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Talisman Saber team effort raises money

ROCKHAMPTON, Australia – Nearly \$14,000 in money raised through a "gold coin" fundraiser was given Monday <June 25> to Legacy, an Australian non-profit veterans charity, during a reception for Exercise Talisman Saber 2007 dignitaries in Rockhampton.

The gold coin donations were given as part of Talisman Saber's Open Day, an event that transpired riverside here last week when the local community met exercise participants and saw equipment normally kept behind military gates.

A number of people were delighted with the amount raised.

"Legacy is a volunteer non-profit organization that sees to the welfare of widows and dependants of deceased Australian veterans who have died as a result of war," said Allan Fuary, Legacy representative and one of the TS07 Open Day coordinators. "The amount raised at open day was absolutely outstanding and will go to good use."

All the money that goes into Legacy is spent on the ground level, said Fuary. Nothing goes into the state coffers and, with volunteers doing the work, money is maximized and goes where it should -- to veterans' families in need.

Janet Boyd, coordinator of city governance and personnel assistant to Rockhampton's mayor, said the amount "exceeded their wildest dreams." The event itself took a lot of hard work and involved everyone pitching in.

"It was a team effort," Boyd said of the fundraiser that involved Australians and Americans coming together. "We all made friends along the way."

Such an effort coincides with the goal of interoperability between the two nations, which is a large part of Talisman Saber's purpose.

U.S. Navy Rear Adm. John Hines Jr. pointed out how successful the exercise's planning stage went in May.

"But here is where the live portion of the exercise takes place; here the important relationship building between two countries and their branches of service happens and now during the exercise is the right time," said Hines Jr., the U.S. director Combined Exercise Control Group.

"A real-world event is not the time to exchange business cards," he added.

Business cards, however, were exchanged during the reception's social time, where attendees mingled and got to know each other more.

"Even this event is about interoperability," said Ian Power, Legacy treasurer.

When the evening formalities started, Royal Australian Army Brig. Gen. David McKaskill, Australian director Combined Exercise Control Group, helped set the stage for the official check handover. He thanked both military and civilians for their contributions to open day and to the exercise overall.

McKaskill said their combined efforts not only gave non-participants an inside view of Talisman Saber, but also helped raise money for an important cause. He said Talisman Saber participants were honored to give back to the community.

The gratitude continued as Mr. Peter Lindsey, parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Defence, thanked the community and military for their commitment and support.

"Whether it's at Open Day or in the field, we work together well and we all share the common interest of making the world a better place," he said.

TS07 is a biennial U.S. and Australian led Joint Task Force exercise designed to prepare both nations for crisis action planning and execution of contingency operations and maintains a high level of interoperability between the forces, demonstrating commitment to regional security and the U.S. and Australian military alliance. The exercise also supports increased flexibility and readiness, which are force multipliers in winning the global war on terror.

Additional information on the exercise is available on the U.S. Seventh Fleet Web site at <http://www.c7f.navy.mil> or through a link from the Australian Defence Force site at <http://www.defence.gov.au/globalexes.cfm>.