



Operation Sovereign Borders

MEDIA STATEMENT

Saturday 9 November 2013

UPDATE ON STATUS OF TRANSFER OF RESCUED PASSENGERS OFF INDONESIAN COAST

On Thursday a Border Protection Command (BPC) asset rendered assistance to a vessel in response to a Search and Rescue (SAR) incident declared by the Australian Rescue Coordination Centre. The incident took place in Indonesia's SAR region (SRR), with the first request for assistance being made when the distressed vessel was 43 nautical miles south of the coast of Java.

The rescue was successfully completed by the Australian BPC asset and, as reported yesterday, all passengers were accounted for.

Given the incident took place within Indonesia's SRR and within close proximity to the Indonesian coast, a request was made, consistent with our standing practice under Operation Sovereign Borders, to transfer the passengers rescued to Indonesia, in accordance with international search and rescue protocols.

On two recent occasions, Indonesia has agreed to these requests and facilitated an on water transfer.

The Indonesian Government has advised Australian officials overnight that they are reviewing the request put forward by Australia.

While we welcome Indonesia's review of our request, in the best interests of the safety of the passengers and crew of the rescued vessel and the Australian vessel that has been rendering assistance, earlier this morning I requested Lieutenant General Campbell to transfer the persons rescued from the SAR incident to Christmas Island for rapid onward transfer to Manus Island or Nauru. They will not be resettled in Australia.

Details of this transfer will be included in the next operational briefing after the persons have been processed for transfer at Christmas Island in accordance with our standard practice.

Australia will continue to liaise with Indonesia in relation to these Search and Rescue incidents on a case by case basis. We will continue to honour our commitment to Indonesia to undertake this liaison privately and directly with Indonesian authorities.

The Government continues to have access to the full suite of Coalition border protection measures to protect Australia's sovereignty, as part of Operation Sovereign Borders, by preventing the illegal entry of vessels into Australia's waters, as endorsed by the Australian people at the recent election.

In the first almost eight weeks of Operation Sovereign Borders there have been 561 illegal arrivals by boat, a reduction of more than 75%, on the same period leading into the start of the operation.

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