

ISSUE 45

SAVE BEFORE EXPLORING

CONTACT

AIR LAND & SEA

MARCH 2015

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MINIATURE MACHINE GUNS

EDITORIAL



AUSTRALIAN MACHINE GUNS FROM 1916



LEWIS LIGHT MACHINE GUN
1916-1945



BREN LIGHT MACHINE GUN
1940-1980s



M60 GPMG
1960-1990



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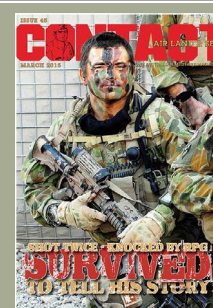
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Issue 45 – March 2015

CONTACT
AIR, LAND & SEA



Shot twice, blown off
his feet by RPG and
SURVIVED
to tell his story

Page 28

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I think I might be a little bit controversial this issue. Not deliberately so, but because a certain topic came up recently that got me thinking.

The topic revolves around the interaction between returned veterans, 'ignorant civilians' and 'ignorant journalists'.

It started when a civilian friend asked what I thought of a book she had just finished, because she didn't know how to react to its theme and tone.

I don't have time to read much these days, but I read *ANZAC's Long Shadow* by James Brown only because this friend asked for my opinion.

Let's just say, the author lost my support very quickly and failed to win it back. And my civilian friend, who is known to some **CONTACT** readers as a staunch supporter of modern-day ANZACs, was relieved to know I agreed with her – that the book was very negative and arrogant.

A recurring theme of this book is anger and frustration at the ignorance of the non-military Australian public in general and media in particular.

But, in the very early pages of his book, James Brown, a former Australian Army officer, tells of a one-on-one encounter with an 'ignorant journalist' when, instead of taking the opportunity to educate the 'offender', he chose to fuel the man's ignorance with a pre-prepared spiel on being an iced-vovo engineer responsible for getting coconut pieces to stick to the jelly.

I thought, what right does anyone have to bitch and moan, especially in book form, about other people's ignorance when, given an opportunity to educate, chooses to prove their own ignorance in response?

That's just my opinion of course. And this isn't actually meant to be a book review – and isn't even the controversial part of what I want to say.

An assertion put forward in *ANZAC's Long Shadow* – and in many other places – is the gross inappropriateness of 'ignorant civilians' asking a returned veteran, "Did you kill anyone over there?"

So here's my controversial musing...

...is it actually inappropriate to ask *that* question?

If a man (or woman) goes to war with a gun in his hand, how is it inappropriate or illegitimate or ignorant to wonder if they encountered a situation where they were forced to take a life? In Afghanistan especially, the chances that the answer might be "Yes" are pretty high.

Now I'm not saying that the question, when asked of a person who actually has been traumatised by the need to answer in the affirmative, isn't insensitive, or even ill advised. I'm just saying that it is a pretty legitimate question to rattle around in the head of anyone who hasn't 'been there or done that' and who may have a genuine interest in a truthful answer.

I once did a talk to a class of 6- and 7-year-old schoolkids on my experiences in East Timor in 1999 – and, "Did you kill anyone?" was the first question asked when I asked, "Are there any questions?"

I was not shocked or surprised or offended – or defensive. I reasonably expected the question and had a reasonable response prepared. And my answer didn't shock or offend either the eager kids or their teacher, who respected my 'bravery' in facing her kids.

All of the above notwithstanding, however, I wouldn't normally ask that question of a returned veteran myself – no more than I would ask if he had sex the night he got home. It's really none of my business – unless the soldier wants to tell his story (about Afghanistan, not the sex) to **CONTACT**, to do his little bit to educate 'ignorant civilians'.

Feel free to tell me what you think on this controversial topic, or to tell me your own war story, by emailing editor@militarycontact.com. And please indicate whether your opinion/story is private or publishable.

Sincerely,

Brian Hartigan

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INCOMING

A QUESTION OF ARMOUR

Hey Irish, what's the go with the new Armoured Cavalry Regiments? I'm obviously way behind on this. I read the white paper announcement, but it doesn't have some of the small details.

Have you done a story on it? What actually happens to 1ARMD, 2CAV, 3/4CAV etc?

I was a bucket in RAAC in 2CAV and 2/14LHR. Both units are affected. I'd like to know do they keep their names (I'm guessing no) but what happens to their Battle Honours, Guidons etc?

What's the make up of the new regiments? How many squadrons of ASLAV, Abrams etc in each new regiment? What new positions are there and what have been abolished?

I'm obviously not keeping up with things... I heard that C Squadron 2CAV was abolished. It felt weird to hear that. I was in the first troop of C Squadron when it was raised in '95. We formed a 4th troop in B Squadron, which became C Squadron. Weird.

Damian G via Facebook

Damian, I'm afraid I'm not full bottle on this either. When info gets released in disjointed dribs and drabs, I often lose sight of the bigger picture (which, as you suggest, was articulated in fullest clarity anyway).



Hi Brian, regarding the Alpha Company 3RAR in Afghanistan article in issue 36, December 2012.

Would I be able to get a copy of the photograph of the soldier carrying the SR25 and Pelican case on the first page of the article.

That's me, and my parents/grandparents would love to have a high-res copy. Kind Regards,
Private Jay P, via email

I trust you got the photo via email Jay? My regards to your 'olds' - Ed

Trying to get an answer for you, though, brought up an issue with Defence media relations that I've never been able to get my head around.

I would have thought that, with a topic this broad and this close to Defence's heart, they would trip over themselves for an opportunity to enlighten the community. I also thought Defence would relish the opportunity to write this story themselves, controlling an error-free message. I also figured the story was probably already written anyway. How many junior officers have formulated briefs on this issue for generals or visiting VIPs at every level of Defence, do you think?

But no - Defence would rather risk providing an interview, risk that I might ask the wrong questions, risk that I might misinterpret the answers, risk that I might add my own spin to the story. Defence would rather not "do the journalist's work for him".

Anyway, my December email "wasn't received", and my February follow-up (from the same email address I always use) was answered within an hour saying, "Sorry, I can't provide a written story - but I'd be happy to organise an interview for you".

I declined the interview, re-formulated your queries into specific questions and resubmitted.

Sorry for the delay, but I hope to have your pre-Christmas questions answered in time for publication in the June issue - Ed.

GOD'S WORK

Brian, thank you for your ongoing service to veterans through your informative publications.

I have just retired from 45 years uniformed service to take on a new role as a chaplain to veterans/ex-service through a charity I have established called **Veterans Care**.

I have a website www.garystone.com.au offering suggestions for holistic health and post-traumatic growth and recently published a book, *Duntroon To Dili*, recounting my own struggles with PTSD and cancer.

I wish to support veterans with their journeys and hope my resources can assist.

**Chaplain Gary Stone, Clagiraba, Queensland
Phone 0403 270 515**

P.S. I enclose an article you might like to use in the magazine some time.

Thanks Gary. God bless you in your continuing service to soldiers, sailors and airmen. Your article is reproduced on page 72 - Ed

TARGETS UPI

This page is a great outlet for fans to vent or to praise. Please, let us know what you think of our magazines so we can deliver more of what you want. Feel free to write to editor@militarycontact.com about CONTACT or any on other military subject - Ed

You can only fuel some of the people some of the time



But RAAF's KC-30A gets even closer to fueling all of the people all of the time. OK, so that's a weak analogy, but roll with it.

Pictured here is a US Marine Corps AV-8B Harrier II being refueled during continuing operations against ISIS in Iraq. Australia's relatively new KC-30A multi-role tanker transport can and has been topping up the tanks of any aircraft that can take on fuel via a hose-and-drogue system (pictured). In the near future – and probably before the current campaign is finished – it will also be capable of refueling through its tail boom, expanding its repertoire to all other aircraft, including C17 Globemaster, E-7A Wedgetail and even other KC-30As.

WATCH VIDEO



HEADS UP

A400M

CITY OF BRISTOL

The UK's first A400M Atlas has been named "City of Bristol" by the RAF in a rare honour to highlight the important role industry in the city has played in the delivery of the aircraft.

The wings of the giant transport were designed and manufactured at an Airbus factory in Bristol, with a number of other businesses in the city, including Rolls-Royce, GKN Aerospace, and Atkins, also supporting the A400M program.

MALAYSIAN A400M



The first of four Airbus Defence and Space A400M turboprop airlifters ordered by the Royal Malaysian Air Force made its maiden flight on 30 January.

The aircraft, known as MSN22, took off from Seville, Spain, for a 90-minute test flight.

WATCH VIDEO

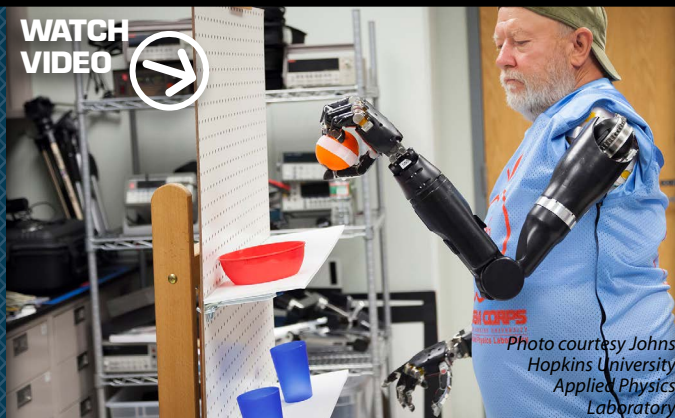


Photo courtesy Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory

LIMB ACHIEVEMENTS

Colorado's Les Baugh made history at the Johns Hopkins University last year when he became the first bilateral shoulder-level amputee to simultaneously control two prosthetic limbs.

Mr Baugh, who lost both arms in an electrical accident 40 years ago, was able to operate the system by simply thinking about moving his arms.

Before that, however, Mr Baugh had to undergo a surgery known as targeted muscle reinnervation, to reassign nerves that once controlled his arms.

Trauma surgeon Albert Chi said reassigning existing nerves made it possible for people who had had upper-arm amputations to control prosthetic devices by thinking about the action they want to perform.

After recovery and training, Mr Baugh was fitted with a custom torso socket that supported the prosthetic limbs and also made the neurological connections with his reinnervated nerves.

"I just went into a whole different world," Mr Baugh said after performing tasks that required him to coordinate the control of up to eight separate motions, astonishing the research team.

Researchers said the speed with which he learned and the number of motions he performed with both arms simultaneously was beyond expectations.

LaWS DEPLOYED

The US Navy deployed a fully functional laser weapon system (LaWS) aboard a naval vessel in the Arabian Gulf late last year.

USS Ponce proved LaWS by hitting various targets including a speeding boat and a Scan Eagle UAV.

The system can address multiple threats using a range of escalating options from non-lethal optical 'dazzling' to lethal destruction.

Rear Admiral Matthew L. Klunder, chief of naval research, said Ponce ran the prototype weapon, through some extremely tough paces, and it locked on and destroyed designated targets with near-instantaneous lethality.

"Laser weapons are powerful, affordable and will play a vital role in the future of naval combat operations," Rear Admiral Klunder said.

"At less than a dollar per shot, there's no question about the value LaWS provides."

"LaWS will more effectively manage resources to ensure our sailors and marines are never in a fair fight."

WATCH VIDEO



LaWS deployed on USS Ponce. Photo by John F. Williams

HATS OFF TO FLYING START



Photo by Charles Abar for Airbus Helicopters

The first EC135 T2+ helicopter being acquired by the Australian Defence Force for its new Helicopter Aircrew Training System (HATS), has successfully completed its maiden flight in Europe.

The first Australian EC135 T2+ took off from Donauwörth, Germany, for a 57-minute test flight on 16 January, to confirm aircraft systems and controls.

The company said further test flights would be needed to confirm ADF-specific equipment on board before delivery to the customer.

Fifteen EC135 T2+ helicopters, as well as flight simulators and a new sea-going flight-deck-equipped vessel are being acquired for Army and Navy HATS.

HATS, worth up to \$700 million, will replace helicopter aircrew training currently conducted on Navy Squirrel and Army Kiowa.

A new helicopter school is being established at HMAS Albatross, Nowra, NSW, with Boeing Australia as the prime contractor.

Thales Australia will provide the simulators.

When the HATS school at Nowra is fully operational in 2018, more than 130 pilots per year are expected to gain their initial helicopter training there.

After graduating, the new pilots will undertake operational flying conversion to other aircraft types – Seahawk staying at Nowra, MRH-90 and Tiger at Oakey and Chinook at Townsville.

SPANISH CHOPPERS

Airbus Helicopters delivered the first two Tiger helicopters in the new HAD-E version and the first NH90 GSPA tactical transport helicopter for the Spanish Army in December.

All three helicopters were assembled in Spain.

Airbus Helicopters España will supply a total of 22 NH90 helicopters to the Spanish Armed Forces under a delivery schedule that continues through to 2021, and also manufactures the front fuselage section for export.

The new HAD-E version of the Tiger boasts a new MTR-E turboshaft with 14% more power, an improved optronic vision system, Spike air-to-ground missiles, an Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) system coupled with an interrogator and a new electronic warfare and countermeasure system.

Spain has ordered a total of 24 Tigers for its Attack Helicopter Battalion.

SEE WEAPON STATION SPECS



Photo by Liz Kaszynski, Lockheed Martin

ANOTHER FIRST FOR AU-F-35A

The first two Australian F-35A Lightning II aircraft have arrived at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, where they will be used in a pool of aircraft for pilot training.

Australia's AU-2 was the first international-partner F-35 to arrive at the base.

US Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Todd 'Torch' LaFortune piloted the aircraft on the 90-minute ferry flight from the Lockheed Martin's F-35 production facility in Fort Worth, Texas.

Australia's air attaché to the US Air Commodore Gary Martin said the RAAF was delighted to be the first foreign partner nation with F-35A arriving at Luke AFB.

"This is an important milestone for Australia and we are looking forward to the

commencement of our fifth-generation pilot training here at Luke," Air Commodore Martin said.

Luke will be the central training hub for international F-35A training, with international and US students teamed together, learning how to effectively employ the fifth-generation strike fighter.

Brigadier General Scott Pleus, 56th Fighter Wing commander, said Australia was the first of nine non-US nations that would not only become part of the Luke AFB community, but would share in calling the West Valley a home away from home.

The second Australian F-35A, AU-1, arrived at Luke a few days later.

Meanwhile, all three variants of the F-35 Lightning II continue on a path toward

full weapons certification by successfully completing numerous milestones late last year.

Highlights included validating weapons software, successfully executing several weapons separation and engagement tests, and completing a series of ground attack exercises as called in by joint terminal attack ground controllers.

The program also surpassed 25,000 combined flight hours in December with F-35 military fleet aircraft (16,200 hours) nearly doubling the System Development and Demonstration (SDD) test aircraft (8950) hours.

The US Marine Corps declared Initial Operational Capability (IOC) for the F-35 program in July last year.

HEADS UP

Former HMA Ships Brunei (L127) and Tarakan (L129) are being gifted to the Philippines. Labuan (L128) was gifted to PNG. Photo by Able Seaman Tom Gibson



LCHs GET LIFE EXTENSION

Australia has gifted two recently-decommissioned landing craft heavy vessels, including a package of spare parts, to the Philippines, Minister for Defence Kevin Andrews announced on 29 January.

Mr Andrews said the former HMAS Tarakan and Brunei would be gifted to the Philippine Navy after being refurbished with new safety and navigation equipment.

"I expect the vessels will be refitted and ready for hand over in May," Mr Andrews said.

The landing craft will be commissioned into the Philippines Navy and will provide additional intra-theatre sealift capability and greatly improve the Philippines' ability to respond to natural disasters.

The Philippines also bought the remaining three LCH.

BAE WINS AUSSIE JSF SUPPORT HUB

Defence Minister Kevin Andrews congratulated BAE Systems Australia and TAE on securing regional maintenance, repair, overhaul and upgrade responsibilities for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter airframe and engine.

Mr Andrews said BAE Systems Australia was one of Australia's leading Defence firms and had been a long-standing provider of sustainment services to a range of military aircraft.

He also noted that TAE was a leading aerospace engine maintenance service provider, based at RAAF Base Amberley, supporting both military and commercial aircraft in the Asia Pacific region.

"The F-35 is the most advanced fighter aircraft in development or production anywhere in the world and securing this work in Australia is a great outcome for these companies," Mr Andrews said.

"This announcement comes on top of US\$433 million that Australian companies have won in production and development contracts to date."

Mr Andrews said that with the F-35 global support system now being stood up and with our first aircraft due to arrive in Australia in 2018, the next few years would see more opportunities for Australian industry to support not only Australia's F-35s but those in our region and around the globe.

"The assignment of regional maintenance, repair, overhaul and upgrade responsibility to BAE and TAE will enable them to demonstrate the capability and capacity of Australian industry to support this leading-edge capability."

VETS TO HELP ON HISTORIC DIG

Waterloo Uncovered, a landmark archaeological project to explore the battlefield of Waterloo was launched in February.

Uniquely, the team will include British veterans, some wounded in recent campaigns, who will work alongside leading battlefield archaeologists and military historians who hope to answer questions that remain unanswered after 200 years.

While the battle has been studied for generations, little is

known about the archaeological remains that exist under the surface of the battlefield, including the mass graves of tens of thousands of casualties.

Waterloo Uncovered is the brainchild of two Coldstream Guards officers, Major Charles Foinette, and Mark Evans, who suffers from PTSD following his experience in Afghanistan.

Further information on Waterloo Uncovered can be found at www.waterloouncovered.com



Mark Evans, ex Coldstream Guards (left) and Dr Tony Pollard, Director of the Centre for Battlefield Archeology, University of Glasgow, inspect the Coldstream Guards Royal Standard, which includes the Battle Honour for Waterloo. Crown Copyright photo by Sergeant Rupert Frere RLC



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Photo by Corporal Brad Hanson

UNSTOPPABLE LOADERS

New Zealand Defence Force personnel in Antarctica worked around the clock in 24-hour daylight to unload and reload a massive supply ship in January.

In a slick eight-day operation, the 53-strong team of NZDF personnel from Linton and Burnham Military Camps unloaded 389 crates from the Ocean Giant containing food, vehicles, scientific equipment and general supplies that will last 12 months – then reloaded the ship with 550 crates of waste and scientific equipment from the previous 12 months.

The larger number of crates for the return journey was a result of poor weather in February 2014 that forced the Ocean Giant to leave Antarctica before all crates were loaded.

The deployment of the Ship Offload Team is the biggest 'surge' of NZDF personnel to the ice each year, with a team made up of stevedores, riggers, general assistants and drivers.

There are now 101 NZDF personnel on the continent, with 23 more supporting operations in Christchurch.

United States Marine Terminal Supervisor on the ice, Michael Davis, was full of praise for the Kiwis.

"The NZDF team are probably the most enthusiastic people I know, and they're definitely the most fit," he said.

"They do pushups for every container they unload and we can't keep up with them."

"They are absolutely a notch above." Although the majority of the supplies were headed to the United States Antarctic Programme at McMurdo, Antarctica New Zealand took ownership of 31 crates that included a much-anticipated excavator, Land Cruiser and two Hagglunds for Scott Base, home to New Zealand's national Antarctic program.

Sergeant Dave Peacock, Pilot Officer Andrew Taylor and Flight Lieutenant Peter Barron excavate ice blocks to build a survival shelter. Photo by Corporal Brad Hanson



ICE SURVIVAL

Seven RNZAF aircrew spent part of their summer in Antarctica completing a Cold Weather Survival Training course.

The course is run by the New Zealand Defence Force Survival Training Centre with support from Antarctica New Zealand Field Training Staff.

The principle purpose of the training is to equip aircrew with survival techniques and have them gain practical experience in the use of cold-weather-survival equipment specifically carried on ice flights to Antarctica.

Aircrew are required to address the priorities of survival over a 24-hour period.

Prioritising gives a survivor the best possible chance of surviving and incident such as an aircraft crash on the ice.

They include addressing, in order, first aid, clothing, shelter, fire, location, water and food.

The Royal New Zealand Air Force makes several flights to Antarctica each season, supporting both New Zealand and American research bases, and using both C-130 Hercules and B-757 aircraft.

RNZAF DOG TEAM GRADUATE

Aircraftman Gareth Havill and his Military Working Dog (MWD) Khan graduated Basic MWD Handler training at Royal New Zealand Air Force Base Auckland on 11 December in a ceremony presided over by Commanding Officer 209 Squadron, Wing Commander Darryl Cockroft.

Aircraftman Havill and MWD Khan, a Dutch Shepherd/German Shepherd Cross, were paired on day one of the 12-week MWD Handler course and their graduation marked both the success of Aircraftman Havill as a new dog handler and MWD Khan as the youngest military working dog in Auckland.

At the graduation, the duo demonstrated several of the techniques they learnt during the course, including obedience, agility and apprehension.

For the partnership to be successful the handler and his dog need to have a great relationship, which is why they are paired at the start of the course and will remain as a working



Photo by Corporal Maria Oosterbaan

team throughout Aircraftman Havill's posting at the MWD Unit.

Aircraftman Havill says he and Khan will join other MWD teams at Base Auckland whose primary role is to provide security for the aircraft and

facilities, both on base and while they are deployed.

"Over Christmas Khan and I will start continuation training so we're constantly improving our skills," Aircraftman Havel said.

"We'll start doing activities such as building searches and tracking, which involves training Khan to locate personnel in buildings, and to follow the ground scent of someone evading on foot."

The Air Force maintains a specialist military working dog unit which is used for force protection – security of the air base and aircraft, and security of RNZAF units when deployed.

In July last year the Air Force deployed three handlers and their dogs to Exercise Pitch Black in Darwin, Australia – training that simulates real-life operations and ensures the dogs can perform away from home.

Aircraftman Havill said he was looking forward to the opportunity of deploying with MWD Khan in the future.

CEREMONY MARKS NEW ROLES FOR NH90

A ceremony to mark the change of command of the Royal New Zealand Air Force's 3 Squadron took place at RNZAF Base Ohakea on 18 December – bringing the entire rotary-wing transport force together under one banner.

Chief of Air Force Air Vice-Marshal Mike Yardley said the integration came as the new aircraft develop new capabilities.

"The NH90 will now become responsible for search and rescue missions, casualty evacuation in association with search and rescue, as well as transport for NZ Police and other government and military personnel for national security requirements," Air Vice-Marshal Yardley said.

"The Iroquois have performed these tasks well for many years, but it is now time for the NH90 to become the primary aircraft for search and rescue and national security."



Wing Commander Marcel Scott hands over the 3 Squadron Penant to Wing Commander Scott McKenzie. Photo by Corporal Brad Hanson

NZ HEADS UP

ANZAC HONOUR

Royal New Zealand Navy's HMNZS Te Kaha departed Devonport on 16 February for a five-month deployment that will see the Kiwi ship visit Gallipoli for Anzac Day. Te Kaha will first participate in sea training off the coast of Australia before her transit north.

Commanding officer Commander Simon Griffith said his crew were honoured to be representing New Zealand on such an historic occasion.

"Gallipoli laid the foundation for our modern military," Commander Griffith said.

"Honouring the brave soldiers and sailors who gave their lives is something we do with pride every Anzac Day, but the 100-year anniversary is a particularly poignant moment we are extremely proud to be part of."

While deployed, Te Kaha will also test out its latest upgrades.

Commander Griffith said the mid-life upgrades had been a real eye-opener for him.

"When I first worked on frigates many years ago, the systems were mostly manual.

"Now all the operational components are controlled through touch-screen technology, which is a huge step forward, and makes operating the ship more intuitive."



ORION WELCOMED HOME



An Air Force P-3K2 Orion aircraft and crew returned to Royal New Zealand Air Force Base Auckland at Whenuapai on 18 February from ongoing Middle East counter-piracy and security operations.

Operating with the 30 nations of the Combined Maritime Force, the aircraft and crew were part of an effort to reduce the influence of pirates in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean.

Acting Commander Joint Forces New Zealand Air Commodore Kevin McEvoy said New Zealand had an aircraft and supporting detachment of around 50 personnel deployed since July 2014.

"Our aircraft upgrades, including new sensor equipment, are proving highly effective and our people have been well trained," he said.

"They have proved their worth in the coalition, and New Zealand continues to make a valuable contribution to reducing the funding of crime and terrorism, including involvement in a multi-million dollar drug bust."

Originally planned to be five months in duration, the mission was extended.

This crew has been replaced by another aircraft and crew and the mission is now programmed to conclude in December 2015.

AIRTRAINER SAYS GOODBYE

It was the end of an era when five Royal New Zealand Air Force's CT-4E Airtrainers took to the skies over Manawatu and Whanganui for a final farewell flyover on 4 December.

The CT-4Es have been a familiar sight in the regions' skies since the model was introduced at RNZAF Base Ohakea in 1998.

More than 190 students have successfully completed the Airtrainer phase of the Wings course after learning to fly in one of the 13 aircraft.

Officer Commanding Pilot Training School Squadron Leader Ben Stephens was the formation leader for the farewell flyover and said it was great to be part of the final formation flight.

"For me, it was important to recognise the contribution of the aircraft and to share the experience with the Pilot Training School team," he said.

"It's the end of an era, for sure, and it's goodbye to a long-serving aircraft."

Future Air Force Wings courses will be carried out on the Beechcraft T-6C Texan II, with seven of 11 of the new aircraft having been received by the Air Force since the announcement of the new Pilot Training Capability in April.

The CT-4E Airtrainer has also been used by the RNZAF formation aerobatics team, the Red Checkers, showcasing flying skills at displays around the country.

The aerobatic display team will also fly the T-6C Texan II and will be renamed by the public via a competition.



Photo by Elisha Cathcart



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Avalon 2015 also commemorated the centenary of the landing of troops from the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) at Gallipoli, Turkey on 25 April 1915.



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Avalon 2015 photos by Daniel McIntosh

BACKGROUND: Manipulated photograph consisting of several photographs from the Battle of Zonnebeke in Belgium during WWI, by Frank Hurley

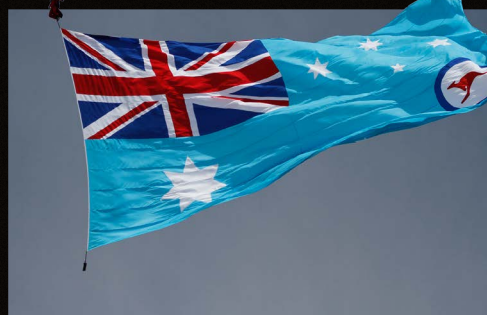


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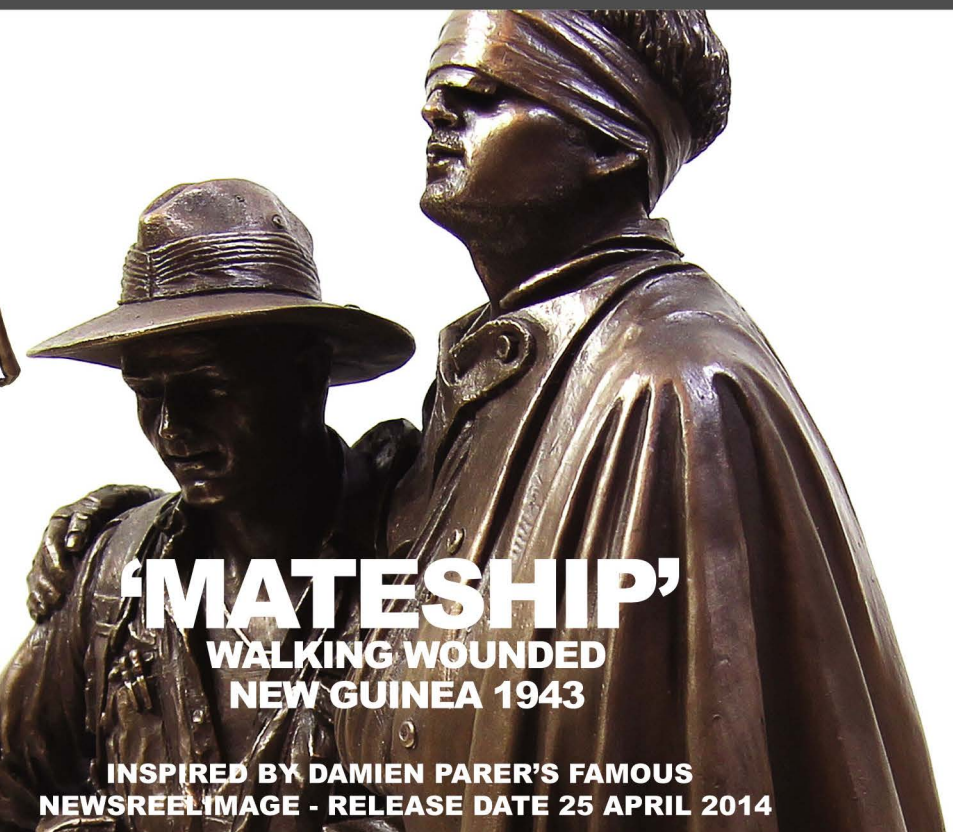
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AUSSIES UNDER FIRE 'LIKE RAIN ON WATER' IN AFGHAN ANVIL

On 26 August 2008, 1 Troop SASR, made up of four six-man patrols, flew 80km to American Forward Operating Base Anaconda near Khas Uruzghan intent on finding a Taliban leader they thought was in the area. No sooner were they on the ground than intelligence came in that their target had been spotted elsewhere – and the Aussies were stuck at Anaconda for several days waiting for a return flight. Rather than kick back and relax, however, the Aussies asked their American hosts if there was anything they could do to help.

Among those Aussies was SAS team leader Sergeant Troy Simmonds.

SASR Sergeant
Troy Simmonds
heads off to catch
the chopper that
would take he and
his men to a date
with destiny
– 26 August 2008

Ana Kalay, scene of
fierce fighting

In truly understated Aussie fashion, Sergeant Troy Simmonds, a veteran of Somalia, East Timor and Iraq, recalls asking the soldiers from the American 7th Special Forces Group, "We're here for a couple of days – where's your hot spots?"

"Well, we have these two valleys we can't get into," came the reply.

Up for anything, the Aussies said, "We'll have a go at them – make ourselves useful while we're here".

So, 'a plan was hatched' Sergeant Simmonds says.

The plan would see a sniper patrol clandestinely sent out on foot under cover of darkness to reconnoitre and set up an ambush and wait for a vehicle patrol that would overtly go out the next day.

As planned, five Humvees set out for one of the troublesome valleys, heretofore designated a no-go zone, to stir things up.

It didn't take long.

The snipers spotted three Taliban moving into what was thought to be a command position some 500m away, and took them out.

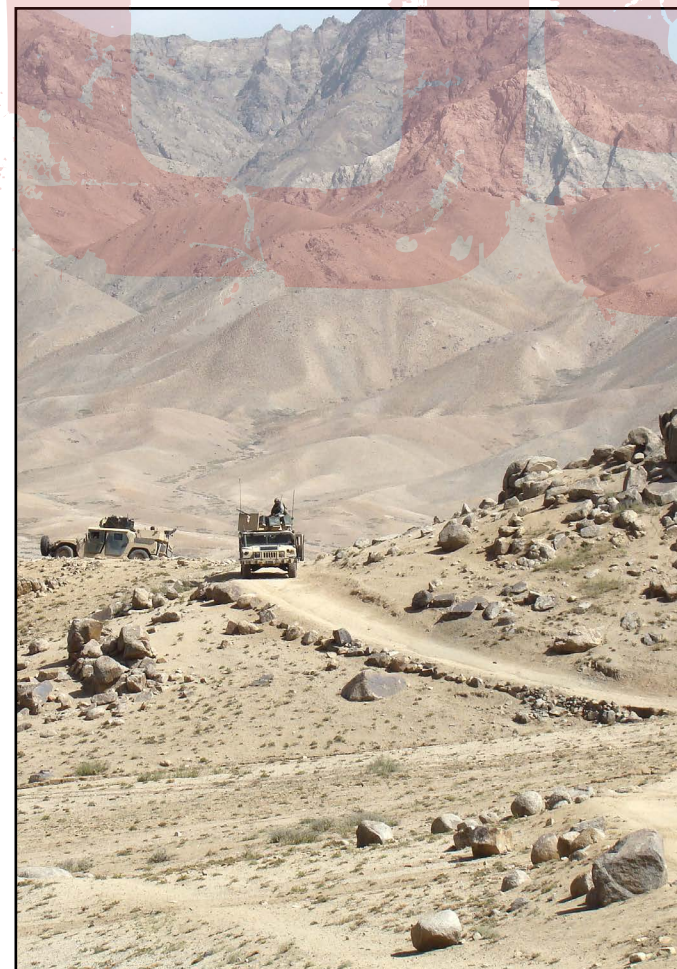
When a heavily armed 'technical' arrived to collect the bodies, the combined Aussie/American patrol fought through using rifles and grenade launchers, aided by the snipers.

A follow-up battlefield clearance confirmed 11 enemy down.





The US/Australian/Afghan patrol stops to talk to locals.



The patrol heads into badlands.



An Aussie sniper overlooks the Ana Kalay valley.

That night, with the tactic proven, the SAS sent out two foot patrols to the second valley.

At 0400hr on 2 September, 12 SAS plus two Aussie engineers and explosives detection dog Sarbi joined 10 Americans aboard the middle three of a five-Humvee convoy. The first and last vehicles contained 10 Afghan soldiers each.

Near the mouth of the valley, the Aussies hopped out of the vehicles and clambered up into the hills to set up yet more ambush positions while the vehicles waited in the green zone before moving into the narrow valley.

The convoy quickly attracted attention, but their movement in turn only brought the enemy to the attention of the waiting Aussies – as planned.

Another seven enemy were killed in short order.

Sergeant Simmonds' patrol spotted another nest of Taliban, armed with rifles and RPGs about 800m away, but this group had children among them, so they were not engaged.

As the day wore on, the decision to return to base was made. The 12 Aussies who rode out with the vehicles married up with the Hummers while the two sniper teams went back over the mountains and started their long walk back to base.

The valley was so narrow and rough that the vehicles had to simply turn around and go back along the same track they had used to get into the valley – tactically not an ideal choice, because the hornets' nest had been well and truly kicked.

**KILL THEM
KILL THEM ALL**

It was 3pm and the Taliban were pissed. Enemy radio chatter rallied all available men to, "Kill them – kill them all".

Mortars began to rain down, quickly followed by hails of bullets and rocket-propelled grenades.

On foot, using the vehicles for cover, the allied patrol returned fire with everything they had – rifles, grenade launchers, 7.62mm and .50cal machineguns, and 66mm and 84mm anti-armour weapons.

But the enemy were in much better positions – high ground, good cover and concealment, estimated at about 200 strong and "pouring a shit-tonne" of ordnance down on the convoy.

The rough ground and the dismounted troops meant progress was agonisingly slow.

An American soldier firing a .50 cal machine gun was hit in the arm early in the fight and, after rendering first aid, an Aussie jumped up behind the weapon to keep the big gun going.

Close air support was called and 500lb bombs silenced the mortars and slowed the bullets just a little.

SASR snipers trek to an ambush position.





Sergeant Simmonds, happy with an air ordnance drop.



Sergeant Simmonds in rough country.



An Australian SOTG patrol prepares to depart Forward Operating Base Locke.

But the convoy was far from saved.

Having moved just 1km from the start point, they were still under heavy fire from at least two directions.

American Sergeant Greg Rodriguez was next to go down – shot in the head and killed outright. Even while two Aussies carried his body to a Humvee the already-dead sergeant copped another two rounds in the back, missing his Aussie aides.

About then, a Chinook helicopter was spotted flying past at some distance and everyone knew it would have Apache escorts.

Australian joint terminal attack controller Corporal Gibbo attempted to call them in, but the Dutch Apaches were reluctant, citing rules of engagement.

Corporal Gibbo decided to move to higher ground to assist the pilots to pinpoint targets, but he was shot in the chest and was in a bad way.

The Apaches were eventually and unceremoniously told to “Fuck off then” if they wouldn’t help.

About now, the lead Afghan Hummer stopped, the Afghan soldiers trying to use its bullet-proof glass for cover – effectively halting the entire convoy in the kill zone.

Another American went down with gunshot wounds to the legs – then another Aussie – and another.

Sergeant Simmonds was on one knee, beside an American, returning fire in the direction of muzzle flashes, which was all he could see of the enemy on his side of the vehicle.

“At that stage we were getting shot at from all directions, so there wasn’t anywhere you could really hide,” he says.

“Bullets were landing all around us – it was kind of like rain on water in the dust.

“One of those bullets landed very near me and ricochet’d into my calf.

“I turned to the guy next to me and I said, “I just got shot”.”

“God damn, so did I,” the Yank yelled back.

Sergeant Simmonds stayed upright however – thanks to adrenaline, training and a desperate desire to live through this.

Moments later, while ordering two of his men to go forward to get the lead vehicle moving again, an RPG landed directly between Sergeant Simmonds and the two other Aussies.

The explosion blew all three off their feet and everyone who witnessed the explosion were certain their sergeant and colleagues were dead.

Lying on the ground, peppered with shrapnel all up his left side and with a massive ringing in his ears, Sergeant Simmonds says he couldn’t feel his left arm, like it was numb from sleeping on it.

“I couldn’t see a thing with all the dust the RPG had kicked up and I was actually afraid to feel for my arm because I was scared it wasn’t there.

“But I eventually reached over and was relieved to find my arm was still attached – and the feeling started to come back into it.”

The other two Aussies, although also wounded by shrapnel, got back on their feet and went forward to the lead vehicle as instructed. One banished the Afghan driver to the back and jumped into the driver’s seat, taking direct control of the situation.

Sergeant Simmonds got up and attempted to move to where the American commander was, to appraise him of the situation and why his men were going forward, but was shot at from close range by two Taliban behind some rocks.

He began to shoot back.

Suddenly, his own rifle, which he had in his shoulder with his cheek on the stock, carefully aiming, kicked up and smashed him in the face. It had caught a round in its ejection port, undoubtedly saving the sergeant’s life.

His weapon was now useless.

Seconds later Sergeant Simmonds felt another massive pain in his lower body, which again knocked him down.

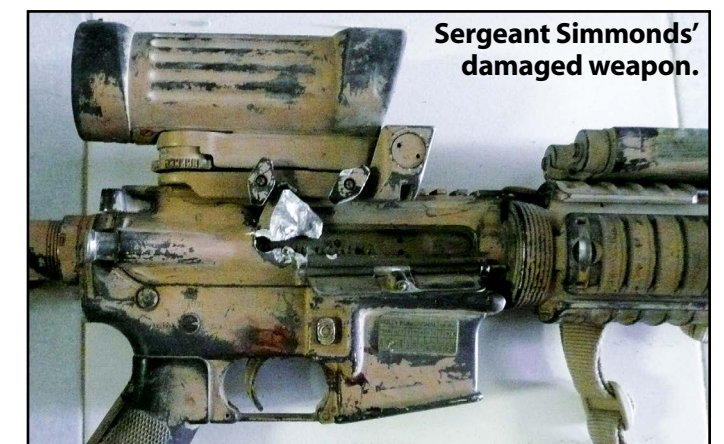
“I didn’t actually know where I’d been hit because I was already covered in blood anyway.

“What had happened, I found out later, was the bullet went through my right bum, past my bowels and my bladder and lodged in my left hip joint.

“In surgery later they had to leave it where it was – it would have been too complicated and dangerous to take it out.

“The surgeons said I was extremely lucky with that shot. They said they tried to push a rod through the entry wound to where the bullet was, without going through my bowel or vital organs – but couldn’t.

“But somehow the bullet had gone through one side of my body to the other without nicking anything vital.



Sergeant Simmonds’ damaged weapon.



Sergeant Troy Simmonds (right) with an Aussie and an American colleague, in a sniper position.



Aussie snipers lie in wait



The snipers exfiltrate from Ana Kalay.

"Anyway, at the time, I thought I was just winded, so I got up and went to the American captain in the Humvee.

"I was sort of dodging bullets all the while because there were bullets hitting the car all over.

"I opened the door and the captain was sitting there with a radio to both ears, talking to two different people.

"I told him that my guys were going forward to get the lead vehicle moving and assured him that everyone else was on or near a vehicle and ready to move.

"As I closed the door, a burst of machinegun fire hit the back of the car, so there was no way I could go that way.

"So I dropped on my back and actually shuffled underneath the car.

"I was surprisingly calm under there and had a little time to go over our situation in my head."

Suddenly the Hummer started to move and Sergeant Simmonds grabbed a hold of something to go with it.

But the ground was too rough to get dragged over, and he eventually had to let go – and try to avoid being crushed between the rear diff and the jagged rocks.

Clear of the vehicle, which was still moving at walking pace, badly wounded in the both hips, with

the rain of bullets still dancing in the dust all around him, Sergeant Simmonds "hobbled like an instant old man" after the Hummer.

As he got close, another RPG burst above the vehicle knocked him down again and sprayed the men inside with shrapnel.

Some shrapnel from this RPG also sliced through the leash tethering Sarbi to her handler, Corporal David 'Simdog' Simpson.

Sarbi took off – and 14 months later stamped her own pawmark on the pages of Australian military history when she was recovered during an American SF raid on a Taliban compound, returned to her super-grateful owners and eventual retirement in Australia.

Catching up with the Hummer, Sergeant Simmonds found there was no room for him inside the vehicle nor were any of the men in it in a fit state to help him, so he staggered around the front where he managed to lodge himself in the gap between the radiator and the bullbar.

Just then, another RPG airburst above the back of the vehicle peppered those inside with even more shrapnel.

One of those wounded this time was an Afghan interpreter, who was badly hit in the head and thrown out of the vehicle – and saved by Trooper Mark Donaldson who was later awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions.

Four other gallantry medals were awarded for surrounding events, including a Medal for Gallantry to the Aussie who took control of the lead vehicle.

Curled in a foetal position on the front of the Hummer, Sergeant Simmonds became a deliberate target again. Rounds started peppering the bonnet and the bullbar, inches from the badly wounded, almost deaf, covered in blood, armed with a useless weapon and all but helpless Aussie, who was wearing only the shredded remnants of what was once a uniform.

"I thought it was just a matter of time before I got hit again," he says.

"I remember actually thinking, 'I've been hit in the body already and I think I'm alright, but if I get hit in the head then it's all over'."

"I didn't have a helmet on so I was quite worried about my head.

"Then I spotted the heavy tow chain wrapped around the bullbar, so I unravelled that and wrapped it around my head – while bullets were still pinging on metal all around me."

But now a new danger seeped into his mind. The patrol had a strong suspicion that the enemy may try to cut them off by planting an IED in the pass up ahead, which would really finish them off.

"It was a very narrow pass – not much more than a vehicle width, with rock on either side.

"Anyway, my guy who was now driving the front vehicle did a bit of a dynamic move and went through the pass sort of up on an angle, with one set of wheels up on the rocks, and he got through.

"So all the other vehicles did the same thing, following in his tracks, and we all got through – under a huge amount of fire.

"They had machineguns on us from every angle, but we got through and gradually the fire started to ease off – and that's when I got really nervous.

"I was thinking, 'OK we got away with that – now we'll probably hit an IED or something'."

"And riding behind the bullbar is probably not the best place to be when a vehicle hits an IED."

Reflecting on the ambush years later, Sergeant Simmonds says it was probably a bit selfish worrying about himself instead of his men, but concedes it was probably human nature too – and there wasn't a lot he could have done for anyone in his precarious, exposed position anyway.

But, as luck would have it, there was no IED on the route back to base and the convoy rumbled into FOB Anaconda to the waiting arms of a plethora of colleagues eager to triage the wounded and get the worst of them evacuated as quickly as possible.

"The triage all went very well. They grabbed us and put us on stretchers and took care of us really well.

"They flew me and a couple of others to Tarin Kot, where there had just been a turnover of surgical teams and so the surgeons who worked on us were a collection of top people from Melbourne and Sydney – all reservists.

"The bullet in my lower leg wasn't a big issue. It was a ricochet so it had broken up before going in. So they took out all the pieces easy enough.

"Those wounds took a while to heal up though.

"Like I said, the bullet in my hip had to be left in place – and I was also shitting blood for about 12 months from all the trauma around that area – but otherwise my recovery was fairly OK."

Sergeant Simmonds made a good recovery and was posted to the training squadron at Campbell Barracks, Swanbourne, home of the SAS, to help on the SASR selection course and train new guys in the basic skills of the SAS soldier.

He says he really enjoyed that role for a couple of years. He also enjoyed plenty of time recuperating and spent lots of time with his wife, who had only seen him for three or four months a year since he joined the SAS.

Inevitably, however, he was posted back to an operational squadron and again deployed to Afghanistan.

"I had some trepidation going back there, but this time I wasn't going outside the wire.

"My job on this trip was helping to plan missions and assist and advise young officers in how the SAS does business."

Now retired from the SAS, Troy Simmonds says he feels no ill effects from his service generally nor from the ambush that almost took his life.

"I saw some pretty bad stuff over there, but I think I have the capacity to put things in perspective and to compartmentalise them.

"It's almost like I can look back on that part of my life and see that I was like acting a role at that time, and now I'm in a different role.

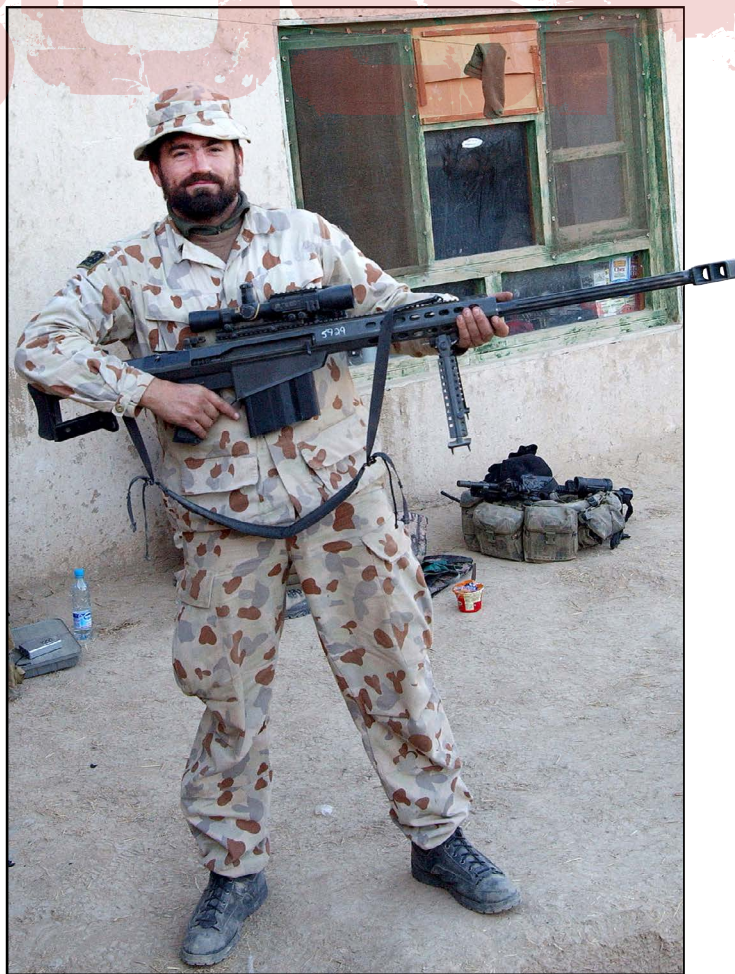
"I know some blokes do suffer from psychological issues after something like that, but I don't – or I don't think I do.

"I can think about it and talk about it and look at photos or videos from over there and it doesn't have a massive emotional affect on me."

Troy Simmonds spent 22 years in the Australian Army and did six tours of Afghanistan with the Special Operations Task Group.

The Battle of Ana Kalay lasted about two hours and resulted in one US KIA, with one wounded. Of nine Aussies wounded, one was considered life threatening at the time, but all survived.

After-action assessments put the enemy death toll at about 80.



SAS Sergeant Troy Simmonds is now retired.



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Three weeks of intensive air-combat training wrapped up on 13 February as Exercise Red Flag 15-1 concluded at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, USA.

A contingent of 150 Royal Australian Air Force personnel participated with two C-130J Hercules transports and an AP-3C Orion surveillance aircraft working alongside counterparts from the United States and United Kingdom.

The RAAF also sent an air-battle-management team from No. 41 Wing tasked with overseeing missions that included more than 60 combat aircraft in the Nevada Test and Training Range.

The 30,000-square-kilometre tract of exercise area is home to an array of 'enemy' radars, ground-based defences and Aggressor Squadron fighters.

Flying low-level along ridgelines in the NTTR, a pair C-130J Hercules from the RAAF's No. 37 Squadron hid from prying radars to deliver personnel and cargo onto designated drop zones.

37 Sqn Commanding Officer Wing Commander Darren Goldie said the Exercise Red Flag 15-1 training environment rated as the world's best.

"This exercise represents the greatest test for the C-130J's abilities," Wing Commander Goldie said.

"During each mission, instruments on our aircraft and the monitoring equipment in the range collect precise information about each engagement for use in debriefs."

He said the face-to-face interaction between

American, British and Australian personnel at Red Flag 15-1 was invaluable to the success of future operations.

WATCH VIDEO



Photos by Leading Aircraftman Michael Green, RAAF



"It's critical that we're well prepared to participate in operations and speak the same tactical language as our partners."

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Exercise Red Flag, with Australia having participated annually since November 1980.

Throughout its history, the exercise has aimed to recreate an aircrew's first 10 missions in a

war-like environment, to increase their chances of survival in combat operations.

No. 10 Squadron Commanding Officer Wing Commander Jason Begley said RAAF personnel worked alongside the world's most advanced combat aircraft, including the B-2A stealth bomber, F-22A Raptor and E/A-18G Growler.

"You only have to look at the flightline to see the regard in which this exercise is held, allowing us to operate at the leading edge of capabilities and tactics," Wing Commander Begley said.

"The tactics, techniques and procedures we learn here will be directly transferable to future aircraft and systems we will operate."

The AP-3C Orion, from 10SQN at RAAF Base Edinburgh, conducted over-land surveillance missions in a highly complicated electronic warfare environment.

"Because of the extensive investment the United States has made on the range, it's a level of complexity that you can't get anywhere else in the world," Wing Commander Begley said.

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Main photo by Leading Aircraftman Michael Green, RAAF

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LANCE CORPORAL JOSH LEAKEY VC



A British soldier who single-handedly turned the tide of battle and prevented considerable loss of life during an assault into a Taliban stronghold in Afghanistan was awarded the Victoria Cross on 26 February.

He is the first living soldier awarded the VC for action in Afghanistan – and the second soldier in his family to receive the military's highest bravery honour.

Lance Corporal Josh Leakey, aged 27, of The Parachute Regiment, was deployed in Afghanistan as a member of a task force conducting operations to disrupt insurgent safe-havens and protect the main operating base in Helmand Province on 22 August 2013 when, on a combined UK/US assault led by the US Marine Corps to disrupt a key insurgent group that the force, having dismounted from their helicopters, came under accurate machine gun and rocket propelled grenade fire.

The command group became pinned down on the exposed forward slope of a hill and, after attempted to extract themselves from their position for an hour, a Marine Corps captain was shot and wounded and the group's communications put out of action.

"On this day, things just felt different," Lance Corporal Leakey said.

"The enemy were more determined, even when air support was around, they stood and they fought, which was fairly uncommon.

"Thoughts going through my mind on that day were, 'let's do this right'.

"There's a man wounded, we need to get this guy sorted, and also stop more people getting wounded."

Lance Corporal Leakey, positioned on the lee of the hill, realising the seriousness of the situation and with complete disregard for his own safety, dashed across a large area of barren hillside, which was then being raked with machine gun fire.

The full severity of the situation became apparent as Lance Corporal Leakey reached the top of the hill. Approximately 20 enemy had surrounded two friendly machine-gun teams and a mortar section rendering the fire support ineffective.

Lance Corporal Leakey moved down the forward slope of the hill and gave first aid to the wounded officer and, despite being the most junior commander in the area, took control of the situation and initiated the casualty evacuation.

Then, still under enemy fire, he set off up the hill to get one of the suppressed machine guns back into action.

On reaching it and with rounds impacting on the frame of the gun itself, he moved it to another position and began engaging the enemy.

"Everyone was under fire," he said. "It wasn't just me.

"But, we needed to be the ones giving effective fire, instead of the ones on the receiving end.

"That's why the guns had to be re-sited and realigned onto the enemy.

"We had to take the fight to the enemy because they were dominating the area and our freedom of movement was being denied.

"We needed to swing the tide back in our favour."

His citation states: "This courageous action spurred those around him back into the fight. For the third time and with full knowledge of the dangers, Lance Corporal Leakey exposed himself to enemy fire once more. Weighted down with more than 60lbs of equipment, he ran to the bottom of the hill, picked up the second machine gun and climbed back up the hill, around 200 metres of steep terrain. Rounds were hitting the ground around him. But, despite the danger, Josh re-sited the gun and returned fire. This was the turning point as, inspired by his actions and with a heavy weight of fire now at their disposal, the force began to fight back with renewed ferocity."

Having regained the initiative, Lance Corporal Leakey handed over the machine gun and led the extraction of the wounded officer to a point from which he could be safely evacuated.

"My goals on that day were very simple, as were everyone's," he said.

"When it became clear there was a casualty, our mission changed slightly so we had to deal with the casualty and we had to suppress the enemy.

"I like to think we did a pretty good job of looking after the casualty and of suppressing the enemy."

Lance Corporal Leakey's citation goes on, "Displaying gritty leadership well above that expected of his rank, Lance Corporal Leakey's actions single-handedly regained the initiative and prevented considerable loss of life, allowing a wounded US Marine officer to be evacuated. For this act of valour, Lance Corporal Leakey is highly deserving of significant national recognition."

The head of the Army broke the news to Lance Corporal Leakey, who was told by General Sir Nick Carter to 'take a seat, I've got something to tell you'.

Josh says, "I'm still stunned, absolutely stunned really, that they've given it to me. It's going to take a while for it to sink in".

"If it was up to me there'd be many other people sitting here with me doing this as well.

"There are so many people out there deserving, from my battalion, my regiment, from Afghan; there are so many of us who've done things. It's nothing out of the ordinary, really.

"You don't do anything in the Army on your own. It's not normal being singled out; you feel uncomfortable, because everything you do is a team effort really, in my opinion. And that day was no different.

"I like to think that on that day we gave a good account of ourselves, you know, fellow paratroopers cutting around the green zone doing what we do best, taking the fight to the enemy."

The Victoria Cross is the highest award for gallantry, awarded to all ranks of the services and civilians for gallantry in the presence of the enemy.

It may be awarded posthumously. Two other VCs have been awarded to British soldiers for actions in Afghanistan – Corporal Bryan Budd, also of The Parachute Regiment, who was killed in action on 20 August 2006 and Lance Corporal James Ashworth, Grenadier Guards, KIA 13 June 2012.

Lance Corporal Leakey's second cousin twice removed, Sergeant Nigel Gray Leakey, posthumously won the Victoria Cross for single-handedly taking on an Italian tank attack in Africa in May 1945.

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UNDERWAY AND ALL SMILES

There was a hushed, controlled buzz of excitement throughout HMAS Canberra as the 400-strong ship's company prepared her to go to sea under the White Ensign for the first time in December.

The heart of the ship, the central control station, was busy with engineering teams moving with purpose as they conducted final ready-for-sea checks.

With one diesel generator and her gas turbine online, HMAS Canberra's two large azimuth pods, combined with her bow thrusters to manoeuvre the giant ship off the wharf and down the harbour.

Petty Officer Darren Jay was the marine systems manager on-watch in the central control station for the departure.

"I was very proud to be the person in that role as we took the ship off the wharf for the very first time," Petty Officer Jay said.

"I think the whole engineering department is extremely happy with what we have achieved.

"It's been a big job getting to where we are and everyone has a right to feel good about the work that's been done."

Marine engineering officer Lieutenant Commander Suzie Bishop said she was impressed by the efforts of her team.

"The engineering team has had range challenges and priorities to juggle, particularly when the ship's company moved onboard, and all the systems such as water, sewage and air conditioning went into full swing," Lieutenant Commander Bishop said.

"The departure and subsequent time at sea has been the next step in the learning journey.

"They are enthusiastic and eager to continue to strengthen their knowledge of the systems and equipment.

"I am proud of their continued achievements."

There was also a mixture of excitement and anticipation on the bridge.

Navigating officer Lieutenant Commander Calvin Johnson said the departure went well.

HMAS Canberra provides a dramatic backdrop to the Inter-Service Yachting Championships on Sydney Harbour.



HMAS Canberra's navigator Lieutenant Commander Calvin Johnson takes a bearing as the ship enters Jervis Bay.

WORDS LIEUTENANT EMILY KENNEDY – PHOTOS ABLE SEAMAN STEVEN THOMSON, LEADING SEAMAN HELEN FRANK AND PETTY OFFICER OLLIE GARSIDE



Able Seamen Codey Martin, Trent Buxton, Matthew Milgate and Jack Williams stow a berthing line as HMAS Canberra prepares to sail from Sydney for the first time.



Able Seaman Leigh McDonald stands on the quarterdeck as HMAS Canberra sails from Fleet Base East.



Officer of the watch Lieutenant Ben Stewart controls the azimuth pods from the bridge.

"Understandably there were a few nerves but we trained very hard for this day and it really paid off, as today was a great success," Lieutenant Commander Johnson said.

"There are always challenges with bringing a new class of ship into service, particularly being the navigator because you need to learn how to use the ship in the first instance."

Lieutenant Commander Johnson said it was a great experience.

"The highlight of the day was being the first navigator to bring Canberra off the wharf – it was pretty fantastic," he said.

A ship relies on every department working in unison to make an activity such as leaving the wharf successful.

The personnel working the huge lines that hold the ship to the wharf had an important role to play.

Leading Seaman Boatswain's Mate Corey Pickett was stationed at the forward mooring station, which is a large area where the forward lines are worked.

"My role is to clutch in and out the large drums that hold the lines to the ship," Leading Seaman Pickett said.

"The sheer size and technology of the Landing Helicopter Dock is the biggest difference compared to other ships I have been on.

"Surprisingly, fewer people are required to work the lines, thanks to the warping drums doing most of the heavy work."

HMAS Canberra underwent a range of seamanship evolutions with Sea Training Group embarked, including man overboard, anchorage, sea-boat drills, and securing and slipping from a buoy.

Canberra achieved all competencies for Mariner Skills Evaluation in preparation for her first-of-class trials.

Another major milestone was receiving her four landing craft in her well deck for the first time.

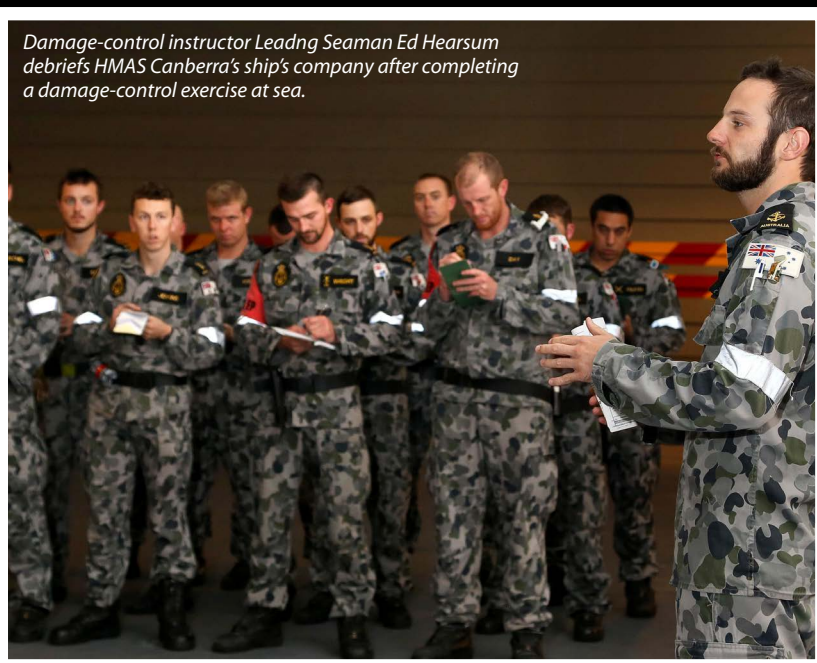
To do this, 4200 tonnes, or 4.2 million litres, of water were let onboard, into a large space inside her stern to allow the ship to 'dock down'.

Canberra's engineering officer Commander David Walter explained the process in simple terms.

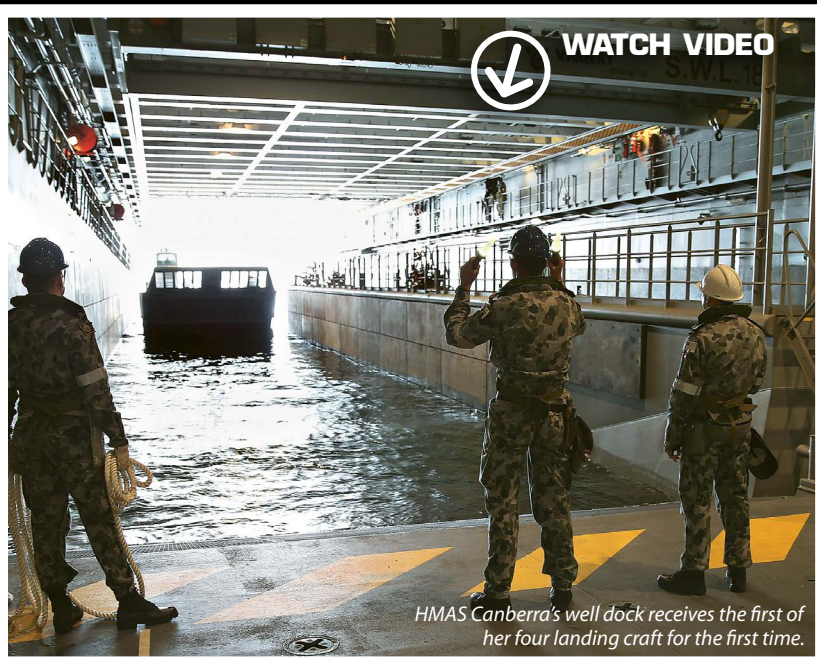
"How it works is, we sink the back end of the ship by filling an empty ballast tank under the well dock.

"Then we open the stern door and let the water fill the well dock.

Once the four landing craft are inside and secured, the stern door is closed and the well dock is drained, leaving the landing craft resting on the timbered floor.



Damage-control instructor Leading Seaman Ed Hearsom debriefs HMAS Canberra's ship's company after completing a damage-control exercise at sea.



HMAS Canberra's well dock receives the first of her four landing craft for the first time.



Leading Seaman Mark Newman fills out details on a breathing-apparatus board during a damage-control exercise.



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GUARDIAN ANGELS

PICS BY SERGEANT RAY VANCE

Having taken over from Force Protection Element-2 (FPE-2) earlier this year, soldiers from Townsville's 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR) and 3rd Combat Service Support Battalion (3CSSB) have bonded as FPE-3 conducting force-protection duties in support of Operation Highroad in Qargha and Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Now part of Joint Task Force 636, a platoon-sized team of soldiers in Kandahar perform 'Guardian Angel' and transport duties for Coalition members of the Afghan National Army's 205th Corps Coalition Advisory Team – 205 CAT.

Platoon Commander Lieutenant Ryan Muller said his team was well prepared to step into the role.

"We conducted 10 weeks of force preparation training leading up to the deployment and that was a good lead-up package which included everything from legal briefs, medical training, weapon training and integration work with the advisors we'll be protecting," Lieutenant Muller said.

"I think we'll do well. We've got a very intelligent group of



Corporal Chris Holmes keeps watch over Coalition advisors at Camp Hero, Kandahar.



Private Benjamin Jones maintains watch from a Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicle en route to Camp Hero.



Private Zachary Murray maintains watch while on Guardian Angel duty at Camp Hero



Private Liam O'Sha stands vigilant on Guardian Angel duty at Camp Hero



An Australian Army Bushmaster drives through a Bazaar in Kandahar.



Corporal Damon Hastie mans a MAG58 general-purpose machine gun on an Australian Bushmaster en-route to Camp Hero

Private Dermott Lane undertakes security duties at a workshop at Camp Hero in Kandahar, Afghanistan.



soldiers that work here and I've got absolute faith that they'll do their job correctly and at their highest capacity."

'Guardian Angel' duties require a soldier to provide individual security to advisors, which ensures they can remain focused on their role of advising while out on site at Camp Hero where the 205th Corps of the ANA is based.

"One of the challenges for us is providing the control measures for our soldiers who are really conducting an individual task within a platoon environment versus how we would conventionally operate with section tasks within the platoon environment," Lieutenant Muller said.

"I think the mindset of every soldier is a positive one and they know that we're here for the benefit of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission and also for the Afghan National Army."

Guardian Angel, or GA, Private Liam Kwasha said it was different to what he expected but he was so far enjoying the opportunity.

"My role is basically to protect my advisor when he is on site advising the ANA," Private Kwasha said.

"My duties involve checking the work area initially, standing watch and calling in any situations."

"One of the challenges is the cold – it's a bit different to Townsville."

"Also, when working with the Afghans, the language barrier is a challenge. Most of them speak scattered English but that can vary, so it can be difficult."

The team will get to see both sides of Afghanistan's weather having deployed in the height of winter and staying for the hotter months later in the year, however Lieutenant Muller is confident in his team's preparation for the six-month deployment.

"We've had a good and long build up and training process prior to deploying here, including being trained up on the latest military equipment

that we've deployed with," he said.

"That equipment provides us a huge level of security and safety while conducting our operations, which is the most important thing."

The transport function for the FPE is conducted by the Protected Mobility Vehicle (PMV) section, which is made up of eight Bushmaster crews – 16 soldiers, from the Royal Australian Corps of Transport.

The PMV section supports the protected movement of advisors and their GAs on daily tasks outside the main Coalition bases.

The RACT soldiers are among the first from their corps to conduct this kind of mission since the transition of the PMV from Armoured Corps.



Private Jacob Morrison maintains a security vigil at an entrance to Camp Hero.

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DEFENDING DARWIN

PICS BY LANCE CORPORAL SEB BEURICH
AND ABLE SEAMAN NICOLAS GONZALEZ

Hundreds of men, women and children gathered in Darwin on 19 February to commemorate the 73rd anniversary of the bombing of their city by Japanese forces in 1942.

Members of the 8th/12th Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, marked the anniversary by re-enacting defence measures, dressed in period 'uniforms'.

Representing the fewer-than two-dozen Australian anti-aircraft guns available on the day 188 Japanese aircraft attacked Darwin, three 8th/12th Regiment M2A2 ceremonial guns 'returned fire'.

The Japanese attack used high-altitude Kate bombers, Val dive bombers, and Zero fighters, launched from four aircraft carriers and their battle group located in the Timor Sea.

In all, 235 people on the ground were killed, with a further 400 wounded – with 131 of the casualties being US servicemen.

Eleven ships were sunk in the attack, including the destroyer USS Peary, with the loss of 88 souls.



Lance
Bombardier
Liam McKinner



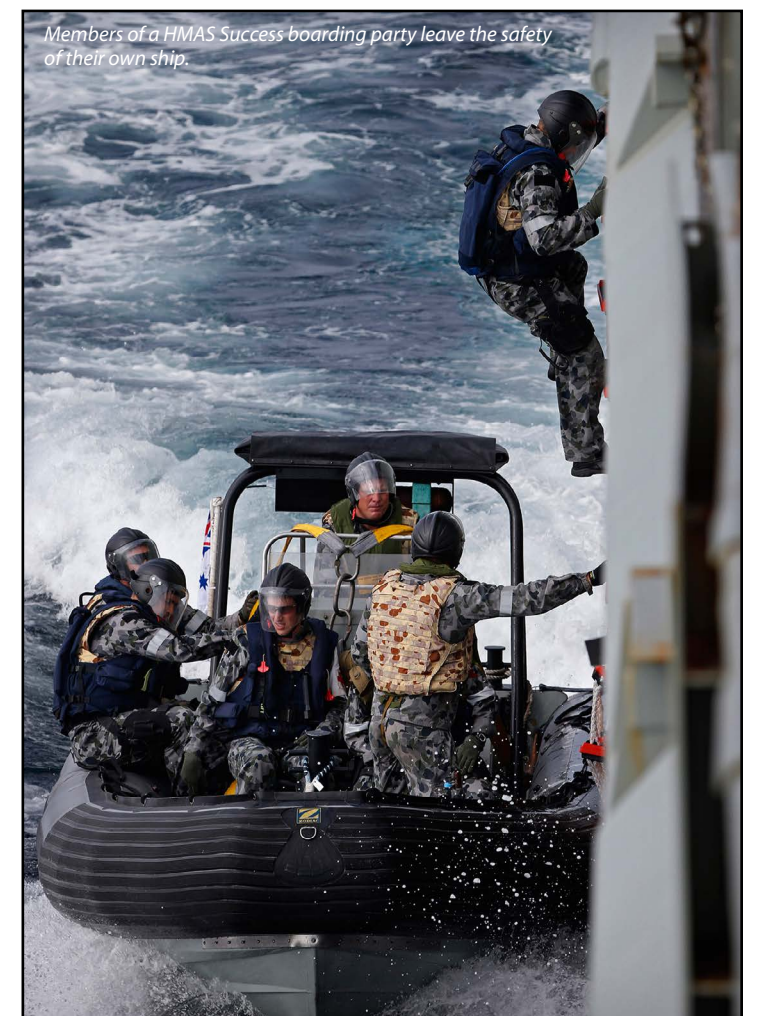
PHOTOS BY ABLE SEAMAN JAKE BADIOR



Two HMAS Success boarding parties return to their ship after conducting a boarding on a dhow in the Middle East.



HMAS Success RHIBs set out to conduct a boarding after receiving a call for help from an Iranian fishing vessel.



Members of a HMAS Success boarding party leave the safety of their own ship.

NCIS JOINS SUCCESS

HMAS Success continues to display in abundance the ongoing co-operation necessary among the league of nations that make up the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) in the Middle East.

The ship's boarding parties recently conducted a boarding operation with the help of Arleigh-Burke class destroyer USS Dewey and her onboard NCIS agent.

On 17 January, Success identified a suspicious vessel through its embarked Seahawk helicopter and subsequently tasked a boarding team to verify the dhow's nationality.

With further suspicious characteristics identified, a more thorough search for possible illicit substances was determined and USS Dewey was sent to assist Success.

USS Dewey's NCIS agent, who had previously worked with other RAN ships in the region, praised Success' boarding team on effectively evaluating the evidence and following the correct techniques.

Success' boarding officer Sub-Lieutenant Thomas Matthews said he was grateful for the opportunity to work with and learn from someone with such significant experience.

"The NCIS agent validated our current procedures and provided insightful feedback about interdiction operations that our boarding team really valued," Sub-Lieutenant Matthews said.

Commanding Officer of Success Captain Justin Jones said the Royal Australian Navy, US Navy and US

Coast Guard had always maintained a strong working relationship in the operational environment.

"The strong relationship we have was highlighted today with the boarding operation, but also yesterday when Success' helicopter assisted USCGC Maui in identifying a vessel they were investigating," Captain Jones said.

"This exemplifies the international cooperation integral to CMF's role of maritime security and stability in the Middle East Region."

Sub-Lieutenant Matthews said the boarding and subsequent search of the suspect dhow had lasted more than nine hours. However, Defence's report on the incident failed to mention if any drugs were found.



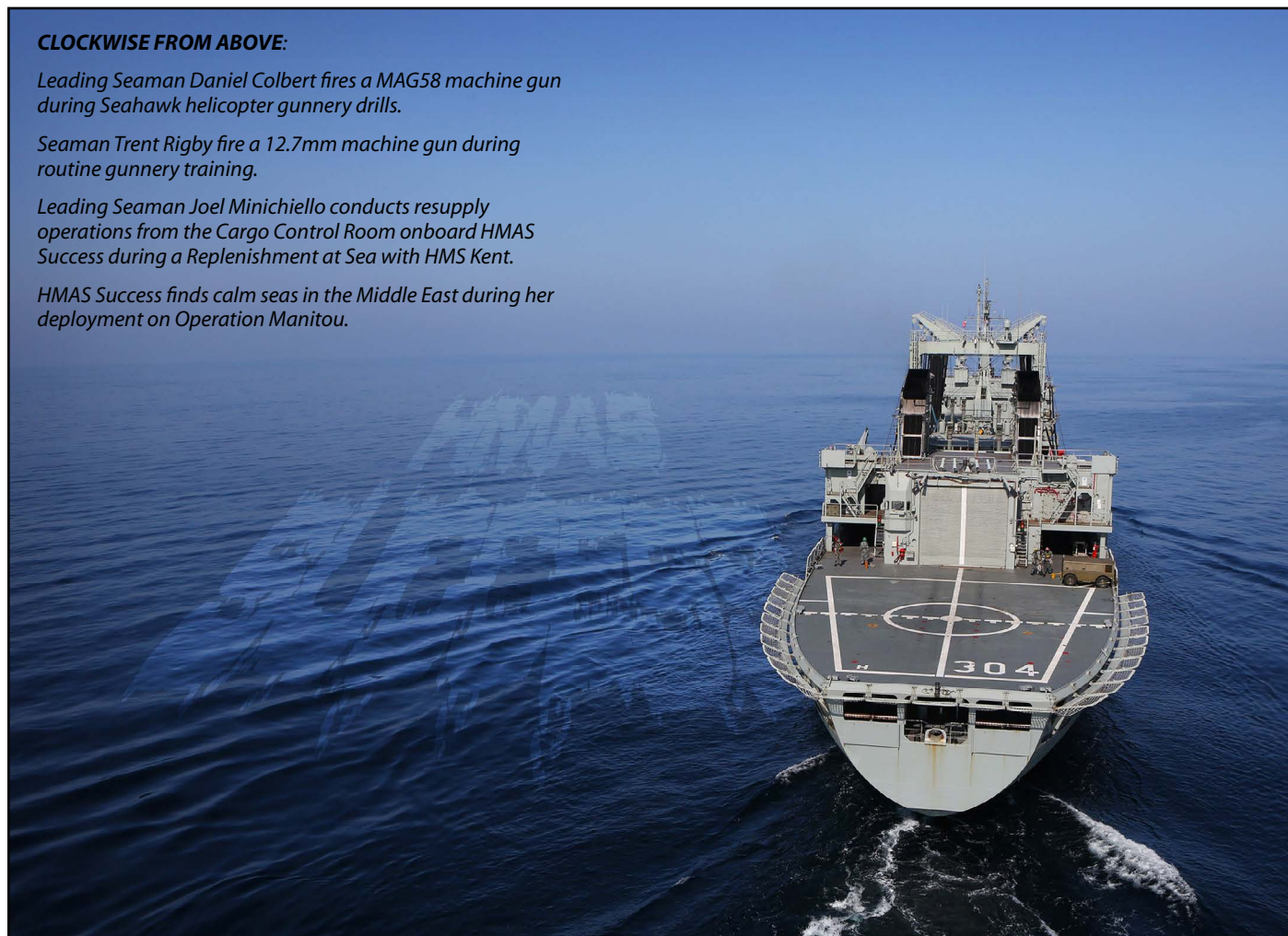
CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:

Leading Seaman Daniel Colbert fires a MAG58 machine gun during Seahawk helicopter gunnery drills.

Seaman Trent Rigby fire a 12.7mm machine gun during routine gunnery training.

Leading Seaman Joel Minichiello conducts resupply operations from the Cargo Control Room onboard HMAS Success during a Replenishment at Sea with HMS Kent.

HMAS Success finds calm seas in the Middle East during her deployment on Operation Manitou.



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OP SLIPPER

In what is hoped will be a massive show of national pride and support for our men and women who served on Operation Slipper, 'Welcome Home Parades' will be held in every state capital and in Townsville on Saturday 21 March.

Since Australia started deployments to Afghanistan in 2001, more than 34,500 Australian Defence Force personnel served in the Middle East Area of Operations alongside Australian Public Service employees, Australian Federal Police and representatives from other government agencies.

Operation Slipper officially ended on 31 December 2014.

The Welcome Home marches will bring together current-serving ADF personnel, along with many former members and others who served in what became Australia's longest war.

As a special tribute to mark the Welcome Home, Chief of the Defence Force Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin endorsed the creation of an exclusive range of Operation Slipper commemorative products.

The Operation Slipper range is primarily for people with a link to the operation through service, support roles or family, although great interest is also expected from the wider community.

Funds generated through the sale of products will go to support charities dedicated to the welfare and wellbeing of service men and women, such as Soldier On, Legacy and each of the Service trust funds.

Defence-linked industries big and small have been quick to throw their support behind the charitable commemorative range and have funded the presentation of an Op Slipper gold-plated lapel pin for all who served in the area of operations.

Thales Australia, Nova Systems, SAAB Technologies and Military Shop have donated the full cost of the special pin to be presented to everyone who served, either at the marches, through work channels or online.

Saab Australia's David Ledger said Saab recognised the valuable contribution and personal sacrifices made by service men and women and their families in defending our national interests.

"Many of our staff are ex-service people, with a number having served in Operation Slipper, and we are very pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the recognition of all who served in Afghanistan," Mr Ledger said.

Nova Systems and Thales Australia shared the same respect for the contributions of those who served and their families.

Nova Systems' General Manager Steven Robinson said the company had a number of ex-serving

members on staff and welcomed the chance to show support and recognition to all who made personal sacrifices to defend our nation.

"We are very proud of our people and of all the men and women who served," Mr Robinson said.

"This commemorative initiative is just part of showing our respect for them and their families."

Thales Australia's CEO Chris Jenkins said supporting this commemorative initiative was a great way for Thales to recognise and thank those who sacrificed so much on behalf of Australia.

"In the spirit of Australian mateship, I encourage everyone to join together in support of organisations such as Legacy and Soldier On to recognise the sacrifices made by our servicemen and women and provide support to those families who suffer financially and socially as a result of their Defence Force service," Mr Jenkins said.

Stephen Davie, who through Military Shop is coordinating the project in conjunction with CDF's office, said the range was a tangible way for people, serving and non-serving, to support those returning from war.

"This is a wonderful initiative to commemorate the passing of a major operation while providing direct benefits to those members and their families who may need a little help from time-to-time," Mr Davie said.

"We will always get behind those who serve."

For information on local marches or to see the Operation Slipper commemorative range, visit www.defence.gov.au/ceremonial/opSlipper.asp





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Carinthia Tropen sleeping bag

Carinthia has been in Austria since 1948 and Australia since 2007. As far as we know, Carinthia is the only bag manufacturer who develops and manufactures their own synthetic memory insulation, G-Loft.

G-loft is one of the best performing synthetic memory insulations available and is hydrophobic as well as machine-washable.

A best seller from their range is the warm-climate sleeping bag, the Tropen. Filled with G-Loft insulation and a Shelltrans outer fabric, the Tropen easily transports moisture out of the bag keeping you warm and dry

down to +5C for comfort and an extreme limit of -12C.

It's light, at only 1100gm for the 185cm height bag and compresses to just 18 x 25cm.

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Limpopo National Park (LNP)

Parque Nacional Do Limpopo (PNL) - Mozambique

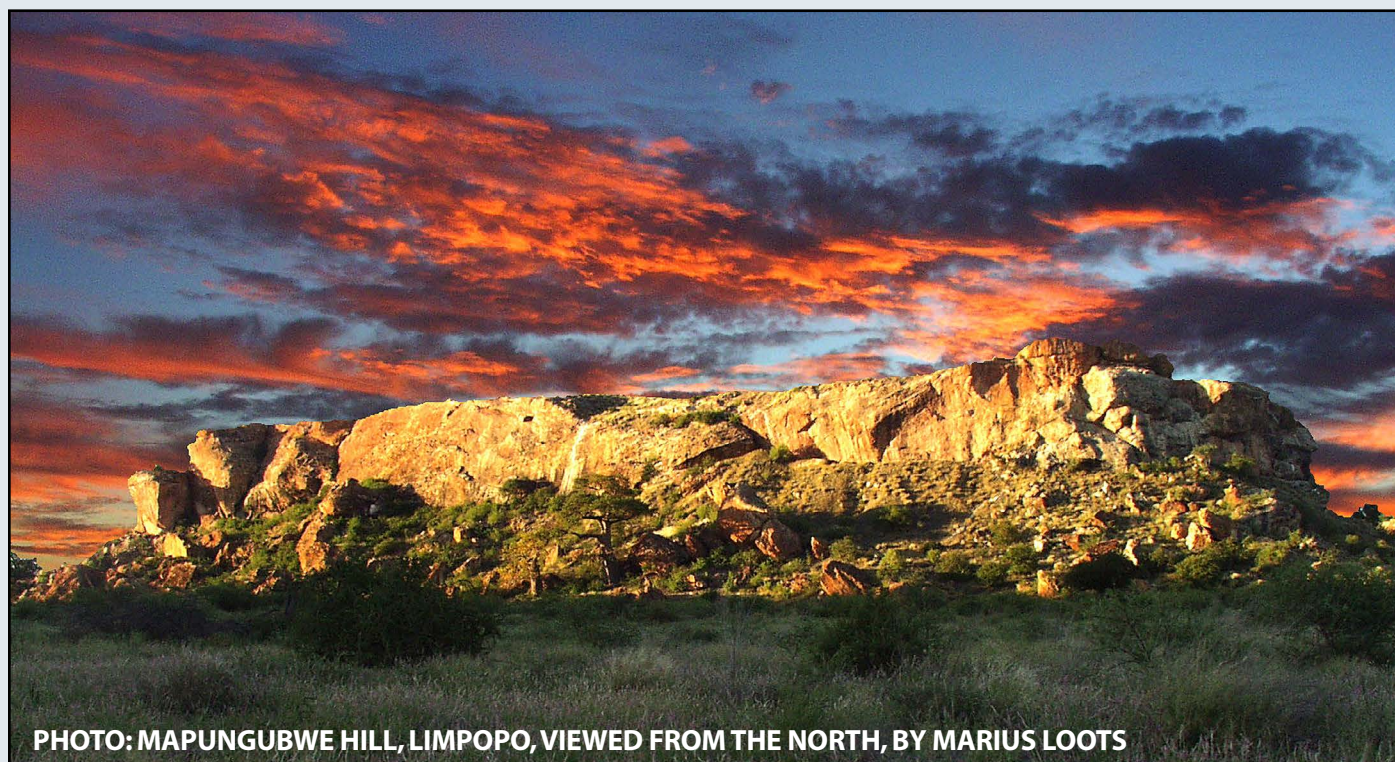


PHOTO: MAPUNGUBWE HILL, LIMPOPO, VIEWED FROM THE NORTH, BY MARIUS LOOTS

To date, the overwhelming majority of efforts to stop the rhino poaching crisis have focused on South Africa, despite the threat emanating from Mozambique. IAPF recognised the critical need to bolster efforts on the Mozambique side of the Kruger border and formed a partnership with WESSA (Lowveld) to jointly support Limpopo National Park in collaboration with the Peace Parks Foundation.

This included the provision and implementation of anti-poaching equipment and systems, upgrades to communications equipment, GIS mapping capabilities and specialist technology.

Limpopo National Park is 1.12 million hectares (2.7 million acres) and makes up one of the largest components of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP).

The GLTP links Kruger National Park (KNP) in South Africa, Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe and LNP in Mozambique.

While the GLTP is one of the greatest wilderness areas on earth, it is not without challenges.

Since 2008, South Africa has been hit increasingly hard by poachers, suffering an astronomical increase in the numbers of rhino killed illegally each year.

KNP is home to more than 40% of the world's remaining 22,000 wild rhino.

But, of the 1004 rhino killed in South Africa in 2013, 60% were

poached in KNP and this figure remained consistent in 2014.

SANParks' Ken Maggs has said, "80% of rhino poachers entering KNP are doing so from Mozambique".

This reinforces the real need for more work to be done in Mozambique, not just South Africa, and particularly in Limpopo National Park, which shares its 200km western boundary with KNP.

Existing Efforts

The LNP protection unit improved their levels of success during 2013 with the arrest of 43 poachers (up from 14 in 2012), and the confiscation of 21 rifles (up from 15 in 2012).

Following on the protection turnaround strategy implemented

in 2012, these successes are attributed to a number of factors including the establishment of performance targets and results-based incentive schemes, improved disciplinary measures and an improved operating environment.

The latter factor included the upgrade of living conditions and availability of resources such as rifles, vehicles and patrol equipment.

The park realised further success in 2014 following the deployment of a newly established 30-man field ranger unit, whose activities were focused in the "Intensive Protection Zone" along LNP's western boundary with Kruger.

The unit continues to undertake coordinated activities with KNP forces as part of "Operation Capricorn", focused on dealing with the greatest threat to rhinos and elephants in the region.

While these are encouraging signs, the number of rhino and elephant carcasses continues to increase, as LNP operates with limited resources.

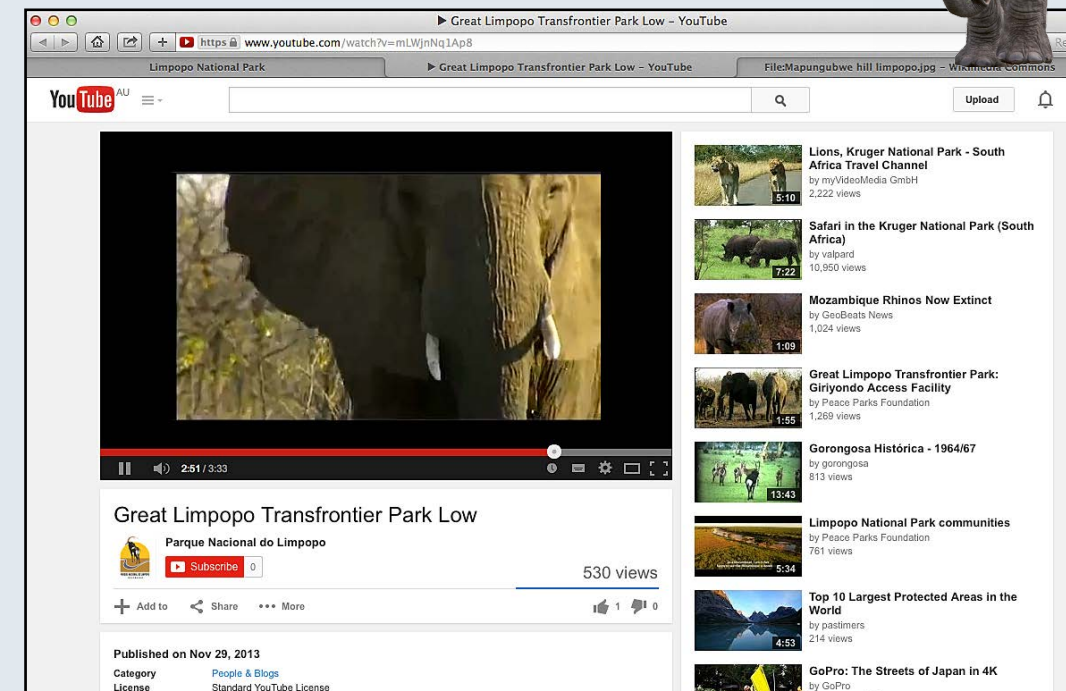
IAPF is committed to fighting the rhino poaching crisis by supporting the rangers who risk their lives daily protecting our heritage.

IAPF Project goal

To work with existing stakeholders in support of a long-term anti-poaching strategy for Limpopo National Park, which bolsters regional efforts in safeguarding biodiversity.

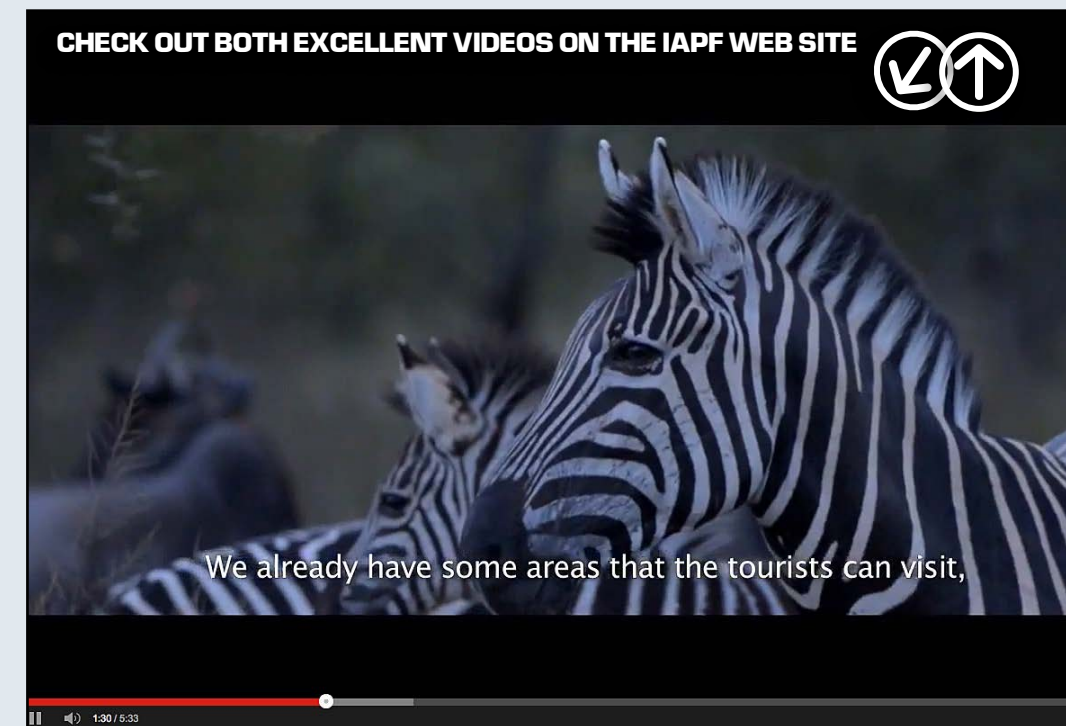
Project Objectives

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Source and implement field equipment to support anti-poaching operations;
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Upgrade living conditions and incentives for rangers at LNP;
- **OBJECTIVE 3:** Identify, procure and implement specialist technology and systems for wildlife protection;



- **OBJECTIVE 4:** Upgrade communications capabilities, both internally and externally;
- **OBJECTIVE 5:** Drive a GIS mapping system that identifies, plots and predicts patterns relevant to supporting the Park Management Plan.

IAPF is reliant on the financial support of individuals, corporations and organisations who understand the urgent need to back determined efforts at the front lines of the wildlife wars. Please visit www.iapf.org to see how you can help.





CLOSE BUT NOT CLOSE ENOUGH

Australians recommended for the VC but not awarded

BY MAJOR DARRYL KELLY

Lieutenant Eric Henry Drummond Edgerton DSO, MM and Bar 24th Battalion

FORMIDABLE

It was men such as Lieutenant Eric Edgerton who made the AIF such a formidable fighting instrument¹.....

Eric Edgerton was born to humble hard-working parents, James and Florence², on 1 April 1897. He was a sensitive child, who enjoyed the basic principals of life and was raised in accordance with the traditions of the Methodist faith, in the inner Melbourne suburb of Moonie Ponds. His early schooling was undertaken at the Harawksburn State School and later, the renowned Wesley College. He was a good student - keen and eager to learn. He was no slouch in the sporting arena either, representing the Elwood Life Saving Club, where in 1914 he was the youngest lad in Victoria to receive the 'Award of Merit' from the Royal Life Saving Society³.

With the onset of war, Eric was eager to do his bit and on 14 April 1915 enlisted as part of the 1st Reinforcement Draft for the newly raised 24th Battalion³. During initial training at the Broadmeadows Army Camp, he was quickly identified as a good, confident soldier who relished the hard training and the closeness of his new-found mates.

In late April he poured over the newspapers, reading of the landings at Gallipoli and of the mounting casualties. This made him all the more determined to train harder and master the art of professional soldiering.

On 25 June 1915, the 24th Battalion marched towards the waiting troopship 'Ceramic', which would take them to Egypt - yet one step closer to getting into the fight⁴.

Mena Camp was a vast expanse of tents, nestled in the shadows of the great pyramids. It was here that Eric and his mates honed their skills in final preparation for the Gallipoli campaign. On August 24, the 24th Battalion

boarded the blackened troopship lying at anchor in Alexandria Harbour - next stop Gallipoli and a crack at the bloody Turk⁵.

The horrors of Gallipoli were a shock to the young Diggers. The glamour and adventure of war now turned into a stark and deadly reality. The battalion took its turn up front in the forward trenches of Courtney's, Quinn's and Steele's Posts. Their introduction to patrol work consisted of sorties into 'no-mans land', scarcely 30 yards wide, around the outpost dubbed 'Johnston's Jolly' and the infamous 'Chessboard'.

Edgerton, now a corporal, was conspicuous by his cool courage and no-nonsense attitude. His men trusted the young NCO and, more importantly, he trusted his men. Eric was fearless but not foolhardy - which was a valuable combination to have at ANZAC.

It was during a lull in the fighting that Eric learnt that his cobbler, Sid Horton, had gone down with dysentery and was being evacuated. As Sid was being stretchered towards the barge waiting to take him and the other sick and wounded offshore, Eric walked alongside him. The last thing that Sid remembers before being lowered into the barge was Eric pressing an English 10 shilling note into his hand, along with a dirty string of figs - 'for you mate!' Eric said. It was months later that Sid found out, that at the time, this was all the money Eric had to his name⁵.

Following the evacuation of ANZAC in December 1915, the AIF took time to lick its wounds, to reinforce, re-equip and retrain. As the 1st Division undertook the task of doubling the ranks of the AIF, the 2nd Division, including the 24th Battalion took its place in defence of the Suez Canal.

Unbeknown to Eric, he was to be awarded one of the first of the new Military Medals, for his staunch service at Gallipoli⁶.

On 21 March 1916, Edgerton and his mates boarded a troopship which would take them to the battlefields of France and a crack at the Hun.

As the train took them north, Eric took time to bask in the beauty of the French countryside. He wrote home on 1 May saying that 'Spring is in full swing; everything in the shape of trees has burst or is bursting into bloom.'¹

The 24th took its place in the line outside Armentieres, in an area known as the 'Nursery Sector'. The highlight of the action was the successful execution of their first trench raid on the Western Front.



Men of the 6th Brigade march to the rear echelons after a spell of duty on the front lines of The Somme, August 1916.

In July, the battalion found itself locked in the hell that was Pozieres. The 24th, in company with its sister battalion the 22nd, suffered appalling losses in an attack on Pozieres Ridge. It was here that the crack German artillery reaped its toll on the Diggers, as they huddled in the forward trenches.

The battalions pressed forward and the key factor in the subsequent success of the Pozieres Ridge attack was the outstanding leadership, initiative and courage of the junior officers and NCOs. During the battle, Edgerton played a gallant part in the mopping up of OG2 (Old German Trench Number Two), where he personally cleared out a number of dugouts and assisted in capturing 34 prisoners. He also carried out key personal reconnaissance and consolidation of his position and reorganised the men near at hand so as to establish order and ascendancy in this key part of the line.¹

At this point, nearly all of the runners had either become casualties or were exhausted. Eric volunteered for the dangerous duty of carrying the urgent messages through the raging inferno of shells to Battalion Headquarters.¹ Eric's courage and determination came to the fore and, at all times, he kept his head as he maintained and inspired his men's confidence through his positive spirit.

Irrespective of the horrors of war that faced Eric, his view of the world remained unchanged. This is evident by a letter written by Padre James Gault, to Eric's parents when he wrote, "It was my great pleasure this morning to meet your boy here and have a long chat with him in my tent. It was a great joy to find with him

that the effect of the war had deepened his character and made him a true representative of the Master here. I found that the experience he had gone through had broadened his mind without in any way spoiling him".¹

Eric was promoted to the rank of sergeant on 6 November 1916.³

In late February 1917, the German Army on the Somme conducted an organised withdrawal to the prepared positions of the Hindenburg Line. The 24th took up the pursuit keeping the pressure on the withdrawing Hun. In the vicinity of an area known as 'Flers Switch', A and B Companies took advantage of the mist to advance to the village of Warlencourt and established a line of key strategic outposts. It was decided to press their luck a little more and again a further advance was made. As the weather cleared the companies came under an effective concentration of enemy fire, forcing the Diggers to withdraw to a more secure and defensible position.

But, the battalion needed to know what it was up against and Eric volunteered to lead a patrol forward. Getting within a mere 40 yards of the enemy's forward positions, Eric was able to gain valuable information on enemy strength and disposition. For his work during the operation, he was awarded a Bar to his Military Medal (the first awarded to a member of the 6th Brigade)⁶.

Shortly after this action, Edgerton was commissioned as a second lieutenant, and in September of the same year, promoted to lieutenant.³

Sid Horton wrote of Edgerton's physical and moral courage, "Eric was powerfully built and on numerous



CLOSE BUT NOT CLOSE ENOUGH

Australians recommended for the VC but not awarded

BY MAJOR DARRYL KELLY

I pushed forward into the village, had a bit of fun mopping up and got about 20 more after a scrap

occasions in France, when as a 2nd lieutenant, I have seen him on a long march carrying up to three packs and three rifles – gear belonging to men who had knocked up. He would have carried the burdens of the whole AIF if he could have”.⁵

October 1917, saw Eric attend a Physical Training and Bayonet Course at Aldershot, England. At the completion of the course, he was able to take some well-deserved leave with his father and brother, who were visiting England. During this time, he was able to tour the English Lakes District and the stunning Scottish countryside.¹

In the first half of 1918, the brunt of the major German offensive to capture the Channel Ports fell on the units holding the lines on the northern Somme. The 24th, along with other Australian units, were rushed up to fill the gaps. Eric had time to write a few lines to his mother, his normal positive outlook came again to light – “There is nothing for the people at home to worry about. The Germans certainly are making progress at points, but at present he is paying a price for his gains.”¹

At this point the higher levels of command were all for seizing and maintaining the initiative and tasked the 6th Brigade to capture the village of Ville-sur-Ancre. This task was to be completed by no later than 19 May. Before the attack, Edgerton led a number of breathtaking patrols to the River Ancre and on each occasion closed with and made contact with the enemy. Sortieing across the river on a number of light bridges laid by the engineers, Edgerton exercised sheer aggression and determination, as he reaped havoc on the enemy's patrols and outposts.¹

On the morning of the main attack, Edgerton pushed hard and crossed the river capturing a machine gun and taking out a bombing post. He was worried about his left flank which was to be secured by Lieutenant Munro's platoon, when suddenly an enemy machine-gun opened up. With his trusty batman, Private Blankenberg accompanying him, Edgerton rushed the gun and, after throwing his one remaining bomb and shooting one of the crew, captured it. Sergeant Coltery, Munro's platoon sergeant, who had taken over the platoon when his commander was killed, moved his men up just in time to turn away an enemy party advancing unseen, from the flank.⁷

As dawn broke, Edgerton gave the order to his platoon to “Saddle Up!” and moved them forward into the village. The platoon came under intermittent fire from a number of the houses. Rushing forward to the nearest house, Eric deployed his men alongside the wall. Looking through a hole left by a missing brick, he could see a German squad firing through the opposite windows into the next street. Eric stuck his revolver

through the opening and commenced firing, hitting five and forcing a sixth to naively try to shimmy up the chimney in a vain attempt to escape.⁷

In writing to his parents of the action he wrote, “Zero hour was set at 2am and by dawn at 3.45am, I was comfortably settled down after getting two machine-guns and a dozen or so Germans. Just after dawn I pushed forward into the village, had a bit of fun mopping up and got about 20 more after a scrap, also another gun. The whole affair was full of excitement except for a ducking which rather cooled our ardour”.¹

For this action Eric Edgerton was recommended for the Victoria Cross, with the citation reading: “This officer is recommended for the highest award for conspicuous bravery and gallantry in the attack on Ville-sur-Ancre, near Albert, on 19 May 1918. At 12.45am on the morning of the attack Lt Edgerton, with two Other Ranks, reconnoitred the track from the place of assembly to the bridge over which, at Zero, he was to lead his platoon. Early in the attack, the platoon was halted by an enemy post. After throwing bombs the post was mopped up; this was mainly due to this officer's personal courage. Several casualties were inflicted on the enemy. Pushing on, a machine-gun was encountered and rushed by Lt Edgerton and Pte Blankenberg; two of the crew were killed by revolver fire of this officer, the remainder being sent to the rear as prisoners. Several dugouts forward of this post were cleared of the enemy. Following this a post was sited and dug in on the objective; a party of the enemy attempted to rush this post, but the cool leadership of Lt Edgerton permitted the quick dispersal of the enemy, inflicting 100% casualties upon them. At 4.45am this officer and LCpl Fry pushed forward to the edge of the village, and by skilful manoeuvre outflanked an enemy machine-gun which had been remarkably active. Three of the enemy were shot by revolver and rifle fire. Lt Edgerton followed up this success by leading five of his men into the village, and with much dash, rushed the enemy and succeeded in personally killing five of them with revolver fire and took prisoner an officer and one other rank, who were sent to the rear. In continuation of this, another enemy machine-gun in action was located, bombs were used, and, after rushing and capturing the machine-gun, the crew were found to have been killed. This was the third machine-gun personally stormed by Lt Edgerton and the fourth captured by his platoon. During the tour of duty in the line prior to the attack, this officer had personally led many daring patrols along the river ANCRE, on all occasions getting into grips with the enemy and inflicting casualties. Information obtained from this officer's brilliant leadership and marked initiative

inspired his men to follow him to such a degree that complete success was obtained.”⁶

Unfortunately the award was down graded to the Distinguished Service Order. The final citation reading: For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. Before dawn on the morning of an attack this officer, with two men reconnoitred the track from the assembly point to a bridge over the river, across which he had to lead his platoon at zero. Early in the attack he mopped up a post by bombing. Pushing on, he and another man rushed a machine-gun, shooting two men with his revolver, and capturing the remainder. After clearing several dugouts, he established a post on his objective, dispersing an enemy attack. In the afternoon he outflanked a machine-gun post, and followed it up by shooting five men with his revolver, and capturing one officer and one man. He then bombed a third machine-gun, killing the crew. His energy was an inspiration to all.⁸

Eric's diary entry for 20 June 1918, was his normal modest self – “Awarded DSO – rather good”.⁹

Along with his mate Corporal McKinnon, Edgerton was chosen to lead an ‘Australian platoon’ in the Grand March of Allied Troops through Paris. The march followed a route of over six miles and Parisians lined the streets and the tops of buildings, all within pelting range, to see their heroes pass by. The massive German gun nicknamed “Big Bertha” lobbed a few shells into the city, in an effort to disrupt the march but nothing could diminish the outstanding admiration of the onlookers.¹

On 11 August 1918, three days after Ludendorff's “Black Day of the German Army”, the 24th was holding a portion of the front line between the villages of Rainecourt and Framerville. During the night Eric set his men into their final defensive positions. Just before he returned to his dugout, he stopped to speak to one of his men, Private Donald. As he spoke, he stuck his head up above the sandbags to take a final look around, when a machine-gun burst caught him fair in the chest thrusting him backwards into Donald's arms. Donald called for the stretcher bearers but Eric was dead before the medics could get to him.

Much could be said about the courage and tenacity of this man but I could write no better epitaph, than the tribute depicted in the Reveille article of 1 May 1938, which formed the basis of this story, when it said, “It was men such as Lieutenant Eric Edgerton who made the AIF such a formidable fighting instrument. Big-framed, boyish in manner, of gay and happy disposition, Eric was indeed the perfect gentle knight. No one ever heard from him an unbecoming or harsh word. There was always a good-humoured twinkle in his eye, and the suspicion of a smile on his lips. Quick and enthusiastic in speech, he was clear headed in danger, quickly determined what was expected of him, and went at it with directness and singleness of aim. If he felt fear or doubt, none ever saw it, and wherever he was there was daring and aggressive action. His name will ever stand high in the annals of the 24th”.¹

As a final tribute, Edgerton was recognised with a Mentioned in Dispatches in December 1918.⁶

*Edgerton's grave in the Villers-Bretonneux War Cemetery.
Photo by Major Darryl Kelly*



NOTES:

- 1 AWM 43 (A377) Celebrities of the AIF, Reveille, 1 May 1938
- 2 Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- 3 National Archives of Australia: B2445, WWI Service Records, 1524 LT EHD Edgerton
- 4 AWM 8, Unit Embarkation Rolls, 24th Battalion, 1914-1918 War
- 5 Letter from Sidney L Horton to the Editor of Reveille, dated 13 April 1938
- 6 AWM 28, Recommendation Files for Honours and Awards, AIF, 1914-1918 War
- 7 Bean, CEW, The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Volume VI, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1936
- 8 London Gazette, 16 September 1918,
- 9 Extract from diary of EHD Edgerton

YOUNG GUNS



Over the past few years, I've helped a wide range of people achieve their military-fitness goals. From men and women in their 40s and 50s looking to join the reserves through to serving soldiers who are attempting Commando and SAS selection. By far one of the biggest groups I give advice to are school and university students looking to join the ADF. This group is both one of the most rewarding to work with and, for reasons I will soon explain, the most frustrating.

In this article I want to outline some of the factors that should be taken into consideration by those in the 15 to 21 age bracket when training to join the Defence Force and explain some of the common mistakes this group makes.

Get Peeve

Ok let's get my pet peeve of training students out of the way before we get to my recommendations.

In my opinion as a fitness trainer, parent, multiple career holder and generally cranky older guy, is that young people want to have everything and they want it yesterday. Every 16 year old who I give advice to online wants to know what they should be doing to get fit for SAS or commando selection even though they are still at school and can barely squeeze out a handful of pushups!

I'm not suggesting that having ambition and goals is a bad thing, but no one seems to understand that becoming a special-forces soldier is a long and arduous journey and is, in reality, only for a select few.

My advice for anyone who is still in high school is to focus on one step at a time. Finish school, join the ADF, pass recruit training, get out in to the 'real Army' – and then think about where you want to go. You won't understand it now, but even if it takes you 10 years to get there, you'll still be young at 26 with a lot of life ahead of you.

The second big mistake that young people tend to make is being underprepared and rushing their preparation for the entry fitness tests.

Even though you only have to do a handful of push-ups and sit-ups and run a 6.5 or 7.5 on the beep test to get into the ADF, it would be folly to think that this is sufficient to survive recruit training. Entering the military with a bare pass in the entry fitness test is taking a huge risk and often leads to injuries and remedial training after you fail the harder fitness tests.

A less common but still problematic approach is to try and do too much. When you are under about 25, your body still has a lot of maturing to do. While weight training is safe for teenagers and should be a part of your program, getting overenthusiastic and training too much can also lead to injuries. The same goes for trying to get fit by running 100km every week. And the worst approach

is the one where you combine a world-level marathon program with weight-training days, then add in the SAS preparation program just to be sure!

So how do you dodge these potential problems and get a balanced program?

- Learn to lift weights but do so under supervision and increase the loads gradually.
- Find a decent gym or trainer in your area and learn the basics of barbell and dumbbell training. It might cost you a little bit of money for a handful of sessions but it will be worth it a hundred times over in the years to come.
- Once you've learnt to lift weights, train three days per week on a very gradual progression. Even if you can add a couple of kilos a week to your main lifts, in a year or so you'll be extremely strong. And strong people make better military members.
- Perform cardiovascular training three to four days per week. Vary the length and pace of your runs from repeated 400m and 800m intervals to some longer 5-6km runs. Mix running with boxing, cycling, rowing and swimming for variety and to avoid overuse injuries.

- Stretch and mobilise. You'll never truly appreciate your body until the first time it breaks badly. You can't prevent traumatic injuries by maintaining your flexibility and mobility, but you can prevent a lot of overuse problems with a little effort, and the earlier you start the easier it is to maintain.
- Play sport. The whole point of developing fitness is to be able to apply it to the real world. Playing sport allows for the expression of your fitness and has a lot of other benefits such as learning to win and lose and to be part of a team – critical skills in the military.

In conclusion

The main point of this article is that, as a young ADF hopeful, you've got a lot of time up your sleeve and you should take the opportunity to develop your fitness in a sensible and progressive way.

If you'd like a sample four-week program that integrates all of these tips, or if you have any questions about training, email me at fitness@octogen.com.au and I will send you one of the programs from my latest book.

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PROMOTING POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH

Chaplain Gary Stone, Long Tan Day 2006, 6RAR



Over 44 years service, firstly as an infantryman, then as an Army Chaplain, I have received too many notices of veterans dying in mid life, mostly from cancer. The early passing of these friends saddened me, of course, but I didn't consider that much could be done about it.

Then in September 2012, at age 60, I received a diagnosis that I too had cancer. The powerlessness of waiting for surgery and the fear that cancer could be growing in other places prompted me to get to understand more of what was going on inside my body, and see what I could do to help myself.

A range of tests identified that my body was highly acidic, that my liver and kidneys were clogged with toxins, and that my body was deficient in a number of vitamins and minerals. I prayed for God's guidance, and searched the Internet for articles about cancer and its causes. I read numerous books, and met cancer survivors who had used a range of complementary therapies. I became aware of holistic (body, mind and soul) approaches to healthy living. This gave me hope, and lifted my spirits. I became more aware of how interconnected the body, mind and soul are, in terms of health.

I had also been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following my service in the Iran-Iraq war. Doctors then prescribed medication and cognitive behaviour therapy. These helped manage symptoms of anxiety and depression, but did little to diminish hyper-vigilance and hyper-arousal. Anxiety attacks became a feature of my life. I also had a range of stomach, neck, and back problems that got worse whenever I was under stress.

What I learnt was that my PTSD symptoms were releasing Cortisol into my body, which immobilised my immune system and allowed cancer to grow. I came to realise that accumulated stress was killing me!

At the same time a diet with too much sugar, wheat and dairy products was clogging up my digestive

system causing me to put on weight and develop a range of other illnesses.

Anxiety saw me living with a "battlefield in my mind" that spilled over into my body and soul, and saw me react inappropriately at times.

Moreover, I realised my involvement with health-care providers was focused on treatments for symptoms with little emphasis on preventative health measures – promoting wellness for the future.

Following surgery, I am clear of cancer for the time being, but I am conscious that I must take intentional steps to provide for my future health and avoid cancer appearing somewhere else. I look forward to the future with personal hope, and a hope that sharing this information might contribute to the improvement of health in other veterans.

Adopting a self managed holistic program, I have lost 16kg, regaining a 'fighting weight' of 75kg that I had as a 30-year-old company commander. I have re-balanced and re-created a healthier lifestyle that involves less work, minimises distress, and incorporates more self care for my body, mind and soul. I have stopped being 'PTS disordered' and am now into Post-Traumatic Growth!

As a result of my research, I believe veterans need to:

- be educated on the nature of the health challenges they face, and the need to proactively embrace holistic wellbeing actions to achieve Post-Traumatic Growth;
- care for our bodies through good diet, exercise, rest and recreation;
- care for our minds by minimising negative inputs and exposure to distressors; and,
- care for our souls by embracing nourishing world views and spiritual practices.

I now manage distress and develop resilience, through a 'wellbeing' regime that involves a range of components:

Caring for the body

Exercise daily to release endorphins and produce more serotonin hormone.

Whenever distressed, reduce a runaway heart rate with deep, slow breathing and meditation.

Eat appropriate foods regularly – particularly fresh fruit and vegetables – drink lots of water and minimise alcohol and caffeine.

Avoid processed and fatty foods and cut out sugar in all its forms.

See a doctor when you experience anxiety or depressive symptoms.

Be open to the complementary therapies of chiropractic, therapeutic massage and reflexology, to release tension and restore energy flow through the systems of the body.

Be open to taking medication. It is not addictive and helps in stabilising mood.

Caring for the mind

Be open to learning cognitive-behaviour therapy.

Recognise and avoid all unnecessary negative inputs to your life.

Remove yourself from persistently stressful environments and individuals.

Be a 'good finder' – name daily all the good things you see in life (journaling is helpful).

Read uplifting and nourishing stories and teachings.

Learn to relax muscles and breathe deeply, to re-engage frontal cortex logical thinking.

Become attentive and mindful of the present moment and pleasant and safe surroundings.

Caring for the soul

Find and embrace a spirituality or 'world view' that is life giving.

Be open to the advice of wise teachers/mentors.

Be open to discovering and trusting in a higher power to assist you in life.

Share your experiences with friends and be open to mutual support.

Invest significant time in key relationships. Become a better lover.

Engage in team/group activities – e.g. sporting clubs, interest groups.

Practice meditation to get in touch with your soul.

Treat yourself to soothing music.

Identify a new 'life purpose' and plan to be a 'wounded healer'.

Restoring health, like losing weight, is easier said than done. We may need a coach or mentor to help us get onto and stay on a healthy pathway. Research indicates that it takes from at least 28 days to many months, to change behaviours and my experience is that, with persistence, we will in time see measurable results. I now feel liberated, after 20 years of struggle, to enjoy the remainder of my life.

We get sick and 'dis-eased' because we let stressful or toxic environments affect our body, mind and soul. Rather than just react to sickness when it occurs, a better way to live life is through a wellness model where we intentionally promote healthy living practices to avoid disease and achieve Post Traumatic Growth.

Gary Stone served in the Australian Army for 45 years from 1970 – 26 as an infantryman followed by 18 years as a chaplain. He deployed on operations to Malaysia, Fiji Coup, Iran-Iraq, East Timor, Bougainville, Asian Tsunami, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste. He is now a retired from the Army, living in Queensland and operating a charity specifically to minister to the wellbeing of veterans and ex-serving soldiers, sailors and airmen. Visit Gary's web site at www.garystone.com.au or phone him on 0403 270 515.

National Flying Competition

Despite not yet having a drivers' licence, Australian Air Force Cadets performed magnificently in a flying competition in November last year.

An Australian Air Force Cadets press release in December announced the winners of the 2014 National Aviation Competition held at the newly opened Bathurst Aviation Centre from 26 to 29 November 2014.

Squadron Leader (AAFC) Craig Fechner said the level of competition was extremely high.

"Most of the cadets do not yet have their drivers' licence, so to see such a high calibre of young men and women competing was extremely

This was the first time the newly opened Bathurst Aviation Centre was used for the National Aviation Competition, after its official opening a few months earlier.

THE WINNERS:

Fysh-McGuinness Trophy (QANTAS Founders) for the Best Powered Cadet:

Lance Cadet Benjamin Traplin
Number 402 Squadron

KJ Broomhead Cup – for Best Gliding Cadet:

Cadet Corporal James Spearpoint
Number 335 Squadron

QANTAS Cup for the Best Wing:
Number 3 Wing

Rawdon Middleton VC Trophy:

Powered: Lance Cadet Keelan Robinson
Number 338 Squadron

Gliding: Cadet Corporal Vladislav Zhelezarov
Number 609 Squadron

rewarding," Squadron Leader Fechner said.

"There can only be one winner for each category, but all participants should be proud of the high standards they set.

"We are also delighted with QANTAS' sponsorship of the competition, which meant that each winner received a scholarship to assist with their flying training."



Photo by Group Captain (AAFC) Greg Williamson

Sydney Cadets visit Melbourne

Cadets from the Sydney area visited HMAS Melbourne at Fleet Base East on 13 December last year and participated in a range of exciting, informative and relevant activities.

TOP RIGHT: Cadet Able Seaman Bilal Ali and Cadet Recruit Fred Bekker scramble to assemble a signal hoist at the flag bin. **RIGHT:** Able Seaman Kellie-Anne O'Connell shows Cadet Able Seaman Brad Anthonisz how to use a 10 inch signal lamp. **BELOW:** Able Seaman Rhys Keen gives a fire-fighting lesson to Cadet Seamen Aladil Ali (front) and Noah Mokahal.



Photos by Leading Seaman Peter Thompson



Herc flight

Members of 332 'City of Wagga Wagga' Squadron, Australian Air Force Cadets (AAFC) recently had the opportunity to go for a flight in a C-130 J Royal Australian Air Force Hercules from RAAF Richmond in Sydney.

The flight was specifically conducted to allow the members of the cadet unit to experience a flight in a service aircraft and opportunities to speak with the Defence personnel manning the flight.

Cadets also had an opportunity a few weeks later at Bathurst to experience



their first hour in control of a glider or light aircraft, depending on individual preference.

Commanding Officer Warrant Officer (AAFC) Michael Barr said it was very important that young people get an opportunity to experience aviation as this was one of the goals of the organisation.



Further information on Cadets can be found at
www.cadetnet.gov.au

Kiwis fly in summer



Photo by Hollie Brown

While most 13 to 18 year olds relax during their summer school holidays, more than 150 New Zealand Air Training Corps cadets from across the country learnt to fly, navigate and survive in the bush during the New Zealand Cadet Forces (NZCF) annual courses in Marlborough.

This year, three courses were run from 4 to 16 January. During the navigation course 18 cadets learnt to plot flight plans (legs) over the Kaikoura coast, inland Marlborough, and down to Hanmer and the Sounds/Tasman areas.

While plotting the legs, they were also taking into account the weight of fuel, wind speed and direction, and other meteorological factors.

Success counted towards a private pilot's licence. The power flying course was open to 35 cadets who learnt to fly solo. Those who performed exceptionally well in this course were selected for a Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) Flying Scholarship for 10 days at RNZAF Base Ohakea, hosted by the Pilot Training School, including familiarisation flights in the new NH-90 helicopter and T6-C Texan II pilot-training aircraft. Course commander for both courses was Captain Alastair Rankin, a Marlborough College old boy and former member of No 27 (Blenheim) Squadron, ATC.

He said he had the best job in the country, seeing amazing young folk achieving outstanding things every day.

An Officer Bushcraft Course and Cadet Bushcraft Course saw more than 100 cadets learning field first aid, campsite selection, group leadership, trip planning, river crossing techniques, risk management, interpreting weather patterns and navigation.

"These courses give cadets valuable life experiences and teach them skills that are transferable to a career in the RNZAF," Captain Rankin said.

Navy's busy bees



PHOTO BY LEADING AIRCRAFTMAN
 MICHAEL GREEN

Cadet Able Seaman Ben Waterston and Cadet Recruit Samuel Ellwood talk to Berryl Rodda during the Legacy working bee. The Navy cadets were among six from Training Ship Canberra who took part in the 16th Legacy Working Bee at the JC Goreman Legacy Village, Queanbeyan, on 16 November last year. The cadets weeded gardens and cleaned the grounds, as well as engaging with village residents.

GROWING AND GROWING AND...



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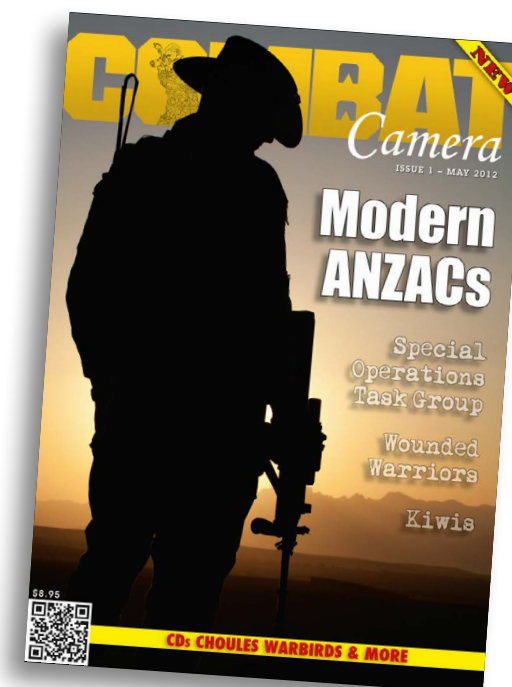
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UNSUNG HERO'S OF CEREMONY

HAVE YOU EVER STOPPED TO THINK ABOUT THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS THAT GOES INTO CEREMONIAL UNIFORMS?



Welcome to 2015, the Centenary of Anzac. We hope you had a terrific break with family and friends and returned safe and sound. Moving into this momentous year in Australia's military history, you wouldn't believe it but 'gear choice' is again going to play a part in all the ceremonial activities around Australia.

The remembrance services and parades have started already and will increase in tempo as we approach the centenary of each milestone that occurred between 1914 and 1918. Our uniformed defence members participating in these services have as much a need for reliable dress uniforms as combat troops need reliable field equipment. Some days on which services occur will be boiling hot, some freezing cold and some pouring with rain – but despite all that, those members on parade on those days will be putting their hearts and souls into getting their drill, timing and precision exactly right in order to properly honour the sacrifice of those who we remember.

You might remember the furore over soles coming off parade boots. Now imagine that happening at

the Canberra cenotaph, or worse, happening to the Federation Guard representing the entire nation at services in London, Amiens, Fromelles – or Gallipoli! You can now see the sense and the urgency of the recent parade-boot tender and the decision in favour of R.M. Williams to manufacture them.

However, it's not just the boots. Defence Material Organisation divides its Clothing Systems Program Office, known as CloSPO, into Combat and Non-Combat Clothing. When you take into account that each arm of the services has its own colours and specific accoutrements, the number of individual items the non-combat-clothing people need to source and supply starts to get much larger than the combative side of the business. You have probably never noticed this because, like good diggers, we want to be fighting fit and fitted out in order to defend Australia to the best of our abilities!

But our dress uniforms require an attention to detail that escapes our attention. Take as an example the colour variations between print runs of DPCU fabric.

During printing, the colours used to be mixed and matched by eye, leaving small variations from print run to print run. On a camouflage uniform you won't really see this (unless you remember the "Yellow" DPCU of the early '90s) but put a regiment on public parade in the sun and you will soon notice the difference in dye batches.

We already replace slightly faded or worn dress uniform items to maintain uniformity, so imagine if those items at new were of different colour shades to start with?

So CloSPO puts out very strict specifications for colour, and tests colour variations with scientific instrumentation according to processes proscribed in Australian Standards.

As well as colour, CloSPO has the same tight specifications for fabrics, construction and materials. If you have ever tried to put a crease into a pair of pants made from cheap fabric, you'd know that getting it there in the first place is not easy and repeating it after washing is damned difficult. Poor-quality fabrics and



their fibres can cause garments to shrink and warp, pulling them out of shape so that they don't drape or wear well and leave you looking just plain unprofessional.

So CloSPO Non-Combat gets right into the construction, telling potential suppliers exactly what they want by using specifications and confirming them with testing and expert advice from organisations such as the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technologies' textile department.

Some of the work put into the manufacture of dress uniforms is done to ease the workload required to prepare those uniforms for ceremonial occasions and to maintain uniformity. The gloss parade boots were one of those items, although now you are not required to "spit polish" the RM's boot, you will still need to polish it to an acceptable level.

Another is the Ceremonial Black Belt and keepers. Made of heavy nylon web, it remains stiff and consistent in colour throughout its life and the brass fittings are polished and lacquered requiring little attention.

If you're my age, you'll remember being given a green cotton Pattern '37 web belt with dull and chunky flat brass. This had to be dyed black and then polished, along with the keepers. I did mine in a flexible gloss paint so as to be easily readied and not mark my uniform, as well as getting my brass gold-plated at my own expense! I cannot tell you how much time that saved. I should also mention how long it takes to spit-polish a GP boot.

CloSPO Non-Combat's other responsibilities include accoutrements. Those are all the badges, lanyards, braid, patches and even swords that adorn and decorate dress

uniforms. Many of these are used to show rank, status, unit, and corps and also provide you, the soldier, sailor or airman with pride and recognition in your service. As many will also find out, the vast majority of these have historical significance, some with links to events we will be commemorating over the next four years. A fine example is the image of the Mk I Tank on the badge of the Royal Australian Armoured Corps and the raising of the corps to operate the new wonder weapon on the Western Front.

Accoutrements are quite difficult to source as, aside from quality, there must be accuracy in their design and manufacture. Many patches involve intricate designs that must be exacting in their reproduction or the result literally becomes an insult to the wearer and the unit. I can think of at least one incidence of this recently, but not a mistake by CloSPO. What's more, many of those designs are Commonwealth copyright and can only be reproduced with the permission of the government, so as to control who uses them, what they use them for and the quality of the reproduction.

In the coming years as you march on ANZAC Day or mount the Cenotaph to commemorate one of the many Australian actions of the First World War, spare a thought for the people in CloSPO Non-Combat Clothing who work hard to ensure that you are properly clothed and adorned when you represent the Australian Defence Force and more importantly, the memory and sacrifice of the men and women who went before you.

MANAGED CHOICE: YES OR NO?

Before we finish up for this issue, we'd like to start a conversation, an argument or even some biffy over the idea of 'managed choice' of service equipment.

At this point in time, if you are unhappy with the boots Defence issues to you, you can choose to purchase your own combat boots from an approved list. What we'd like to know from you the service member, is:

- Would you like to see more items approved for personal purchase?
- If so, what should they be? and,
- Should Defence Material Organisation set up an approval scheme to receive suggestions and manage the available items?

You can tell us your thoughts on this topic by posting on [facebook.com/CONTACTmagazine](https://www.facebook.com/CONTACTmagazine) or by emailing us, along with the usual comments, critiques, criticisms and death threats, to gearinsider@militarycontact.com



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