**ARMY in WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**An Analysis of Soldier   
“Numbers” in WA”**

**Opening Statement**

Governments and ADF Leaders since the end of WW2 have made no headway or senses in decision making to establish an ARMY that encompasses, protects and supports the whole of Australia.

**Introduction**

The objective of this paper is to highlight and bring attention to the fact that Western Australia has a very tiny ARMY presence.

This is even more so in the North West of WA, which has near to none.

Western Australia and particularly the North West has an incredible proportion of Australia’s mineral and resourses wealth but does not have an oppropriate level of security that it properly needs.

With coming explosion of companies involved in the Critical Minerals sector, far more focus needs to be on the security of these mining areas and processing facilities and infrastructure.

There is a plethora of documents which cover all manner of categories, relevance and status in regard to our ADF and ARMY which have been produced over the past six to eight decades...

However across all this time and all these documents there has been no achievement, increase or change in the strength and capability of our ADF and ARMY to have the capacity to provide Security and Defence of the entire country.

**Northern Australia**

The protection, surveillance and securityof Australia whole Northern Region falls to the activities and roll of the **RFSG -** **Regional Force Surveillance Group**

The RFSU was formally established on 4 October 2018 to command the [Australian Army Reserve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Army_Reserve)'s three [Regional Force Surveillance Units](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional_Force_Surveillance_Units) and a training unit. The RFSG forms part of the [2nd Division](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Division_(Australia)).

The RFSG is tasked "to provide a littoral surveillance and reconnaissance capability in Australia's north and northwest in order to support whole-of-government efforts to maintain national sovereignty and border security” The three Regional Force Surveillance Units conduct operational patrols as part of [Operation Resolute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Resolute).

Upon formation, the Regional Force Surveillance Group comprised:

* Group Headquarters located at [Larrakeyah Barracks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larrakeyah_Barracks) in [Darwin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darwin,_Northern_Territory)
* [NORFORCE](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NORFORCE) (responsible for the [Northern Territory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Territory) and [Kimberley region of Western Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kimberley_region_of_Western_Australia))
* [The Pilbara Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilbara_Regiment) (responsible for the Pilbara region of [Western Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Australia))
* [51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Far_North_Queensland_Regiment) (responsible for [North Queensland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queensland))
* [Indigenous Development Wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Indigenous_Development_Wing&action=edit&redlink=1" \o "Indigenous Development Wing (page does not exist))

The Group headquarters provides a single formation headquarters to formalize command and control arrangements and knowledge sharing between the three units.

The Indigenous Development Wing is responsible for delivering key training programs to [Indigenous Australian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_Australian) soldiers across the Army and running the Regional Force Surveillance Group Education and Development Course. It was also established on 4 October 2018.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional_Force_Surveillance_Group#cite_note-Power_of_three-3)

**NORFORCE (Overall / Total)**

The NORFORCE (North-West Mobile Force) is an [infantry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infantry) [regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regiment) of the [Australian Army Reserve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Army_Reserve). Formed in 1981, the regiment is one of three [Regional Force Surveillance Units](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional_Force_Surveillance_Units) (RFSUs) employed in surveillance and reconnaissance of the remote areas of [Northern Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Australia). It consists of a regimental headquarters, four surveillance squadrons, and an operational support squadron and training squadron.

NORFORCE Area of Operations

The regiment is now a fully integrated unit consisting of a cadre of about 65 regular personnel supporting 435 Reservists. Regimental Headquarters is at Larrakeyah Barracks in Darwin, while its [area of operation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Area_of_operation) (AO) covers 1.8 million square kilometres, encompassing the entire Northern Territory and the Kimberley region of Western Australia; the largest of any military unit in the world today. An operational support squadron and training squadron are also based in Darwin. Borrowing the concept of different "skin" groups to differentiate clans, members of NORFORCE are also known as "Green skins". The primary role of the regiment is reconnaissance, observation and the collection of military intelligence. In the unlikely event of an invasion of northern Australia, NORFORCE and the other RFSUs would operate in a "[stay-behind](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stay-behind)" capacity. Sixty percent of NORFORCE personnel are Aboriginal soldiers, drawn mainly from the area they patrol to draw on local knowledge this has resulted in great trust for the regiment among Aboriginal communities. Patrols can be inserted and extracted from the area of operations by small boat, airlifted by helicopter or light aircraft, drive in using a range of vehicles, or on foot. Due to their operational role the RFSUs have a high priority for allocation of equipment. Equipment includes [F-88 Steyr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F88_Austeyr) rifles, [F-89 Minimi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FN_Minimi) light support weapons, [MAG 58 machine-guns](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FN_MAG), grenades, [M18-A1 Claymore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M18_Claymore_mine) anti-personnel mines, Raven radios, specialised binoculars and telescopes, night vision equipment, cameras and advanced GPS satellite navigation systems. Vehicles include a variant of the [Land Rover Perentie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_Rover_Perentie) known the Regional Forces Surveillance Vehicle (RFSV), motorcycles, [Zodiac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zodiac) inflatable boats, and aluminum boats.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NORFORCE#cite_note-FOOTNOTERosenzweig200174–78-15) In the future the RFSVs will be replaced by Mercedes-Benz [G-Wagon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G-Wagon) 6×6 Surveillance Reconnaissance Vehicles (SRV).[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NORFORCE#cite_note-16)

**North West of Western Australia**

So now let us now set out what, who and how many are in the NW of WA:

* 1. **NORFORCE** [Kimberley region of Western Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kimberley_region_of_Western_Australia)) based in Broome

There are no specific troop numbers available because that is part of the overall deception of the ADF Command to keep the posture up and the truth away from the public. But simply logic based on the overall numbers stated above (65 Reg and 435 Res) would suggest something in the order of thirty (30) Soldiers maximum would be in the Broome location

The area of the Kimberley Region which is the Operational Area is 423,517 Km2, which equates to 14,117 Km2 per Soldier to cover or be responsible to watch over.

* 1. **Pilbara Regiment**

[The Pilbara Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilbara_Regiment) (responsible for the Pilbara region of [Western Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Australia)) based and HQ in Karartha

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the need for a military presence in the north was recognised, with an integrated land, sea and air surveillance network developed in response. Part of this involved the raising of reserve infantry units that would act as "eyes and ears" in the north.

The Pilbara Regiment was raised for operations in the [Pilbara](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilbara) region of north-west Australia, whilst others were raised in the Northern Territory and Far North Queensland. The regiment was originally formed as a [company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Company_(military_unit)) on 26 January 1982, as the 5th Independent Rifle Company, The Pilbara Regiment, under Major David Hudson. It was subsequently redesignated as a full regiment in 1985.

Today the regiment's mission is: "To provide the Australian Army with information by conducting surveillance operations to contribute to an effective Australian Defence Force surveillance network in the North West of Australia .

The PilbaraRegiment is therefore responsible for the entire Pilbara Region which is about 180,00 Km2 . This area is from [Port Hedland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Hedland,_Western_Australia) to Geraldton in WA from the coast to the border with the [Northern Territory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Territory).

A detailed knowledge of its Area of Operations is maintained by conducting [reconnaissance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconnaissance) patrols by foot, vehicle and watercraft; [surveillance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surveillance) from static observation posts; and by systematic communication and liaison with police, customs, other regional authorities, and with local landowners

On 4 October 2018, all three RFSUs were grouped together as part of a new formation headquarters, the [Regional Force Surveillance Group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional_Force_Surveillance_Group). The new formation came into being at a parade held at [Larrakeyah Barracks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larrakeyah_Barracks) in Darwin.

As at 2017, The Pilbara Regiment comprised three squadrons, a regimental headquarters and two support squadrons. The regiment's sub-units are:

* Regimental Headquarters
* 1 Squadron
* 2 Squadron
* 3 Squadron
* Training Support Squadron
* Operational Support Squadron

The Regimental Headquarters is located in the town of [Karratha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karratha,_Western_Australia) and most other elements of the regiment are spread across the Pilbara region. 3 Squadron is located in [Perth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perth,_Western_Australia).

Again there are no specific troop numbers available because that is part of the overall deception of the ADF Command to keep the posture up and the truth away from the public.

However again logic will tell that the difference between the overall original numbers of about **250** when the Pilbara Regiment was started in the 1970’s when enthusiasm and support in the region was at an all-time high and now is a very different story.

Interest, support and engagement in the outer locations and towns are at a very low level and are in affect nonexistent compared to the original days. Most of the mining towns units have been abandoned or disbanded.

In the absence of any advice readily available or forth coming from the ARMY and/or 13 Brigade, my assessment would generously put the total number around **155** Soldiers.

Therefore TOTAL NUMBER of FEET ON THE GROUND SOLDIERS in the:

**NORTH WEST**

Kimberley’s (Broome) 30

Pilbara (Karratha) 155

**TOTAL 185**

**At this very moment the Structure and Strength of the ARMY protecting the**

**North** **West of WA is 185 Soldiers, made up of principally 90% Reserve**

**Soldiers, of which 60 - 90% are Indigenous Soldiers .**

**Operational Area is (Pilbara and Kimberley ) 603,517 Km2, which equates to**

**3,263Km2 per Soldier to cover and be responsible to watch over.**

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**South West of Western Australia**

The majority of the Tiny Army in WA is centred in the PERTH area and some major towns in the South West corner of WA.

|  |
| --- |
| The majority of Australian Army Reserve units are under the command of the |
| 2nd Division in six state-based brigades. |
| In WA 2nd Division, comprises the 13 Brigade, of which is made of the units as  Set out here under. |

**13th Brigade - HQ Karrakatta Western Australia**

As quoted by BRIGADIER Peter Moore in WA Defence Review interview on 17th October 2020, the total manpower of 13 Brigade is a little over one thousand, consisting of **100 Permanent** Soldiers, **900 Reserve** Soldiers and 25 Public Servants

In the absence of any other source to establish overall Army manpower in WA, this information from BRIG Peter Moore has been taken as complete. And those units not included have had numbers suggested based on intuition.

Note: Unit names, locations, and numbers throughout WA, has been requested through the FOI process but this has been denied and is currently at External Review stage

A’ Sqn. 10th Light Horse

11/28 Battalion RWAR

16 Battalion RWAR

13 Field Squadron RAE

109 Signals Squadron

13 Combat Services Support Battalion

Regional Towns that are **SAID** to have some component (ie: section, platoon, troop, squad) associated and/or part of the main units based at Karrakatta are listed below:

Albany – 2 Platoon A Company 11/28 Battalion RWAR

Bunbury –1 Platoon A Company 11/28 Battalion RWAR

Geraldton - UNKNOWN

Joondalup – Platoon attached to 16 Battalion

Kalgoorlie – Platoon attached to 16 Battalion

Rockingham - B Company 11/28 Battalion RWAR

**8th Brigade attached to RMC**

Tertiary Institution Training Unit

Western Australian University Regiment WAUR

As there is no communication with the Army in any regard, knowledge of whether this Unit still exists or not and its strength if it does, is unknown.

For the purpose of this exercise let’s assume this Unit is still in place with say (**100) Soldiers**

**9th Reg. RAA - HQ at Kogarah Barracks, NSW**

3rd Light Battery (HQ) Irwin Barracks.

As there is no communication with the Army in any regard, knowledge of whether this Unit still exists or not and its strength if it does, is unknown.

For the purpose of this exercise let’s assume this Unit is still in place with say (**25)**

**Soldiers**

**SASR - HQ at Campbell Barracks, Swanbourne WA**

Special Air Services Regiment

Please Note:

1. Real or actual strength is undisclosed.
2. Special Forces are not normally included in any count as just Permanent Soldiers but for this situation to be seen as being an unbiased accessor their numbers will be recorded as say **700 max** In Campbell Barracks at any one time

Therefore TOTAL NUMBER of FEET ON THE GROUND SOLDIERS in the:

**SOUTH WEST**

13 Brigade (Karakatta) 1000

8th Brigade (Fremantle) 100

9th Reg. RAA (Karakatta) 25

SASR (Swanbourne) 700

**TOTAL 1825**

**TOATAL SOLDIER NUMBERS IN THE WHOLE OF WA**

Summary of all Feet on the Ground Soldiers in WA is as follows:

**NORTH WEST** 185

**SOUTH WEST** 1825

**TOTAL 2010**

Area of operation being the whole of WA which is 2,527,013 Km2 being 1/3 or 32.9 % of Australia) which equates to 1,257 Km2 per Soldier

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