, is as smooth and seamless as possible.

Senator, I thank you for your question. It is a valid question and it is a good question to ask in this chamber. We take great effort in making sure that the men and women who have served us so well have a seamless transition with all of their health issues into the Veterans' Affairs jurisdiction. It is an important matter and we are very, very much on top of it, can I assure you. *(Time expired)*