

The Real

As the Royal Australian Navy celebrates its 100th anniversary, the professionalism and preparedness of its minor vessels has never been greater. But keeping this diverse organisation at the required level of readiness to protect Australia's massive coast and off-shore interests doesn't come easy. Rehearsals, shakeouts and numerous exercises combine with real-life experience to keep our sailors – and the vessels they live on – in peak shape.

One such shakeout is the annual Minor War Vessel Concentration Period – a set of escalating exercises, revolving around realistic scenarios that may reasonably be encountered on real operations.

Minor War Vessel Concentration Period 2011, in the waters off Cairns, brought HMA Ships Launceston, Brunei, Labuan, Wewak, Shepparton and Benalla together to practice a range of skills and challenge their capabilities. Squirrel and Augusta helicopters, operated by 723 Squadron, added another level of complexity to the exercise, enabling the ship's companies to test their aviation integration skills.

But, what was the aim of the Minor War Vessel Concentration Period?

Commander Alex Hawes, Commander Sea Training Minor War Vessels – Sea Training Unit, says that, in general terms, the aim of this year's exercise was to integrate three different ship types and varying crew skill bases to achieve a common goal.

"Three survey units, three heavy landing craft, two Armidale-class patrol boats and two A109 helicopters from 723 Squadron – with supporting involvement from fleet tanker HMAS Success and guided missile frigate HMAS Newcastle – formed the core force," Commander Hawes says.

"The core force accounted for some 200 uniformed personnel.

"We took a week alongside to forum a range of current operational issues and lead into some detailed planning.



Sea Patrol

