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HMAS Sydney Integrates with UK Carrier Strike Group in Australian Waters

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His Majesty's Australian Ship (HMAS) Sydney, a Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Hobart-class air warfare destroyer, has joined the United Kingdom's Carrier Strike Group (CSG) in Australian waters, marking a significant collaboration as HMS Prince of Wales becomes the first Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carrier to visit an Australian port. This move strengthens allied interoperability amid rising regional tensions,

although critics question the Labor government's defence priorities. This article explores Sydney's role in the CSG and its implications for Australia's security.

Departing Singapore in late June 2025, HMAS Sydney integrated with the UK CSG as part of Operation Highmast, a deployment involving naval assets from Canada, Norway, Spain, and New Zealand. The group sailed toward Australia for Exercise Talisman Sabre, a biennial multinational exercise involving approximately 35,000 personnel from 19 nations. Sydney's 240-strong crew conducted a replenishment at sea with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary tanker Tidespring and undertook cross-deck personnel transfers with HMS Dauntless for joint training. Royal Navy Leading Seaman Paul Adams told Defence News that "UK carriers aren't often in this region, so this is a valuable opportunity for our crews to integrate," praising the hospitality of the Australian team.

Commander Ben Weller, Sydney's Commanding Officer, hosted Carrier Strike Group Commander Commodore James Blackmore, who was treated to a traditional Australian surf-and-turf lunch, according to Petty Officer Chef Justin Macey. "It was an excellent chance to strengthen our long-standing relationship with the Royal Navy," Weller said, underscoring shared strategic interests. Sydney's advanced Naval Strike Missile capability and Aegis combat system significantly enhance the CSG's air and missile defence, complementing HMS Prince of Wales' complement of F-35B Lightning II jets and Merlin helicopters. This collaboration highlights Australia's commitment to Indo-Pacific security, especially amid increased Chinese naval activity, such as the recent visit of the Chinese carrier Shandong's task group to Hong Kong.

While the partnership bolsters allied naval presence, some defence commentators question whether the Albanese government's strategy prioritises integration with foreign-led operations at the expense of developing domestic capabilities. Critics call for increased investment in Australia's naval self-reliance. As HMAS Sydney sails alongside the UK CSG, this historic integration demonstrates Australia's naval proficiency but also raises important questions about long-term defence autonomy in an increasingly volatile regional security environment.