



Air Task Group

Recommended Citation

Richard Tanter, "Air Task Group", Australia in Iraq, November 09, 2014, <https://nautilus.org/briefing-books/australian-forces-abroad/australia-in-iraq/air-task-group/>

In September 2014 the Australian government [announced](#) the deployment of an 600-person ADF contingent as part of a US-led coalition to attack Islamic State in Syria and the Levant (ISIL) forces in Iraq.

An initial RAAF element made up of:

- up to eight Boeing F/A-18F Super Hornets
- a Boeing E-7A (737) Wedgetail airborne early warning & control aircraft
- an Airbus Defence & Space KC-30A (A330 MRTT) air-to-air refuelling tanker
- C-130J Hercules and C-17A Globemaster aircraft used in humanitarian relief operations.

On 5 November 2014, the [Defence Department announced details](#) of ATG operations to date, noting there were six F/A-18F Super Hornets deployed in the theatre. [On 30 March 2015](#), the Defence Department announced the Super Hornets were returning to Australia, to be replaced by /A-18A or F/A-18B Hornets.

It also noted that the E-7A Wedgetail's early warning & control principal responsibility was airborne situational awareness relating to the presence of firedly and threatening aircraft or missiles. However the Wedgetail also carried out airspace command and control of all Coalition aircraft assigned to operations over in Iraq, directed by U.S. Central Command's Combined Air and Space Operations Centre. This included targeting work "in a virtual network that includes information passed back to the United States in a live timeframe, back to the Middle East for correlation, and then out to the aircraft live. So when a target arises, or is seen, a target of opportunity, it can bounce across three-quarters of the globe, and we can be striking that target within about 15 minutes."

On 25 March [Prime Minister Tony Abbott announced](#) that the early warning and refuelling aircraft were involved in support for coalition air strikes in Syria as well as Iraq, although the RAAF bombers were not at that point involved in the Syria strikes.

200 members of the 400 RAAF personnel in the first deployment to Iraq in October 2014 returned to Australia in early 2015, [replaced with a second rotation of 200](#).

See also:

- [Al Minhad Air Base](#), Dubai, [Australian Bases Abroad](#)

AIR TASK GROUP commanders

- Air Commodore Glen Braz, 1.2015 -
- Air Commodore [Steve Robertson](#), 8.2014 - 1.2015

Air Task Group rotations

- First rotation: 8.2014 - 1.2015
- [Second rotation](#): 1.2015 -

Air Task Group strike operations

The Defence Department's Operation Okra Air Task Group website maintains a [timeline of ATG operations](#). This site was updated frequently in the first month of the deployment, but only intermittently and at a very general level subsequently.

On 30 March a Defence Department briefing announced that during March:

- ATG F-18 Super Hornets had attacked and destroyed sand wall constructed by ISIL to impede government forces near Mosul early in the month
- in an airstrike near Sinjar two GPS-guided bombs were released to destroy a building occupied by insurgents
- "On the same day in Ramadi, Iraqi security forces were pinned down by Daesh, and an Australian airstrike was employed to disrupt the fighting to allow Iraqi forces to extract without further injury."
- In support of peshmerga forces conducting a clearance operation near Kirkut, Australian Super Hornets used eight precision-guided munitions against Daesh command and control nodes and checkpoints along a main supply route, giving peshmerga forces the advantage in seizing the high ground."
- the KC-30 Multi Role Tanker Transport undertook 30 missions, transferring three million pounds of fuel
- the E-7 Wedgetail airborne control and early warning aircraft completed a thousand hours of operation between September and March.

On [12 February a Defence Department briefing](#) announced that:

- ATG operations "contributed to" to 13% of total coalition air strikes
- the ATG dropped
 - 53 laser-guided and GPS-guided bombs in January
 - 61 500 pound bombs in december

-
- ATG operations (period unclear)
 - 60% of have been in the north of Iraq (Mosul and Sinjar areas, and Baiji and Salahuddin province)
 - 40% central Iraq near Ramadi, Fallujah, Al Asad and Rawah.
 - 90% have targeted "Daesh fighters" and the remainder "Daesh leadership" (middle-ranking)
 - Super Hornets : 2,200 hours
 - Wedgetail: 815 hours
 - KC-30 refuelling: 1,100 hours; 8 million litres of fuel dispensed in one month
 - KC-30's ability to monitor ground operations by radio enables it to anticipate bomber aircraft refuelling needs, and lengthen bombers' operations over target areas.
 -
-

On 5 November 2014 the [Defence Department announced the following details](#) of ATG operations to date:

Super Hornets

- Sorties: 89
- Flying hours: 663
- Ordnance used: 27 laser or GPS guided 500-pound bombs
- No. of targets: 14 targets, of which 11 confirmed destroyed and 3 assessed as damaged.

Main target areas:

- [Baiji Oil Refinery](#):
 - 35°0'45"N 43°30'22"E, [Wikimapia](#)
 - [Battle Map of the Iraqi Army Offensive in the City of Baiji](#), Al-Masdar Al-'Arabi
-
- Fallujah Dam
 - 33.3082944, 43.7824059, [Wikimapia](#)
 - [Fallujah Barrage](#), Wikipedia
-

KC30 air-to-air refuelling aircraft

- 33 sorties, dispensing 2.5 million pounds of fuel to Australian, French, and U.S. aircraft. The defence Department did not rule out the possibility that U.S. aircraft refuelled by Australia then proceeded to combat operations in Syria.

E7 Wedgetail early warning and control aircraft

- 24 missions

PROJECT COORDINATOR: [RICHARD TANTER](#)
UPDATED: 26 MARCH 2015

View this online at: <https://nautilus.org/briefing-books/australian-forces-abroad/australia-in-ira-air-task-group/>

Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:
nautilus@nautilus.org