

The Telegraph

Australian naval base raided over drug trafficking claims

Australian officials investigating claims that navy personnel are operating a drug trafficking ring in Sydney have discovered a range of illegal drugs during raids on a large naval base.



Garden Island is the largest naval base on the Australian east coast and can host up to 6,000 sailors at a time Photo: ALAMY



By [Bonnie Malkin](#), Sydney

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The raids, which were carried out by Australian Defence Force (ADF) and state police, were prompted by reports that sailors were selling drugs from the Garden Island naval base on Sydney Harbour, which is located close to the notorious Kings Cross nightlife district.

"A range of substances and other items were seized and a number of defence personnel were tested for prohibited substance use," the ADF said in a statement.

"It is too early in the investigation to confirm the nature of all of the substances seized to date, though it can be confirmed that steroids were found."

The investigation came after it was reported that dozens of sailors could be involved in the trafficking ring, which had the potential to become one of the military's worst drug scandals.

Garden Island is the largest naval base on the Australian east coast and can host up to 6,000 sailors at a time.

One unnamed source said that the ring had been involved in drug sales to young tourists in the area. Kings Cross is a favourite destination for international backpackers, who congregate at pubs and youth hostels in the gritty inner city suburb that is packed with brothels and 24-hour bars and has a reputation as the unofficial headquarters for the city's drug dealers.

The incident is not the first time the country's military personnel have been linked to drugs.

Despite a zero tolerance policy, the defence force announced in June that nearly 600 personnel had been caught taking illegal substances, including steroids, in the past five years.

The figures were released after an [Australian](#) commando was airlifted out of Afghanistan for treatment after a drug overdose.

In 2003 and 2004, investigators raided army barracks in Queensland and the Northern Territory following allegations of widespread drug use.

The raids will further dent the reputation of Australian navy personnel, which was deeply damaged earlier this year when it emerged that a group of male sailors had run a "sex ledger" aboard the ship HMAS Success while it was deployed to Singapore.

An inquiry heard that a dollar value had been placed on the head of each female crew member and male sailors would compete to see how many women they could sleep with. There were also reports of sexual assaults on the ship.

Kevin Rudd, prime minister at the time, said reports of behaviour onboard the ship was "disturbing" and several sailors were removed from duty over allegations of misconduct.

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