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QUESTION BRIEF (QB)

TOPIC: US Alliance

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If asked: US sinking of Iranian frigate

- US submarine operations are a matter for the United States.
- As the Prime Minister stated [6 March 2026], three Australian personnel were on board the submarine that sank the Iranian frigate.
- As the Prime Minister also stated [6 March 2026], no Australian personnel participated in offensive action against Iran.

If asked: What were the Australian personnel doing?

- Members of the ADF are routinely embedded with US forces, as US service members are with us.
- As part of the AUKUS Pillar 1 Optimal Pathway, Australian submariners are embedded on US and UK submarines to gain experience in operating nuclear-powered submarines.
 - All such arrangements are undertaken in a manner consistent with Australia's domestic and international legal obligations. This includes compliance with Australian rules of engagement, and with the conditions of the exchange.

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- It is in our national interest to undertake these arrangements to further deepen our interoperability with our most important security partner and ally.
- Australia does not typically go into the details of operational activities and we will not comment further, either on our operations or those with partners.

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Lead Division

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Division: International Policy Division
Date first prepared: 19 March 2025
Originating Source: Department of Defence

Phone: s47E(d)
Action Officer: s47E(d)
Date last updated: s22

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Talking points

Australian Defence Force and the Middle East

Correct as at 26 1645L March 2026

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Third country deployments

If asked: About third country deployments:

- There are long-standing arrangements relating to third country deployments to ensure Australian interests are managed appropriately.
- For operational security reasons, the Australian Defence Force does not disclose specific details regarding third country deployments, including the number of personnel or their location.

If asked: Why were Australians on the US submarine?

- Members of the ADF are routinely embedded with US forces, as US Service members are with us.
- All such arrangements are undertaken in a manner consistent with Australia's domestic and international legal obligations.
 - This includes compliance with Australian rules of engagement, and the conditions of the exchange.
 - ADF members are directed to cease performing tasks that are not consistent with these requirements.
 - It is in our national interest to undertake these arrangements to further deepen our interoperability with our most important security partner and ally.
- Australia will not go into the details of operational activities, either our own or those with partners.

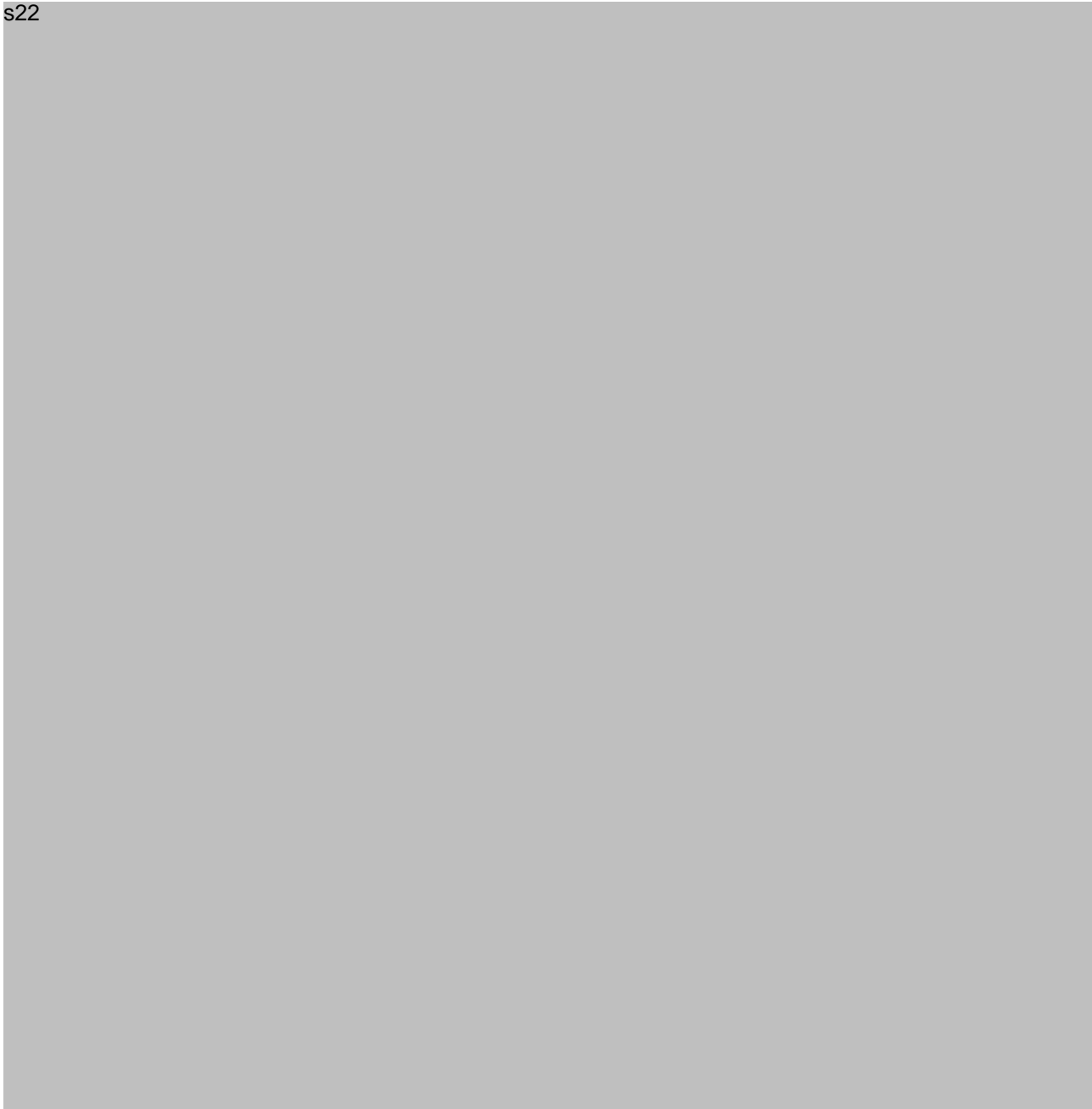
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If pressed:

- Defence has several multinational peacekeeping and Coalition security operations across the Middle East. This includes:

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- **Operation Hydranth:** Support to the United States and United Kingdom defensive actions targeting capabilities used in Houthi rebel attacks in the Red Sea.

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- Defence will not provide information about the specific location of its personnel due to operational security requirements.

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Clearance	Name	Appointment	Date and time
Drafted by	s47E(d)	SCA to MSC	09 0925L Mar 26
Updated by	s4 / E(d)	SO2 MPA Global / SWP	26 Mar 26
Updates cleared by	s4 / E(d)	JOR Commander, HQJOC	26 1635L Mar 26
	s47E(d)	Executive Director Aerospace Explosive Ordnance SPO	17 1337L Mar 26
	s47E(d)	A/AS Global Partners	26 1730L Mar 26
	s4 / E(d)	A/gDirector Global, MSC	26 1726L Mar 26
	s4 / E(d)	J330	18 1445L Mar 26

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	AIRCDRE Angus Porter	Director General Air Combat Capability – Air Force	11 1556L Mar 26
	RADM Jonathan Earley	Head, MSC	18 1535 Mar 26
Consulted by	s47E(d)	A/g Director, Israel-Palestine Taskforce, DFAT	20 1028L Mar 26
	s47E(d)	Senior Legal Officer, Office of International Law	20 1017L Mar 26
	s47E(d)	Senior Adviser, Middle East, Africa and Multilateral Policy, PM&C	20 1107L Mar 26
	Paul Griffiths	FAS Middle East and Africa Division, DFAT	09 1956L Mar 26
Embedded comms team	s47E(d)	SCA. SP&I Media	17 1115L Mar 26
	s47E(d)	Acting J09 / SCA to CJOPS	26 1555L Mar 26
	s47E(d)	Snr SCA to MSC	26 1659L Mar 26
	s47E(d)	Deputy Director Media, Brand and Identity	20 1617L Mar 26
Defence Media	s47E(d)	Director Media	27 March 26
OSEC/OCDF	s47E(d)	Director, Chief of the Defence Force Communication and Strategic Communication Adviser to the Chief of the Defence Force	16 1529L Mar 26

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