

A warship heading towards Iran is using Adelaide technology to keep sailors safe

An Australian warship has been sent to guard the critical fuel shipping zone of the Hormuz Strait – armed with high-tech defences made in Adelaide.

Tory Shepherd, State Editor, The Advertiser

An Australian warship that is powering towards a dangerous Middle Eastern zone had its “brains” made in Adelaide.

As tensions between the United States and Iran flare again after another missile attack against a US base in Iraq (where Australian and New Zealand troops also live) the Royal Australian Navy’s HMAS Toowoomba and 190 sailors on board are heading to join the allied forces.



HMAS Toowoomba alongside Fleet Base East during the Sydney Vivid Festival 2017.

The ship’s combat system, which controls all the missiles, radars, and artificial intelligence on board was made in Mawson Lakes.

And one of its greatest defences – BAE Systems Australia’s Nulka active missile decoy, which fires into the air and lures enemy missiles away from the ship to fall harmlessly in the water – is also an Adelaide invention.



BAE systems’ Nulka anti-missile decoy defence system was developed in Adelaide.

BAE is also doing work on the Evolved Sea Sparrow Missile, which can take out supersonic enemy missiles.

SAAB Australia has customised the 9LV combat system for Australian ships. The 9LV gathers information about any friends and enemies nearby, and coordinates responses from the weapons systems.

The 9LV controls everything from lasers to missiles. It can simultaneously fight threats from mines, planes, ships, and submarines, while observing all around it.



Evacuees from Mallacoota arrive on the navy ship MV Sycamore at the port of Hastings, Victoria. Picture: AAP / Ian Currie

The system is also used for humanitarian missions; most recently on a ship helping people affected by the bushfires.

SAAB managing director Andy Keough said the 9LV fuses all the available information together so a human commander can make a decision.

“The combat system allows the commander to build a tactical picture around them to work out who are the good guys, who are the bad guys, and who are the neutrals,” he said.



Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Michael Noonan with personnel on board HMAS Toowoomba.

Combat system engineering group manager Jim Bourke said complex and emerging threats in the region means they had to develop more sophisticated defences and arms that work swiftly in a congested space – sometimes with 100 or more “contacts” nearby.

Software engineer Charlie Rocklyn said she was “building parts of the brain of the ship ... something that’s going to support our people in the defence forces who are on the ground, to make their jobs easier and safer”.

Australia has deployed HMAS Toowoomba to the Strait of Hormuz, a critical fuel shipping zone, where it could face threats from Iran, pirates, or terrorists.

It will support the allied forces for about six months.

Rockets hit military complex staffed by Australian troops

Hundreds of Australians are in the Taji Military Complex, which was targeted by Soviet-era rockets yesterday in yet another attack believed to be by Iran on western forces.

None of the Aussies were hurt, but there were reports of Iraqi injuries.

Many of the troops are young, and most of them are there to train the local Iraqi forces and help them defeat ISIS.



Lieutenant Mitch Lindsay, training Iraqi Security Forces at Taji Military complex in Iraq. Picture: Tom Huntley

They practice “Vegemite diplomacy”, building relationships with the Iraqis, whom they advise and assist in restoring their war-torn country.

They eat in an enormous canteen alongside their United States and New Zealand colleagues; giant servings of fried chicken, jelly and salad, and “near-beers” instead of alcohol.

They share dongas, decorated with photos of back home and quilts sent from supporters.

They share bathrooms and jokes and serious danger.

An Australian restaurant at Taji Military Complex near Baghdad. Picture: Tom Huntley

All around them are T-Walls, thick metal barriers to stop mortars. Taji is full of tanks and barbed wire and the detritus of war.

The Katyusha rockets struck on Tuesday as Iran and the US fight over the US assassination of Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani.



Task Group Taji 10 outside headquarters at the Taji Military Complex, Iraq.

Defence Minister Linda Reynolds said she was aware of the attack but that all Australians were accounted for and safe.

“At the time of the attack there were no Australians in the immediate vicinity. The safety of our service men & women is our utmost priority,” she said.

The 300 Australians are there at the request of the US and the Iraqi governments, while the NZ forces are preparing to move out.

Ms Reynolds said the Australian position was always being reviewed.