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Subject: HMAS MELBOURNE ALCOHOL RELATED INCIDENT IN AQABA, JORDAN
Comment:
Action Area: CJOPS

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HQJOC HIB 2010/17

HOT ISSUE BRIEF

ISSUE: HMAS MELBOURNE ALCOHOL RELATED INCIDENT IN AQABA, JORDAN

SENSITIVITY: Medium

KEY ISSUES:

- At 0200B 23 Dec 10, HMAS MELBOURNE was informed by Royal Jordanian Navy liaison personnel that an Australian male had been involved in an incident at the [REDACTED].
- At 0250B, two HMAS MELBOURNE personnel, accompanied by Jordanian Navy personnel, identified the person as an Able Seaman from HMAS MELBOURNE.
- Hotel staff and one Jordanian Tourist Police Officer indicated the sailor had caused minor damage to the hotel and been involved in an altercation with hotel security staff possibly breaking the finger of a Jordanian male. The sailor was released to HMAS MELBOURNE without charges being laid.
- Ship's staff visited the hotel in the afternoon of 23 Dec 10 to arrange for the sailor to pay for any expense incurred by the hotel and hotel staff. Negotiations are continuing.

- Senior Jordanian naval authorities are providing assistance in managing the incident.

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Date issued: 24 Nov 2010

BACKGROUND:

HMAS MELBOURNE is conducting a visit to Aqaba, Jordan, from 20 – 26 Dec 10.

MELBOURNE Ship's Company are permitted overnight shore leave, in one of three approved hotels and are required to return to the confines of the hotel or ship by 2359 daily. Commander JTF 633 has authorised the Commanding Officer to permit members of the ship's company, that are not required for duty, to consume two standard alcoholic drinks per 24 hour period either onboard, or within the confines of one of the approved hotels. The approved hotels are patrolled by HMAS MELBOURNE duty personnel.

In this incident, the Able Seaman was at a non approved hotel after curfew, was alone and is likely to have consumed more than two standard alcoholic drinks in contravention of the controls placed upon personnel.

The Able Seaman was observed by hotel staff to be running around the foyer shouting that there was a bomb in the hotel before damaging an elevator telephone, a picture frame and a staircase railing. A scuffle ensued with hotel security staff in which one local national possibly broke a finger requiring medical treatment.

The Able Seaman presented in a disorientated state and was assessed by HMAS MELBOURNE medical staff to be intoxicated or possibly under the effects of a chemical agent. The sailor has limited recollection of the events despite being in a coherent state on

returning to the ship and believes his drink may have been spiked in the early evening of 22 Dec 10. The sailor tested negative for drugs AM 23 Dec 10 and recorded a blood alcohol level of .02 at 1130 23 Dec 10.

The Able Seaman is now subject to administrative and disciplinary action. He will remain onboard the ship, for the remainder of the port visit, to mitigate the risk of arrest by local authorities.

The Jordanian Chief and Deputy Chief of Navy have been advised of the incident. Jordanian officials are providing assistance to resolve the incident.

In response to this incident the Commanding Officer of MELBOURNE has decided that personnel are no longer permitted to consume alcohol ashore for the remainder of the port visit to Aqaba.

MELBOURNE has been deployed since 18 Aug 10.