



National Bosun's Call



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Once Navy, Always Navy

August 2023

USS Canberra Commissions in Sydney



Australia welcomed the USS Canberra to Sydney Harbour, with HMAS Canberra guiding the Independence-variant littoral combat ship to berth alongside Fleet Base East ahead of the formal commissioning on ceremony held on 22 July.

The crews of HMAS Canberra and USS Canberra focused on joint activities during commissioning week, including playing sport, ship tours and sharing their countries' culture and traditions.

This ceremonial commissioning emphasizes the more than 100 years of mateship built on friendship, history, democracy, and respect.

The two countries have fought side-by-side in every major conflict since World War I. Canberra's namesake is a reminder of the shared responsibility the U.S. and Australia have to each other as allies.

Left: HMAS Canberra escorts USS Canberra into Sydney Harbour prior to her commissioning on 22 July 23.

Below: USS Canberra approaching her berth ahead of HMAS Canberra on the north end of Garden Island's extended Cruiser Wharf

Photos: POIS Peter Thompson



National Newsletter of the
Naval Association of Australia



Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

Extracts from the Royal Commission's newsletters

26 July 2023

The Chair of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide says reforms to improve mental health outcomes for ADF members are progressing too slowly and may not be successful.

Commissioner Nick Kaldas made the remarks on the final day of the Royal Commission's tenth public hearing block in Adelaide, which focused on postings, career management, mental health and the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA).

The eight-day public hearing was told that a lack of communication, changes to organisational structure, competing and shifting priorities were hindering progress on implementing reforms within the ADF and Department of Defence designed to improve members' mental health and wellbeing.

"We're concerned that the internal reforms being considered by Defence are taking too long – and there is no certainty that they will lead to meaningful improvements in members' mental health and wellbeing", Commissioner Kaldas said.

Mr Kaldas said it further demonstrates that Defence is failing to adopt a 'people first' culture.

"We've heard repeatedly from Ministers and service chiefs, particularly in light of the Defence Strategic Review, about Defence's people being its greatest asset. One wonders then why more has not been done to address the cultural and systemic challenges our servicemen and women face at every stage of their military career."

Commissioner Kaldas noted positive steps taken by DVA in response to the Royal Commission's Interim Report, including in relation to harmonising complex legislation governing veterans' compensation and clearing the backlog of unprocessed claims.

"We commend these steps; however, we know there is still much more to do. What can't be overlooked is that we continue to hear from many veterans about their poor experiences when seeking the support and services they desperately need and deserve."

The Royal Commission will next sit in Melbourne from 28 August, [Hearing Block 11] where it expects to hear evidence relating to the Inspector-General of the ADF. It will also hear from Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews about Commonwealth-

State cooperation on veterans' issues.

A further hearing will be held in Sydney from 20 November 2023.

23 July 2023

During the first week of the Adelaide hearing block, the inquiry heard evidence about a lack of training for veteran advocates, the link between physical injury and poor mental health outcomes for ADF members, the failure to implement a Defence Injury Prevention Program and the pressures placed on servicemen and women and their families due to postings.

The Commission also heard evidence from former Navy Clearance Divers about the high level of physical injury in the unit and the impact on the mental health and wellbeing of its members and the failure of the ADF to address significant issues brought to their attention.

Hearing Block 11

The witness list for Hearing Block 11 has now been finalised. During our Melbourne hearing, the Royal Commission expects to hear evidence relating to the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force; about the transition to civilian life; and from representatives of the Victorian Government, including Premier Daniel Andrews, about co-operation between the States and Commonwealth on matters related to veterans, and about supports for serving and ex-serving members in Victoria. The Commission will also hear from people with lived experience while in Melbourne, including family members of people who have died by suicide.

The Royal Commission has been preparing for its first hearing block in Victoria, with staff recently visiting Puckapunyal Military Area to meet with serving personnel. Our Community Engagement team have also started to meet with local ex-service and other support organisations to hear about issues that are unique to Victoria. The Commissioners will hold private sessions in Melbourne with people who have lived experience of suicide and suicidality in a military context.

Following Hearing Block 11, the Royal Commission will have held public hearings in all capital cities, as well as major garrison towns across Australia.

We expect to hold further public hearings as our inquiries continue, including one in Sydney which will commence on 20 November 2023. For up-to-date information about future hearings, please visit our website.

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Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

17 July 2023

The Chair of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide said the inquiry continues to uncover evidence that raises "serious questions" about what is being done to prevent past and present Australian Defence Force personnel taking their lives.

The inquiry's tenth public hearing, which began in Adelaide today (Monday 17 July), will focus on safe workplaces – and examine how aspects of military life, such as leadership, postings and promotions, deployment and career management, can impact the mental health and wellbeing of ADF members, and their families.

In his opening address, Commissioner Nick Kaldas said protecting the mental health and wellbeing of serving and ex-serving Defence personnel must be prioritised.

"We've heard many contemporary examples of our sailors, soldiers and aviators doing it tough, not just historical accounts – raising serious questions about what the ADF is doing to address the occupational stressors influencing the mental health and wellbeing of its people, as well as their families," Commissioner Kaldas said.

Commissioner Kaldas said Australia's defence capability, primarily, comes from the brave men and women who pull on the uniform of our Navy, Army and Air Force and go to work each day to protect us.

"Each and every one of us has a duty to ensure that Government, Defence and other agencies truly protects the mental health and wellbeing of our veterans. For far too long that hasn't been the case – and it has undoubtedly cost, and continues to cost, many lives," he said.

"The hundreds of billions of dollars to be invested in technically-advanced nuclear-powered submarines, aircraft, weapons and other hardware to defend Australia and its national interests, as part of the Defence Strategic Review, will count for nothing if the ADF struggles to recruit and retain a resilient, psychologically-safe workforce."

Meanwhile, in line with the inquiry's terms of reference, the Commissioners have now visited all Australia's 'Five Eyes' partners – Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States – hearing firsthand how they're responding to similar challenges among their veteran populations.

Last month, Commissioners travelled to the US where they met with more than 100 representatives from government, the military, academia, veterans' groups and charitable organisations.

"While we have sought to learn from our closest allies about how they're tackling these issues, we

also know they're watching with keen interest the outcome of this Royal Commission – and the recommendations we put forward to address the entrenched cultural and systemic issues which are failing our serving and ex-serving members," Commissioner Kaldas told the Adelaide hearing.

Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission, Lonya Sheptooha, said the hearing will explore issues impacting past and present ADF members at a national level – but also examine local issues affecting the more than 100,000 South Australia-based veterans, which includes approximately 6,000 current servicemen and women.

"That concentration of current and former service personnel in South Australia – and their families – provides this Royal Commission with a valuable opportunity to continue its examination of the systemic issues and contributing risk factors relevant to defence and veteran suicide," Mr Sheptooha told the hearing.

The Royal Commission was established in July 2021 to examine the alarming rates of suicide and suicidality among Australia's military community.

During the past two years, the inquiry has received more than 3,800 submissions and heard from 257 witnesses at nine public hearings in Brisbane, Sydney (two), Canberra, Townsville, Hobart, Darwin, Wagga Wagga and Perth.

The eight-day Adelaide hearing will conclude on Wednesday 26 July 2023.

16 July 2023

The impact of postings and relocation on the wellbeing of current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and their families will be examined at a public hearing of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, which begins tomorrow (Monday 17 July) in Adelaide.

The inquiry's 10th public hearing, held at the Grand Chancellor Adelaide, will also examine issues relating to leadership, career management, promotions, and the effects of physical injury on mental health.

The Director of Veterans SA will give evidence about the effectiveness of the agency's support for ex-servicemen and women and provide an update on its Veteran Wellbeing Centre. The inquiry will also hear evidence from other senior Government and Defence officials, workplace safety experts and lived experience witnesses.

Royal Commission Chair Nick Kaldas said it's critical the inquiry hears from South Australia's defence community, given the strategic importance of the state to Australia's future Defence capability.

There is still time to make your submission – support is available

USS Canberra arrives in Sydney for her Commissioning Ceremony



Above: USS Canberra entering Port Jackson in HMAS Canberra's wake

Below: USS Canberra and HMAS Canberra approaching their berths on Garden Island's extended Cruiser Wharf (was known as the Oil Wharf in pre modernisation days).

Insert. USS Canberra approaching her berth at the northern end of GID. Photo taken from HMAS Canberra

Photos; Defence



USS *Canberra* to begin her commissioned life in Sydney



(L-R) Captain Marc Crawford, Commodore of Littoral Combat Ship Squadron One, Commander Australian Fleet, Rear Admiral Chris Smith AM, CSM, RAN, Commanding Officer USS *Canberra* Blue Crew Commander William Ashley and Commanding Officer USS *Canberra* Gold Crew Bobby Barber, stand with ship's company on the Flight Deck during a visit to the ship after she secured alongside Fleet Base East in Sydney

Photo: Defence

USS *Canberra* arrived in Sydney on 18 July 2023 alongside Fleet Base East ahead of the ship's ceremonial commissioning on 22 July. During the week, the crews of HMAS *Canberra* and USS *Canberra* conducted activities together including playing sport, ship tours and sharing their countries' culture and traditions.

USS *Canberra*'s commissioning emphasises the more than 100 years of mateship built on friendship, history, democracy, and respect. The two countries have fought side-by-side in every major conflict since World War I. *Canberra*'s namesake is a reminder of the shared responsibility the U.S. and Australia have to each other as allies.

Three members of the NAA ACT Section were invited to attend the Commissioning Ceremony, David Manolas, Tiger Lyons with Susie, and Peter Cooke-Russell with Jenny. Despite a cold westerly wind, the ceremony was blessed with a clear sky and the team from HMAS *Kuttabul* ensured that the event ran smoothly and that the aged could get from the GID gates to the north end of Garden Island without too much trouble. A large number of people attended and were given an excellent presentation of the USN order of a Commissioning Service.

Lead by the Governor General of Australia and the Governor of NSW a high level of dignitaries were also present including the Australian Minister for Defence, the USA Defense Secretary, both the USN and RAN Chiefs of Navy, and the Patron of the ship, Senator the Hon Marise Payne.

One Australian naval officer will be a permanent member of the USS *Canberra*'s complement. It was noted that several RAN sailors were also included in the USS *Canberra*'s ship's company during the ceremony and they will most probably remain on board her during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2023.

One hundred members of each ships' company travelled to Canberra for the Freedom of Entry ceremony held on the morning of Sunday 23 July. It was great to see that family members of the USS *Canberra*'s crew had come to Australia to witness the events. We spoke to one couple who were driving to Canberra on the Sunday and they were experiencing a bit of anxiety concerning driving on the left hand side of the local roads.

Hundreds of people braved cold temperatures lining the Civic streets to cheer both crews and give them a very warm welcome.

USS Canberra Commissioning Ceremony 22 July 2023



Left : Australia's Governor General; HE David Hurley addressing the assembly. USS Canberra I's bell in front

Below: USS Canberra's ship's company awaiting the order to man ship

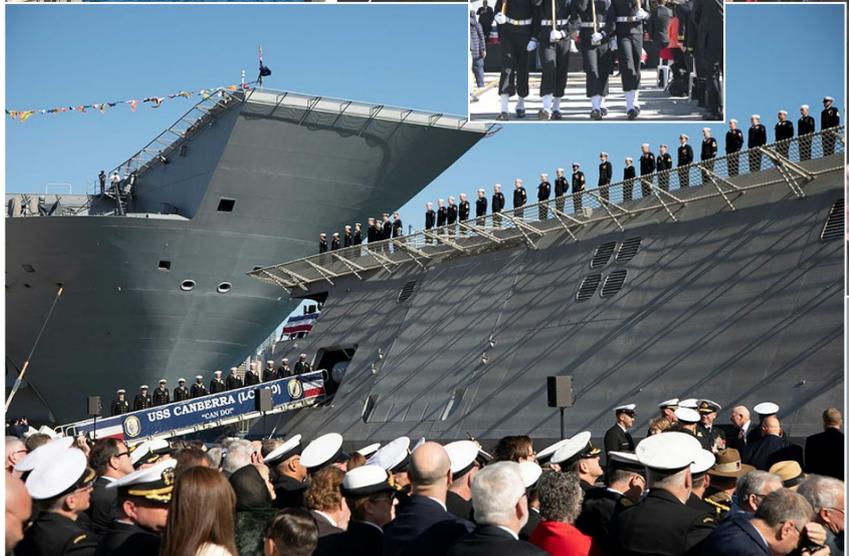
Right below: CN Australia presenting the port side kangaroo symbol to the USN Chief of Naval Operations. and the kangaroo symbol fitted to the Starboard side of Canberra's superstructure

Photos; RAN and David Manolas



Centre: USN Colour Party and USS Canberra's badge

Below: USS Canberra is manned with HMAS Canberra's bow astern.. The ship's motto is "Can Do"



USS Canberra's Freedom of Entry into the City of Canberra 23 July 2023

Right: Commanding Officers of USS Canberra's Blue and Gold crews meeting the challenger ACT Police Chief, for entry into the City of Canberra

Below USS Canberra's crews enter Canberra and march past CN, ACT Chief Minister, US Ambassador to Australia, Caroline Kennedy and ACT Chief Police Officer Neil Gaughan

Bottom left: HMAS Canberra's crew follow the US crew

Bottom Right: USN 7th Fleet Band playing with the beating of its drums



Photos: Defence and David Manolas



HMAS Canberra and USS Canberra Ships' Companies at the Last Post Ceremony Australian War Memorial Canberra 23 July 2023



Top: Royal Australian Navy personnel from HMAS Canberra and United States Navy personnel from USS Canberra conducted a Freedom of Entry March followed by a visit to the Australian War Memorial and a moving Last Post Ceremony in the Commemorative Courtyard in Canberra

Above: United States Navy Captain Kevin Smith, Chief of Navy Australia, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO, and Mrs Jodi Hammond lay wreaths

Above: (l-r) Commanding Officer HMAS Canberra Captain Brendan O'Hara and Commodore of Littoral Combat Ship Squadron ONE Captain Marc Crawford, lay wreaths

Photos: Nicole Mankowski

Australian Coastwatcher Memorial Service in Brisbane

Second World War Coastwatchers were commemorated at the monthly Naval Association of Australia ceremony at the Jack Tar statue at South Brisbane Memorial Park (next to the Ship Inn) at 10.30am on Thursday 27 July.

Descendants of legendary decorated Coastwatchers Paul Mason DSC and Bill Bennett MM attended along with representatives from the United States, Solomon Islands, New Guinea and Chinese communities.

Coastwatchers rescued 75 prisoners of war, 321 shot-down Allied airmen, 280 shipwrecked naval personnel, 190 missionaries and other civilians, uncounted Islanders and 260 Asian people who had put their own lives into danger.

Apart from their intelligence-gathering duties, Coastwatchers also rescued stranded Allied sailors and airmen including future U.S. President John F Kennedy after his patrol torpedo boat, PT-109, was sunk by a Japanese destroyer. President Kennedy's daughter Caroline who is now the Ambassador of the United States in Australia participated in the ceremony.

A memorial in Madang in Papua New Guinea that's dedicated to the 36 Australian Coastwatchers killed in the line of duty says: 'They watched and warned and died that we might live'.

The QLD Section President Helen Yentch opened her address at the memorial service as follows:

"Today we have three or more women have something in common. Rosemary and Elizabeth Gill whose father served his country as a Coastwatch-

er in the Pacific War; Betty Lee, Susan Peatfield and Alison Early - three relatives of Eric Feldt another Coastwatcher who we honoured last year and last but no means least, Ambassador Caroline Kennedy whose father served his country and was rescued by a Coastwatcher in that war"

Coastwatcher Lieutenant Reg Evans DSC RANR witnessed the aftermath of the collision of PT 109 with a Japanese destroyer from his hideaway on Kolombangara Island and reported the collision. The next day he was informed of the loss of PT109 with a crew of 12 in Blasket Strait. Evan's scouts found no trace of survivors the next day.

After several days Evans found one of his scouts awaiting him with the news that men were on an island between Gizo and Ferguson Passage who turned out to be Lieutenant John Kennedy and the survivors of his crew. The scouts showed Kennedy how to carve a message on a coconut. Later Kennedy and the survivors of his were picked up and returned to Rendova.

On election to Presidency of the USA, Kennedy received a congratulatory message from Evans and Evans was invited to the US where he met with Kennedy and the PT109 veterans in the White House. A replica of the "Message on a coconut" was presented to the QLD Section by Ambassador Caroline Kennedy at the end of the Commemoration Service. In return, the Ambassador was presented with a NAA historical book and an NAA 100 year badge which she pinned on her collar before her departure



Above: The NAA QLD Section was presented with a replica of the "Message on a coconut" by Ambassador Caroline Kennedy, at the end of the service

Left: USA Ambassador to Australia Her Excellency Caroline Kennedy at centre with (L-R) Jim O'Connor, Marg Dean, Rosemary Gill, Helen Yentch, Caroline Kennedy, Rudi Bianchi, Pat Nuss in front of the Jack Tar monument

Photos: NAA QLD

Exercise Sea Raider

In July 2023 the Australian Defence Force conducted Exercise Sea Raider across the coast of North Queensland.

Exercise Sea Raider certified the Amphibious Ready Unit and saw the Australian Amphibious Force train closely with the Royal Australian Navy's HMAS *Adelaide* and HMAS *Choules*, as well as a beach landing force comprising of infantry, armoured vehicles, artillery, aviation and logistic elements optimised for amphibious raids and assaults.

The Sea Series of exercises enhances joint interoperability of the Australian Army and Royal Australian Navy's amphibious capabilities



Above: An M1A1 Abrams main battle tank is transported via Mexefloat to the beach head from HMAS Adelaide during Exercise Sea Raider 2023.



Left: An M1A1 Abrams main battle tank from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment provides perimeter security in the Raspberry Creek Urban Operations Training Facility during Exercise Sea Raider 2023.

Photo: SCT Andrew Sleeman

HMAS Sydney (V) Memorial Service for HMAS Sydney (II)

24 June 2023

HMAS *Sydney* (V) Ship's Company participated in a commemoration ceremony to honour the loss of HMAS *Sydney* (II) and HSK *Kormoran*. After completing warfare training in the Western Australian Exercise Area (WAXA) HMAS *Sydney* (V) took passage north up the coast of Western Australia to pay her respects to the 645 Australian men who lost their lives in the battle between *Sydney* (II) and HSK *Kormoran*.

This is the first time *Sydney* (V) has been able to make the journey to the final resting place of *Sydney* (II) since her commissioning in 2020.

The commemorative sunset ceremony was led by Executive Officer LCDR Maddison and Catafalque Party Guard Commander POB Chris Bradshaw



Above: Catafalque party emerges from the hanger to take up position for the Memorial Service and Commemorative Sunset

Photo POEW Aaron Clancy

Historic first for Navy's 816 Squadron

18 July 2023

Exercise Resolute Hunter has long been a cornerstone in maritime warfare training, bringing together allied forces to share expertise and bolster security.

This year, the exercise, stationed in Nevada and San Diego in the United States, witnessed a remarkable and historic new addition – the Australian Navy's 816 Squadron.

The collaboration between the US Navy and Australia's 816 Squadron on the exercise demonstrates the proven partnership between the two forces in an evolving maritime landscape.

Conducted biennially, Exercise Resolute Hunter represents a significant stride in military cooperation and is a testament to the camaraderie shared by the two nations.

The powerful joint maritime warfare training exercise aims at enhancing interoperability and collective capabilities amongst allied nations.

The exercise seeks to enhance and emphasise innovative tactics and technologies where 816 Squadron represents the RAN's commitment to staying on the forefront of maritime defence.

816 Squadron operates the MH-60R Seahawk - a reliable and highly effective combat helicopter that contributes strongly to naval power.

It is designed for both anti-submarine warfare and anti-

Right: RAN participants in the biennial Exercise Resolute Hunter 23. It has long been a cornerstone in maritime warfare training, bringing together allied forces to share expertise and bolster security.

Below: Participants in biennial Exercise Resolute Hunter 23

Photos: Defence

surface warfare combat roles across the RAN and US Navy Fleets.

816 Squadron's involvement in Exercise Resolute Hunter 23 reflects Navy's commitment to and engagement with the Indo-Pacific region as well as its integration with partner nations.

The integration of 816 Squadron with the US military during the exercise provided both forces with valuable insights into each other's operations and capabilities.

The exposure to varied equipment, strategies, and environments allowed for the cross-pollination of knowledge and skills.

816 Squadron members returned home from the exercise with invaluable experience, new insights, reinforced relationships and enhanced lethality prowess.

It's expected the RAN Fleet Air Arm will continue to participate in future iterations of Exercise Resolute Hunter, strengthening the ties between the US and Australian maritime combat helicopter communities and making the world's oceans safer for all.

By Sub Lieutenant Marina Riley



Exercise Talisman Sabre 23

8 August 2023

The largest massing of naval capability in Australian waters in recent years occurred when the Exercise Talisman Sabre 23 fleet assembled for combined training.

More than 17,000 people from eight countries served at sea across the 27 vessel-strong armada of frigates, destroyers, cruisers, amphibious ships, support ships, submarines, aircraft carriers and their embarked fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters.

The personnel count included ships' crews and embarked land forces conducting amphibious activities – key events in the exercise program.

Exercise Director Brigadier Damian Hill said the large maritime component was central to the exercise concept.

"As an island nation, Australia operates predominantly in the maritime and littoral environments, so it was fitting that half the Talisman Sabre force was maritime," Brigadier Hill said.

As Talisman Sabre Maritime Component Lead, Royal Australian Navy Commodore Flotillas Commodore Paul O'Grady, had the responsibility of overseeing the naval force and said the exercise was an important training event.

"Talisman Sabre provided a rare and valuable opportunity to combine diverse capabilities from different countries, and operate them seamlessly at sea. Together with their embarked aircraft and helicopters, they executed war at sea events, sustained the fleet, employed niche capabilities and delivered land forces from the sea," Commodore O'Grady said.

In addition to planned exercise activities, the close integration and international cooperation among maritime units was evident in their search-and-rescue response to the tragic loss of four Australian Army aircrew in an MRH90 incident during the exercise.

Commodore O'Grady commended all involved for the dedication and determination shown throughout the search operations.

The amphibious task group

The Talisman Sabre amphibious task group carried embarked forces from Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea and Germany, and comprised:

- RAN amphibious assault ship HMAS *Adelaide*
- Landing ship dock HMAS *Choules*
- USN amphibious assault carrier USS *America*
- Amphibious transport dock ships USS *New Orleans* and USS *Green Bay*
- Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force helicopter destroyer JS *Izumo*
- Tank landing ship JS *Shimokita*; and

- the Republic of Korea ship (ROKS) *Marado*.

The group was escorted by HMAS *Brisbane*, USS *Rafael Peralta* and USS *Oakland*, His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Montreal*, ROKS *Munmu the Great* and an Australian Collins-Class submarine.

The fleet and its escorts were sustained at sea by Australian replenishment ship HMAS *Stalwart* and United States Naval Ships *Tippecanoe* and *Caezar Chavez*.

Commodore O'Grady said the exercise strengthened international interactions; "By practising forming, sustaining and protecting a large multinational amphibious task group we have enhanced interoperability through increasingly complex maritime scenarios, in challenging and unforgiving environments,"

Mine countermeasures and logistics

Closer to shore, the coastal minehunter HMAS *Huon* practised protecting ports and amphibious landing areas from the threat of sea mines and other harbour security threats in company with USS *Miguel Keith*.

This was supported by a port security unit and maritime safety and security team from the United States Coast Guard deployable specialised forces and the RAN Maritime Geospatial Warfare Unit operating Remus 100 autonomous underwater vehicles.

In the vicinity of Bowen, Queensland, the USN's Military Sealift Command Ships *Bob Hope* and *Fisher* exercised the joint logistics over the sea capability. A pier erected from the shore and projecting over 500m out into deep water, allowed deep draft vessels to unload vehicles and equipment on shore in remote regions without requiring harbour facilities.

The aircraft carrier strike group

To Australia's north, HMAS *Perth* operated with USS *Ronald Reagan* and its escorts USS *North Carolina*, USS *Antietam* and USS *Robert Smalls* and support ships USNS *Rappahannock* and USNS *Carl Brashear*.

"These activities, executed over a vast area, strengthened our relationships and interchangeability, enabling our people to deliver vital warfighting effects as a combined force across a wide range of missions," Commodore O'Grady said.

Exercise Talisman Sabre brought together more than 30,000 people from 13 nations in training activities carried out on land, at sea and in the air across Queensland, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and New South Wales, and in the waters off Queensland and the north-west coast of Australia from July 21 until August 4.

By LCDR Andrew Herring

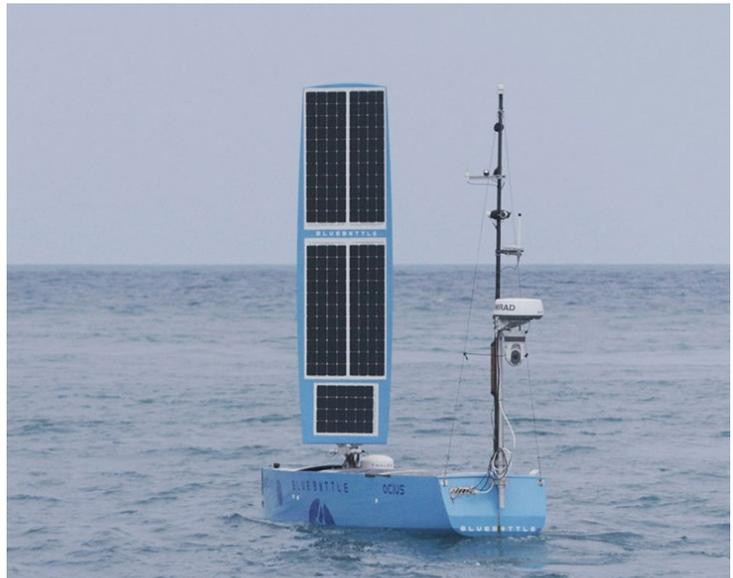
Blue Bottle maritime unmanned surveillance vessel

18 November 2022

From 10-22 October 2022, Australian Defence Force personnel deployed from Darwin to conduct long-range patrols on remote islands off Western Australia as part of Operation RESOLUTE. The patrols searched the islands for foreign fishing vessels and evidence of illegal activities by conducting foot patrols, water patrols, observation posts, and information gathering. Operation RESOLUTE is the Australian Defence Force (ADF) contribution to the whole of government (WoG) effort to protect Australia's borders and offshore maritime interests.

The seventh rotation of Army's Regional Force Surveillance Group (RFSG) used Bluebottles, developed by Ocius Technologies, which can provide a 24/7 on-water surveillance capability, with the flexibility to be readily manoeuvred to respond to emerging surveillance requirements or tasks.

During the two-week deployment in October, the contingent conducted surveillance and reconnaissance on and around remote islands off north Western Australia for foreign fishing vessels and evidence of illegal activities.



Above: A Blue Bottle maritime unmanned surveillance vessel patrolling on Operation Resolute, in remote Western Australian waters near Maret Islands

Photo: SGT Jarrod McAneney

Below: North West corner of Australia

Readers Digest Australian atlas

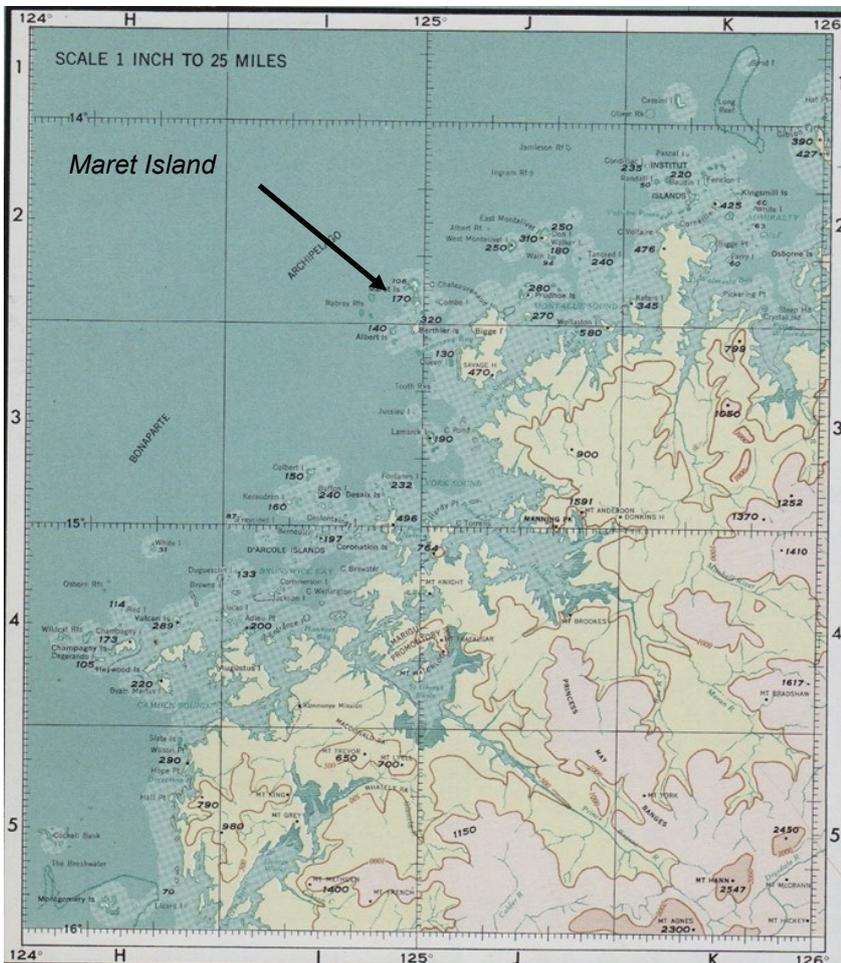
The contingent of 18 personnel was drawn primarily from Northwest Mobile Force (NORFORCE) and 10th Force Support Battalion, with attachments from the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment and 1st Combat Signal Regiment.

Major Alexander Brent, the Maritime Border Command (MBC) Liaison Officer to Rotation 7, said the use of the Bluebottles, and the embedding of an Ocius employee within the task unit headquarters, added significant capability to the operation.

"In addition to persistent surveillance, we were able to use the Bluebottles to conduct more specific reconnaissance tasks, such as beach landing site reconnaissance and avenues of approach to specific islands in advance of the ground force," Major Brent said.

"By controlling the Bluebottles remotely, the ground force was free to be able to move independently of the USVs (uncrewed surveillance vessels) and focus on other tasks, such as onshore reconnaissance and patrolling, while still benefiting from what the Bluebottles collected."

By Captain Lily Charles



Are uncrewed surface vehicles the future of naval combat?



GlobalData
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Uncrewed surface vehicles (USVs) represent an interesting new development in naval warfare



The Ukrainian Navy has recently incorporated the use of uncrewed maritime platforms into its ranks.

Credit: Billy Watkins / Shutterstock.com.

The naval achievements that the Ukrainian armed forces have accomplished over the past year have been substantial given their fleet size. Having sunk 18 ships since the invasion began including the sinking of the Russian Black Sea flagship *Moskva*, Ukraine has denied Russia full control of the Black Sea littoral zone thanks to the resilience of their navy. The Ukrainian Navy has recently incorporated the use of uncrewed maritime platforms into their ranks, using them several times to disrupt Russian naval movements and hinder port access.

Although not the first time uncrewed surface vessels (USVs) have been utilised on the battlefield, these attacks represent the first modern application of the technology that allows USVs to operate remotely up to 500 miles away from the vessel's homeport. The Ukrainian Government has announced its intention to procure 100 of these ves-

sels in order to expand its hold on the Black Sea and deter Russian aggression, as 20% of the roughly 4,500 missiles launched at Ukraine came from Russian naval vessels. Notwithstanding Ukraine's strategic objectives, examining the impact presented by USVs in the Russia-Ukraine conflict is vital to understanding their viability in future maritime conflicts.

Traditional USVs are usually fitted with defensive capabilities like machine guns or mine-laying capabilities so that the USV can return safely from engagement. The unconventional USVs employed by Ukraine are deemed uncrewed surface explosive vehicles and perform kamikaze operations largely at port targets. The Ukrainian Navy employs a swarm strategy by sending the vessels out in groups of 2-6 in conjunction with aerial drone sup-

(Continued on page 15)

Are uncrewed surface vehicles the future of naval combat?

(Continued from page 14)

port. Multiple targets moving rapidly in the air and on the ocean prove harder for Russian ships to effectively counter, often resulting in damage to the ship.

So far, there have been five different attacks mainly focused on the port cities of Sevastopol and Novorossiysk, ranging in effectiveness and scope. The first attack on 29 October 2022 was the most successful, as seven USVs and one aerial drone attacked the frigate *Admiral Marakov*, the mine-sweeper *Ivan Golubets*, and an unnamed ship in Sevastopol. Although none of the ships were sunk, they sustained significant damage causing the vessels to be grounded for an extended period. The USVs penetrated the protected and "safe" harbour, likely resulting in a significant drop in morale and security for the members of the Russian Navy. The breach of Sevastopol's defences caused Russia to implement more defensive measures like anti-USV wires in their ports and increased military presence.

With Novorossiysk being 420 miles away from Odessa, the next attack represented a key target for its oil supply. Several USVs attacked the Sheskhari oil terminal and little damage occurred, however, it demonstrated the expansive range within which USVs could operate effectively. Two further attacks occurred in Sevastopol on 22 March and 24 April 2023, where in both cases multiple USVs penetrated the harbour and exploded shy of the intended target and thus inflicting little damage. The most recent case is unconfirmed, as both sides present a different story. Russia claims that the intelligence ship *Ivan Khurs* was attacked by several USVs 140km away from the Bosphorus strait while the ship was reportedly protecting the Bluestream and Turkstream pipelines. Although they provided video evidence of the attack, Ukraine gave another video illustrating a collision between a USV and a warship. Regardless of what occurred, the effect of USVs on the Russian Navy has led the admirals to be more conservative and defensive with their fleet deployment as the Black Sea fleet scarcely leaves Sevastopol.

Despite not sinking any ships, Ukraine illustrated the operational viability of USVs in future naval confrontations. Even the Russians have adopted a "kamikaze" USV in light of Ukraine's success, employing an explosive USV to blow up a bridge near Odesa in February 2023. The ability to deliver payloads at a high-speed while being autonomous/remote-controlled provides a unique way to conduct naval operations without the cost of human life. USVs can be made smaller than most boats and are relatively cheap, with the vessels in Ukraine costing \$250,000 in comparison to for instance a tomahawk missile at around \$2m each. The vessels found in Ukraine are easy to manufacture, with

many indicating that they can be built in a garage with off-the-shelf civilian components.

The combination of low cost and low risk translates into the ability to sustain a persistent threat to navies in the open ocean and at port through large numbers. There are also benefits to not having a human in control of the vessel, as it can be streamlined and faster. USVs can also be deployed in worse conditions and stay out at sea for longer periods of time. USVs could represent a cheaper alternative to missiles while also being able to carry out more functions if the USV possesses a modular design.

However, there are downsides to USVs as they can often have limited applications once the element of surprise is lost. This effect was demonstrated by the subsequent attacks on the Russian Navy after the primary attack in October of 2022, as none of the other attacks were able to inflict considerable damage. Continued USV attacks on ports would only be countered by a proportional increase in defences. The Russian Navy has limited experience employing defensive capabilities, whereas western governments (specifically the US and UK) have invested in netting and jamming techniques after learning from clashes with Houthi rebels in the Gulf of Yemen in 2021. Therefore, the attacks perpetrated by Ukraine would have a larger effect on Russia than similar attacks on a developed navy. There is also an absence of international regulation on the subject as a warship is defined to be "manned" and require proper oversight from the chain of command, regulations which are difficult to enforce on uncrewed platforms.

Although the UK pledges to use autonomous/ remotely operated military equipment legally and ethically, this may not be the case for other states or allies in times of war. Cybersecurity concerns about the reliability of a platform which is being operated remotely have merit. To summarise, USVs represent an interesting new development in naval warfare. They represent a low-cost alternative to traditional missile strikes and attack-based naval operations, but they also represent a minimal threat currently once the element of surprise is lost. Many would argue, however, that the simple threat of USVs (especially the explosive variants) forces competing navies to be more cautious with their fleets. USV technology will likely improve over the coming decade with GlobalData intelligence predicting that the USV market will grow from \$894m in 2023 to \$1.5bn in 2027, indicating the potential developments in the design of USVs. With the news that Ukraine is developing the world's first combat unmanned underwater vessel (UUV) and have developed a new USV, the *Monobank*, Ukraine will continue to disrupt Russian naval operations with innovative unmanned maritime vehicles.

HMAS Cerberus—BMIET Graduation 104

The Boatswains Mate Initial Employment Training (BMIET) is a six month course beginning with Seamanship for the first 3 weeks, where trainees will learn the basics of ship's husbandry, line handling, and all major evolutions. From there, trainees will move to the battery where they will learn weapon handling and maintenance in depth.

Trainees are instructed on a number of weapons from 9mm through to 12.7mm. Trainees will also learn basics of handling a sea boat in different conditions while also gaining an understanding of how to safely navigate the sea boat with other personnel on board.

As part of the Boatswains Mate branch members will be required to be part of the ship's Boarding Party (BP) team. Trainees will learn the legal aspects that are required to be a part of the BP team as well as a variety of skills, which include Defensive Tactics, the service-issued tactical baton and an overall understanding of all aspects relating to being a member of the BP team.



Above: Deputy Director Maritime Skills Centre, Commander Luke Weston, RAN (right), presents Seaman Gabrielle Avery with the Warfare Medallion and certificate during the Basic Boatswains Mate Initial Entry Training (BMIET) Course graduation, at Maritime Skills Training Centre, HMAS Cerberus, Victoria.

Below: Trainees fall in for the graduation of the Basic Boatswains Mate Initial Entry Training (BMIET) Course at Maritime Skills Training Centre, HMAS Cerberus, Victoria.

Photo: LSIS James McDougall



HMAS Cerberus Base Redevelopment Project completed

Right: Assistant Minister for Defence, the Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs the Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP (right), officially opens the HMAS Cerberus Junior Sailors Galley Extensions with Commanding Officer HMAS Cerberus, Captain Ainsley Morthorpe, CSM, RAN marking the completion of the Base Redevelopment Project



Left: Assistant Minister for Defence, the Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP (2nd from end on left) enjoys lunch with sailors and officers in the newly opened Junior Sailors Galley Extension

Right: Assistant Minister for Defence, the Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs the Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP (right) is shown the Leak Stop and Repair Simulator by Chief Petty Officer Darren Oke at the School of Survivability and Ship Safety



Photos: LSIS James McDougall

DVA CONTACTS

Provider enquiry numbers

- Provider invoicing & billing enquiries: [1300 550 017](tel:1300550017)
- Provider enquiries: [1800 550 457](tel:1800550457)
- Transport bookings: [1800 550 455](tel:1800550455)
- [Veterans' Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre \(VAPAC\)](#): [1800 552 580](tel:1800552580)

Hearing or speech impairment assistance

- If you are deaf, or have a hearing impairment or speech impairment, contact us through the [National Relay Service \(NRS\)](#):
- Talk To You (TTY) users phone [1800 555 677](tel:1800555677) then ask for 1800 838 372
- Speak and Listen users phone [1800 555 727](tel:1800555727) then ask for 1800 838 372
- Internet relay users connect to the [NRS](#)

Claim processing times

Where things are at

In the month of June 2023 we:

- made 6,724 decisions on claims
- received claims from 5,146 veterans
- As at 30 June 2023 we:
 - were working on 42,888 claims
 - had 32,153 active claims not yet allocated to a decision-maker (known as the claims backlog), lodged by 21,164 veterans

During Financial Year 2022-2023

Claims lodged	68,306
Claims determined	67,817
Acceptance rate for initial liability conditions	74.0%

Information on health services may be obtained from DVA. The contact numbers for health care providers requiring further information or prior financial authorisation for all States & Territories are listed below:

PHONE NUMBER:

Telephone:
[1800 VETERAN \(1800 838 372\)](tel:1800838372)

International callers:

[+61 2 6289 1133](tel:+61262891133)

POSTAL ADDRESS FOR ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES:

Health Approvals & Home Care Section department of Veterans' Affairs

GPO Box 9998

BRISBANE QLD 4001

DVA WEBSITE:

<http://www.dva.gov.au/providers/allied-healthprofessionals>

DVA email for prior financial authorisation:
health.approval@dva.gov.au

The appropriate prior approval request form can be found at: <https://www.dva.gov.au/providers/servicesrequiring-prior-approval>

CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT

For information about claims for payment visit: www.dva.gov.au/providers/how-claim

Claim Enquiries: 1300 550 017
(Option 2 Allied Health)

Claims will take a variety of times to complete based on whether or not the claim is prioritised for allocation to a decision maker and the complexity of the claim itself. For example, if the service of the individual crosses two or more Acts or contains a lot of health conditions and injuries or both. This results in some claims being decided faster than the average time, while some claims take longer.

For any condition, to make the claiming process smoother, follow these 3 steps:

- **Step 1:** Get your medical practitioner to confirm your diagnosis.
- **Step 2:** Supply the documents you need to;
- **Step 3:** Check if you are already eligible for free health care and treatment.

OPEN
Veterans & Families
Counselling
ARMS
1800 011 046



**SAFE ZONE
SUPPORT**

FREE ANONYMOUS
COUNSELLING LINE
CALL 1800 142 072

**Defence
Family
Helpline**



1800 624 608

**Defence
All-hours
Support Line**



1800 628 036