

# Operation Falconer

Transcript of the Prime Minister The Hon John Howard MP address at the Welcome Home morning tea for Brigadier Maurie Mcnarn and ADF Personnel Australian troops to start coming home.

The Prime Minister announced on 18 March 2003 that the Government had committed Australian Defence Force elements in the Middle East to the coalition of military forces prepared to enforce Iraq's compliance with its international obligations to disarm. Prime Minister's speech to Parliament

Australia's contribution to the coalition, known as Operation Falconer, has to date involved about 2000 Australian Defence Force personnel.

Operation Falconer has included: About 250 airmen and women and support crews deployed with a squadron of 14 F/A-18 Royal Australian Air Force Hornet fighter aircraft.

About 150 personnel deployed with three RAAF C130 Hercules transport aircraft.

About 150 personnel deployed with two P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft.

An Air Forward Command Element of about 70 personnel responsible for coordinating air operations with coalition partners and providing national control of RAAF assets.

Approximately 350 sailors and soldiers embarked on the sea transport ship HMAS Kanimbla with a Sea King helicopter, Army landing craft and Army air defence detachment and a specialist explosives ordnance team.

About 600 personnel embarked on Royal Australian Navy frigates HMA Ships Anzac and Darwin, who have been part of the Multinational Interception Force enforcing United Nations sanctions against Iraq.

A Navy clearance diving team capable of locating, rendering safe and disposing of mines.

A Special Forces Task Group of about 500 personnel, including: - An advance party including a Special Air Service squadron - CH-47 troop-lift helicopters and personnel from 5th Aviation Regiment - Specialist troops to deal with the threat of weapons of mass destruction drawn from the Incident Response Regiment based at Holsworthy, New South Wales

A quick reaction support force drawn from the Holsworthy-based 4RAR Commando unit and a Combat Service Support Group that provides the essential logistic support necessary for all these elements to remain functional.

An Australian National Headquarters of approximately 60 personnel, headed by the Australian National Commander, Brigadier Maurie McNarn.

As announced on 17 April by Minister for Defence Robert Hill, the Government has decided to scale back its military contribution now that the conflict is drawing to a close and the majority of personnel deployed to the Middle East will return home soon.

Force elements returning from the Middle East during May will be: HMA Ships Anzac and Darwin and embarked personnel. Airmen and women and support crews deployed with F/A-18 Royal Australian Air Force Hornet fighter aircraft.

The Special Air Service squadron and some of the Combat Service Support Group that provides logistic support necessary for the Special Forces Task Group.

The Navy clearance diving team. Due home in June are HMAS Kanimbla and her embarked personnel and elements.

Australia's Continuing Contribution: There remains a role for Australia to contribute to the ongoing coalition efforts to bring stability and humanitarian aid to Iraq. Some ADF elements are to remain in the Middle East to support the transition from combat operations to the Coalition Provisional Authority. These include: The Frigate HMAS Sydney with a Naval task group command element and a logistics support element. A Royal Australian Air Force combat support element of about 60 air traffic control personnel working at Baghdad International Airport. Experienced analysts and technical experts to support the coalition effort to locate, identify, account for and subsequently destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and programs. The Government has decided to send a further four specialists in addition to the 12 Defence personnel already announced. The specialists are military and civilian officers from the Defence Intelligence Organisation, the Defence Science and Technology Organisation and the Australian Defence Force, with skills relating to chemical and biological weapons, missiles and related technologies, and Iraq's weapons programs.

A security detachment of about 75 personnel to protect the Australian Representative Mission that will be established. The detachment will also provide protection and escort for Australian Government personnel working in Baghdad. The detachment will comprise a troop of three Australian Light Armoured Vehicles (ASLAV) and 15 personnel from the Darwin-based 2nd Cavalry Regiment, an infantry platoon of 35 from the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment based in Townsville, communications and logistics elements from 3rd Brigade in Townsville and personnel from the 1st Military Police Battalion from Brisbane. Elements of the security detachment have started deploying to the Middle East and will be in place by mid-May. The security detachment will relieve an interim security force from the Commando task group already deployed in Baghdad.

A temporary military liaison officer to the Australian Mission in Baghdad.

Three ADF representatives to the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance.

Two C130 Hercules transport aircraft and two P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft supported by air operations personnel.

A restructured Australian National Headquarters and logistics element.

Australia's transitional contribution also includes a Defence team of 16 civilian and military weapons inspection specialists and a Royal Australian Air Force air traffic control element to support air operations at Baghdad International Airport.

Another two mid-ranking ADF officers will be attached to the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance to complement the existing deployment of an ADF colonel.

Australia's contribution to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Iraq does not affect the ADF's capability to respond effectively to contingencies in our region or at home.

Meanwhile, the Defence Community Organisation and the Department of Veterans' Affairs continue to work closely to provide the highest level of support to the families of those personnel deployed.

Information on the support provided can be obtained from the various support agencies, which include:

The Defence National Welfare Coordination Centre on 1800 801 026, which provides 24 hour support to the families of deployed personnel.

Other support information is available through:

- Family Information Network for Defence (FIND) on 1800 020 031 or [www.dco.dod.gov.au](http://www.dco.dod.gov.au)

National Consultative Group of Service Families on 1800 100 509

Knowing that their loved ones are being well supported at home is a significant morale boost for deployed personnel.