



# REPORT OF THE PROTESTS AGAINST TALISMAN SABRE 2005

By Denis Doherty, AABCC National Convenor

**The giant US-Australian military exercise called 'Talisman Sabre' did not proceed without opposition. The national and Brisbane Anti-Bases Campaigns called for a 'peace convergence' on the Rockhampton area for the long weekend of June 10 to 13.**

'Talisman Sabre' can be translated as 'lucky sword'. In the Australian context of 2005, however, it meant Australian troops training with their US counterparts to invade other countries. The Federal Government surrounded the event with weasel words including 'strengthening our preparedness', 'interoperability' and the 'war on terror'. We knew precisely what was really going on -- that Australia would be drawn into the next US adventure just like we have been drawn into the quagmire of Iraq.

The exercises would enable Australian troops to slot into US mobile forces in their adventures around the world in pursuit of terrorists.

These war games were not lucky. They have made Australia poorer, not safer.

Before our arrival there had already been demonstrations in Yeppoon against the new status of the Shoalwater Bay Training Area (SBTA). One demonstration was as large as 800.

The chief worry of the Yeppoon people, who have organised a vigorous group against the upgrading of the base, is the possibility that the military is and/or will use depleted uranium.

The Australian Government had earlier announced that the SBTA will be one of three new US "training" bases in Australia. According to Donald Rumsfeld, the three bases will be linked to the US Pacific War Fighting Centre in Hawaii, which would enable the US to rely on fast response units as an alternative to more centrally located troops from permanent bases. The base will provide relatively easy access to both the Pacific and Indian Oceans and offer shorter US supply lines to the Middle East.

Fears of environmental damage at the new Shoalwater base are realistic.

In 2004 the ADF conducted "radioactive contamination reviews" at bases in NSW, Victoria and Queensland following concern that past environmental practices on ADF property -- covering about 3 million hectares of land and 25,000 facilities often fell far short of current standards.

### Contacting the local communities

In the 1997 campaign against 'Tandem Thrust' the people of Rockhampton were hostile. In 2005 with the advantage of this knowledge, we made a special effort to contact and convince the local community that

*continued next page*

### Editor's Note

*The AABCC apologises to all our subscribers and other readers for the delay in bringing out the latest editions of the Anti-Bases Bulletin.*

*A number of our collective in Sydney have had some health problems and this, combined with our focus on the protests against the Talisman Sabre war games, meant we fell behind with our work.*

*We are bringing out the winter, spring and summer issues at one time hopefully providing some interesting and thought provoking reading for the summer holidays for our Australian and regional subscribers and for the long winter nights for our European and American readers.*

*This winter issue features the protests against the Australian-United States Talisman Sabre military exercises in Queensland.*

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reliance on the military has negative outcomes. We were trying to win hearts and minds, but of course this was only one aspect of the community's response to the giant US-Australian military exercises.

The peace activists made contacting Rockhampton and Yeppoon activists and the local communities a priority. Our first formal meeting was on Friday night in Rockhampton when we were the guests of the local environment group. After an excellent meal we had an interesting debate on the peace movement in Australia.

The premiere in Rockhampton of David Bradbury's wonderful film on depleted uranium *Blowin' in the Wind* provided a further opportunity for discussion of the issues around US military exercises.

We were invited to the Peace Festival on Yeppoon's beachfront on Sunday afternoon. This provided an opportunity to reach out to many of the people living in that area.

A public meeting held in Yeppoon on Sunday night with about 600 people attending. Yeppoon is not a very large town and to have so many people eager to discuss US bases, military exercises and depleted uranium was stunning and determined to take action to defend their community was stunning.

#### **Non-violent actions**

##### **a) Friday.**

#### **Rockhampton Barracks**

On Friday night we converged on the Rockhampton Barracks, near Rockhampton airport. We picketed outside the barracks, which had grown markedly with the arrival of both US and Australian forces and their equipment. The barracks are usually a few permanent buildings, but for the war games they had grown into a large tent city crammed with troops, equipment and vehicles.

We covered the fences with our banners and our picket lasted until well after dark with candles and singing. We grew in size when we were joined by the majority of the crew who had driven up from Brisbane.

##### **b) Sunday.**

#### **Shoalwater Bay Training Area**

By collective decision, it was agreed that we would blockade one of the entrances to the training area on Sunday. One affinity group requested time to get to the gate first for their own action. We readily agreed and did all we could to assist.

The first group went in, climbed the fence, and held a service inside the training area, praying for Iraq war victims. They took with them symbolic

coffins. They were arrested while reading out the names of the dead.

The rest of the convergence arrived later and set up a blockade of the gates. For several hours we maintained our vigil while police and military authorities looked on. No military vehicles approached from either side of the gate.

Banners were put on the fences and a pedestrian crossing was constructed, quite a feat on a dirt surface. The premise was that people take precedence over vehicles on pedestrian crossings. It was in constant use!

Most of the activists had made a commitment to attend the Yeppoon Peace Festival and so had to leave the blockade. A few members of the group decided to remain behind to maintain the blockade. A number of the people were finally arrested.

The cavalcade returning to Yeppoon was held up for over an hour as police staged licence and vehicle checks. It was a provocative move by the police, but it allowed us to see what we had achieved -- about 20 large semi trailers laden down with tanks which had been prevented from joining the war games for several hours.

#### **Court cases**

Ten peace activists appeared in Rockhampton Magistrates Court at the end of November.

The court has reserved its decision until late January in the cases of the six activists who held a memorial service inside the entrance to the training facility and prevented the exercise from proceeding as they read out names of Iraqi and American dead.

Those arrested at the blockade outside the gates were found guilty of failing to obey a police direction, but with no conviction being recorded.

Your support for these activists would be appreciated. For more information, contact: 0439 353 587

#### **Conclusion**

**We have plans for a bigger and better demonstration against Talisman Sabre 2007.**



# SCENES FROM THE PROTEST AGAINST TALISMAN SABRE 2005

Over the long weekend June 10, 11 and 12 a series of actions and events were organised by the Anti-Bases group and others against the giant US-Australian military exercise to highlight a number of concerns. The area of Shoalwater Bay near Rockhampton is set to become a new US base, which needs to be highlighted and condemned.



*Early media picture of the peace protesters after they had arrived in Rockhampton*



*The Sydney crew at the Rockhampton barracks.*



*The Friday night vigil held outside the tent city, which developed at Rockhampton Barracks. The Barracks become the logistics centre for exercises such as Talisman Sabre.*

# SCENES FROM THE PROTEST AGAINST TALISMAN SABRE 2005



*The march through Rockhampton streets on Saturday. The peace activists made special efforts to reach out to the community and to explain the issues involved in the US and Australian war games.*

*Another view of the march in Rockhampton*



*At the gates of the Shoalwater Training Area*



*The end point of the march in Rockhampton, the peace symbol in the riverside park.*

# SCENES FROM THE PROTEST AGAINST TALISMAN SABRE 2005



*Anti-Bases banner at the gates of the Shoalwater Training Area*

*Protesters block the entrance to the Shoalwater Training Area*



*Part of the military convoy held up by the peace protest. A long train of tanks waiting to get into the Shoalwater Training Area and begin their war games.*

*Another view of the tanks held up by the protesters*



# SCENES FROM THE PROTEST AGAINST TALISMAN SABRE 2005



*Police hold up the protesters a kilometer from the gates of the Shoalwater Training Area.*

*Some of the peace activists at the Peace Festival at Yeppoon on Sunday*



*The peace activists are welcomed to Yeppoon by the organiser of the Yeppoon Peace Festival, Peter Murray*

*Part of the large crowd at the Yeppoon Town Hall to view the premiere of the David Bradbury film 'Blowin in the wind'.*



# Air warfare destroyers

## **Construction of the three theatre missile defence air warfare destroyers is getting closer as the Federal Government awards contracts to mostly US linked corporations to**

The Federal Government has chosen Gibbs & Cox, a United States based company, as the preferred designer for the Navy's three air warfare destroyers (AWDs) -- one of Australia's largest and most expensive military projects at a cost of \$6 billion.

Raytheon Australia was awarded the role of Air Warfare Destroyer Project Combat System-System Engineer. The contract is valued at approximately \$15 million. Raytheon Australia employs over 1000 people in six different locations in Australia and is one of the largest defence electronic companies in Australia.

The US is rapidly expanding its anti-missile systems around the world, including in Australia.

"The ships will be equipped with the world-class Aegis Combat System and will be interoperable with the United States and other coalition partners," Defence Minister Robert Hill said.

Australia's small military-industrial complex is being invigorated by a series of seminars in all capital cities and key regional areas throughout Australia outlining the potential profits to be made from the multi-billion dollar construction of Australia's Air Warfare Destroyers (AWD).

Site work is about to start at the Osborne Maritime Precinct in South Australia - the construction site for the three AWDs, Defence Minister Robert Hill announced on September 5.

The Federal Government has granted approval for the South Australian Government to start preliminary site works including land and environmental studies of the area to be known as the Common User Facility (CUF).

# Houston, we still have a problem

*An alternative annual report on halliburton*

**In May this year Halliburton held its annual shareholders meeting in Houston. Inside, CEO David Lesar congratulated himself on the astonishing US\$7.1 billion revenue the company has made off its recent work in Iraq. This number is double what the company made in the war-torn country the previous year and boosts Halliburton's overall revenue some 25 per cent, bringing it to over \$20 billion for 2004.**

In an alternative annual report on the company by CorpWatch, entitled "Houston: We Still Have a Problem," Halliburton's real 2004 track record is revealed.

The report details everything from the company's unwillingness to prevent bribery, fraud, and corruption within its workforce to its inability to take proper precautions to protect its employees in Iraq.

CorpWatch also exposes the company's attempts to undermine US Government regulations that protect drinking water, and side-step federal laws meant to prohibit Halliburton from doing business with corrupt and brutal regimes around the world.

### **For example:**

- ◆ A dozen investigations are pending against Halliburton ranging from the Securities and Exchange Commission to the US Department of Justice.
- ◆ Former Halliburton accountants filed a class action lawsuit in August 2004 alleging "systemic" accounting fraud from 1998 to 2001.
- ◆ Allegations of overcharging in Iraq persist. Early in 2004, Halliburton returned \$6.3 million to the US military, admitting that two of the company's

employees took kickbacks from a Kuwaiti company. The company still hasn't repaid the \$212.3 million the Defense Contract Audit Agency says Halliburton overcharged for fuel transportation in Iraq, nor has it found the millions of dollars in government property it "lost" because of mismanagement there.

- ◆ Sixty Halliburton employees were killed in Iraq in 2004. This tragic number is compounded by allegations by victims' families that Halliburton misrepresented the true nature of their loved ones' duties and intentionally placed them in harm's way. These families are now suing Halliburton in both Texas and California.

*For the full report go to  
<http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=12259>*

## Sale of Aegis to Australia

**The Pentagon announced in late May the sale of three Aegis naval weapons systems to Australia, saying it would increase the ability of the US and Australian navies to operate together.**

The Defense Security and Cooperation Agency (DSCA) estimated the value of the sale at as high as US\$350 million.

Aegis systems are centered on a computerized command system that can cue air defense missiles to enemy missiles and aircraft detected by targeting radar. Using its AN/SPY-1 phased array radar, it can track over a hundred targets simultaneously.

Noting Australia's strategic location, the DSCA said helping the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) modernize its fleet of surface warships was vital to US interests.

# Protest at Tidbinbilla against militarisation of space

**About 15 protesters representing the Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition, Canberra Program for Peace, and OzPeace occupied the Visitors' Centre at the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex (CDSCC) Tidbinbilla on April 29 to draw attention to the accelerating militarisation and nuclearisation of space in which the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) plays a key role.**

NASA portrays itself as civilian and only engaged in the peaceful exploration of the Cosmos but Tidbinbilla had monitored a military satellite over Hawaii which was testing green/blue lasers in the detection of nuclear submarines.

Tidbinbilla's manager Glen Nagle (employed by Raytheon, a top arms manufacturer) confirmed it had also covered space shuttle flights but maintained that there was no military connection, even though it is a matter of record that secret military payloads were carried.

The space shuttle design was modified to cater for military payloads. No-one outside the US Defense Department knows what is on board, so the claim that Tidbinbilla only monitors scientific and peaceful missions is wrong.

President Bush stated that US military and commercial dominance of space is an absolute national priority. America's civilian and military space programs are converging, with the extra funding which Bush proposed for manned flight to Mars likely to accelerate this. Former NASA director, Sean O'Keefe, said that from now on all space missions had to be considered "dual purpose" i.e. military and civilian.

## **Nuclearised space**

NASA is trying to soften up public opinion to accept nuclear reactors in space so power-hungry laser weapons can be used for space warfare being planned by US Airforce Space Command.

The prospect of orbiting Chernobyls falling to Earth or exploding on the launch pad like Columbia does not seem to deter these self-styled Masters of Space.

Their vision is of "Full Spectrum Dominance" through which Earth will be controlled in the interests of the US. Military or commercial space competitors (friend or foe) will be "denied" space access if they do not conform to US interests.

To pursue this aggressive agenda they need NASA and the facility at Tidbinbilla.

## **Australian involvement**

Australia is heavily involved in the militarisation of space even though this clashes with our ratification of the Treaty on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the 1979 Moon Treaty and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

NASA facilities and the biggest CIA base outside America, Pine Gap, are only part of the picture. The Howard government has signed up to an enormous financial commitment (unspecified) to participate in National Missile Defence (Star Wars) which is actually an aggressive first strike system having very little to do with protecting civilians.

Through the Australian Hypersonics Initiative, the Australian National University and the universities of New South Wales at the Defence Force Academy and Queensland are collaborating in a \$4.6 million contract with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to conduct scramjet experiments at Mach 10 (about 11,000km an hour) at Woomera, South Australia.

## **Hypersonic bomber**

DARPA is developing a hypersonic edge-of-space bomber (FALCON) which can take off from any airfield and carry 12,000 lbs of nuclear/conventional weapons anywhere in the world in two hours. The bombs would hit Earth targets at hypersonic velocity and be able to penetrate to great depth before exploding.

The Federation of American Scientists have proposed an international monitoring agency like the International Atomic Energy Agency which would verify absence of weapons before satellite launch. The Australian government should support this.

A majority of Australians feel Australia subordinates its foreign policy and strategic objectives to those of the US; they want Australia to focus on what is good for this country. The time is long past when we must demand an immediate halt to this collaboration in infamy.

*Source: Gareth Smith from Canberra Program for Peace*

## **Gifts to Anti-Bases Campaign**

**Denis Doherty, the Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition (AABCC) National Co-ordinator had his 60th birthday in August.**

At a party to celebrate the event, guests were asked to donate to the anti-bases campaign instead of giving presents.

A total of \$900 was raised for the AABCC.

## **CONTACT US:**

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**Anti-Bases Bulletin is produced by the Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition**

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