

Three RAN Aircrew Safe after MH-60R Helicopter Ditched in the Philippine Sea



HMAS Warramunga (left) conducts a replenishment at sea with USNS Big Horn while sailing in company with HMAS Brisbane during a regional presence deployment. *ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY / LSIS Daniel Goodman*

CANBERRA – Three crewmembers of a Royal Australian Navy (RAN) MH-60R Seahawk helicopter are safe after ditching their helicopter in the Philippine Sea during a routine flight overnight, the Australian Department of Defence said in an Oct. 14 release.

The aircraft was operating from HMAS Brisbane as part of a regional presence deployment with HMAS Warramunga, when the crew conducted an emergency landing in the water.

HMAS Brisbane deployed sea boats and rescued the crew approximately 20 minutes later. The crew received first aid for minor injuries upon their return to HMAS Brisbane.

Commander of the Australian Fleet, Rear Adm. Mark Hammond, commended the crews of both ships involved for their quick response to the emergency.

“The successful rescue is credit to the devotion to duty and skill of the officers and sailors of HMAS Brisbane,” Hammond said. “Their immediate actions ensured the survival of the aircrew, validating the significant training undertaken in the event an emergency of this nature occurs.”

Both ships continue to search the area for any debris, which will aid in determining the cause of the incident.

“With the aircrew safe, investigating the circumstances that

led to the helicopter ditching is the priority at the moment," Hammond said. "As a precaution, we have temporarily paused flying operations of the MH-60R Seahawk fleet."

The Department of Defence is reviewing the impact of the incident on Brisbane's and Warramunga's current deployment. Australia is planning on procuring 12 MH-60Rs to supplement the 24 already procured and delivered by 2016.