

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 38

Senator Birmingham asked the following question at the hearing on 18 February 2008:

The Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) advised the Senate Standing Committee on the Environment, Communications and the Arts that the Australian Customs Service had entered into an agreement to undertake five flights utilising the Airbus A319 over which the AAD holds a leasing agreement and that, as at 19 February 2008, three flights had been taken. DEWHA subsequently advised the Committee that just two flights have been taken.

- a) Can Customs clarify whether three or two flights had been taken as at 19 February 2008?
- b) When did the flights occur?
- c) When did or will the remaining flights occur?
- d) Was video or photographic footage taken?
- e) If video or photographic footage has been taken, has it been released to the public? If not, why not, will it be and, if so, when?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

- a) As at 19 February 2008, the A319 Airbus had conducted two flights.
- b) The A319 Airbus conducted a long range surveillance proving flight into the Southern Ocean on 20 January 2008. The aircraft conducted a second mission on 7 February 2008.
- c) The A319 Airbus conducted a third mission on 4 March 2008. Additional flights will depend on aircraft availability, weather conditions and other operational issues.
- d) During the 20 January flight, two Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing vessels were located and photographed. During the 7 February and 4 March 2008 flights, imagery was obtained of vessels of the Japanese Whaling Fleet.
- e) The release of video or photographic footage is a matter for ongoing consideration by the Government.