

It is blue force versus red force for about 200 RAAF Williamtown members who have deployed to Townsville for Australia's largest exercise, Talisman Sabre 2007.

The biennial exercise sees about 7500 Australian military personnel participate in an intensive four-week training period of sea, air and land battles.

"RAAF Townsville's versatility in supporting a cross section of demanding air activities are demonstrated during Talisman Sabre," WGCDR Micka Gray, Deputy Commander Task Unit Townsville, said.

Eight F/A-18 Hornets from RAAF Williamtown's 77 Squadron are joined in Townsville by 33SQN's B707 tanker and local based Caribous from 38SQN for the war games.

Talisman Sabre also provides the RAAF with the opportunity to train with some 20 000 United States Air Force, Navy and Marines, while focusing on the operational level planning and conduct of high end warfighting.

The United States Marine Corps VMFA 212 SQN will also be flying F/A-18 aircraft during the exercise, and will be supported by KC-130 air-to-air refuelling aircraft operating out of Rockhampton.

The United States Air Force 353 Special Operation Group is operating specialist transport aircraft, including helicopters, supported by air-to-air refuelling C-130 Hercules and KC-135 Air-Air aircraft.

This training provides participants with high complexity air combat training opportunities by engaging with allied militaries.

"During the exercise the fighter aircraft will take off from Townsville, meet the air-to-air refuelling tanker for a top up, fight through combat air patrols, conduct simulated attacks on enemy ships and ground targets, before fighting back out," FLTLT Trent Schurmann, F/A-18 Hornet pilot from 77 SQN, said.

A typical Hornet sortie for the exercise will take about three hours in the air, combined with about 6 hours of thorough mission planning, briefing and debriefing.

The maintenance personnel are yet another essential component of the 77 SQN detachment for Talisman Sabre.

CPL Rhys Mitchell, avionics technician at 77 SQN, is putting his skills to use during his first time on Exercise Talisman Sabre 2007.

"It is great to be able to get away with a really good bunch of guys from the SQN and get the jets in the air for the exercise," CPL Mitchell said.

"It is awesome to be able to get out into the community and experience the different challenges being on an exercise entails".

The maintenance tempo has stepped up from 12 to about 30 flying hours per day during the exercise.

“This means more time is committed to servicing for the jets than what we would normally experience back at Williamtown,” CPL Mitchell said.

About 110 maintenance members from 77 SQN are working shifts around the clock to ensure aircraft are maintained and airworthy for Talisman Sabre missions.

Members from 81 Wing Headquarters have deployed along with 77 Squadron to provide essential administrative, logistical, operations and intelligence support for the exercise.

The exercise aircraft will be primarily operating in the over water airspace to the south-east of Townsville down to the Shoalwater Bay Training Area near Rockhampton.

77 SQN will also be co-ordinating with a United States Navy aircraft carrier based force, including F/A-18 E/F aircraft.

As well as the aircraft operating out of Townsville, there are also a range of aircraft in Rockhampton, Amberley, Brisbane and Williamtown, along with aircraft carriers and soldiers in a variety of locations around Australia.

Clearance	Name	Appointment	DTG
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