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THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

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Issue 15 – September 2007

## CONTACT

AIR, LAND & SEA



### Cover Story

Private Thomas Whish-Wilson, of Darwin, takes aim during a training exercise at Camp Terendak, Iraq.  
**Story page 38**

Pic by Leading Seaman Phillip Cullinan

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Authors and photographers may submit articles and high-quality photos for consideration for publication, however, the editor accepts no responsibility for any material submitted and does not undertake to publish all submissions. Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope if material is to be returned.

**O**n 23 November 1948, three Australian battalions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF were regimented to form the Australian Regiment – Australia's first ever standing regular infantry units. Less than a year later the regiment received the 'Royal' prefix. Since that time, the battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment have acquitted themselves with distinction in several conflicts, policing actions, peacekeeping missions and exercises around the world.

In 2008, the regiment celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. While the battalions, the regiment and regiment associations are undoubtedly planning massive celebrations, CONTACT is also planning to mark the anniversary through the publication of a special, one-off, extra issue of CONTACT magazine.

To that end, I call on members and former members of the RAR, of all ranks, to express an interest in writing stories of various lengths and to supply supporting original photos. Or, you can tell your story in an interview and let us do the writing.

It is our desire to cover each of the major missions of the RAR and to cover each of the current and former battalions.

We invite prospective authors or storytellers to first contact the editor, Brian Hartigan, on 0408 496 664 (or send an email to [editor@militarycontact.com](mailto:editor@militarycontact.com)) to discuss editorial and technical requirements.

Major General Michael Jeffery, Governor General of Australia, will write the Foreword for this publication. Ten per cent of all profits will be donated to Legacy.

#### Terms and conditions

We envisage that stories can be of various lengths between 300 to 3000 words. They should be personal accounts of single incidents or whole campaigns. They can be serious or humorous. Our current, long-running Somalia series is a very good guide to the desired style and tone. Not all stories will be published. Submissions will be considered on merit. The best stories will be published in the magazine, while other good stories may be published on our web site. All submissions must be in electronic format – call the editor to discuss technical requirements. Ten per cent of all profit from this publication will be donated to Legacy. No fee will be paid for submissions whether published or not (other non-monetary rewards will be announced later).

Brian Hartigan  
Managing Editor



PIC BY ASHLEY ROACH – FULLFRAME PHOTOGRAPHICS

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## INCOMING

### ON TARGET...

Our star letter writer wins a 3ltr Hydrapak worth \$115, from **Cool Kit Australia** - visit [www.coolkit.com.au](http://www.coolkit.com.au)

**C**ONTACT is an awesome magazine. I've been reading it for a while and, because of its informative style, I have learnt heaps about the Defence Forces. The knowledge I now have about the Army, its deployments and the lifestyle helped me to decide that the Army would be a fantastic career. Also, the knowledge I have gained from reading CONTACT has helped me get a job offer from the Army as a fulltime rifleman. Training starts in December, soon after I finish my HSC. I can't f\*#king wait. Great mag, great articles, good stuff.

**Aaron T**



### FIRE SUPPORT...

**J**ust wondering if you caught the news this morning? I think it was Channel 10, although I tend to flick channels while I get ready for work at 6am. It was a story about Telstra internet/broadband. I wasn't paying much attention until there was a shot of a computer. Lo and behold the website which popped up on the monitor was none other than CONTACT. Sorry I can't remember the details, but there you go, you made it on TV!

I hope things are going well with the mag. Although I've still only had time to read some of the new one, it is, in my humble opinion, one of the best. I wish there was more of it (hint, hint). I hope more advertisers come on board to make a larger CONTACT possible.

Keep up the good work.  
**Jesse H**

**N**ice edition! I especially liked your rumours and opinionated follow-up to your Iraq and Afghanistan trip. I don't know about you, but I find it really interesting hearing what other military forces think of our guys, and it's just a pity you couldn't milk more of that out of the yanks. But the story you did give about our special-forces guys being happy to take the task they did, made me feel warm inside.

That was a bummer about the camera confiscation incident, but it's good to hear you did what any photographer should do with the flash card!

I love your front cover photo, and I reckon there were a number of elements that made that

photograph work, as you would undoubtedly know, having taken it. Without a doubt, having an Aussie artillery guy checking out the foreigner's piece is very topical, and, if I may go on about it even further, I think the expressions on the soldiers' faces makes our guy stand out as very calm, content, and friendly, in contrast to the Dutch guy!

**Shannon J**

**A**s a former New Zealand infantry soldier, I have tremendously enjoyed your magazine, buying every issue since day one. I do, however, miss the articles in your first few issues that focused on specialised roles within the ADF. These included the 4RAR Commando, Navy Clearance Divers and Boarding Party/Boatswain Mate articles that talked about their roles, equipment and training.

As a former NZ soldier who had almost nothing to do with the mechanised role, I would especially like to hear about the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> RAR. Being that these two units have just de-linked, I think it would be an excellent opportunity to talk about what these units do and how they operate. Not only would this interest older soldiers such as myself, but also the younger generation, eager to learn about their Defence Force and a future within it.

Keep up the good work guys.  
**Daniel S**

### FRIENDLY FIRE...

**I** am a cadet corporal in the Australian Army Cadets and when I first started to buy CONTACT last year, I could not put it down and I could hardly wait for the next issue. Your magazine has really encouraged me to think more about joining the Australian Defence Force and doing my bit for our wonderful country. Thanks for making the magazine so interesting and informative at the same time.

**Jean O**

**G**'day. My name is James and I'm an Australian Army Cadet for the forth year running. CONTACT is the only media I read and, being a cadet, I have great interest in the military. I have travelled to Singapore through cadets and also been in the winning Chief of Army Challenge, South Queensland. I am very proud of my service and you do very well to make myself and others proud of the ADF. Cheers.

**James V**

**E**ver since I was a kid I have always wanted to be in the Defence Force. Now, at 14-years-of-age, I have just joined the cadets (211ACU). I'm glad I made the choice to join. I have learnt a huge amount of new skills as well as made a lot of new friends.

Anyway, thanks for making this magazine. Keep up the good work.

**James J**

Please keep your letters short and to the point, to fit more in. The Editor reserves the right to abbreviate and otherwise edit letters for any reason, including to make them fit.

Subscribe free at [www.aussiecombat.com](http://www.aussiecombat.com)



Recruit Ross Djolpa, Raminging Community, is advised on arcs of fire by senior NORFORCE soldier Private Richard Namarini, during a night patrol at Kangaroo Flats Training Area near Darwin

# MENTORS

PICS GUNNER SHANNON JOYCE

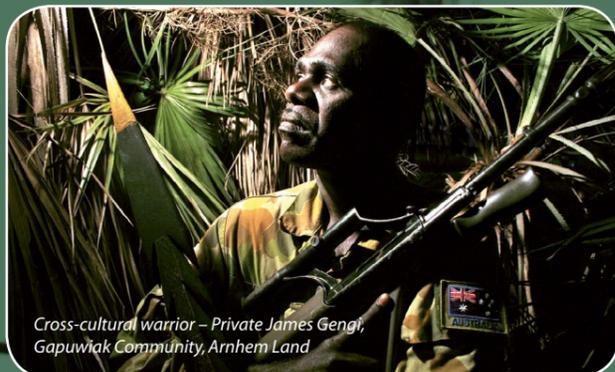
**E**xperienced NORFORCE mentors assisted with the training of 17 recruits from various communities across the Northern Territory, on an Army Reserve Induction Course, in May.

Mentors often attend induction courses to support younger indigenous recruits who might find adjusting to the military family difficult.

All NORFORCE soldiers can speak English, but as it is often not their first language, mentors translate certain words or offer alternate explanations on unfamiliar processes.

Army Reserve recruits attending this induction course traveled from remote communities to learn basic soldiering skills such as handling the F88 Steyr rifle and radio communication procedures.

Indigenous patrolmen have varying levels of bush-survival and tracking skills that do not originate from their military training, but are highly sought by patrol commanders to achieve tasks set down by Border Protection Command in a land that changes by the season.



Cross-cultural warrior – Private James Gengi, Gapuwiyak Community, Arnhem Land



Private Richard Namarini, Raminging Community, Arnhem Land. In his civilian job, Richard works as a bush mechanic, fixing community vehicles in a region where spare parts are not easy to come by.



Sub Lieutenant Sid Raper in a leased AW109E.



Two AW109Es destined for Navy training.

PICS BY BRIAN HARTIGAN

## NAVY LEASES TRAINING POWER

Raytheon Australia has delivered what may be a unique and highly innovative capability to the Royal Australian Navy in the guise of three AW109E helicopters for pilot continuation training.

Under the project, which Navy is keen to promote as a skill-retention and motivation initiative, Raytheon will lease the civil-registered helicopters to the RAN for four years.

AW109E is a single-pilot, twin-engine, all-weather helicopter fitted with modern

avionics and capable of conducting day and night operations in multiple roles.

The almost off-the-shelf helicopters will mainly fill the gap between basic training on Squirrel helicopters and the more technologically advanced and systems-loaded Sea Hawk, Sea King and Sea Sprite, taking training pressure off the operational platforms.

Trainees such as Sub Lieutenant Sid Raper, who has just completed 18 months of basic training on the Squirrel and is

about to step across into the AW109E, is typical of the trainees who will benefit from the contract. He will start the next phase of his training in a far less expensive aircraft than, for example, a Sea Hawk, yet have all the benefit of training in a systems-rich 'glass' cockpit.

Raytheon will provide maintenance, engineering and logistic support and project management from its facilities at HMAS Albatross, in Nowra, to 723 Squadron who will command and administer the asset.

## LASER SUCCESS



Airborne Laser – a key US missile defence platform.

PIC BY JIM SHRYNE

The US Missile Defence Agency has taken the Airborne Laser (ABL) concept to an advanced stage after successfully completing a series of tests in June and July.

Initial test of the Surrogate High Energy Laser (SHEL) mounted in the nose of the modified 747-400 freighter successfully found, tracked and engaged the 'Big Crow' target aircraft. Cameras on-board Big Crow verified all laser beams hit their intended locations on the target.

SHEL is a low-power laser used to simulate the characteristics of the high-energy chemical oxygen iodine laser (COIL) that will be installed on ABL later this year.

COIL has completed more than 70 successful firings during ground testing.

ABL will be the first combat aircraft to rely entirely upon a directed-energy device as a weapon. Its laser beam is designed to destroy a ballistic missile shortly after launch, in the boost phase of flight.

In-flight testing of the full-power system against a boosting missile is scheduled for 2009.

When operational, the ABL will be an integral part of America's layered Ballistic Missile Defense System, capable of shooting down targets at infinite line-of-sight ranges, at the speed of light.

## MODULAR ARMOUR OFFERING

A British midlands-based engineering company is offering a unique modular and upgradeable protection package for the protected-patrol-vehicle market.

The steel monocoque design from S. MacNeillie & Son is designed to be mounted on standard Mercedes Unimog chassis and running gear.

Built of high-grade steel, the basic body shell incorporates a spill liner, giving high levels of ballistics and blast protection.

Upgrades include appliqué armour and V-shaped belly plates to mitigate IED threats.

Body width of the basic vehicle has been contained within the track to allow stand-off protection to be carried without excessive overhang.

Wheel and tyre equipment incorporates standard, in-service, run-flat systems.



MACNEILLIE PIC

Unimog-based modular armour from MacNeillie.

## DSTO GOES HYPERSONIC

Australia's Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) has successfully launched one of the world's fastest air-breathing engine experiments.

An experimental scramjet engine was first lifted to an altitude of 530km by rocket before making its speed run on re-entry when it reached speeds of up to Mach 10, approximately 11,000 km per hour. The flight took place at the Woomera Test Facility in South Australia under a collaborative effort between the United States' Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and DSTO.

DSTO scientist Warren Harch said hypersonic propulsion using supersonic combustion ramjet – scramjet – technology offered the possibility of very high speeds and fuel efficiencies.

"This technology has the potential to put numerous defence and civilian aerospace applications within our reach during the next couple of decades," Dr Harch said.

As part of its continuing commitment to a research program in the field, DSTO has signed the \$74 million Hypersonics International Flight Research Experimentation (HiFire) Agreement with the US Air Force, under which up to 10 hypersonic flight experiments are planned for Woomera over the next five years.

Right: A TALOS rocket, carrying the HyCAUSE scramjet experimental payload, launches at Woomera.



PIC BY FLIGHT SERGEANT IAN GOSPER

## US COAST GUARD GETS AUSSIE PILOTS

Four Royal Australian Navy pilots are set to fly with the US Coast Guard on a 'loaner' program agreed between the two services.

The pilots will serve with the Coast Guard for three to four years and will fly HH-60 Jay Hawk and HH-65 Dolphin helicopters.

Rear Admiral David Pekoske, US Coast Guard, said the program would allow the RAN to retain pilots and maintain their skill sets, even without positions for them.

"The agreement with Australia is more of a loan [rather than exchange arrangement]. The Australian pilots will continue to receive their salaries and allowances from the RAN, while training and operations costs will be financed by the Coast Guard," he said.

"It's a win-win situation."

While the RAN pilots will acquire additional skill sets and experience, the Coast Guard gets desperately needed extra pilots in a time of expansion.

All four pilots hail from 723 Squadron based in Nowra, NSW.

Lieutenant Ben Wenban, the first of the Aussie pilots to arrive in the US, said he was settling in quickly to the routine at Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod.

"It's a beautiful area. I don't think I could have come to a nicer place in the United States," he said.

"The weather here is said to be very extreme, however, so combining operational work with the harsh conditions, I think this is going to be a good experience.

"I'm very excited to do search and rescue. It should be extremely challenging but rewarding at the same time."

At Cape Cod, Lieutenant Wenban is likely to participate in search and rescue, homeland security, law enforcement and maritime interdiction missions, as well as some aids-to-navigation work, flying a HH-60 Jay Hawk.



## DEFENCE SHIFT ON ASTHMA

A three-step testing protocol has been introduced by the ADF that will allow people with 'mild intermittent' or 'mild persistent' asthma to enlist.

The move potentially increases the wider ADF recruitment pool by 400,000.

A clinical audit of serving ADF members who enlisted with asthma waivers shows they had displayed minimal use of health services and sick days as a result of their asthma.

## SEA SPRITE EARNS REPRIEVE

Despite mounting rumours and speculation, the Australian Government has not terminated the Sea Sprite project.

Defence Minister Brendan Nelson said that after detailed consideration of the issues involved, the government had decided to continue the project, subject to satisfactory contract arrangements.

"The return to flying will involve a series of controlled steps to assess the contractor's performance, and to ensure Seasprite's safety, reliability and performance," he said.

## TIGER PAYMENTS WITHHELD

Defence exercised rights under the Air 87 Tiger acquisition contract to stop payment to Australian Aerospace on 1 June because a contracted milestone for initial operational capability had not been achieved.

Delays in the Franco/German Tiger program have negatively impacted the development of simulators and Australia-based training needed to achieve the milestone.

Tiger's through-life support contract is unaffected and flying operations for the seven aircraft already delivered are continuing.

## LONG-RANGE RESCUE

A lone yachtsman was winched to safety following a dramatic rescue flight by the Royal Australian Navy in August, 160km north of Lord Howe Island.

A Sea Hawk and Sea King helicopter from HMAS Albatross in Nowra, NSW, supported by an ANZAC Class frigate, covered more than 1500 kilometres during the mission.

The man was successfully winched on board the Sea Hawk and flown to Lord Howe Island. Commodore Ray Griggs, the Deputy Commander Australian Fleet, said the operation showed the flexibility of Navy's ships and aircraft and their ability to be retasked at short notice.

## NAVAL SALUTE

The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) initiated what will become a Naval tradition in June by declaring that all Australian and foreign naval vessels proceeding into Sydney Harbour will render ceremonial honours to the HMAS Sydney I Memorial Mast at Bradley's Head.

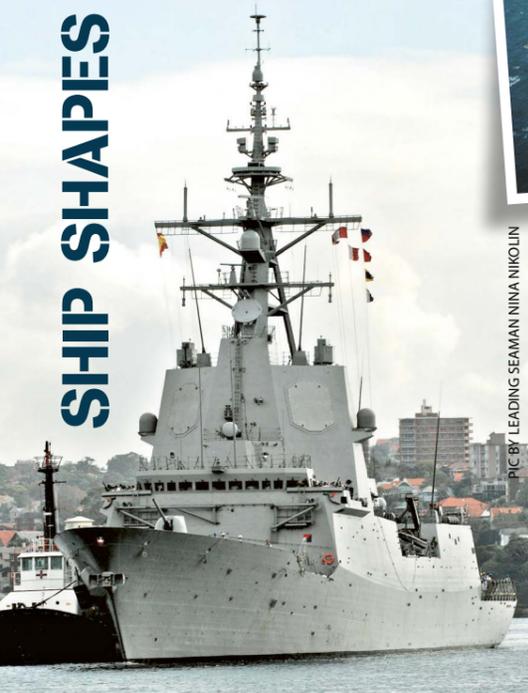
HMAS Sydney I Memorial Mast is considered to be one of Australia's premier naval monuments and a memorial of national significance.

It was removed from Sydney I when she was decommissioned in 1928.

The ceremonial salute will represent a mark of respect and recognition of Australian officers, sailors and ships lost at sea and in combat.

# HEADS UP

## SHIP SHAPES



Above: Navantia's LHD design destined for Royal Australian Navy service.  
Left: F100-class (Alvaro de Bazan pictured) will be Australia's new Air Warfare Destroyer.

The majority of combat-system design and integration will take place in Adelaide, worth up to \$100 million for the South Australia economy.

Three Air Warfare Destroyers, based on an 'Australianised' F100 Design, will cost around \$8 billion to deliver. The first of these will be delivered in 2014, followed by the second and third ships in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

These ships are capable across the full spectrum of joint maritime operations, from area air defence and escort duties, through to peacetime national tasking and diplomatic missions. They represent a quantum leap in air warfare capability for the Royal Australian Navy.

The proven and highly capable Aegis Combat System will be at the core of AWD's capability ensuring that our platforms are fully interoperable with key coalition partners.

AWD will be built in Australia. While Adelaide-based ASC will conduct final assembly, about 70 per cent of the ships' modules will be built at other sites around Australia.

For a detailed description of both new naval capabilities see CONTACT Issue #3 for LHD and Issue #12 for AWD.

### Spain proved to be the big winner recently when both the Air Warfare Destroyer (AWD) and the Landing Helicopter Dock (LHD) projects fell to Spanish-designed platforms.

Subject to successful contract negotiations, Tenix has won preferred-tenderer status to supply two Navantia-designed LHDs, while the AWD Alliance (Defence Materiel Organisation, Australian Submarine Corporation and Raytheon Australia) have won the contract to deliver the Navantia-designed F100 as the next generation AWD platform.

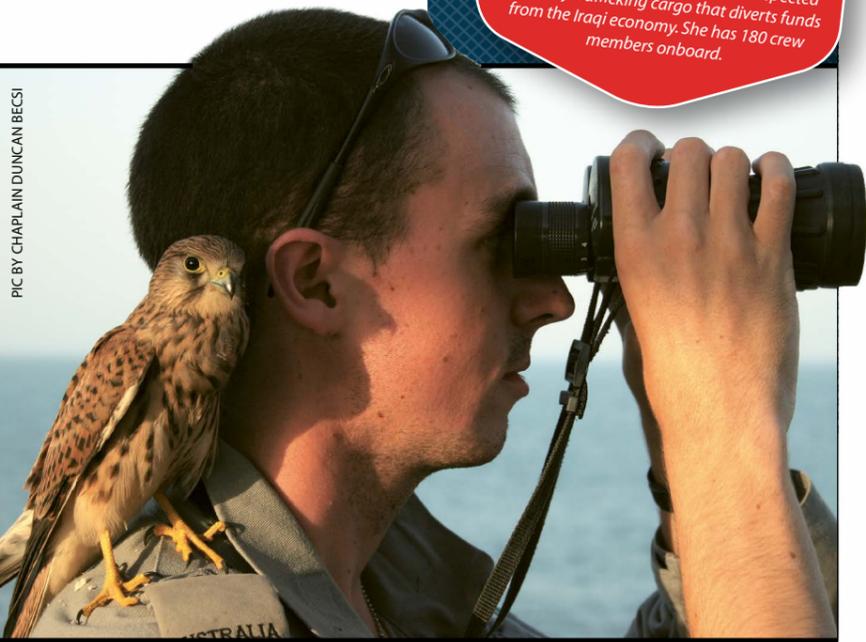
LHD, at a cost of approximately \$3 billion, will greatly enhance Australia's ability to deploy forces in strength when needed or to provide assistance in time of natural disaster.

With integrated helicopters and watercraft, the ships are capable of landing more than 1200 personnel each, along with their vehicles, including Abrams tanks, artillery and supplies.

Each ship will also be equipped with medical facilities, including two operating theatres and a hospital ward.

Under the terms of the Tenix proposal, the ships will be partially built overseas with a high degree of Australian fitout. Much of the combat and communications systems integration and installation - the 'smart stuff' - will be done by Australian industry.

Construction of the superstructure and the majority of the fitout will be done in Melbourne, with an estimated value of up to \$500 million.



PIC BY CHAPLAIN DUNCAN BECSI

## NEW TANKER FLYING

The first of the RAAF's new-generation A330 Multi Role Tanker Transport aircraft (MRTT) has had its first flight following completion of structural modifications in Madrid, Spain, marking the end of the first phase of transformations to install military systems into the commercial A330 aircraft.

Two under-wing aerial refueling pods, a fuselage-mounted refueling boom, military communications, data link, navigation, identification, mission planning and electronic warfare self-protection equipment will be fitted to the first aircraft by CASA in Spain before delivery to Australia. The remaining aircraft will be converted by Qantas in Australia.

In addition, QANTAS will provide through-life support for the aircraft under an initial five-year contract signed in February this year.

Australia is the lead customer to develop and test the new advanced refueling boom system and integrated military mission systems.

To be known as the KC-30B in RAAF service, MRTT is a key enabling capability designed to maintain Australia's air-combat superiority in our region.

MRTT will replace the ageing Boeing 707 by 2009.

*Harry the Hawk (actually a Falcon) dropped in to help HMAS Anzac's bridge crew keep lookout during the ship's first patrol in the Northern Persian Gulf in July. The young raptor, believed to be a juvenile female Gyr Falcon, is pictured with Seaman Bosun's Mate Ashley Shirley. HMAS Anzac is protecting Iraq's offshore export oil terminals and monitoring, intercepting and boarding vessels suspected of illegally trafficking cargo that diverts funds from the Iraqi economy. She has 180 crew members onboard.*

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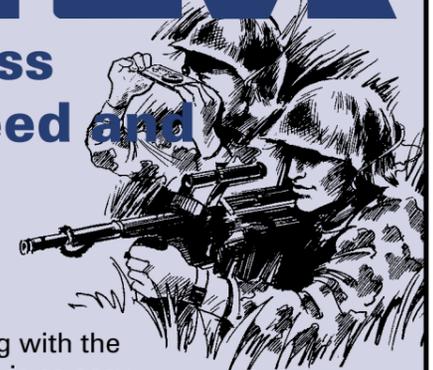
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## ORIONS' DUAL ROLES TESTED

It's been a busy quarter since CONTACT last spoke to the flyers of the 'Fighting Fifth', the Whenuapai-based No 5 Squadron, RNZAF.

In May, CONTACT hopped aboard a P-3K Orion for a spot of low-level bombing above Kaipara Harbour north of Auckland.

Eighteen practice and six MK 82 depth bombs were dropped, allowing aircrew to maintain the skills required to harness the Orion's bombing capability.

Commanding Officer 5 Squadron Wing Commander Logan Cudby said the week of training aimed to ensure pilots and crews could accurately bomb a target if called upon.

"Bomb week practices the critical links between ground-support personnel and air crews to ensure the weapons can be delivered accurately," he said.

"Skills learned through bombing are also transferable to the torpedo, although specific torpedo training is conducted less frequently during exercises in Australia."

The 'dumb bombs' used in this case rely on pilot skill and crew coordination for accuracy.

It wasn't long before some of the Kiwi crews got to put their newly honed bombing skills to the test, with one aircraft participating in an Australian-led maritime-warfare exercise south-east of Sydney in July.

RNZAF Air Component Commander Air Commodore Peter Stockwell said the Orion crew completed about 32 hours of maritime-warfare training during the exercise, honing their skills at sub-surface detection and anti-ship warfare.

"Opportunities to train alongside our closest ally are always welcome and assist us whenever we work together operationally," he said.

"The Orion is a capable peacetime surveillance aircraft, but as a military organisation, it's important we ensure our combat skills are as well honed as our surveillance skills."

Meanwhile, back home, other RNZAF personnel, including another Orion crew,

were responding to a 'state of emergency' declared in the far north on 10 July after the region was hit with a month's worth of rain in one day.

The deluge caused severe flooding to the region, which had just recovered from a "once-in-a-lifetime" flood in March. Several towns and settlements were cut off while winds up to 200km/h hit the Coromandel Peninsula to the south east.

An Orion was sent to carry out photo-reconnaissance to aid in assessing the damage and the level of Civil Defence response required, while a No 3 Sqn Iroquois was dispatched to fly the Prime Minister on an inspection tour. A No 6 Sqn Seasprite was also on standby.

Several members of the local Territorial Force, 3 Battalion, RNZIR, assisted in the evacuation of flooded settlements.



Privates Wade Turnock and Leigh Smith from Townsville-based 1RAR and Signalman Karl O'Connor, 2 Signals Squadron, Palmerston North, New Zealand, pause to read a memorial plaque while patrolling together in Timor Leste.

## PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION

New Zealand's elite and most secretive soldiers stepped out from the shadows for an unprecedented public presentation of the US Presidential Unit Citation in May.

1st New Zealand Special Air Service Group received the award from Defence Minister Phil Goff on behalf of President George W. Bush.

The citation states the award is in recognition of extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in Afghanistan from 17 October 2001 to 30 March 2002.

Former Commanding Officer 1st NZ SAS Group Lieutenant Colonel Peter Kelly originally accepted the award on behalf of the unit from President Bush on 7 December 2004. Approval to wear the award was granted by the Queen in June 2005.

Below: Members of the NZ SAS on parade to receive a US Presidential Unit Citation.



## FAREWELL TO BOSNIA

After 15 years, New Zealand's contribution to peace in Bosnia has come to an end with the return home of the last three Kiwi military personnel in June.

A ceremony hosted by Commander of the European Union Forces (EUFOR) Rear Admiral Hans-Jochen Witthauer was held to mark the end of the Kiwi commitment which included the lowering of the New Zealand flag and the presentation of medals to Major Michael Brown, Captain Russel Skeet and Captain Philip Wood.

Rear Admiral Witthauer said the New Zealand association with the mission had been a long and rewarding one for EUFOR and the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina and for the New Zealand Defence Force.

Nearly 1000 NZDF personnel served in the former Yugoslavia between 1994 and 2007. At its height, the Kiwi commitment included a reinforced infantry company.

## LEBANON - JOB WELL DONE

The majority of the joint New Zealand Army/Navy Battle Area Clearance Team serving in southern Lebanon returned home in July after five months defusing unexploded ordnance and land mines, with two of the 10-strong contingent remaining in theatre to assist the second team go through accreditation processes.

An area equalling the size of about 19 rugby fields has been cleared to date, returning crop fields, orchards and grazing land to the people. More than 950 explosive items were disarmed.

Senior National Officer Lieutenant Commander Steve Lenik says that there is a real feeling of accomplishment after months of hard work.

"The team has done an amazing job - our training prepared us for the physical work we were doing, but nothing could prepare us for the satisfaction we felt watching the land we'd just cleared being reoccupied," he said.

"We could see immediately what a difference our work was making to the lives of the people. It was an incredible experience."

UN estimates suggest that more than one million unexploded cluster bomblets remain spread over 798 sites in southern Lebanon, mostly in urban or populated areas.

## HAWKES BAY RESCUE

A drought on the North Island's east coast was brought to an end in spectacular fashion on July 17 when torrential rain flooded several areas necessitating the mobilisation of local Territorial Army units and their all-important go-anywhere Unimog trucks.

Primary-school students, teachers and adults from two remote settlements were evacuated to higher ground by soldiers from the Napier based 7th Wellington and Hawkes Bay Battalion and four of their trucks after calls for assistance were received from police.

Staff Sergeant Greg Molloy said the Unimogs played a vital role.

"No other vehicle could get across," he said. "But most of the kids thought it was a great adventure."

# LONG ROAD HOME

In 1965, two young Australians were left behind on a battlefield in Vietnam. Their mates never forgot them.

WORDS SERGEANT DAMIAN GRIFFIN  
PICS CORPORAL RACHEL INGRAM

Reproduced with permission ARMY newspaper

At 2057hr on 4 June 2007, the wheels of a 37 Squadron Hercules lifted off the tarmac of Hanoi's international airport and began a nine-hour flight to Darwin. At that moment, as if by some silent signal, every passenger on board stopped trying to get comfortable in the cargo-net seats, forgot the discomfort of the hearing protection inserted to muffle the engines' roar, and glanced toward the precious cargo secured at the rear of the airplane – the Australian-flag-draped coffins of Lance Corporal Richard Parker and Private Peter Gillson. Each knew they were privileged to be taking part in this special flight. After almost 42 years missing in action in Vietnam, Lance Corporal Parker and Private Gillson were coming home.

For Second Lieutenant Robert Gillson, it was an opportunity to share an adventure with the father he never met.

For four 1RAR veterans on board, it was a moment they'd hoped, prayed and worked towards for many years.

Jim Bourke, a former platoon commander in D Company, was joined by three former A Company members – from 3 Platoon, Private Gillson's platoon commander Clive

Williams, and from 1 Platoon, Gordon Peterson and Trevor Hagan, acting platoon commander and acting platoon sergeant the day their comrades were killed.

Jim, founding member of Operation Aussies Home, recalls the feeling in 1RAR after Lance Corporal Parker and Private Gillson were killed during Operation Hump on 8 November 1965.

"The battalion was very depressed after that. A big black cloud came down over A Company – over the whole battalion. They'd left two blokes behind," he says.

Following the loss of the two young soldiers, a plan was drawn up by 1RAR to return to the battlefield the following week to destroy the enemy and reclaim their mates' bodies. But this was abandoned because of a lack of air resources and because 1RAR was sent on another operation on 20 November.

Ever since, A Company members have gathered on 8 November each year for a few beers and to remember the two they'd left behind.

"They've just felt really guilty about it, and it's been niggling at them for years," Jim says.

For him, the search for MIAs in Vietnam began in 1997 when he began searching



Gillson and Parker - welcome home.

for another lost mate, a US special forces soldier, Sergeant 1<sup>st</sup> Class Anastacio Montez, who he'd worked alongside during his second tour of Vietnam with AATTV.

Jim conducted a determined search which, although unsuccessful, provided valuable contacts in the US Joint POW MIA Accounting Command.

In 2002, the command approached him for assistance in gaining mitochondrial DNA from the families of the six Australian MIAs, to exclude the possibility that their remains were already held by the US.

This piqued his interest in the Australian MIA cases, and he began to investigate. Before long, Jim Bourke began campaigning for funds and support, all the while continuing to work on the cases of Lance Corporal Parker and Private Gillson and also that of Lance Corporal John Gillespie, who was killed on April 17, 1971, when the helicopter he was on crashed in the Long Hai Hills of Phuc Tuy province.

In November 2005, Jim returned to Vietnam with Trevor Hagan and Gordon Peterson where they met with a Vietnamese man who had knowledge of the 8 November battle and was able to put the team in contact with Nguyen Van Bao, commander of 1RAR's opposing force in 1965.

Mr Bao described the battle in detail and told the Australians that the bodies of their comrades had been buried after the battle in a pit. However, his estimation of where the battle took place later proved to be about 1400m further south than where it actually occurred.

Australia's officially recorded location for the battle was also incorrect, which Hagan and Peterson realised immediately when they arrived. This may be explained by the fact that maps used in 1965 were from National Geographic and based on aerial photography from 1961 when the terrain was primary jungle with a dense canopy and undergrowth.

"The maps were absolutely inaccurate, except for the grid lines," Jim says, "they bore no resemblance to the ground we were on."

The team walked toward the east for

400m until both Hagan and Peterson decided on a likely position. A search was conducted, but nothing was found.

In May 2006, the team returned to the site with Clive Williams. He concurred with the site chosen by Hagan and Peterson and picked the ridge he believed he had followed in an attempt at a flanking attack 40 years earlier.

Using metal detectors, they searched for the tell-tale signs of a battlefield, but only located post-'65 ammunition cartridges.

Jim says they logged about 20 potential points they considered could have been weapon pits or burial sites before they had to return to Australia.

"We had the right location – I was 99 per cent certain of that. But how the bloody hell do we find two bodies after all this time?"

Upon return to Australia, Jim had another battle to face – undergoing five months of chemotherapy to combat lymphoma.

Determined not to continue without their mate, the team postponed the next trip to Vietnam until Jim recovered.

This time, armed with ground-penetrating radar provided by the Australian National University, and joined by forensic excavation expert David Thomas, the team returned to the battleground in January this year. Unfortunately, the first and most significant problem they were faced with this time was gaining diplomatic approvals to use the radar equipment. A whole month was wasted in Bien Hoa as negotiations stalled.

Disappointed and out of pocket, the team was forced to return to Australia. However, shortly afterward, Minister for Veterans' Affairs Bruce Billson reimbursed the cost of the mission and granted a further \$37,500 to the cause. A Queensland businessman, Paul Darrouzet, chipped in with another \$40,000 for the operation to continue. Through the good offices of Mr Billson, approvals to deploy the ground-penetrating radar were also secured and the team returned to Vietnam accompanied by ANU staff.

As it turned out, however, the usefulness of the radar was hampered by high levels

## FINAL CHAPTER

*"Mates lost – battles passed – but soldiers carried the weight and worry, without respite, of an invisible and unimaginable 'backpack' of unfinished business, of mates not returned.*

*"Eternally bound by a shared experience and the motto of the Royal Australian Regiment – duty first – Operation Hump has continued, the return of their mates an enduring commitment.*

*"For more than four decades, much of this story has been written and settled, yet incomplete. The chapters already written record the service and sacrifice of Lance Corporal Parker and Private Gillson; their courage and commitment; the loss of a husband, a brother, a father, a son, a mate. How mates, veterans of A Company and Vietnam more generally, held fast to a conviction to get them home – to finish the story of these two diggers – the conviction that has not wearied or waned, despite the slow passage of many, many years, that a new chapter need be written – a conclusion.*

*"A chapter largely penned by the passion and perseverance of mates who never gave up and rarely let a day escape without remembering and recommitting to their goal.*

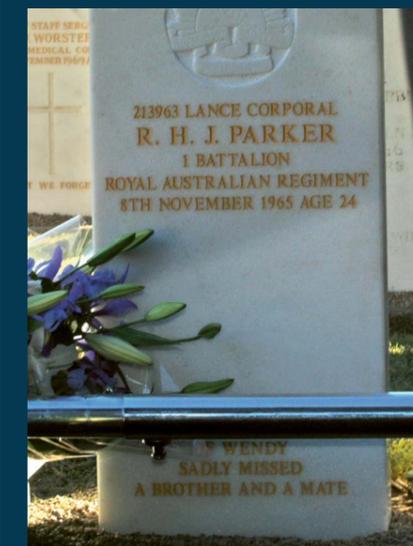
*"So today, the new chapter, the final chapter, is further written.*

*"Let the final chapter read and record: two brave servicemen lost; now forever young; never forgotten; found, recovered and repatriated with great care and dignity; carried home by the hands of mateship; returned to those who love and were loved; honoured and laid to rest by a grateful nation; at home at last, always remembered."*

Extracts from a speech by Minister for Veterans' Affairs Bruce Billson



Left: Former colleagues carry a mate home.  
Below: 1RAR Honour Guard.





An emotional return at RAAF Base Richmond.

Donlon and forensic dentists Commander Matt Blenkin and Russell Lain.

Upon their arrival in Vietnam, Jim Bourke handed over to Brian and his team. On Anzac Day, Brian's team accessed the site and began a slow, painstaking process of carefully excavating with trowels and brushes to finish what the Op Aussies Home team had started.

It wasn't long before they found even more exciting evidence. "We discovered a set of dog tags," Brian Manns says.

"When we got the dog tags out, they were still wrapped in tape, but they were rusted to buggery – you couldn't read them at all."

Attempts to remove the tape began to damage the discs, so the suggestion was made to X-ray them using the dentists' equipment.

"When we X-rayed the discs, we could clearly read Gillson's service number and, from another angle, we could clearly read GILLSON."

By the Friday, the remains of Lance Corporal Richard Parker and Private Peter Gillson were fully removed from their burial site – but the dig could not be considered complete until the archaeologists had reached undisturbed soil at the bottom of the pit.

"When we did that, we came across a second set of dog tags. They were stainless steel and in perfect condition."

Amazingly, Lance Corporal Parker's stainless steel dog tags only needed the tape removed and the mud rubbed off to return them to perfect condition.

Further dental and forensic examination of the remains were conducted and a positive identification was eventually and officially declared.

With this chapter of a continuing quest closed, both Jim Bourke and Brian Manns say the high level of cooperation they received from contacts in the Vietnamese government means there's a much improved chance of accessing information and sites where the four remaining Australian MIAs may eventually be found. Jim is already back on the trail, continuing his search for Lance Corporal John Gillespie and believes he has located the crash site, after finding scraps of a Huey in the right vicinity.

As two flag-draped coffins touched down at RAAF Base Darwin on 5 June 2007, Jim Bourke's dogged determination in his search is perhaps best summed up in his own words when I wish him luck – "You can sit around crying into your beer, or you can get on that hill, the right hill, and dig a hole. Then you've got a chance to find them."

Thanks to Jim, his team and the support they gathered around them, 15,153 days late, two fallen comrades are home at last.

of iron in the soil. Undaunted, the team persevered with the assistance of local labourers and an excavator, and spent two weeks digging several likely pits.

With only four days left, Jim Bourke remembers that morale was starting to flag as the prospect of another unsuccessful mission loomed.

"That Saturday night, we were really ticked off with one another and the whole thing – it was the hardest management job I've had in my life."

David Thomas suggested searching some of the sites they'd already dismissed so, the next day, the team went out to take another look at old ground.

On the Sunday afternoon, in the sixth hole they'd dug that day, the team finally found evidence of what they were looking for.

"Out the side of the hole popped a boot. It was Parker's boot," Jim recalls.

At 190cm, Lance Corporal Parker must have had trouble fitting into standard-issue boots because these didn't appear to be Australian. But there was no doubt the team had hit pay dirt, and excitement was high.

Soon, they found what was eventually identified as Parker's second boot and, before long, a second set of boots appeared, protruding from the dirt.

With Thomas supervising, the dig continued the next day and bones were unearthed. But it wasn't until Wednesday that the grave revealed its most telling evidence yet – an almost-perfect-condition talc-covered map of the AO (area of operations) for Operation Hump.

"It was covered with contact on both sides – you could see the boundaries marked," Jim says.

When the two young soldiers had been buried more than 41 years earlier, the area had been covered by thick jungle. Since then, heavy machinery had cleared it for cultivation, dramatically changing the ground. Depressions left by stump holes had led to several false readings from the radar and several fruitless searches. The actual pit containing Lance Corporal Parker and Private Gillson had a large rock on top of it that Jim Bourke assumes was inadvertently pushed there by machinery when the jungle was cleared.

"We'd actually identified that area in May. We'd probed it, but obviously we'd hit something hard and moved on."

All agree there was a good degree of luck, and perhaps "a little help from the man upstairs" in finding the remains. Nonetheless, here they were at last.

After finding the map on 17 April, Jim Bourke called Australia's Defence Attaché in Hanoi who alerted Brian Manns at the Army History Unit. Well aware of the Operation Aussies Home mission, Brian had been hoping for this call.

"I briefed the deputy chief of army at 0800 on Wednesday, and by 0830 walked out of his office with a task order to get a team over there as quickly as possible," Brian says.

Tasked with formally identifying and repatriating the two, the team included AHU's Major Jack Thurgar, archaeologist Tony Lowe, physical anthropologist Denise

missionpac.com



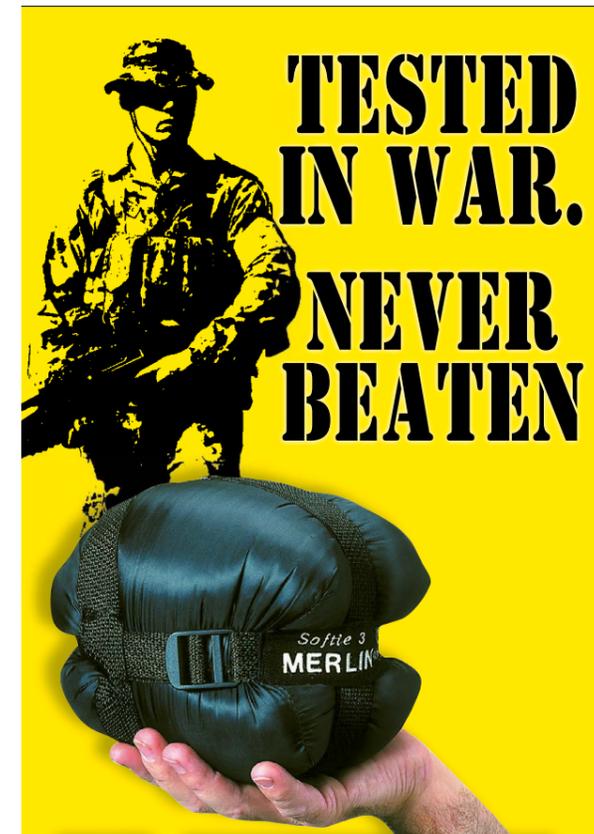
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# MIDDLE EAST AREA OF OPERATIONS



## MEAO Facts

### OPERATION SLIPPER

Australia's commitment to Operation Slipper (Afghanistan) currently includes:

- **Reconstruction Task Force** (RTF) is Australia's contribution to the Dutch-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Uruzgan Province. It provides command, security, engineering and operational-support capabilities – **385 personnel**
- **Special Operations Task Group** (SOTG) provides support to ISAF security operations, and provides security and force protection to the RTF. SOTG consists of Commandos, members of the SASR and enabling and support personnel – **300 personnel**
- **Air Force Control and Reporting Centre** (CRC) for operational airspace control at Kandahar Airfield – **75 personnel**
- **Force Level Logistic Asset** in Kandahar – **60 personnel**
- **National Command Element** in Kabul, led by Colonel John Frewen – **30 personnel**
- **20 Liaison Officers** serving with ISAF plus 1 at UN HQ

### OPERATION CATALYST

Australia's commitment to Operation Catalyst (Iraq) currently includes:

- **OBG-W** (Overwatch Battle Group-West) in Dhi Qar Province – **515 personnel**
- Three **C-130 Hercules** for intra-theatre airlift – **155 personnel**
- **SECDET** (security detachment) to provide protection and escort to Australian Embassy staff – **110 personnel**
- **Force Level Logistics Asset** – **110 personnel**
- **AATTI** (Australian Army Training Team Iraq) training Iraqi Army throughout the country – **100 personnel**
- **Detachments** to multi-national force headquarters and units – **95 personnel**

*Some ADF assets and personnel in the Middle East Area of Operations are dual-assigned in support of both operations:*

- One **ANZAC Class Frigate** for maritime patrol and security – **190 personnel**
- Two **AP-3C Orions** for reconnaissance and surveillance – **170 personnel**
- **Australian Joint Task Force HQ** commanded by Major General Mark Evans – **90 personnel**



# TIGER IN THE FRAY

BATTLE GROUP TIGER STEPS UP

Privates James Rawling (front) and Nicholas Reed during a training exercise at Camp Terendak.

WORDS BRIAN HARTIGAN PICS LEADING SEAMAN PHILLIP CULLINAN

More than 500 members of the Darwin-based 'Battle Group Tiger', centred around the newly delinked 5RAR – the 'Tiger Battalion' – have taken up the mantle of operations in southern Iraq. Not strictly involved in security for the provinces it patrols, the Australian battle group is helping the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and provincial governments build on their own capacity to secure their own areas of responsibility.

Heading into the mission, OBG(W)3 (Overwatch Battle Group (West) 3) were under no illusion that this mission could be as dangerous as it was vital to the future of Iraq. Just two weeks before being officially farewelled from Darwin by a large contingent of family, friends and dignitaries, their predecessors in Iraq had been targeted in a series of deliberate and potentially lethal attacks.

On 23 April, an OBG(W)2 patrol was involved in an incident where three roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were detonated as the vehicles passed. While no one was killed – a fact easily attributable to the protection afforded by the ASLAV vehicles they were travelling in – two soldiers were injured, one of them relatively seriously.

The attack, which occurred north of An Nasariyah in the Dhi Qar Province, saw one ASLAV destroyed and a second badly damaged. Both of the soldiers who were

injured were travelling in the destroyed vehicle, which careened off the road after the IED exploded and burst into flames (see "48 Hours of Action" for more detail).

Before leaving for Iraq, the soldiers were formally farewelled on a traditional parade at Robertson Barracks on 10 May, which featured 5RAR trooping its Colours. The battalion had only recently rededicated itself to the original Queen's and Regiment Colours in an apt but largely unheralded ceremony while on mission rehearsal exercises in Cultana Field Training Area in South Australia.

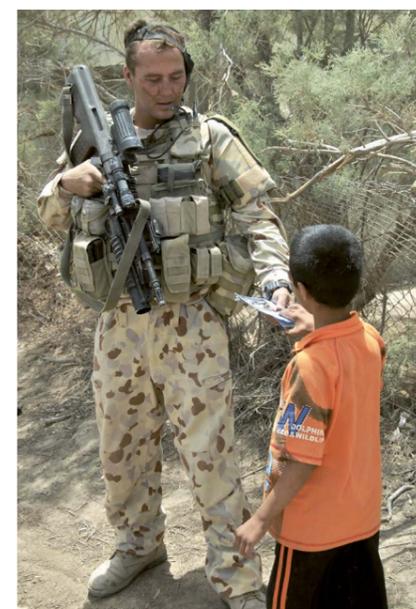
Sir Roden Cutler VC originally presented the 5RAR colours to the battalion in 1967. Six years later, 5RAR and 7RAR were formally linked to form 5/7RAR. Both battalions' colours were eventually 'laid up' at the Soldiers' Chapel, Kapooka, in 2004. Now, however, under a \$10 billion plan to expand the Army by 2600 personnel, 5RAR and 7RAR have again been split. The delinking happened while 7RAR was

on operations in Afghanistan and 5RAR was preparing for deployment to Iraq – affording both battalions unique, moving and fitting opportunities to write new chapters in their proud histories.

Subsequently, in Iraq, life for 5RAR proved to be relatively quiet. Save for a broken arm and a few bruises in a vehicle accident in mid June, Overwatch Battle Group (West) 3's mission (to date) has run routinely and to plan.

One major operation of note for the soldiers of the OBG(W)3 was the provision of support to a coalition movement called Operation Crimson Advance, in July. The Australian contribution, coded Operation Hindmarsh, saw the battle group play an important role in assisting the British Army King's Royal Hussars (KRH) move from Maysaan Province to Basrah.

Op Hindmarsh gave the Australian battle group a valuable opportunity to support major Coalition security operations that involved British and US ground forces as



Private David Petherick distributes information leaflets in Saha'alat.

# 48 HOURS OF ACTION

WORDS CAPTAIN SARAH HAWKE  
EDITED BY CONTACT

well as combat aircraft, Apache helicopters and Australian P3-C Orions.

Commanding officer OBG(W)3 Lieutenant Colonel Jake Ellwood says it is particularly noteworthy that the Australian Battle Group played a vital role securing two important bridges [favoured insurgent ambush points] in the urban sprawl of An Nasiriyah.

Securing the bridges enabled the KRH to cross the Euphrates River and marry up with the Australians, who then escorted the Brits through one of Iraq's largest cities, which only weeks earlier had been the scene of fierce fighting between the Mahdi Army and the Iraqi Security Forces and where Australian patrols had been ambushed.

Lieutenant Colonel Ellwood says that part of the success of Operation Hindmarsh can be attributed to Australian UAVs and other Coalition air assets that provided the ground forces with vital situational awareness and real-time imagery during the mission.

"The operation was conducted in the dead of night and the belligerents, who potentially could have attacked the convoys with RPGs and machineguns, were undoubtedly dislocated by the battle group's speed and night-operating capabilities," he says.

"There could be no better ending to a Coalition operation of this scale or undertaking."

Commanding officers from both the KRH and the OBG(W)3 later celebrated their success with a good cigar – presumably in the absence of G&Ts.

With no real beer for the soldiers of OBG(W)3 until they return to Australia in October, we wish them well for the remainder of their deployment.

"All I can remember is just an almighty bang, which in turn knocked us to the turret floor."

That was the first recollection of the callsign VOB crew commander after his ASLAV, on a patrol north of An Nasiriyah in southern Iraq, was struck by an IED at 6.24pm on 23 April.

That explosion and two other IEDs within the next 11 minutes were part of a series of coordinated attacks against OBG(W)2 over two days.

It was the worst level of violence targeted against Australian forces since they began operations in southern Iraq in 2005.

The first attack occurred around lunch time on April 23 at Ar Rfia'l, north of An Nasiriyah in the Dhi Qar Province, when the battlegroup's ASLAVs and Bushmasters came under RPG and small-arms fire, with no damage resulting.

During their move south, heading back to the camp at Ali Air Base, Tallil, the patrol received further small-arms fire at An Naser.

Then, about 1.7km north of An Nasiriyah, the first of three IEDs exploded. Back at the OBG(W)2 headquarters at Tallil, operations-room staff were monitoring the incident [via a live video feed from a UAV loitering overhead the battle scene] and saw VOB veer off



A US Black Hawk arrives to evacuate two Australians injured in an IED attack.

PIC BY CAPTAIN KENT CHAPMAN

the road into swampy lowlands and burst into flames.

What followed on the ground was a demonstration of good training and drills, with critical support from the battlegroup HQ, logistical and medical staff as well as coalition air assets – an effort battlegroup commander Lieutenant Colonel Tony Rawlins described as "phenomenal."

The crew commander, driver and gunner of VOB extracted themselves from the burning vehicle within seconds of the blast, despite the driver, Trooper Andrew Behrnt, having received serious leg injuries and burns.

At the same time, infantry soldiers and other attachments quickly moved to check for further IEDs, provide security, secure a helicopter landing zone,

support the injured and provide details of the injuries to already inbound US medievac helicopters.

With the crew well away from the burning vehicle and a security cordon in place, a second IED exploded, damaging two more ASLAVs in the next packet of vehicles. A third IED detonated a short time later.

While jet fighters swooped low overhead, and with the situation on the ground still very tense, US helicopters arrived to evacuate the wounded – less than 18 minutes after the first blast.

Lieutenant Colonel Rawlins, who was in the convoy, said he had nothing but praise for the US pilots.

"They landed the choppers on the road in close vicinity to VOB – which was exploding at the time, as ammunition cooked off inside – without any thought for their own safety, in order to get the casualties out."

Unable to recover the burning ASLAV, the Battle Group continued its journey to Tallil in the early hours of April 24, only to be ambushed again with RPG and small-arms fire on a bridge in An Nasiriyah. The Australians returned fire but pushed on.

That night, the recovery operation for the abandoned ASLAV was again ambushed. The Aussies returned fire, but emerged unscathed – except for the already gutted VOB, which copped another RPG hit while it sat on the back of a recovery vehicle.

With permission ARMY newspaper

# DOUBLE TROUBLE FOR TALIBAN

WORDS CAPTAIN CAMERON JAMIESON

A Reconstruction Task Force (RTF) security troop recently delivered two body blows to Taliban forces operating about 10km north-northeast of the Australian/Dutch base at Tarin Kowt in Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan.

The first contact happened on 8 July during a reconnaissance operation. The Australian troops had moved into an area for the first time to conduct an engineer survey of Afghan security posts so that planned construction work could be conducted by the engineering component of the RTF.

Troop Leader Lieutenant Scott Owens says the Aussies were expecting trouble before the first round was fired.

"We had moved across a road into an area where the locals had recently been harvesting a wheat crop," he says.

"There were wheelbarrows and harvesting equipment lying around in the open, and my driver remarked on how it looked weird because there were no people around.

"About a minute later we were in contact."

The battle was initiated by a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) fired from ahead of the RTF patrol, and was followed by small-arms fire.

Lead-vehicle commander Corporal Jason Hatcher says that once the contact started everything worked as per training.



Sergeant Brett Ensbey prepares breakfast.

PIC BY LEADING AIRCRAFTMAN RODNEY WELCH

"We were moving in formation through open terrain when there was an explosion at the rear of the troop," he says.

"To our front we saw the puff of smoke from where the round had been launched and then we saw a guy move around from behind the wall of a compound. He had an RPG on his shoulder and was prepared to fire again.

"So, we engaged. All our training kicked in – our vehicles moved into place, and we opened fire. Our drills worked excellently – it was a scenario we had rehearsed and trained for and everything just fell into place."



Above: Sergeant William Ross supervises soldiers firing an 84mm Carl Gustav.  
Right Private Nicholas Reed and Corporal James Gosling provide support in a simulated attack at Camp Terendak.



ASLAV pit stop in Oruzgan Province.

PIC BY LEADING AIRCRAFTMAN RODNEY WELCH

The combined firepower of the ASLAVs forced the enemy to flee their positions ahead of the follow-on infantry clearance sweep.

Lieutenant Owens says the initial firefight was over fairly quickly.

"Once we returned fire they wanted to withdraw, because they knew we had a lot of overmatch on them."

About 20 minutes after the ambush, a group of Bushmaster-mounted Australian infantry arrived on the scene to sweep the area.

In the second action, the Australians arrived at a police outpost, not far from the first contact, just as the Taliban launched an attack. Although the Afghan police held their ground, the assistance of the Australians and some nearby Dutch forces was well appreciated by the policemen.

Swift employment of the Australians' light armoured vehicles' main armament was a dramatic wake-up call to the Taliban as they

quickly realised they were on the receiving end of cannon and machinegun fire.

Their woes weren't over yet, however, as Dutch Apache helicopters joined the fight and conducted strafing runs on the hapless extremists.

The fight was a great success for the Afghan police and the Australian and Dutch soldiers with no personnel wounded. The same could not be said for the Taliban, however.

When the Australians drove up to the Afghan police post, the Diggers were greeted with loud cheering and clapping.

RTF commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Harry Jarvie says the result was a team effort.

"We're in a close partnership with the government of Afghanistan and their police force as we try to re-establish security here in Afghanistan," he says.

"Today was a perfect example of that cooperation."



Dutch and Australian Joint Terminal Attack Controllers work together during a training session in Tarin Kowt.

PIC BY LEADING AIRCRAFTMAN RODNEY WELCH

## THE FIGHT WAS A GREAT SUCCESS FOR THE AFGHAN POLICE AND THE AUSTRALIAN AND DUTCH SOLDIERS WITH NO PERSONNEL WOUNDED



Lieutenant Will Langdon and his platoon staff discuss tactics in Oruzgan Province.

PIC BY CAPTAIN HADYN BARLOW

# EYES OF THE SILENT EAGLE

WORDS AND PICS CAPTAIN CAMERON JAMIESON

ScanEagle ready for launch.

**Under the cover of darkness, Taliban extremists dig swiftly into dry, dusty ground beside a rutted track that leads to a Tiri River crossing point. When they are satisfied the hole is deep and long enough they gently lower the improvised explosive device, barely daring to breathe, in case their unstable home-made device detonates in their hands. Finally, pleased with their work, they carefully backfill and camouflage their deadly trap and scurry back to their mountain observation post – totally oblivious to the Australian Army unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) silently recording the whole event from 6000 feet above them.**

UAVs have become a high-demand intelligence asset in both Iraq and Afghanistan. After establishing a capability using a smaller model two years ago, the Australian Army has now deployed the high-tech ScanEagle UAV to Afghanistan in support of Australian and coalition forces operating in the Oruzgan Province.



Supporting ground crew prepare ScanEagle for takeoff.

Commanding Officer 20STA (20th Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regiment) Lieutenant Colonel Philip Swinsburg, who oversaw the UAV's introduction, says the tempo of UAV operations is already high despite only being in theatre for a few months.

"ScanEagle is in demand because it is a 24-hour-capable system that allows us to give the guys on the ground a lot more confidence in where they are going," he says. "If there is an incident we can usually be on the scene very quickly."

"We pass information to both the commander at the scene of the incident and back to headquarters so that everyone understands what's going on and they can react to the situation better."

"The feedback we are getting is very positive."

The secret to ScanEagle's success is its stealth and optics. Powered by a whipper-snipper-size engine, an improved muffler system makes the aircraft practically silent at altitude and its relatively short 4m wingspan and haze-grey paint scheme make it almost invisible.



ScanEagle was originally designed to operate from ships – hence, it is launched by catapult and recovered by cherry picker and bungee cord.

Key to the package, however, is its high-zoom optics with day and night capability giving operators an excellent view of what's happening on the ground. And, being capable of staying aloft for 15 hours at a time, it can cover a lot of ground in a single mission.

A few hundred metres from the launch pad, in air-conditioned comfort, Bombardier Michael Konig says he has never regretted transferring to UAV operations.

"It's a fantastic job flying an aerial vehicle," he says.

"You can see what's happening on the ground and help the boys do their job by providing real-time information that can actually save lives."

Flight crew for a mission consists of an air-vehicle operator (AVO) who manoeuvres the UAV, and a mission commander (MC), who operates the optics and retains overall control.

"I get situation reports from higher command and have the UAV moved around accordingly," Bombardier Konig says.

"There must be close coordination between the AVO and MC, because the

air vehicle will crash if you don't work together."

As ScanEagle was a rapid-acquisition project for the ADF commitment to Afghanistan there was also a rapid training regime to prepare operators for the deployment.

"We went to the US for two months of intensive UAV training with Insitu, the manufacturer," Bombardier Konig says.

"It was quite hard. There was a lot of flight time involved and you must stay focused."

He says that while missions can be very long and demanding he was proud to be doing such an important job in Afghanistan.



# PHANTOM DIARIES

In this, the first of what we hope will be a regular personal insight into life as a nomadic soldier, the 'Phantom' takes us, and a first-timer, to the mean streets of Baghdad, Kandahar and Tarin Kowt.



**W**ell, here I am, back for another task and working in the varied and various locations where Aussies are based in the MEAO (Middle East Area of Operations).

We had a new member in our group this time who had not deployed before – anywhere – so it was enlightening to see his reaction to the various locations to which we travelled.

After using the FLLA (Force-Level Logistics Asset) facilities we moved forward to Baghdad where, almost immediately on arrival, a rocket landed less than 400m away and gave us the by-now almost expected, familiar and fitting welcome-to-Baghdad handshake! A few days later, a car bomb exploded just 200 metres away, but thankfully on the other side of the fence.

In all, we had four rockets land – some as close a 100m – during our brief stay. The random aiming of these damn things were as amazing for their lack of real damage as anything else.

It was very interesting to see that many countries had departed Iraq since my last visit and moved to Afghanistan to concentrate their war efforts in that theatre.

As always, the weather was stinking hot and the food was plentiful but monotonous.

Our task finished, we departed Baghdad – and certainly relieved to do so, especially the new guy.

Kandahar saw us arrive into the mayhem of the main support base for Operation Slipper, where British, Canadians, Dutch and, of course, Americans are also heavily concentrated.

The base is very crowded, but the facilities are not bad, if you can put up with the afternoon smell from the sewerage farm, which can get quite thick and toxic depending on the prevailing weather conditions.

Random rocket attacks saw the bunkers used on a regular basis, and usually when you were just about to get in the shower or sit down to a meal.

Accommodation for the Aussies is quite crowded and unprotected here, except for the concrete perimeter, which can make for interesting nights contemplating the random nature of rocket attacks. But, if you don't think too hard on the subject, you can sleep quite soundly – and we did.

The heat was a bugger, though. It was quite intense.

Our RTF (Reconstruction Task Force) base is a relatively small outpost near the town of Tarin Kowt. It sits inside the confines of the larger Dutch 'Kamp Holland' and sits in the shadow of magnificent mountains.

Aussies deployed here live in armoured accommodation, which is very heavy and is by far the strongest we encountered. As visitors, though, we slept in plywood huts, which are much more roomy and cool.

It's hard to imagine there's a war going on outside the fence here, but it is real and, with frequent missions departing and returning, Apaches taking care of air cover down the valley, and outgoing 155mm artillery from the mobile howitzer, it certainly is a busy place. The arty rounds, in particular, were a popular cause of great debate, shaking the whole base when they fired.

Huge firefights were taking place 15km away and were easily visible through binoculars from many vantage points.

While we were there, Kamp Holland was directly attacked only twice.

Throughout our deployment it was very satisfying to see the many teams undertaking their tasks so professionally despite much pressure and a heavy workload. It was really good to be part of it all.

Our newly deployed member is now hardened to the environment and is looking forward to returning, knowing what to expect.

Opportunities for deployment for the Australian Defence Force look set to continue for some time to come and, in the end, I am confident we will have a highly trained and experienced core of people, ready for anything.

 Phantom



### 3 BRIGADE FLEXES

PICS TROY RODGERS, TOWNSVILLE BULLETIN

More than 3000 soldiers from Townsville-based 3 Brigade rolled out to hone basic soldiering skills during April and May at the nearby Townsville Field Training Area – High Range.

The Combined Arms Training Activity (CATA) put almost the whole brigade through a variety of operational scenarios.

Units worked up through individual and small-unit skills before coming together in more complex and demanding tasks involving combined units and combined arms, demonstrating that, with all elements working together as a single entity, 3 Brigade is capable of delivering far greater battlefield effects than the sum of its parts.

CATA is a regular and necessary exercising of basic skills for 3 Brigade (and others), but in this case, also doubled as timely preparation for Exercise Talisman Saber – the combination of the two making for a busy mid-year span for the formation.

With 3RAR an integral part of 3 Brigade, the CATA also included parachute delivery of troops to the training area, with the help of three RAAF 37 Squadron C-130 Hercules. After landing, commanding Officer 3RAR Lieutenant-Colonel Mick Mumford is quoted as saying that the easy part was over – “This is the bus we take to work and our work starts now,” he said, before joining his troops on a 15km march.

Another unit on the move, this time in its newly acquired Bushmaster Infantry Mobility Vehicles, was B Squadron, 3/4 Cavalry Regiment – the unit having recently (and reluctantly) given up its M113 APCs.



Private Stephen Fenn, 3CER



Corporal James Wells, 3CER



Lance Corporal Michael Fletcher, 3RAR



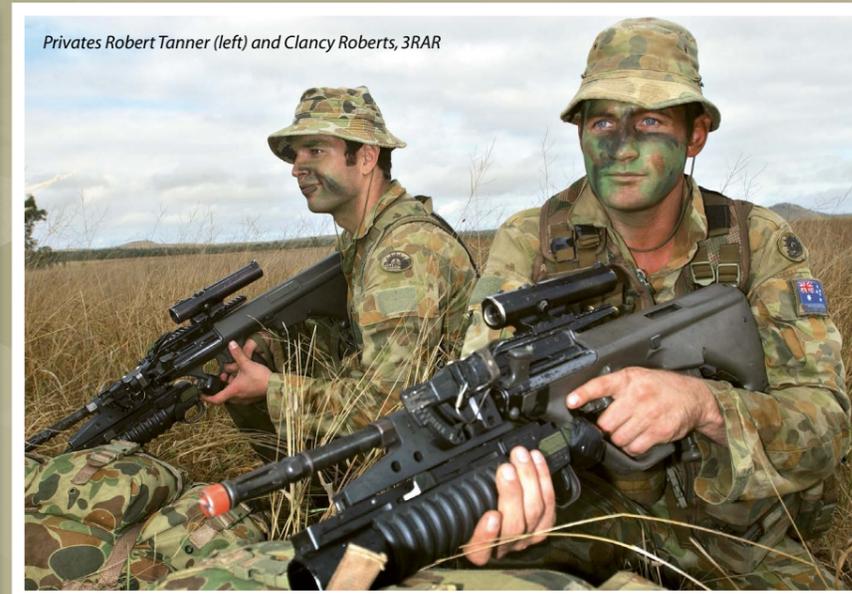
Sapper Josh Cook



Johnston, Thompson, English and Douglass



Private Jason Hill, 3RAR



Privates Robert Tanner (left) and Clancy Roberts, 3RAR

## RECENT COMPLETED OPERATIONS

**Operation Sumatra Assist** and **Operation Sumatra Assist Phase Two** saw the Department of Defence provide valuable humanitarian relief assistance to Indonesia following both the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami and an earthquake the following March. Nine ADF members were killed during the second phase when their Sea King helicopter crashed on Nias island.

**Operation Pakistan Assist** saw an ADF medical team and helicopter detachment deployed to Pakistan to provide vital health care assistance to those affected by an earthquake in October 2005. Around 140 personnel were deployed to Dhanni, about 20km north east of Muzaffarabad on the Pakistan side of the Kashmir Line of Control.

**Op Cranberry** was the ADF commitment to the Coastwatch-coordinated civil maritime surveillance program in northern Australia to detect illegal activity such as smuggling and illegal fishing, with assistance from predominantly Fremantle- and Armidale-class patrol boats. Defence provided naval surface patrol and response, RAAF maritime aerial surveillance and Regional Surveillance Force Unit patrols in support of the civil surveillance program.

**Op Relex II** was an ADF operation to detect, intercept and deter vessels transporting unauthorised arrivals from entering Australia through the north-west maritime approaches. It included units from all three services operating in support of Coastwatch and Customs.

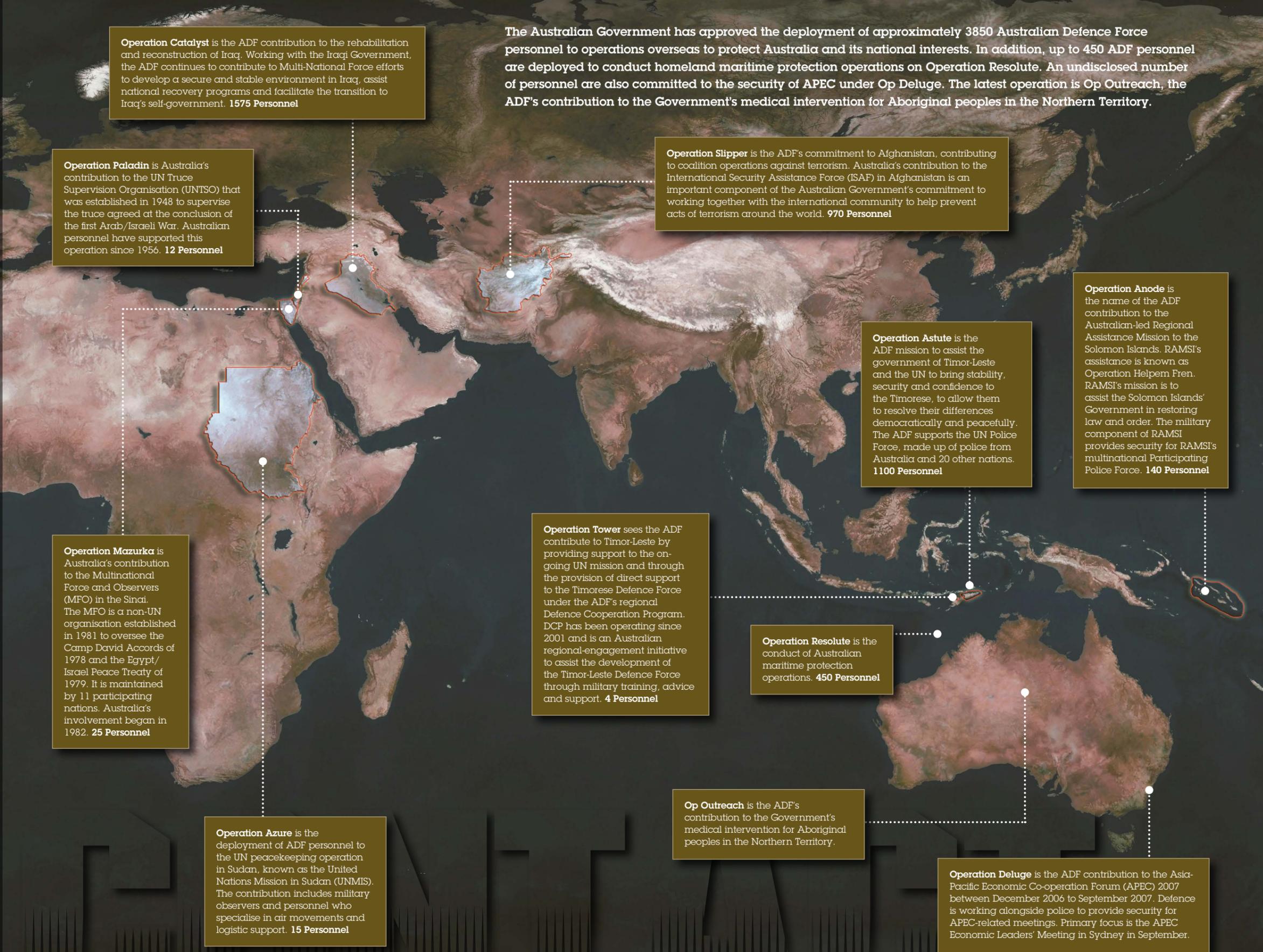
**Operation Celesta** was ADF support to Coastwatch and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority enforcing Australian sovereign rights and fisheries laws in the Southern Oceans. Dangerous pursuits and boardings saw several foreign fishing vessels, with millions of dollars worth of illegal catch on-board, successfully apprehended.

**Operation Ramp** saw about 120 ADF personnel deploy in support of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade-led evacuation of Australians from Lebanon. They included a team of 22 to support the DFAT staff in Beirut, Cyprus and Turkey plus a Task Force of 96 – including a command element, two evacuee processing teams, liaison officers, movements officers, health specialists and linguists – who went in to Lebanon and supported the evacuation of more than 5300 Australians and 1300 foreign nationals.

On 18 November 2006, around 50 ADF personnel were deployed to Tonga where they served with a New Zealand-led combined military force to support Tongan Security Forces in stabilising civil unrest. They provided security at the Fuaʻamotu International Airport before moving some elements to the capital, Nukunono. An RAAF Boeing 707 evacuated a number of Australian citizens and foreign nationals to Sydney after commercial flights were suspended.

An ADF task group of around 800 personnel was deployed to the South West Pacific in November 2006 on a stand-by mission to ensure the safety of Australians in Fiji following a military coup. The group comprised HMA Ships Newcastle, Kanimbla and Success, together with an SAS contingent, evacuation handling teams, medical staff and a helicopter detachment. An RAAF maritime patrol aircraft supported the task group from a base in Pago Pago. Two soldiers were killed on this operation when a Black Hawk crashed onboard HMAS Kanimbla.

# Australia's Global Operations



**Operation Catalyst** is the ADF contribution to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq. Working with the Iraqi Government, the ADF continues to contribute to Multi-National Force efforts to develop a secure and stable environment in Iraq, assist national recovery programs and facilitate the transition to Iraq's self-government. **1575 Personnel**

**Operation Paladin** is Australia's contribution to the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) that was established in 1948 to supervise the truce agreed at the conclusion of the first Arab/Israeli War. Australian personnel have supported this operation since 1956. **12 Personnel**

**Operation Slipper** is the ADF's commitment to Afghanistan, contributing to coalition operations against terrorism. Australia's contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan is an important component of the Australian Government's commitment to working together with the international community to help prevent acts of terrorism around the world. **970 Personnel**

**Operation Anode** is the name of the ADF contribution to the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands. RAMSI's assistance is known as Operation Helpem Fren. RAMSI's mission is to assist the Solomon Islands' Government in restoring law and order. The military component of RAMSI provides security for RAMSI's multinational Participating Police Force. **140 Personnel**

**Operation Astute** is the ADF mission to assist the government of Timor-Leste and the UN to bring stability, security and confidence to the Timorese, to allow them to resolve their differences democratically and peacefully. The ADF supports the UN Police Force, made up of police from Australia and 20 other nations. **1100 Personnel**

**Operation Tower** sees the ADF contribute to Timor-Leste by providing support to the on-going UN mission and through the provision of direct support to the Timorese Defence Force under the ADF's regional Defence Cooperation Program. DCP has been operating since 2001 and is an Australian regional-engagement initiative to assist the development of the Timor-Leste Defence Force through military training, advice and support. **4 Personnel**

**Operation Mazurka** is Australia's contribution to the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai. The MFO is a non-UN organisation established in 1981 to oversee the Camp David Accords of 1978 and the Egypt/Israel Peace Treaty of 1979. It is maintained by 11 participating nations. Australia's involvement began in 1982. **25 Personnel**

**Operation Azure** is the deployment of ADF personnel to the UN peacekeeping operation in Sudan, known as the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). The contribution includes military observers and personnel who specialise in air movements and logistic support. **15 Personnel**

**Operation Resolute** is the conduct of Australian maritime protection operations. **450 Personnel**

**Op Outreach** is the ADF's contribution to the Government's medical intervention for Aboriginal peoples in the Northern Territory.

**Operation Deluge** is the ADF contribution to the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum (APEC) 2007 between December 2006 to September 2007. Defence is working alongside police to provide security for APEC-related meetings. Primary focus is the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Sydney in September.

# Pimps Merics

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## UNIQUE AMONG HER PEERS



HMAS Parramatta leaves Sydney for Op Relex, October 2004

PIC BY ABLE SEAMAN BRENTON FRIEND

PIC BY ABLE SEAMAN HELEN FRANK



Exercise Tasmanex, February 2005

**S**hip's company of the Royal Australian Navy frigate HMAS Parramatta became the first ever Australian fleet unit to be awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation for operations outside of direct conflict.

The ship was honoured for exceptional service in warlike operations during her deployment to the Persian Gulf in 2005-06.

NSW Governor Marie Bashir presented the award to Commander Justin Jones, HMAS Parramatta's Executive Officer during the Gulf deployment, accepting on behalf of the ship's company who were deployed on another mission.

"I am very honoured to accept this award on behalf of the ship's company of HMAS Parramatta who sustained a high level of operational tempo during our deployment," Commander Jones said.

"In doing so, they set a new benchmark in performance, contributed significantly to the ADF mission of rehabilitating Iraq and in maintaining the security of the wider Gulf region."

The ANZAC Class Frigate was deployed on Operation Catalyst in the Persian Gulf from 1 November 2005 to 25 March 2006. She was awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation in the 2007 Australia Day Honours list for outstanding service, which included seizing 6.2 kilograms of ammonium nitrate, hidden in the pantry of an intercepted merchant vessel.

During her deployment, Parramatta conducted 186 boardings and security patrols, 1111 boat evolutions, 330 flying hours in its embarked Sea Hawk helicopter and 653 investigative queries of merchant vessels.

HMAS Parramatta was the first non-US Navy ship to be appointed Persian Gulf Air Defence Commander.

She also initiated a successful mentoring program for the Iraq Navy which saw Iraqi naval officers spend time onboard to observe frigate operations first hand.

HMAS Parramatta is the fifth RAN ship to be awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation since the award's inception, and the first to be honoured for operations outside of direct conflict.

PIC BY ABLE SEAMAN HELEN FRANK



Exercise Ocean Protector February 2005





Live-fire practice on HMAS Tobruk.

**“Well, there’s drop bears – they can get pretty nasty.”  
I now have the full attention of my US Army counterparts – they stop mucking around outside their armoured vehicle and come closer, eager to learn more.**

**“D**rop bears? What the hell is a drop bear?” one young soldier asks. “No, I’ve heard of those! One of my buddies who came here before told me about them,” his colleague offers.

The spotlight is now squarely on me and, as my mate Bully struggles to keep a straight face, I continue to feed bullshit to my entranced audience.

“Well, they live in the tops of gum trees and they catch their prey by jumping on top of them,” I say in my best Australians-know-better voice.

“How big are they?” asks a visibly shaken lance corporal.

Sensing my lies are about to be exposed, I start thinking back to that Bundy ad, desperate for inspiration to keep the charade going.

“Well, um, they start pretty small, you know, about the size of a koala, but they can grow pretty big. A couple of years ago an English tourist was attacked by a big one and was lucky to survive. So yeah, don’t hutchie up under gum trees fellas.”

Sensing my imminent fall from grace, Bully jumps in.

“Nah, don’t worry too much about those. It’s the bunyips and yowies that’ll get you.”

It is Monday morning, 19 July, and Exercise Talisman Saber 2007 is about to explode into action with the anticipated amphibious landing of a massive US-led multi-national force only hours away. In the meantime, however, it is peaceful.

Deep inside Shoalwater Bay Training Area, a squadron from 2/14LHR (QMI) (2/14 Light Horse Regiment, Queensland Mounted Infantry) with attached infantry from 9RQR (9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Queensland Regiment) – including the author – are getting to know their allies for this mission, a Stryker force of mounted infantry from the US Army. The weather is reasonably friendly and morale is quite high in anticipation of the largest combined-arms training exercise undertaken by the Australian Defence Force.

The Americans are happy to chat to the Aussies about their Strykers (armoured troop carriers) and all their other military gear, but get a touch nervous when the subject is changed to the Australian bush and its inhabitants. This is something immediately set upon by the Aussie diggers with their famous penchant for mischief.

Preying on the fears of American soldiers and marines officially began the previous day in the comfort of a US Army accommodation tent, with the official safety brief. After the usual dos and don’ts associated with all military safety briefs, a ‘cultural and environmental awareness package’ was added for the benefit of the visiting members of the US Armed Forces.

As the Australian Medical Corp warrant officer stood up to read out his presentation, Aussie diggers looked at one another with a sense of knowing and shared a snigger at what they knew was to come.

What followed was an explanation, complete with colour pictures, on the animals, plants and other hazards located in

Shoalwater Bay Training Area that had ‘real’ potential to be lethal. This was emphasised at the end of each individual animal or plant covered with a simple phrase – “Don’t go near it – it’ll kill ya!”

As the Aussies in the front row giggled uncontrollably, big, tough-looking marines laughed along, nervously.

As the group stood up to exit the tent, Sergeant Hastie from B Company 9RQR tapped a particularly large US marine on the shoulder.

“So, you’ll be right out there, mate?”

Not as sure of himself as his stature might suggest, the marine shook his head in disgust at the black humour every Aussie digger seemed to possess.

“How the hell do you guys stay alive out in the field?” he demanded in a quavering voice.

“We’re tough mate,” Sergeant Hastie replied, without skipping a beat.

“Yeah we heard that.”

At 2330hr the largest joint war-fighting exercise in the Pacific for 2007 kicks off.

Scattered cloud cover makes it hard for the stars and moon to illuminate the enormous convoy of Australian and American armoured vehicles.

Awaiting the beach landing of close to 2500 ground forces, is 2/14LHR (QMI)’s A Squadron, combined with a company of the US Army’s 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team from Alaska.



# TALL TALES AND TRUE

**ALLIES GEL ON TALISMAN SABER**

WORDS SAM EASTWOOD PICS ADF

An Australian Landing Craft Medium docks with USS Juneau.



Above: USMC and Australian infantry land.

The wind picks up and sends a shiver down the back of my neck.

I've been walking down the narrow, graded road for the last 15 minutes, but still have no idea what I'm meant to be guarding during this security picket. Armoured vehicles are lined up bumper to bumper on both sides of the road, with seven US Strykers parked dead centre. Troops are scattered around next to the vehicles, trying to catch a few hours sleep on the cold, moist ground before the official commencement of hostilities with the Red Force.

I continue my roving security picket along the road, down towards the open beach that will serve as the landing point for thousands of tonnes of supplies and machinery in an hour or two from now.

The empty white beachhead is eerily quiet as the wind continues to squeeze itself between my bush-hat and my shivering scalp. On the walk back to my vehicle, a 2/14 troop sergeant informs me that the landing has been held up a couple of hours and we will be pushing off at 0500.

For diggers on the ground, the most noticeable indication that the operational tempo is about to escalate from non-tactical to fully 'tac' is the sudden presence of aircraft over the area of operations. As the armoured vehicles disperse to troop hides, two Australian Kiowa recon helicopters swoop overhead, scouring the terrain for concentrations of enemy forces. The buzz of the choppers is soon drowned out by the roar of F/A-18 Hornets and US Navy AV-8B Harrier II jump-jets on routine patrolling runs.

A few hours later, and the first American Landing Craft Utility and Australian Heavy Landing Craft gently bounce up onto the coarse sand. After emptying their loads of troops and gear they make their way back to mother-ships, anchored off the coast, to collect another load of supplies.

Privates Jason Grant (left) and Andrew Stewart, 3RAR, prepare to fire an 84mm rocket.



PIC BY CORPORAL MICHAEL DAVIS

The invading Blue Force of Australian and US troops pour onto the shore and begin positioning themselves for an incursion into the territory held by the dreaded and hateful Red Force, comprising mostly US Marine Corp reserve forces. Soldiers from 2RAR (2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment) manoeuvre onto land after their stay onboard the USS Juneau alongside marines from the 31<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit, who had recently enjoyed Royal Australian Navy hospitality aboard HMAS Kanimbla.

Australia's specialist parachute battalion, 3RAR, had already entered the exercise in typical style, dropping behind Red-Force lines the previous afternoon. The soldiers had boarded three Australian C-130 Hercules transports at RAAF Base Richmond before being flown to the drop zone in Shoalwater Bay by 37 Squadron.

Upon landing and clearing the drop zone, the keen paratroops fulfilled specialist tasks described by their commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Mick Mumford – "Our job is to cause as much disruption behind enemy lines as we can in order to enable an amphibious task force to land as unopposed as possible."

Maintaining control of an exercise of such proportions, featuring so much military hardware, is a task just as complicated as the warfare raging around the Shoalwater Bay Training Area. Talisman Saber 2007 was overseen by a combined force of American and Australian senior NCOs and officers, identifiable by a distinct white armband over their uniform. These umpires were embedded alongside platoon-sized groups and communicated operational news through the radio net to a central exercise control group in Rockhampton. Discussions between umpires and exercise control determined and coordinated casualty

numbers and other relevant information from battles, which were then relayed to the units in play.

The price of becoming a casualty during Talisman Saber was a six-hour stand-down penalty, where those deemed KIA were declared 'out of ex' and forbidden to contribute to the operation. At the conclusion of six hours, these 'casualties' returned to their units as field reinforcements.

As the coalition battlegroup inevitably began to close in on Red Force's defensive positions, the infamously volatile Shoalwater Bay weather launched its own offensive push against the soldiers on the ground. The chilling winds and overcast conditions that greeted the landing force were soon reinforced with a constant drizzle that occasionally spat out flurries of heavier rain coupled with gusts of frigid wind.

The ever-present rain began to affect the terrain, as previously dusty areas transformed into muddy puddles. Diggers from Brisbane's 2/14LHR (QMI), who only days earlier had been limited to four-minute showers because of water restrictions, could scarcely believe they were still in Queensland as they were



PIC BY ABLE SEAMAN JO DILORRENZO

forced time and time again to recover vehicles bogged in the muddy ground.

These trying conditions also created a new obstacle for commanders attempting to achieve mission objectives.

As the exercise wore on, the soldiers spread out along the front line received harsh practice in the art of hutching up. The slightest miscalculation of tent-peg angles was often met with an uncompromising dose of freezing-cold water onto one's sleeping bag at the ungodliest hour. It was after one of these most unwelcome moments, I was reminded by my section commander of the final verse of the role of the Australian infantry – "...regardless of season, weather or terrain". In other words, war doesn't stop for rain breaks. And neither did Talisman Saber 2007.

Blue Force's offensive continued over the next couple of days, fuelled by a vast supply line, relentlessly fed from ship to front line by the well-oiled machinery of war.

Red Force's main defensive position was eventually and conveniently (for the training benefit) located at the brand new urban operations training facility, built to simulate the complex environment of urban terrain.

Inside this maze of alleyways and rooms lay the defending Red Force, awaiting an imminent and inevitable assault.

It took several hours for the numerically superior Blue Force to clear the 350 modified shipping containers that make up the small town, as defenders engaged them with fierce, close-quarter fighting in a hopeless, last-ditch stand.

After the battle, and after spending days on end in mud and rain, thousands of troops gleefully set up temporary residence inside the newly won shipping containers. This lull between phases provided the first real opportunity for curious Australian soldiers to

**TROOPS ARE SCATTERED AROUND NEXT TO THE VEHICLES TRYING TO CATCH A FEW HOURS SLEEP ON THE COLD, MOIST GROUND BEFORE THE OFFICIAL COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES WITH THE RED FORCE.**

RAAF F/A-18 Hornets take on fuel.



PIC BY CORPORAL GARY DIXON

Private First Class Andrew Love, US Marine Corps.



PIC BY CORPORAL CHRIS MOORE

mix with their US Marine Corps counterparts. 'Lego Land' was bustling with activity as soldiers from both countries roamed around, exploring the extensive facility and meeting new friends.

Ill-informed preconceptions of marines being arrogant meat-heads were soon tossed aside as a vibrant trade in stories and sentimental souvenirs began to flow – and the Aussie digger's reputation for being a shrewd trader on the black market was surely enhanced.

After close to a week out field in the rain, the many soldiers who smoke had exhausted their supplies of cigarettes. Faced with the grave situation of another couple of days in the cold and wet without a nicotine boost, the esteem of those soldiers still in possession of cigarettes suddenly sky-rocketed. This situation led to the swapping of materials that, under ordinary circumstances, could be classed as ridiculous.

Twenty-two-year-old Lance Corporal Michael Levesque had a broad smile and positive disposition for a smoker not in possession of cigarettes. Home based at Camp Pendleton California, he says he enjoyed the experience of working alongside Australian soldiers.

"They impress me a lot. I think some of our marines couldn't do what I saw Australian infantry do – they know their tactics and stuff like that backwards, they are good to go," he says.

"And, yesterday, one of them offered me a cigarette. I didn't even have to ask.

"It's small things like that make Aussies cool to work with."

However, Lance Corporal Levesque does not share the same love of local wildlife.

"I've seen the Crocodile Hunter, so I knew a lot of stuff over here was poisonous. I'm not usually scared of spiders but, no shit,

wherever I hootched, I'd look up and I swear to God there would always be at least one of these massive spiders right there above me," he says.

"But when you are actually doing your job you don't think about it.

"Besides, I was so damn tired, I'm like, screw it, I'll just lay here and I don't care what's up there."

The young marine from Iowa has walked over to the 2/14 squadron eager to trade something to show for his brief time in Australia. As we talk, his friend yells over to get his attention, ecstatic that he has acquired a packet of smokes for a mere \$50.

"That's nothing," Levesque says, "one guy swapped his Gortex rain-proof jacket for a packet of cigarettes. I couldn't believe he did that."

He reaches into his map pocket and produces an Alpha Company, 2RAR undershirt. With a proud smile, the new owner spreads it out and reads aloud the writing on the back – "It is not a Commonwealth division, it is an Australian division. Why, give me two Australian divisions and I will conquer the world for you".

"Rommel said that," he professes knowingly.

The gloom of the drizzly afternoon dips into night as I trudge around the muddy puddles between buildings, searching for the brew point set up by the very thoughtful (and well equipped) USMC. 'Lego Land' is alive with inhabitants, as groups of soldiers stand around chatting and laughing, weapons slung behind their backs. It feels as though I've landed in the middle of a Vietnam War movie.

After locating the brew point, I fill my cups canteen and head back towards my troop's nominated shipping container for a welcome night of non-tactical sleep.



Air traffic controllers, Flight Lieutenants Damien Fairhurst and Brianna Connelly.



Flight crash exercise, HMAS Manoora.



Able Seaman Lindsay Ackland, HMAS Tobruk.



Above: Private Rick Foard, 4<sup>th</sup> Light Armoured Reconnaissance. Right: Private Paul Jecks, 3RAR.



PIC BY CORPORAL MICHAEL DAVIS

PIC BY CORPORAL MICHAEL DAVIS

## THE NEW AIRFIELD WILL EXPAND BRADSHAW'S IMPORTANCE AND VALUE AS A MILITARY TRAINING FACILITY INTO THE FUTURE

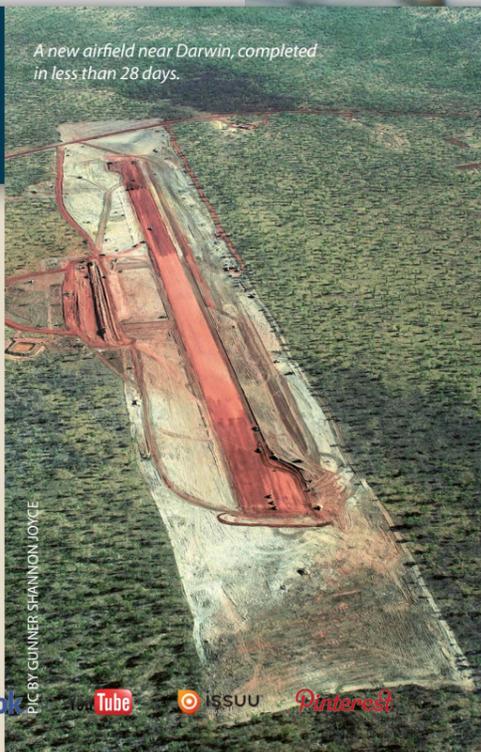
**Taking less than four weeks to complete, a team of Australian and US military engineers has built a new air strip capable of taking C-17 Globemasters.**

The Joint Rapid Airfield Construction (JRAC) project team used remote-control plant equipment, GPS location software and other high-tech systems to build the unsealed landing strip and service aprons at Bradshaw Field Training Area, 600km south of Darwin.

More than 200 Australian and US military personnel plus 20 civilians from the US Army Corps of Engineers' Engineer Research Development Centre completed the project, which was tested by both Australian and American C-17s and C130s on completion.

A prime example of the type of construction either US or Australian engineers would need to undertake to expand a forward base for strategic or heavy-lift air transport, the airfield design provides unloading aprons for two C-17 aircraft with a third aircraft on the runway.

The new airfield will expand Bradshaw's importance and value as a military training facility into the future.



A new airfield near Darwin, completed in less than 28 days.

PIC BY GUNNER SHANNON JOYCE

## THEY IMPRESS ME A LOT. I THINK SOME OF OUR MARINES COULDN'T DO WHAT I SAW AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY DO



A USAF C-17 Globemaster tests the new airfield at Bradshaw Field Training Area.

PIC BY GUNNER SHANNON JOYCE

**TALISMAN SABER**

Along the way, I come across First Lieutenant Edward Leon from the USMC 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Regiment, sitting on a doorstep in one of 'Lego Land's' numerous alleyways. As he scrubs away at a disassembled M4 assault rifle, a smile crosses his face and he recounts his experience working alongside Australians for the first time.

"We worked with Alpha Company, 2RAR. My boys had a wonderful time. Those Aussies bring so much to the fight," he says. "So much field knowledge and different ways of doing things."

"We all learned quite a bit." The Platoon Commander of 2 Platoon, Echo Company says the attitude of Australian soldiers is a refreshing take on the military.

"They have an almost relaxed intensity about them that is really impressive."

"I've worked with the British a little bit and they talk about staying cheerful in the face of adversity, and I can really see that in the Australians too," he says.

"The ability to be relaxed even though you are knee deep in the suck – that's excellent."

"They know the points to stress and, on the certain things that matter, they are very intense, very disciplined. But when it doesn't really mean a whole lot, they can relax."

"I think we have a hard time trying to strike that balance, but you guys manage it a whole lot better."

"I think we can learn from that."

The young officer is also impressed by the Australian Army's methods of operation.

"Since you are a smaller force you have a different approach to the tactics the Marine Corp would use..."

Lieutenant Leon's voice is suddenly cut off by the roar of a US Marine platoon sergeant who appears to have just stepped off the set of Full Metal Jacket. His booming



voice cuts through the cool air as he barks orders, peppered with a range of expletives, at his marines to leave the shelter of the containers and please go help pick up brass shell-casings around the area.

Barely skipping a beat, Lieutenant Leon continues as though nothing interrupted his train of thought.

"I learned a lot from Major Stevens [Officer Commanding, A Company, 2RAR], particularly in defensive operations. The Marine Corp has a lot more at our disposal than you guys when it comes to firepower and equipment, so it is interesting seeing the way your army adapts and overcomes both tactically and physically in combat situations."

"It has been a good learning curve for me personally."

Next morning, as if on cue, the sun makes its first appearance in Shoalwater Bay

Training Area since the start of hostilities. After two long weeks out field and countless retrievals of bogged ASLAVs it is time to go home. We are herded onto a bus for the eight-hour drive back to Gallipoli Barracks in Brisbane.

On the way out of the training area we drive past the company of US Army Strykers we worked alongside during the exercise. A few soldiers are standing around chatting in front of a vehicle. One waves his arms around as he re-enacts a story for his buddies. He points to the tree-line behind his audience and they each turn around to stare at the giant eucalypts, before bursting into laughter.

As we drive on, leaving our American friends behind, I can't help but wonder if they are still looking for drop bears.

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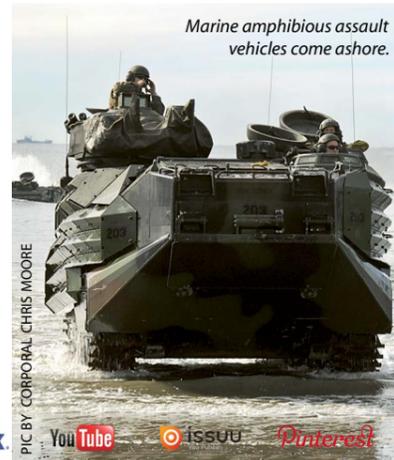
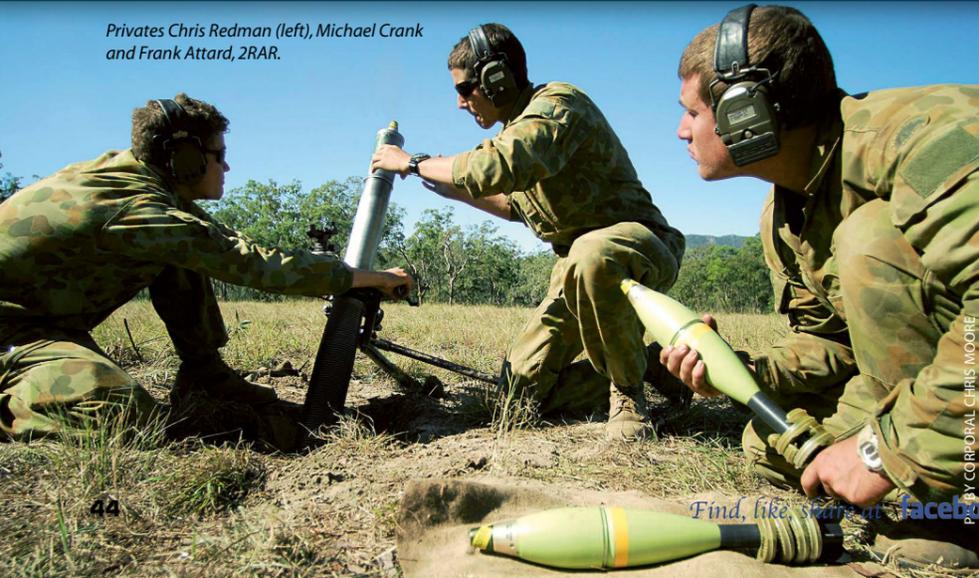
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**AS WE DRIVE ON, LEAVING OUR AMERICAN FRIENDS BEHIND, I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER IF THEY ARE STILL LOOKING FOR DROP BEARS**

Privates Chris Redman (left), Michael Crank and Frank Attard, 2RAR.



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# FIRST AMONG EQUALS

By the time this issue of CONTACT hits the shelf, New Zealand's latest Victoria Cross winner will probably be walking out of the Urewera Ranges with a pig draped over his shoulders. That's because Corporal Bill 'Willy' Apiata VC would rather be in the hills hunting wild boar, or in the mountains of Afghanistan on the Taliban's tail, than face the media throng that hunted him on Monday 2 July. **WORDS KIWI MAC PICS RNZDF**



Lance Corporal Willy Apiata in Afghanistan.

It was about 3.15am, sometime in 2004, when the flash of an RPG detonating into an NZ SAS vehicle in southern Afghanistan, turned night into day. Machinegun fire ripped into the air from the darkness of the Afghan hillside. While a stunned but unhurt then Lance Corporal Apiata was thrown off the bonnet of the vehicle, one SAS soldier, his upper right arm shredded by shrapnel, bled profusely and lapsed in and out of consciousness.

The patrol had laid up in defensive formation for the night so the operators

could shelter from the harsh conditions. But, under the cover of darkness, about 20 insurgents had crept over undulating ground to get close enough to launch an assault.

When a second soldier was wounded, but less critically, Apiata told him to break contact and make his own way to the others, 70 metres away, while Apiata hefted the critically injured corporal on his back and ran across the machinegun- and RPG-raked ground back to relative safety and medical help.

His burning vehicle lit his path, but it also illuminated the pair as Apiata dodged over uneven ground in the middle of a two-way

gun battle between the Taliban and the New Zealand patrol.

To the amazement of those familiar with the type of skirmish they were involved in, neither man was further injured and the wounded man was delivered to the patrol medic who rendered life-saving medical assistance.

Not content with just rescuing his mate, Apiata picked up his M4 and joined the battle. Though heavily outnumbered, it took only 20 minutes for the patrol to vanquish the Taliban.



Corporal Willy Apiata receives the US Presidential Unit Citation.

The assault was broken up and the numerically superior attackers were routed, suffering significant casualties.

A later assessment of the corporal's injuries concluded he would have died of blood loss and shock were it not for the prompt action of Apiata. Instead, he has made a full recovery and is back on duty with the NZ SAS.

Describing his actions, the man known to his mates as 'Mudguts', says he was only doing his job – "I was doing what I was trained for".

Though the only Victoria Cross to ever be awarded to a serving member of the SAS anywhere in the Commonwealth, it wasn't the only decoration awarded to members of the 1<sup>st</sup> NZ SAS Group announced at the 2 July press conference. One SAS captain and a corporal received the New Zealand Gallantry Decoration while another corporal was awarded the New Zealand Gallantry Medal.

None of the other recipients were named, for security reasons, but Defence Chief Lieutenant General Jerry Mateparae, himself a former SAS man, said Apiata's award was too big to go unheralded.

While the public received the news on Monday, the man on whom New Zealand's highest bravery award was bestowed was informed the morning before, through three letters – from the Governor General, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence.



NZ Chief of Defence Lieutenant General Jerry Mateparae congratulates Corporal Willy Apiata VC



## VICTORIA CROSS FACTS

### VICTORIA CROSS RECIPIENTS

- The VC has been awarded 1356 times.
- Corporal Bill Apiata is the first serving SAS recipient anywhere in the Commonwealth.
- 13 VCs have been awarded since World War Two – Korea, four British (two posthumous); Borneo, one British; Vietnam, four Australian (two posthumous); The Falklands, two British (both posthumous); Iraq, one British; Afghanistan, one British (posthumous), 1 New Zealand.

### MANUFACTURE

VCS are cast in gunmetal from guns captured from the Russian Army during the Crimean War. The metal is chemically treated to give a dark bronze finish. The rank, name and unit of service of the recipient are engraved on the reverse of the suspender bar and the date of the act or acts for which the cross is awarded is engraved on the central portion of the reverse. The Victoria Cross for New Zealand is manufactured by London jewellers Hancock and Co, who have made the VC since its inception.

## WHO IS WILLY APIATA, VC?

Born on 28 June 1972 in the small Waikato forestry and hydro-scheme town of Mangakino, his birth certificate lists his first name as Bill, but most know him as 'Willy'. Except his mates, that is. To them, the man they share a beer with or head off to the back blocks of the Bay of Plenty hunting pigs, he's not Bill 'Willy' Apiata VC – he's just 'Mudguts'.

Willy has three sisters and is the third youngest in the family. His parents (father Maori, mother Pakeha) split up when he was young, but he remains close to his mother.

Before he left, however, his dad taught him to hunt, almost as soon as the kid could walk, and today, Willy is utterly at home in the bush.

Spending his early years in Northland, Willy moved to the settlement of Te Kaha in the eastern Bay of Plenty region of New Zealand's North Island. Leaving the Whanau-a-Apanui Area School when he was 15, Willy went to live with relatives in Auckland when he was 16. At age 17 he joined the Tauranga-based 6 Hauraki Battalion, a part-time territorial unit, as an infantryman.

On completing basic training, the first person he showed himself to was his grandfather, Jimmy Clarke, who had fought in World War Two.

"One of my proudest moments was wearing my uniform to show him," he says.

While serving as a part-time soldier, Willy held down a number of farming, hunting, horse-breaking and shoeing jobs. He also tried working on a fishing boat and delivering bread.

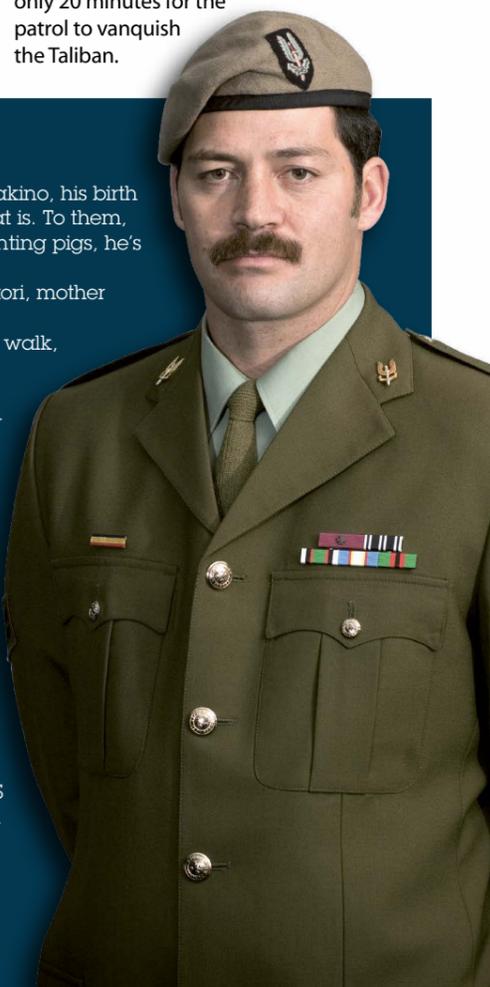
"I'll take anything on. I was just enjoying life, taking things as they came," he says.

Along the way he moved to Wellington with his childhood sweetheart. They are now separated but the couple have a four-year-old son to whom Willy says he is devoted.

In 2000, Willy deployed to East Timor. On return, he decided to have a crack at SAS selection, but fell short. Undaunted, he joined the regular force and, at age 29, signed on for another selection and passed.

And the rest, as they say, is history.

A member of the SAS contingent to Afghanistan in 2004, he was to be the first ever serving SAS member to receive a Victoria Cross, the first recipient of the Victoria Cross for New Zealand, and the first Kiwi to be awarded the VC since World War Two.



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# LAST LEOPARD

**E**motions ran high among some of the Armoured Corps' most hardened senior members at Robertson Barracks in July, when a reliable workhorse and old friend was retired after 30 years service in the Army.

In the biggest parade for Australian Armour since the Centurion Tank was farewellled in 1967, former serving members from across the country descended on Darwin to join old mates from the 1st Armoured Regiment in saying goodbye to the Leopard tank, a major piece of the unit's heart.

As the last Leopard rolled off the 1st Brigade parade ground, through a steadfast guard of M1A1 Abrams, the odd hint of tears were bashfully wiped away by old-school Armoured Corps sergeants, right through to some old Defence chiefs.

While a sense of sadness seemed to wash over those who had served almost all of their Army lifetimes on the Leopards, an eruption of delight and a resounding cheer broke the sombre mood, as a single Leopard made one final charge across an empty parade ground on its way to a new home as guard and monument overlooking the front gate to Robertson Barracks.

Taking the Leopard to its final resting place was an honour bestowed to the only serving member of 1st Armoured Regiment

## OLD WORKHORSE RETIRED

to witness the original transition parade between the Centurion and Leopard, Sergeant John Hensler.

With a warm demeanour and a proud 24-year-history as an armoured senior NCO to back him up, Sergeant Hensler holds a 30-year Pandora's Box of stories on the Leopard close to his chest – to be opened only between mates and beers for years to come.

"It was a great honour as a young fella to drive that Centurion tank into its retirement spot down at Puckapunyal 30 years ago, so you can imagine how I'm feeling today," he said.

"We've come a long way in 30 years, and I'm very proud to have been a part of that."

While the Leopard's change in status from war machine to war relic marked the end of an era, a sense of excitement was surfacing from some of the Regiment's younger faces – a feeling that had been brewing since the first announcement of the Chief of Army's vision for a Hardened and Networked Army.

As a waiting media scrum jostled to grill the Chief of Army and 1st Brigade armoured commanders on what the new tanks mean

to Australian operations in the Middle East, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy stood his ground.

"For those in the armoured regiment who want to ask me the question, 'when are we going?' I answer – 'when we need to you,'" Lieutenant General Leahy announced.

"What I see today is that 1st Armoured is ready – and that's the important first step."

Commander 1st Brigade Brigadier Craig Orme described current sentiment across the corps.

"I'm a tank soldier myself – I grew up on the Leopard, like a lot of the men you see here today," he said.

"A lot of old diggers have come back for this farewell, to share again in that sense of mateship that is born through Army training and experience on the battlefield.

"They have come from right across Australia to say goodbye to the Leopard, but also to welcome the Abrams.

"Today is our re-birthing, and the excitement across the unit is unmistakable."

Commanding Officer 1st Armoured Regiment Lieutenant Colonel Duncan



Right: The last Leopard tank crew to serve the Australian Army pose with their tank after firing its last rounds (above) at the Mount Bundy Training Area – (from left) Trooper James Moore (operator), Trooper Michael Colley (gunner), Corporal Nicholas Zerafa (crew commander), Trooper Craig Hancock (driver). Photos by Gunner Shannon Joyce



Hayward summed up what the arrival of the Abrams means to his unit.

"The Abrams are faster, more lethal. They fight at night and, most importantly for our soldiers, they are incredibly survivable.

"We're in the business of giving the government options – and what we give them now is the ability to deploy Abrams from today."

Regimental Sergeant Major 1st Armoured Regiment Warrant Officer Class One Ian Cummings who served all his 25 years on the German-designed Leopard, pointed out a funnier side of the capability upgrade.

"At least we're not translating the manuals from German anymore," he said with a grin.



The last Leopard tanks in service with the Australian Army are farewellled by a guard of 1st Armoured Regiment's new M1A1 Abrams at Robertson Barracks on 7 July.



The old and the new Leopard (centre) and Abrams.



New kid on the block – M1A1 Abrams.

# BALANCE OF LIFE

## NZ CONTRACTORS IN IRAQ

More than 300 New Zealanders walk a daily tightrope on the mean streets of Iraq. As guns for hire, they weigh up the risk to life against the attraction of lucrative contracts, and soldier on.

WORDS KIWI MAC

**H**undreds more are said to be interested. Salaries appear attractive. US\$600 per day sounds pretty good – good enough to have enticed several blokes from my Waikato home town, Te Awamutu, to work in Iraq as Private Military Contractors (PMCs). One, Andre Chatfield, who earned his spurs in the New Zealand police's Special Tactics Group even guarded Iraq's interim president.

But if the money sounds too good to be true, sometimes it is. In July this year, Darryl de Thierry lost his life in an IED attack while last year, two other Waikato men, Steve Gilchrist and Teina Ngamata, both employed by ArmorGroup, were killed in two separate incidents. In 2004, New Plymouth engineer John Tyrrell was shot dead in Kirkuk.

Ngamata and de Thierry had served together in 1RNZIR before both men decided to ply their trade in the private sector with ArmorGroup.

Fellow former Waikato soldier, Mike, currently operating in Iraq, is just one of an estimated 35,000 PMCs working the circuit for about 80 different companies.

While some PMCs drive into Iraq from neighbouring Jordan or from Kuwait in the south, Mike says most enter the bad-lands via Baghdad International Airport.

"Aboard a Royal Jordanian flight from Amman, the first time in, I thought the pilot was a frustrated fighter jock as he threw the plane into tight corkscrews to avoid ground fire," he says.

"Landing, you then take the ringroad towards the exit. You're in a green, or safe weapon state, but once past the waving Gurkhas on the gate, you're in the Red Zone, loaded for beer."

The eight-minute ride along 'Route Irish' is described as the biggest adrenalin rush on the planet with as many as 15 attacks a

day along the main access to the safe haven of the Green Zone.

Contractors working in Iraq are generally tight lipped. The last one to grant *The Times* an interview was sacked, despite gaining approval to speak to the media in 2005 – so, we thank Mike for his insights.

Mike has worked in Iraq for about three years and said things had gotten seriously dodgy of late, and some PMCs questioned if the money was still worth it.

"It's getting pretty tight. I managed to secure a job in the Green Zone last year but, before you can do that, you've got to earn your patch working the convoys for about two years.

"While the money is OK, it isn't that flash to be honest. Sure it's good compared to an eight-to-five, Monday to Friday office job. But it's not Monday to Friday, it's 24/7 and

actually works out about US\$25 an hour when you consider insurance and other costs," he says.

But despite the risks, more and more Kiwis [and Australians] appear eager to take the plunge. Many former or serving soldiers, police and even the odd civvie are putting their hand up for a shot at a job with a real difference.

It's easier said than done, though. Many become frustrated trying to get that first foot in the door.

But one New Zealander who has trained both PMCs and crack counter-terrorist teams from 30 different countries says perseverance is the key for Kiwis wanting to enter the industry.

Alan Brosnan, a former New Zealand SAS soldier is one of a rare breed, having already established himself in the private security sector before the war in Iraq started.

He even wrote a best-selling book with fellow ex SAS soldier and fellow security contractor Duke Henry – *Soldiering On* – about the pair's days with the Special Air Service and subsequent security operations.

Originating from Dunedin, Alan left the NZ SAS in the late '80s.

In 1991 he established his own company in Mississippi USA – the Tactical Explosive Entry School (TEES) – to train law-enforcement and military special-operations teams from around the world, tasked to operate in high risk environments.

"One of the biggest pitfalls for Kiwis

wanting to enter the private security industry is that they are applying for jobs with mostly US and UK companies and competing, not only against applicants from those countries, but Australians and South Africans as well.

"They lack the initial contacts. They need buddies on the inside," he says.

But those who persevere and prove themselves have adapted well.

"One thing they do have in their favour though, is that Kiwis have a good reputation. They mix well with different cultures and races, where some guys from other countries don't.

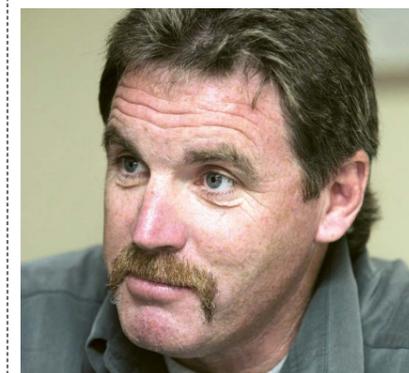
"And they don't expect a lot. Most are just happy to be there, contributing to the global war on terror," he says.

One particular Kiwi trait that is popular with employers is that despite an industry made up predominantly of type-A personalities, the New Zealanders have an ability to become the 'grey men'.

"They don't go about puffing their chests out and that can be a real advantage."

With a far larger homeland special operations community, American companies have so many former soldiers to choose from that they see little point recruiting from elsewhere, finding it simpler to recruit their own countrymen.

"Once they've been trained up by the government and had their skills honed by deployments in Iraq or Afghanistan, they are suddenly very employable," Alan says.



Alan Brosnan

**“ ONE THING THEY DO HAVE IN THEIR FAVOUR, THOUGH, IS THAT KIWIS HAVE A GOOD REPUTATION. THEY MIX WELL WITH DIFFERENT CULTURES AND RACES WHERE SOME GUYS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES DON'T ”**

Below: Baghdad's mean streets



Darryl de Thierry





**“ THE GUYS IN IRAQ ARE NOT MERCENARIES, LIKE THE ILL-FATED EQUATORIAL GUINEA OPERATION, THEY ARE HIRED TO PROTECT INFRASTRUCTURE AND PEOPLE INVOLVED IN RECONSTRUCTION, NOT TO CARRY OUT OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS ”**

But the veteran operator has no plans to return to the circuit himself.

Having travelled and worked extensively as a trainer and operator, including Iraq and three tours in Afghanistan since 2002, Alan is happy to hang up his gun.

In 2005 he sold TEES to Olive Group and now works for them as a training director.

“I’m not interested in working as a contractor, I’m happy to work as an executive and develop the business,” he says.

Here, he is ideally placed, working with government agencies and contractors, teaching and adapting to new techniques to fit in with established ones.

“I sold TEES to Olive because they had a sound reputation and we are currently developing our facility into the premier training centre in the US.”

Private security companies operating in Iraq and Afghanistan have been accused of being a private, uncontrolled army. But their presence is actually regulated, resulting from the US Army’s Logistics Civil Augmentation Programme (LOGCAP), introduced in 1985.

This allowed the US Army to downsize after the Cold War and civilian companies to tender for contracts to supply a broad spectrum of logistical and technical support. Under the agreement, however, the US military is obligated to provide security to civilian contractors or, if unable to do so because of troop shortages, contractors are free to hire private security firms to protect them.

Since the invasion of Iraq, and given the sheer scale of that engagement, there has been a sharp rise in the

number of companies needing and offering protective services. Among those offering such protection are the giant American companies Blackwater, Triple Canopy and DynaCorp, while British companies, where most Kiwis find employment, include Aegis, HART, CRG and Olive Group.

Alan Brosnan says that, far from just guns for hire, these companies offer broad-spectrum security solutions and a protective layer for those who are working to rebuild shattered nations.

“Here at Olive Group, for instance, we offer vulnerability appraisals, intelligence gathering, analysis and assessments, training and operational support.

“The guys in Iraq are not mercenaries, like the ill-fated Equatorial Guinea operation, they are hired to protect infrastructure and people involved in reconstruction, not to carry out offensive operations.

“If they get contacted, their job is to bug out, to protect the principal,” he says.

Iraq or Afghanistan are not the only places these contractors can be sent when military forces are stretched. After Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, Olive Group provided staff to help secure disaster-relief efforts.

“We deployed 200 personnel, who were mobilised within days, assisting FEMA as security contractors. They’re contracted on that mission for at least one year.

“Since then we’ve also had people sent to assist in Texas where they were hired, equipped and deployed within hours.”

With so much of the US Defense budget being soaked up in Iraq and Afghanistan, Alan says it was only logical that specialist training be contracted out to companies like his.

“It’s easier and cheaper to hire private companies to run training than to create and maintain a specialist facility with limited focus within the military.

“The US is full of subject-matter experts in the area of counter-terrorism, so why not use them – and free up the military for other tasks.

“That’s why they come to companies like us.”



PIC BY BRIAN HARTIGAN



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WORDS WAYNE COOPER PICS ADF AND COOPER COLLECTION

Someone was playing that bloody song again. Lately it seemed like every time I was here someone was playing that song, it was like torture. If they were trying to do my head in it was working.

It wasn't that I had something against the Hoodoo Gurus.

Quite the opposite in fact – I was a huge fan. And before my arrival in Somalia several months earlier, that song had been a particular favourite. But now the melancholy lyrics were cutting too close to the bone, and the chorus was an unwelcome reminder of how far away from home I really was.

As I walked wearily from where my APC section had aligned itself along the outer wall of the squadron's makeshift barracks, the song drifted out from the sleeping quarters. After another of countless night patrols through the streets of Baidoa, even the prospect of a shower and few hours' unbroken sleep provided little distraction from the grit in my eyes and ache in my back. I was fatigued, cranky and homesick – and there was that song taunting me again.

"Turn that shit off," I muttered as I walked into the bashers, my eyes trying to adjust from morning sunshine to the dimly-lit expanse.

"Fuck off!" came the response.

Fair enough – just thought I'd ask.

Although the line sections spent most of their time away from the airfield that had become the 1RAR Battalion Group's home, we all had a bed space in the bashers that we could claim as our own. It wasn't much. An army-issue stretcher (a Gucci American one if you were lucky enough to swindle one off a Yank), a mosquito net, and a bit of space under the stretcher to stow any possessions you didn't have the need or room to carry in your APC.

Finding my little patch, I laid out my foam mattress over the US Army stretcher

and slumped down. Closing my eyes I tried unsuccessfully to rub the soreness out of them and to relax. But the song sought me out from across the large room and, despite my best efforts to the contrary, my mind drifted to thoughts of home.

When I had left Townsville three months earlier, my daughters had been 18 months and two-and-a-half years old. In my mind they remained that age, but in reality they would have changed significantly in that time. The thought of my babies growing up without me affected me more than it ever had before.

As a member of the Operational Deployment Force (ODF), I had become used to being away from my family for many months of the year, but at almost six months, Operation Solace was to be the longest extended separation from my kids I had endured. Add to that the fact that this was a reasonably dangerous deployment and, optimism aside, there were no guarantees that you would see your family again. It could make for a pretty depressing scenario if you dwelt on it, which of course I was.

It was April, and we had been in country for more than three months with a couple still to go. I had been quietly struggling with the separation from kids for some time and it seemed April was going to be the hump to get over before the downhill run home. As things were to transpire, psychologically it was going to be the toughest month of all.

After the initial excitement of deployment, seeing the anguish of the Somali people as they struggled in the most terrible circumstance to keep their children alive had brought my own family into sharp focus. But even though I had become quite homesick, I made a particular effort to remain focused on my work as the best way to ensure I'd get home to see my kids again.

"...Estimated time of arrival 9.30 a.m.  
Been up before the sun and now I'm tired before I even begin,  
Now you're flying - I got so much work in front of me,  
Really flying - it stretches out far as the eye can see...I can see..." \*

# ONE THOUSAND MILES AWAY

So when, on a break from patrolling near the refugee camp, my section commander Moose Ferriday took me aside to ask how I was handling being away from my children, I was horrified. Had it been that obvious? I was instantly embarrassed and angry that I may have let my professional guard down.

As we stood amid the stench of shallow graves outside the camp, I nervously asked why he asked.

"Because you're the only person in the section who has kids," he said in his usual direct manner.

In contrast to Moose's usual outward indifference to the more emotive issues, his next statement surprised me. After pausing to take in the hundreds of rock piles that inadequately covered the rotting bodies beneath, he continued.

"And if I had kids, I think this shit would get to me," he explained.

With the limbs of the dead protruding from the rocks all around me, I reaffirmed to do just that. After all, there was no shortage of reminders of what could happen if you didn't.

April marked a turning point for the city of Baidoa and the greater humanitarian-relief sector we were operating in. After several months of decisive action to combat lawlessness and win the trust of the people, the 1RAR Battalion Group was beginning to see the fruits of its labour. Although banditry had not ceased, it had significantly diminished, and there were obvious signs the local population had begun to gain some trust in the Australians and some hope for the future.

Baidoa itself was changing. To an outsider, the desolate regional centre would still have had a post-apocalyptic aspect to it (and it was emerging from an apocalypse

from the 1RAR Battalion Group. Despite plenty of passion, the best efforts of the home side (and the one-eyed spectators who unashamedly lent assistance), their efforts went unrewarded as the Aussies prevailed in what was by all accounts an enthusiastic, if not too skilful display of the beautiful game.

On the day of the big match, 23 Section was in a different part of town, working through another patrol cycle with the infantry. As the result of the match was broadcast over the squadron radio net, I noted the 2-3 score line with a measure of detached interest while sullenly musing that it could only be rear-echelon pogues who had time to play sport.

The day-cycle turned to night patrols and the evening began like many others. And, like the infantry company we were working with, the battalion's other companies began

involved, but I could tell everyone was anxious for more news. The questions of whom, what and where hung heavy in the air, with the cigarette smoke.

The radio crackled again and the banter abruptly stopped. Squadron liaison officer Mick Toohey's voice sounded tense as he reported his vehicle was returning to the airfield with a casualty. SHQ replied that a dust-off was on its way.

It didn't need to be said that whoever the poor bugger was, his condition was serious. But the fact that a member of the battalion group had gone down didn't excuse the rest of us from our work. A short time later, the infantry patrol arrived at our location and, after a quick exchange of information, the grim-faced infantry piled into the back of our vehicles. That one of their colleagues was in trouble obviously weighed heavily on their minds.

from our duties, no matter how upsetting. But as the details of what had happened became known, a sense of dismay permeated the ranks.

It seems the fatality had been caused by an accidental discharge during a patrol when a lead scout handed his 2IC a loaded weapon. As the man on point, the digger's weapon had been on instant and as Lance Corporal McAliney pulled the rifle toward him, it discharged into his stomach at near point-blank range.

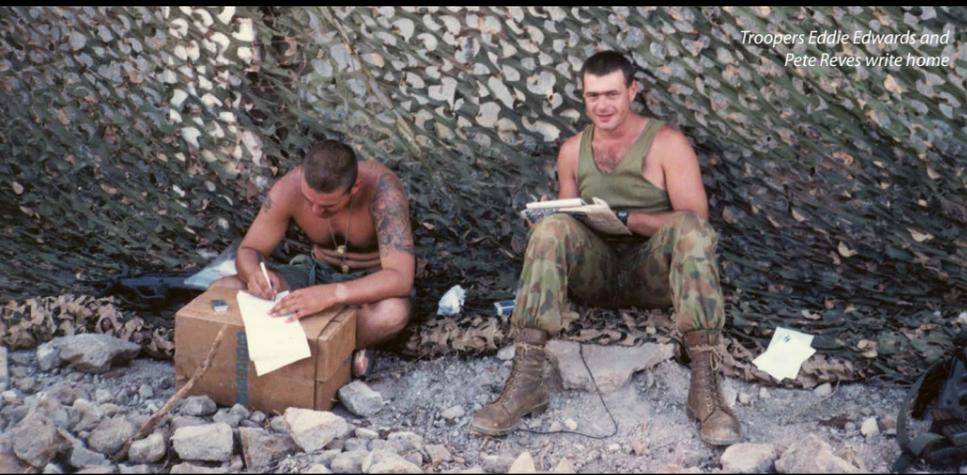
I didn't know Shannon, and initially his name did not ring any bells. I eventually worked out who he was by his platoon and section callsign. It turned out we had carried his platoon in our vehicles on a couple of occasions, but I only had a vague memory of him.

My immediate thoughts were for the poor guy whose moment of forgetfulness

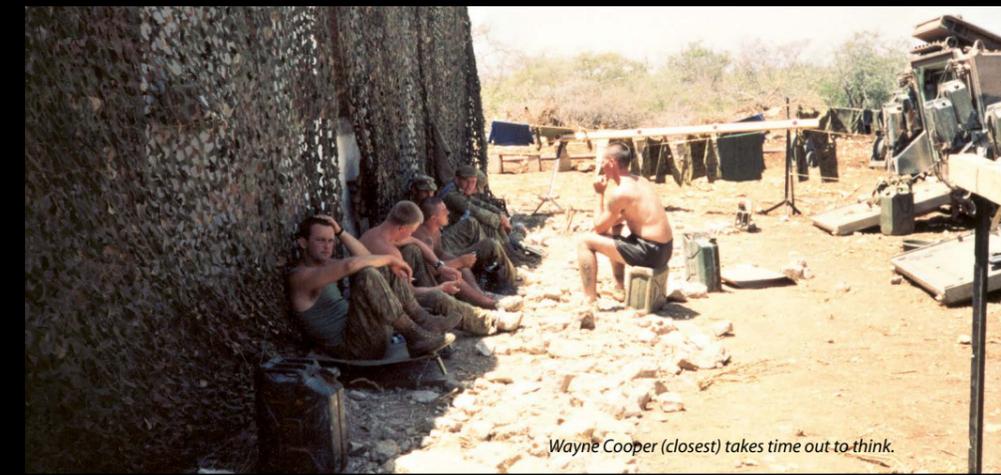
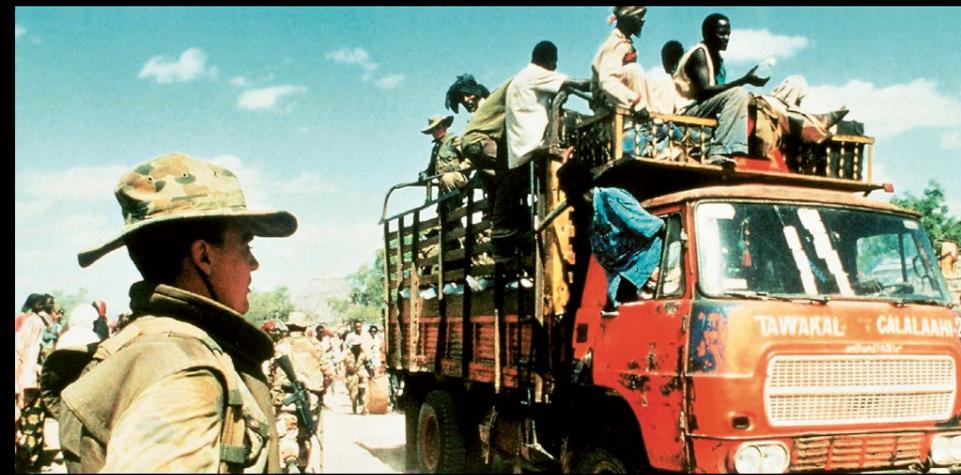
But there was still a long way to go and more dangerous work ahead.

As I lay on my stretcher later that same week, I morbidly wondered how many more of us would not make it home to our loved ones. Thankfully my thoughts eventually drifted again to my two young daughters. With the image of them safe in their beds in Australia, I snapped out of my reverie and resolved not only to do all I could to get home to them, but to never again take my good fortune for granted.

Despite these promises to myself, in the years between then and now, I know I have not lived up to my own ideals. While it's human nature to take things for granted, I feel that those of us who have seen how the other half live – and die – should be more aware of our good fortune, so in that regard I have failed – but not totally.



Troopers Eddle Edwards and Pete Reves write home



Wayne Cooper (closest) takes time out to think.

So it was just a good guess then. Not for the first time, I acknowledged my good fortune at having Moose as my Secco. Realising I wasn't facing a reprimand I let my guard down a little.

"I'd be lying if I said I wasn't thinking about my kids a lot," I offered cautiously. "But I'm ok. I'm just keen to get on with it and go home."

Now, thankfully, like most real-life soldiers, Moose wasn't one for Hollywood-style pep talks or stirring speeches to inspire his troops. In fact, he was blunter and more direct than most, firmly in the 'suck-it-up-and-get-on-with-it' school. But he was also one of the best NCOs in the job and knew what to say and when.

After a reassuring smile, he began to walk back toward his APC. The acknowledgment that he was conscious of my situation was all that was required. Nothing much else needed to be said.

"Well, keep your mind on the job and we will," he said over his shoulder as he walked away.

of sorts), but to those of us who had arrived in January, the Baidoa of April 1993 was a different place.

The cause of the city's renaissance could be summed up in a word – optimism. Across the town the changes were subtle, but significant. Everywhere the population was taking back possession of their city and the signs of burgeoning optimism were obvious.

With the help of the battalion group, the streets were being cleared of garbage, urban decay and the relics of war. Shops and cafes were reopening and more produce could be seen on shelves. An array of colourful clothing was seen in the streets and people were out and about in an obvious effort to socialise with neighbours once more.

Even sport was back on the agenda. An epic soccer match took place on red dirt and gravel of one of Baidoa's sports fields, between a team consisting of locals and NGO aid workers and a representative side

to spread out through the town to patrol the dark streets. Unfortunately for Delta Company, this night was to end in tragedy.

Having backed up against a wall to wait for a grunt patrol to marry up with us, Pete and I were enjoying a brew and a smoke when the radio net burst into life. Squadron headquarters (SHQ) abruptly gave orders for the Quick Reaction Force section to pick up Delta Company's commander and medics and proceed to a location in Delta's AO to render urgent medical assistance.

Pete and I looked at each other across the crew compartment, the sense of disquiet I was feeling also visible on his face.

Radio messages were usually a lot less revealing. So, someone must be in serious trouble for the sigs to speak so plainly over an unsecured network.

I made my way over to Moose's vehicle to find the rear door open and Micky P and Ken already sitting in the back. Conversation flittered around some absurdity, as it often did when P was

### There was no possible good side to any of this, but the fact the Battalion Group's first casualty was the result of an accident was even more disturbing for us all

The patrols went on through the night with no fresh information. At dawn, we returned to the airfield to the news that 21-year-old Lance Corporal Shannon McAliney had died from wounds he sustained in an incident in town. The urgency of the activity the night before had given us some indication of the seriousness of incident, but the news that one of ours had been killed still hit hard.

It wouldn't be fair to say the soldiers of the battalion group were stunned by the news, as that would imply our ability to do our jobs was somehow diminished. As professional soldiers we all knew the realities of our work and were too pragmatic to allow this news to divert us

led to the death of a colleague. What horror was he going through? To make matters worse, as well as being a member of the same section, apparently they had also been close mates.

There was no possible good side to any of this, but the fact the Battalion Group's first casualty was the result of an accident was even more disturbing for us all. To be killed in combat by the enemy was to at least to go down doing what you had trained for. But, for a life to be lost in an unnecessary accident was such a waste.

It was a wake-up call to us all. We had done a lot of good work and had helped to turn things around for the people of Baidoa.

I never did find out who it was playing that song over and over in the bashes at Baidoa airfield, but I owe them a small debt of gratitude I suppose. When I hear it now it takes me straight back to Somalia and I am reminded of how lucky I am. It's funny how, as you grow older, the simplest things can take you back so effectively – at least for those of us afforded the opportunity to grow old.

*"... Promised to myself someday I'd take the time and try to make sense, Out of all those opportunities I've lost from trying to sit on the fence, Now you're flying – but right now I've got no time for yesterday, Really flying – yesterday's a thousand miles away..."\**

Well maybe yesterday is not that far away after all?

\* Lyrics from 1000 Miles Away by Dave Faulkner

## After the break

BY DON STEVENSON

Last issue I talked about preventative strategies for some common military-fitness injuries and, hopefully, those tips will help you avoid any overuse injuries.

Unfortunately, the nature of military work will always see some injuries that can't be avoided no matter how rigorous your training. Acute injuries like broken bones, dislocations and sprains can occur during regular military activities and operations and, of course, in this day and age there is a distinct possibility of sustaining combat-related injuries.

So what should you do if you suffer an injury with the promise of a long rehab process?

While it may sound like a good idea to sit on the couch and watch TV, to do so will only make you fat, unfit and facing an even longer uphill struggle to get back into shape once the medical personnel clear you to begin training again.

When you suffer a serious injury it's basically going to put either a leg, an arm or your lower back/torso out of action and limit you to exercises that use the other two areas. As you rehab, you may be able to start adding exercises that use the injured area in a non-impact manner – such as cycling for injured knees.

Also, keep in mind the need to maintain all aspects of your fitness including strength, muscular endurance, cardio fitness and flexibility – having a

broken leg is not an excuse to do nothing but bicep curls and bench press for 8 weeks!

So let's look at some workout strategies and exercises that can be used to maintain your fitness while you are dealing with a serious injury.

**Cardio:** If you've injured a knee or ankle or broken a leg, then running is probably out of the question for a while.

Depending on the injury, though, you may be able to row or cycle but if those options are closed as well, it's time to get creative. Swimming may be a viable alternative. However, my preferred method of cardio conditioning for people with leg injuries is circuit training, with a variety of upper-body and core drills. A number of the workouts from places like [www.crossfit.com](http://www.crossfit.com) can be modified to replace squats with extra core exercises, while still keeping a very high cardio load.

Try the following legless workouts:

- Complete as many rounds as possible in 20 minutes of 5 pullups, 10 pushups, 15 situps.
- Complete 4 minutes of tabata intervals (20 sec on/10 sec off) of each of the following exercises; chinups, pushups, heavy bag punching, situps. Complete 16 minutes without a break.

**Strength:** Injuries can sometimes even be a blessing in disguise, allowing you to focus on developing strength in one area while another area is out of action. Once again, you may have to get creative with working around an injury, but this can lead to some very good workouts. Take a look at the following examples.

**Squats;** back squats can be tough on the lower back when you are recovering from core and shoulder injuries. Try versions such as front squats which are easier on the shoulders and lower back but tougher on the stabilisers of the core.

**Chinups and dips;** legs completely out of action? Work on weighted, high-rep and gymnastic-ring chinups and dips. You can never have enough chinup and dip strength and, if you get really adventurous, you could even learn to do a muscle up (chinup to dip support on rings), a move which will make surmounting walls and other obstacles a breeze.

**Core:** I'll admit I'm not a huge fan of doing so-called core-stability work on wobble boards and swiss balls, except as required by physiotherapy, however I am a huge fan of developing lower back and

abdominal strength through difficult bodyweight exercises and weighted core work such as gymnastic L sits and other holds on rings or parallel bars – and these are an excellent thing to learn while injured.

**Unilateral work:** If one arm or leg is out of action there is no reason to stop working the other! While it's probably not a great idea to do a six-week right-arm bicep specialisation program, it is a good idea to keep the uninjured limb moving. A large component of strength is neural, and by working your good side you'll actually maintain strength in the injured side and enhance it's recovery once your injury has cleared up. One-armed snatches, clean and press, deadlift and pushups are all fantastic exercises to put into strength workouts or conditioning circuits. One-legged squats and deadlifts are just as good, although a bit trickier.

Unfortunately, I could probably fill a book with various scenarios and strategies for working around injuries and, really, it's going to come down to case-by-case program design. If you do need a specific program to work around an injury (or just to increase your fitness generally) contact us at [fitness@octogen.com.au](mailto:fitness@octogen.com.au) and we can help you out.

## Scenario Based Training

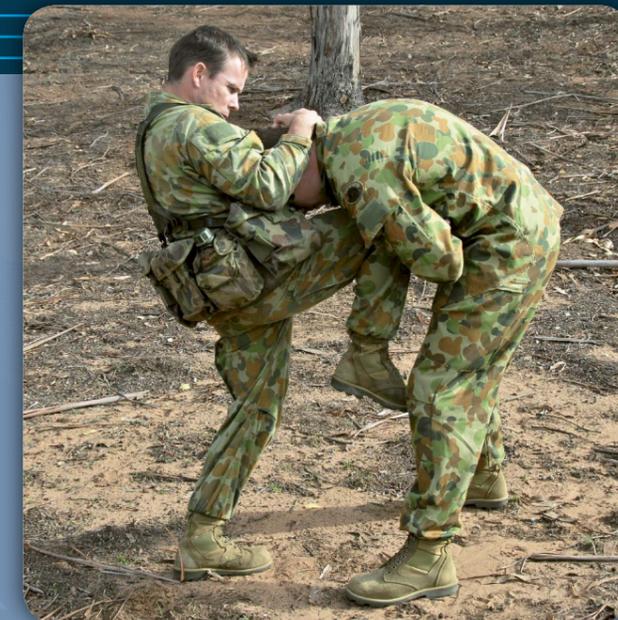
BY MAJOR TRAVIS FAURE

The value of realistic scenario training can not be underestimated when training soldiers for less-than-lethal, graduated use of force. The Army Military Self Defence (MSD) program incorporates the use of scenarios into the training to enhance the student learning experience, confirm skill adaptation and induce a degree of stress. Scenario training includes real-life environments where the soldier must maintain situational awareness and deal with close personal confrontations.

Key aspects to scenario training include designing appropriate scenarios that reflect the operational environment, well-trained role players, safety considerations and maximum control.

Role players have an important task to ensure the scenario is optimised for maximum learning outcomes. The role player is integral to the success of the scenario and must be able to follow the script and adapt to the students' responses. MSD instructor courses train soldiers to be role players within MSD scenarios.

Safety precautions are used in scenarios to ensure the training is safe with minimum risk of injury to the student and role player. This includes the use of protective items and suites, such as FIST and Redman suites. These have been designed to be impact reducing. Role players place their bodies on the line for the students' learning benefit, so it is important that they are protected. Use of simulated weapons ensures that if mishaps occur or the timing was not right, the student and role player do not receive injury.



The overriding safety feature is the control of the scenario. This includes well-developed briefs including, at the commencement of the scenario, a purpose brief, role-players and safety brief and, at completion of the activity, a student debrief. Each scenario is controlled by a safety officer who, on completion of the scenario, debriefs the students and, if necessary, the role players.

Scenario training is an advanced form of training designed to test the student under the pressure of performing in a dynamic environment when they have just experienced an 'adrenalin dump'. Students can be observed to see how they respond to various situations and if they employ the correct graduated use of force and the right MSD techniques to handle the situation.

Ultimately, MSD scenario training is about stress inoculation. By exposing the students to various scenarios, they learn the basic principles and concepts to apply, which are similar for most scenarios. Then, on operational duty, if they experience a similar confrontation they automatically know how to respond. Techniques road-tested under pressure and found to work in scenario-based training will be maintained by the student as an option for future reference and use in the field.

Scenario training is a double edged weapon, however. If the student has a positive experience they will leave the course combatively confident and wanting to do more training. If the scenario goes poorly for the student, then it is important to redo the scenario and learn other ways to handle the situation. Techniques and concepts learnt under stress will be maintained. But if these techniques and concepts do not suit the scenario then the student must have the opportunity to adapt to a new behaviour, otherwise the training is reinforcing incorrect responses.

Finally, MSD is scenario-based training. Students learn the MSD techniques in a controlled learning environment.

They then escalate through various aspects of training to ensure they can apply the technique when the need arises. Techniques based on gross motor skills are usually easier to perform and, under the effects of the 'adrenalin dump', do not deteriorate – in fact, they actually perform better.



## CLOSE COMBAT: CROSS OF IRON

Matrix Games

[www.matrixgames.com/games/game.asp?gid=335](http://www.matrixgames.com/games/game.asp?gid=335)

PC

Long-time CONTACT readers will be well aware of Sapper Gameboy's affection for Atomic's masterpiece of real-time tactical wargaming, the *Close Combat* series. With five titles under its belt and two publishers pushing their creative prowess, Atomic Games disintegrated spectacularly following *Close Combat: Invasion Normandy*. Much of the company's failure can be attributed to internal bickering over the support it should offer to a dedicated fan base intent on filling the space between official releases with user mods.

*Close Combat: Cross of Iron* is the first title in a commercial venture by CSO Simtek (a group of dedicated modders) and Matrix Games to rekindle

the brand that has kept its fan base enthralled for well over a decade. Experienced *Close Combaters* are now faced with the difficult decision to purchase something they have, for the most part, downloaded and tweaked for free in the past few years or to support a resurgence and possible growth in the title. And that really is the nub of it. *Close Combat: Cross of Iron* is simply what most diehard fans have transformed their copies of *Close Combat III* into over the years. While many argue the Russian Front had the best tactical gameplay aspects of the series, it loses on the extra depth added to later titles with no off-map artillery or close-air support – something I immediately missed.

Gameplay wise, *Cross of Iron* is *Close Combat* on 'roid rage. The tactical prowess and skills of the AI adversary are maxed out and weapon-system effects are as accurate as they can be within the constraints of the program. While it is extremely armour focussed,



the Eastern Front battles offer a great mix of terrain in which even the humble infantryman brandishing a Molotov cocktail can come into his own. While experienced *Close Combaters* will have no real problems against the AI and immediately gravitate towards the multi-play arena, first-timers will struggle as the T34s come swarming through the snow. Like all games in the *Close Combat* series, it doesn't do a bad job of reinforcing some of those old military chestnuts such as keeping one foot on the ground when advancing, maintaining a

strong and potent reserve and, most importantly, correctly siting direct-fire weapons systems for maximum effect.

The other features of the game are where the true value lies. Multiplayer campaigning is now available with the ability to continue against the same opponent whenever the two of you are free. Campaign progress and comprehensive ladder is easily accessible. Modding *Close Combat: Cross of Iron* is even easier with an inbuilt mod manager and custom-file library. This allows the myriad maps produced for *CCIII* to be imported directly into the game to create new battles and operations.

*Close Combat: Cross of Iron* offers a rewarding experience that does not require a Cray supercomputer to run and for about \$60 (depending on which version is purchased) it's not a bad deal if new to the series. Most diehard fans probably already have it.

Score: 3.5/5

## THEATRE OF WAR

Battlefront

[www.battlefront.com/products/tow/index.html](http://www.battlefront.com/products/tow/index.html)

PC

Battlefront, the publisher renowned for the insanely detailed *Combat Mission* series has departed from the norm by joining with the Russian company that developed the most comprehensive WWII (and beyond) flight simulator on the market, 1C. Oleg Maddox's *IL-2 Sturmovik* crew have taken their lovingly created target models (because in *IL-2* anything that moves on the ground is a target) and developed a real-time ground combat game around them. Fans of both the *Battlefront* and *1C* titles will immediately notice the influence of the parent companies – the detail and perfectionism of *Battlefront* and the intuitiveness and playability of the *1C* developers.

*Theatre of War* is the perfect blend of *Combat Mission*'s anal retentiveness and the general RTS genre's predisposed love



of tanks, tanks and a few more tanks. Epic is probably the best word to describe the *Theatre of War* experience. Game maps extend for kilometres in every direction, line-of-sight actually means something other than being able to see it on the computer monitor and the psychological impacts of war are brutally recreated. It was not unusual to see vehicle crews throw open their hatches and bail out after the second or third armour-piercing round glanced off the forward armour of their tank.

Compared to other games in the RTS genre, *Theatre of War* doesn't quite dominate in the eye candy stakes until players zoom right in to view the exquisitely modelled armoured vehicles. Unfortunately, being able to zoom in to appreciate that level of detail is almost

impossible as the expanse of the game requires complete battlefield oversight to truly excel.

Each and every individual vehicle and weapons system within *Theatre of War* is monitored, and statistics are readily available as only the Battlefront crew know how. This level of detail immediately lends itself to a level of micromanagement that, after a while, became my one real issue with the game. While it was fun to work out that Private First Class Newman was a better driver than Corporal Jones, with more than 150 soldiers and vehicles charging across French fields between the blossoms of artillery impacts, I really had better things to be worrying about. *Theatre of War* also includes seldom-seen features such as the ability to commandeer weapons and vehicles or simply pick up discarded equipment from the field of battle.

With five major campaigns totalling about 40 missions and the recent release of a completely free sixth campaign focusing on the fight for Moscow, *Theatre of War* is

one of those games that will be hard to finish. The recent expansion also includes a comprehensive editing system so that any in-game map can be edited to create new and challenging scenarios.

If there is one downside to *Theatre of War*, it is a pretty obvious one. A game this grand is an absolute system hog and those with lower specced systems would be well advised to check the requirements before purchasing – otherwise, that \$100 game may end up costing much more in system upgrades to play it. The recent patch seems to have freed up some of the memory-hogging issues, but the game is still prone to slowdowns with a large amount of movement within the battlefield.

*Theatre of War* is the perfect "soldier's RTS" – detailed enough to satisfy the most hardened military moron, but with a level of playability that doesn't automatically require a tweed jacket, pipe and glass of cognac.

Score: 4.5/5

## S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: SHADOWS OF CHERNOBYL

THQ

[www.stalker-game.com](http://www.stalker-game.com)

PC

No, it's not some creative marketing type being clever – *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* is actually an acronym, although I won't tell you what it is, for fear of being lynched by someone horrified that I gave the storyline away.

Set in 2012, *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* as the full title suggests, occurs in a radioactive wasteland surrounding the infamous Chernobyl reactor. While most locals were happy to leave the radiation zone alone, a second event at the old reactor in 2006 created a mutated landscape with wild beasts and radioactive artefacts. The once-depopulated area has now become home to a group of explorers intent on exploiting the treasures of the new environment, whatever the cost.

*S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* is part first-person shooter, part role-playing game and part puzzle game, set in an amazing alternate-



reality environment in which life goes on in real time. The game starts with perhaps the most enthralling intro movie and rapidly progresses through a couple of teaching missions before players find themselves alone and completely exposed within the zone. Not only are players forced to fight off wild mutants, they have to defend themselves against marauding gangs, Russian soldiers and, of course, the environment itself. Throughout the game, players take on missions from non-player characters, all the while trying to work out who the hell they are.

The game can be played in any style, with each and every action having an affect on the overall environment. Kill too many 'good guys' and a player will gain a reputation, side with the wrong crowd and become a larger target, or just slide through the zone minding your own business for as long as possible.

*S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* is all about using whatever the environment can offer. Stripping corpses of anything useful becomes a routine chore. Managing ammunition and food stocks while retaining the all-important first-aid and anti-radiation treatments at times takes primacy over the mission itself.

*S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* is one of those games that could quite possibly go on for ever – there always seems to be another mission on offer or other equipment to find, making just exploring the zone the true value of the game. While it is relatively violent, it wasn't until I entered the radiation-affected underground and was set upon by 'things' that I really got spooked. The audio, visuals and general feeling in the game can get you looking over your shoulder late at night.

Recently patched to eliminate a few bugs, *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* is a game for those who like to settle down with something familiar and keep going. It's like the old dice-rolling *Twilight 2000* role-playing game of the '90s – but more frightening.

Score: 4/5

## RUSH FOR BERLIN

Red-Ant

[www.rushforberlin.com/englisch/index.html](http://www.rushforberlin.com/englisch/index.html)

PC

The one bugbear with WWII RTS games (and there's hundreds of them) is that, for the most part, players are locked into history – Germany always loses, the Russians always have dodgy accents and the Americans fly in to save the day.

Enter the StormRegion team, developers of the famed *Codename Panzer* titles, and their love of the 'what if'. *Rush for Berlin* finally offers the chance for an alternate history to play out in full. What if Hitler had been killed in the von Stauffenberg plot? What if the Russians failed to counter the push towards Moscow? What if America said "screw you" to the war in Europe?

While the options aren't quite that far reaching, *Rush for Berlin* offers players a chance to really explore some of the great unanswered questions of the war. Allowing the Luftwaffe



to use the groundbreaking ME262 to defend Germany's skies rather than breaking ground by using it to drop bombs. What if the Americans unleashed Little Boy on Berlin rather than Hiroshima?

*Rush for Berlin* is an RTS game that is as perfect as it possibly could be with the experience of the development team shining through. Graphically, the game is a visual feast and it was sometimes hard not to be distracted by the amazing visual effects – a certain squadron of tanks can hold my fascination – long enough for an artillery strike to wipe them out. A particular mention must be made of the weather effects in the game. If visibility in Bastogne was anything like

it is in the game, it's a wonder the opposing forces didn't just drive past one another. The level of concentration required to see what was going on in the blizzard was amazing.

*Rush for Berlin* has been developed from the beginning as a game designed to ease gamers through the intricacies of tactical combat. The three campaigns on offer, Russian assault towards Berlin, Allied push from Normandy and the German defence of the capital, must be played through in order. While it does give players the best chance of actually surviving first contact as a German defender, it is also immensely frustrating as it is in this campaign that 'what ifs' truly come into play.

Funnily enough, the lack of a big-name publisher kept this title at the back of Sapper Gameboy's collection for far too long (sorry Red-Ants) with a horrible premonition of it being just another WWII RTS.

The game is anything but middle of the road and is up there with *Company of Heroes* for gameplay and visuals.

Score: 4/5



## NITE WATCH

Nite International UK, through Australian distributors Macson, has launched the TX10-010, a stunning military sports watch featuring Tritium illumination – a highly specialised dial glow that allows the watch to be instantly read in the dark, without pressing buttons or draining batteries.

Designed for the military market, Nite watches are manufactured to exacting standards using the highest-quality materials. The result is a military sports watch in digital olive that will deliver unsurpassed performance in extreme conditions. Information from [www.nitewatches.com](http://www.nitewatches.com) or (03) 9489 9766



## PAKISTAN ASSIST

Following the devastation of the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, former Defence photographer Gary Ramage visited the ADF medical assist mission in Kashmir during that winter and brought back a magnificent collection of images. Now beautifully presented in book form from News Limited, this book is a must-have souvenir for anyone who was there or anyone who appreciates the fine art of reportage photography amidst heartache and hope.

\$29.95 from [www.newstext.com.au/pakistanassist](http://www.newstext.com.au/pakistanassist) or The News Shop, Holt St, Surrey Hills in Sydney.

## AND THE WINNERS ARE...

■ With thanks to Cool Kit Australia, winner of the M390 Combat Boots was David Fuller, Bolwarra, NSW

■ Thanks to BSc Body Science Australia, the winner of the Kompressorz Half-Quads were Chris Pham, Vic; Chad Maxwell, WA; and, Brenton Kelly, 4CER.

■ Thanks to Danair Aviation, the Javelin model was won by Alison Thompson, ACT

■ Thanks to Ubisoft, the GRAW II X360 faceplate and T-shirt went to Jacob Marshall, Victoria

# LETTERS FROM THE FRONT LINE



After a long and relatively comfortable recuperation in England, Henry was eventually fit enough to return to active duty in France. He got orders to return to the fight after a run-in with a corporal. While official records do not reflect the exact nature of the charge brought against him, family folklore suggests that Henry refused to go out in heavy snow to buy the NCO's paper. Whatever the reason, Henry is again destined for France but seemingly in good spirits about it, at least when writing to his father...

Overseas Training Battalion, Longbridge, Deverill, Near Warminster, Wiltshire, England. July 12<sup>th</sup> 1918.  
My dear Father,  
Just a few lines to say I am well and will in four days time, be going back to France to fight this Hun. I am now in splendid health and can almost tip the scale at 13 stone. I am just about jumping out of my skin with good training we get and do not mind in the least having to go back. It is for you dear people at home that I am thinking. You will be worrying, but you must buck up, for I may be back again in England before this reaches you.  
Well Dad, she is some war and is hanging out a long time, years longer than any of us thought. But there is no doubt that America's millions of men is going to bring us a victory within a few months. America has now a million men in France and she is sending on an average 10,000 every day and can continue this until the war ends. The Germans are at present holding a big part of France and they are trying their damndest to reach Paris. They will never do it. They have advanced over ground in a few weeks which had taken the Allies nearly two years to get, but in my opinion, this was all part of the Allies plan to fall back to gain time for the American Army to come in and also to kill off as many of the Huns as possible. You will see, a great change will take place soon. The Allies will start an offensive and push ahead and the Lord help old Fritz for it will be one of the biggest lickings she has had. The war will only start then. The slaughter will be terrible, but it is the only way for peace.  
Well Dad, I was in hopes of having

Christmas back home with you all but will have to again postpone it. Still, I guess that Hoghead beer will keep for another year. We must not forget a good night then. I guess you were pleased to have Fred, Bert and Charlie home again and don't forget Dad, I will soon be back, my good luck will always stick.  
So Dad, I want you all to cheer up, I am going over to the big stouch with a good heart and I want you to keep the home fires burning and don't let anything happen to that beer.  
Your loving son,  
Henry.

No 1 Command Depot, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire, England.  
Dear Leslie,  
I have just received a letter from Mother dated 18th April and you were at that time wanting Dad's and Mother's consent to join up. Well dear Brother, I certainly admire your pluck for wanting to do your bit, but if this reaches you before you have taken that step, I would like to point out a few of the disadvantages of this rotten life. First of all, you will miss all those comforts you are used to at home and this is more than you can ever dream of. You will be allowed to draw 2 shillings per day [only] and this at the present time is equal to 6 pence in peacetime. I am drawing 1 shilling and I cannot keep my self in smokes. You will find the tucker is much harder to take than you are used to at home. I wish I could sit down to a good square meal like Mother can cook but I am on Army rations and I

have not any spare shillings to buy any extra. I have to just want.

Here is our days menu,

Breakfast;

1 slice of dark bread with dripping, a small quantity of a greasy looking mess called Curry and Rice, half pint of tea minus sugar.

Dinner;

Stew, 1 slice bread, rice pudding or sago.

Tea;

1 slice of bread, jam, margarine, half pint tea.

I don't know if you ever tasted margarine, I hope not.

Now, you are bossed and bullied about by Corporals, Sgts, Officers and Lancejacks from morning till night and you have to do all kinds of unpleasant duties. You cannot refuse unless you like to lose a few days pay and do a few days clink.

Now Les, just consider yourself well off where you are and try and use your common sense a little. Surely you must admit Mother and Dad have had enough worry over Fred, Bert, Charlie and myself.

I am going to France in a couple of week's time. I will represent you there and as a last wish, I want you to hang on where you are. You can never realise the misery of it all until you have seen some of it. Hoping dear Brother, this finds you well and that you think before enlisting,  
Your loving Brother,  
Henry.

Henry finally returned to his battalion, on the battlefields of France, on 24 July 1918.

To be continued...



## SOLDIER ON HELPING OUR WOUNDED WARRIORS



SOLDIER ON IS ABOUT AUSTRALIANS COMING TOGETHER TO SHOW THEIR SUPPORT FOR OUR WOUNDED. IT'S ABOUT TELLING OUR DIGGERS THAT WE WILL ALWAYS HAVE THEIR BACKS; THAT WE WILL REMEMBER THOSE WHO HAVE COME HOME, AS WELL AS THOSE THAT HAVE DIED. IT'S ABOUT GIVING THE WOUNDED THE DIGNITY THEY DESERVE AND THE CHANCE TO DO AND BE WHATEVER THEY CHOOSE.

SOLDIER ON IS ABOUT THE ANZAC SPIRIT, AND MATESHIP AND ALL AUSTRALIANS KEEPING THEIR PROMISE TO TAKE CARE OF OUR WOUNDED WARRIORS.



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## PRIVATE JOHN 'BARNEY' HINES

BY WO1 DARRYL KELLY



In the latter half of 1916, a large man of scruffy appearance, covered in tattoos, entered an AIF recruiting depot in Sydney. He walked up to the table and thumped it hard with his hand. 'Is this where I join up?' he growled in guttural tones, laced with a thick accent. His name was John 'Barney' Hines.

Born in Liverpool, England, Hines gave his age as 36 and his occupation as comprising a variety of trades – seaman, engineer, fireman, deep-sea diver and shearer. Nor was this Barney's first experience of military life. He had served in the British Territorial Forces (the 8<sup>th</sup> King's Liverpool Regiment) for three-and-a-half years. He had, in fact, also enlisted in the AIF the previous year, only to be discharged suffering from haemorrhoids.<sup>1</sup>

Barney was a 'Fair Dinkum' – one of those who enlisted in response to the call for more volunteers following the heavy casualties suffered by the ANZACs at Gallipoli. These volunteers fully understood that this was not a glamorous adventure. They knew that wars cost lives – and plenty of them.

Barney sailed for England and further training at a camp on Salisbury Plain. The big man proved to be quite a handful in camp and frequently gave himself extended leave – the last one resulting in penalties of 60 days' detention and forfeiture of 109 days' pay.<sup>1</sup>

Allocated to the 45<sup>th</sup> Battalion, he embarked for France and the Western Front in March 1917. Soon after his arrival, the 45<sup>th</sup> moved into the Bapaume area to prepare for its attack on the heavily fortified Hindenburg Line.

Barney had a habit of adopting a glazed stare when confronted by a hostile German, as a subsequent description of his fighting style indicates.<sup>2</sup> Digger comrades dubbed him 'Wild Eyes' and his escapades soon became famous. Disdaining to use his .303, he went into action clutching two sand bags stuffed with Mills bombs. Battalion officers recognised his natural fighting ability but despaired of ever turning him into a trained and disciplined soldier.

Lieutenant Colonel Allen thought of attaching the big fellow to a Lewis gun. Hines was entranced by the weapon and its spraying power. 'This'll do me', he growled, 'it's just like hosing the bastards down.'

However, Barney's real passion was for souveniring. His first taste of it came when he found a donkey and cart that had been careening along a road after an officer of the 46<sup>th</sup> Battalion had caused the animal to take fright. Barney tried to stop the donkey but, in so doing, was catapulted over the beast's head, dislocating his shoulder. He regarded the injury as little more than an inconvenience, but feared he now might only be able to carry one bag of bombs into battle.

The men of the 45<sup>th</sup> liked having this unconventional Digger fighting beside them. The man was fearless, and his natural ability to inspire confidence in his fellow soldiers was immensely reassuring. Yet, at times, he would behave in the most reckless, unorthodox, gallant or inexplicable manner.<sup>3</sup>

There were many occasions when his conduct could only be described as bizarre.

One day, as the men of the 45<sup>th</sup> marched from their lines, Hines broke ranks and rushed up to a Chinese man working on the road with a labour unit. He smothered the little man in a bear hug, and then kissed him. The startled man took fright and, while trying to escape Barney's attentions, ran blindly in front of a truck and was killed. Without any apparent show of remorse or emotion, Barney checked the body, shrugged his shoulders, then rejoined the ranks.<sup>4</sup>

Hines was renowned for refusing to leave a wounded soldier behind. He repeatedly set off on his own, under heavy fire, to rescue casualties. Whenever possible, he buried those of his own unit who had been killed in action. Even after long periods of heavy fighting, Hines never tired of searching for and burying bodies that had been missed or forgotten.

One day, in the mud and slush of a little-known place named Octagon Trench, Barney and an officer, Second Lieutenant Hoppood, had become separated from the rest of their platoon. Suddenly, the uneasy quiet was pierced by a burst of machinegun fire. One of the rounds found its mark, wounding Hoppood in the arm.

The salvo had come from a German pillbox, and Hines realised he had to eliminate the enemy gun if he and the lieutenant were to survive. He crept forward, climbed on top of the offending concrete fortification and, to the astonishment of the resident Germans, dropped right in front of the door and threw in a few Mills bombs. The surviving 63 Germans, including a general who had taken shelter in the machinegun post, offered no resistance and surrendered to Hines.

Later that day, Hines ventured out alone and destroyed another German machinegun post. He was wounded during this latter action and spent the next six weeks recuperating in hospital. During a day's convalescent leave from the hospital, he

found a fine chestnut horse with a saddle, but no rider. He took it 'home' and traded it for a bottle of whisky.<sup>5</sup>

At Zonnebeke, armed with a handful of bombs and with his Lewis gun slung across his back, Hines set off on one of his lone forays. He stumbled upon an enemy dressing station. The German occupants were all dead, but a British soldier lying on a stretcher on the floor was still alive. With a gentleness that one would not normally associate with a man of Hines' size and appearance, Barney shouldered the wounded man to carry him back to safety. His efforts were in vain, however, as the Englishman died on the way. Hines buried him, then, ever the opportunist, went back to collect a few coins and other odds and ends from the 'morgue' that once had been the dressing station.<sup>3</sup>

The following night, Hines accompanied Captain Dibbs on a reconnaissance patrol. A raid on a troublesome pillbox was considered, but Captain Dibbs decided, prudently, that they should first ascertain the strength of the enemy's defences. Barney worked his way up to the front of the fortification and counted about 20 Germans. Dibbs questioned whether they should return for reinforcements, but Hines was determined to try out his latest toy – an incendiary bomb.

He prized open the door of the pillbox and launched his missile. In his own words, 'The egg went straight in among the bastards'. There was no need for reinforcements or a raid.<sup>4</sup>

On the way back to the lines, Hines encountered 10 Germans taking refuge in a shell hole. He rushed in and took them all as his prisoners. Others from the battalion came to assist, but Barney warned them off in no uncertain terms. These were his prisoners and he was not about to share his loot. He wasted no time relieving his somewhat indignant captives of their personal possessions and equipment – watches, cash and any other saleable items were added to Hines' growing stash of 'finds'.

Any time the Diggers wanted such items as Zeiss field-glasses or a Mauser pistol, Barney could supply them, but always at a price.<sup>4</sup>

Barney's souveniring escapades soon became common knowledge amongst the Diggers. An official army photograph of Barney taken at Polygon Wood made headlines in a variety of newspapers and broadsheets. The image portrayed an unshaven, disheveled Barney wearing a German forage cap and surrounded by the 'treasures' he had scavenged during a day of souvenir-hunting. On that particular day, he had amassed more than 4000 francs, a bottle of whisky, a pair of earrings, a diamond brooch, a gold ring, around one million German marks, a variety of watches, and sufficient iron crosses to fill a sandbag. Barney's notoriety was now widely known.

It is reputed that the photograph was even reproduced in Germany, where the Kaiser was incensed at the sight of the scruffy-looking Digger surrounded by the piles of equipment and personal effects he had taken from German soldiers. The image caption described Hines as typical of the impossible, uncultured Australian savages that the German soldier had to contend with on the Western Front.<sup>3</sup> It was rumoured the Kaiser was so furious that he put a price on Hines' head of 100,000 marks. The money would be paid for Barney's capture, dead or alive, and represented a small fortune in those days.

At Passchendaele in 1917, Hines was the only member of his Lewis-gun team to survive a direct hit by an enemy shell. The force of the exploding missile ripped the soles off his boots and threw him some distance from his post. He crawled back to the gun position to bury the dead, including his best mate, Private Colman. He restored the gun to working order and carried on alone until hit in the knee by a splinter of spent shrapnel.<sup>4</sup>

## IT WAS RUMOURED THE KAISER WAS SO FURIOUS THAT HE PUT A PRICE ON HINES' HEAD OF 100,000 MARKS

Barney was granted leave in England, where this ferocious fighter, whom many believed was worth two in the line, gave the trouble of 10. Barney turned up a week or so late to return to France. He had found a new cobbler and a bottle of whisky to enjoy before he returned to the war. He had so many brushes with military law – particularly for being absent without leave, resulting in fines or loss of pay – that many say Barney Hines' pay book was possibly one of the most graphic documents to emerge from the First World War. It could be argued that Barney's souveniring for profit was born of a need for additional money, to compensate for the pay he had lost in fines.

Barney's fearless assaults on enemy strongholds with his pins-out-of-grenade style; his fierce, wild-eyed demeanour; his large, intimidating body; and his bags of deadly bombs, produced many enemy dead and induced numerous terror-stricken Germans to surrender.<sup>4</sup>

In the spring of 1918, Hines fought with the 45<sup>th</sup> in the crucial battle of Dernancourt, preventing the Germans from breaking through the British front. Soon after this action, Hines became the casualty of a gas attack. He was reluctant to leave the combat area, but had been temporarily blinded by

the chemical vapour and was sent to the rear for medical attention.

The hospital train was bombed en route. Did the Hun know Barney was on board?

Hines had been undergoing hospital treatment for three weeks when German planes launched a savage attack on the facility. Casualties were heavy – including Barney, who caught a piece of shrapnel in his heel. Despite his injuries, and supported by a makeshift crutch, Barney worked through the night to help the hospital staff move patients to safety.<sup>4</sup>

Barney did not recover sufficiently to return to active service and was repatriated to Australia in 1919 and discharged as medically unfit. Post war, Hines wandered the countryside trying his hand at a variety of jobs. He returned to the outer Sydney area of Mt Druitt where he lived a lonely existence in a little old bag shack. He had to survive on his war pension, income from odd jobs and money from the sale of his precious souvenirs.<sup>5</sup>

In the early 1930s, at the height of the Great Depression, Barney gained prominence when his plight was featured in the Returned and Services League (RSL) of New South Wales' magazine, *Reveille*, in an article entitled, 'Souvenir King Has No Souvenirs Now'.

Old Diggers from around Australia dug deep and sent donations to help their old mate. A cable received at RSL headquarters simply stated: Have just received my December 'Reveille' stop Wiring two pounds for Barney Hines Christmas stop Digger.

Barney's appreciation of his fellow veterans' generosity was heartfelt and sincere. When he sat down to his first real Christmas dinner for many years, he said, 'I'd like to meet that bloke and keep an eye on him in the next war'.<sup>4</sup>

Barney passed away on 29 January 1958. He is buried in an unmarked grave in Sydney's Rookwood Cemetery and is commemorated in the cemetery's Garden of Remembrance.

In honour of a local hero, Blacktown City Council renamed a street in suburban Minchinbury, 'John Hines Avenue'.<sup>6</sup>

- 1 National Archives of Australia: B2455, WW1 Service Records, 2296 Private J Hines
- 2 Holledge J, article, *Sunday Mirror*, 21 July 1968
- 3 AWM 43 (A377) 45<sup>th</sup> Battalion Souvenir King, *Reveille*, July 1939
- 4 AWM 43 (A377), *Celebrities in the AIF*, *Reveille*, 1 December 1933
- 5 AWM 43 (A377) *Souvenir King Has No Souvenirs Now*, *Reveille*, 1 January 1934
- 6 Hosken G, digging for Diggers, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, Brisbane, 2002



'THE SOUVENIR KING' AWM NEGATIVE E00822

# SPECIAL TRAINING FACILITY OPENED

PICS BY CORPORAL CHRIS MOORE

A new special-forces training facility was opened by the Governor General Major General Michael Jeffery at Holsworthy Barracks in July.

One of only four of its kind in the world, and costing \$94 million to build, the facility will provide leading-edge training to counter-terrorism forces.

The new facility includes indoor and outdoor multi-level electronic and live-fire ranges as well as a variety of training environments for 4RAR Commando, the Special Air Service Regiment and others.

It will be used to train in counter-terrorism scenarios and other special-forces-specific roles.

The Governor General inspected the new facilities and also farewelled Sydney-based members of the Special Operations Task Group preparing to deploy to Afghanistan as part of Operation Slipper.

He said that a battalion doesn't simply become 'special', in much the same way as soldiers don't simply become commandos.

"Like every military unit or formation, training is the key to success and it must be realistic, structured and achievable. It must focus the individual and the team on the collective task at hand and, above all, it must be done safely, albeit with an acceptance of perceivable risk," he said.

"This new complex – the Special Forces Training Facility – is designed to do exactly this and much more."

To Bravo Company, 4RAR (Cdo), Major General Jeffery said their coming deployment was a culmination of decades of imaginative training, excellent leadership at all levels and sustained performance by soldiers, NCOs and officers.

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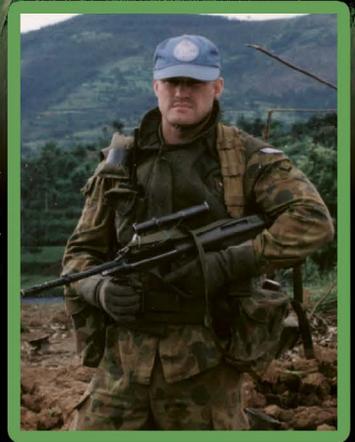
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