



Supplementary Estimates Hearing – October 2025

Topic: JATF OSB Opening Statement

Good afternoon Senators, and thank you Chair for the opportunity to provide an opening statement.

Protection of Australia's maritime borders is critical to the sovereignty of our nation, our economic prosperity and the protection of our communities and environment. I would like to thank the 1,181 personnel assigned to Maritime Border Command and Operation Sovereign Borders for their efforts in enforcing the civil maritime security of Australia's maritime borders. This includes 727 sea-going crew, as well as 454 personnel here in Canberra and across Australia. Ever vigilant, these personnel work in remote areas, away from their families and loved ones, for weeks at a time, every day of the year. These officers are dedicated to protecting Australia's maritime domain from those seeking to extract personal gain from our natural resources, unique marine environments and selling vulnerable migrants dangerous boat journeys, which are based on false promises of employment opportunities and settlement in Australia.

Challenging economic conditions, conflict, and natural disasters all contribute to onwards movement pressures and are driving people to seek economic opportunities. These situations are then exploited by criminal people smuggling networks in a cruel game of false hope and empty promises.

Despite this environment, Australia's policy is clear: those who attempt to come to Australia without a visa by boat will not settle in Australia. Operation Sovereign Borders continues to detect, intercept and safely resolve irregular maritime ventures in accordance with Australian law and our international obligations, including non-refoulement.

Since taking command of Operation Sovereign Borders on 10 January 2024, to 31 August 2025, Operation Sovereign Borders has successfully undertaken 15 disruptions, a 275% increase from 2024, and successfully resolved all 26 maritime people smuggling ventures carrying a total of 383 potential irregular immigrants.

My priorities have not changed. The safety of all people involved in Operation Sovereign Borders operations will always take precedence. Under my command, Operation Sovereign Borders operations are undertaken legally, with the highest regard for safety and operational security. The protection of sensitive operational information remains critical to our ongoing success. The discussion of operational matters, including the specifics of OSB operations plays into the hands of criminal people smugglers. I cannot allow the release of any information which people smugglers could use to trick vulnerable people into risking their lives at sea. Protecting our operations also ensures the safety of those 1,181 personnel working tirelessly to safeguard our maritime domain. Their commitment to duty and ongoing service to the mission is the reason we continue to achieve success.

I thank the Chair and Committee for your time and welcome any questions.