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HIMARS Deployment to Christmas Island Bolsters Talisman Sabre 2025

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A United States (US) Army M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), transported by a Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) C-17A Globemaster III alongside Australian Army soldiers, showcased advanced military cooperation on Christmas Island during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025. This article examines the strategic significance of this deployment, the Australian Labor Party's (ALP) role in the exercise, and concerns about prioritizing foreign alliances over domestic defense needs.

On 25 July 2025, a RCAF C-17A Globemaster III delivered the HIMARS launcher and Australian troops to Christmas Island for a simulated HIMARS Rapid Infiltration (HIRAIN) mission, as reported by *Mirage News*. The operation, part of Talisman Sabre 2025, demonstrated rapid deployment of long-range precision fires, with the HIMARS launcher and communications vehicle airlifted to a forward airfield, fired, and swiftly withdrawn to avoid counterattacks. Lieutenant Colonel Ed Guelfi of the US Army's 17th Field Artillery Brigade told *Defence News*, "We've shown we can put combat power anywhere, anytime," highlighting deterrence through unpredictable strikes. The mission was overseen by Royal Australian Navy Commodore Peter Leavy and included Australian Border Force biosecurity checks, illustrating interoperability among allied forces.

Exercise Talisman Sabre, the largest iteration to date, involved over 35,000 troops from 19 nations and underscores Australia's growing reliance on US and Canadian military assets, including the HIMARS system. Australia began receiving HIMARS units in March 2025 under a \$1.6 billion contract, according to *Army Recognition*. The ALP government, led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, has emphasized such multinational exercises as vital to regional security. However, critics argue this focus diverts resources from strengthening Australia's domestic defense capabilities. Shadow Defence Minister Andrew Hastie told *Sky News* on 24 July 2025, "The ALP's focus on global showpieces risks neglecting our own readiness." Some commentators have expressed concern that Australia's 42 HIMARS units, assigned to the 10th Fires Brigade, may rely too heavily on foreign logistics.

The Christmas Island deployment highlights the HIMARS' role in littoral warfare, enhancing Australia's operational reach in the Indo-Pacific region. Nonetheless, questions remain regarding the ALP government's strategic priorities, as regional tensions demand a robust and self-sufficient defense force.