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Sustainable Flight at Talisman Sabre 2025

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Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025 in Queensland, Australia, marks a milestone with the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and United Kingdom partners trialing Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) in a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft. This article explores the integration of eco-friendly fuel in military operations, its strategic implications, and the broader context of defense readiness amid regional tensions.

During Talisman Sabre 2025, a biennial exercise involving 35,000 troops from 19 nations, the RAAF made headlines by powering a KC-30A MRTT with SAF for a VIP flight from RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland.

Supplied by Viva Energy, SAF is a certified “drop-in” fuel that blends with conventional jet fuel, requiring no aircraft modifications while cutting carbon emissions by up to 80%. “From the cockpit, there’s no difference—the aircraft flies exactly the same,” said Flight Lieutenant Michael Que Hee of 33 Squadron in a Defence News interview, noting the seamless transition. Leading Aircraftwoman Tikiri Lamb, involved in flight preparations, echoed this sentiment, highlighting the fuel’s ease of integration. This trial underscores a commitment to operational capability without compromising environmental responsibility.

The use of SAF in Talisman Sabre, a high-stakes exercise featuring amphibious landings and live-fire drills, reflects a strategic pivot toward sustainable military practices. Conducted from July 13 to August 4, the exercise showcases the ADF’s interoperability with allies like the United States and the United Kingdom, countering threats in the Indo-Pacific, where China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy monitors activities. X posts from defense observers praise the ADF’s innovation but question the current Labour government’s focus on green initiatives over defense spending. The SAF trial, however, proves that readiness and sustainability can coexist, enhancing energy security without sacrificing combat effectiveness.

As geopolitical tensions rise, with Chinese surveillance ships expected near Queensland’s coast, Talisman Sabre 2025 reinforces allied unity. The SAF-powered flight, a first for the exercise, signals that Australia and its partners are preparing for a future where resilience includes both

military might and environmental stewardship. “We’re building a fuel system fit for the future,” an ADF spokesperson told The National Tribune, emphasizing collaboration with industry and allies. This bold step ensures the ADF remains a formidable force, soaring cleanly into the next era of defense.