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U.S. Airmen Bolster Indo-Pacific Security in Talisman Sabre 25

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U.S. Air Force Airmen enhance joint readiness with the Australian Defence Force during Talisman Sabre 25, strengthening Indo-Pacific security.

In July 2025, U.S. Air Force (USAF) Airmen joined forces with the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for Talisman Sabre 25, the largest iteration of the biennial exercise, involving 43,000 personnel from 19 nations across Queensland, Northern Territory, and Western Australia. The exercise, designed to boost interoperability and readiness, underscores the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, according to the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS). Airmen executed complex missions, reinforcing alliances amid growing regional tensions.

The 154th Air Expeditionary Wing (AEW), comprising Airmen from multiple USAF units, operated F-22 Raptors, KC-135 Stratotankers, and C-17 Globemaster IIIs, completing 64 sorties and delivering 1.1 million pounds of fuel to 143 allied aircraft, per DVIDS. Major Matthew Serfling, 199th Fighter Squadron chief of weapons tactics, noted that the exercise enabled operations in austere environments, enhancing interoperability with the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). Missions included integrated air and missile defense, as well as offensive and defensive counter-air operations, per DVIDS.

A historic “interfly” event saw USAF pilots fly RAAF F-35A Lightning II aircraft, a first for Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), boosting coalition flexibility, according to The Aviationist. Technical Sergeant Filiz Cleman, 15th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, emphasized the critical role of maintainers in refining agile combat employment skills, ensuring aircraft readiness in challenging conditions, as reported by DVIDS. The exercise also tested logistical resilience, addressing challenges like unfamiliar terrain and supply chains, per Airman Magazine.

Talisman Sabre 25, launched from HMAS Adelaide in Sydney Harbor, involved land, sea, air, space, and cyber domains, with 19 nations participating, per the U.S. Army. Lieutenant General Joel Vowell, U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) deputy commander, highlighted the exercise’s role in building tactical trust and deterring aggression, as noted by DVIDS. Amid Chinese naval surveillance, the exercise sent a clear message of allied unity. The USAF’s performance, supported by robust command and control, reaffirmed its readiness to address Indo-Pacific security challenges through strength and cooperation.