

Preemptive Strike



More than 1000 soldiers from Darwin's 1st Brigade spent two weeks in Shoalwater Bay Training Area near Rockhampton, Queensland, gearing up for the biggest military exercise of the year – Talisman Sabre 2011.

The 1st Brigade soldiers used their own Exercise Predator's Strike to fine tune their readiness and combat skills, combining mechanised infantry, tanks, cavalry, combat engineers, artillery and support services to respond to a range of threat scenarios before rolling in to TS11 with the Yanks over the same terrain.

Commander 1st Brigade Brigadier Gus McLachlan said he was confident his soldiers were ready for the challenges of Talisman Sabre and were looking forward to working alongside the US forces.

"1st Brigade is in great shape," Brigadier McLachlan said.

"Our Darwin and Adelaide-based elements are operating and combining well as a team and we're looking forward to the opportunity to work on our interoperability with the Americans during Talisman Sabre.

"Predator's Strike was an important part of our preparation because the training of our Darwin-based elements was affected by the northern wet season – so it's invaluable to get down to a range like Shoalwater Bay.

"We're lucky to have 7RAR based in Adelaide and they've had a great opportunity to work up individually at Port Augusta in better conditions, but, during Predator's Strike, we all came together to work as a combined-arms combat team.

"I'm very satisfied with how all the elements are working together."

The 1st Brigade is the Australian Army's light armoured brigade. Its soldiers and Abrams tanks, artillery, combat engineers, ASLAVs and M113AS4 armoured fighting vehicles are tasked with being ready to respond to a range of threats and regional events on behalf of the Australian government.

Following Predator's Strike, the 1st Brigade soldiers joined 14,000 US personnel and 7000 other Australian Defence Force personnel for Exercise Talisman Sabre 2011.

TS11 is a biennial combined training activity, designed to train Australian and US forces in planning and conducting combined task-force operations in order to improve ADF/US combat readiness and interoperability.

It is a US-led Australian-supported exercise to improve readiness across the spectrum of military operations, from conventional conflict to peacekeeping and humanitarian-assistance efforts.

The exercise forms part of the ADF's extensive training program to ensure it is prepared to protect and support Australia and its national interests, and contributes to the ability of Australian and US military forces to work together efficiently and safely.

TS11 was officially conducted between 11-29 July, but many of the Australian and American units conducted their own unit or formation exercises before and after this official exercise period.

TS11 wasn't just big in terms of the numbers participating – but also ranged across much of Queensland and the Northern Territory and in adjacent maritime areas. Key sites, other than Shoalwater Bay, included High Range near Townsville as well as Delamere Range, and Bradshaw and Mount Bunday Training Areas in the Northern Territory, and the air space over the northern part of the Northern Territory.

