

SENATE ESTIMATES BRIEF

Whole of Defence 6
Secretary's and CDF's pack

**WHOLE OF DEFENCE 6: DEFENCE OF AUSTRALIA'S
NORTHWEST AND PILBARA REGIONS**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defence provides up to seven Armidale Class Patrol Boats, one Major Fleet Unit, three AP-3C Orion aircraft and approximately 500 personnel to Operation RESOLUTE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 600 personnel are assigned to the Pilbara Regiment based in Karratha.
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Key Issues

- Defence maintains a visible presence through a broad spectrum of activities and bases across the north-west:
 - Navy conducts regular presence patrols and also conducts surveys and transits across the north-west.
 - Army's Pilbara Regiment based in Karratha comprises approximately 600 personnel and has depots at Port Headland, Karratha and Carnarvon.
 - and the North West Mobile Force has depots located at Broome, Kununurra and Derby.
 - Air Force periodically conducts flying activities from RAAF Base Learmonth.
- In 2013 Defence will conduct 10 exercises in the north and west to test and enhance its capabilities including those relevant to the protection of the resources and minerals sector. A large joint Services tactical exercise is planned to be held in North West Australia in 2014 which will include the US Marine Rotational Force – Darwin.
- Defence contributes towards Whole-of-Government national resilience including counter-terrorism and civil emergency planning and Australia's economic assets in the north and west form part of that planning.

Navy basing in North West Australia

- There is a Navy Logistic Support Element in Karratha and modifications have been made to the wharf at Dampier to support Navy patrol boats.

- The use of the Dampier facilities has not been as extensive as was initially anticipated; reasons for this range from the distance Dampier is from normal transit routes, adverse conditions at Dampier Cargo
- Wharf for small aluminium-hulled ships, berth congestion and logistic shortcomings.
- Broome is in a better location and presents less of a challenge than Dampier. It has been used frequently by patrol boats in the past.

Operation RESOLUTE

- Defence maintains a presence in the North West Australia region under Operation RESOLUTE and Regional Force Surveillance Units (RFSU).
 - Defence provides up to seven Armidale Class Patrol Boats, one Major Fleet Unit, three AP-3C Orion aircraft and approximately 500 personnel to Operation RESOLUTE.

Defence engagement with North West Australia stakeholders

- Defence, Border Protection Command and industry representatives meet biannually at the Department of Infrastructure and Transport-led Oil and Gas Infrastructure Forum, to discuss risk and security .
 - Defence's role is to engage with north-west industry partners to increase awareness of Defence's supporting role and capabilities.
- Defence also liaises with shipping and maritime trade industry representatives at the biannual Australian Maritime Defence Council, which includes:
 - the Minerals Council of Australia and the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association,.
- The Chiefs of Service Committee met in Western Australia in November 2012, which included open forum discussions between Defence's Senior Leadership and industry executives.
- In April 2013 a table-top exercise – Exercise PYTHON – was conducted in Perth, involving senior industry executives including those from the oil and gas sector.
 - The aim of Exercise PYTHON was to take senior leaders through a series of briefs and vignette discussions to develop an understanding of the capacity and capabilities that Defence and other Government agencies have to deal with potential security threats.

Defence White Paper and the Force Posture Review

- The Force Posture Review found that our strategic environment does not require widespread changes in the location of our Defence Force bases, but some adjustments should be made to meet future needs.
- The implementation strategy for the Review's recommendations will be met from Defence's allocated resources as determined through the 2013-14 Budget. Many recommendations will be progressed through the Defence Capability Plan and the Defence Major Capital Facilities Program.
- The White Paper identifies the importance of Australia's north and its economic assets, which requires a visible force posture in the northern and western approaches.
 - A more visible posture will be achieved through: enhancing the ADF's presence in and familiarity with Australia's north; updating operational plans for defending the north; and developing a better understanding of civil infrastructure logistic capacity in the north-west.
- The White Paper details specific plans for:
 - upgrades of the Tindal and Learmonth air bases to enhance the support of KC-30 air-to-air refuelling tanker operations, and the Cocos Island airfield facilities to support P-8A maritime surveillance aircraft;
 - proceeding with infrastructure development to support P-8A operations from RAAF bases including RAAF Base Pearce;
 - proceeding with infrastructure development to support Joint Strike Fighter operations at RAAF bases including RAAF Bases Darwin, Tindal, Learmonth and Curtin.
- The deficiencies in Defence's supply network identified by the Force Posture Review will be addressed through improved planning and use of the rail, road and sea supply chain. This includes the testing through ADF exercises of potential improvements to the north and north-west fuel network system.

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BACKGROUND

- Defence routinely conducts a wide variety of exercises at the Service, joint and multinational levels using Australian Defence Force elements tasked with the land, air and seaward defences of Australia, including our Sea Lines of Communication in the north and west, and conducts Offshore Energy Installation counter-terrorism training at least annually.
- The Army's Pilbara Regiment based in Karratha comprises approximately 600 personnel of the approximately 1600 personnel assigned to the Regional Force Surveillance Units based across the north of Australia.
- Fixed bases are used to support the maritime strategy of manoeuvre, power projection and layered defence – not provide permanent defensive positions.
- Defence conducts an annual consultative forum meeting with the State Government of Western Australia. The scope of this forum includes consultation on planned developments in North West Australia for the purpose of identifying areas for mutual and collaborative work.
- Defence has also included visits to the North West Australia region as part of the study tour schedule for Defence College students to improve their appreciation and understanding of the challenges associated with this region. The first of these tours will take place in the next 12 months.