

## **Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

### **ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates Hearing 21-24 May 2012

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Outcome/Program:** 1.1.2 National Security and International Policy

**Topic:** US Defence force Darwin - status of forces agreement

**Senator:** Senator Ludlam

**Question reference number:** 23

**Type of Question:** FPA P9, 22 May 2012

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 6 July 2012

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

Senator LUDLAM: Okay. If you have got some written advice that would be much appreciated. I am going to skip through a couple of issues quickly. When the Prime Minister and President Obama announced last November that there would be a rotational US Marine Corps presence in Darwin, was the announcement based on a written agreement?

Mr Sadleir: I am not aware of a written agreement to that effect.

Senator LUDLAM: Well, I am, but you work for the Prime Minister, so does the fact you are not aware of it mean that such a document does not exist or just that you have not been made aware of that?

Ms Noble: We will have to take that on notice.

Senator LUDLAM: Potentially I am. Is that the only written document in existence that underpins it? For example, I think I was told at the last estimates that there are no changes proposed to the status of forces agreement between the United States government and Australia, because that is not deemed necessary. Is there any other agreement on which facilities, how many people, what their operating conditions will be and so on apart from what was issued in the communique?

Mr Sadleir: You are right about the SOFA: there is an existing SOFA and it has adequately provided for deployments in the past.

Senator LUDLAM: A very comfortable SOFA, we are told!

Mr Sadleir: We will continue to monitor those arrangements to ensure that they remain adequate. As to further underpinning detail and documents, I am happy to take that on notice and come back to you on that.

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**Answer:**

The joint announcement made by the Prime Minister and United States (US) President last November that there would be a rotational US Marine Corps presence in Darwin was based on the text of a written joint communique which was agreed between officials of the two governments.

Aside from the joint communique referred to above there are no other written agreements between the Australian and US Governments specifically relating to the rotational US Marine Corps presence in Darwin. However, a classified statement of principles was agreed by Australia and the US in 2010 to guide bilateral cooperation on the US Force Posture Review.