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UK Joins FPDA Chiefs at First Roundtable

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Australia recently hosted the inaugural roundtable of joint operations chiefs from the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), bringing together leaders from Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom. The meeting took place at HMAS Coonawarra, a Royal Australian Navy base in the Northern Territory, following the conclusion of Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025.

This gathering marked the first time the current chiefs from all five nations met in person. Vice Admiral Justin Jones, Australia's Chief of Joint Operations, described the roundtable as an opportunity to "talk candidly about the challenges we face, the future of the FPDA, exercises such as the Bersama series, and what we want to achieve out of those exercises."

Air Vice Marshal Nathan Christie, commander of the FPDA's Headquarters Integrated Area Defence System (HIADS), provided updates on the pact's evolution. He highlighted plans to enhance interoperability in areas including maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), and defensive cyber operations. Christie reaffirmed that "FPDA is a highly successful multilateral arrangement that has stayed true to its intended purpose for over 50 years."

Established in 1971, the FPDA is a consultative security framework that obliges member nations to convene if Malaysia or Singapore face an external armed threat. Over the decades, it has evolved to include high-end exercises such as Bersama Lima, which integrates advanced assets like Australian F-35Js and the UK carrier strike group.

The Defence Ministers of all five nations had reaffirmed their commitment to the FPDA earlier this year at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. They emphasised the strategic

relevance of the arrangement and welcomed the UK Carrier Strike Group's participation in Exercise Bersama Lima.

The UK's involvement underscores its broader engagement in the Indo-Pacific. HMS Prince of Wales, leading the Carrier Strike Group deployment under Operation Highmast, is operating in the region to demonstrate Britain's commitment to multilateral partnerships and regional security, particularly amid growing strategic competition.

The roundtable discussions provided an opportunity to review the FPDA's objectives, address challenges in interoperability, and plan for future joint exercises. Officials highlighted the importance of continued collaboration to ensure readiness and resilience in the region.

Australia's hosting of this inaugural chiefs' meeting signals the nation's central role in fostering regional security and strengthening defence ties with its FPDA partners. The event also reflects the ongoing modernisation of the pact, ensuring it remains relevant in a complex strategic environment.

As the FPDA moves forward, member nations will continue to coordinate joint exercises, enhance operational integration, and support each other's security objectives in the Indo-Pacific region.