



Submission No 38

## **Inquiry into Australia's Overseas Representation**

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION

**Organisation:** Department of Defence

## **DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE**

### **SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION TO JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE**

#### **INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S OVERSEAS REPRESENTATION**

##### **Timeline of Defence actions after cyclone Nargis in 2008 in response to a question asked by Mr Laurie Ferguson**

1. Following Cyclone Nargis, which devastated Burma in 2008, the ADF at short notice successfully transported two United Nations World Food Program (WFP) helicopters from South Africa to Thailand. The role of Defence Attaché (DA) Bangkok in liaison and coordination between the WFP and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) was critical to the success of this operation.
2. On 21 May 2008, the AusAID director at the Australian Embassy in Bangkok informed the DA of the WFP's plans to seek Australian assistance. Early the following morning, the DA notified International Policy Division and Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC) of the impending request. This information was in turn communicated to Defence seniors, including Vice Chief of the Defence Force, and ADF planners.
3. On 22 May, the WFP officially requested Australian Government support to transport two Puma helicopters from Johannesburg, South Africa to Bangkok, Thailand. The WFP was coordinating a logistics hub in Bangkok and had received authorisation from the Burmese Government to import nine helicopters to deliver relief supplies into the Irrawaddy Delta region. The WFP had chartered civilian helicopters for this task and had arranged for their transport to Burma, with the exception of the two Puma helicopters in South Africa. There were no civilian aircraft available to provide transportation within the time required.
4. On 23 May, the Prime Minister approved ADF support to the WFP. The DA relayed this approval to the WFP, as well as the WFP's acceptance of the Australian offer.
5. Over 22-23 May, the DA liaised between the WFP and Defence in order to determine the scope of this request and to confirm the ADF's capacity to support. This involved a series of exchanges to identify the technical specifications of the two helicopters and the infrastructure available at the South African airport. This information was vital for Defence since this was the first time a RAAF C-17 Globemaster had carried Puma helicopters, which are slightly larger and heavier than the ADF's Black Hawk helicopters. As part of this process, the DA also identified and contacted the helicopter operator to confirm logistic requirements and to establish direct liaison between HQJOC and the contractor.
6. Once agreement had been reached on ADF support to the WFP, the DA liaised with the Royal Thai Air Force to facilitate landing access for the C-17 at Don Muang Airport, Bangkok.
7. On 25 May, a RAAF C-17 Globemaster from No. 36 Squadron based at RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland, flew to Johannesburg. The helicopters were loaded on

board this aircraft, which then proceeded to Thailand. For the C-17's arrival in Bangkok, the DA provided support to media organisations, facilitating airport access and responding to media queries.

8. On 28 May, the two helicopters were unloaded from the RAAF C-17, which then returned to Australia the following day.

9. Prior to the transportation of these two Puma Helicopters, the ADF had delivered emergency aid supplies to Burma on 13 May 2008. A RAAF Globemaster flew into Rangoon, Burma, with approximately 31 tonnes of humanitarian relief stores including water and purification tablets, blankets, tarpaulins and medical supplies. However, DA Bangkok had no significant role in this earlier delivery.

### **Information pertaining to the DA Islamabad's activities in Abbottabad in response to questions asked by Mr Danby**

10. Australia's Defence representatives in Islamabad include a DA (currently a Group Captain) and a Defence Administrative Assistant (DAA) (currently a Warrant Officer).

11. In 2011, the DA visited Abbottabad on four separate occasions. The DAA visited Abbottabad twice.

12. On 8 April 2011, the DA visited the Pakistan Military Academy for a few hours. His purpose was to deliver some counter-insurgency related textbooks that the Australian Department of Defence had donated to the Academy.

13. On 23 April 2011, the DA attended a passing out parade (President's Parade) at the Pakistan Military Academy at the invitation of the Commandant.

14. On 8 September 2011, the DA escorted a small delegation of Australian Defence Force health specialists to a Pakistan Army Medical Facility in Abbottabad. The delegation's visit involved an exchange of knowledge on military health issues including triage and rehabilitation.

15. On 23 November 2011, the DA escorted the Australian Chief of the Defence Force and his delegation to the Pakistan Military Academy for a call with the Commandant. The call was part of a broader visit to Pakistan for the Pakistan – Australia 1.5 Track Security Dialogue.

16. On 5 and 9 September 2011, the DAA escorted a small delegation from the Royal Military College – Duntroon to and from Abbottabad. The delegation was there to visit the Pakistan Military Academy.

17. Australia continues to support Pakistan's efforts to confront the security challenges posed by extremism through increased defence cooperation and engagement with a focus on building Pakistan's counterinsurgency capability. Pakistan's stability, capacity and commitment to combating violent extremism are critical for regional and global security, as well as success in Afghanistan.