

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Ligue internationale des femmes pour la paix et la liberté
Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad
Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit

Consultative Status with United Nations ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO

Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO and UNICEF

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5 March 2009

Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP
Minister for Defence
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

We are writing on behalf of the Australian Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) concerning the environmental impact of the upcoming Talisman Sabre (TS2009) joint military exercises with the US to be conducted in the Shoalwater Bay Military Training Area in Central Queensland.

Like many Australians and others, we in WILPF greatly appreciate the environmental and biodiversity values of the Shoalwater Bay Ramsar Wetlands and the Great Barrier Reef. They are a treasured part of our national heritage and, as such, we would like to be able to ensure that future generations are also able to enjoy them.

We understand that TS2009 will involve the movement of tens of thousands of troops along with the movement of military hardware including tanks. We also understand that TS2009 will involve the firing of ammunition, including live ammunition, and that chemical residues are likely to be left behind in the soil and the sea after TS2009 is finished.

It is with grave concern therefore that we now write on behalf of our members.

It is our hope that you will be able to inform us as to whether an environmental impact assessment has been prepared in order to reveal the extent of the likely environmental damage to the areas where the TS2009 military exercises will be undertaken. If so, what are the findings of that assessment? In addition, we would like to be assured that your

department has in place plans in order to ensure that animals in the area are protected from any live ammunition that may be used in the joint military exercises.

We thank you for your kind attention and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Picone and Ruth Russell
Joint National Coordinators

CC.: Senator Bob Brown, Australian Greens Spokesperson for Defence
Senator Christine Milne, Australian Greens Spokesperson for World Heritage