

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE  
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

**Question No. 206**

**Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 24 May 2005:**

- a) How much of the funding for Arming Customs Vessels is going to providing additional crew, and how much to arms?
- b) Are you able to provide information about what additional arms will be purchased? Are they hand-held arms, or arms mounted on the ship?
- c) How many additional crew will be recruited? Where will they be recruited from? The general public or another source?
- d) Where will the additional crew be located? Similarly, what is the location of the vessels on which the arms are to be attached.
- e) Could you provide a breakdown of where the budget is intended to be spent over the next few years?
- f) What is the timeframe for the rollout of the arms and crew?
- g) What training packages are going to be available for the crews?
- h) How much funding has been allocated to the training of crews?
- i) Where are the arms going to be sourced from? Is there a tender relating to the arming of the vessels?
- j) What are the rules of engagement for the new armed vessels? Have they been circulated to the crews?
- k) Which Customs vessels will be undergoing this upgrade?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

- a) Additional crew funding is \$21.6 million over four years. Arms cost, including weapons purchase, ammunition, mounting, storage lockers, maintenance and communication equipment is \$1 million.
- b) The arms are 7.62mm calibre FN Herstal MAG 58 General Purpose Machine Guns (GPMGs). They will be in removable mounts on the ships.
- c) Thirty-six additional crew will be recruited. Normal Public Service recruitment process will include applications from the general public.
- d) Crew are permitted to reside at any location within Australia able to facilitate expeditious travel to a vessel. Australian Customs Vessels (ACVs) operate anywhere around Australia's coastline considered to be a current or forecast operational priority.
- e) From 2005-06 to 2008-09 the per annum budget will be spent on: crew \$5.4 million, training \$0.18 million, arms maintenance, communication equipment and ammunition \$0.06 million, overheads \$0.46 million. A further \$0.8 million will be spent on the purchase of equipment; and \$0.009 million in training in 2005-06.

- f) The first MAG 58 GPMG has been installed into an ACV. The entire fleet of eight ACVs will be fitted with and capable of operating the MAG 58 GPMG by the end of 2005.
- g) Training provided will, with the exception of vessel specific requirements, mirror that provided to Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel.
- h) \$0.7 million over four years.
- i) The arms will be purchased from the Department of Defence. No tender is necessary.
- j) Interim Rules of Engagement (ROE) are in force. The ROE is a classified document. Crew members will not be issued with the ROE per se but will be issued with an individual set of Orders for Opening Fire. This individual set of Orders for Opening Fire will be drawn from a menu of options from the ROE, dependent on the nature of the operation.
- k) All eight Customs vessels will be upgraded.

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**Question No. 207**

**Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 24 May 2005:**

In relation to narcotic finds that have occurred by way of container examination facilities:

- a) How many people have been charged in relation to those finds?
- b) How many charges have been laid? What are the charges that have been laid?
- c) How many people have been brought to trial? How many have past the committal stage?
- d) How many convictions resulted?
- e) Are any subject of any ongoing investigations?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

- a) 65 since February 2003.
- b) 89. The charges relate to the importation of prohibited imports, possessing proceeds of crime, possessing a false passport and trafficking in narcotics (state legislation).
- c) 33, 16.
- d) 21.
- e) Yes.

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**Question No. 208**

**Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 24 May 2005:**

Activities in China: Could you provide a breakdown of the \$7.4 million? Is this funding inclusive of the funding for new offices in Jakarta and Beijing (also, where is the funding for the Jakarta office coming from)?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

Additional funding of \$7.4 million has been allocated to Customs to support the provision of additional staff located in China. The funding has been allocated over four years – \$1.8 million a year in 2005-06 and 2006-07 and \$1.9 million a year in 2007-08 and 2008-09.

This funding primarily covers the costs associated with having an additional two Customs officers posted to China. The role of these officers will be to support anti-dumping and countervailing investigations, and arrange verification visits to Chinese exporters, producers and relevant government agencies. They will develop expertise in Chinese business and culture, and report on trends in China's market and regulatory schemes relevant to dumping and subsidies. The officers will also support the Post's capability to deal with Customs issues.

In terms of a specific breakdown of this funding, the direct employee expenses associated with these additional staff will be approximately \$0.2 million per year.

There will also be supplier expenses of approximately \$1.5 million per year. This includes costs associated with:

- basing Australian officer overseas (including posting allowances and residential rent)
- employing locally engaged Chinese staff
- maintaining an office in Beijing (including rent and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade information technology and service charges) and travelling to other areas of China
- engaging, when necessary, expert advisers with recognised business/accounting/legal skills and experience in relation to China.

This \$7.4 million is additional to that funding provided to establish offices in Jakarta and Beijing. The funding to establish the Jakarta and Beijing offices was provided as part of the Government's 2004 election commitments for Stronger Border Protection.