

Jump TO Article



The article on the pages below is reprinted by permission from *United Service* (the journal of the Royal United Services Institute of New South Wales), which seeks to inform the defence and security debate in Australia and to bring an Australian perspective to that debate internationally.

The Royal United Services Institute of New South Wales (RUSI NSW) has been promoting informed debate on defence and security issues since 1888. To receive quarterly copies of *United Service* and to obtain other significant benefits of RUSI NSW membership, please see our online Membership page:

www.rusinsw.org.au/Membership



Jump TO Article

DEFENCE NEWS

Royal Australian Air Force

Operations

Operation Resolute continues as the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) contribution to the whole-of-government effort to protect Australia's borders and offshore maritime interests. It is the only ADF operation that defends homeland Australia and its assets. 2013 witnessed an appreciable increase in operational tempo. Air Force continued to provide substantial contributions to these areas of interest which required it to respond with P3-C Orion Long-Range Maritime Patrol aircraft from various locations.

Operation Slipper is Australia's military contribution to the international campaign against terrorism, maritime security in the Middle East Area of Operations, and countering piracy in the Gulf of Aden. During 2013, Air Force continued to provide on-going support and transition planning towards Australia's scaled withdrawal from the Middle East Area of Operations.

Exercises

Exercise Talisman Saber 2013 (TS13) was the major international exercise for the ADF during 2013. Talisman Saber is a biennial, bilateral training activity jointly sponsored by the ADF Joint Operations Command and the United States (US) Pacific Command to train the US 7th Fleet and Australian Deployable Joint Headquarters staff as a designated Combined Task Force.

TS13 was held between mid July and early August 2013 with more than 28,000 soldiers, sailors, air men and women taking to the sea, land and sky in northern Australia. The exercise scenario saw a peace enforcement mission set conditions for the task force to hand over to a United Nations peacekeeping force. The forces operated in military training areas in central and south-east Queensland, the Northern Territory and the Coral, Timor and Arafura seas. Shoalwater Bay was used predominantly, with a large staging area at Defence Base Rockhampton.

TS13 witnessed the practice and progression of Defence's emerging amphibious capability. The exercise was the third block of training for the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment's Amphibious Ready Element Landing Force.

As with previous Talisman Saber exercises, this activity is a major undertaking reflecting the Australian and United States alliance and the strength of the military-to-military relationship. Approximately 21,000 US and 7000 ADF personnel were involved in the exercise. Other Australian government agencies involved included the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, AusAID, Australian Federal Police and Australian Civil-Military Centre.

Air Force contributed fast jets, air lift workhorses and airborne early warning and control aircraft operating from an array of bases including Amberley, Townsville, Darwin, Williamstown and Richmond. Air Force personnel also participated at other locations including the Air Operations Centre in Hawaii, on board the USS *Blue Ridge* and at Rockhampton, Williamson Airfield and Shoalwater Bay.

The ADF conducted a full environmental impact assessment on the Shoalwater Bay region and strong

measures were put in place for participants to respect and protect the marine environment within which they operated.

Exercise Tamex (Tactical Maritime Exercise) was held in January/February, May and July 2013. Tamex is an anti-surface warfare exercise involving AP-3C Orions from 92 Wing RAAF. US Navy, Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force and Royal New Zealand Air Force Orion Squadrons are invited to attend.

Exercise Red Flag Nellis, held in February/March 2013, is a US Air Force-led tier one, high-fidelity, large-force employment exercise designed to replicate a high-end combat environment. Participants were Australia, United Kingdom and the United States. Australian participation consisted of F/A18A/B Hornet, E-7A Wedgetail, KC-30 Tanker, and C-130J Hercules aircraft, and staff for the Air Operations Centre.

Exercise Cope North, a trilateral (Australia, United States, Japan) air combat and humanitarian and disaster relief exercise, was conducted in Guam in February 2013. Australian participation included F/A18A/B Hornet, E-7A Wedgetail, KC-30 Tanker, and C-130J aircraft, and communications and operations staff.

Pacific Airlift Rally, held in June 2013, is a biennial US Pacific Air Force-sponsored military airlift symposium for Pacific region countries which includes a demonstration, a desktop exercise and air missions by C-130J Hercules.

Exercise Coalition Virtual Flag, a large-scale US Air Force-led virtual constructive distributed network simulation activity, will be held in September 2013. Participants will be the United States, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom operating from simulation facilities in the United States and remotely from home countries. There is no live aircraft involvement.

Exercise Kiwi Flag, to be held in November 2013, is a tactical training exercise run by the Royal New Zealand Air Force for fixed-wing air transport. Australian participation will consist of C130J crews and airspace controllers.

Exercise Elang Ausindo, an annual bilateral fighter exercise between Indonesia and Australia, hosted in Australia every two years, will be held in November 2013.

Judy Ferrier

Strategic Communications Adviser
Headquarters Air Command
August 2013