

**Talisman Sabre military exercises
22 July – 4 August 2023**

This year marks the 10th Exercise Talisman Sabre, and according to the Exercise Director, Brigadier Damian Hill: '[it] will be the largest ever iteration of the exercise in terms of both geographic span and partner nation involvement... [it] will demonstrate our ability to receive large volumes of personnel and equipment into Australia from across the Indo-Pacific and stage, integrate and move them forward into the large exercise area'

So, how big is big?

Talisman Sabre 2023 will be one of the largest military drills in the world – over 30,000 personnel, one-third of whom are ADF personnel. It will engage dozens of ships, aircraft and armoured vehicles. By comparison, TS2021 involved 17,000 military personnel, including some 8,000 from the ADF, and involved seven countries (France, Germany, India and Indonesia observed).

Who is coming?

Confirmed country participants: Australia, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, France, the UK, Canada and Germany. The Philippines, Singapore and Thailand are attending as observers (India has yet to confirm whether or not it will attend and in what capacity).

Where is the mock battlefield?

The practice battlefield will stretch from Western Australia, across the Northern Territory and Queensland, to Jervis Bay and Norfolk Island in New South Wales.

What are the drills?

Publicly released information includes airborne troop drops near Charters Towers and amphibious lands at locations along the north and central Queensland coast, plus maritime mine-hunting near Gladstone. The RAAF Base Scherger at Cape York will play a key role. In addition, long-range fire exercises will take place in Jervis Bay with Japan's Self-Defense Forces and air, ground and maritime exercises are set for Norfolk Island. The Darwin area will cover logistics duties while larger warships will practice naval gunnery and submarine hunting exercises offshore.

Why is this year's TS so large?

Ongoing geopolitical tensions, especially over Taiwan's future are the most likely incentive for displaying greater military muscle. In early April 2023, China undertook three days of military exercises around Taiwan. Western analysts considered the 12 Chinese warships and 91 aircraft around the island to simulate targeted strikes and a blockade of Taiwan. 'The total of 232 air sorties in three days are unprecedented' (Alexander Huang, military expert at Tamkang University in Taipei). It's been reported that warcraft were still operating around the island after the drills were over. AUKUS, the trilateral security pact, is also sending signals to the Chinese Government that Australia has joined a well-armed and trained military alliance 5,614 kilometers from Taiwan.

We encourage Friends to consider acting

Protests have been springing up around Australia, at military bases and at Federal Senator/MP offices. Friends are encouraged to participate as they wish, including letters to their Parliamentarians expressing deep concern.

Resources

Charles Miranda. 'Talisman Sabre details revealed ahead Australian Defense Force's largest ever military drill. NT News. 15 April 2023.

Department of Defence: <https://www.transparency.gov.au/annual-reports/department-defence/reporting-year/2021-22-119> of Defence Annual Report 2021-22, Exercise Talisman Sabre 2021.

Department of Defence media release 16 April 2023 <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2023-04-16/largest-ever-exercise-talisman-sabre-be-held-australia>

Voice of America: 'Taiwan Detects Chinese Warships, Planes Around Island After Drills End'. Agence France-Presse, 11 April 2023. <https://www.voanews.com/a/taiwan-detects-chinese-warships-planes-around-island-after-drills-end-/7045266.html>