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Sappers Prepare for Asset Protection Missions

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Australian sappers are intensifying training to safeguard critical military assets during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025, enhancing regional security. This article delves into their vital role in asset protection, the strategic importance of their skills, and concerns over the Albanese government's defence priorities.

At Cowley Beach, Queensland, sappers from the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) 5th Engineer Regiment are honing their craft as part of Talisman Sabre 2025, a multinational exercise involving Australia, the

United States, and allies like Japan and South Korea. Sappers, elite combat engineers, specialize in mobility, countermobility, and survivability tasks, such as clearing minefields, constructing defensive barriers, and breaching obstacles. Army Reserve Sapper Nicholas Kour, in a July 18, 2025, Mirage News interview, expressed enthusiasm for the training, stating, “It’s a good experience... we’re always looking to learn anything new.” His unit, part of Joint Task Force 629, deployed to Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Tindal to secure key infrastructure, ensuring operational continuity against threats like sabotage or enemy incursions.

These exercises highlight sappers’ critical role in protecting assets like ports and airfields, especially amid rising tensions with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The 2025 Defence Strategic Review notes China’s growing naval presence, including warship maneuvers near Australia, per a March 2025 New York Times report. Sappers’ ability to fortify bases and clear routes enhances the ADF’s readiness for AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) operations, such as submarine deployments. Their training includes handling explosives like C4 and using specialized equipment like the Wisent AEV II armoured breaching vehicle, ensuring rapid response to threats.

Yet, the Albanese government’s defence policies raise alarms. Critics, including Shadow Defence Minister Angus Taylor, argue Labor’s 2.3% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) defence spending cap limits ADF capabilities, particularly for resource-intensive sapper operations. With Chinese-linked firms acquiring properties near AUKUS ports, robust asset protection is non-negotiable. Sappers’ expertise is a force multiplier, but underfunding risks undermining their effectiveness. Australia must prioritize investment in these elite engineers to secure

critical assets and deter aggression in an increasingly volatile Indo-Pacific.