

Media Release

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Protesters demand end to dangerous US-Australian war games

Peace and environmental protesters from around Australia will converge in Brisbane today to launch their campaign to obstruct and counter the US - Australian war games which are due to take place at Shoalwater Bay, near Yeppoon in central Queensland next month.

Scheduled to run for three weeks from July 6 to 26, the live-fire war games dubbed Talisman-Sabre, will involve some 30,000 US and Australian military personnel, cost Australian taxpayers at least \$50 million and bomb and blast coastal waters and pristine rainforest of the largest wilderness area on the central Queensland coast.

This year's operation is the fourth in the biennial Talisman Sabre series, which two years ago saw up to 1,000 protesters travel to the area and voice their opposition to the event, which includes the firing of live ammunition.

"Peace activists see the war games as a tax heist to train and prepare Australian defence forces for military aggression and engagement in more US wars," said Just Peace spokeswoman Annette Brownlie, who was joined today by former Democrats leader Andrew Bartlett and St Mary's-in-exile priest Father Terry Fitzpatrick.

"Environmentalists see the war games as environmental folly and senseless destruction.

"The pristine area of Shoalwater Bay is one of high environmental significance, habitat to many migratory birds, nesting sites for turtles, feeding grounds for dugongs and home to 26 species of dolphins and whales including humpbacks and the endangered Blue Whale.

"We don't want to see our land bombed and polluted in the name of war. These war-games are dangerous and must stop. We don't want them here."

Under the former Howard Government an area the size of Denmark was effectively ceded to the US military - the worst polluters on the planet - to serve as a 'test facility' for 50 years.

Environmental impacts include the hazard created for marine and land-based wildlife, water contamination from toxic chemicals and heavy metals, effects on air quality, fire potential, noise pollution, waste disposal and spills as well as erosion created by amphibian craft landings and high explosives.

Protesters will in Brisbane today launch their campaign by unveiling a massive banner (see above image) at the Kangaroo Point cliffs.

Many of them will then travel up to Yeppoon where they



will continue to raise awareness of the dangers and issues created by the operation.

Long-time peace activist and operator of peacebus.com, Graeme Dunstan said it was pleasing to see some moves in the right direction by the current Federal Government, an indication of the success of the high profile campaign of 2007.

"Recent assurances by new Defence Minister John Faulkner that depleted uranium munitions would not be used in Talisman Sabre 2009 is welcome news," Mr Dunstan said.

"Senator Faulkner also indicated no nuclear powered US ships would operate in Shoalwater Bay or near the Barrier Reef - we will watch very closely to ensure those commitments are kept."

Mr Dunstan said no such assurances were given by the Howard Government. He said evidence indicated depleted uranium munitions, standard issue to the US military, were used in previous war games.

"Senator Faulkner's commitments are small wins for the movement," Mr Dunstan said.

"But we have a long way to go to convince the Rudd Government to cancel the games altogether."

The Brisbane launch of the Talisman-Sabre protests will be celebrated with the unveiling of giant banner, as depicted in the above image.

Further Information

<http://www.peaceconvergence.com/>

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