



**AIR CHIEF MARSHAL M.D. BINSKIN, AC**  
**CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCE**

**Opening Statement**  
**Budget Estimates Hearing**  
**22 October 2014**

*Delivered by*  
*Vice Admiral Ray Griggs, Vice Chief of the Defence Force*

**\*\*Check against delivery\*\***

Good morning Senators, thank you for the chance to make an opening statement on behalf of the CDF. Air Chief Marshal Binskin and Secretary Dennis Richardson will join us later this morning on completion of the NSC.

Senators I would like to use this opportunity to provide an update on our current operations.

Since mid-September, our focus has been drawn sharply toward Iraq where Australia is working as part of a broad coalition of around 60 nations which have joined together to disrupt and degrade ISIL across a number of areas, providing political, economic, humanitarian and military support.

Operation OKRA is a significant deployment for the Australian Defence Force. The combination of strike aircraft, tankers and airborne early warning aircraft mean this Air Task Group is not only one of the most capable air packages Australia has ever deployed, it's also the first completely organic or self contained Air Task Group we've deployed and is integrating seamlessly into the US led coalition.

Following Government approval, Australia commenced combat operations on the 5th of October. Since that time, our F/A-18 Super Hornets have flown 56 sorties clocking up more than 417 flying hours. Over the same period the KC-30 air-to-air refuel has flown 20 missions delivering more than 1.5 million pounds of fuel to Australian and Coalition aircraft. To give you some context here - each Super Hornet mission is around 8-10 hours and each aircraft may refuel up to four times during a single mission. These missions are complemented by our E-7 Wedgetail which plays a vital role in coordinating all Coalition aircraft while they're in the air. The E-7A has conducted 16 missions accruing 192 flying hours. [\* Figures as a 220700L Oct 14]

You will be aware from our operational updates that we have successfully destroyed a number of ISIL targets; however, we need to be sensible and judicious with this information to protect our people and to avoid playing into ISIL's propaganda campaign.

ISIL is an adaptive enemy. But the Coalition is agile. So although ISIL has some tactical influence, the Coalition has the strategic momentum and the ability to continue to build on our successes. The strength of our partnership is in our ability to provide the capabilities required to disrupt and degrade their attack.

Around 200 Special Forces personnel are currently positioned at Australia's main base in the Middle East. Now that the appropriate legal arrangements are in place with the Iraqi Government, we are finalising the administrative arrangements to allow the Special Operations Task Group to deploy to Iraq where our personnel will advise and assist Iraqi Security Forces. The Australian SOTG will work with the Iraqi Forces to prepare and plan for operations, joint fires, air support, and artillery. If the Iraqi headquarters moves outside the wire, then our advisers will also move outside the wire to continue to advise them on those operations. But we will not conduct independent combat operations as formed forces.

Senators while much of the public, and certainly the media attention is on our activities in Iraq, the ADF continues to operate in Afghanistan - albeit under a different construct.

From July 1, Operation SLIPPER split into three operations that more accurately reflect Australia's continued military contribution in the region. Our activities in Afghanistan remain under Operation SLIPPER while our commitment to counter piracy and Maritime Security Operations in the Middle East Region fall under Operation MANITOU with support to those operations assigned to Operation ACCORDION.

Approximately 400 ADF personnel are deployed in Kandahar and Kabul under Operation SLIPPER. As part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission, the ADF are now training and advising the Afghan National Security Forces at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy, in the 205 Corps Advisory Team and within the Afghan Ministry of Defense.

Our Heron Remotely Piloted Aircraft detachment continues to provide Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance support until the end of the year and a modest Special Forces contingent is working with our ISAF partners to train, advise and assist the Afghan National Security Forces in the Headquarters General Command of Police Special Units.

Since 2001, Australia has played a crucial role in the international mission, which has contributed strongly to Afghanistan's security and stability allowing a successful political transition to occur.

We have reached the point where the ANSF lead almost all operations across Afghanistan. They have proven themselves to be a resilient force, capable of defending direct insurgent attacks. This was evident during the recent Afghan national elections where the ANSF successfully secured more than 6,000 polling booths across the nation. That's an encouraging sign for the country's future.

The efforts of ISAF have assisted the Afghan people to regain control over their nation's future. The recent formation of a unity government in Afghanistan led by Dr

Ashraf Ghani is a case in point. The inauguration of Dr Ghani as President marked the first democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan; an historic milestone for the Afghan people.

The ISAF mission will conclude on 31 December 2014. The legal framework is now in place, to allow Australia and other NATO partners to continue to support the ANSF beyond the end of this year through the NATO-led *train, advise and assist* mission known as *Resolute Support*.

The Australian Government has also committed \$300 million toward the sustainment of Afghanistan's security forces over three years, starting in 2015. Australia remains committed to supporting a more peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan, and we stand ready to work with the new government to this end.

Alongside our contribution on land in the Middle East the Royal Australian Navy has deployed 34 warships to the region in 13 years and 58 since Kuwait was invaded in 1990. HMAS *Toowoomba* is currently assigned to the Combined Maritime Forces to conduct maritime security, counter-terrorism and counter-piracy operations in the Arabian Sea, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, and Indian Ocean. HMAS *Toowoomba* is the first ship to deploy under Operation MANITOU and coincidentally, Commander Cath Hayes is the first woman to lead a Royal Australian Navy ship into this region. Last month *Toowoomba's* crew seized and destroyed more than 5.6 tonnes of cannabis resin, with a street value around \$280 million (AUD). An intercept of that size not only puts a significant dent in the illicit drug trade, it snatches money out of the hands of terrorists who rely on drug money to fund their crimes. More broadly in the past 12 months our ships have seized and destroyed over \$3.6 billion worth of illegal drugs - this is a very significant achievement.

In parallel with these major deployments, the ADF has supported *Operation Bring Them Home* - Australia's whole-of-government response to the MH17 crash in Ukraine. To date, ours has been primarily a support role to the AFP led operation - and as recently as last week an RAAF aircraft carried victims back to their loved ones. However, as part of a broader Australian assistance package, Defence will provide cold weather equipment to Ukraine Armed Forces and, longer term; Defence will establish a cooperation program.

Despite the increase in operational deployments, the ADF has maintained its commitment to regional operations and exercises. As part of Operation RESOLUTE we recently stepped up our efforts against foreign vessels illegally fishing in Australian waters.

In addition, HMAS *Choules* sailed from Sydney last week to join Operation RENDER SAFE. Operation RENDER SAFE is the ADF's enduring pledge to identify and remove Explosive Remnants of War which continue to pose a potential danger to communities across the South West Pacific and this year, will be conducted in Bougainville.

On the exercise front, each of the services has conducted significant regional engagement in the past four months. One of the most significant exercises is currently underway in the Northern Territory. Exercise Kowari is the first tri-lateral exercise

involving Australia, China and the United States. This land-based survival training marks an important milestone in Defence cooperation between the three nations and demonstrates a commitment to enhancing mutual trust, cooperation and regional security.

For three weeks in August, Air Force hosted 110 air craft and 2,300 personnel from the United States, Singapore, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, New Zealand and France (New Caledonia) for Exercise PITCH BLACK 2014. Held every two years, PITCH BLACK is our largest, most complex air exercise and this year it was followed by the Royal Australian Navy's largest maritime warfare exercise known as Exercise KAKADU. Over two weeks more than 1,200 naval personnel, eight warships and 26 aircraft from 15 coalition forces throughout the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean regions conducted tactical warfare planning as well as high-end warfare serials.

So while we've seen an uptick in the operational tempo, the ADF has continued its schedule of regional engagement and we remain well postured, well prepared and poised to respond to future contingencies.

Finally Senators, I would like to draw your attention to another significant step forward in our cultural reform program. Defence has recently commenced a four year collaboration with the Australian Human Rights Commission to further embed the cultural intent of Pathway to Change across the Defence organisation. The Commission's expertise will allow it to provide independent, robust advice to help Defence address the remaining challenges, continue our cultural reform program and ultimately, improve our overall capability into the future.

Our members know abuse will not be tolerated. They see that we are taking action - swiftly and decisively - to hold people to account when they fail to live up to the values and behaviours expected of a member of the ADF. The CDF and I believe we are on the right path and we're making real progress on cultural change across Defence. We know we must maintain strong leadership and a dedicated focus to perpetuate the progress - and we are committed to doing so.

**ENDS**