

## SENATE ESTIMATES BRIEF

Operations 5  
Secretary's and CDF's pack

### OPERATIONS 05: AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE BATTLE CASUALTIES: KILLED AND WOUNDED AS AT 06 MAY 2013

#### Key Facts

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>39 ADF battle casualty deaths have been sustained in Afghanistan since operations commenced in 2002.</b></li> <li>• <b>282 ADF personnel have been wounded in action in the Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO) since 2002.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>30 ADF personnel were wounded in Iraq.</b></li> <li>○ <b>252 ADF personnel have been wounded in Afghanistan.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Four wounded in action casualties have been female:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>two in Iraq and</b></li> <li>○ <b>two in Afghanistan.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>During 2013, six ADF personnel have been wounded in action in Afghanistan.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>three of these casualties have been returned to Australia for further care.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
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#### Key Issues

- Defence defines battle casualties as personnel who are killed, wounded, missing or captured as a consequence of action against the enemy.
- Where soldiers are unable to continue their duties due to their wounds, they are returned to Australia for further medical or surgical treatment.
- The number of killed and wounded personnel on operations is a sensitive issue and there has been public concern expressed regarding timely disclosure of information, timeliness of aero medical evacuations and subsequent medical care.
- Information about the number of battle casualties is made publicly available through the Global Operations page of the Defence website.
- Medical evacuations and treatment times and are undertaken within International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) guidelines and meet ADF standards.

### **Types of wounds ADF members have sustained**

- It is not appropriate to provide specific details on wounds due to medical-in-confidence and privacy reasons; however, the types of wounds sustained to date can broadly be categorised as:
  - Amputations;
  - Fractures;
  - Gunshot wounds;
  - Hearing loss;
  - Lacerations/contusions;
  - Concussion/traumatic brain injuries;
  - Penetrating fragments; and
  - Multiple severe wounds.
- Personnel can sustain multiple wounds concurrently, commonly following attacks by an improvised explosive device.
- The Minister for Defence also provides information about broad categories of wounds sustained by our personnel in his Ministerial Statements to Parliament.

### **Aero Medical Evacuation (AME)**

- The ADF will always seek to evacuate wounded personnel to medical facilities as rapidly as possible.
- Medical evacuations and treatment times are undertaken within ISAF guidelines and meet ADF standards.
- Treatment is based on the severity of wounds and can be complicated by the tactical situation, particularly if troops are still engaged with the enemy.
- For life-threatening wounds, the following timings are mandated by ISAF and endorsed by Australia:
  - All ADF personnel receive advanced first aid training and can provide immediate care within the first ten minutes of wounding.
  - Our aim remains for casualties to receive advanced resuscitation support within one hour. Often this resuscitation capability deploys forward with the combat element.
  - Casualties are evacuated to a medical facility able to provide surgery within two hours.

- While a battlefield recovery time from point of wounding to an advanced resuscitation capability of one hour is achieved in most circumstances, there are sometimes operational reasons why it is not always achievable.

#### **Accuracy of Defence reporting**

- Defence is confident that the figures provided are correct, but continues to review and consolidate available information and processes to ensure that all Defence personnel wounded on operations are accurately recorded.

#### **Suppressing the identity of wounded Defence personnel**

- The ADF will not release the names of casualties until Next of Kin notification procedures have been completed.
- When our wounded service personnel return to Australia, it is a personal decision for them and their families as to whether or not they choose to make public the details of what was likely a traumatic experience – the exception to this being Special Forces personnel who are required to keep their identities protected.
  - Names are only withheld when protected identity status is applied (Special Forces soldiers).

*Refer to **Personnel Brief 2** for a status of Commissions of Inquiry and Inquiries into Combat Deaths and **Personnel Brief 3** for details relating to Support for Physically and Mentally Injured and Ill Australian Defence Force Personnel].*

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## BACKGROUND

- **Definition of BCAS.** Defence defines battle casualties (BCAS) as those personnel serving in warlike conditions, who are killed, wounded, missing or captured as a consequence of action against the enemy. Killed and wounded battle casualty numbers are reported separately in order to provide clarity for external agencies. The Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO) – which includes Afghanistan and Iraq – is the only area of operations designated as warlike. No ADF personnel have been reported as missing or captured.
  - Wounded is defined as a Defence member who is hurt while serving in warlike circumstances and is involved in contact with the adversary, either through direct engagement, or indirectly (e.g. road-side bombing).
  - Injured is defined as a Defence member who is hurt in an incident that has not been the result of adversarial action in warlike circumstances.
- **BCAS Reporting.** BCAS reporting is made available on the Defence web page on the Global Operations site.
- **Release of BCAS Information.** Information regarding battle casualties is not released until Next of Kin notification procedures are completed and it is operationally appropriate to do so. Some families may choose to withhold personal information of soldiers killed in action.
- **Returned to Australia.** When wounded, personnel with minor wounds can be treated and rested as required in the Area of Operations before they return to duty. Personnel are returned to Australia when the nature of their wound prevents return to duty, or they sustain more severe wounds.
  - Personnel who are critically wounded and require intensive care stabilisation prior to return to Australia are staged through an advanced Coalition health facility in Germany.
  - Once stabilised, they are evacuated back to Australia under escort of a qualified Air Force aero medical evacuation team to receive additional medical or surgical treatment and rehabilitation as appropriate.
- **First Aid Training.** All ADF personnel receive first aid training and additional refresher training prior to commencing duty in the MEAO. Tactical units also prepare selected soldiers as combat first aid providers and they receive additional specific training in the initial treatment of the wounds they are likely to encounter on a battlefield.