

## News from under the Southern Cross - Edition 22. Talisman Sabre

21 July

The name “Talisman Sabre” literally means “Demon-repelling cavalry sword”. Among defence and military-related people, there is a shared awareness that it refers to Australia’s largest-scale joint defence exercise between Australia and the United States.



Australian and US troops landing on the shoreline (2019) (Source: Australian Department of Defence)

### **1. This year’s exercise**

Talisman Sabre has been held every two years since 2005. This is the ninth iteration of the exercise. Although it is smaller in scale than previous years as a result of the COVID pandemic, in addition to the presence of around 17,000 personnel, approximately 20 warships, over 100 military aircraft, and many amphibious vehicles, all of these have converged to conduct tactical exercises aimed at offshore island defence at a training ground on Queensland’s east coast. The exercise runs from July 14 through to August 1.



Japan Ground Self-Defense Force soldiers land on-shore (2019) (Source: Australian Department of Defence)

## **2. Participation by the JSDF**

The Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) have participated in this exercise since 2015. Exercise Talisman Sabre presents an ideal opportunity for land and sea forces to practice amphibious operations. Together with its contribution to improving the tactical ability of the JSDF to protect offshore islands, it is also considered significant given it demonstrates the unity and solidarity between different countries in maintaining and strengthening a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific'.

This year sees the involvement of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amphibious Rapid Deployment Regiment from the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade and the destroyer JS *MAKINAMI* from the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF).



A JMSDF destroyer (JS *MAKINAMI*) entering Sydney Harbour (2021)  
(Source: Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force)

## **3. Most participants ever**

Ever since the first exercise in 2005, the number of participating countries has been steadily growing. This year will see, in addition to Australia, the US, and Japan, the inclusion of the UK, Canada, New Zealand, and South Korea (for the first time) as participants. In addition, India, Indonesia, France, and Germany are attending as observers.

At the opening ceremony for Talisman Sabre held at RAAF base Amberley on the outskirts of Brisbane, Queensland on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, ambassadors from the participating countries joined Defence Minister Peter Dutton and Chief of the Defence Force General Angus Campbell in attendance, thus presenting a magnificent spectacle of unity.

I, together with these other ambassadors, made a jolting, one-day journey from Canberra to Queensland and back on-board a C-130 transport aircraft provided by the ADF in order to participate in the ceremony.



The RAAF transport aircraft ceremony participants travelled in to Queensland

#### **4. A timely exercise**

As was confirmed at the Japan-Australia 2+2 Dialogue held the other day (see News from under the Southern Cross (Edition 19) '2+2'), tensions in the East China Sea and South China Sea, including the Taiwan Strait, are increasing at present. It is thus significant that in the midst of such a situation, 11 countries that can play an important role in the Indo-Pacific are conducting a joint exercise.



The Ninth Japan-Australia “2+2” Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations  
(Source: Japan Ministry of Defense)

In the case of Japan, while confirming the solidarity between nations that share a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific', the exercise also demonstrates the resolve of the JSDF to defend Japan's sovereign territory, starting with the Senkaku Islands, by maintaining and strengthening the island-defence capabilities of the JSDF. So it clearly carries significant weight.

At a time when the regional situation grows ever more opaque, and when there is renewed awareness of the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, these kinds of exercises play a crucial role in the timely and appropriate application of 'deterrence'.



An air cushioned landing craft launched from the transport ship JS *KUNISAKI* (2019)  
(Source: Australian Department of Defence)

##### **5. A final word**

What I am particularly pleased to hear every time I go to one of these venues and listen to various military experts from other countries is the high praise for the discipline and prowess of the JSDF. Given our long lack of actual battleground experience, the importance of these down-to-earth exercises and drills in maintaining that high level of proficiency is something that anybody related to the JSDF is acutely aware. So as a proud fellow countryman, I give my blessings to the JSDF in their activities, and give them my full support.

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