



**Australian
BORDER FORCE**

Senator Alex Gallacher
Chair
Select Committee on the recent allegations relating to conditions
and circumstances at the Regional Processing Centre in Nauru
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Gallacher

Allegations of claims of mistreatment of asylum seekers and their possessions by the Royal Australian Navy

In the absence of specificity of these allegations in Submission 100 (Name Withheld) the Department of Immigration and Border Protection is unable to specifically investigate the claim.

Previous inquiries into similar allegations of mistreatment by personnel from the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Customs & Border Protection Service (now the Australian Border Force) have been proven to be unsubstantiated.

Officers of the Australian Border Force and the Australian Defence Force are trained to conduct themselves in a humane and considerate manner with respect for the needs of all persons aboard their vessels. This includes the provision of medical care where required.

The safety and wellbeing of all persons involved in Operation Sovereign Borders activities is paramount. Strict procedures are followed by all personnel engaged in Operation Sovereign Borders on-water operations to ensure that people and their possessions are appropriately dealt with and accounted for. To the extent practicable and safe to do so, all efforts are made to repatriate people with their belongings at the conclusion of the on-water phase of any operation. Personnel engaged in on water operations adopt an ethical approach to the conduct of these operations in difficult and often dangerous conditions, regularly made more dangerous by the unseaworthy vessels used by people smugglers.

Should specific allegations be known to the Committee at any time, the Department would appreciate advice which would allow the claim to be investigated.

As with previous responses to the Inquiry the Department proposes to publish this response on its website.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Bottrell, CSC and Bar, DSM
Major General
Commander Joint Agency Task Force
Operation Sovereign Borders
31 August 2015