Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Traumatic events, other operational stressors and physical and mental health reported by Australian Defence Force personnel following peace-keeping and war-like deployments

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 15 November 2011

**Reviewer:** Margaret Jones

**Reviewer’s report:**

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. State how many of the personnel deployed to Bougainville also deployed to East Timor. This is an important omission from the paper.

2. Please give more detail of results to support the statement that both groups reported being less affected by deployment experiences now than at the time of the event (not just a p value). Similarly for PTSD and psychological distress can number of cases be reported please for each deployment?

3. In the discussion modify the sentence that states “although the level of traumatic exposure was different, the association between level of exposure and scores on PCL, K10 and number of symptoms was consistent in both groups” to not include K10 for the Bougainville group.

Minor Essential Revisions

4. A very minor point - Is it peace-keeping (as in title) or peacekeeping (as elsewhere in paper)?

5. Check the sample size for the East Timor group - is it 4002 (in Method) or 3999 as in Table 2?

6. PCA: state which were the two items removed from subsequent analysis.

Discretionary Revisions

7. What was the period of recruitment – start and end date?

8. State in the methods that for the Traumatic Stress Exposure Scale the items were dichotomized before being summed.

9. Please explain why the 12 events of the Traumatic Stress Exposure Scale were dichotomized into never/ever whereas (factor) scores are used for the non traumatic exposures.

10. Using the same categories for traumatic exposures in the two deployments would aid comparison – is this possible?

11. In the second paragraph of the Results – presumably the second sentence should read something like: “Each traumatic event was reported with higher frequency in the East Timor group with the exception of ....”

12. Table 3 eliminate the never columns to make it easier to compare the
frequencies of exposures between the two operations.

13. Table 4 I recommend removing the factor loadings from the table and reporting the non traumatic stressors in the same way as the traumatic stressors in Table 3 giving the number as well as %, grouping the stressors by the 4 factors.

14. Tables 5 and 6 I would recommend removing the results for General Health and just refer to these results in the narrative. The column of results for Symptoms quotes Ratio of means – I am not familiar with this way of expressing the results of negative binomial regression – should this be a Rate Ratio (IRR in stata)?

More detailed comments attached below

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests