

**Editor**  
The Herald Sun

Dear Sir,

Your article titled 'Failure to communicate' (Herald Sun Thursday 26th July, p15) unfairly criticises Australia's Abrams main battle tank.

Australian Abrams tanks can operate safely with and communicate effectively with US and other coalition forces.

The vehicle is fitted with two voice radios that are capable of communicating with any coalition radio operating in the same mode and on the same wavelength.

Whilst the Battle Management System provides increased situational awareness for commanders, standing rules of engagement require all coalition forces to positively identify a target before engaging. Therefore vehicles not fitted with Blue Force Tracker will not be at "grave risk of being destroyed by other fighting vehicles or coalition aircraft" as suggested by your article.

The Battle Management System requires either satellite, combined with a data fusion centre, or radio based (terrestrial) carrier signals to enable a network to be established.

Defence is negotiating the provision of satellite services which is expected to be established by the end of 2007. In the meantime an interim solution is being investigated.

It is disappointing that reporting on such important matters glosses over the actual facts and details.

**Brigadier Mike Phelps**  
Department of Defence

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