

Department of Defence

Submission to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Reference Committee Inquiry into the Kidnapping of Australian Citizens overseas.

Defence recognises that kidnapping incidents involving Australian citizens overseas are complex and require a coordinated, multiagency response by the Australian Government.

Defence agrees with the recommendations of the *Independent Review of the Nigel Brennan kidnapping in Somalia*, conducted by former DFAT Deputy Secretary John McCarthy AO. Defence strongly supports efforts to build on interdepartmental coordination for kidnapping incidents and responses, as it does all security incidents affecting Australians overseas.

Australian Defence Force (ADF) capabilities may assist with the resolution of overseas kidnapping incidents in certain circumstances. The ADF maintains contingency plans for select response capabilities, including kidnap recovery operations overseas.

Defence involvement in any Australian Government response to a kidnapping incident overseas would depend on the circumstances of the case, along with the security situation and capability of security forces in the country the incident occurred.

In determining the need for Defence involvement in an Australian response, the capabilities of government and private organisations will be considered and coordinated. The Government will also take into account legal obligations and responsibilities associated with any Defence involvement.

Additional considerations apply when a Defence contribution is required for a response to a kidnapping of an Australian citizen in a conflict situation.

Defence notes that the capacity of the ADF to effect kidnap recovery operations is contingent on a number of external factors. Recovery operations are not feasible or advisable in every case.