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Award Recognizes Indo-Pacific Operational Service

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The Australian Operational Service Medal – Indo-Pacific (AOSM-IP) honors over 15,000 Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel for their service in regional operations since 2005, with ceremonies held at HMAS Harman and Henderson Shipyard. This article explores the medal's significance, the operations it covers, and its role in acknowledging the

ADF's commitment to regional stability amid growing geopolitical challenges.

In early 2025, the AOSM-IP was introduced to recognize ADF members who completed 30 days of service or 30 sorties in Indo-Pacific operations, such as Operation Gateway, which bolsters regional security in South East Asia, and Operation Render Safe, clearing World War II explosives in Pacific nations. Other operations include Operation Augury, supporting the Philippines against terrorism, and Operation Argos, enforcing United Nations (UN) sanctions on North Korea. Admiral David Johnston, Chief of the Defence Force, presented the first medals at HMAS Harman, stating, "This medal reflects our enduring appreciation for their professionalism and contribution to Australia's security". The medal's design, featuring a globe and mimosa wreath, symbolizes global vigilance and national pride.

The AOSM-IP underscores the ADF's critical role in the Indo-Pacific, where tensions with China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy are escalating. Operations like Argos demonstrate Australia's resolve to uphold international law, countering aggressive posturing in the South China Sea. X posts from veterans applaud the recognition but express frustration with the Labour government's focus on symbolic gestures over robust defense funding. Lieutenant Don Nguyen, honored for his 2023 service on HMAS Choules during Operation Lilia, called the medal "surreal but welcome," emphasizing the competitive regional climate. Flight Sergeant Meeka Cowling, recognized for her 2024 Solomon Islands deployment, shared similar pride.

With 15,000 current and former ADF members eligible, the medal highlights decades of sacrifice, often far from home. Commander Warren

Bechly of HMAS Stuart, where 150 crew received the AOSM-IP, noted, “Our operations rely on family support and an integrated ADF”. As the Indo-Pacific grows more volatile, this award not only honors past service but also reinforces Australia’s commitment to a secure, stable region, projecting strength through unity and resolve.