

Haliburton – Howard – Australia's Defence - Nuclear

[Lest we forget](#)

By Lis | June 9, 2007

<http://www.stoplaughing.com.au/wordpress/?p=424>

I think, as humans, having short memories is an important survival mechanism. If we remembered everything bad that happened we'd drown in self pity and low self esteem. Instead, we're able to pick ourselves up, brush ourselves off and start all over again ... leaving the past behind us. Governments rely on our short memories, knowing that it's only the soundbite of today that stays in most people's minds. And it's as though we, the voters, all suffer a strange form of dementia – despite all the mistakes and corrupt deals we've observed we happily accept the latest happy soundbite ... **“it's a beautiful day isn't it? it's a beautiful day isn't it? it's a beautiful day isn't it?”** But what if there are some important things we really should remember? Like the photo above. This is John Howard with Mr Dave Lesar, Chairman, President and CEO of **Halliburton** at the opening of **The Ghan railway in 2004**. Halliburton put up 50% of the money to build the Ghan railway (**without any tendering process**) which now transports uranium from South Australia to Darwin. Halliburton is the company Dick Cheney was CEO of before becoming Vice-President of the United States – and the company that still pays him up to \$1 million a year in deferred compensation. In his article [Australia: the new 51st state](#) published in the **New Statesman** in March this year, John Pilger writes that Howard's servility to the US is even greater than Tony Blair's and has earned him the nickname Bush's deputy sheriff.



(Recently) " Vice President Dick Cheney came to Sydney to "thank" Howard for his support. The New South Wales state government rushed through a law that allowed Cheney's 70 secret service guards to carry live weapons. With the police, they took over the centre of Sydney and closed the Harbour Bridge and much of the historic Rocks area. Seventeen-vehicle motorcades swept theatrically here and there, as if Howard was boasting to Cheney: "Look at my control over this society; look at my compliant country." And yet his guest and mentor is a man who, having refused to fight in Vietnam, has brought back torture and lied incessantly about Iraq, who has made millions in stock options as his Halliburton company profits from the carnage and who has vetoed peace with Iran. Almost every speech he gives includes a threat. By any measure of international law, Cheney is a major war criminal."

Halliburton is now under investigation by the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission however its new railway line between Alice Springs and Darwin (constructed by its subsidiary Kellogg, Brown and Root) passes conveniently closely to all three sites commonly expected to become nuclear waste disposal sites, and would be an ideal way to transport nuclear spent fuel arriving either in Darwin, Port Adelaide, or any eastern Australian seaboard port.



In [Australia's New Nuclear Ambitions](#) Richard Broinowski, former diplomat and Adjunct Professor at the University of Sydney, argues that

“without transparency from government about its plans Australians are left uninformed about what is really going on” concerning the Howard government's thinking about nuclear energy. “But, for speculation, there are a number of indicative straws blowing in the wind”, with possibilities including enhanced exports, nuclear waste imports, uranium enrichment, nuclear waste reprocessing, and even nuclear power generation. **“Outlandish as it may seem to many Australians, the challenge may soon be to reassure**

Australia's neighbours, especially Indonesia, that Mr Howard has no plans to build nuclear weapons in Australia.” In 1995, the Labor Prime Minister, **Paul Keating**, set up the **Canberra Commission, designed to kick start a new round of nuclear disarmament**. Its distinguished members included a Nobel Peace Prize winner, Joseph Rotblat, commander of US strategic nuclear forces until 1994 General Lee Butler, former US Secretary of Defence and World Bank President Robert McNamara, and former chief of the British Defence staff

Field Marshall Lord Carver. The Australian participants were the war historian Robert O'Neill and the nuclear diplomat, Richard Butler. None of these men, observed Keating with satisfaction, had come down in the last shower. **But Australia's new conservative prime minister, John Howard, would do no such thing. He and his foreign minister, Alexander Downer, quietly buried the Commission's findings and it never met again. On nuclear issues Howard began to demonstrate the same kind of disregard for established non-proliferation norms as his American patron. He contributed Australian technology and research towards Bush's National Missile Defence system – a sure-fire way to encourage regional nuclear proliferation.** He supported Bush's decision to walk away from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia. He applauded Bush's Nuclear Posture Review of December 2001 and National Security Strategy of September 2002, which together lowered traditional US barriers to the use of nuclear weapons by sanctioning their deployment against suspected adversaries including non nuclear weapons states. **He supported Bush's illegal preventive war-fighting doctrine, or, as Condoleezza Rice called it, 'anticipatory self-defence'. He remained supportive of new US nuclear weapons research,** even though it was directly contrary to the spirit and intention of Article VI of the NPT, a treaty that Foreign Affairs officials continued insisting that Australia still supported. Howard appears to favour expanded uranium sales to more and more customer countries from more and more Australian mines, **even if they are subject to less and less stringent nuclear safeguards. He also contemplates selling to non-signatories of the NPT such as India and Taiwan.** Does Mr Howard want Australian power companies to construct nuclear power reactors of their own? **Would government subsidise the huge cost?** Would he see reprocessing of spent fuel from such reactors, (as Prime Minister John Gorton planned in 1969), as **an opportunity to acquire weapons-grade plutonium for an Australian bomb program?** Would he encourage Australian research at Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) or in Australian universities into weapons-related nuclear technology? **Does he or anyone in the Australian defence establishment, want to resurrect plans for Australia to acquire or build its own nuclear weapons?**

And how does Halliburton fit into all these plans? In [A Profit Powerhouse](#), Sydney Morning Herald 2005, it was pointed out that:

“During the US election campaign, it was revealed that Halliburton had paid Cheney more than \$US2 million in pension payments since he resigned as the boss in 2000 ... Halliburton holds about \$US10 billion (\$12.7 billion) worth of defence contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan, **making it by far the biggest corporate winner in Bush's war on terrorism** ... The US Government Accountability Office found that Halliburton's contract to reconstruct Iraqi oil fields was awarded without full and open competition. There are even anti-Halliburton websites such as <http://www.halliburtonwatch.org>. In Australia, however, while the company has quietly put down deep roots, it has attracted little attention.

Halliburton's involvement in Australian defence industries has grown exponentially in recent years.”

Halliburton subsidiaries successfully tendered for Defence contracts worth \$18 million, provide construction management, educational, computer, professional and other services to a wide range of army, navy and air force operations, including Australia's Baghdad military facilities. It's known that KBR has been involved in a number of projects including some kind of trials at Woomera last year; the long-range Tactical Air Defence Radar System; high-frequency communication systems; and a standing offer for logistics for contract “1354622”, which is not specified. KBR was recently awarded a \$120,000 contract to provide logistical support for the first phase of the Air7000 **project to develop unmanned reconnaissance aircraft for border security.** By 2015 unmanned aircraft will replace the current drones at a cost of \$5.5 billion, protecting maritime assets such as the Southern Ocean fisheries and oil and gas installations on the North-West Shelf. Adelaide's **privatised water company, United Water International** has become a wholly foreign-owned operation. **Questioned in 2002 by The Age about United Water's financial success and rising prices,** Halliburton's representative said:

“We're not here because we love the state and we've got bleeding hearts, for Christ's sake. We're here to make money. We're here to do business.”

This chillingly reminded me of the scene in the movie “The Corporation” where villagers, protesting about having to pay for rainwater, were gunned down.

Halliburton is also involved in public infrastructure projects such as water and energy. Halliburton's Australian connections include:

- An alliance with Western Australia's Water Corporation to maintain Perth's water assets.

- A standing offer for KBR to provide risk management and security strategic advice to the Federal Department of Health and Ageing.
- Organisation of the Melbourne Grand Prix.
- Planning the athletes' village at Homebush Bay in the lead-up to the Sydney Olympics.
- Private-sector projects, including a \$260 million BHP underground pipeline from Port Campbell in Victoria to Adelaide; and a \$630 million ammonia plant on the Burrup Peninsula for an Indian consortium.

Through Kinhill, Halliburton has also become heavily involved in Australian aid programs. In the past two years KBR has secured \$58 million worth of projects through the Federal Government's overseas aid program, AusAID. Contracts include \$13.5 million for a natural disaster mitigation and water resources project in Vietnam and \$22 million for a water supply and sanitation program in India. More recently KBR has won several contracts for the planning of a memorial hospital in Bali and, in November, a five-year, \$13.5 million contract to maintain roads in Papua New Guinea.

So, I wonder, in this supposed democracy we live in, is our Government answerable to the people or to Halliburton? [SBS Dateline Halliburton Down Under](#) October 06, 2004, tells how the company:

"now stands accused of bribery and the rorting of contracts in Iraq which they were given without tender. As Sophie McNeil reports, **the company has a little-known, but significant, presence in Australia, where it is also receiving large government projects without any bidding process involved**" Halliburton's wholly owned subsidiary, Kellogg, Brown and Root or KBR, has its global infrastructure division headquarters in Adelaide. Some 2,500 staff are coordinated out of this office. RICHARD TONKIN: We need the Australian people to learn that **everyone from the Pentagon down is accusing this company of mistruth, of financial manipulation**. It might all seem very far away but the plans that are coming from this office are the plans to generate profit from the aftermath of the bloodshed. And while Halliburton's profile is relatively nonexistent in Australia, in the United States the Halliburton story is everywhere. CHARLIE CRAY, DIRECTOR, CITIZEN WORKS: **They're accused of overcharging taxpayers at least \$61 million for gasoline imported from Kuwait. They're accused of charging the US Government \$150 million-plus for meals that were never served to the troops. In August the defence contract audit agency issued a report which explained that Halliburton could not justify \$1.8 billion out of \$4.3 billion charged to the US taxpayers for its work under one contract in Iraq. The Nigerian Government has frozen all its operations and, as of last week, Halliburton is now banned from operating in that country.** Back home in the United States, Halliburton has become a controversial feature of the presidential race. The links between Halliburton and Bush Vice-President Dick Cheney are under fierce attack.



So why in Australia are Mr Howard's links to Vice-President Dick Cheney not under similar attack?

Halliburton has been awarded over 200 contracts, amounting to more than \$21 million with the Australian Defence Forces. 90 of those contracts have been awarded in the first six months of this year. PETER CHARLTON: **We've already seen local companies lose contracts that they had previously with the ADF basically because they can't compete with Halliburton's size.** Companies like Halliburton have become so big because of a global shift in defence operations policy. In an attempt to cut costs, many military functions are now outsourced to private companies. But there's a debate over whether outsourcing really saves money. PETER CHARLTON: I think the jury is really out on that. I do. It can be a book entry. You can move, say, the

cost of cooks from the defence budget but the private companies that are supplying the meals aren't doing it at – on a cost bases. They're making a profit out of it. PROF CHALMERS JOHNSON, AUTHOR: It's extremely controversial in the United States and there are many members of Congress deeply upset over the waste of taxpayers' money in functions that should be done by the Department of Defense. **This outsourcing of defence has also happened in Australia. And Halliburton's move into the defence market has begun to raise concerns.** In the United States, one of the biggest controversies about Halliburton is the lack of any competitive bidding process before it secured its huge contracts in Iraq. **Dateline has learnt that Halliburton has also received defence contracts here without them going to tender – at least 20 in the last four months.** CHRIS EVANS: What concerns me is that those contracts haven't gone to open tender and that means concerns will be raised, people will have their doubts and the sort of concerns and issues that have arisen inside America will obviously be raised here as well. Despite the efforts of these protesters, it does appear that Halliburton is in for the long haul. It's donated over \$60,000 to both Labor and Liberal parties since the 2001 election and plans to expand its participation in the Australian defence market.

In the meantime, back at the ranch, I've been continuing to explore and link up with new blogs, rang the Sydney Morning Herald to tell them about what we're doing and, on the personal front have been purging the house 4 bags of clothes to St Vincent de Paul and the Smith Family. Also used a thermos when I was making my tea ... because it was so cold today I needed lots of cuppas. I just poured the water out of the thermos each time instead of continually reboiling water and, for my tiny teapot which was too small for the tea cosy I'd been given, I just adapted an old baby beanie I'd had for the boys – found it during my purge.