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MP to seek assurances on US bombing safety

The practice range to be used by US strategic bombers is about 130 kilometres from Katherine and the town’s residents would be unlikely to even know when the bombs exploded, according to the Member for Katherine Mrs Fay Miller.

But Mrs Miller said she would ask her Federal colleague Senator Nigel Scullion to get a full briefing from the Defence Minister to ensure all safety concerns by Katherine residents were fulfilled.

Last week it was announced that long-range US B-52, B-1 and B-2 Stealth bombers would use the 211,000 hectare Delamere range to drop live bombs. The range is already used by the Australian air force and air forces of other nations involved in multinational exercises.

“Defence is a very important part of the Katherine community,” Mrs Miller said. “The Tindal air force base is not only essential to Australia’s security but it provides a very big contribution to the Katherine and Territory economy.

“Our alliance with the United States is crucial and desirable in these difficult – and in some instances – dangerous times.

“In a perfect world no-one would want to see live bombs dropped anywhere. But this is not a perfect world and Australia gains enormously from its defence alliance with the US.

“Obviously, my primary concern is for the safety of the people of Katherine and Territorians in general.

“I will be speaking with Senator Scullion and we will seek assurances from the Federal Government that all possible precautions are taken with regard to the safety of Territory citizens.”