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Talisman Sabre 2025 Ends with Historic Papua New Guinea Drills

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Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025, the largest joint military exercise between the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the United States Armed Forces, concluded on August 4, 2025, with a closing ceremony in Lae, Papua New Guinea (PNG). The 11th iteration of the biennial exercise involved more than 40,000 personnel from 19 nations, including Canada, Japan, and the United Kingdom, with Malaysia and Vietnam participating as observers. This year marked the first time that training activities extended to PNG.

The exercise ran from July 13 to August 4 and included activities across land, sea, air, cyber, and space domains. Training took place in multiple locations, including Queensland, Western Australia, the Northern Territory, New South Wales, Christmas Island, and sites in Papua New Guinea.

Military activities included live-fire demonstrations, amphibious landings, and air combat operations. One of the notable milestones was the first live firing in Australia of the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) equipped with a Precision Strike Missile. This was conducted alongside a United States Mid-Range Capability (MRC) SM-6 missile engagement against a maritime target.

Chief of Joint Operations Vice Admiral Justin Jones stated that the exercise involved the movement of approximately 32 million kilograms of cargo and 16,000 personnel across 5,300 kilometers. He described the event as demonstrating multinational interoperability and readiness.

In Papua New Guinea, a Joint Personnel Recovery activity was conducted between Lae and Wewak, showcasing capabilities of the PNG Defence Force. This event coincided with PNG's 50th independence anniversary. Rear Admiral Philip Polewara, Chief of the PNG Defence Force, stated that the exercise reflected the strong defence partnership between Papua New Guinea, Australia, and the United States.

The exercise also featured participation from a UK-led Carrier Strike Group and a United States long-distance paratrooper deployment from Alaska. According to the Australian Department of Defence, the scale and scope of the 2025 iteration were greater than any previous Talisman Sabre exercise, with the aim of enhancing cooperation among partner nations and improving readiness for regional security challenges.

Chief of the Australian Defence Force Admiral David Johnston stated that the exercise demonstrated a shared commitment among participating nations to maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific region.