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Captain Manning Field Employs Playing Cards to Identify Enemy Vehicles in Talisman Sabre 2025

July 24, 2025

– Categories: Defence & Security



During Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025, Australian Army officer Captain Manning Field from the Battle Lab introduced an innovative method using playing cards to train soldiers in identifying enemy vehicles, enhancing combat readiness. This creative approach, part of a broader push for tactical innovation, highlights the economic and strategic importance of modernising Australia's military, though some critics question the government's focus on high-cost exercises.

Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025, the largest bilateral military drill between the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the United States, involved over 35,000 troops from 19 nations across Queensland, the Northern Territory, and Papua New Guinea. Captain Field, a key figure in the Australian Army's Battle Lab, developed playing cards depicting vehicles such as tanks and armoured carriers to help reconnaissance units, including the 2/14th Light Horse Regiment, swiftly identify enemy equipment. Field explained that the cards offer a simple and effective way to drill recognition skills under pressure, contributing to the Tactics Development Lab's efforts to improve army-wide procedures. The ability to memorise threats quickly is critical for operations in the complex Indo-Pacific region.

This innovation aligns with the Battle Lab's mission to refine tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) through the use of emerging technologies like unmanned aerial systems (UAS). The exercise, which costs millions of dollars, reflects Australia's \$50 billion annual defence budget, with Talisman Sabre also driving economic activity through local contracts and tourism in host regions. However, some critics argue that the Labor government's emphasis on multinational exercises diverts funds from domestic priorities such as regional infrastructure development. Shadow Defence Minister Andrew Hastie stated, "We need investment in local capabilities, not just flashy drills."

Captain Field's approach demonstrates the value of cost-effective, practical training amid rising defence expenditure. While the exercise strengthens alliances, the opposition warns that over-reliance on foreign-led operations risks economic strain without delivering significant benefits to Australian industries. As Talisman Sabre 2025 tests new systems such as the Precision Strike Missile, Field's playing cards offer a low-tech, high-impact solution, illustrating that innovation can thrive under pressure despite ongoing debates over defence spending.