

23 January 2011

The Hon Stephen Smith MP  
Minister for Defence  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT 2006

Dear Minister,

We write to urge you to urgently reconsider your priorities, cancel the Talisman Saber (TS11) US-Australian joint military exercise planned for July this year in the Rockhampton area and divert the millions of dollars and military manpower hours earmarked for TS11 to assist in the recovery and reconstruction of Queensland following the recent catastrophic floods.

Australian military personnel have already made a contribution to recovery efforts. It would be perverse to expose flood damaged areas, including the Great Barrier Reef, to an intensive 300,000 strong military training exercise. This could undermine the ADF efforts which should rather be expanded.

There would be widespread support for cancellation of the exercise. We say this with confidence, based on the following facts:

The people of Australia see the reconstruction effort as our number one priority.

A 2009 Australian National University poll revealed that public support for disaster relief work by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) stands at 86 per cent, surpassing even support for the defence of Australia.

TS11 will cost an estimated \$70 million. The ANU poll tells us that 70 per cent of Australians favour spending less money on defence and a large majority (82 per cent) oppose tax increases to pay for more defence spending.

It is therefore clear that the great majority of our community would favour the Federal Government reconsidering its priorities and cancelling TS11.

Yours sincerely

Denis Doherty  
AABCC National Co-ordinator