

Senate Standing Committee Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Parliamentary inquiry – Use of the Quinoline anti-malarial drugs Mefloquine and Tafenoquine in the Australian Defence Force

RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Department of Defence

Question Number:

Senator: N/A

Question Format: Written

Committee Due Date: 16 November 2018

Question:

1. The Committee is seeking clarification regarding the issue of members of the ADF who deployed in East Timor without participating in the antimalarial trial, specifically:

The IGADF inquiry was told that over 400 deployed members of the battalion group did not participate in the 1 RAR tafenoquine prophylaxis trial. This 2000-1 trial compared tafenoquine and mefloquine (IGADF report paragraphs 158, 170, 233). This was also discussed by Defence during the hearing on 11 October.

However, on page 23 of Defence's first submission it appears that this has been confused with the 388 people who took doxycycline during the separate mefloquine trial (2 and 4 RAR, 2001–2002). Is this interpretation correct?

Thirdly, please provide a source for the statement: 'For the tafenoquine prevention study, 95 personnel were recorded as being unwilling or unable to enrol and another 24 were excluded as they were found unsuitable on screening' (Defence, Supplementary submission 1.1, p. 11).

2. In the supplementary submission it states tafenoquine for the treatment of malaria was provided between 2000 and 2001 (p. 8).

The original Defence submission stated the evaluation of tafenoquine for the treatment of malaria was 2001 to 2002 (pp. 20, 21).

Could you please clarify the distinction?

Answer:

1. The reference in the Inspector General Australian Defence Force (IGADF) report to 'over 400 deployed members not participating in the 1 RAR tafenoquine prophylaxis trial' (which compared tafenoquine and mefloquine), represents an estimate based on the usual size of a Battalion Group during this time (approximately 1,100) and the 654 deployed members known to have been recruited into the prevention study.

The 'over 400' reference stems from rounding down the balance of these two numbers, which is 446. It is difficult to determine the exact size of the 1 RAR Battalion Group at the time and, therefore, the exact number of members who did not participate in the prevention study because the operation was mounted through Headquarters Australian Theatre; which is no longer in existence.

The first Defence submission inadvertently confused this number with a reference to 388 deployed members who took doxycycline during a separate mefloquine trial. This figure is accurate, but relates to a subsequent mefloquine versus doxycycline phase 4 post marketing study conducted in 4 RAR Battalion Group. This is not the same activity referred to above. It represents a different study and different Battalion Group.

"For the tafenoquine prevention study, 95 personnel were recorded as being unwilling or unable to enrol and another 24 were excluded as they were found unsuitable on screening"

This statement was sourced from the Tafenoquine versus Mefloquine prevention study records.

2. A supplementary submission clarifying the date range for the study involving tafenoquine for the treatment of malaria has been provided. (See supplementary submission 1.2).