

Drugs on duty: Australian Defence Force's hidden drug culture exposed

Bryan Seymour
[7News](#) 22 November 2017

EXCLUSIVE: A 7 News investigation has uncovered more than 120 cases involving illegal drugs in the Australian Defence Force; happening on shore, at sea and even while on duty.

While the introduction of random and targeted testing appears to have reduced the use of illicit and prohibited substances, it does still occur - from soldiers selling medals for ice and personnel associating with outlaw bkie gangs.

Epidemiologist Dr Brian O’Toole has studied the long term impact on Vietnam Veterans of substance abuse and PTSD. He said, unlike the United States and the United Kingdom, the “Australian Defence Department hasn’t published any of the information publicly of drug use within military”.



Cases of drugs and illicit substance use were reported in all arms of the Australian Defence Force. Source: 7 News

By using Freedom of Information – [7 News](#) has uncovered 400 pages detailing investigations at Defence bases across the country and overseas.

The documents revealed 126 cases investigated between October 2015 and July this year, with most of the breaches occurring in 2016.

They include Army, Airforce and Navy installations, including ships on deployment.



A range of substances were recorded in the breaches uncovered by 7 News through a Freedom of Information request. Source: 7 News



There were 126 breaches across the ADF over the past two years. Source: 7 News

Australian Defence Association's Executive Director Neil James says the ADF drug testing program appears to be working, despite the documents revealing cases involving ice, speed, ecstasy, cocaine, flakka (bath salts), steroids, ketamine and other prohibited supplements.

"Mainly because they know they'll be caught and they stop using it or the ones who continue to use it you discharge, and just as in other industries, the Defence Force has found it pretty useful," Mr James said of the drug testing policy.

"The ADF is recruited from the society at large, and so you'll get the same social problems and the same tragedies as you get outside."

Hidden drug culture exposed

In June, NT Police raided an ice dealer's home and found war medals from a soldier who admitted trading them for drugs. He finished rehab and was discharged.

In February 2016, an ADF member was discharged after he held a three-day party at his home where someone fell from a balcony.



Source: 7 News



Source: 7 News

Police also found drugs and affiliates of bikie gangs there.

In April 2016, a soldier stationed at an overseas base posted 180 tablets containing prohibited supplement Yohimbe to his spouse in Sydney



Leading Seaman Cameron Acreman, HMAS Darwin, passed away on shore leave in Oman in 2016.

Source: Facebook

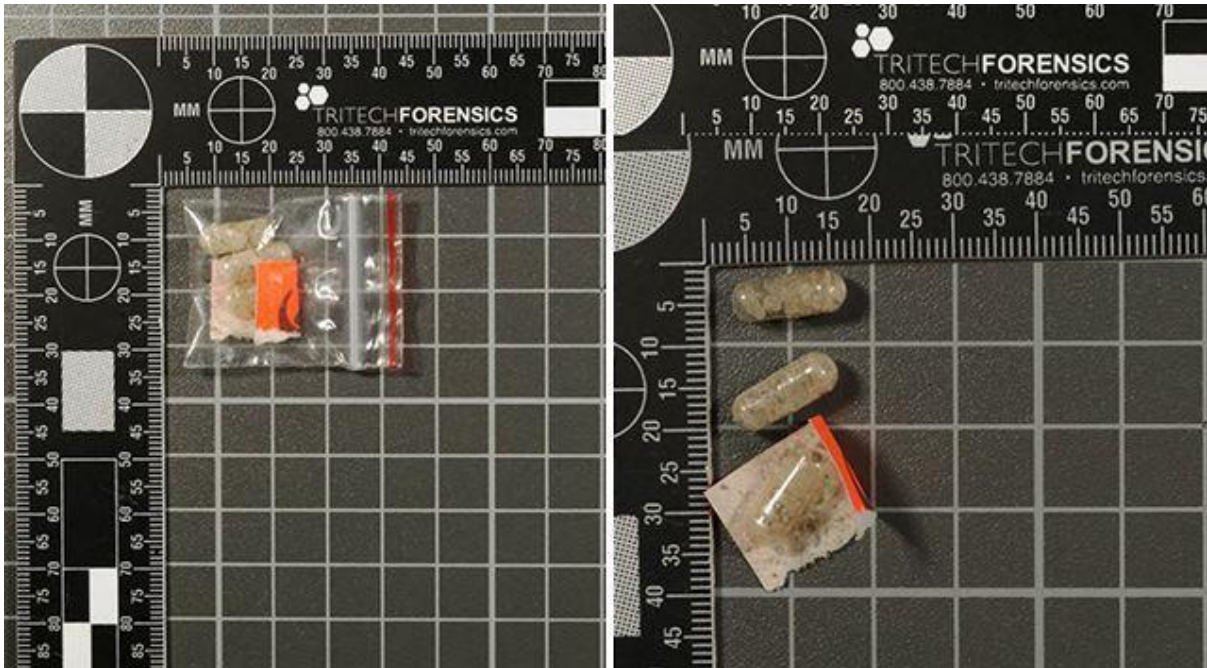
Serial 46



The prohibited substance Yohimbe was intercepted after being posted to a spouse. Source: 7 News

In December 2016, two sailors took unidentified drugs at the Leuwin Barracks near Perth and were hospitalised. They were fined \$2500.

Only a handful of these cases were reported in the media.



Ecstasy uncovered at Holsworthy Army Barracks. Source: 7 News

Leading Seaman Cameron Acreman's death in Oman was reported in June 2016 while the sailor was stationed aboard HMAS Darwin.

Seven News can now reveal the 27-year-old was found unconscious in a room at the Shangri-La Hotel in Muscat after reportedly taking a locally-sourced substance.

Extensive witness statements were completely redacted.



Source: 7 News



Source: 7 News

One of the documents uncovered also revealed just how keen Australian Defence is to avoid public scrutiny.

When one ADF member from HMAS Kuttabul pleaded guilty in December 2015 to possessing the drug "flakka", an official wrote "there was no media in court, however there was mention of Defence".

A Defence Spokesperson gave this statement to 7 News:

Defence does not tolerate unlawful or criminal activity; or individuals who engage, promote or espouse behaviors (sic) that are inconsistent with Defence Values.

This includes the possession, use or supply of prohibited substances.

At least 25 per cent of Defence members are tested annually under the Defence Prohibited Substance Testing Program.

Between 1 July 2015 and 31 June 2017, 41,136 ADF members were tested under the ADF prohibited substance testing program for prohibited substance use with 0.56 per cent returning a laboratory confirmed positive result.

Tests are conducted both randomly and on a targeted basis, this can result in a member being tested more than once in a financial year.

Use of prohibited substances is incompatible with an effective and efficient Defence Force as it can undermine health, safety, discipline, morale, security and reputation.

Urine testing remains the routine method for testing as it is robust, detects a broad range of drugs, has a large detection window (one day to four weeks post-drug use), is cost effective, easy to conduct, legally defensible and acts as a strong deterrent.

Urine testing is consistent with industry best practice and research by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre.

However, in an effort to further strengthen the ADF's prohibited substance testing, a trial of hair and saliva testing commenced on 1 October 2017 and will continue until 31 July 2018. As part of the trial, each service will conduct 50 hair and 500 saliva tests for prohibited substances.

This is in addition to the minimum 25 per cent urine tests.

Hair and saliva testing methods are being used in conjunction with urine testing to provide a further deterrent and indicator of prohibited substance use.

The results of the trial will be examined by Defence to determine if these methods have an improved deterrence value and whether they add to the detection of prohibited substance use by Australian Defence Force members.

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/7-news-investigation-reveals-rampant-drug-use-in-defence-force-37967627.html>