

Air Commodore Paul A. Cronan AM

Director General Australian Defence Force Legal Service

Education & Professional Legal Qualifications

Air Commodore Paul Cronan received his Bachelor of Laws Degree/Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice from the Queensland Institute of Technology, Brisbane, Queensland in 1982/83 respectively. He was admitted to practice as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Queensland in 1983 and the Australian Capital Territory in 2005. Air Commodore Cronan received his Master of International Law degree from the University of Sydney in 2005.

Career

After a period in private legal practice, Air Commodore Cronan was commissioned into the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as a legal officer in March 1985. From 1985 until July 1993, Air Commodore Cronan held a range of legal positions at the base, command and strategic headquarters' levels including RMAF Butterworth, Malaysia, Headquarters Air Command in Sydney and the Directorate of Air Force Legal Services in Canberra.

In July 1993, Air Commodore Cronan was posted to Washington DC where he undertook a two year legal exchange with the United States Air Force Judge Advocate General's Department specialising in International Law & Environmental Law. On return to Canberra in July 1995, Air Commodore Cronan was appointed Acting Director of Discipline Law until taking up the position of Staff Officer Legal at Headquarters Air Command in Sydney in January 1997.

In January 2001, Air Commodore Cronan commenced duties as the J06 (Chief Legal Officer) at Headquarters Australian Theatre in Sydney (now Headquarters Joint Operations Command), a position he held for the next three years. During this posting, the ADF was involved in a period of unparalled operational tempo involving the planning and conduct over 35 ADF operations, including operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In January 2004, Air Commodore Cronan returned to the Defence Legal Division, Canberra and was appointed Director, Operations and International Law which was followed by his appointment as the Director, Military Justice in September 2005. In that role, Air Commodore Cronan was specifically tasked with overseeing implementation on behalf of Defence Legal of the October 2005 Australian Government Response to the Senate Inquiry into Military Justice. In February 2008 Air Commodore Cronan was appointed the Director, Military Discipline Law and throughout 2008 he led a team of ADF legal officers tasked with policy implementation of significant legislative reform to the ADF's military discipline system.

After the Australian Military Court was found to be unconstitutional by the High Court of Australia in August 2009, Air Commodore Cronan was appointed Director of the new Directorate of Military Discipline Reform which was tasked with overseeing reinstatement of the court martial and Defence Force magistrate system and with developing long term options for the trial of serious service offences in the ADF.

Throughout 2010 to the present, Air Commodore Cronan has overseen development within Defence of the Military Court of Australia Bills which, if enacted, will have the effect of replacing the current system of trial of serious service offences by court martial and Defence Force magistrate system with a federal court – the Military Court of Australia - established under Chapter III of the Australian Constitution. The Military Court of Australia Bills are presently being considered by the Australian parliament.

Current Duties

On 6 December 2010 Air Commodore Cronan was appointed the Director General Australian Defence Force Legal Service. In that capacity he serves as the senior military legal advisor to the Chief of the Defence Force, the Secretary of the Department of Defence and as the principal source of legal advice to the Department of Defence on military legal issues. As the head of the tri-service ADF legal service, he is responsible for the professional oversight and direction of more than 140 permanent and 320 reserve legal officers. His particular areas of legal expertise are in military justice and public international law.

Operational Service

In 2003 Air Commodore Cronan deployed to the Middle East as the Chief Legal Officer, Australian National Headquarters – Middle East Area of Operations for operations against Iraq. In July 2006, Air Commodore Cronan was deployed back to the Middle East where he served in Baghdad until January 2007 as the Chief, International Law/Deputy Staff Judge Advocate – Headquarters Multinational Force Iraq.

Honours and Awards

Air Commodore Cronan's personal decorations include the:

- United States Meritorious Service Medal (1996) with Oak Leaf Cluster (2006);
- Australian Service Medal (South East Asia - 1987);
- Australian Active Service Medal (International Coalition Against Terrorism - 2002) and Clasp (Iraq - 2003);
- Australian Defence Medal (2006); and
- Iraq Campaign Medal (2006).

On 27 November 2003, Air Commodore Cronan was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his service as a legal officer during operations against Iraq.

Air Commodore Cronan has twice accepted the Judge Advocate General's Award for Excellence as a Team - on behalf of the Directorate of Operations and International Law in 2004 and the Directorate of Military Discipline Law in 2008. In January 2009, Air Commodore Cronan's Discipline Law Working Group was awarded a Defence Support Group Commendation for the significant contribution made by the Group to the successful implementation of major discipline law reforms.

Publications

Air Commodore Cronan was a contributing Government expert on the *Manual on International Law Applicable to Air and Missile Warfare* (Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University, 2010) and a co-author of *Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER: Legal support to commanders* (Australian Defence Force Journal, Issue No 184, 2011).