

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio

Additional Estimates, February 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 1: GBRMPA **Question No:** 9

Broad Topic: Talisman Sabre exercises –
cost

Proof Hansard Page and Date 110 (21/2/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM—Do you folk have a cost or an impact on your budget that you can identify for hosting the Talisman Sabre exercises, whether it be in assessment or monitoring or clean up?

Dr Reichelt—For Australia's hosting of them?

Senator LUDLAM—Yes. Do they impact on your portfolio?

Dr Reichelt—We allocate some resources to work with the defence teams and evaluate their reports. I could estimate the amount of effort we put into that. I would not have it with me right now.

Senator LUDLAM—That is okay. I will ask you to take that on notice, if you could. If you would itemise what those costs would be to you I would appreciate that. ...

Answer:

A number of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) staff are involved in activities related to the Talisman Sabre exercises, including preparation of advice, meetings, site inspections, etc. The GBRMPA estimates the cost to be approximately \$80,000.

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Additional Estimates, February 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 1: GBRMPA **Question No:** 10
Broad Topic: Talisman Sabre exercises—
impact
Proof Hansard Page and Date 111 (21/2/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM—I might rip some of those questions in on notice, because there is quite a few. We have spoken a couple of times in the past about the use of sonar during Talisman Sabre and its impacts on marine mammals. Do you do measurement of or do you have any role in assessing the use of active sonar technology during the exercises?

Dr Reichelt—Not to our knowledge.

Mr McGinnity—I do not know the answer.

Senator LUDLAM—I will ask you to take that on notice as well—and if it is not you if you would tell us who does. That would be appreciated. The United States military is immune to a lot of environmental regulation in the US. We do assess it. There is a PER undertaken to assess the exercises in the area. But I am wondering what would happen if to your knowledge an impact were ever found to be unacceptable. Would the exercises go ahead? Is there any way for regulators to prevent these exercises from continuing if the environmental impacts are not acceptable?

Dr Reichelt—That goes to an area that I am not familiar with right here. I will ask Peter if he has a reply.

Mr McGinnity—No. That is a legal question. Normally the matters are resolved without having to go to a legal solution.

Dr Reichelt—No. We could give you a breakdown of the processes afterwards.

Answer:

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) provided advice to Defence and environmental consultants Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) during the Public Environment Report (PER) process for Talisman Sabre 2009. The advice provided included assessing the potential risks of sonar on whales during Talisman Sabre 2009. The management and reduction of risk associated with use of sonar included restricted area of use of active mid-frequency sonar in deep water in the Coral Sea (outside the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park) and away from known concentrations of whales or seabed features likely to attract whales, use of passive sonar, lookouts and monitoring of beaked whales.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003 – specifically Part 5.2 Use or entry without permission after notification provides that:

"A zone may be used or entered without permission, after notification to the Authority, and subject to any directions given by the Authority, for any of the following purposes;

...(d) to undertake defence activities that would otherwise require permission under this Zoning Plan"

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If an environmental impact associated with a Defence exercise was assessed by GBRMPA as unacceptable GBRMPA would give a direction that this could not occur in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

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Additional Estimates, February 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 1: GBRMPA **Question No:** 11
Broad Topic: Talisman Sabre exercises—
showbags
Proof Hansard Page and Date 111 (21/2/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM—In the last round of estimates I was asking about the show bags that are being handed out. There was a list provided of what was in them, but we did not get one. I am wondering if we can be provided the materials that are being given to the members of the public relating to the exercise. They are all in the public domain. It is just difficult to get hold of them in here.

Dr Reichelt—That would be easy to do as long as they are still in print. I imagine that they would be—the zone plans and other things that are in the list.

Senator LUDLAM—I would very much appreciate it, thanks.

Answer:

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority handed out zoning maps and information about turtles and dugongs. The brochures were handed out in Rockhampton on 5 July 2009 as part of the Talisman Sabre exercises. This material is attached. Two hard copies will be provided to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications Legislation Committee.