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CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCE**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING
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Check against delivery

Thank you Chair and good morning Senators.

The Australian Defence Force is currently engaged in two significant operations in the region. First, almost four weeks ago, the ADF deployed a P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft and around 60 support personnel to Japan. The Australian contingent is working with our international partners to enforce the United Nations Security Council resolutions in a coordinated effort to maintain economic and diplomatic pressure on North Korea.

The second is Australia's continued commitment to the Philippines where all three services are working closely with their counterparts in the Armed Forces of the Philippines to strengthen local forces' long-term ability to combat terrorist threats and prevent the spread of Daesh in our region.

Since the Philippines' fight against Daesh-affiliated terrorists in the country's south ended in October last year, more than 3,000 Philippine Armed Forces personnel have participated in the peer-to-peer engagement activities.

There are approximately 100 ADF personnel deployed to the Philippines as part of the Joint Task Group. The Land element is focused on urban combat and joint coordination skills to build on the significant counter terrorism and counter violent extremist capabilities that already exist the Philippines Army and Marine Corps. The Australian trainers have shared valuable insights from our recent experience in Iraq and, in return, Philippine military personnel have passed on the lessons learned from the fight in Marawi.

The Air Force element is leading training activities to further enhance the Philippines' air support to counter terrorism operations on the ground. Again, the Australian Air Task Group's real-world operational experience in urban environments like Mosul is proving invaluable.

The maritime element is undertaking peer-to-peer engagement and training activities with the Philippine Navy. Through its real world experiences in Border Protection and Middle East constabulary operations, the Royal Australian Navy is able to transfer its relevant experiences to the Philippine Navy. This has been undertaken through table top exercises and on-water training activities. Today, we have two Armidale Class

Patrol Boats HMAS *Albany* and *Glenelg* conducting a coordinated maritime surveillance activity with the Philippines Naval Forces in the Sulu and Celebes Sea.

All three training elements have proven to be highly effective and very well received by our partners in the Philippines.

The Philippines was also one of seven regional nations included in the Navy's South East Asia Deployment. In March HMAS *Anzac*, *Toowoomba* and *Success* departed Australia for a three month regional deployment with port visits in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam.

As part of the deployment, *Toowoomba* and *Success* also participated in Exercise BERSAMA SHIELD. This exercise strengthens professional relationships between Singapore, Malaysia, New Zealand, the UK and Australia under the Five Power Defence Arrangements.

Around 300 Navy, Army and Air Force personnel, took part in BERSAMA SHIELD while another 300 ADF personnel participated in humanitarian and disaster relief exercises in New Caledonia as part of the French-led Exercise CROIX DU SUD.

These exercises greatly improve our ability to work effectively with our neighbours, particularly when natural disasters strike the region. You only need to look at our response in Tonga and Fiji following Tropical Cyclone Gita or in PNG after the devastating earthquake in the Southern Highlands to see the benefits. In both instances, the ADF rapidly mobilised personnel and equipment to provide the Australian government with options to contribute to a coordinated response effort. The same applies here at home as we saw when Tropical Cyclone Marcus struck Darwin in March.

In this case the locally based 1st Brigade was quick to provide soldiers to assist with the clean-up. At its peak, Joint Task Force 659 included 800 Navy, Army and Air Force personnel, working to repair schools and public buildings. The ADF contingent was complemented by around 50 US Marines, who had recently arrived in Darwin as part of this year's Marine rotation.

These examples highlight the ADF's ongoing commitment to tangible and meaningful engagement in our region and here at home. It demonstrates our deliberate, coordinated approach to regional security and the ADF's commitment to nurturing strong ties with our neighbours in the interests of regional security and stability.

Following the success of Indo Pacific Endeavour 17 last year, Indo Pacific Endeavour 2018 will commence in the coming days. This year's deployment includes four ships and around 1000 personnel. The 13 week deployment will focus on the South West Pacific, with an emphasis on planning for disaster assistance, multi-national naval manoeuvres and training activities with partner nations – and there will be more on that in coming days.

Our work in the region is occurring in parallel to the ADF's long standing operations in the Middle East region where Daesh's remaining fighters continue to plan and execute attacks in Syria and to a lesser degree in Iraq. Elements of the Australian Air

Task Group continue to contribute to Coalition efforts but the ADF emphasis has shifted towards training the Iraqi Security Forces.

Since April 2015, the combined Australian-New Zealand Task Group Taji has trained more than 34,000 Iraqis. The local security forces are the primary force to combat any resurgence of Daesh during this critical phase of operations.

Complementing the Building Partner Capacity Mission at Taji, the Australian Special Operations Task Group continues to work closely with Iraq's Counter Terrorism Service. You may remember the Counter Terrorism Service was central to Iraq's success so far and will lead future counter-insurgency operations.

Our respective militaries have formed a close professional relationship over the past three years and maintaining the military-to-military connection and building on the success of our training and advisory programs will be critical to Iraq's future security.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains equally challenging. Insurgents and terrorist groups continue to resort to high profile attacks in an attempt to incite maximum fear among the population and undermine confidence in the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces – particularly in the lead up to this year's Parliamentary and District elections and next year's Presidential election.

The ADF's 300 strong contribution to the ongoing NATO-led train, advise and assist mission remains a critical factor in the Afghan security forces' ability to contain, and in many instances prevent attacks against civilians.

Senators during the last Estimates hearing, I highlighted HMAS *Warramunga's* high success rate on counter-narcotic interdictions. To date, the ships company has now seized and destroyed 26 tonnes of hashish and two tonnes of heroin, effectively preventing approximately \$1.8 billion dollars from reaching the terrorists.

It's also worth noting that during *Warramunga's* deployment, Combined Task Force 150, which plans and executes maritime security patrols in the Gulf, was under Australian command, with a combined Australian-Canadian support staff. Commodore Mal Wise handed over to the UK late last week after a very productive six months at the helm of CTF.

Chair, in a little over five weeks I will complete my tenure as Chief of the Defence Force. My four year tenure has seen a significant level of activity for the Australian Defence Force – domestically, regionally and globally. Since I assumed the post in July 2014, the Australian Defence Force has deployed 27,000 people on over 30 operations at home and abroad.

Senators, there is no greater honour than to serve as a member of the Australian Defence Force and for me, no higher privilege than to command the 80,000 men and women in the permanent and reserve force who choose to serve. I am immensely proud of them, and their collective achievements over the past four years – they have achieved a lot.

I would also like to acknowledge the Secretary and his team for their support and their dedication to ensuring Australia's security; also the Minister for her fantastic support.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the incoming leadership team on their appointments. I have every confidence the ADF will continue to thrive under their stewardship.

As I begin to reflect on my own 40 years service in the Australian Defence Force, I look back with a sense of accomplishment and contentment.

Senators, 40 years has been an exhilarating ride!

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