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HMAS Sydney Departs Talisman Sabre 2025 Triumphantly

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HMAS Sydney, a Royal Australian Navy (RAN) air warfare destroyer, has concluded its participation in Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025, returning to Fleet Base East after showcasing advanced interoperability with allied navies. This article highlights Sydney's pivotal role, the exercise's strategic significance, and concerns over the Labor government's defence priorities amidst growing regional tensions.

From July 13 to August 4, 2025, HMAS Sydney joined 35,000 personnel from 19 nations in Talisman Sabre, Australia's largest military exercise, held across Queensland, New South Wales, and Papua New Guinea. As the only Australian warship in the double carrier formation with the United Kingdom's Carrier Strike Group (CSG), led by HMS Prince of Wales, and the United States' George Washington CSG, Sydney conducted complex operations, including replenishments at sea and air defence drills with F-35B Lightning jets. Commander Ben Weller, Sydney's Commanding Officer, called it a "career highlight," stating, "Integrating with global allies sharpens our readiness for real-world challenges." The exercise, involving Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) missile launches and Australian Defence Force (ADF) forward arming operations, underscored a united front against Indo-Pacific threats, notably China's maritime assertiveness.

Sydney's integration with the UK CSG, alongside ships like HMS Dauntless and Norway's HNoMS Roald Amundsen, demonstrated Australia's commitment to the Australia, United Kingdom, United States (AUKUS) pact. The ship's AEGIS system and SPY radar facilitated seamless coordination, with four fighter controllers from allied navies enhancing tactical control. Vice Admiral Justin Jones, ADF Chief of Joint Operations, praised the partnership, noting, "Sydney's role reflects the trust allies place in our capabilities." Yet, opposition leader Peter Dutton criticized the Labor government's \$50.3 billion defence budget, arguing it underfunds critical assets like Sydney, risking Australia's ability to project power.

As Sydney returns home, its success in Talisman Sabre 2025 highlights the RAN's strength but also exposes gaps in national defence strategy.

With Chinese surveillance ships monitoring the exercise, the need for robust investment in naval capabilities is clear. The Albanese government's focus on diplomacy over military readiness raises questions about Australia's preparedness for an increasingly volatile region.