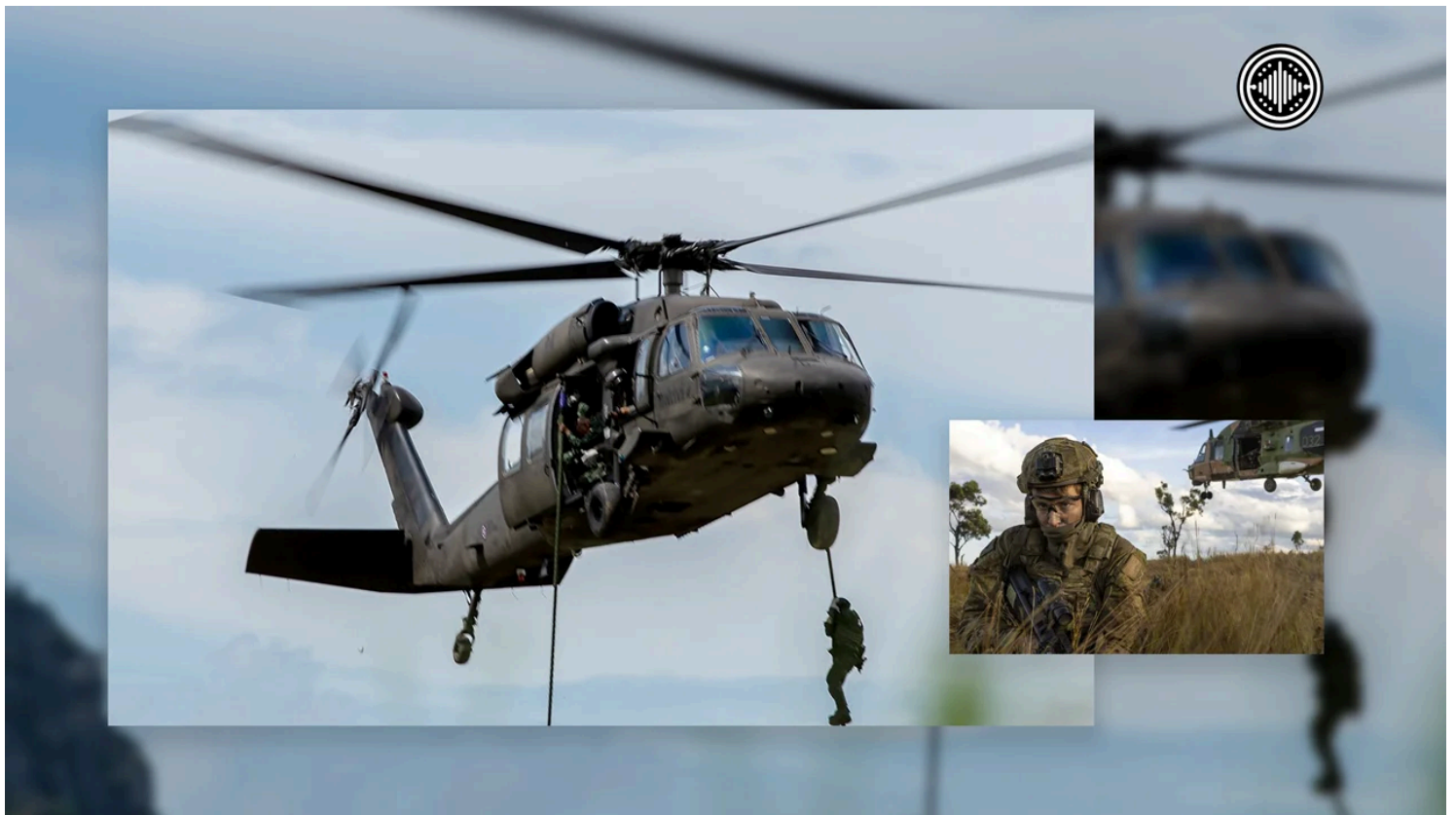


Taipan-Like Helicopter Returns for Talisman Sabre War Games

July 13, 2025

— Categories: Defence & Security



A helicopter nearly identical to the retired Multi-Role Helicopter-90 (MRH-90) Taipan will take to the skies during the 2025 Talisman Sabre exercises, a biennial war game hosted by Australia and the United States. Following a tragic crash in 2023, Australia grounded its Taipan fleet, but New Zealand's NH-90 helicopters, close cousins to the Taipan, will

participate in this year's drills, marking a significant moment in the multinational exercise.

The Talisman Sabre exercises, running from July 13 to August 4, 2025, bring together over 35,000 personnel from 19 nations, including the United States, Canada, and New Zealand, to enhance combat readiness and interoperability. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) retired its MRH-90 Taipans after a devastating 2023 incident during the same exercise, which claimed the lives of four servicemen: Captain Dannel Lyon, Lieutenant Maxwell Nugent, Warrant Officer Class 2 Joseph Laycock, and Corporal Alexander Naggs. A defense investigation, released in May 2025, praised the pilot's evasive actions for preventing further loss, but the fleet was decommissioned, replaced by American-made Black Hawk helicopters. However, these Black Hawks will play a limited role this year, leaving New Zealand's NH-90s to fill the gap, a move that underscores the strength of allied cooperation.

This year's exercises, held across Australia and Papua New Guinea, are the largest yet, with live-fire drills and maritime exclusion zones, like the one at Shoalwater Bay, emphasizing real-world combat scenarios. The presence of New Zealand's NH-90s, nearly identical to the grounded Taipans, signals confidence in the platform's capabilities despite Australia's cautious shift to Black Hawks. Critics of the current Labor government have questioned the haste in retiring the Taipans, arguing it left the ADF reliant on foreign allies for key capabilities in exercises like Talisman Sabre. Meanwhile, the ADF remains vigilant, expecting Chinese surveillance ships, as seen in past exercises, to monitor the war games off Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Talisman Sabre 2025 not only tests military prowess but also reinforces alliances in a tense Indo-Pacific region. The return of a Taipan-like helicopter, through New Zealand's contribution, highlights resilience and partnership, ensuring the ADF and its allies are prepared for any challenge.