

# **Shoalwater Wilderness Awareness Group's (SWAG's) Response to Talisman Saber 07 Public Environment Report and requests for information.**

## **FINAL DRAFT for Comments**

**Prepared by Steve Bishopric, SWAG spokesman.  
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Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Public Environment Report. I have noted my issues and concerns below and seek answers to questions relating to statements made in the documentation available on the Maunsell and ADF websites.

SWAG's five primary concerns are –

1. The failure of the ADF to adequately inform the community and government bodies and organisations about the publication of this report and the public information sessions. Further the PER claims to have widely consulted with interested parties and this has clearly not been done, for example was Livingstone Shire Council consulted regarding its water catchment area? The ADF has failed to honour its commitment to communicate as stated on page 2. of the PER.

2. The PER has serious omissions regarding environmental impact from the exercise. eg. There is no mention of the Capricorn Coasts water supply, or of risk to Yeppoon from air, sea or creek born contaminants.

3. Risks identified in the PER from known activities. (Pages iii & iv)

4. Unknown aspects of the exercise including activities and use of equipment and armaments which have not been published in the PER. eg. Carrying of Nuclear weapons and whether ships confirmed to be carrying depleted uranium will be berthing in Australian ports. There is no information of the type of new weaponry to be used in the exercise, only an admission that this may occur.

5. The failure to produce the normal Environmental Impact statement required under the EPBC act for this size activity.

## **Details of concerns**

### **1 ADF failure to communicate**

This failure is another example of the way the community has continually been ignored in the expansion of SWBTA and exercises like TS07. It is widely accepted that a deliberate policy of non-communication, a positive public relations campaign and political spin has been and is in place by both the ADF and the US forces. The evidence is clear that their rhetoric is not in any way matched by their actions or their very apparent intentions.

Swag requests details of who received information letters and what advertisements were placed as stated on page 16.

### **2. Omissions.**

#### **a. No provision for clean up or compensation.**

The PER makes no mention of any written agreement to clean up, rehabilitate or compensate for damage resulting from known risks (eg. Road damage, rated as almost certain) or unknown or omitted risks.(eg. To Capricorn Coast's water catchment). Written guarantees are needed and should be included in all agreements to conduct joint exercises with foreign powers.

Shoal water Wilderness Awareness Group (SWAG) requests copies of the Statement of Environment and Heritage Principles signed by U.S.A. and ADF in November 2005 (See Page I, of PER) and for copies to be made available to Livingstone Shire Council (LSC) and to the public through the Yeppoon Library.

SWAG requests copies of all existing written agreements relating to compensation for damage that have been entered into with the USA government.

#### **b. Capricorn Coast water catchment supply.**

The failure to include risks to the Capricorn Coast water catchment in the risk analysis of TS07 is alarming, irresponsible and incompetent.

The PER fails to mention this in it's Summary of Possible Environmental Risks (page iii), in it's Summary of identified Possible Impacts by TS07 (page 19) and in Key Environmental Attributes of SWBTA (page 31).

The water catchment for Waterpark Creek from which the town water is drawn is predominantly in SWBTA, mostly in the Dismal sector with flows from the Freshwater and Corridor sectors. It was regarded as Queensland's cleanest water, as it is sand dune fed, but is at risk from military activity. Samuel Hill, the ADF's principal facility is located in the Dismal sector on the banks of North Sandy Creek and Tea Tree Creek, tributaries to Waterpark Creek. Live artillery firing was conducted in these sectors in TS05 and ground exercises were clearly identified as occurring here in the Commonwealth Commission of Inquiry into Shoalwater Bay interim report. The new amphibious landing facility at One-Mile beach is designed for landing personnel and equipment directly into these sectors for fighting through to the Mt. Hummock sector. Mt Hummock is a high impact and high explosive target. It is only 10 km from the catchment. Contaminates from high explosives are released into the atmosphere and wind born 1000's of kilometres. ADF operate military planes and helicopters over the water catchment. Risks from accidents are identified but the risks from plane crashes are ignored.(page 19).

SWAG asked LSC during TS05 for water testing to be done,(see details in letter below, ref.1) but received only a partial response from LSC and no comment from the ADF. The matters raised in this letter need addressing before TS07.

Waterpark Creek adjoins the Locality of Byfield, a residential and established eco-tourism destination. Water is drawn from Waterpark for Byfield orchards and eco accommodation and restaurant businesses. The river then flows into Corio Bay which is protected by the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. (Otherwise known as the RAMSAR Convention). Corio Bay is a prime recreational and fishing destination for locals and tourists. It is within the Byfield National Park and the northern boundary of the Rydges Capricorn International Resort.

Corio Bay then flows into the Coral Sea at the northern end of Farnborough Beach, Yeppoon and the resort's main beach. Big tidal ranges here ensure rapid transport in fast currents to Yeppoon and the Keppel Islands.

Any contamination of SWBTA will result in rapid contamination of the Capricorn Coast's water supply, The Byfield National Park, Corio Bay, Keppel Bay and the Capricorn Coast.

Swag requests the ADF provide written guarantees to fund independent monitoring on water and air quality before during and after TS07 and all live firing exercises. Testing should be under the control of LSC and the Queensland Health Department, and the results made available publicly and promptly, during exercises.

### **Specific risks to the water catchment.**

## **Contamination from:**

\*Airborne and waterborne contamination from live firing in the catchment and/or adjacent high explosive impacts. Concerns about known contaminants and unknown contaminants from new weaponry and ammunition recently approved for in service use (eg. In Iraq). See last sentence under experimental weapons PER page b 2.

\*Plane collisions or crashes

\*Release of contaminants during emergency release of fuel

\*Airborne contamination from fires on board nuclear powered and armed vessels

\*Fires on conventional vessels including U.S. vessels authorised to carry DU

\*Failure of unmanned drone aircraft

\* Fires with in SWBTA, human activity on manoeuvres in catchment, motor vehicle accidents including those carrying ammunition.

\*Pollution resulting from human activity and manoeuvres in catchment and Samuel Hill facility.

## **3.Risks and damage identified from PER**

### **Damage to LSC roads.**

The PER assesses **the risk of damage to roads and bridges as almost certain.**

SWAG requests written assurances to fully compensate all local authorities for this a damage.

### **Damage to third parties ( accidents involving military vehicles).**

The PER assesses this **risk as almost certain.**

SWAG requests the ADF advertise in both Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast newspapers vehicle movements and convoys to enable road users including commercial operators to plan their journeys safely.

### **Nuclear Powered vessels.**

Nuclear powered submarines will be utilised in TS07 (page 8).

Any accidents carry risk of radioactive contamination. No civilian plans are in place to deal with radioactive pollution from either leaks from reactors after accidents or from catastrophic failure.

### **Carriage of nuclear arms**

In the absence of assurances to the contrary it can be assumed that the U.S. aircraft carrier fleet would be carrying nuclear weapons. Any accidents or failures would result in an emergency well beyond the scope of local emergency services capabilities. ADF's response times to past contamination of Yeppoon's beaches have been poor.

SWAG requests notification as to whether nuclear armed vessels and submarines will be involved in TS07 and if they will be in SWBTA and in which Australian Ports.

### **Carriage and importation of Depleted Uranium**

The ADF acknowledge the US forces will be carrying DU on their ships during TS07. The PER does not rule out DU weapons being on board aircraft landing in Australia or the use of DU armoured vehicles. Accidents or fires on vessels or planes carrying DU would result in serious contamination including that of regional water supplies.

Accidental firing of DU weapons has occurred in other foreign training areas and bombing ranges ( e.g. Okinawa ,Japan)

Swag requests;

The ADF acknowledge the US forces will be carrying DU on their ships during TS07. The PER does not rule out DU weapons being on board aircraft landing in Australia or the use of DU armoured vehicles. . DU is used as ballast in military planes that have crashed previously in Australian training exercises. Accidents to or fires on vessels or planes carrying DU would result in contamination including to regional water supplies. Accidental firing of DU weapons by US forces has occurred in other foreign training areas (Okinawa, Japan) used with serious health problems resulting.

SWAG requests;

- a.) A statement on whether US planes will be landing on Australian soil carrying DU weapons or DU armoured vehicles.
- b.) A statement on whether US naval vessels known to be carrying DU weapons will be berthing in Australian ports and which ports.
- c.) Details of what US vehicles or planes entering Australia will contain DU in their construction.
- d.) Details of what ADF equipment contains DU in their construction.

### **Unexploded and off target ordinance and devices (UXO)**

The full arsenal of ADF and US forces weaponry including “new weapons” will be used in TS07. These range from laser guided missiles to location markers. Laser guided missiles fired by US marines went astray last year on the NT’s Delamere Ranges injuring personnel . Several unexploded marine location makers (phosphorous) have been washed onto Queensland beaches recently, including Bangalee in Yeppoon. ADF bomb disposal took 24 hours to respond.

Swag requests the ADF to advertise the dangers to the public from UXO and devices during and following exercises. These ads should be of equal prominence to the Government run full-page local ads warning of terrorist attacks during TS05. The ADF already advertise it’s monthly ad in the LSC’s” Living in Livingstone “ newspaper and SWAG requests equal prominence be given to public advice on this danger.

The LSC has been requested to do this advertising if the ADF do not.

### **Other risks identified in PER**

All risks identified on pages iii, iv, d-1 and d-2 have potential to impact on LSC

Summary of those identified risks of most concern to LSC residents.

- \*Vessel accidents and Spills- Damage to Keppel Bay, islands and beaches.
- \* Accidental fires/ explosions from ammunition handling, transport or storage on vessels-Damage to Keppel Bay, islands and beaches, ports, and air borne pollution to land and catchment.
- \*Introduction of marine pests by visiting vessels.- - Damage to Keppel Bay, islands and beaches.
- \*Accidental damage to flora and fauna by munitions landing outside designated areas during live firing-**this ignores the risks to people and SIGNIFICANTLY, completely ignores the risk to thr water catchment.**
- \*Damage from fires started during live firing- this occurs in most exercises of any scale. Damage to the catchment is common. Damage to non-defence land from fires is ignored. Written guarantees of compensation to adjoining landholders are requested.
- \* Translocation of weeds.
- \*Release of contaminants due to storage vessels rupture on port wharf areas.- Damage to Keppel Bay, islands and beaches, ports, and air borne pollution to land and catchment.
- \*Inadvertent release of solid materials such as equipment into sea during port anchoring in ports.- Danger to local shipping and damage to Keppel Bay, islands and beaches and ports.
- \*Introduction of pest via ballast water- Danger to local shipping and damage to Keppel Bay, islands and beaches and ports.

\* Unmanned aircraft and vessels carrying unknown equipment and weapons. .  
 - Damage to Keppel Bay, islands and beaches, ports, and air borne pollution to land and catchment  
 SWAG request written guarantees from the ADF and US government that compensation and restoration will be undertaken on the above “other risks”.

#### **4. Unkown Aspects** **Unknown contaminates.**

No list of equipment or weapons is contained within the PER and the public cannot therefore assess the risks to their communities.

Swag requests the ADF provide details of what chemical and other potential contaminants will be released into the environment during TS07, and to publicly release this information.

#### **New Weapons**

The PER states “new “ weapons can be used in TS07, Page b-2. A major concern is the secret nature of these new weapons. All evaluation and approvals are done solely by the military. The approval for “in -service “ use would logically include use in service in Iraq etc. and any foreign weapons can be used if the ADF “approve” them.

- SWAG requests further information on
  - a. Who authorises the use of new weaponry?

- b. Whether arms manufactures will have representatives in SWBTA during TS07 to train personnel or commission or calibrate new weapons?
- c. Whether the US forces will be using weapons not previously used in Australia?

### **Terrorist attacks.**

The federal government advertised extensively locally during TS05 on the risks of terrorist attacks. No apparent increased security was in place in LSC during TS05 eg. at the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleets concert at the Yeppoon Town Hall.

SWAG requests;

- a. the ADF to investigate the level of this increased risk to Central Queensland and for the findings to be made public.
- b. Australian Government provide increased public security for all activities involving the US and or the ADF forces during TS07

### **Failure to produce the normal Environmental Impact statement**

SWBTA contains both World Heritage Listed Areas and protected zones within the Great Barrier Reef Marine National Park. It is impossible to reconcile this with bombing, live firing and exercising with the world's largest military force.

\_The PER on TS07 is proof that the ADF is either not capable of producing nor has any intention of producing a report that accurately assesses the effects of TS07 on the environment and the local community. The omissions, errors, wrong classifications and apparently deliberate failure to communicate and consult with the community render the PER almost worthless.

Swag requests the ADF cancel TS07 as they have failed to follow the normal process of requiring a full and independent Environmental Impact Statement as required under the EPBC Act.

### **Conclusion.**

SWAG believes that SWB is an important national treasure and needs to be protected from further damage from military activity. SWAG believes that the US forces appalling environmental and social record in every foreign base, bombing range and training area they have used around the globe, disqualifies them from any right to move their training and exercises to Australia.

SWAG believes the ADF and the Government are not acting in the best interests of Australia and request a cancellation of TS07 and all future exercises with the US forces.

Swag requests that the Government immediately declare all of SWBTA as National Park and provide full protection for one of Australia's finest assets.

We await the information and answers requested.

Steve Bishopric,  
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References...

1.) LETTER TO LIVINGSTON SHIRE COUNCIL DURING TS05

6<sup>th</sup> July 2005

**Urgent: RE YEPPOON WATER SUPPLY AND POSSIBLE CONTAMINATION FROM MILITARY.**

Action: PLEASE TABLE AT NEXT MEETING OF LIVINGSTON SHIRE COUNCIL

TO:

Mr Franks  
Chief Executive Officer  
Livingstone Shire Council  
Anzac Parade  
YEPPOON QLD 4703

Dear Sir

We are writing to request the Livingstone Shire council take immediate samples of Waterpark Creek and other relevant water catchment areas for testing for possible contamination of heavy metals and other pollutants following recent military exercises in these areas. We would request these samples satisfy the chain of custody requirements and that sufficient samples be taken so as to keep historical reference samples on hand.

The reasons behind this request are:

1. The substantial increase in bombing levels in the recent Talisman Saber 2005 exercise.
2. The northerly wind direction during the period of bombing.
3. The high level of rainfall and run off during the period of bombing.
4. The very close proximity of the Mt Hummock high impact range to the Dismal Sector of Shoalwater Bay Training area which is a substantial part of the Waterpark Creek, northern Sandy and Tea Tree Creek catchments.
5. The land based army activity that is known to occur in the western part of the Dismal Sector and the ADF past practice of live firing into that area.
6. The unknown nature of the high explosives, Smart Bombs and laser guided missiles the US Defence forces are testing in Shoalwater Bay Training area.

We would also like to be informed as to the Livingstone Shire Council procedures for monitoring the integrity of the Capricorn Coast water supply during the larger scale military exercises such as Talisman Saber 2005 and those in the future.

Our specific requests are to be informed about

1. What testing and sampling has LSC currently in place to test the water quality during and after these major exercises?
2. What samples are kept as a record of water quality?
3. What has LSC asked the ADF about high explosive use in the SWBTA both past and present?
4. What is currently tested for in the water supply and how frequently?

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5. Does the LSC review the ADF referral under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)?
6. What briefings did ADF give LSC regarding where military activity would be conducted and how were these activities reviewed?
7. Has the LSC reviewed the Commonwealth Commission of Inquiry into Shoalwater Bay Report (1994) in order to determine patterns of military use in and adjacent to the water catchment of the Capricorn Coast?
8. Has the LSC requested Commonwealth funding to monitor and protect the Capricorn Coasts water supply with the proposed increase in activity under the "enhanced military training program" between the ADF and US military?

We would greatly appreciate your prompt attention to the serious concerns.

Yours truly,  
Steve Bishopric  
Member of CADUU (Citizens against depleted uranium use)

