

1st Joint Public Affairs Unit



*Clockwise from left:
A Special Forces soldier searches a Kajaki cave system
for drugs and hidden insurgent caches, 20 May 2011
– Corporal Christopher Dickson*

*A RHIB from HMAS Parramatta in the Red Sea,
28 November 2011 – Petty Officer Damian Pawlenko*

*Australian special forces soldiers patrol Al Asad Air
Base in western Iraq, 24 April 2003 – Sergeant W Guthrie*

*A C-17 Globemaster lands at Multinational Base Tarin
Kot, 28 May 2010 – Sergeant Mick Davis*

*WOFF Angelo Augustis loads supplies bound for
Helmand province, 14 March 2011 – Sergeant Mick Davis*

*Major Kurt Rezek, outside a minefield in Bihac, Bosnia,
14 June 2002 – Sergeant W Guthrie*



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COLLECTIVE PSYCHE WITHOUT PLACING SOMEONE,
OFTEN IN HARM'S WAY, BEHIND A LENS

WORDS CAPTAIN CHRIS RICKEY

It is a well-established adage that conflict, specifically armed conflict, brings out the best and worst in man. Arguably many of the world's most striking and emotive images have been captured on the field of battle.

Raising the Star and Stripes over Iwo Jima, a wounded digger assisted by his mates along the Kokoda Track and the Saigon police chief's street execution of a Viet Cong suspect during the Tet Offensive are just three photographs that provide an instant and powerful account of a particular moment in time.

Fast forward 44 years and who hasn't been exposed to countless images of 9/11, Iraq, Afghanistan and of course, closer to home, East Timor and the Solomon Islands?

It's often said that journalists and photographers create history's first draft and this statement most certainly applies during times of war.

These images would not exist in our collective psyche without placing someone, often in harm's way, behind a lens – and that's where Australia's 1st Joint Public Affairs Unit (1JPAU) enters the frame.

Members of a tri-service, high-readiness

unit, the men and women of 1JPAU are some of the most deployed soldiers, sailors and airmen currently serving in the Australian Defence Force.

Since formation in 2002, many 1JPAU members have averaged up to six months absent from the unit each year on Australian taskings or deployed overseas.

Officer commanding 1JPAU Major Haydn Barlow quickly sums up the unit's position within the ADF and its reason for existence.

"1JPAU performs two important functions – we support the communication objectives of the ADF mission, and we capture a permanent and continuous visual record of Australian servicemen and women on operations," Major Barlow says.

"Both aspects of the job contribute to the nature of the relationship between the public and its defence force, which is a huge and humbling responsibility."

The 'who, what, where, when, why and how' principles of journalism definitely apply at 1JPAU. The difference is, when asked about the 'where and when' the answer is a resounding "everywhere and anytime!"

To further illustrate the point – 1JPAU public affairs officers and photographers, now known as imagery specialists, usually have boots on the ground within the first hours of any new operation anywhere in the world.

Naturally, technology plays a major role in how the unit functions. In this digital age, 1JPAU members are obliged to keep abreast of rapid advances in technology to maintain industry standards of technical proficiency. Not necessarily an easy task for a tri-service organisation that also needs to be militarily experienced, combat capable and ready to deploy at a moment's notice.

Of course, it's not all about combat and firepower at 1JPAU. According to unit sergeant major Warrant Officer Class 2 Mark Dowling, some of the unit's best work has emerged from disaster-relief and community-assistance operations both domestically and overseas.

"It's part of the team's commitment to telling the full ADF story, and that means capturing images of sandbagging during floods or an Australian Army medic providing help to an injured civilian following a cyclone," WO2 Dowling says.