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ISSUE 2//JUNE 2004 \$8.95

# CONTACT

THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

AIR, LAND & SEA

## RWANDA REMEMBERED

THE AFRICAN GEONOCIDE TEN YEARS ON

## RUSSIAN ROULETTE

DRUG SMUGGLERS LOSE THE BIG GAMBLE

## ANZACS IN ALICE

DAWN SERVICE IN THE RED CENTRE

# CLIMB ABOARD

NAVY'S TOOLED-UP SEARCH TEAMS

**PLUS** M1 ABRAMS TANK//MILITARY NEWS// POLITICS OF  
WAR//GALLIPOLI 2004 //SOMALIA PART2//REVIEWS//  
DHC-4A CARIBOU//JUST SOLDIERS//PRIVATE NOBBER & MORE...



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**Bohemia  
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STUDIO

[vbs@bistudio.com](mailto:vbs@bistudio.com)

Phone: 02-49821741

## THE EDITOR'S LETTER

### CONTACT AIR, LAND & SEA

**Editor** Brian Hartigan

**Design & layout** Blair Pagan@lemonsqueezee  
squeezee@bigpond.net.au

**Contributors** Sean Burton, Brian Hartigan,  
Wayne Cooper, Jon Garland,  
Darryl Kelly, Simon Pointer,  
Troy Rodgers, Jason  
Weeding, Dave Fowler,  
Sergei Zhukov

**Advertising** John Bell  
PO Box 407  
Vaucluse NSW 2030

[jbelle@solutionsguide.com.au](mailto:jbelle@solutionsguide.com.au)  
ph: (02) 9337 3323  
fax: (02) 9337 3404  
mob: 0429 992 221

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Telephone: 0408 496 664  
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Greetings one and all, and welcome to the second issue of **CONTACT Air, Land and Sea.**

In our cover story this issue we go to sea with the Royal Australian Navy and find out what it's like to leave the relative safety of one ship and try to clamber aboard another – while on the move – and why you would want to do such a dangerous thing in the first place.

Back on dry land and, as we correctly predicted last issue, with Australia about to acquire Abrams tanks from the US, we invited Simon Pointer back to ask and answer the pertinent question, "Why does Australia need a tank anyway?"

We also revisit some old stomping grounds as Wayne Cooper continues his very personal tour of Somalia. This has proven to be a very popular segment and, I'm pleased to report, that it is set to continue as a series for some time.

Still in Africa and to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the worst genocide since WWII, we take a look at what happened in Rwanda when the world turned a blind eye to the mass murder of an estimated 800,000 people in 100 days.

On the home front, Anzac Day has come and gone for another year and I am pleased to commend to you a fine article on page 18, by Sean Burton and Full Frame photographer Jason Weeding who spent their Anzac Day in the heart of Australia – Alice Springs.

I could think of no more fitting place to send a **CONTACT** team, except of course, Gallipoli itself, where the Anzac legend was baptised with fire.

How ironic, however, that Gallipoli is now deemed too dangerous for the men and women who wear the military uniform of today's Australian Defence Force – banned from visiting the birthplace of the legend that sets them apart on the world stage.

"Those who have made this pilgrimage here today... are sending a powerful message that the spirit of Anzac is alive and well and will not be defeated."

So said Defence Minister Robert Hill at the dawn service in Gallipoli. It's just a pity there were no off-duty Defence members there to hear him say it.

**CONTACT** didn't miss out altogether, however, thanks to Sergeant Troy Rodgers who, in an official capacity, captured a brilliant and emotional set of images, a selection of which you'll find starting on page 45.

Till next time, keep your head down.

Brian Hartigan, Editor





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## FEEDBACK

### HARD TO PUT DOWN

I purchased your magazine last week and read a little each night. I bought the magazine initially for my son who collects fighter and military aircraft and one day would like to join the Air Force to become a pilot. Being only 10 years old and having a dream, I will certainly try to keep the dream alive for him with any information and material that will help him reach his goal.

In saying that, I found your magazine fantastic, and very interesting – hard to put down each night when finally deciding to retire. Your articles and stories were great and placed [my] imagination on cruise control as they were described by the people who lived the [experience].

But there was one story that really touched home, that of Richard Warne, a courageous but sad story of a hero who befell a tragic end. Why it touched home is because I live in Maryborough, home of many diggers who served in all the wars Australia has served in. Can't wait for your next issue and I am sure that this magazine is going to be a success for you for there is no other that is such great reading.

**Alex Romanov, Maryborough**

### FOR NON-ABSORBANT USES

Firstly, let me congratulate you and the team on a very impressive first edition. I enjoyed the magazine immensely, particularly the piece on Op Solace through the crew commander's eyes.

The magazine has a pleasant feel, with the weight of paper you are using, and the layout is very comfortable to read (you'll note I did not use Ashley Roach's usual praise, "Thoroughly absorbent, and soft").

One criticism – I do not want to cut out the subscription form and ruin the title page of the Somalia story! That aside (I have photocopied the relevant form and dispatched it to you) let me reiterate my opening remarks; congratulations – it is great to see a publication such as this on the news stands promoting the excellent work done, past, present and future, by the Australian Defence Force.

The magazine is especially welcome given the high standard of independent writing and illustration, and I eagerly await future editions.

**MG, Baghdad**

### LEGIONNAIRE EMPATHY

I'm an Australian para serving in the Foreign Legion, 2nd Foreign Parachute Regiment, Support Company, Recon Pl (2 REP, CEA, SRR).

By chance, I read your article on the Aussie's experiences during instruction. I also happen to serve in the same company as three men pictured in the section photo.

I think I can safely say that no Legionnaire enjoys the time they spend at Castlenaudary, either as an EV (engage volontaire) or on a promotion or specialist course. However, life in the Legion starts once you are effected into a regiment.

I understand why he left, though, if he had stayed he could have been deployed to the Ivory Coast (op Licorne) or various other interesting ops.

He was right about one thing – it's not an easy life and it doesn't get any easier, however the handful of Aussies here are professional and doing a good job. Congratulations on a great magazine (I'll get my family to post me a copy).

**Mark J, 2 REP**

### SNAP-HAPPY READERS

First off I would like to congratulate you on the first issue of *CONTACT*. I want to say that I love the magazine and bought it the first chance I got. The layout and information is amazing and I will most definitely be happy to pay a subscription fee for the two years. I was a subscriber to another magazine and you have got me converted.

The visuals are absolutely stunning and I have informed all my other collector friends of your magazine to buy it at the first chance they get.

Once again congratulations.

Will there be a readers' pic corner where we can submit pictures for future issues?

**Sean Batson, Adelaide**

P.S. We run a website called Groundpounder HQ. We collect 1:6 scale highly detailed military miniatures – <http://pub157.ezboard.com/bgroundpounderhq>

*Sean, we are currently developing our own web site, which will feature areas where people such as yourself can send pictures, stories and info on your own activities, for publishing on the World Wide Web. And of course, if submissions are sufficiently interesting and well presented, they will most definitely be considered for publication in hard copy.*

*Our web site is [www.militarycontact.com](http://www.militarycontact.com)*

*Thanks for converting. I hope we can keep your loyalty through maintaining the quality and variety. Ed.*

### THE GOOD BAD AND UGLY

Good work on the first issue! It was a very enjoyable read. Just thought I'd give some feedback to such a promising publication.

#### Good points:

- Good, glossy presentation. Really catches the eye and looks the business. Great pictures.
- Very practical. None of the crap that you'd see in foreign military-genre publications (that is, no semi-attractive female models in gucci bloody accessories for soldiers).
- Loved the articles! Especially the French Foreign Legion, Aust Commandos, The Light Horse ...well, all of them actually! A great mix of current news, future propositions, and history of our great defence force. Great to read about the recent contributions of the ADF in Somalia.

#### Not-so-good point:

- Not sure about the "Nobber goes to ground" story. Bit odd.

**Summary:** Great looking mag, full of useful information that is presented in an easy way to read with lots of pics to show your mates and go, "Check this one out!" Good work!

**Sapper Hamish Goddard, Melbourne**

### LAND (ROVER) LUBBER

Just writing to compliment you on your fantastic new magazine *CONTACT Air, Land and Sea*.

As a civilian, I find it very important to keep up to date with the Australian Military involvement in protecting our country.

My interests in the military generate from my passion in restoring ex Australian Army Landrovers, of which I currently own three. Not just a hobby, but a social experience with other collectors across the country, who collect and respect ex Australian military equipment, preserving it for future generations. I have many exciting years ahead of vehicle restoration, being that I am only 23 years old.

Once again, congratulations on a fantastic effort in your new magazine and best wishes for

the future and developments.

**Chris Cullen, Bundaberg**

### NOT SO SMUDGY

Congratulations on the first issue of *CONTACT*. If this is the quality to come, you look like being around for quite a while.

Only one suggestion, if you don't mind? Change the smudgy print. It's a little hard to focus on.

I do have one question. Do the contributors have to be in the military or an ex like me?

**Ken Wright**

*Ken, thanks for the feedback. We'll consider contributions from anyone. Our basic requirement is that stories should be of general military interest, be well written and have high-quality supporting photos (free from copyright problems) available. We must warn intending contributors, however, that competition for space in CONTACT is already very high, therefore your stories and photos need to be sufficiently strong to beat off competition. Please contact us to discuss your ideas before launching into a frantic spate of writing.*

### SWIFTLY STRUCK

May I first of all congratulate you on an excellent first edition of *CONTACT* magazine.

I was particularly drawn to the article on 4RAR which I found to be well written and informative.

I was, however, disappointed with some omissions and inaccuracies regarding my unit, the 1st Commando Regiment. Firstly, you quite rightly identified that the reserve companies were raised in 1955 without actually acknowledging that these companies were 1 and 2 Commando Company of the 1st Commando Regiment. They still exist today and we proudly celebrate our 50th anniversary of service to special forces as the oldest Australian Special Forces unit, in 2005.

You quite rightly acknowledge the Commando Regiment's contribution to the raising of SASR but omitted that the unit also contributed to the raising of the 4RAR Commando capability. Indeed in 2003, 25 per cent of Commando-qualified soldiers joining 4 RAR came from 1st Commando Regiment.

Additionally, 43 1st Commando Regiment soldiers deployed with 4RAR to East Timor.

Your article recognised that 1st Commando Regiment's Simpson Platoon (named for Ray Simpson) was the precursor to the SFDRS. The unit is also conducting this unique scheme this year.

Finally the unit's Signal Squadron designator is 301 not 330.

I raise these issues not as a complaint but as feedback.

I also note that your first edition includes no articles on Reserve units. As such I would like to extend to you or your contributing writers the invitation to do a piece on 1st Commando Regiment – the premier Reserve unit in the Australian Army. I would be happy to host a writer/photographer on any given exercise or training event in either Melbourne or Sydney or provide a piece ourselves with a follow-up telephone interview.

I look forward to hearing from you, and once again, congratulations on your debut.

**Lieutenant Colonel Anthony John 1st Commando Regiment**

*Anthony, your observations are duly noted and we extend apologies for the error. We look forward to accepting your kind invitation.*





## BRITS UNDER FIRE IN BASRA

Despite this dramatic picture taken during a recent Public demonstration the British Soldier, one of 13 hurt, was not seriously injured.

Major Tim Smith Military spokesman in Basrah, said the soldiers injured in the attacks were recovering well.

"The lack of burns injuries highlights that all our personnel were correctly equipped and trained to deal with this situation."

"Thankfully none of the soldiers is in a life-threatening condition. I want to commend their restraint under enormous pressure in dealing with the situation with the minimum of force."

In response to petrol bombs and improvised explosive devices being thrown, British Army personnel fired a number of baton (plastic 40mm) rounds in self defence.



## HUNTERS' NEST

Australia's \$3 billion Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) Wedgetail aircraft have a new home ready and waiting for them in, appropriately, the Hunter region.

To be headquartered at Williamtown near Newcastle, the Wedgetail will be operated by the RAAF's re-formed No. 2 Squadron.

The opening of the new hangar facilities is the first stage of a \$149 million redevelopment of RAAF Base Williamtown.

Defence Minister Robert Hill said the Wedgetail would enhance Australia's combat capability through leading-edge air and maritime surveillance.

Wedgetail is named after Australia's Wedgetail Eagle for its acute vision, wide range and long endurance.

If delivered on schedule, the first two aircraft will be handed over to the RAAF in November 2006.

## AUSTRALIA'S SKYNET

Defence has signed a \$114 million contract with Boeing Australia to deliver a new air defence command and control system that will provide the ADF with the capability to support national surveillance and the air defence of Australia from operations centres at RAAF Bases Williamtown and Tindal.

"Vigilare" will consolidate information from a variety of sources such as the Jindalee Operational Radar Network (JORN), AEW&C aircraft, civil and military microwave radars, fighter and maritime patrol aircraft, Royal Australian Navy air-warfare-capable ships and various intelligence sources.

It will provide high-tech communication facilities to enable ADF commanders to command and control widely dispersed air, sea and ground assets and will be networked with other ADF and allied surveillance and combat assets.

Boeing will maintain the Vigilare system in Australia under a five-year support contract valued at \$11.4 million.



## TIGER TAKES FLIGHT

Australia's first Tiger production helicopter performed its maiden flight at Eurocopter's Marignane plant on 20 February.

The 50-minute flight gave the test pilot Jacques Larra and test engineer Bernard Janssonie the opportunity to check that all

systems were operating correctly and to check out the complete flight envelope.

This plus one other French-built airframe will be delivered to the Australian Army by the end of this year.

## NAVY FLICKS MAPS

Western Australian company Nautronix has

signed a \$6.2 million contract with Defence that will see Australian warships and submarines move from paper-based to electronic navigation.

The new systems will be fitted to bridges and operations rooms to electronically plan, monitor and record voyages. They will display electronic

charts developed by a variety of organisations including the Australian Hydrographic Service.

The first systems will be delivered next year.

## HALO GETS TRUCKS

HALO (Hazardous Areas Life-support Organisation) the mine clearing charity has been donated 12 DAF

45 armoured trucks by the UK Ministry of Defence for use in Kosovo.

Since 1999 the MOD has donated 100 surplus vehicles as part of a ongoing program.

HALO has over 5,500 mineclearers in nine countries and is a non-political, non-religious NGO which specialises in the removal of

the debris of war. To date, it had cleared more than 1.6 million landmines and other unexploded ordnance.

## BATTLEFIELD COMMS UPGRADE

Tenders for a Battlespace Communication System (Land) project worth \$97 million, which closed last

month, offered opportunities for industry to provide communications systems from small hand-held radios to larger vehicle mounted communications equipment for both the Army and Air Force. The contract is part of a major program to enhance the ADF's digital communications systems. It is planned that the project

will increase the efficiency and capacity of the Army and land-based Air Force elements to rapidly share battlefield information.

## DEFENCE TARGETS ALBURY

A \$4.3 million contract to deliver 600 portable infantry target systems to practice, assess and vali-

date battle-shooting skills in a field environment has been subcontracted to two companies in Albury NSW. The system, to be built by Milspec and ATS Headquarters, will use Australian designed and developed target systems and replace 30-year-old systems considered out-of-date and unreliable.



## LAST LAUNCH FOR ANZAC CLASS

Last of the billion\$ boats slips her ropes to begin sea trials



Australia's \$7 billion investment in the ANZAC class frigate project reached a significant milestone when the tenth and final ship in the class - Nuship Perth - was launched at Tenix's Williamstown shipyard in Victoria in March.

Perth will be equipped with the latest communication, navigation and fire-control systems when it is delivered in June 2006. It will be capable of firing the Evolved SeaSparrow missile from its Vertical Launching System and will be armed with a five-inch gun.

Perth will have an upgraded Combat Management System - the first ship of its class to have this system fitted.

"The five ANZAC frigates already in service have proven their worth in operations in the Persian Gulf, off the north coast of Australia and in Antarctic waters," Defence Minister Robert Hill said.



### NZ ROLLS LANDROVER

New Zealand is in the process of replacing its fleet of Landrovers with the purchase of 188 new Pinzgauer Light Operational Vehicles.

The vehicles represent the first of a total fleet of 321 at a total cost of the project is estimated at up to NZ\$110 million with delivery scheduled to begin in October.

Originally designed and built by Steyr-Daimler-Puch of Austria, the Pinzgauer now is produced exclusively in the United Kingdom by Automotive Technik and is exported to 30 countries.



### ORION GETS NEW GLASSES

US company FLIR Systems Inc has won a \$10 million contract to supply and fit 10 electro-optical Star SAFIRE III surveillance systems on RAAF AP-3C Orions. Five Orions are already equipped with the system.

Star SAFIRE III is a next generation surveillance system capable of providing images with greater magnification and resolution and, in a later phase of the project, will be integrated with the AP-3C data management systems so that images can be transmitted off-board.



### 1 BRIGADE

## URBAN TRAINING FACILITY FOR DARWIN

Darwin-based soldiers will benefit from a new \$550,000 contract to design and construct a Small Teams Skills Training Facility (STSTF) at the Robertson Barracks.

The facility will enable training of 1 Brigade personnel in building-entry and search techniques in an urban environment.

Australian military deployments to Cambodia, Rwanda, Somalia and East Timor have proved the need for training in this type of environment, where high levels of training and coordination are required.

This project is just the first stage in the development of an urban training capability in the Northern Territory - the second stage, scheduled to commence at the Mount Bundy Training Area later this year, will compliment the STSTF by allowing foot soldiers to train alongside armoured vehicles.



## AIRBUS FUELS TANKER PROJECT

Contract will deliver nine-fold boost to the RAAF's air-to-air refuelling capacity

Australia has chosen the Airbus A330, modified as a tanker, to replace its ageing Boeing 707 fleet in a \$2 billion contract with European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS) and Qantas Defence Services.

The RAAF will take delivery of five of the modified commercial aircraft with the first coming on line in 2007.

The contest - that saw Boeing's 767 eliminated - will deliver an estimated nine-fold increase in air-to-air refuelling capability over its current fleet.

Announcing the decision, Defence Minister Robert Hill said the A330 offered greater capability in terms of endurance, offload-of-fuel capacity, cargo capacity and value for money.

The fact that Qantas Defence Services was part of the team and already operates the commercial version of the A330 is expected to provide significant synergies in relation to maintenance and support.

Four of the five aircraft will be modified in Brisbane at a new facility being constructed by Qantas.

It be fitted with both boom and drogue delivery systems, suitable for all types currently flown by the RAAF.

All fuel is carried in existing integral tanks, eliminating the requirement to fit additional bladders or to remove passenger seating.

Eight military pallets of cargo and 293 personnel can be carried in the aircraft's secondary troop-lift role or, for example, it could deploy six F/A-18s from Darwin to Butterworth in Malaysia non-stop, while carrying 43 tonnes of support equipment and stores.

## THE TWO MINUTE BRIEF...

### JEMAAH ISLAMIAH

**What is Jemaa Islamiyah?**

Jemaa Islamiyah (JI) or "Islamic Organization" in Arabic is a Sunni Islamic extremist organisation, whose stated goal is to create an Islamic state encompassing Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Mindanao.

**Where does JI operate?**

Across South East Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, possibly Thailand and the Philippines with local Islamist groups Abu Sayyaf and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

**How big is JI?**

Unknown - but there are cells all over South East Asia with worldwide links forged in battle in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Somalia, Yemen, Bosnia and Kosovo.

**Who is the leader of JI?**

Abu Bakar Bashir, an Indonesian of Yemeni descent, was jailed for four years in September 2003 by an Indonesian court for involvement in a plot to overthrow the government and violation of immigration laws. Freed on appeal recently then re-arrested.

**Who are the other leadership figures?**

Indonesian JI leader, Ridwan bin Isamuddin, aka Hambali, fought with the Mujahideen in Afghanistan during the 1980s. Hambali is also known to have assisted Al Qa'ida 9/11 terrorists and has made arrangements for JI members to travel to Al Qa'ida training camps in Afghanistan. Hambali was arrested last year in Thailand and was handed over to US authorities.

**What is JI accused of?**

JI, or individuals affiliated, is thought to be coordinating to several terrorist attacks, most notably the October 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202.

### LIFT

Adelaide-based NTP Forklifts Australia has won a \$10.2 million contract to supply the Australian Army with new rugged-terrain medium-lift fork lifts. The fork lifts - Manitou MHT 7140 LT (Army) Telehandler - have a lift capacity of eight tonnes, compared to the five tonnes for the

equipment they will replace, and will be operated on operations and exercises in field conditions.

### CHARGE IT

A new contract between the ADF and Diners Club will see Defence business travellers paying for travel-related services by credit card, instead

of receiving daily cash travel allowances. This will allow Defence to claim GST credits for all hotel accommodation and meals - saving about \$6 million a year. Reconciliation of accommodation, meals and incidental expenses will also be accounted for on the travel card. The card will be introduced

initially to Defence's senior leadership, but will be available to all Defence business travellers by the end of the year.

### BRIDGING THE GAP

The Australian Army has just spent \$7.3 million on 10 new fixed modular bridges from United States-based Acrow Corporation.

Capable of crossing gaps of varying widths, the bridges have a span of 51 metres or can be joined to span wider gaps as required and are capable of carrying heavy loads including the Army's new M1A1 Abrams tanks. Army engineers from the Combat Engineer Regiments in Darwin, Townsville and Brisbane,

will be capable of deploying the bridges, while some of the new acquisition will be used for training. The first bridges are due for delivery in July.

### OUR VETS ON THE INTERNET

A new website has been developed to showcase inspiring war stories being

recorded as part of the Government's new Australians at War Film Archive. [www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au](http://www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au) carries almost 100 transcripts of interviews undertaken to date, with hundreds more to follow.

"The Film Archive and website will provided an unprecedented resource

for researchers, film-makers and future generations of Australians," Veterans' Affairs Minister Danna Vale, said.

### TENIX FLOATS KIWI BOAT CONTRACT

New Zealand has selected Australian company Tenix Defence for its NZ\$500 million Project Protector

ship-building requirements. Tenix has been chosen as the preferred tenderer to supply the Royal New Zealand Navy with a multi-role vessel, capable of undertaking tactical sealift and disaster relief, plus in-shore and off-shore vessels to meet New Zealand's surface-patrol requirements.



## MEDALS & AWARDS

### STAR OF COURAGE FOR TANKIE

Australia's second highest bravery award has been awarded to Corporal Shaun Clements (now an instructor at the School of Armour) who, on 5 May 2001, was involved in an Army training exercise when the tank he was in suddenly veered out of control after the gun caught the side of the driver's head. As Corporal Clements climbed onto the top of the tank, it suddenly accelerated and was on a collision course with two other occupied tanks. Corporal Clements, while supporting the injured driver, was able to steer the tank away from the other vehicles and bring it to a halt, using a steep rise and surrounding trees. Even though Corporal Clements suffered broken ribs and a collapsed lung in the incident, he remained on the tank and helped with the medical evacuation of the driver.

### SOLOMONS DEPLOYMENT RECOGNISED

Defence Minister Robert Hill presented Australian Service Medals (ASM) in April to more than 500 Townsville-based soldiers in recognition of their service as part of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands.

"Through their efforts they have made a real difference in the lives of the people of the Solomon Islands," Senator Hill said.

The soldiers were among about 1500 initially deployed on Operation Anode to provide support and protection to the Participating Police Force.

### LEGION OF HONOUR

Brigadier Steve Meekin has been awarded the United States Legion of Merit in recognition of his distinguished service while commanding the Joint Captured Materiel Exploitation Centre in Iraq.

US Army Major-General Keith Daryton, Commander of the Iraq Survey Group, presented the award at a ceremony at Russell Offices.

Authorized on July 20, 1942, and amended on March 15, 1955, this was the first United States decoration created specifically as an award for citizens of other nations, and it is the first award to have different 'degrees' to conform with the decorations of other countries. It is awarded to members of the UN Armed Forces for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service to the US. Originally awarded to both officers and enlisted, currently the recipient must occupy a position of great responsibility and would normally be a high-ranking officer of staff or flag rank.



## GEORGE CROSS WIN

Queen Elizabeth awards high honour to teen for bravery under fire

The George Cross, which along with the Victoria Cross is the commonwealths highest award for gallantry, had been awarded to its youngest recipient, 19-year-old British soldier Trooper Christopher Finney of the Household Cavalry Regiment, for outstanding courage in Iraq on 28 March 2003.

Tpr Chris Finney, aged 18 at the time, was on his first operational deployment.

His citation reads in part: On 28 March 2003, D Sqn Household Cavalry Regiment was probing forward along the Shatt Al Arab waterway, north of Basrah, some 30 kms ahead of the main force of 16 Air Assault Bde. In exposed desert, their mission was to find and interdict the numerically vastly superior, and better equipped, Iraqi 6th Armoured Division.

Tpr Finney, a young AFV [armoured fighting vehicle] driver with less than a year's service, was driving the leading Scimitar

vehicle of his troop, which had been at the forefront of action against enemy armour for several hours. In the early afternoon, the two leading vehicles paused beside a levee to allow the troop leader to assess fully the situation in front. Without warning, they were engaged by a pair of Coalition Forces ground attack aircraft. Both vehicles were hit and caught fire, and ammunition began exploding inside the turrets. Tpr Finney managed to get out of his driving position and was on the way towards cover when he noticed that his vehicle's gunner was trapped in the turret. He then climbed onto the fiercely burning vehicle, at the same time placing himself at risk from enemy fire as well as from the aircraft should they return. Despite the smoke and flames and exploding ammunition, he managed to haul out the injured gunner, get him

off the vehicle, and move him to a safer position not far away, where he bandaged his wounds.

The troop leader, in the other Scimitar, had been wounded and there were no senior ranks to take control. Despite his relative inexperience, the shock of the attack and the all-too-obvious risk to himself, Tpr Finney recognised the need to inform his HQ of the situation. He therefore broke cover, returned to his vehicle, which was still burning, and calmly and concisely sent a lucid situation report by radio. He then returned to the injured gunner and began helping him towards a Royal Engineers Spartan AFV that had moved forward to assist.

At this point, Tpr Finney noticed that both the aircraft were lining up for a second attack. Notwithstanding the impending danger, he continued to help his injured comrade towards the safety of the Spartan vehicle. Both aircraft fired their cannon and Trooper Finney was wounded in the buttocks and legs, and the gunner in the head. Despite his wounds, Tpr Finney succeeded in getting the gunner to the waiting Spartan. Then, seeing that the driver of the second Scimitar was still in the burning vehicle, Trooper Finney determined to rescue him as well. Despite his wounds and the continuing danger from exploding ammunition, he valiantly attempted to climb onto the vehicle, but was beaten back by the combination of heat,



smoke and exploding ammunition. He collapsed exhausted a short distance from the vehicle, and was recovered by the crew of the Royal Engineers' Spartan.

During these hours and their horrifying aftermath, Tpr Finney displayed clear-headed courage and devotion to his comrades, which was out of all proportion to his age and experience. Acting with complete disregard for his own safety, even when wounded, his bravery was of the highest order throughout.



M1A1 ABRAMS TANK

## HARD CHOICE

Why does Australia need a new tank or, indeed, why do we need a tank at all? And, if we do need one, is Abrams the best choice?

WORDS SIMON POINTER PICS GENERAL DYNAMICS & US ARMY

As predicted in the first issue of *CONTACT Air Land and Sea*, Australia has decided to equip its army with a fleet of 59 M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks to replace the ageing Leopard 1, at a total project cost of about \$550 million. As explained, Abrams was probably the best choice given the global circumstances we operate in – though we have to admit we were not alone in this assessment. Choosing Abrams for Australia was probably the biggest open secret in modern military history.

### THE RATIONAL

Armoured warfare is not a new concept. Since the armies of Alexander the Great conquered the world, professional soldiers have been attempting

to find the perfect balance between firepower, mobility and protection. The first great success came during the Middle Ages when the armoured knight made his appearance.

Imagine being one of the first soldiers to encounter an armoured knight in combat. The charging iron-clad horse, bearing an iron-clad knight – wooden-tipped arrows bounced off him and wooden pikes splintered on his breastplate – a truly awe-inspiring sight. Unfortunately for the knight, weapons and techniques soon evolved to counter him.

One of the most effective techniques was to simply push him off his horse. Knights were not very manoeuvrable and, once down, could not get up again, and were soon dispatched.

Although an interesting and in some ways novel solution to the problems of firepower, mobility and protection, the armoured knight was not really practical. Although good on level or gently sloping land, the armour became a death trap if fighting on uneven, broken or boggy land. So the problem remained.

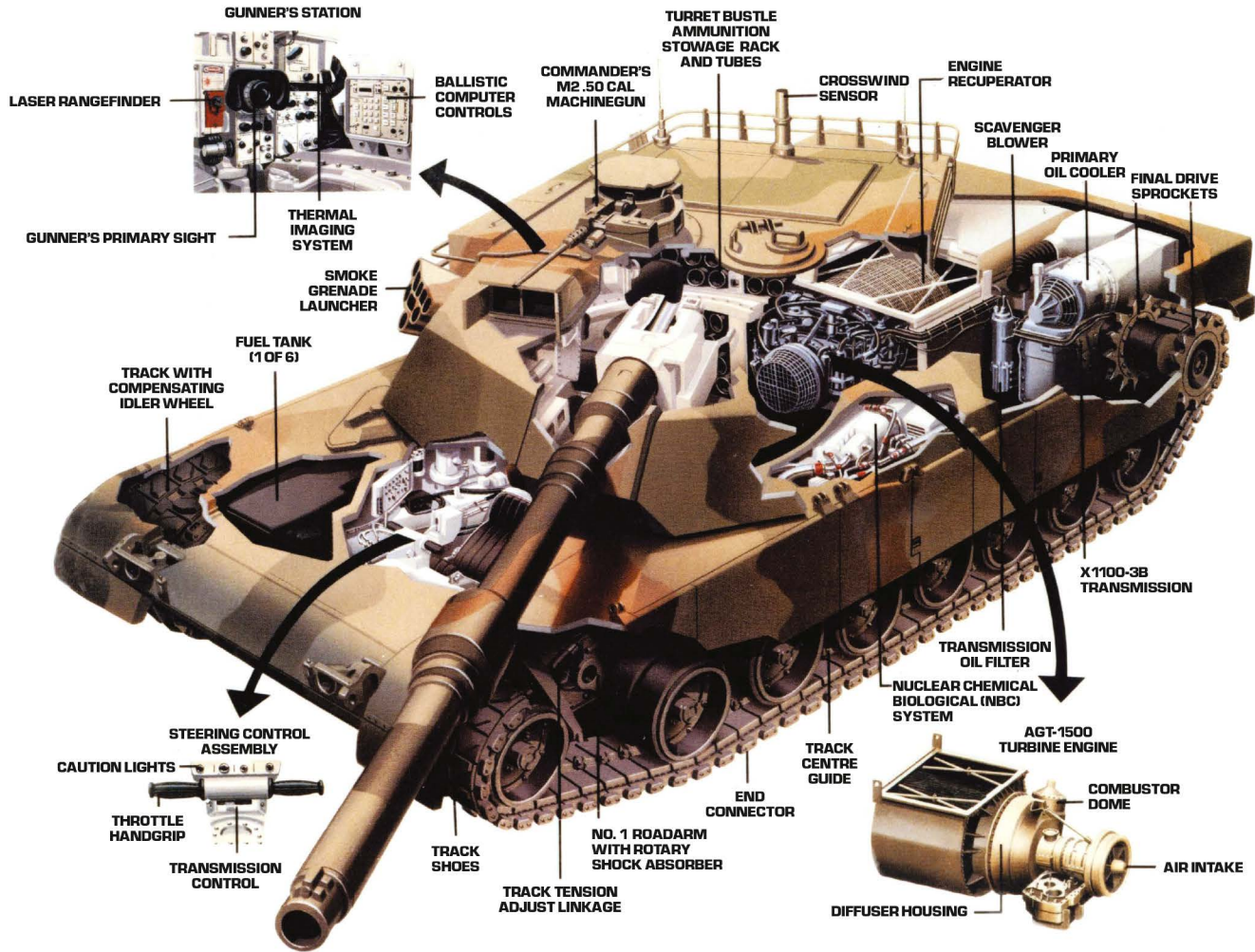
However, as technology advanced, the problem was revisited. Consider the Crimean War of the 1850's – the first truly modern war. During this conflict between the Franco-British-Turkish Allies and the Russians, we see the introduction of binoculars, the electric telegraph, the camera, the steam engine and the steam ship as weapons of war. We also see an ever-increasing use of rifles and exploding projectiles.

So how can an army overcome a highly lethal battlefield where a commander instantaneous information and directly order logistical or arms support to a particular area? Simple – you design an armoured vehicle!

This is what the British did. Essentially it was a steam-powered armoured traction engine. However, it was not built during the Crimean War. Rather the first ever, construction and trials of an armoured vehicle took place during the Boar War (1898-1902), some 40 years later. This vehicle was



M1A1 ABRAMS TANK



M1A1 ABRAMS MBT

Crew	4
Armament	1 x 120mm smoothbore gun
	1 x 7.62 mm co-axial mg
	1 x 12.7mm mg mounted
	1 x 7.62mm mg mounted
	8 x smoke grenade dischargers
Armour	Classified
Length (hull)	7.92 m
Width	3.66m
Height	2.89m
Combat Weight	57,154 kg
Engine	Gas Turbine, 1500hp@30000 rpm
Speed	67kph,
Range	480km,
Vertical	1.07 m
Trench	2.74m
Gradient	60%

not really a success, proving unable to operate in close proximity to the enemy and was very mechanically unreliable.

The first successful military use of the tank took place in 1903 within the imagination of HG Wells, when he penned a short story for the Strand Magazine in which he accurately described the use of “The Land Ironclad” within the concept of trench warfare. This was a remarkably forward-thinking essay.

Although he never admitted to it, it is believed that the Australian Engineer Lancelot de Mole was inspired by HG Wells when he developed (1912) an armoured vehicle, running on a fully tracked wheel-base and powered by a diesel engine. Unfortunately he was completely unable to get the Imperial Government to show any interest in the concept and, like most other armoured pioneers, his idea was never put into production. The idea of the tank had to wait until the horror of the First World War arrived before a really practical solution was developed by British Engineers as a result of the pressing instigation of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill.

HOW THE TANK IS USED

It is a commonly held misconception that the role of a tank is to find and destroy other tanks. This overly simplistic view has resulted in a stifling of understanding as to the true employment of armoured forces and, correspondingly, the need for an upgrade to those forces.

So, if the public conception of the role of the tank is incorrect, what exactly is it for and why are our current tanks not up to the task?

Tanks can be used either offensively or defensively. This may seem like a fairly banal statement, but it is an important one to make. The secret to the tank’s dual use is its mobility. This mobility coupled with its armoured protection and firepower allows the tank to rupture an enemy’s defensive position and, when the enemy has fled, to pursue and route him, thus denying him use of manpower, material and geography.

This may not seem very defensive at first, but consider this. An enemy has invaded Australia’s north and seized the port of Darwin and it’s immediate surrounds. In order to continue his advance south, the enemy must consolidate and build a logistic base in Darwin centred on the port and the airport. In order to consolidate safely, the invaders must fortify their positions in and around the city.

An Australian commander faced with the responsibility of re-capturing Darwin with only infantry and artillery would face an impossible task. In fact it is likely that he would fail and thus weaken the nations ability to offset defeat. However, if you use an armoured force, which consists of a balance of mechanised infantry and artillery with some airpower support, you could open up a hole in a defensive position and thrust into the enemy’s rear area. An event such as this would cost the enemy considerable loss of life and

equipment and could very well render his occupation of the city impotent.

Defence is not about sitting behind a wall and waiting for the enemy to conveniently come to you. It is about being able to exploit your geography and mobility in order to achieving the following;

- i. Reduce the enemy’s ability to move without impairment,
- ii. Reduce the enemy’s ability to maintain a supply line to his forward positions,
- iii. Reduce the enemy’s ability to maintain safe positions behind his lines, and
- iv. Reduce the enemy’s ability to conduct offensive operations against you.

In Australia we have vast tracts of flat open land. This country lends itself to mobile warfare and, in any conflict on the Australian continent, the side with the greatest mobility, firepower and protection will eventually win.

So what is so wrong with our current tanks that we need to purchase new ones?

Firstly, Leopard is old. It is a design that was first delivered to the West German Army in 1965. Our Leopards were delivered in the mid to late 1970’s and, like a second-hand car, are simply wearing out. Additionally the armoured and anti-armoured forces within our region have advanced to the point where the 10mm-70mm thick armour of the Leopard 1 is no longer adequate defence. The 105mm gun is out-ranged by most modern anti-tank weapons and by other tanks in the region.

So, our tanks are mechanically unreliable, no longer provide adequate protection for their crews and do not have adequate firepower.

Remember the trinity of mobility, firepower and protection? If you are mechanically unreliable, you can not ensure battlefield mobility, if your armour can be easily pierced you have no protection and if your gun does not have the range you can not destroy your enemy. So we need a new tank!

So, we’ve decided we need a new tank and we’ve chosen General Dynamics’ M1A1 Abrams.

M1A1 ABRAMS

The M1 Abrams is a battle-tested and proven tank that, in it’s current form – the M1A1 – is a formidable armoured vehicle. Unlike most other tanks in service today it’s powered by a gas-turbine engine that produces a vast amount of power. This engine is very reliable, mechanically simple and easy to service. All pluses for mobility. However, the engine is extremely noisy and emits a lot of heat. Both of which make it very easy to detect on the battlefield.

Abrams consumes a huge amount of fuel, and although that was not a problem in the two allied wars against Iraq, it could prove to be a limiting factor if fighting in the Australian Outback. This engine option for the M1 was originally intended for a vehicle operating in the relatively confined European theatre of operations.

The M1 has very effective armour, the construction of which is classified. However what we can say is that, from combat experience, it appears to be very good at stopping most forms of anti-tank munitions. Also, the M1 has a compartmentalised structure, which means that a fatal hit to one part will not be transmitted to the remainder of the tank, thus increasing crew survivability.

The main armament of the M1A1 is the magnificent Rhienmetall 120mm smoothbore gun. This weapon has the ability to fire very-high-velocity rounds out to a respectable range with a remarkably flat trajectory. Coupled to this is a state of the art laser range and targeting system, feeding into a targeting computer. This combination can give the tank crew the ability to achieve a first-round kill under most climatic conditions.

*Simon Pointer is a postgraduate student of military history with a special interest in armour.*

ABRAMS - LESSONS LEARNT 2003

US Army reports from Iraq on the performance of the M1

Capturing and evaluating battlefield performance and lessons learnt are critical to improving systems so that manufacturers are better able to fulfil customer and warfighter requirements.

With a lot of speculation on the performance and capability of the Abrams in the media, these lessons learnt in battle go some way to proving that our troops are well protected inside Australia’s new MBT.



LEFT: ANTI-ARMOUR RPG ATTACK TO LEFT SIDE. NON-BALLISTIC SKIRTS REPEATEDLY PENETRATED BY ANTI-ARMOUR RPG FIRE. ANTI-PERSONNEL RPG ROUNDS CAUSED ONLY COSMETIC DAMAGE. RIGHT: RPG PENETRATION INTO HYDRAULIC RESERVOIR.



LEFT: MOST LOSSES WERE ATTRIBUTED TO MECHANICAL BREAKDOWN OR EXTERNAL STOWAGE FIRES. THE VEHICLES WERE STRIPPED BEFORE BEING ABANDONED. RIGHT: AFTER SURVIVING TWO RPG STRIKES THIS M1 WAS STOPPED BY 25MM HITS TO THE REAR ENGINE COMPARTMENT.



LEFT: FRONTAL TURRET AND HULL ARMOUR CONTINUES TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT CREW PROTECTION AS SHOWN WITH THIS 25MM STRIKE. RIGHT: AFTER A BREAKDOWN IT TOOK A GRENADE, A SABOT ROUND AND TWO MAVERICK MISSILES TO DESTROY THIS M1 TO PROTECT ITS SECRET TECHNOLOGY.



LEFT: ROADWHEELS AND TRACKPAD WEAR PROVED TO BE SIGNIFICANT OVER THE LONG DISTANCES TRAVELLED. A HIGH RATE OF FAILURE FOR ROAD ARMS (THREE). RIGHT: EVEN AFTER BEING HIT, AMMUNITION BLAST DOORS PROTECTED CREW AS DESIGNED, WITH THE CREW SURVIVING.



# ANZAC DAY IN THE RED CENTRE

As Anzac Day grows in stature, media coverage of the big-city marches can overshadow the rest of the nation. *CONTACT* sent a team to see how the day is commemorated in a town like Alice.

WORDS SEAN BURTON PICS JASON WEEDING, FULLFRAME

I wanted to do something different. I wanted to report on Anzac Day from another part of Australia, one that didn't hog the evening's news and newspapers' clichéd coverage.

How did a small town, whose loss and sacrifice was acutely felt, commemorate Anzac Day?

I was curious about the small RSL clubs, were they only relevant on Anzac Day, were they becoming a thing of the past? A friend told me there was a growing trend among Vietnam Veterans to travel to different RSLs on Anzac Day for annual reunions – who knows what I'd find?

But where to go? Looking at an Australia road map, I scanned the seaboard looking for somewhere different. I started at Darwin and went anti-clockwise, but ended back at the top after scanning the country's coastline.

I'd been everywhere really except... I looked south and stopped at Alice Springs.

Bemused looks accompanied the question, "You're going where? What for?" was all I heard in

the preceding week when asked what I was planning for the Anzac Day weekend.

Alice Springs is situated in the heart of Australia. It's nearest population centres are Darwin to the north and Adelaide to the south – both more than 1500 kms away. Brisbane and Perth are also an equidistant of 2000 kms east and west.

Apart from being near (four hours) Ayers Rock, Alice's main claim to international fame is Neville Shute's WWII romantic heroine's desire to live in *A Town like Alice*.

So, for Anzac Day 2004, a town like Alice it was. I joined Alice Springs pilgrims converging in the darkness through quiet streets and begin walking up Anzac Hill, snaking towards the floodlit beacon of the cenotaph.

The older veterans, some who once negotiated the narrow mountain footpaths of New Guinea, now pause to catch their breath before continuing upwards through the darkness towards a light that will never go out.

Two flag poles stand like sentinels guarding the floodlit, whitewashed cenotaph, with their Australian and New Zealand flags stirring softly in the cold morning breeze. Looking down from the summit of Anzac Hill, street lights cover the surrounding outback city in a neon orange spider web. A police officer directs traffic to a nearby small car park, a row of service medals poking out from beneath his fluorescent orange vest.

Whispered words of cadence announce the arrival of the Norforce catafalque party, quick marching and parting the crowd of two hundred souls, before they halt briefly, then slow-march into position at the four corners of the cenotaph. The guard commander whispers words of command and the sentries begin their slow clock-work-soldier drill, heads bowing, hands resting together on lowered rifles.

Suits, boots, beanies and fleece protect against the cold desert air while everywhere, chests festoon with medals – some left side, some right.



Parents usher their children to the front of the semi-circle crowd where they sit, watching and waiting. "Mummy I forgot. Why are we here?" breaks the silence. A row of school kids sit with knees pulled up to their chests, sweatshirts pulled over their noses, eyes darting.

Police, firemen and emergency service personnel stand in cliques, some wearing medals on both sides. New veterans in smart black suits with electric-coloured ties, wearing Australian and UN medals, stand shoulder to shoulder with airmen, sailors and submariners – Navy whites contrasting with the conservative suits and inky-blue night-sky backdrop.

The service is as solemn as any dawn service I have attended, but it's the outback location in the heart of Australia that makes this morning haunting and poignant. Those feelings of sacrifice and compassion are compounded in a landscape of ranges and never-never as a local cleric leads the morning service, quoting Psalm 23.

"Even though I walk through the valley of death... No man has a greater love than this, than to lay down his life for his friend."

After benediction, Advance Australia Fair rings out unaccompanied – early morning voices raw, impassioned, on this stark outback hill as the dawn seeps across the outback horizon.

## THE NINERS

Old Niners, reunited, reminisce on a hard enemy and an even harder welcome home.

Raised specifically for service in South Vietnam, the now disbanded 9RAR was trained in the shortest period of any Australian Infantry battalion that has gone to war.

The unit saw service in South Vietnam from November 1968 until November 1969.

Four former 'Niners' – Geoff Shaw, Frank Jennings, Hans Mouthaan and a shy Richard Tilmouth – were revelling in each others company as they recalled their time together 37 years ago.

"We were a young battalion with a lot of conscripts and a young platoon commander called Peter Cosgrove," laughs platoon signaller, Hans Mouthaan.

Geoff was one of the best, he always knew what was going on says Hans nodding towards Geoff.

"I did my stint as a Nasho, then it was back home – all over red rover and you try to pick your life up in civvie street again."

Hans never marched on Anzac Day until the Welcome Home parade in 1987.

"It was mainly because when we came home we marched through Adelaide and we didn't get the reception we expected.

"For two weeks before we were polishing our brass – so excited to get home. But on the day, we had people throw tomatoes and raw meat at us and wave placards calling us murderers.

"I was a young conscript – I was proud to serve my country – and maybe we shouldn't have been there, but those who disagreed shouldn't have taken it out on us they should have taken it out on the politicians who sent us.

"It was good to hear the Prime Minister say recently, "If you don't agree with Iraq, take it out on me not the troops". I feel that was a direct result of how we were treated after Vietnam."

"I went back to South Vietnam in 1996 and '98 and, I tell you what, the Aussie soldier is respected over there.

"We used to bury our dead enemy and, to this day, they respect us for that. We are still respected as good clean hard soldiers who fought a 'clean war'.

"I'm happy to say we didn't do any bad things over there, which made me feel very proud of my country and the boys here."

He says 9RAR had a tough time with many heavy contacts and, sadly, they lost 35 men and 150 wounded in action.

Twelve of those 35 killed were men from Alpha Company.

Frank Jennings served for more than 20 years in the Army after Vietnam and was an Alpha Company NCO with Geoff and Hans.

A TV above our heads breaks from sport to news headlines, showing US soldiers advancing, crouched under fire, in Iraq.

Frank turns to me and says, "It

looks to me like the Yanks didn't learn anything from Vietnam. Even back then we seemed to have a different system to them of doing things.

"They seem to be doing the same thing in Iraq as they did back in Vietnam.

"They're a big army with big guns and big aircraft, so they think they can do what they like. But they forget that all it takes is one man and a satchel bomb to cause all types of strife.

"Their numbers meant they could afford to lose men. We were so small we had to fight our war smarter to minimise casualties."

The three men nod with approval when Frank says that the NVA were a worthy opponent.

"Were they ever," agrees Geoff.

"Let me tell you, the forces that opposed us never had a training field before the war – they never had rifle ranges – they just got conscripted and went south.

"When we got to Vietnam there



OLD 'NINERS' HANS MOUTHAAAN, FRANK JENNINGS, RICHARD TILMOUTH AND GEOFF SHAW.

wasn't too many Viet Cong left because of the Tet offensive so we were up against North Vietnamese Army regulars," says Frank.

"They were well equipped and well armed. But what they didn't have was knowledge of the local country or good maps – they relied

on local guides to get them from point A to point B. So, if you could drop those guides you really put them in trouble."

There were a lot of bunkers, Hans recalls. "The first six months of fighting the NVA involved bunker systems and then digging them out. It wasn't nice.

"If we didn't have the arty, mortar and air support, we would have been in real trouble.

"We fought a very hard soldier."



The march assembles on the council lawns near the Todd Street Mall. Band members tune their instruments as the marchers stand around in small groups posing for photos. Others talk to family and friends as they wait for the parade to begin.

Standing under a gum tree and waiting to board one of three nearby Norforce Land Rovers was New Guinea veteran Vern Kilgariff.

"I was a sergeant in the 6th Division – fought through New Guinea. I carried a Bren gun. It was a bloody noisy thing. But, in the end, I got typhus and spent a lot of time recovering," he says as his voice trails off at the memory.

Alice Springs now has a population of 28,000, but Vern remembers when the town was much

smaller. He says he's pleased to see young people finally taking an interest and they are now being taught about the sacrifice others made for them.

"The young people are keen to hear about their country's history and we are part of it. It's a remarkable thing. The new generations of veterans are very lucky that they won't get the poor treatment others did.

"It wasn't until the Welcome Home parade for the Vietnam Veterans in Sydney in 1987 that the kids were able to start hearing about the sacrifice made by that generation of Australians. It was very sad before that..."

His words are interrupted by a bellowed, "Form up!" from the Parade Marshall, Norforce Centre squadron sergeant major WO2 Kevin Greaves.

With that, the former Sgt Kilgariff bids farewell and walks off slowly with the aid of his walking stick, eyes fixed on the waiting Land Rover.

A tri-service flag party leads the march, as a USAF Pine Gap contingent carries the stars and stripes behind. A Norforce Land Rover carries a handful of the oldest veterans. Behind, the vehicles are the Korea and Malaya returned service men who march at the front of the main body. Behind them a large contingent of Vietnam Veterans, with more recent veterans occupying the rear guard.

Local cadets, wearing slouch hats and DPCUs, follow. The local brass band beats out time.

Next, emergency service personnel, wearing their forefather's medals, followed by scouts, St

John's Ambulance and, finally, local school kids waving to everyone. The march through Alice Springs town centre passes in a couple of minutes.

Sporadically along the 750m route, small knots of locals cheer and clap to waves and smiles from the marchers. There appears to be more marching than watching. A minibus carrying Asian tourists is stopped at a junction as the small parade passes, their faces instantly and simultaneously masked behind small chrome cameras as they take yet more happy snaps. I'm sure the irony of those pictures will be lost in the explanation back home.

Three female, suntanned backpackers stand outside an Internet café and watch bemused as the parade passes. "Do you have anything like this back home?" I ask.

"No, I never see it before, we don't do this sort of thing," one replies in a heavy European accent.

My grandfather fought in the desert. He said it was dumb and gets upset," says another. "So we don't talk about it."

"The lady in the hostel told me about today. So where are the cookies?" asks the third girl as she scans the march.

Bemused, I look at her and shrug, "Cookies?"

She turns to her friends and babbles sentences peppered with the words "Anzac cookies".

The march troops past the Post Office and is reviewed by local dignitaries on a cramped stage. A visiting lieutenant colonel takes the salute as they march past and disperse out of sight at the foot of Anzac Hill, on top of which, Alice Springs

commemorates Anzac Day with a service.

Five-hundred pack around the cenotaph as kilted WWII veteran George Brown plays a pipers lament that floats away into the brilliant blue sky, as wreaths are laid.

At the conclusion of the service, the RSL – at the foot of the hill – becomes a hub of activity in the Alice. On entering the crowded club, I begin talking to a dark-suited guy, wearing recent service medals – one of the approximately 22,000 post 1972 veterans – as he waits to be served at the bar.

"I just got out, so no names mate," he says with a grin. "I'd had a gutful, so time to move on. I planned to be in Alice today as I'm on a road trip south from Darwin visiting a family friend."

"This is a top spot. There's a lot of Vietnam



Veterans here – more than I expected – but I think a lot are visitors here for reunions. But this is different – real back-to-the-roots stuff, isn't it?

"I wore my gongs today, but I feel a bit uncomfortable around a lot of the older blokes. They did it hard compared to us. We're a bunch of soft cocks next to them. But there again, I'm sure they felt the same when they came home and were having a beer with the veterans who served before them."

I talk to a couple of East Timor veterans, now working in Alice Springs. What's good about working here I ask.

"The chicks" they both flash back.

Beer flows and its all Champagne comedy on a beer budget. "Mate, I was sweating like a paedophile at a High Five concert!" – and on it goes.

At 2pm the much-anticipated Two Up begins, outside in the Long Tan Bar.

I watch a thousand dollars ebb and flow through the fingers of one punter. They take their Two Up very seriously in Alice.

Punters shout to be heard, like market-stall holders selling fruit and vegetables. "Five for heads." "Who'll give me 20 for tails?"

"I'll take yer five." "You're covered mate!"

"Come in spinner. Head 'em up!" "Tail 'em up!" shouts his rival.

Pennies spin mid air, eyes follow their tumbling decent and roll. Eyes scan coins on the mat, some punters roar "Yes!" – some groan "Ah, fackit" and they start again – "Come in spinner!"

The afternoon drags on. As the tills prepare to close within the hour, remaining guests line up two deep against the bar.

As another Anzac Day at the Alice Springs' RSL Club comes to a bleary-eyed close, president of five years Garth McPherson, a former 3RAR Vietnam veteran and Northern Territory Police officer,

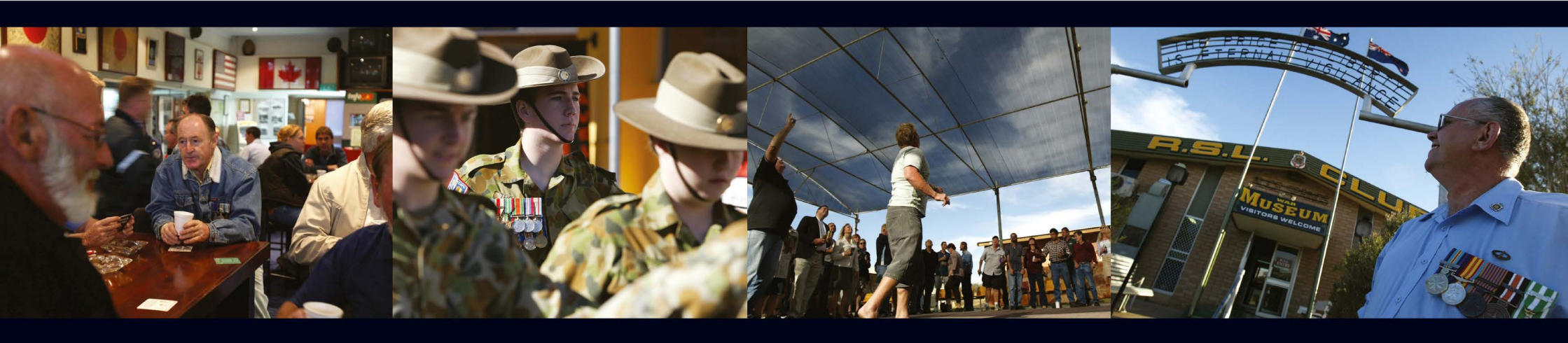
looks tired but content and reckons the day has been a brilliant one.

I remark how impressive the club's small museum is and Garth relays that it has taken a lot of years and donations to get it to that standard.

"I still get a kick out of it when visitors walk in for the first time and go "Gee look at all this!"

"The rarest thing in the club is a WWI trench periscope. And we have a German U Boat flag that the boys from HMAS Sterling had their eye on today. But it's still there – for now," he laughs, checking over his shoulder.

The President says the club is trying to add to



COLIN CHAPMAN, SNOW STRICKLAND, JEFF CASTLE, JIM COOPER AND GRAHAM BAILEY

## THE DELTA DEVILS

Rough and ready on the outside, mates help each other to stay on top of the demons within.

I stood and watched as they bickered like an old married couple, "What'dya do that for yer mongrel?" Beetle Bailey yelped, rubbing his hand after Snow Strickland had used it as an ashtray.

"Well ya should have got yer hand out of the way, yer dickhead" Snow snarled – and on it went.

These two are going to end up punching soon, I thought. But everyone just carried on as if it was nothing unusual.

As I walked away, Beetle tapped me on the shoulder. "Mate, I want to tell you about Snow," he said as if making confession. "But not here – somewhere quiet."

He was searching my eyes for signs of interest – because this was going to be important.

"It was the second of March '71. We'd stood down in the night harbour and within an hour we were shot up."

Shot up. Two small words guaranteed to grab attention.

"Both of us were trying to get cover behind a tree so small that our ears were touching. Then Snow got a bullet in his right eye and shoulder."

Snow was med-evaced by helicopter to an American Hospital, where he underwent life-saving microsurgery.

Beetle says he and his mates thought the gunner had been sent home, but he was still in Vietnam for another two months, recuperating.

"He was pretty cheesed off that no one came to see him. He probably thought we'd forgotten about him. We all thought he was home."

"In fact, I beat him home because my National Service was up before the battalion rotated."

The pair lost touch after Vietnam.

"I tracked him down years later and found him working as a cook in Singleton. He was in a pretty bad way, but he's doing better now."

"All that time, all those years, he was mad at us."

"The first reunion he came to was only a couple of years ago in Adelaide."

"He was still wild at us for not coming to see him in hospital."

I asked Beetle if he could recall much from that night in March – 33 years ago.

"I still remember the fear," he says, looking awkwardly at his feet.

Then his eyes snap back to mine. He points to his right ear.

"I remember this ear touching his ear and him getting shot in the eye. Boy! that was close enough for me. It was scary shit," he says, grinning and head-shaking the memory away.

Today, the Delta Devils have their ups and downs but they manage to keep on top of it.

"We try to remember the good times – but it's the bad things that come back to bring you down."

"We've all been down, but we get help and treatment from veterans' counselling services and we're OK – most of the time."

## GEOFF SHAW OAM

Should the colour of a man's skin matter when he dons a uniform – or any other time? Ask Geoff Shaw.

Some time ago, as I entered a government building, a girl handed me an orange ribbon.

"Its Harmony Day. You can wear it on your uniform today" she beamed.

The red mist came down. "I can wear it on my uniform...I can wear it on my uniform?"

Still beaming, but her head was now tilted to one side.

Deep breath and count to 10...

"How do you like my harmony badge? I wear this one on my uniform everyday," I said, pointing to the Rising Sun badge on my left shoulder.

"OK," she squeaked, head now tilted on the opposite side. "But would you like to..."

I didn't hear the rest as I walked away, wondering how much money was wasted enforcing colour blindness on an organisation that knows only one colour – DPCU.

In 1964 Geoff Shaw joined the Army to serve his country but, as an aboriginal Australian, it was to be another three years before he was even given citizenship and the right to vote.

"I joined up in 1964. I'm a local lad but I thought there's got to be better things than staying in this town. We only had a population of 3000 then," Geoff recalls.

"The Army came on a recruitment drive, so I decided to join up."

"I'm a high-school drop out but the Army gave me an education."

Ironically, by 1967, when a Federal referendum granted citizenship and the vote to Aborigines, Geoff had already served his country in Borneo, Malaya and Vietnam and was about to embark on a second tour of South Vietnam with 9RAR.

Today, standing with his 9RAR mates, Geoff Shaw has a fixed smile beneath a splendid white

beard that almost hides an Order of Australia Medal.

His smile straightens when I asked if it was difficult being an aboriginal soldier in the 1960s?

"When I was a soldier there was no such thing as racism. It didn't exist in the army. We fought as men and as friends. We related to each other. We were a brotherhood. Nobody looked at what skin you were or what background you came from."

"There was no racism ever, because wearing the same uniform puts you in a brotherhood."

"I was a section commander – in charge of 10 men. I considered it to be the United Nations."

"I had a Dutchman, a young pommy, a Scotsman, a Mac-edonian, and my machine-gunner was Polish. But we were all Australians."

He says he did 17 years in the Army and his boy Walter is with Norforce. "I hope he joins up full-time one day."



Geoff thinks Australia Day gets more attention than Anzac Day but, from an aboriginal perspective – and from Geoff Shaw's – Anzac Day is far more important "for showing what we've done since colonisation".

"Anyway, a man's colour doesn't matter when we wear our uniform" he chuckles.

Perhaps the organisers of Harmony Day should have a beer with Geoff.



GRAHAM EDWARDS MP

# BATTLEFRONT CAPITAL HILL

Wounded in Vietnam, Graham Edwards MP continues to fight the good fight on a radically different front – as the veterans' advocate.

WORDS BRIAN HARTIGAN PICS ASH ROACH

Graham Edwards MP is a man to be admired. Wheelchair bound after losing both legs to a landmine in Vietnam, he does not let his disability slow him down. Proof of his dogged determination was reported recently by friends of *CONTACT* in Afghanistan where he was seen to refuse help pushing his wheelchair through rough, gravelled ground that effectively slowed other, able-bodied members of a visiting official contingent.

It is, perhaps, his disability in concert with his dogged determination, backed by a substantial service history in Vietnam – Pioneer PI, 7RAR from 1968-71 – that makes Graham Edwards such a powerful advocate for our veterans, speaking as he does with the authority of experience, in Canberra's corridors of power.

In his inaugural speech to Parliament in 1998 – aptly on Armistice Day – he laid the foundation for an effective Federal Parliamentary career.

"As a Vietnam veteran, I find some irony in being elected to this public office with an opportunity to speak on many subjects and issues that confront Australians. I say irony, because I cannot help reflecting that some 28 years ago, I, and a military plane-load of other wounded and ill Vietnam veterans, were snuck back into Australia in the dead of night, secreted away for 24 hours in an Air Force base hospital in new South Wales, and then quietly shunted off to other hospitals around Australia.

"I say irony, because the then Liberal government took every action to hide wounded diggers away from the media and away from public view on their return to Australia during those controversial Vietnam War years.

"I say to the Liberal government that you will find it harder to hide me now, just as you will find it hard to hide the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and the Minister for Defence from some of the issues relating to veterans that I intend to raise here today and in the future."

One issue raised in that opening speech was the case of six diggers who had been recommended for Military Medals for gallantry under fire in Vietnam but missed out because former Minister for Defence Industry, Science and Personnel, Bronwyn Bishop, "Refused to award medals of gallantry to six diggers, at the same time as she conferred those same awards on officers".

"John Burridge never received that award because he was excluded by a quota system. In short, the quota system meant that Caesar looked after

Caesar, and the quota saw precedence given to officers – many of whom had not seen a shot fired in anger – to the exclusion of diggers like John Burridge and his five coppers who put their own lives on the line to protect their mates."

In Graham Edwards' view, the courage of the diggers should be the determining factor for awards, not the petulant attitude of a minister of the Crown.

"Blue Burridge and his mates are entitled to justice, and I see three courses of action to achieve it. First, I am prepared, with the support of my party, to introduce a private member's bill. Second, I am, despite being a determined supporter of the republic, prepared to write to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and ask her to intervene on behalf of these blokes. Thirdly and lastly, the option is for the minister now responsible, following Minister Bishop's demotion, to initiate his own review and ensure that justice is finally delivered.

"On behalf of all fair-minded Australians, I would urge him toward that course of action and say that I am prepared to give him time to address that issue before taking action myself."

Having had this speech brought to our attention, *CONTACT* was inspired to ask Graham Edwards for an update.

Speaking from Parliament House, where he represents the people of Cowan in Western Australia, he says that following the maiden speech, he continued to put pressure on Bruce Scott, the then minister responsible for awards.

"That issue should not have gone on for so long – the minister should have stepped in and demanded that, as a matter of fairness and equity, the blokes in question be properly recognised as per their original recommendation.

"I think Scott was just upholding, for the wrong reasons, a decision of Bronwyn Bishop not to make the awards. Her attitude stemmed from a public blue she had on radio in Perth when a Vietnam veteran, since deceased, challenged her about the issue. She, then or subsequently, said that they would get the medals over her dead body."

Eventually, Mr Edwards says, Minister Scott made a hash of an answer to a question put to him in the house to the degree that the PM pulled him aside and rebuked him in front of the House.

"Next day, in answer to a Dorothy Dixier, he announced an inquiry that resulted in the medals fiasco being resolved and the six diggers getting their just medals."



## GALLANT UNDER FIRE

Thirty-year wait and capital fight for a medal most deserved

Private John Burridge commenced his National Service obligations on 1 May, 1968 and after recruit training was posted to the 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment on 9 July 1968. He arrived in South Vietnam on 15 February 1969 as a machinegunner in 11 Platoon.

On 4 April, 1969, while on Operation Overlander, 11 Platoon came under heavy enemy machinegun and rocket fire from a bunker position at a range of 20 metres. Two members of Private Burridge's section were killed and the section commander wounded.

Private Burridge moved forward, on his own initiative, to a position 15 metres from the enemy and commenced engaging the bunkers. He maintained his position for over an hour and effectively prevented the enemy from moving to other bunkers on the flanks of the platoon. His actions drew most of the enemy rocket fire onto his position and as a result he was wounded in both legs.

Despite his wounds and further enemy engagement of his position, Private Burridge continued to fire on the bunkers and restrict the effectiveness of the enemy fire until the remainder of the platoon could move to a new position.

His courage and complete disregard for his own safety were major factors in preventing further casualties to the platoon and his conduct was an inspiration to all.

On the issue of a quota system for awards as it operated in Vietnam, Graham Edwards wonders how many bravery awards were either downgraded or not approved for diggers, that simply went, as a matter of course, to high-ranking officers who simply filled a position and may never have seen a shot fired in anger.


"I have no problem with officers being recognised, providing their medal did not come of the quota and prevented a digger's bravery award being approved," he says.

Having won this particular battle, Graham Edwards' campaign on other fronts continues. A keen example is his fight for those involved in the Battle of Long Tan whose awards were downgraded in favour of the Battalion CO and the Task Force Commander – neither of whom were there during the actual battle.

Then there's the scrap on behalf of the 6RAR diggers who have still not received approval to wear the Vietnamese awards that were to have been given them.

As his battles continue, *CONTACT* will observe Graham Edwards – or any other veterans' advocate – as he fights the good fight on behalf of our servicemen and women and will report from the battlefield that is Capital Hill.





AFRICAN GENOCIDE

# RWANDA REMEMBERED

Ten years after 800,000 Rwandans were slaughtered under the indifferent noses of a watching world, some say we still don't care.

WORDS SEAN BURTON PICS ADF

**B**etween April and June 1994, Rwanda erupted in an apparently well orchestrated mass killing frenzy that lasted 100 days and left an estimated 800,000 people dead.

Innocent men, women and children were hunted down like rats and hacked to death at an average rate of approximately 8000 a day – that's five human lives every minute of every day for almost three and a half months.

The scale and speed of the slaughter was shocking and incomprehensible as the world watched from a clean, white-suburban world, thousands of miles away.

Most of those killed were Tutsis and most of the killers were Hutus, turned against each other by the ranting broadcasts on an official government radio station.

In a newly published book, *Conspiracy to Murder; the Rwandan Genocide*, acclaimed investigative journalist Linda Melvern reveals the contents of previously unpublished documents that suggest the campaign of genocide was not spontaneous, but premeditated genocide.

After meticulous inspection of Rwandan government documents, Malvern discovered, among other things, that in 1993 the Hutu government imported \$US750,000 worth of machetes from China – presumably to facilitate the slaughter. One in three Hutus were issued with a new machete.





UNDER RESOURCED AND WITHOUT MANDATE, UN PERSONNEL WERE POWERLESS TO PREVENT GENOCIDE

Historically, the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups are similar in language and traditions and can live in peaceful coexistence.

But ethnic violence in Rwanda is not new. There had always been animosity between the majority Hutus and minority Tutsis which was institutionally encouraged by Belgian colonists who arrived in 1916.

The Belgians maintained control of the population by dividing the two groups against each other, even producing identification cards to segregate Hutus and Tutsis.

During the 1930s, and for reasons best known to them, the Belgians proclaimed the Tutsis superior to the Hutus. The Tutsis, of course, welcomed this idea, and for the next 20 years enjoyed better economic and educational opportunities than their Hutu neighbours.

Over the years, resentment among the Hutus simmered, rising to boiling point in 1959 with riots killing more than 20,000 Tutsis and thousands of survivors fleeing to neighbouring states.

In 1962 Belgium relinquished colonial power and granted Rwanda independence. The Hutus, having held the upper hand since the 1959 riots, grabbed the chance of legitimate power and from then on the Tutsis were portrayed as scapegoats for the country's economic problems.

In the years before the '94 genocide, Rwanda's economy was a mess and the long-term Hutu president, Juvenal Habyarimana, was losing popularity. He needed to reinvent the Tutsi scapegoat to hide his mismanagement of the country.

Long-term Tutsi refugees, still in neighbouring Uganda and Tanzania, began forming a rebel army, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), to one day take back power in their former homeland.

The president exploited the perceived RPF threat as a way to unite the Hutus behind him.

However, in 1993 a peace agreement was signed between the president and the Tutsi dominated RPF, but the ethnic resentments were not forgotten and they continued to fester.

When, in 1994, President Habyarimana's aircraft was shot down, ethnic tensions exploded, triggering the rampage that left 800,000 Rwandans dead.

The wholesale slaughter of Tutsis and moderate

## MODERATE HUTUS WERE FORCED TO HACK THEIR FRIENDS TO DEATH OR FACE DEATH THEMSELVES

Hutus began with a Hutu militia of 30,000 once law-abiding citizens, soldiers and civil servants launching into a killing frenzy directed by a ranting Hutu Government radio station.

In ethnically mixed villages, moderate Hutus who had lived peacefully beside their Tutsi neighbours for generations were forced to hack their friends to death or face death themselves from the Hutu militias.

Almost a year before the genocide, the UN had established the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda (UNOMUR) which established a monitoring, peace-brokering presence in the country (superseded by United Nations Assisted Mission In Rwanda (UNAMIR)).

Subsequent reports on the genocide suggest that this mission was indeed feeding accurate and timely warnings of impending disaster to the outside world. But, rather than react to prevent it, the world turned its back, withdrawing troops already there (but not before 10 UN soldiers were killed) and engaging in high-level political debate and procrastination on whether the killings actually fell under the definition of genocide.

Why did it matter if it was to be called genocide or just civil war? Because the world had promised itself "never again" after the genocide of Jews in Europe just 50 years previously, and if genocide was proved, the United Nations would be compelled by its own rules to react.

Hearing of the genocide, the RPF renewed its efforts for power and mounted an assault on the Rwandan capital of Kigali, capturing it later that year and declaring a ceasefire.

AUSSIE MEDICAL AND SECURITY PERSONNEL DID WHAT THEY COULD IN A LOSING BATTLE



With the blood of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis on their machetes, the Hutus didn't need to wait around to hear the new Tutsi government mandate. The tables were now turned – the hunters had become the hunted.

The world couldn't deny its complacency for ever and UNAMIR II was raised and began to arrive in Kigali – among them more than 300 Australians (who arrived in late August) comprising military medical personnel with their own infantry, cavalry and logistic support elements.

In July, a new multi-ethnic government was formed, promising all refugees a safe return to Rwanda. A Hutu, Pasteur Bizimungu, was inaugurated as president, while the majority of cabinet posts were assigned to Tutsi RPF members.

Rwanda was calming down. But tension and revenge would plague the country for a long time.

Almost a year later in Kibeho, Australian Medical Force personnel were powerless to intercede, witnessing first hand, just some of the ethnic payback as 100,000 Hutu civilians cowered in a ramshackle refugee camp to be picked off by RPF vultures circling at whim.

But although the massacres are over – for now – the legacy of genocide continues and the search for justice is a long and drawn-out affair. More than 500 people found guilty of mass murder have been executed, while 100,000 men and women still languish in Rwandan prisons waiting for their day in court.

True justice for Rwanda may never be realised,

however. Few ringleaders have been brought to account for their part in the genocide, many thought to have fled overseas, are now quietly living respectable lives in Europe on the back of refugee status.

Some of those who have faced court, highlight the madness that engulfed Rwanda during those 100 days. Failing to, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," one Hutu Catholic priest and two nuns were recently convicted of participating in the deaths of hundreds of Tutsis seeking sanctuary, from machete-wielding Hutus, in their church.

The truth about who was responsible for Rwanda is screwed up in a ball of ethnic hatred, colonial power plays and Western apathy somewhere near the bottom of the too hard basket.

## WE FAILED THEM

The UN accepts its failure – but, how will it act next time?

The UN could and should have done more to stop the genocide in Rwanda 10 years ago, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said at this year's, tenth-anniversary Rwanda memorial conference in Washington.

In his speech, Mr Annan, who was at the time the head of the UN peacekeeping department, said he realised he personally could have done more to rally support for international efforts to stop the massacre.

"The genocide in Rwanda should never, ever have happened. But it did. The international community failed Rwanda, and that must leave us always with a sense of bitter regret and abiding sorrow," he said.

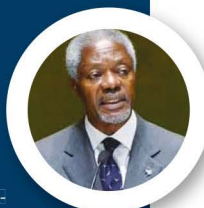
"If the international community had acted promptly and with determination, it could have stopped most of the killing. But the political will was not there – nor were the troops.

"The international community is guilty of sins of omission."

In April 2000 the UN Security Council admitted responsibility for failing to stop the genocide. But not everyone thinks the international community has learnt a lesson.

The head of the small UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda at the time, Lt-Gen Romeo Dallaire, told the conference that no one was interested in saving Rwandans.

"I still believe that if an organisation decided to wipe out the 320 mountain gorillas [in Rwanda], there would be more of a reaction by the international community to stop that than there would be still today in attempting to protect thousands of human beings being slaughtered in the same country."





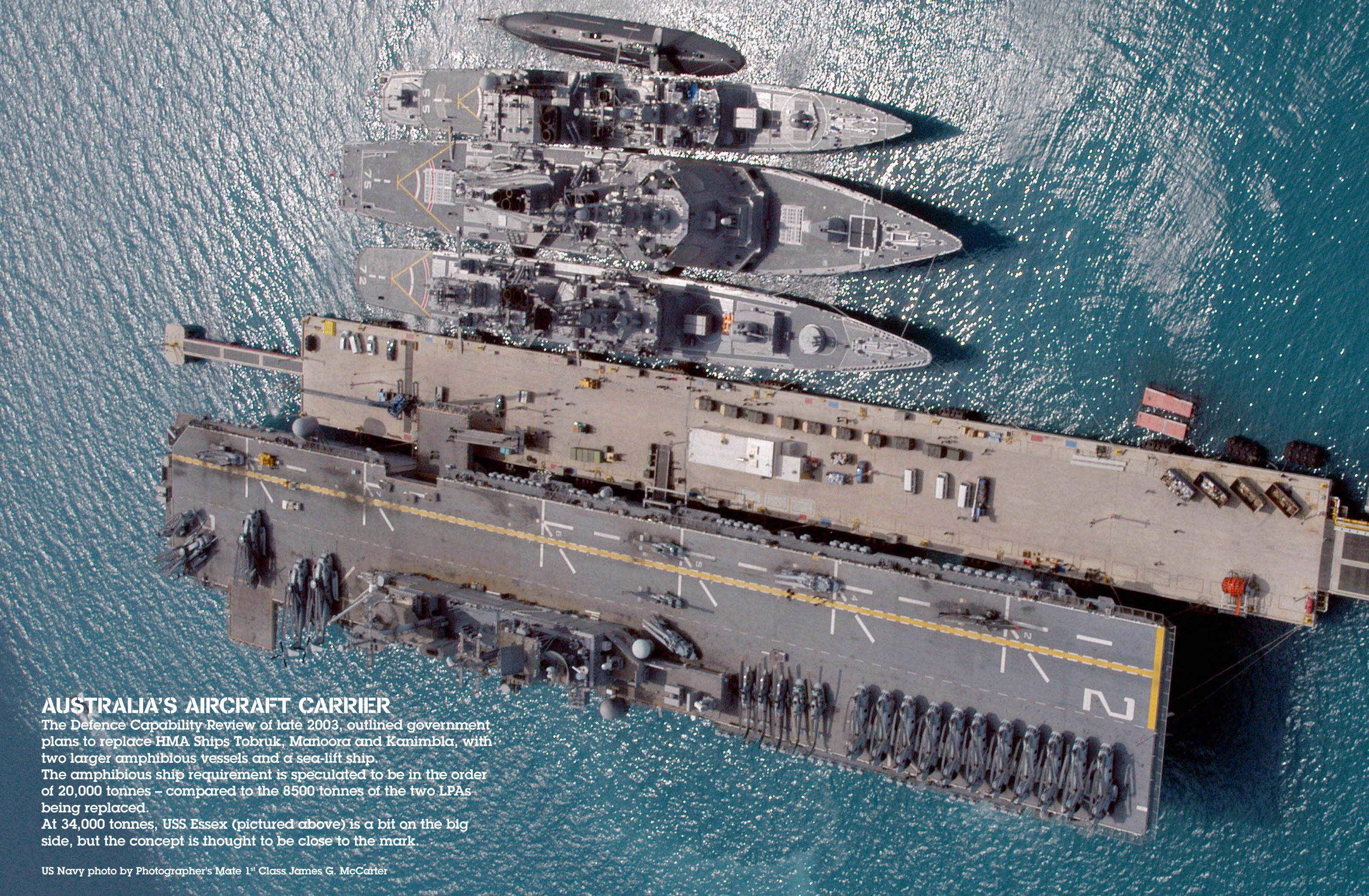
# CONTACT

AIR, LAND & SEA



General Dynamics F-111, 'The Flying Pig'





## AUSTRALIA'S AIRCRAFT CARRIER

The Defence Capability Review of late 2003, outlined government plans to replace HMA Ships Tobruk, Manoora and Kanimbla, with two larger amphibious vessels and a sea-lift ship.

The amphibious ship requirement is speculated to be in the order of 20,000 tonnes – compared to the 8500 tonnes of the two LPAs being replaced.

At 34,000 tonnes, USS Essex (pictured above) is a bit on the big side, but the concept is thought to be close to the mark.



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BOARDING OPS

# CLIMB ABOARD

On the high seas, cold receptions from non-compliant crews and even Mother Nature, are all in a hard day's work for Navy's boarding parties.

WORDS BRIAN HARTIGAN PICS ADF



SPECIFICATIONS SIKORSKY S-70B-2 SEAHAWK	
Length	19.8 metres
Height	5.2 metres
Width	16.4 metres (rotors spread)
Weight	9947 kg
Speed	330 kph
Range	1295 km
Crew	3 (Pilot, Tactical Coordinator, Sensor Operator)
Engines	Two GE T700-GE-401C Turboshaft, 1690 shaft horse power each
Main Rotor	4 blade foldable
Weapon Systems	Two Mk46 Torpedo One 7.62mm machine gun

In January this year when the first member of an Australian Navy boarding party, attempting to fast-rope onto the illegal fishing vessel Maya V fell overboard, he succeeded in proving one obvious fact – naval boarding operations can be extremely dangerous.

Were it not for the real danger our sailors face on the high seas, what happened next could read like a comedy of errors.

But first – a little background.

The Australian Navy, like most navies around the world, hones and practices the capability to board ships on the open ocean, as a basic tool of trade. Although it may sound simple, to leave the safety of one's own ship and climb aboard another in open water poses myriad problems and dangers.

Falling is perhaps the most obvious and potentially the most dangerous of all the hazards – yet it is, not surprisingly, easily done. Consider the forces of nature operating against our sailors as they try to scale the sheer, cliff-like side of a target ship – high winds, rough seas, ice, spray and so on. Not to mention the fact that this sheer steel cliff is rocking, rolling and bobbing on a turbulent sea.

But don't think for a minute that to fall is simply a matter of getting wet. Sea temperatures in the Great Southern Ocean can freeze a man to death in a few minutes if rescue is not quickly at

approaches from the rear quarter that offers the best shelter.

When the RHIB pulls along side, ropes or ladders are either thrown down by a compliant crew or, if the crew is not cooperating for whatever reason, the boarding party casts grappling hooks over the rails to get the first man on board.

After shimmying up a rope ladder – developed in Australia in response to our sailors' design demands based on their experiences in The Persian Gulf – the first man on deck secures further ropes and ladders to facilitate easier boarding by his teammates.

Getting all his team on board as quickly as possible – without falling – is a priority for the team leader, still in the RHIB. A split team makes for poor command and control.

If one member does fall, however, the team leader – usually a junior officer – has a snap decision to make – to rescue a man overboard (who may have been rendered unconscious by the fall) or first getting the lone climber off the target ship, thus keeping his team together.

If, however, the first member aboard the target ship had already been joined by a colleague to watch his back, then the man in the water becomes priority one, without question.

At this point, while the team is split and individuals are concentrating on the physically



hand. Then there's the real risk that a fall could be broken by something much more solid than water before the big splash, rendering a hapless sailor unconscious and in real risk of drowning.

Obviously, strict safety precautions, careful planning and hours of training can help mitigate the danger – but you simply can't prevent every slip, trip or tumble.

There are various methods of boarding a ship at sea. Two basic approaches can be made – from the water or from the air.

Approaching a ship from the water is done by RHIB (rigid-hulled inflatable boat).

If the crew of the ship to be boarded is complying with instructions, the target ship continues running with the weather – surfing the waves to minimise turbulence – while the boarding team

demanding task of hauling themselves and their equipment up a rope ladder – while being jostled, bumped and otherwise assaulted by Mother Nature – the team is probably at its most vulnerable from its other main danger – a hostile crew on board the target ship.

Boarding teams are trained in self-defence techniques as well as a range of small arms including 9mm pistol and 12-gauge shotgun.

However, non-compliant crews on the usually civilian or merchant target vessels are much more likely to employ passive defences than openly hostile action. For example, ships' crews in The Persian Gulf sometimes smeared railings and ladders with grease, flooded decks with crude oil, welded doors and hatches shut, or even welded spikes to the side of their ship, in deliberate attempts to

thwart boarding parties. In such cases, apart from employing a degree of caution, boarding parties usually carried cutting and breaking tools to force doors and hatches.

The other main method of boarding a target ship is by fast-roping from a Seahawk helicopter. While a RHIB approach is usually the favoured platform for boarding, an aerial approach might be quicker.

But while fast-roping from a hovering helicopter may seem like an ideal method of boarding, the dangers are high.

Fast-roping is a method of descent whereby, unlike abseiling, the descending sailor is not fastened to the rope by karabiner or other mechanical safety harness. The sailor slides down the thick rope, fireman's-pole fashion, using his

feet for friction and holding the rope close to his chest for stability.

While this is obviously a very quick method of descent – hopefully not too quick – the inherent dangers of descending, say 10 meters on a fast rope are complicated when the deck on which the sailor intends to land is suddenly just 5 meters below him and then, just as suddenly, 25 meters below.

Such movement could also cause the pilot more than just a little anxiety, especially in close proximity to masts, antennae, cranes or other obstacles potentially lethal to his aircraft.

Lieutenant Paul Welch, a boarding party team leader aboard HMAS Anzac, says the boarding teams on his ship maintained an immediate-notice-to-board watch and that the RHIBs were

far better suited to this tempo and preferred by the teams.

"Helicopters require a lot of forethought and a lot of logistics, but you can put the boats in the water very quickly and get on with the boarding," he says.

"When everything is spontaneous, like boarding non-compliant vessels trying to make a run for open water, the boats were a lot easier and a lot more effective."

Crews on the 7.2 meter RHIBs were usually dedicated to the task and became very proficient. Using these relatively fast, maneuverable boats was a tried and trusted method and proved very safe. During his tour, Lieutenant Welch says Anzac teams recorded no incidence of man overboard in the Persian Gulf.





He says boarding operations, while inherently dangerous, are basically exciting, exhilarating activities.

"Given that there's so much adrenaline flowing at that stage, you are, I guess, super aware and anxious more than scared.

"But we trained over and over and we did so many boardings all the time that you kick into a routine. But, while it was familiar, you knew you could not afford to become complacent in it."

The first tasks for the boarding party, once all the team are safely on board, is to secure the bridge and engine spaces and muster the ship's crew. Once this happens, the threat is considered much lower and the next phase – the investigative phase – of the boarding can commence.

While the ship's captain is questioned about his intentions and his cargo, he almost always remains in command of his ship and is fully responsible for all aspects of its safe running. If the boarding party are in a position to help with first aid or any other issue that needs attention, they

will help out, but very rarely take full control of the ship's operation.

Assuming full control of the ship is done only in exceptional circumstances and is a decision not normally taken at the team-leader level. The boarding-party team leader consults with the situation room on board the parent ship via HF radio, outlining his circumstances, before a decision is made at higher levels.

Splitting up, but always working in at least pairs for safety, the boarding party next commence what is, more often than not, the hot, dirty, claustrophobic task of searching every compartment of the ship.

In the case of a small illegal fishing boat off Ashmore Reef, such searches can be conducted quickly and relatively easily, by three or four sailors. But, in the case of a large container ship suspected of trying to run contraband oil, dates, weapons or uranium past the UN blockade on Iraq, well...

Two full teams of 12 could spend an entire day

abseiling down the faces of shipping containers stacked several rows high, searching each one and reconciling its contents against the ship's manifest. And after that, there are acres of dark, dank compartments below decks to be searched.

Boarding party duty is not a specialist trade. Party members are selected from almost any part of the ship's crew, although weapons' user and engineering categories are generally favoured.

There are only so many people on a ship – about 180 – to choose from for boarding duties and some sailors are automatically ruled out because they are required to maintain normal operations on their own ship.

Those who are selected must, in the first instance, be willing to participate, given that they are often required to fulfil their normal duties on top of the boarding-party workload.

Lieutenant Welch says gender is not a barrier to selection, but physical fitness is obviously a major factor.

"It's a very physically demanding job because

### FAST ROPE Not your average braid

In case you wondered what it is that sailors slide down when fast-roping from a hovering Seahawk helicopter – the rope is an eight-strand, four-braid rope, 48mm in diameter, made of polished cotton, is green in colour and 20 meters long.

you are frequently hauling yourself and your equipment up vertical ladders – while battling the elements at the same time.

"Plus, teams can work very long hours with little sleep.

"It's certainly not an easy job, or comfortable, but it is very rewarding. I'd encourage anyone to give it a go."

Getting back to that not-so-funny comedy of errors reference... when a RHIB was despatched to rescue the hapless sailor who fell in the water – uninjured – while trying to fast-rope onto the illegal fishing vessel Maya V, the RHIB flipped in the rough seas tossing its crew of three into the water as well.

Suddenly, what was a tricky boarding attempt in poor weather turned into a full-scale rescue emergency for the ship's company aboard HMAS Warramunga.

While all crew members were rescued uninjured, the incident did three things;

highlighted the dangers faced by our sailors operating on the high seas thousands of miles from home; highlighted the high levels of training and professionalism extant in our Navy crews; and, gave boarding parties on sister ships throughout the Navy a real good excuse to rib their mates on Warramunga, the next time a beer is shared.

**T**here are several ways for budding sailors to join the Royal Australia Navy, either as a sailor or an officer. Each stream is split into several specialist employment categories, of which Boatswain's Mate (BM) is one.

### BOATSWAIN'S MATE

The Boatswain's Mate is primarily responsible for Boarding Operations, Small Arms Weapons and Seamanship.

They specialise in fast-roping from Navy helicopters in support of boarding operations and are also the Navy's subject-matter experts on rifles, pistols, batons and machine guns.

Additionally, within the seamanship area of employment, the Boatswain's Mate will perform knot-tying and rope-work duties and work with wires, shackles, anchors and small-boat operations.

They are also required to conduct ships husbandry (corrosion control) and evolutions associated with the movement of ships in harbour.

Later in their careers, these sailors may sub-specialise as a Navigator's Yeoman and in Shipborne Lifesaving and Survival Equipment

On joining the Royal Australian Navy, all sailors undergo initial military training, consisting of 11 weeks at the Recruit School, HMAS Cerberus, situated on Western Port Bay, Victoria, about 70km south east of Melbourne.

The 11-week Recruit Course is designed to give recruits sufficient knowledge and skills on which to base their Navy careers and includes both classroom and practical activities.

Most subjects are individually tested. Examinations are set to ensure recruits are sufficiently prepared to undertake further specialist training at category schools.

After graduation personnel, are posted to a category school, also at HMAS Cerberus, for a further 14 weeks training which includes seven weeks of weapon training and a Seamanship Course of another four weeks.

The Boatswain's Mate category course covers:  
- The proficient and proper use of firearms and

### RAN BOARDING PARTY





BOARDING OPS



RIB ENGINE SPECIFICATIONS

Volvo AD41 /DP
DP stands for Dual Prop
200 Horsepower
6 Cylinder 4 Stroke Diesel
3.6 Litre
Direct Injection
Turbo

- other hand weapons, especially when acting as part of a group detached from the ship;
- Fast Roping (the rapid transfer from a helicopter to a ship) in support of Boarding Operations;
  - The operation of a ship's close range weapons system;
  - Providing visual assistance for the direction of medium-range gunnery systems,
  - The ability to diffuse situations and, where necessary, apply appropriate level of force,
  - Boarding Parties for fisheries and other enforcement operations; and,
  - Parade and Ceremonial duties.



SPECIFICATIONS RIGID-HULLED INFLATABLE BOAT (RIB)

Length	7.2 meters
Beam	2.74 meters
Engine	Volvo Penta Diesel
Passengers	Slight seas - 18 pax Rough seas - 12 pax
Crew	3
Speed	29 Knots
Endurance	5 hours at 15 Knots

OFFICER ENTRY

Although there are several means to gain a commission in the Royal Australian Navy as an officer, the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) is probably the most widely known. ADFA was established to provide young officer cadets from the Navy, Army and Air Force with the top-quality tertiary education. Academic pursuits are just a part of being a student at ADFA. There's also military studies, fitness training, leadership and management skills. Cadets are paid to study at ADFA and receive a textbook allowance, free medical and dental treatment, free uniforms and HECS. In addition,

they are guaranteed a job as an officer in the Royal Australian Navy when they graduate. The Academy offers degrees in engineering, science, arts, business, and a Bachelor of Technology (Aeronautical) or (Aviation), all of which are tailored to Navy requirements. An academic year at ADFA consists of one week orientation, followed by four weeks Common Military Training (CMT) and or Single Service Training (SST), with one further week dedicated to the CDF's Parade. Sixteen weeks of academic study is followed by mid year exams and leave before another 14-week academic session, rounded off with end of year examinations, CMT and or SST and five weeks leave.



SOLDIER ON  
HELPING OUR  
WOUNDED  
WARRIORS



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

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



INSPIRE. ENHANCE AND EMPOWER

Our wounded have done their part for Australia, they have given their best. Thousands have wounds, some you can see and some you can't. It is now Australia's turn to look after them, please give generously and make a difference in our wounded warriors lives.



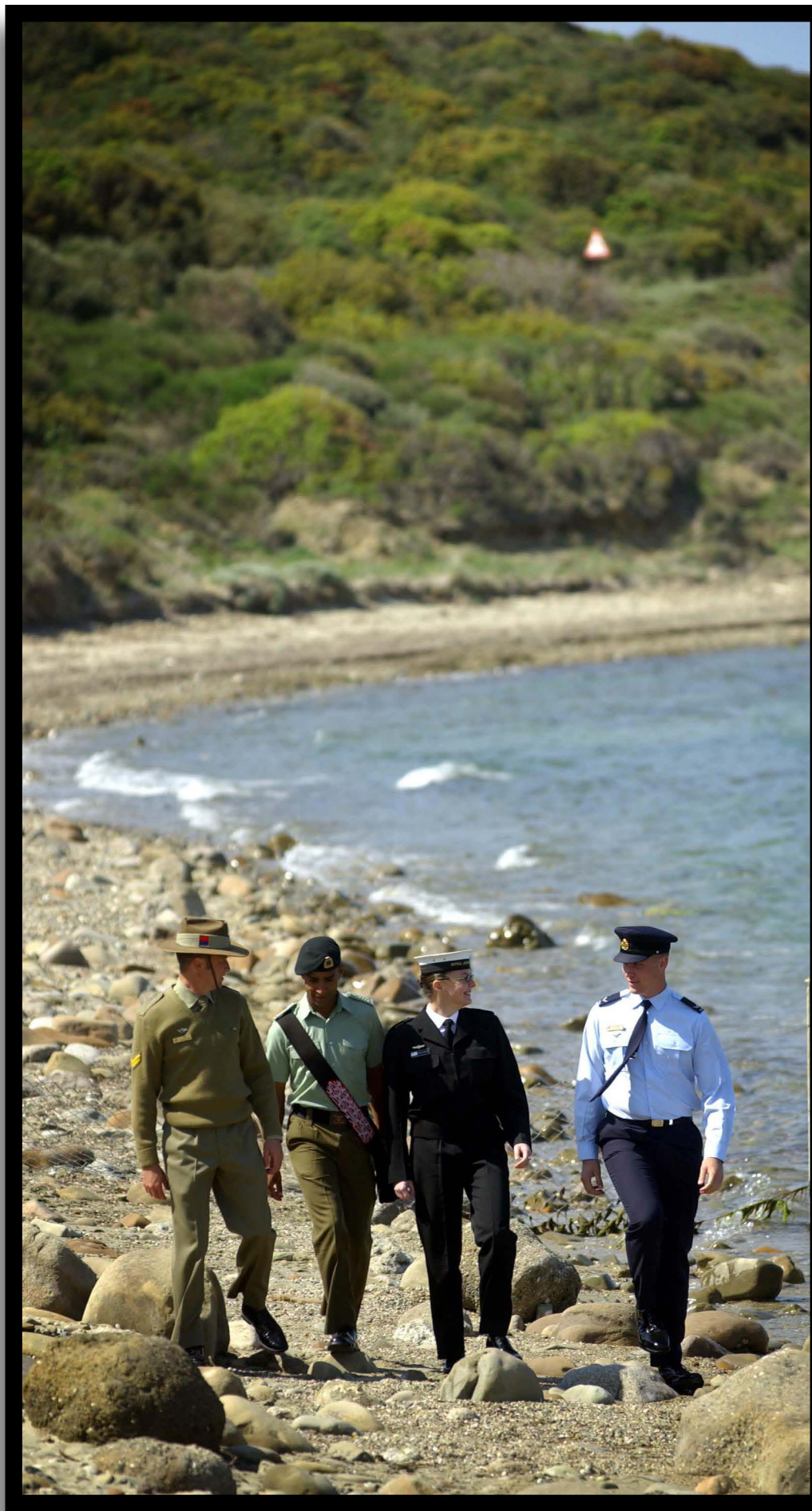
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# LEST WE FORGET

Addressing record crowds at Gallipoli, Defence Minister Robert Hill captures the essence of our important day.

**WORDS ROBERT HILL**  
**PICS SERGEANT TROY RODGERS**

"We stand here this morning to remember all those who suffered and died at this place 89 years ago.

We pay homage not only to the Australians and New Zealanders, but also men from Britain, France, Canada, India and Newfoundland. We remember the brave Turks who defended this ground.

In time, we have ceased to distinguish between the loss of friend or foe - all who fought here shared a common sacrifice, and those who remember them share their legacy of courage.

As dawn breaks, we cannot help but think of how those first ANZACs would have felt. With thoughts of family and home, they willingly took their places in the boats. With excitement and fear as never before, they steeled themselves for the unknown that lay beyond.

For many, this would be a final act of sacrifice and service. Some 8700 Australians and 2700 New Zealanders would lose their lives.

Many more would suffer cruelly and be nursed in the most difficult of circumstances.

Others would fight on in the horrors of the trenches of France and Belgium.

All would be part of a special legacy - their example is as relevant today as it was when news of their sacrifice first broke the hearts of two young nations, Australia and New Zealand.

The actions of those first ANZACs have since stirred us to aim higher and encouraged the finest qualities - service, courage, sacrifice, shared responsibility and overcoming adversity no matter what the odds.

Since the campaign in Gallipoli, generations of young soldiers, sailors and airmen and women have stood ready to serve and pay the price even by giving their lives. This morning we also commemorate their sacrifice. And we think of the men and women on active duty today, with a new generation of friends and family anxiously waiting behind. We particularly think of those in Iraq and Afghanistan - serving at significant risk. We pray for their safe return.

Those of us from Australia and New Zealand



## GALLIPOLI

claim the heritage of ANZAC as part of our identity. If so, we must show it in our own lives. To wear a uniform is not a prerequisite for service. We will all have the chance to demonstrate some of the qualities of the ANZAC. If we do so, we will be contributing to a better society. And we will be demonstrating that the sacrifice of those who died at Gallipoli was not in vain.

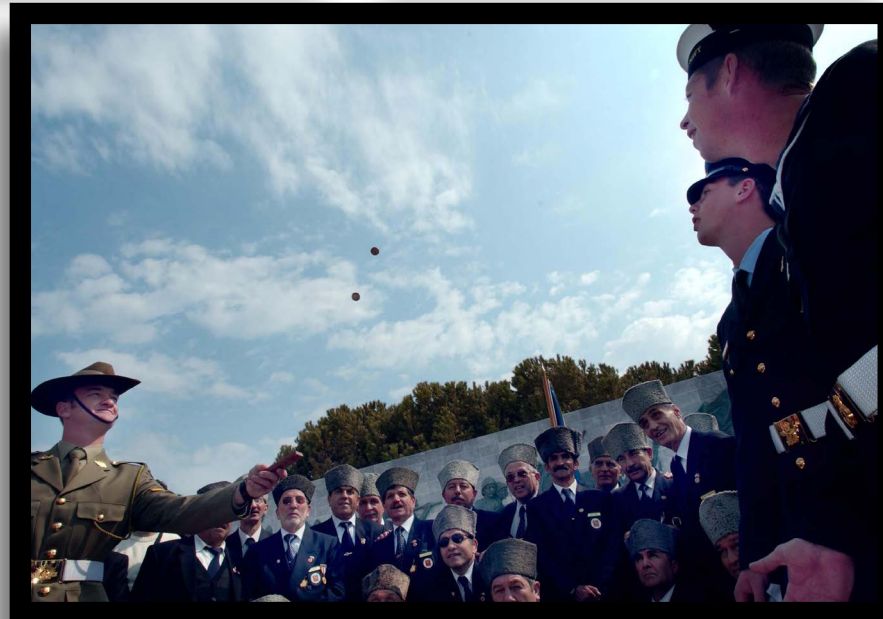
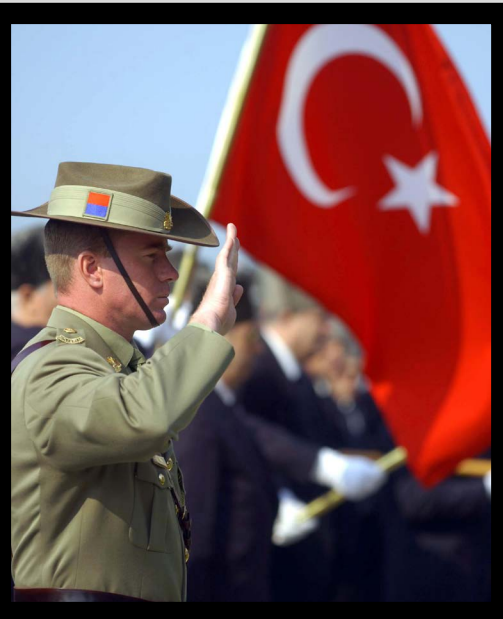
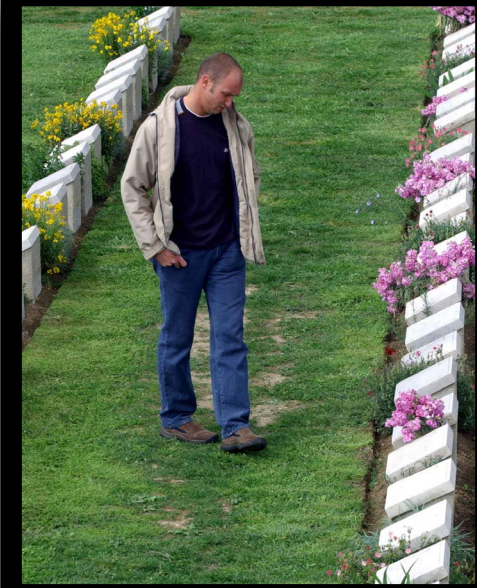
We must also remember the lesson that war is terrible and the costs incalculable. Sometimes war will be necessary but it will always come at great cost. This cost demands that we do our utmost to settle differences peacefully and provide the necessary security for our people and interests without the resort to arms.

At the same time, we must not be cowed by extremists who use terror to undermine our way of life and break our spirit. Those who have made this pilgrimage here today and those across the world who stand together in these ceremonies are sending a powerful message that the spirit of ANZAC is alive and well and will not be defeated.

Let us remember that we are here to commemorate those who out of a sense of service and duty have staked their own frail mortality for the benefit of others. We recognise the nobility of their sacrifice and commit ourselves to preserve their legacy.

As the light here grows and another ANZAC Day comes upon us, we turn to those in the shadows.

We thank you. We will never forget you."







RUSSIAN ROULETTE

# NARCO WARRIORS

With the blessing of the Tajik Government, Russian soldiers deal harshly in their own war on drugs.

WORDS DAVE FOWLER PICS SERGEI ZHUKOV / GAMMA PRESSE

“There were piles of bodies lying limp in the dust,” starts Sergei, “with bullet holes severing rag-clad limbs. Just 20 minutes previous, these 4 Afghans and one Tajik had been smuggling sacks of pure heroin over the Tajik-Afghan border. This time, however, Allah had deserted them and they ran into the Russian Drug Task Force, who patrol the area with the authority of the Tajik government. There was a vicious fire-fight – but there was only ever going to be one winner.

One look and you could see who it was. The native headdress, splattered with dust and caked

in filth, showed the Russians had helped stop the flow of Afghan heroin into Russia and Europe once again. 100 kilos were seized in all. Then the bodies were left next to burned-out vehicles for the Afghans to take away that night. The situation became ordinary, and the more it happened, the more we got used to it. War is war, after all.”

I have just arrived in Russia, where we’ve hooked up with 24-year-old photographer Sergei Zhukov. Recently, Sergei called me directly to tell me he was the first and only photographer to operate with the Russian army on the so-called “heroin highway”. The highway, which leads from

the opium-growing areas of central Afghanistan to the capitals of Europe, carries the richest cash-crop in the world. It’s a crop that variously funds the Taliban, Al Qaeda, civil wars, terrorist atrocities and Islamic extremism around the world. It helped blow up the Twin Towers. It’s the reason there are so many burglaries and beggars in your home town, wherever that may be. “Pure evil in powdered form” is how Sergei describes it.

“Heroin is the cause of cataclysmic social problems in Russia,” he continues, “and it’s all coming from Afghanistan. Now, correct me if I’m wrong, but I thought the USA and Britain went to Afghanistan to fight Al Qaeda and control the





country! Since the British and Americans have been there and flooded the place with weapons, there is more heroin headed for Russian borders than ever before. I saw tonnes of it, and you can see it in my photographs! Look at the size of the heroin bonfires that were burnt!

"Some of the heroin is undisputedly from the Taliban, who use it to raise fighting funds in hiding," adds Sergei. "Equally, many of the warlords the Americans backed to overthrow the Taliban are now major exporters. The Americans know exactly what is happening and what their corrupt allies are doing. They don't care about Russian addicts in Europe. The whole situation is rotten."

Whatever the political roots of the problem, one thing is certain – Afghan heroin production may be skyrocketing but the Russians are getting tougher. Thankfully, the situation in Tajikistan has allowed them to.

anbe (Tajikistan's capital) but became a citizen of the Russian Federation in 1995. During this time Tajikistan's border was full of holes. The country's GDP fell by 70 per cent, with 80 per cent of people living below the official poverty line. It was chaos, with heroin flowing through in massive quantities. Back in Moscow, we also had political problems, so militarily we weren't as organised as we are now.

"These days, we know what we're doing. The Russian soldiers I patrolled with were very brave and excellent at their job. I can't go into too much detail or name names because it may put their lives, or the lives of their families in danger. They are elite forces from within the Russian army – I know this for sure because I used to serve in the 201 Division for my military service – and they know how to handle themselves. They may not have had the sophisticated weaponry of the Americans over the border in Afghanistan, or the

concerted: the Tajik border is the front line against heroin. If the Russians fail here, they would have to defend – impossibly against the odds – a 4000km border with Kazakhstan.

"To defend the borders, patrols used air support via helicopters to track their prey," explains Sergei carefully, "and armoured personnel carriers on the ground. The weapons you can see in my photos also include the collapsable AK-47 favoured by Russian Special Forces (Spetsnaz), grenade launchers and even tanks. You could say they are well armed and determined! And for good reason. Smugglers do not give up without a massive fight, and given that they have come from Afghanistan they are incredibly well armed. You can buy any weapon in the world in Afghanistan. There is even an arms market on the Afghan border with Pakistan that sells everything in one place.

"You might sum the Russian approach up by

The heroes, though, are facing a tough fight. Although there are no casualty figures forthcoming from Russian authorities, they are suspected to be relatively high. This is because, unlike say, the US or NATO, Russians are far more likely to engage with their combat troops on the ground than bomb with missiles from the other side of the world.

Traditionally, the Russian military has also accepted higher losses.

The professional soldier (as opposed to hapless conscripts who are sent to places like Chechnya) knows the risks, is strongly nationalistic and ruthless. That's just as well when they face Islamic extremists who welcome death (rooms of virgins in attendance and all that) and Tajiks motivated by grinding poverty and an average wage of \$3 a month. Danger and death is never far away in these parts.

"I'm not ashamed to admit that sometimes I

"Photographers and journalists aren't especially brave, I would say. Not compared to the soldiers. We just do our job. Tajikistan is a really dangerous region and I knew quite a few journalists who were killed there. Recently my friend Sandjar Khamidov was injured in Leninabad in the northern area of Tajikistan. You know, we don't have body armour or a helmet... we rely on good fortune!"

The concept of "embedded" journalists – of friendly reporters in places like Iraq sat on the back of tanks as they "blaze towards victory" telling good news to the world – has yet to reach the deeply sceptical Russian Army. Russian Army PR, in fact, usually involves not having any journalists present at all. Amazingly, Sergei took his pictures in Tajikistan without their official approval. To gain their trust and take these amazing photos, he worked in the region for a total of six years and went to the border 100 times. His list of contacts

and spent enough time there to understand what I was doing. You can't achieve the same effect by jumping off a plane and booking into a hotel, like most Western reporters.

"People sometimes say I must be mad to take shots like these. But I don't really have a choice. Some people like driving cars, some like sitting in comfy chairs in an office. I must be in the front line. This is my work. A real job is to be in the epicentre of what happens."

Now he's just pulled out of Tajikistan, Sergei is well... unhappy. He has recently signed up with the Russian News Channel RBC, which doesn't give him the same buzz, but as he puts it himself, "he has to eat something." Not much, as we found out when we sat down to dinner – Sergei is as skinny as a rake and likes to stay that way. These days Sergei is dreaming of two things: to be able to purchase a digital camera and to return to the

## "YOU MIGHT SUM THE RUSSIAN APPROACH UP BY SAYING THEY

Following independence from Moscow in 1991, Tajikistan – which had always been the poorest of the former Soviet republics – was convulsed by a bitter and protracted civil war between the government and extremists who wanted to establish an Islamic fundamentalist state.

For a while, the republic threatened to become another Chechnya, but good sense and a strong arm prevailed so that current secular president Emomali Rahmonov now controls the entire country. With the rule of law in place, the Russians could operate to stamp out the smack.

"The nineties were a period of total war in Tajikistan," explains Sergei. "The place was emptying of population as the Islamic extremists tried to impose Sharia control. Many good people emigrated to Russia, Israel and the neighbouring republics. I am an ethnic Russian, born in Dush-

UN, but then neither of those two is trying to stop heroin washing into Europe, and we are.

"That's surely the most important thing, isn't it? Just look at the figures – a massive 80 per cent of drug seizures in Central Asia are accomplished in Tajikistan. What does that tell you?"

Tajikistan's 1200km border with Afghanistan is a country of sky-touching mountains. The Pamir range, for instance, is often called the "Roof of the World." It's a land that is both stunningly beautiful and incredibly dangerous at the same time, as the mountain passes, rocky terrain and deep gorges provide cover to terrorists and smugglers alike. The Russians, however, had 15 bloody years learning how to fight in Afghanistan in landscape just like this, and they seem to be putting that experience to good use.

And there is another reason why the effort is so

saying they don't mess about. They don't like to take prisoners is sometimes just a saying, but not here! They don't take risks and they go in hard. They know exactly what the Afghans are like and the evil they are doing to Russia and Tajikistan, so they attack with intense ferocity.

"They are totally committed troops, many of whom volunteer for dangerous missions. I followed them on reconnaissance patrols and observation exercises, and attended the burning of the heroin seized, but I didn't take part in any fully-pitched battles. The soldiers are committed to eradicating heroin, and they didn't always want me about taking pictures. They showed me what happened afterwards (the piles of bodies) and I believe they are true heroes. People in the West need to know about these heroes. They are defending civilisation against drugs."

## DON'T MESS ABOUT. THEY DON'T LIKE TO TAKE PRISONERS"

was really frightened," tells Sergei as he shows more of his amazing photographs. "Take one look at the scenery in this shot and you will see how exposed the soldiers could be at times. The Afghans had the advantage of knowing the territory so much better than us, which was ideally suited to launching ambushes. The worst, though, was when they felt cornered and would come out fighting. I haven't been in any of those situations exactly, but the body count is always very high.

"The feeling you get when you do get shot at is strange. When it happened to me, when we got caught in some exchange of fire, it was like it wasn't happening at the time. We weren't fearful for our lives, but we were terrified afterwards! It was like a release of fear all in one go! I guess fear comes later when you know when everything has ended.

and ability to move around freely came from being known and respected for what he did. His father may have been an influential ITAR-TASS agency photographer in Soviet times, but Sergei built his own reputation from the ground up.

He worked as a "stringer", selling shots to newspapers to survive, until he took on a job as a cameraman with NTV (Russian TV channel).

"I had a very good contact with the press centre on the Russian border, and the rest of the time it was just a question of reporting what went on," he admits modestly. "For me, interesting work happens when you are out in the field, not when you're stuck in a studio taking nice shots somewhere. You also have to work at a subject and really understand what you are doing before you can properly photograph a place. I have pictures of all aspects of Tajik politics and culture

action, either in Chechnya, Tajikistan or anywhere else in the old Soviet Central Asia where bullets are flying.

And, naturally, where adrenalin rushes are stronger than anything that can be provided by brown sacks being smuggled over the border.

"These pictures really represent a time in my life – an achievement," Sergei sums up, lifting a vodka glass in a toast. "Everything in Tajikistan was happening before my eyes, even if I didn't understand it all when I was younger. Later, when I got older, it became more difficult. This is the land where I was born, where my parents still live. This is a piece of my history. I love this country.

"These pictures are unique. They show how Russia defends peace in the region and the civilised world from drugs and Islamic extremism. The people must know who their heroes are."



OPERATION SOLACE

# PERSONALITIES AND PITFALLS

As 3/4 Cavalry Regiment arrives in Baidoa and establishes a foot-hold in a less-than-friendly town, Wayne Cooper realises how far away from home he really is.

WORDS WAYNE COOPER PICS PETE REEVES, WAYNE COOPER & ADF

**T**he road leading to the front gate of Baidoa airfield was blocked by a chicane of burnt-out cars. The hulks had been dragged into place to stop enemy vehicles getting a good run-up at the gate and smashing their way through. Lessons learnt in previous operations were already being applied to our new AO.

To the right of the boom gate was a desolate two-story building with "Home of the Big Blue 1" sprayed in blue on the wall – 1 RAR had laid claim to its new digs. The top floor, with its gaping hole in the outwards wall, had been turned into a sentry post. A detachment of 1RAR grunts watched our approach from behind a wall of sandbags and body armour, their Minimi machineguns pointing down the approach road.

The convoy was waved on and we weaved our way slowly through the chicane and past the boom gate. From the turret

I could see the remainder of the picket platoon resting up, cooking a feed or making a brew over Hexi stoves through holes in the ground-floor wall. The old bullet holes in the walls of the sentry building would soon be joined by fresh ones as the Big Blue 1 enforced its claim to the airfield in the following weeks.

Baidoa airfield was situated on the north-western edge of the city. The old Soviet airbase was now home to the 1RAR Battalion Group, elements of the US Army and US Marines. Despite being run down and decrepit, the base had a functional runway and something approaching a defensible perimeter. Although the airfield was a mess, powerful wheels were in motion and it wouldn't stay that way for long.

As we drove through the base for the first time, the paradox of US and Australian soldiers living on a Soviet airbase



appealed to my sense of irony. “Glasnost in action – how the world has changed” I mused. Unfortunately, as we would learn through the 17 weeks of Operation Solace, alliances and borders may change, but the basic brutality of human nature does not.

The convoy reached its destination and we were directed into place by ground guides. The vehicles were backed up against the wall of the long, roofless building that was to become B Squadron, 3/4 Cavalry Regiment’s home for the duration of the operation. With some sections already out patrolling or on recon tasks, there were 20 or so M113s lined up in section lots as we shut engines down and surveyed our new home.

Standing on the top of the vehicle, I could see the 3/4 Cav building formed one side of a pair of parallel buildings separated by a large courtyard. Either side of the building, rubble had been bulldozed into the surrounding scrub to form a rough car park and work areas for the squadron. At the northern end of the courtyard, a crude

position we would grow to relish as it was close to the toilet and showers and far from Troop HQ. The eight of us sat down together at the back of our cars, away from the bustle of the other sections, for the first of countless orders groups.

Corporal Darren ‘Moose’ Ferriday was the commander of 23 Section and an experienced and highly-respected NCO. Moose had finished his section commander’s time in 22 Section at the end of 1992 and was supposed to have moved on to another position in 1993. When the word came that we were to be deployed at short notice, the decision was made that he should stay in the troop, to make the most of his experience.

To me, Moose was the epitome of the cavalry NCO. Quite, confident and fair, Darren was professional enough to know the rules and smart enough to know when to break them. Those of us who didn’t already know, were to find him one of those rare individuals who – at least outwardly – took every situation in his stride and inspired confidence in those around him.

a great person to have around, and there would be more than a few occasions when his sense of humour would help ease the tension.

Moose outlined the plan for the next few days. After a familiarisation tour around town in the morning, 23 would be working with Recon Platoon and Snipers conducting reconnaissance of the area to the north-west of town and patrols in the city at night. We would also be getting spotlights fitted to the turrets that would allow us to be a little more effective in the dark.

As I looked around the group, I was reminded that most of its members had been posted to 3/4 Cav late in ‘92 from 2/14 Queensland Mounted Infantry, after one of its squadrons changed from a regular to a reserve unit. I was a little unsure of my standing in the section as all of the other crew commanders and most of the drivers (including my driver Pete) had known each other for some time. Although no one ever did anything to make me feel that way, I initially felt a little like an outsider amongst a group of close friends.

then Mickey P was its heart and soul. He was absolutely uncompromising in his attitude to life and his example would help me get through some of the darker moments of following five months.

As Mick and I worked on our guns, the section’s 2IC delivered the week’s codes and SOLs. Lance Corporal Ken ‘Kenny’ Nelliman was another member of the 2/14 Mafia – or blow-in, as the long-term 3/4 Cav ‘Stingers’ liked to say. The rivalry between the two Cavalry regiments went back decades and the recent influx of the 2/14 members had raised the ire of the Stinger establishment – much to the Brisbane boys’ delight.

Ken was a rather serious-looking Thursday Islander who, like many TI men, looked pretty intimidating until his face broke into a broad, friendly smile. Among Ken’s many admirable traits was an engaging, self-effacing sense of humour. Even with this in mind, Mick and Moose were the only two members of the section who ever called Ken by his other, much-less politically correct nickname, ‘Nigger’.

We sat and discussed the next day’s activities with the sort of subdued excitement you would expect of eager young soldiers on the eve of their greatest adventure. Not for the last time, I was to marvel at my good fortune at being part of such an easy-going and switched-on group. Leading the conversation, as he often did, was the driver of 23B, Trooper Allan ‘Eddie’ Edwards.

At 28, Eddie was the oldest member of the section and one of its real characters. Allan had an opinion on just about everything, which he often delivered with laconic good humour. Never shy or intimidated, Eddie was honest – sometimes brutally so – and to the point with everyone, regardless of rank or position – a trait I greatly admired.

Two- Three Section was an eclectic mix of personalities. The fusion of characters and experience made it a great team to be part of. Its cohesiveness and high morale were also to make it the envy of many other sections in the squadron.

The boys eventually drifted off to their beds, with most deciding to sleep in their vehicles

beginning to truly appreciate my situation. On the other side of the world, in one of the bleakest regions of the planet and with a mammoth task ahead – one should really be careful what they wished for.

My delayed episode of environmental shock was short lived as I received a message from the vehicle behind, pointing out that there were people trying to steal the jerry cans off the back of my carrier. As I yelled at the young men who had climbed up on my rear track guards, I learnt the first of many valuable lessons about Somalia. Language, both reasonable and harsh, did not illicit much response. However action – usually in the form of violence, real or threatened – did. A well-aimed antenna top across the knuckles did the trick.

After returning to the airfield, it was time to prepare our vehicles for the night’s activities. The Spanners (RAEME – Royal Australian Mechanical and Electrical Engineers) began fitting spotlights to the turrets of our vehicles as we loaded am-



shower and toilet facility had been set up and, to the south and across the road, another roofless building had been converted into a mess.

The Sun was starting to set as Pete and I stepped off the vehicle and were joined by some of the members of Two-Three (23) Section who had made the journey with 1 Troop a few days before. There was a quick greeting and then it was straight into unloading the vehicles. The last hours of daylight were spent carrying parts, ammo and rations to the hastily established Q Store in the northern section of our building.

As we worked, 1 Troop guys ribbed us about finally arriving and how, as usual, they had been doing all the work in our absence. These comments were met with the standard witty reply, ‘get fucked’ by tired 2 Troop members. In truth, there had been 2 Troop members there the whole time, but 1 Troop never missed an opportunity, real or imagined, to stick it to 2 Troop, and vice versa.

With the vehicles unpacked, it was time to get the word on what had been going on in our absence. As the last section in the call sign hierarchy, 23 Section was situated at the northern end of the long line of vehicles, Pete and I – as the crew of Two Three Charlie (23C) were at the very end – a

## EVERY NIGHT SINCE THE BATTALION GROUP ARRIVED, IT HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY

Moose told us that they had been carrying out patrols through town in composite sections. Every night since the Battalion Group had arrived, it had been in contact with the enemy. Baidoa at night was proving to be a very dangerous place and 23 Section would be conducting night patrols for the next couple of weeks.

“Great, death patrol,” was the openly sarcastic comment from Trooper Tino Siliato, the driver of 23A, who had already conducted patrols the previous two nights. Tino, as a gregarious Italian, was an excitable and exceedingly likable guy. His enthusiasm and infectious laugh made him

Orders group broke up with Moose telling everyone to get a feed and to get their vehicles sorted before getting some sleep. He left us with the prediction that the next few weeks were going to be extremely busy and a demand that we get our shit together quickly. His assumption was correct, as the first month of Operation Solace proved to be most tiring and action-packed of our tour.

After a quick meal at the new mess, consisting of a 10-man ration-pack train smash and disgusting Yank long-life bread, Pete and I set about getting our car squared away. Pete was a very conscientious and fastidious driver who insisted on keeping the vehicle as clean and organised as possible. As he worked at stowing the vehicle, I serviced my guns and tried to keep up with the rapid-fire humour of commander 23B, beside me.

Lance Corporal Mick ‘Mickey P’ Holmes was one of the world’s rogue gentlemen. Mick was blessed with an unflappable temperament and one of the most irreverent personalities I have ever encountered. He saw the humour in almost any situation and never let anyone take themselves, or the situation, too seriously.

Mick was to become the person I measured myself against. If Moose was the brains of 23 Section,

In today’s social climate it may seem abhorrent for anyone to call a close friend or workmate by that name. And I was certainly one skinny white boy who was never brave enough to call the big Thursday Islander that, even if he didn’t appear to mind. But Ken, Moose, Mick and many of the other lads went back a long way and, in a twisted Micky P sort of way, it was a term of endearment.

Having squared away the vehicles, the section soon gathered again in the back of the section commander’s car for a chat. Trooper Andrew ‘Johnno’ Johnson – Moose’s driver – made his one and only section brew for the duration of Operation Solace. When later asked to be a good host and make a section brew during orders, he would counter with “Fuck off, I already have,” accompanied by an approving grin from his crew commander.

Johnno was a practical, country lad, whose quiet intelligence and dry wit could often catch you off guard. Amidst a section of extraverts, Andrew was the subtle observer who never missed a thing. Often, when someone got on a roll paying-out on another member of the section, it would be Johnno who delivered the well-timed retort that shut the denigrator down.

rather than in the roofless squadron building. The nights had not yet grown too hot and a long, exhausting day ensured I slept like the dead. Morning would soon bring a new set of adventures and a minor disaster for 23 Section.

After a good night’s sleep Pete and I were keen to get into town and have a look around, as were the rest of the guys who had arrived the previous day. After some brief orders from the troop leader, 2 Troop lined up its vehicles and headed into the ruin that was Baidoa. After speeding through the barren countryside the day before, the press of humanity in the tight streets of the city was to prove quite unnerving to the uninitiated.

As the troop made its way through the crowded marketplace the sea of dark faces staring at us was intimidating. The grim faces of the people of that unfortunate city seemed to look at us with thinly disguised disdain. Many nations and factions had taken turns at ruling this part of the world and another occupying army was treated with justifiable scepticism and contempt. I felt, for the first time, that disquieting sensation of someone who had just realised how far away from home they really were. The first few days of my deployment had been a blur, and I was only now

munition and worried about going out on patrol without having test-fired our guns. The test-fire pit was still a week away from construction and we would have to rely on good preparation and luck that our guns would fire when we needed them.

Our mission for the night was to drop snipers at various positions around the outskirts of town and conduct patrols through a designated part of the city with Recon Platoon.

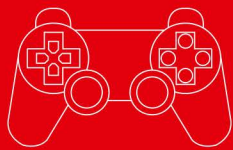
After orders and a quick meal, it was time to get to work. But our excitement and optimism was to be short lived. As 23A led the section towards the front gate, a muffled explosion issued from the turret of Ken’s vehicle.

The section quickly moved up around the lead vehicle and the scene we found was not good. A live wire from the newly installed spotlight had touched against the feed plate of Kenny’s .50 cal machinegun and, as he loaded rounds onto it, one exploded and blew the top of his index finger off.

Two-Three Section’s first patrol was off to a less than auspicious start.

*Wayne Cooper's journey through Operation Solace and the streets of Baidoa continues next issue.*





## SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

UBISOFT  
XBOX  
[www.splintercell.com/uk](http://www.splintercell.com/uk)

Sam Fisher is back and this time he's operating a little closer to Australian shores. Set mostly in East Timor and Indonesia, the world's greatest covert agent also ventures to France, Israel and the country he calls home, the USA, in this sequel to Ubisoft's award-winning third-person stealth shooter. For those unfamiliar with Sam Fisher, he is an agent working for

the highly classified organisation known only as the Third Echelon. His activities, although part of the US Government program, are completely deniable, giving him freedom to act beyond boundaries and with far more liberal rules of engagement. Armed with a selection of high-tech weapons, he is a middle-aged man on a mission. Like its predecessor, the storyline is enthralling and when coupled with the amazing graphics, it is like playing within a movie rather than a console game. It starts with a suicide bomber driving a truck-load of explosives into the US Embassy in Jakarta and the capturing of the ambassador by a radical fundamentalist group.

Sam is inserted, not to save the day, but to ensure top-secret information does not get into the hands of the terrorists. Once the information is secure, Sam is free to start preparing the embassy compound for the imminent arrival of a Delta Force recovery operation. It's a mission that requires stealth, cunning and a fair bit of thought, but it serves as a great training ground for what lies ahead. As in the original, Sam is supported by a team of specialists that communicate via a real-time voice- and data-link. They provide handy hints throughout the game and a real-time intelligence feed today's soldiers can only dream of. Despite his lethal array of

equipment, quite often Sam is best employed as a shadow leaving little more than the odd boot print in his area of operations. Using the latest in night-vision and thermal-imaging technology, players can "own the night," taking out unsuspecting sentries with a swift whack on the back of the head. Much of the game is about scanning the surroundings, discounting obvious avenues of approach and thinking outside the square to achieve mission goals. In many cases there are several ways to achieve each goal. While the single-player campaign will occupy many, many hours, those with Xbox Live will be able to experience a unique take

on multi-player gaming. Limited to four players (two teams of two), Pandora Tomorrow, is an intense and personal gaming experience. Joining with a partner (making use of the Xbox Live voice communication function, is a must), players can infiltrate an area of operations as Third Echelon ShadowNet spies or defend the area as a pair of heavily armed Argus mercenaries. Playing on the ShadowNet team is similar to Pandora Tomorrow's single-player campaign as the spies use stealth, agility and cunning to reach mission goals. The Argus mercs are more akin to a standard multi-player game viewed through the first person,

relying on overwhelming firepower to complete missions. This multiplayer game has become extremely popular and getting on a team can prove quite difficult as players are ranked on their online results. Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow is a great Xbox game that, like its predecessor, will also be released on other gaming platforms including PC. The single-player campaign is brilliant and the multi-player experience is a new and enthralling take on what has now become standard gaming fare.

RATING ★★★★★



## BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM

EA GAMES  
PC  
[www.electronic-arts.com.au](http://www.electronic-arts.com.au)

Eighteen months ago, EA Games and Digital Illusions revolutionised online gaming with the release of Battlefield 1942 (BF42). Despite hitting the shelves when a glut of WWII-themed first-person shooters was on the shelves, BF1942 captured gamers' in a way that had not been seen since Half-Life and its Counterstrike mod. With so much interest in the

game, it is little wonder that the team behind it knuckled down to push a new version out the door. With Vietnam now occupying the same level of attention by game developers that WWII has held for the past few years, Battlefield Vietnam (BFV) is attempting to recreate the market success of previous generations. Essentially, BFV is the same game as BF42 set in a new environment – most players describing it as a comprehensive mod rather than a complete new game. Although it boasts a completely new graphics' engine designed to cope with the complexity of Vietnam's lush foliage, players have quickly identified a flaw that makes

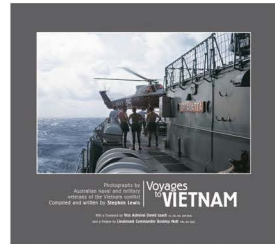
ambushing in particular quite difficult. Depending on a player's graphics quality settings (and to run at the highest level you will really need a beast computer) the vegetation draw area only extends a certain distance from a player. Quite often when I thought I had hunkered down in a well concealed spot, I was engaged from an enemy vehicle moving at speed more than 100 metres away. A bit of investigation by myself and several other players has led to the conclusion that the terrain outside the vegetation draw distance is the victim of a virtual Agent Orange strike, and is baldier than the plains of Puckapunyal. Move closer to the area

(within the draw range) and, all of a sudden it is covered by lush tropical vegetation again. Despite this limitation, BFV retains the one aspect that made BF42 so appealing – game play. With the option of four different character classes, each with a choice of loadouts and skins, several vehicles, boats, helicopters and aircraft, there are an amazing number of ways to play the game. Online, most players are opting for the more open maps that include a variety of vehicles, but if you want to enjoy some good infantry-based combat, the city maps can't be beat. Unfortunately my mouse-controlled flying skills have not improved since

WW2 and successfully piloting a Huey or a fast-jet is skill that takes a serious amount of practise – then just when you've mastered the art of missing the ground you have to learn to accurately employ the weapon systems. In this respect the single-player mode of the game is quite important – it is far better to embarrass yourself in front of a virtual team-mate than to suffer on-line taunts. Most players will be left disappointed with the single-player game. Apart from learning how to use the vehicles and developing ground appreciation, AI standard severely limits the value in the single-player game. Those familiar with the Vietnam

conflict will probably balk at the inclusion of NVA helicopters and vehicles such as the BTR 60 but, in terms of play balance they were definitely required. All up BFV provides more of the same gaming fun that made BF42 such a hit. With several dedicated Aussie servers and any number of ways to play the game, BFV is already dominating the local online gaming scene and creating a new page in first-person shooter history. Oh, and it has the coolest soundtrack of any PC game to date – it's like being part of the '80s TV show, Tour of Duty.

RATING ★★★★★



## VOYAGES TO VIETNAM

STEPHEN LEWIS  
MY VIETNAM TRUST  
[www.myvietnam.com.au](http://www.myvietnam.com.au)  
Reviewed by: Sean Burton

'Voyages to Vietnam' contributor John Francis wrote to Author Stephen Lewis, "The 1960s and early 1970s was a fantastic time to be in the Royal Australian Navy. There was none of the political correctness bullshit there is today. In addition, we had new ships, we were as sharp as razors (because of Vietnam) and no one cried like a Sheila when we went away to do our job." The 206-page hardback book records a bygone era in Australian naval history and captures the humor, spirit and diversity of naval life during Australia's longest military campaign. Part of the book's charm is that it's an honest and true reflection of Australians at war without the PR political correctness and paranoia. Voyages to Vietnam was compiled and written by South Australian-based Stephen Lewis who served in Vietnam with the RAA between 1968 and 1969. He previously produced the critically acclaimed My Vietnam in 2002 and, by his own admission, had little knowledge of the Navy's involvement in the Vietnam War. This was highlighted after hearing the comment, "Not much Navy stuff in it" throughout the book's nationwide promotion. So began Stephen's voyage of discovery which has led to an outstanding collection of over 600 photographs by 140 Australian naval and military veterans some of whom were ships' photographers, others just "happy snappers". While the Navy initially entered the Vietnam War in support of the Army, its ships and men went on to forge their own proud history in a typical Australian manner. The book acknowledges those ships that are no longer afloat and pays tribute to the Navy's contribution from its highly decorated helo flight and clearance diving teams through to the vessels and crews of the gun line and logistics groups. High-quality printing gives this book the feeling of a very polished and professional personal photo album – it is a true historical time capsule that navy veterans would be proud to share with their families and friends. The content and quality is a fitting tribute to those who served their country and, for those who did not return, a reminder of their sacrifice. For further details on Voyages to Vietnam and subsequent book launches, check out the web site: [www.myvietnam.com.au](http://www.myvietnam.com.au)

RATING ★★★★★





# VETERAN STILL FLIES

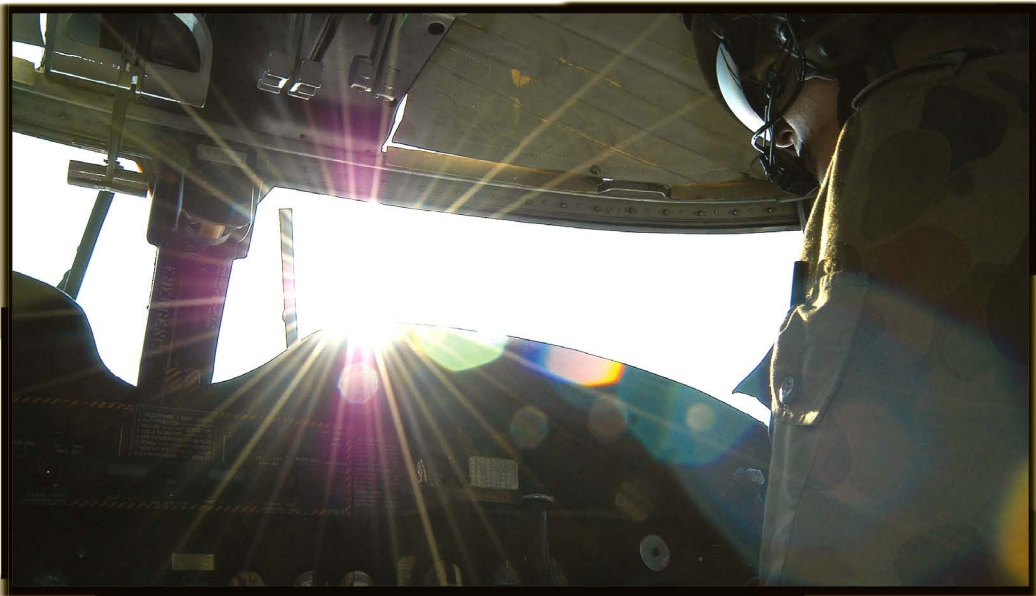
WORDS AND PICS BRIAN HARTIGAN

After first seeing active service with the RAAF in Vietnam 40 years ago, the venerable old bird – DHC-4A Caribou – is still serving the nation at home and on far-flung missions such as the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.

I have an old copy of *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Aircraft in Australia and New Zealand* that says, "A number of proposals have been put to the Department of Defence relating to the Caribou replacement... However, a decision is not imminent and a replacement would not be expected to enter service before 1990."

You can't keep a good plane down!

DHC-4A CARIBOU	
Manufacturer	De Havilland, Canada
Role	Light tactical transport
Engine	Two Pratt and Whitney 14-cylinder radials, 2000 horsepower each
Length	22.5m
Height	9.6m
Wingspan	29m
Weight	15,000kg
Payload	3100kg
Range	2000km
Speed	280km/h normal cruise
Crew	2 pilots, flight engineer





SERGEANT WILLIAM WASS MM

# ONLY A DOG TAG...

Communications between front-line units and their headquarters were vital for effective command and control on the battlefield – and the battalions’ signallers were prime targets for enemy snipers.

WORDS WO1 DARRYL KELLY PIC AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

The machine gun fire was murderous – it seemed to be coming from all directions at the same time. The Diggers unsuccessfully tried to edge their way forward as time and time again they stopped to burrow their faces into the ground in an attempt to avoid the barrage of bullets.

A young platoon commander raised his head to get his bearings but a 7.92mm round blew it apart like a ripe melon, splattering his blood over those around him...

William Wass was born in Derby, England. He chose the life of a professional soldier and at a young age enlisted in the British Army, assigned to the local regiment, the Sherwood Foresters.

The young Wass thrived on the spit, polish and discipline of army life. With the outbreak of hostilities in South Africa, the Sherwood Foresters were deployed to fight the insurgent Dutch-Afrikaner settlers, known as Boers.

The climate was unforgiving – sweltering hot in summer and bone-chilling cold in winter. After a time chasing an elusive enemy across the African veldt, Wass’s battalion received orders to move to the docks for immediate embarkation. Spirits were high as they packed their equipment and loaded the supply wagons in anticipation of their impending journey home.

As the lines were cast off and the ship moved from the quay, their reverie was shattered as they learned they were not going home – they were going to China.

In their campaign against Westerners, the militant ‘Boxers’ were carving a path of death and destruction across northern China – their targets, the European missionaries, civilians and western-

ised Chinese. A small, but well-armed multinational force was besieged in Peking and various nations hastily assembled a relief force to liberate the beleaguered garrison.

Wass’s unit was soon in action, facing a human horde that swarmed towards them. The Foresters stood firm as the Boxers came closer and closer, their blood-curdling cries of Sha! Sha! (Kill! Kill!) sending shivers down the Englishmen’s spines. Coolly and calmly the orders were issued, ‘At fifty yards, volley ... fire! Present ... fire!’ The hail of bullets brought down the entire first wave and most of the second. The orders were repeated and more Boxers fell. As the Foresters advanced up the narrow street they clashed with the forward elements of the attacking mob, their bayonets eliminating many of the enemy assailants.

Soon, the overwhelmed rebels dispersed and fled, closely followed by the Foresters who took aim and fired a parting salvo. Wass observed the trail of bodies littering the street. As he glanced down, he saw his boots were splattered with fresh blood. He closed his eyes, took a deep breath and awaited the next order.

In the ensuing weeks, the rebellion was quelled and order was finally restored. The Sherwood Foresters embarked yet again, this time to India to garrison the North-West Frontier borders. Postings to Egypt, Singapore and Hong Kong followed.

After the thrill of action, the tedious life of garrison duty was not to Wass’s liking. When his term of enlistment was up, he chose to take discharge and try his luck in Australia.

One afternoon in 1914, while working as a machine fitter in Sydney, William called into the local pub for a drink. The bar was abuzz with talk of the German push across Europe and Britain’s

declaration of war against the invaders – the British Empire was again at war.

Wass presented himself for enlistment in the AIF and was allocated to the newly formed 2nd Battalion. He was one of the originals and proud of it and, with his military background, was soon promoted to signals corporal in Battalion Headquarters. In October 1914, the 2nd Battalion boarded the troopship Suffolk bound for Egypt.

At the desert training camp at Mena, Wass proved his worth time and time again within the headquarters. Young officers readily sought his advice and his cool, calm efficiency served as an inspiration to the younger soldiers.

By April 1915, the 1st Division was on the move. Equipment was packed and loaded into wagons, and the troops – including 2nd Battalion – were moved to the docks and the waiting troopships.

The night of 24 April was deadly calm as the invasion fleet waited patiently beyond the horizon. Then as the moon disappeared, the fleet edged closer toward the darkened shoreline in preparation for a dawn assault landing.

As they abandoned their landing craft on the pebbly beach, Corporal Wass rallied his troops. “Stay close to me and keep your heads down”, he ordered as he led his section up the hill.

That first night, the ANZAC forces held a grim toehold on the Gallipoli Peninsula, so maintenance of communications was critical to the defence of the beachhead. Wass had his signallers fully operational as semaphore positions were sited, runners briefed and telephone cables to the companies were laid. He screwed the last two wires into the telephone set then briskly turned the handle. “All lines are working, Sir,” Wass said as he passed the handset to his commanding officer.

That night the Turks counterattacked in force, but the Diggers held on and retaliated with deadly efficiency. As a line was severed and communications were lost, Wass had his runners standing by to carry the vital messages to the forward companies. And, if it was too dangerous, he delivered the message himself.

The ANZAC forces soon settled into the rigours of trench warfare on the inhospitable peninsula. Turkish snipers were ever present and caused havoc from their vantage points on the high ground. The signallers were their prime targets, but to ensure vital communications were maintained Corporal Wass had his men work in parties of three – two to conduct repairs and one to cover the others with a rifle. Some became victims of the snipers but another always stepped forward to fill the gap. William’s abilities did not go unnoticed and he soon was promoted to sergeant. Many commented that the 2nd Battalion’s communications were as “sound as a pound”.

In August, the battalion took part in the assault on Lone Pine. The blast from the whistle was the signal for the troops to attack. Racing across open ground, the signallers carried the spools which spewed out the vital telephone cable as they ran. On reaching the enemy lines, the Diggers dropped into the darkness of the covered trenches and engaged the Turks in fierce hand-to-hand combat.

As the battle raged, the commanding officer turned to Wass and yelled, “Get me headquarters, Sergeant!” Wass tried the line but it was dead. Grabbing a rifle, he paused to survey the open area towards the old trenches where bullets were flying in all directions. Taking a deep breath, Wass scrambled from the trench and raced across the open ground, weaving as he ran. He let the cable run over the top of his cradled rifle, all the time looking for the break in the wire.

Suddenly, there it was, the two shattered ends of the line lying about 10 metres apart.

Snatching up one piece of wire, he lurched forward to retrieve the other. Suddenly, the concussion of a round threw him backwards and, as he struggled to regain his senses, he felt the warm trickle of blood dripping from his forehead.

Crawling forward, he retrieved the other end of the line and, baring the wires, tied the severed ends together. A burst from a Turkish machine-

gun forced him to seek cover in a depression that barely covered his body. Mission accomplished, he once more ran the gauntlet of enemy fire and, with machinegun rounds bouncing round his heels, he stumbled his way back to his CO.

Picking up the receiver, he did a line check. “Ready, Sir”, he reported. “About bloody time”, the CO replied as he grabbed the handset.

Suffering blurred vision, Wass checked himself all over. It appeared his head wound was his only injury. Satisfied he was in no immediate danger of succumbing to any serious after effects from his wound, he applied a shell dressing and soldiered on for the next four days without rest.

William was noticed to be suffering badly and it was under duress that finally he reported to the unit medical officer. “It’s the beach for you, sergeant. You’re in a bad way”, the doctor advised.

The wound was serious and Wass was evacuated, first to Lemnos and then to Egypt. The doctors were amazed that the sergeant had carried on for so long with his injury as closer examination found that Wass had a severely fractured skull. He remained in hospital for the next four months, returning to the battalion after its evacuation from Gallipoli.

**TURKISH SNIPERS WERE EVER PRESENT AND CAUSED HAVOC FROM THEIR GOOD VANTAGE POINTS**

Moves were afoot to expand the AIF. The 3rd Division was being raised in Australia whilst the 4th and 5th Divisions were formed by breaking up the existing units. Thus the 2nd Battalion gave up some of its own to form the 54th Battalion, 14th Brigade of the 5th Division. Sergeant William Wass was one of those chosen to form the nucleus of the new battalion.

It was at this time he learned he was one of the first to be awarded the new Military Medal for his actions at Gallipoli.

Subsequently, the 5th Division moved to France. Their first major action was at a place called Fromelles. The 54th Battalion formed part of the assault force against a feature called the Sugar Loaf Salient. As the battalions moved forward, with so many troops massed in one place, the Diggers thought they were in for an easy time.

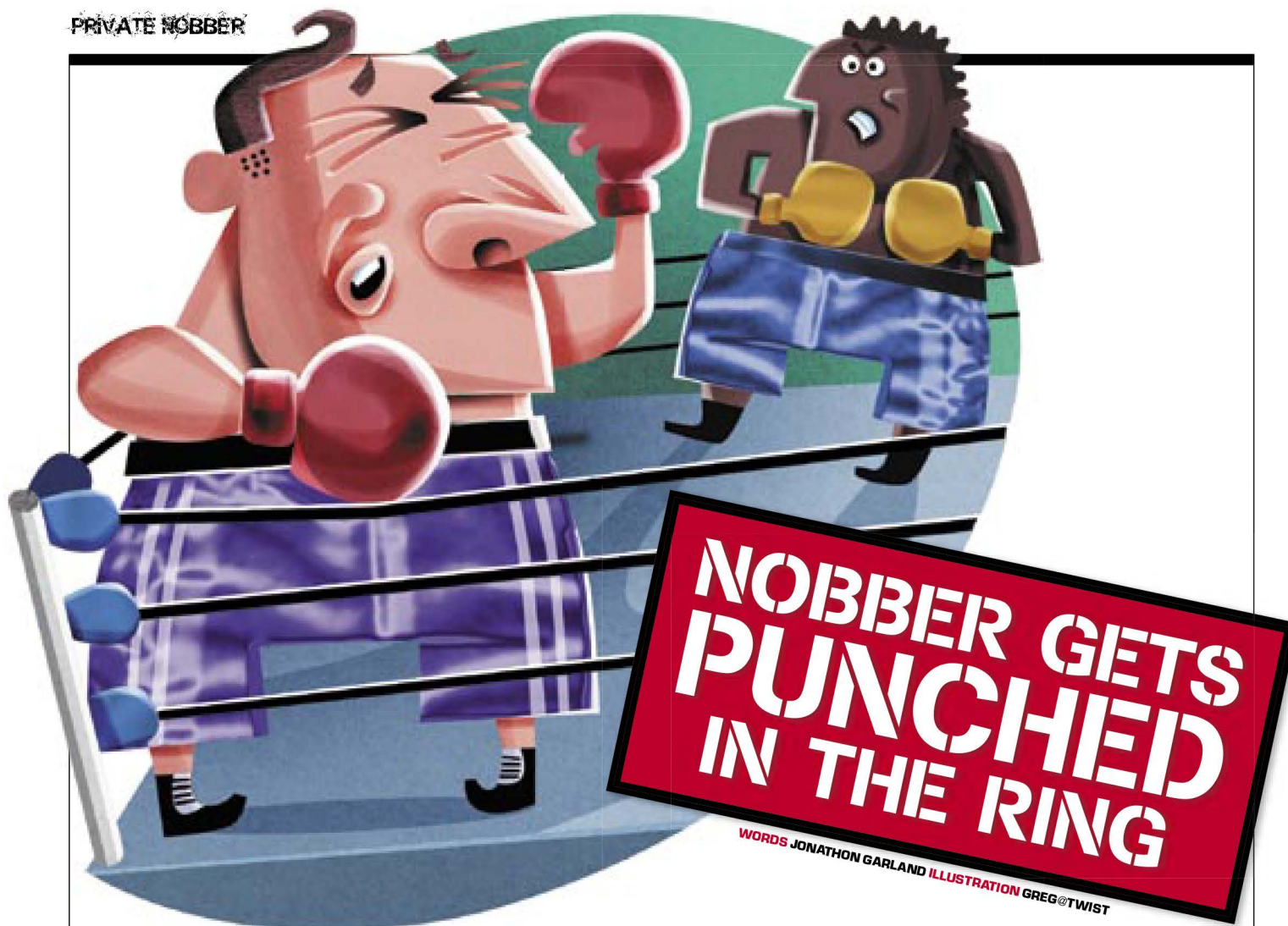
Suddenly there was mayhem. The British brigade covering the right flank bogged down, enabling the German forces to concentrate most of their firepower on the ANZAC line. As the Diggers moved forward, enemy machineguns on their flanks launched a massive barrage and with deadly accuracy, cut a swathe of carnage throughout the ranks. The Diggers tried in vain to return fire but the Germans held the high ground and their machineguns continued their relentless bombardment of the Australians.

The 54th Battalion’s command post consisted of a shell hole. Communications were nonexistent as many of the reels lay in the hands of dead signallers who now littered the battlefield. The CO needed information and his only option was to use a runner. He turned to Will. “Wass, get a message to Brigade. Tell them we’re pinned down and we need some support, and we need it in a hurry.” Grabbing his rifle, Wass ran, crawled and scurried towards the rear, jumping from shell hole to shell hole, soon disappearing into the cordite haze.

Under cover of darkness, the remnants of the shattered units withdrew from the salient. The beating suffered by the 5th Division was severe enough to keep it out of the war for months.

Many weeks later, the German Red Cross delivered a sandbag full of personal effects and dog tags, collected from the dead of the Fromelles battlefields, to Swiss authorities. Among the identification discs was one that read – William Wass.





The incident occurred as a result of the platoon looking for volunteers to represent them at the inter-company boxing match.

The company was well represented in most areas but there was a gap in the middleweight division that needed to be filled. When those too unsuited, too injured, or too clever to get volunteered were sifted, the spotlight fell on Private Nobber.

Nobody had ever seen Nobber fight. His combat philosophy was based on the theory that you couldn't hit what wasn't there. He had dedicated his life to not being there – in more ways than one, some might snicker.

Despite the lack of track record, there were two things that made Nobber a candidate.

One was physical appearance. Thanks to a good genetic heritage handed down from a farmer father who regularly wrestled bulls to the ground with one hand while castrating them with the other, Nobber had, against all evidence to the contrary, a physique that suggested the capacity to defend himself.

The other was temperament. Nobber had a habit of remaining quiet when in a group. This was, in reality, simply because he had nothing to add to the conversation most of the time, but others often thought it indicated a seething cauldron of barely controlled homicidal tendencies just looking for a chance to find expression. Despite a total lack of violence on

his part, some people expected one day to read a newspaper story prominently featuring Nobber, a rifle and a clock tower.

Nobber was aware of this and had never tried to convince anyone otherwise. It was a useful lever in certain confrontational situations.

And this is how he found himself standing in one corner of a boxing ring wearing silk shorts and a worried expression.

Without his spectacles, he was effectively blind. He squinted hard, looking for his opponent, but all he could see in the other corner was a blurred object that looked a bit like an ebony wardrobe.

The referee called Nobber and the wardrobe into the centre to touch gloves. Nobber took the opportunity to say 'good luck' and was rewarded with a grunt that sounded like a chainsaw starting. There was a thwack of leather as the gloves met, and Nobber hobbled back to his corner, sure his shoulders were dislocated.

**THE REFEREE AND HIS TWIN BROTHER APPEARED AND ASKED NOBBER IF HE FELT HE COULD GO ON**

There was the sound of a bell and Nobber advanced to meet the wardrobe. A rush of wind was followed by the sound of Big Ben striking one o'clock and Nobber found himself admiring the architecture of the gym ceiling from a comfortably prone position.

The referee and his twin brother appeared, asking him if he felt he could continue. As he wasn't sure they'd actually started, he agreed.

Now painfully aware he was outmatched, Nobber was determined to go to any lengths to avoid his opponent. Without even pretending to face off, he ran like hell around the enclosed space, bouncing off the ropes like a demented pinball with the wardrobe thundering in his wake. Turning his head to try to get a bead on the bad guy, Nobber ploughed smack into another body and shrieked at an embarrassingly high pitch, before realising it was the referee, who gave him a stern lecture and sent him back to his corner for one last try.

Once more he advanced. Once more there was a sudden windstorm, Big Ben struck two and Nobber was admiring the roof. He was sure he'd landed a blow himself, this time. His knuckles were throbbing like an engine.

The referee triplets arrived and, between them, carried Nobber from the ring. As he was escorted, toes dragging behind him, past the catcalls of soldiers of both companies, somebody put his spectacles back on for him. It didn't improve his vision any.

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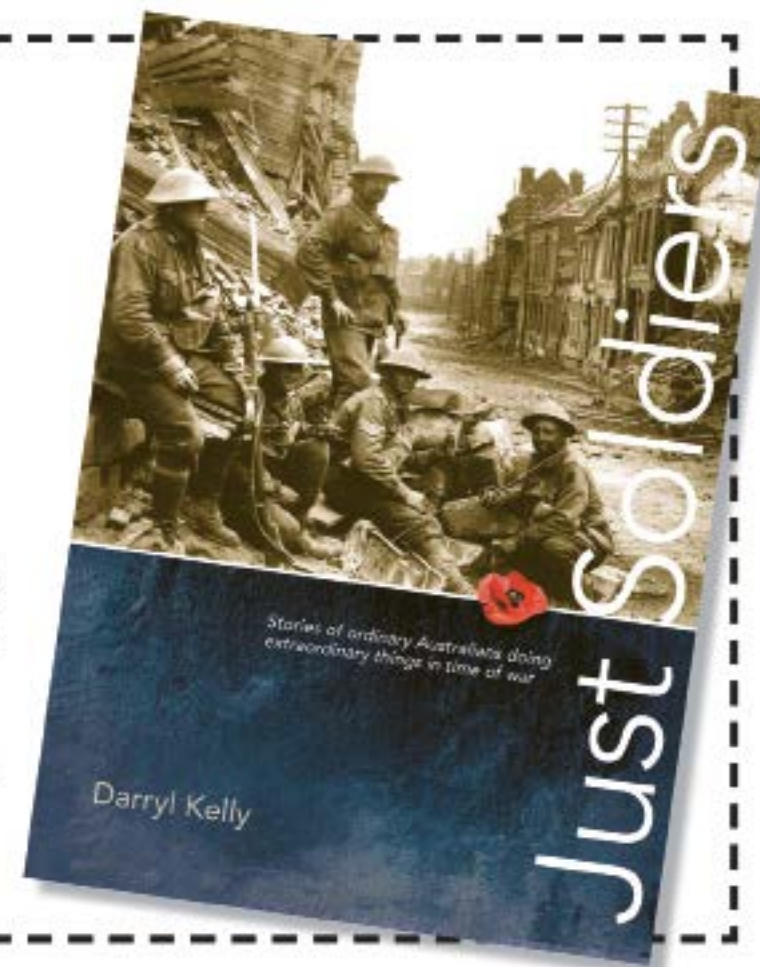
## JUST SOLDIERS:

### STORIES OF ORDINARY AUSTRALIANS DOING EXTRAORDINARY THINGS IN TIME OF WAR

by Darryl Kelly

In 1914, Australia had a population of fewer than 5 million, yet 300,000 from all walks of life volunteered to fight. More than 60,000 were killed and 156,000 wounded, gassed or taken prisoner. This book of WW1 stories, based on fact, portray the human tragedy of war. Many confirm the reputation of Australians as fearless fighting men. Yet, as in life, not all were heroes.

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