

2 COMMANDO REGIMENT

WITHOUT WARNING

WARRIOR CAPTAIN'S GEAR
PICT: BRIAN HARTIGAN/ADF

The modern-day Australian commando draws lineage primarily from the Independent Companies (Commando Squadrons) and Services Reconnaissance Department (M and Z Special units) of World War II. The original commandos were a tough breed of Aussies who were used by the Allies to agitate against and delay the formidable force of the Japanese in the Pacific. In the early 1940s, it appeared that the impending Japanese assault onto the Australian mainland may only have been a matter of time – so the independent companies were required to punch well above their weight and assisted in slowing the Japanese move through Asia towards Australia. The tactical actions of this small yet determined force had strategic effects and sapped a disproportionate amount of Japanese resources and manpower.

These units fought with distinction and demonstrated the utility of an agile, highly trained and culturally attuned special-forces capability in generating strategic effects against a numerically superior force. Just like today's commandos, they were tasked with a broad range of independent tasks – from raids, harassment operations, guerrilla tactics and intelligence gathering to the development of friendly indigenous fighting forces to hedge against the threat of the day.

The turbulence of World War II precipitated the need for a regular commando capability. Similarly, the complexities of today's security environment – beset on all sides by non-state protagonists, transnational and home-grown terrorism groups, and the threat of highly lethal rogue states – has led to the creation of the 2nd Commando Regiment. While, on one hand, this regiment continues to look forward and energetically adapt to the changing threat environment, it is constantly mindful of those who came before. As the current commanding officer says, "history strengthens".

The Modern Commando

The 2nd Commando Regiment's (2 Cdo Regt) recent history began in 1997 when the 4th Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment (4RAR) was designated as a commando battalion, serving with distinction as 4RAR (Cdo).

The years 1997 to 2009 were a period of dynamic restructuring, development and operational deployment, none of which would have been possible without the skills transfer, mentoring and assistance of other Special Operations Command (SOCOMD) units, such as the SASR, 1 Commando Regiment and the Special Forces Training Centre (SFTC).

On 19 June 2009, 4RAR (Cdo) became 2 Cdo Regt, recognising the transition to a fully fledged special-operations regiment.

2 Cdo Regt is a joint special-operations force optimised to operate across the land, maritime and air domains to conduct special operations in support of strategic aims. Their focus is on the ability to prevent, deter or respond to threats at short notice, with surgical precision within complex terrain. And, of course, complex terrain in this instance refers not only to complex physical terrain, but also complex human, legal and cultural terrain.

The majority of operations performed by 2 Cdo Regt are direct-action, offensive, special operations.

The 2nd Commando Regiment is made up of more than just army personnel. As a joint special-operations force unit, it includes a detachment of navy clearance divers (used in the domestic counter-terrorism role) and RAAF personnel from the Special Tactics Squadron who supplement the regiments joint terminal attack controller (JTAC) capability (soldiers and airmen who control airborne platforms in support of commando operations). Furthermore, 2 Cdo Regt is actively engaged with the wider national-security architecture to ensure that a whole-of-government solution is provided to whatever problem the ADF may ask 2 Cdo Regt to solve.

The crucible of almost constant combat and operational deployment since 2003 has refined 2 Cdo Regt into a battle-hardened, highly experienced special-forces unit. The courage, resolve and dedication of these commandos is beyond question. Just one recent bravery citation reads, in part:

'Despite rounds passing all around him, and knowing that he was within the enemy's engagement area, Private G displayed excellent situational awareness by immediately engaging enemy positions to his front and flank in order to regain the initiative ... he knowingly exposed himself to the enemy on numerous occasions so as to employ grenades against a very-well-armed, entrenched and determined enemy force ... his selfless and courageous actions in the most hazardous circumstances were instrumental in his team's success.'