

ISSUE 5 \$8.95

CONTACT

AIR, LAND & SEA

THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

OP SUMATRA ASSIST
ADF'S TSUNAMI RESPONSE

SHOOTOUT IN IRAQ
SURVIVING THE JAWS OF THE DEVIL

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At the heart of the image



34



19



28



32



42



46



48



24

09 **FEEDBACK**

Your letters to the editor

10 **THE BIG PICTURE**

Army apprentices launch street machine at Summernats

12 **HEADS UP**

Latest snippets from Australia and around the World

19 **PRIVATE ARMY, FORMER SOLDIER**

Private security contractor in Baghdad's Green Zone

24 **TUBETALK**

What the future holds for the Royal Australian Artillery

28 **AVIATION'S LEADER**

AAAvn takes delivery of its first two Tiger helicopters

32 **OP SUMATRA ASSIST**

Disaster relief in Aceh

34 **STRIKE FORCE**

What it takes to get our Hornets in the air and keep them there

42 **QUEEN'S LIFE GUARD**

The King's Troop preparing to mount guard in London

46 **LESS LETHAL**

When lethal force is less than desirable – less lethal weapons

48 **AMBUSH IN IRAQ**

Surviving the jaws of the Devil

52 **A NIGHT ON THE TOWN**

If 'Hell on Earth' ever applied anywhere, it applied in this place

56 **REVIEWS**

WRC 4: Official game of the FAI World Rally Championship
PLUS: Shellshock giveaway

58 **FRONT-LINE LETTERS**

Private Henry Wright corresponds with his mother

60 **JUST SOLDIERS**

Front-line angel

62 **PRIVATE NOBBER**

Nobber hits the wall



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LIBERTY

THE EDITOR'S LETTER

Issue 5 - March 2005

CONTACT

AIR, LAND & SEA

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Published by Contact Publishing Pty Ltd
PO Box 897, Dickson, ACT 2602, AUSTRALIA
www.militarycontact.com

Printed by Goanna Print, Fyshwick, ACT

CONTACT - AIR LAND & SEA is published in March, June, September and December each year. All subscription and general correspondence should be addressed to the editor. Advertising enquiries should be directed to John Bell.

Subscriptions \$34 per year (incl GST, postage and handling within Australia). Fill out credit card details on the subscription form available in this issue or send a cheque or money order made payable to Contact Publishing, with the completed form, to the editor.

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I'm very excited about this issue for a couple of reasons. First there were a host of obstacles that lined up to stunt progress in the past three months. These have now been overcome – but I won't bore you with the details. Secondly, and most importantly for you, is that the line-up and variety of stories on offer in this issue is very exciting indeed.

Private security contractors in Iraq have copped a hiding along with the rest of the soldiers in that country. But, unlike the armies of the occupying countries, these guys – and indeed girls – don't have the comfort of knowing they can fall back on a long and capable logistics chain that includes medical support. Notwithstanding this, there is no doubt they are, in the main, a capable and competent bunch, drawn mainly from elite and specialist military and police forces around the world.

Starting on page 19, I am very pleased to introduce one from among their midst. "Skippy" (avoiding her real name for security reasons) is a former close-personal-protection trained Australian Army Military Police officer currently operating inside the Green Zone in Baghdad. Her story is not one of gun-fights and excitement but, as would be familiar to many soldiers, "sliding between very busy and dead bored". It does however, give a very unique and everyday insight into life on the ground over there.

It is a coincidence that we have a second story from Iraq this issue, after barely mentioning the place since we started (it's hard to get stories without going there yourself, the ADF has a blanket ban on members talking to the media and the official output is far too sanitised for these pages). Captain Joe Plenzler, an American PR officer, was caught in an ambush last year and, thankfully, survived to tell his story exclusively to CONTACT (it seems our reputation has spread far and wide). Joe's story starts on page 48.

To coincide with the International Airshow at Avalon, our main cover story delves into the world of the F/A-18 Hornet – that sexy beast we'd all love to fly. But rather than concentrate on the beast itself, I was curious to go behind the scenes and find out what it takes to get our fighters in the air and keep them there. In other words, the people behind the machinery. What I found was a large 'family' of professionals who love their Hornets. What I also found – and was blown away by – was a secret control room that takes battlefield command and control to a far higher level than the Forward Air Control I featured in issue #3. For some reason – surely naivety – I had assumed that FAC was the top of the tree. But now it makes a lot more sense.

One of our letter writers this issue asked for more photos by Gary Ramage. I'm pleased to say that Gary did a good deal of work for us in England late last year and we will be featuring his excellent camera skills over many issues. In this issue he takes us behind the scenes at Whitehall, London as The King's Troop, The Royal Horse Artillery, prepare to mount the Queen's Life Guard. Then, in the next issue, we see all the colour and pageantry of the parade itself.

Among our guest writers this issue is respected Defence commentator Ian Bostock who takes us through the possible contenders in a project to re-equip the Royal Australian Artillery. Also, Barney O'Shea, President of the American Helicopter Society's Australian Chapter, examines the structure of Australian Army Aviation after witnessing the delivery of our first two Tiger helicopters.

All I can say is – enjoy.

Brian Hartigan
Managing Editor



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FEEDBACK

HELLO FROM IRAQ

I've been meaning to drop you a line to congratulate you on the magazine. My wife sent me the first copy while I was in Iraq, and I've grabbed every copy since! Good work and best of luck for the future!
Name supplied



Thanks for the Contact magazines you shipped over to the Task Group. They are a very much sought-after item and those of us who have had the opportunity to read them have all been suitably impressed.

Ian G

TOO SHORT

Firstly, congratulations on a fresh and crisp new magazine. I started out with issue 3 and quite enjoyed it. The variety of articles is great and many are quite interesting, but sometimes they seem a little too short and are screaming for more to be written.

Do not take this the wrong way as I am not having a shot at you, rather that you are picking good subject matter and if it were within your bounds it would be great to see some articles get even more in-depth.

With the Avalon Airshow coming up, it would be good to see a good

deal of attention placed on this. Not just a two- or four-page spread with a few paragraphs, but a good solid write up with plenty of images.

I am sure you are inundated with suggestions for articles but another one which I think would be a little different is to follow the course of new army recruits through Kapooka. Follow their transformation from civilians to soldiers. This could provide an insight to any prospective recruit.

Lastly, I'd like to see more of Gary Ramage's imagery. I have seen some of his work and quite admire it.

Mark H

I NEED MORE

I purchased your magazine a few weeks ago. I read it from cover to cover, and again and again. It would have to be the best military magazine. The only bad thing was that I realised that this was issue #3. I was wondering, if you had any lying around could I please buy them from you?

Shaun T

AWESOME MAG

This is a great magazine. I have really enjoyed all of the articles.

I am in the Air Force Cadets in Victoria. I have been in the squadron for a year. My brother was in the army with 3RAR and then moved to the School of Infantry, so I am into army articles (but my favourites are aviation articles). I also really enjoy the stories on Somalia.

Please, can you do an article on the Joint Strike Fighter and more on 3RAR.

Thanks for this awesome mag.

Grant M

COMMANDO ASPIRANT

First of all I have to say thank you for the best magazine ever made. I have hopes of becoming a commando, it is my dream job. Your magazines have

given me plenty of information and even though it is a very challenging occupation, I still want to do it.

I await the next issue with anticipation.

Rafael

THUMBS UP

Hey, I absolutely love this magazine and every article in it. I have all the editions so far and loved the recent article on clearance divers. As someone aspiring to be a CD it helped me heaps.

I know that it is still early times for the mag but I would appreciate it if something about the fairly new TAG (tactical assault group) came up. There isn't a lot of info out there and not many people realise that this group even exists.

Anyways, keep up the marvellous effort and a big thumbs up from me.

Dan B

DIVING FOR INFORMATION

I read in your Issue 4 "feedback" where a reader made the comment that there is a shortage of information out there about RAN Clearance Divers. Your excellent article has gone a long way to correcting that shortage.

We have recently produced a new web site titled "RAN Clearance Divers Association". The site is growing rapidly with branch history, diving articles, current structure and lots of photos from the '50s to the current, being added on a daily basis.

So if you want to find out anything about the RAN's "Bubbly", this is where you will find it - www.rancd-association.com

There is also a web site dedicated to the operations of the "RAN Clearance Diving Team 3" and their war service in Vietnam at - <http://people.smartchat.net.au/~eyt/>

Tony E

STAR LETTER



THIS ISSUE'S STAR LETTER WINS ...
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BEACH-BOY DILEMMA

Hi, I picked up issue 4 of CONTACT while on holiday and thought it was brilliant. It was a tough choice between going to the beach or re-reading the magazine.

The articles are so much more entertaining than those in other military magazines I have read. While reading other magazines I sometimes find myself sheepishly flipping forwards to see how many more dry

statistic-filled pages I have to grind through. With CONTACT I am disappointed when an article finishes, and eager to start the next one.

There is good variety as well, from all arms of the Defence Force as well as older history, recent history and present-day material.

As has been stated before, the first person accounts are very good and I am sure that I speak for many when I say that more of them would be welcome.

The article on CDs was great, it really opened my eyes to what their job requires. Before reading the article I didn't even know they were in Iraq. They really don't get the publicity they deserve.

'Meeting Pte Wright' promises to be good as well - his letters are interesting and thought provoking.

I have to throw in a quick article request - anything on infantry officers or officer cadets at RMC or ADFA would be greatly appreciated.

Ben Clarke

Next Issue...

Thanks to **Cool Kit Australia**, CONTACT will have one pair of M790 boots, as issued to US Army and Air Airforce, to give away. **Value - \$390**
Giveaway will be run in conjunction with our subscription offers. Magazine out June 3



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ARMY STREET MACHINE

The Australian Army officially launched a radical new recruitment and training tool at this year's Summernats car expo in Canberra – a 6x6 Landrover with extensive high performance modification to the engine and drive train.

When fully modified the Army street machine will include:

- Custom differential and axle assemblies with all drive shafts to V8 Supercar specs.
- Supercharged LS1 5.7 litre V8 engine bored and stroked to 7 litres.
- Custom-mapped electronic engine management system.
- Upgraded powerglide automatic transmission.
- Racing-standard six-wheel disc brakes with isolation system to allow different braking configurations.

"I believe this project will raise the profile of some of the technical trades available as well as promoting the Army as a varied and interesting career, to a key target market – young people," Chief of Army Lieutenant General Peter Leahy said at the launch.

The street machine is transported in a specially prepared Kenworth truck and trailer and will travel around the country, appearing at major community events, highlighting the variety of trades and apprenticeships available in the Australian Army.



SOLOMON RAPID RESPONSE

In light of the fatal attack on an Australian Federal Police officer, the Australian Defence Force has deployed a rapid response capability to demonstrate its ability to deploy at short notice.

The rapid deployment group is based on an infantry company of approximately 100 personnel from 3 Brigade in Townsville and will reinforce the military component of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

The strengthened military presence will support police in carrying out their work to complete the restoration of law and order in the Solomon Islands.

F-111 HEALTH COMPO COMING

The Government has considered the findings of the Study of Health Outcomes in Aircraft Maintenance Personnel and has recognised the special nature of the circumstances of those whose health has been adversely affected.

It has agreed to offer a lump sum benefit to those who have suffered exposure, with no differentiation between military, public servants or civilians and will be in addition to normal rights under the various State and Commonwealth compensation schemes.

Additionally, the Government will make funds available to the Department of Veterans' Affairs to provide a cancer



and health screening and disease prevention program.

The compensation will be paid in recognition of health problems arising from maintenance procedures carried out inside the fuel tanks of F-111 aircraft. The size of the lump-sum payment or when it will be paid has not been announced.

AIR WARFARE DESTROYERS CLOSER

Defence has received three proposals from Australian industry in the \$4.5 to \$6 billion Air Warfare Destroyer project.

Proposals from ASC Shipbuilding, Northrop Grumman Ship Systems and Tenix Defence come on top of design proposals from Blohm + Voss, Gibbs & Cox and Izar.

BAE Systems, Raytheon Australia and Saab Systems have also put their hands up for the Combat System-System Engineer aspect of the project.

"The construction of the Air Warfare Destroyers will be one of the most significant shipbuilding projects undertaken in Australia to date, and will provide an enormous challenge for Australian industry," Senator Hill said.

"The AWDs will have the US sourced Aegis air warfare system as the core of their combat system, and will provide sustained maritime area air defence for deployed forces."



LIGHTNING FAST

EDWARDS AIRFORCE BASE, CALIFORNIA — LIGHTNING STRIKES ON THE HORIZON BEHIND THE FLIGHTLINE DURING A THUNDERSTORM. POWER IN SOME AREAS OF THE BASE WAS INTERRUPTED FOR A FEW MINUTES BECAUSE OF THE STORM. PHOTO BY JAMES SHRYNE, USAF



SFDRS UNDER FIRE

F/A-18 fighter jets, armoured personnel carriers and machine guns unleashed simulated fire on recruits at Singleton recently as they attempted a bunker assault during Special Forces Direct Entry Recruiting Scheme training.

Only six months into their Defence careers, the SFDRS recruits successfully achieved their mission, using live ammunition with small arms and grenades.

New Deputy Special Forces Commander Brigadier Tim McOwan watched as the attack went through.

"It is incredible to see how far these recruits have come in just six months.

Their performance as a team continues to meet the challenges set by the Special Forces Training Centre", he said.

To date, 186 members have been enlisted as part of the SFDRS scheme.

X-45 CONTROL MILESTONE

Joint Unmanned Combat Air Systems' (J-UCAS) X-45 program successfully transferred remote control of its X-45A UAV recently to a control station 900 miles away, and back again, completing a major phase of testing.

During the 46-minute flight, command and control of the aircraft was successfully transferred, via satellite, from an operator at Edwards Air Force Base, California, to a mission control operator at a Boeing facility in Washington.

"This flight was an essential step towards proving the systems capability to smoothly transfer command and control between mission control elements," Captain Ralph N. Alderson,



X-45 program manager, said.

"During future missions, these distributed control elements could be housed on air bases or aircraft carriers around the world. Reliable communication paths and control systems are essential parts of providing persistent, lethal J-UCAS presence anywhere, anytime."

FOOD RESEARCH MARCHES ON

An army marches on its stomach – and the best way to a man's heart is through his stomach – and no one knows this better than the staff at the Defence food research facility at Scottsdale, Tasmania.

Fourteen fulltime staff continue to provide research and development in food science, nutrition and quality, specialised, food products to the Australian Defence Force. Through science and research they set ration-pack menus, aiming for a balance between providing the nourishment that hardworking soldiers in the field need and packing a selection of rations that remain edible in all environments and over long periods.

Known by various names over the years, DSTO Scottsdale recently celebrated its fiftieth birthday.



TWO MINUTE BRIEF....

ACEH — TOUGH PLACE TO GET A DRINK

Indonesia's troubled province has had more than its fair share of trouble in recent times.

Aceh, isn't that Jughead's mate?

No. Aceh is a province on the northern tip of the island

of Sumatra in Indonesia. The region has been embroiled in civil unrest since the 1970's.

What's the problem?

The predominately Muslim population has been demanding autonomy from Indonesia since the 1950's. In 1959 the Indonesian Government granted the region "Special Region" status, purportedly taking a more lenient stance on religious expression.

Why not give them independence?

The area is rich in liquefied natural gas and produces considerable revenue for the central government in Jakarta. Among other concerns, the Acehnese feel they are denied the benefit of the revenue generated in their region.

The locals aren't happy then?

Not really. The Free Aceh movement, or Aceh Merdeka, has been fighting for an independent Islamic state since the 1970s. The Indonesian Government has

forcefully resisted the move and has banned foreign tourists and press from reporting from the area citing a "military emergency".

So I shouldn't plan a visit anytime soon?

Not at the moment. Aceh was devastated by the recent Tsunami that wrought havoc through Asia and Western Africa. The capital, Banda Aceh, being close to the epicentre of the earthquake that caused the massive waves, received a double

dose of destruction. The massive earthquake reduced large parts of the city to rubble and, minutes later, the resulting tsunami swept much of what was left into the sea. More than 100,000 Acehnese people died in the disaster.

What are we doing to help?

Australia deployed troops to the area almost immediately after the separatists and the Indonesian Government declared an uncertain truce. There are currently about 1000 defence personal including

medical teams, engineers, air and ground crews deployed to Indonesia to assist in the humanitarian efforts in the Tsunami ravaged areas.

What a mess. Must be tough place to get a drink?

One of the most important contributions to the recovery efforts in Banda Aceh has been the deployment of an Army water purification plant. The plant is providing more than 300,000 litres of clean drinking water for the local population each day.



HEADS UP

AUSSIE PATROL BOATS FOR YEMEN



Length Overall: 37.5 metres
Length Waterline: 32.4 metres
Draft (maximum): 2.2 metres
Engines: 2 x Caterpillar 3512;
 1305 kW at 1800 rpm each
Maximum speed: 29.0 knots
Range: 1000 nautical miles

Austal has launched the tenth and final fast naval patrol boat ordered by the Republic of Yemen.

The boats have been designed to meet a variety of operational requirements including general police missions in coastal waters; customs control and anti-terrorist operations at sea; offshore protection and tracking; surveillance of the Exclusive Economic Zone; defence and protection of national sea areas and operations within integrated task forces.

Western Australia-based Austal's won the contract to supply the patrol boats over 23 other builders from around the world, including Asia and Europe.

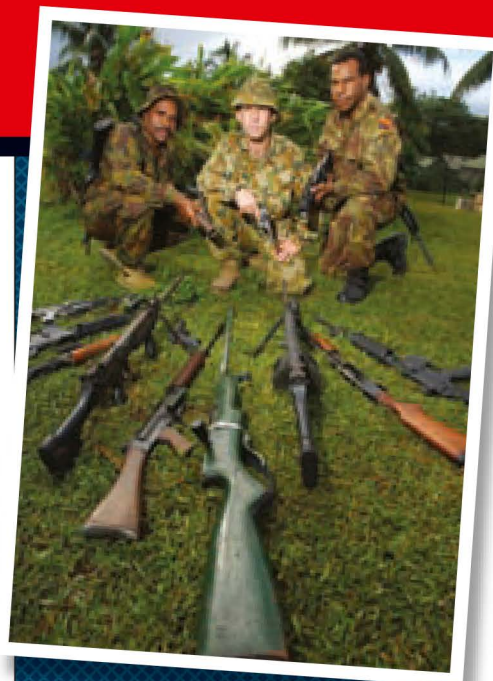
Austal's Sales and Product Development Manager Glenn Williams says Yemen is receiving a well-built, well-engineered and well-supported patrol-boat fleet.

"Based on the eight Bay Class patrol boats Austal delivered to the Australian Customs Service in 1999/2000, these 37.5metre deep V monohull patrol boats offer exceptional value for money by combining world best shipbuilding techniques and commercial-off-the-shelf equipment," he said.

In order to enforce local and international laws, within Yemen's territorial waters each patrol boat is fitted with a 25mm twin barreled naval gun and two 12.7mm heavy machine guns. Weapons lockers for the machine guns and small arms are fitted and ready-use ammunition lockers are located adjacent to each gun mounting.

Each patrol boat operates with a complement of 19, comprising three officers and 16 sailors.

A well-appointed galley and adjacent food storage allowing the vessels to spend at least 14 days at sea on patrol without replenishment. A fresh water maker is fitted to supplement potable water supplies.



ENHANCED PNGDF PACKAGE

Australia and Papua New Guinea have signed a new Defence partnership agreement, which reflects current strategic challenges in the region.

Australian Defence Minister Robert Hill and PNG Defence Minister Mathew Gubag signed the Enhanced Defence Partnership (EDP) agreement at the recent Ministerial Forum in Lae.

"Australia and PNG have mutual strategic interests in working together for a peaceful and prosperous region free of terrorism and transnational crime," Senator Hill said.

"Our operations in the Solomon Islands demonstrate the constructive role our defence forces can play in promoting regional security."

The EDP covers a wide range of defence activities including force development, training, exercising, infrastructure development, maritime surveillance and advisory assistance. It also calls for the PNGDF to be reduced from 3300 to 2000 personnel.

BRIT FFR ROLLS OUT

The British Army's new Truck Utility Medium (TUM) has been unveiled in a Fitted for Radio (FFR) variant.

A £20 million procurement project will see 360 of the new TUM(FFR) – a four wheel drive Pinzgauer – purchased to make up a fleet shortfall.

What sets the Pinzgauer apart from other vehicles in its class is its drivability. Anti-lock brakes, electronic traction control and electronic brake distribution have never before been incorporated in a similar vehicle.

It also features an automatic gearbox, making it easier to deal with off-road conditions, reducing driver fatigue.



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FUTURE SOLDIER

The European Aeronautic Defence and Space company (EADS) has been contracted to supply the German Bundeswehr with a new future soldier system that aims to decisively improve the protection of individual soldiers on dangerous missions.

The company announced on Friday that EADS Defence Electronics (DE) obtained a 70-million euro order for 196 IdZ Future Soldier basic systems, which are thought to be destined for service in Afghanistan.

"The 'Infantryman of the Future' is based on an integrated system approach that combines aspects of self-defense, communication, orienteering or navigation, and arms," Bernhard Gerwert, Head of EADS Defence Electronics said.

Individual infantryman will be equipped with a ballistics-protective vest made from the most modern materials, nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) protection, night vision equipment, digital navigation and communication equipment with GPS, tactical voice and data communication, as well as improved armament.

COMBAT UPGRADE FOR COLLINS

Australia's Collins Class submarines are set to benefit from a combat systems upgrade under an agreement worked out with the US.

The system, called the AN/BYG-1 Combat Control System, will be installed in both US Navy and Royal Australian Navy submarines under the new Armaments Cooperation Project.

Defence Minister Robert Hill said the agreement follows the approval of the \$455 million Collins Replacement Combat System Project in

2002 and will lead to significant upgrades to the capability of the Collins fleet, commencing in 2006.

"Cooperating with the US Navy means we have the opportunity to influence the design and development of the systems and to participate in a continuous upgrade process," Senator Hill said.

These combat systems will complement the new advanced capability torpedoes for the Australia's submarines approved in 2002.

NATO ENDS FIRST PEACE MISSION

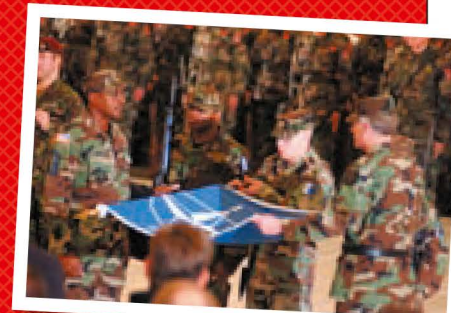
A ceremony in Sarajevo on 2 December, 2004, marked the historic conclusion of the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the launch of the European Union's follow-on EUFOR.

NATO ended its first peacekeeping commitment almost exactly nine years after the organisation deployed forces to the troubled region.

The decision to withdraw is said to reflect the improved security situation in the country.

Secretary General of NATO Jaap De Hoop Scheffer said progress made in the country in the past decade was unimaginable in the early 1990s. People no longer lived in fear, state institutions had been established and there was respect of human rights.

The 7000-strong EUFOR has now assumed responsibility for peacekeeping operations, while NATO has established a headquarters in Sarajevo to assist the country with defence reform.



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times more oxygen to your eyes than ordinary soft contact lenses. NIGHT & DAY delivers so much oxygen to your eyes that in research studies* eyes wearing NIGHT & DAY lenses were similar after sleeping to eyes wearing no contact lenses at all.

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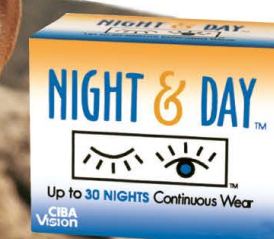
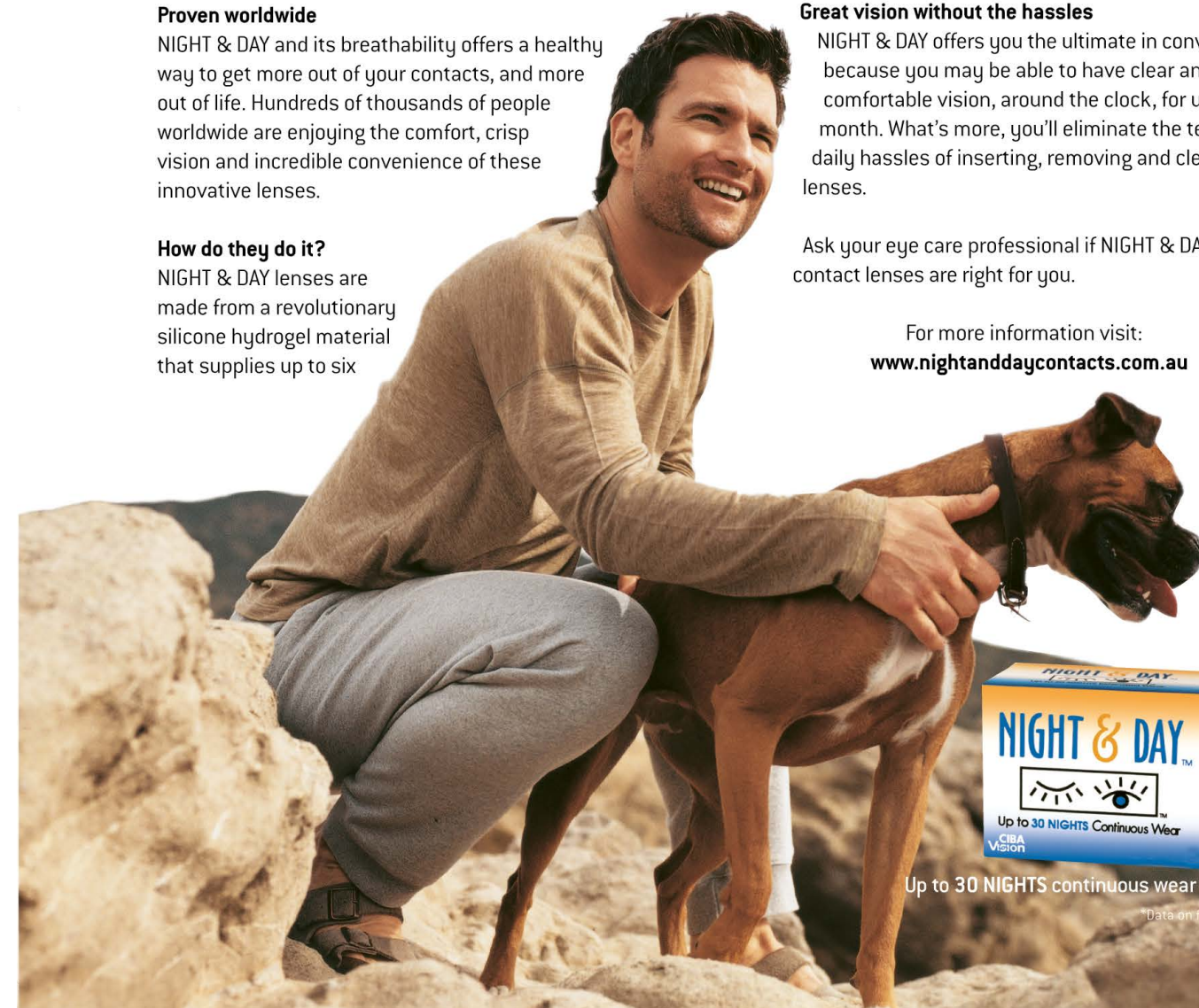
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*Data on file. LV11322



PAPPY PIPS MASSIVE RECORD

PREMIER defence long-distance runner Private Tony 'Pappy' Kleiner has left his own indelible mark on history at the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, by winning its annual cross country 20 consecutive times.

Kleiner, now 40, was well behind midway around the 7.5km track but ran the last 1200 metres in just 3min 20 sec to snatch victory literally on the finish line from second-place getter WO2 Richard Quirk.

The extraordinary 28 mins 26 secs struggle of wills and fitness by Kleiner and fairytale home straight victory posted an extraordinary military sporting record that is unlikely to be broken.

Known universally as Pappy, the Queensland and Australian long-distance representative, said he had no immediate plans to stop training but he could now retire happily with the milestone in place.

"I had a back operation two years ago and the last couple of years have been tough," Pte Kleiner said.

"Nothing is a sure thing any more and I have really got to work for it – and turning 40 doesn't help things either."

Event co-ordinator Cpl Wayne Heath said it was an extraordinary race.

"The enormity of the victory for one person to win a race 20 years in a row is a fantastic achievement, being available to run injury free, not suffering from the flu and not on course or deployment in itself is amazing," Cpl Heath said.

Champion Australian marathon runner Pat started the race and ultimately presented the winners trophy to Kleiner – with the suggestion the 'Heartbreak Hill' should be renamed Kleiner's Climb to mark the endurance feat.

We at CONTACT were so awestruck by the enormity of Pappy Kleiner's achievement that we are rewarding him with a free subscription for the next 20 issues.

ROULETTES LOSE PLANE

Two PC-9 training aircraft from the Royal Australian Air Force's Roulettes display team collided in mid air while practising for the 2005 display season.

One pilot was forced to eject from his aircraft while the other was able to recover to RAAF Base East Sale.

The pilots involved were Flight Lieutenants Mark Ellis and Roland Morscheck. Neither was seriously injured.

Flight Lieutenant Morscheck was forced to eject from his aircraft, which was completely destroyed.

Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Angus Houston said he welcomed the news that both pilots were safe.

"I commend them both for their professionalism under the circumstances."

Only two scheduled air displays had to be cancelled following the accident. Other Roulette commitments including the International Airshow at Avalon are set to go ahead.



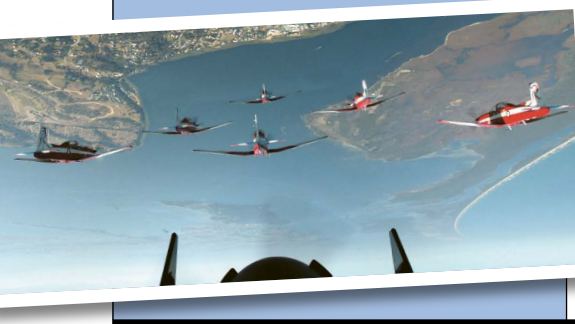
FIRST OF CLASS NAMED

The first of the Royal Australian Navy's fleet of new high performance patrol boats was officially named at a ceremony held at the Austal shipyard in Henderson, Western Australia last month.

The 56m, all-aluminium monohull was named "Armidale" by Jana Stone, the eldest daughter of Ordinary Seaman Donald Lawson who served on the original HMAS Armidale, a Bathurst-class corvette, during World War II. "Combining endurance, improved

seakeeping, advanced onboard systems and long term economy of operation, these vessels are at the leading edge of international patrol boat design and construction," Austal's Executive Chairman, John Rothwell said.

Construction of "Armidale" commenced in May last year and it was launched on January 5. It is on schedule for delivery to the Royal Australian Navy, in May this year, at its home port of Darwin where it will be commissioned into service. Construction of the second and third boats in the class has already commenced.



PRIVATE ARMY FORMER SOLDIER

While foreign corporations cash in on massive contracts to supply everything from toilet paper to fuel-tanker drivers in support of the military effort in Iraq, from an individual's point of view, the consequential lure of high wages – and a little excitement – is too tempting to pass up.

WORDS
BRIAN HARTIGAN
PHOTOS
SUPPLIED BY 'SKIPPY'

It is estimated that in Iraq today there are as many as 20,000 foreign civilian contractors working in military-support roles.

Among them are thousands of private security contractors – men and women employed to protect strategically important people and facilities in a very volatile

environment. In fact, it is said there are more private security contractors operating in Iraq than there are British soldiers on the ground.

But where have they all come from? Most are highly trained former soldiers drawn from many of the world's elite forces – including Australia. Upwards of 40 of our own SASR troopers have taken discharge in the past year, and are once again heavily armed and patrolling the streets of a foreign war zone – dressed in civvies.

They are not all former SASR, however. Meet Skippy, a former lieutenant in the Australian Army Military Police – who, although will be recognised by many of her former colleagues, does not want her real name published while still operating in Iraq.

Skippy joined the Army's Ready Reserve Scheme in 1993 for the financial assistance the scheme offered young people attending university. After a while, however, she found herself more and more enjoying the military side of life than that of a student. So, in 1997, she eventually transferred to the Army full time. She believed she could make a career in uniform.

1998 she was advised to apply to the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and was subsequently accepted. She says she never once looked at return-of-service-obligations (ROSO) nor tried to work out when she might be free to leave the Army – she didn't need to, she simply knew she would be in the job for 20-plus years.

But as time passed, she changed her mind.

"As a Military Police officer, I loved my job and I loved all the courses I could attend and the opportunities that were offered," she says.

"I loved instructing on riot control and getting involved in training my troops. I worked hard to achieve the physical standards required for the MP CPP (Close Personal Protection) course, and successfully passing that course.

"However, as a lieutenant in MPs, due to be posted to captain, my career prospects did not look too good. There were the inevitable desk jobs, moving from OPs to doctrine writing to staff jobs."

After completing what she says was the most exciting, physically demanding and arguably the best course available in the Army for a female, a desk job did not appeal.

"I joined the Army to serve my country, to face new and exciting challenges and to specialise in security and I could see those ideals fading rapidly as time went by – I was not able to specialise in CPP.

"As a female in the Army, I was unable to train or even be considered for a special-forces role, so I eventually began to see the Army as a very limiting organisation for me personally."

Skippy started looking at civvy street and the deeper she dug, the more she discovered there was a whole new world out there to explore. Areas such as Iraq were crying out for good-quality CPP operatives.

Early in 2004, Skippy informed her superiors that her heart was set on operations in Iraq and it was her desire to go – in uniform or out.

With no deployment prospects on the horizon, she eventually took the bold steps towards discharge. Unfortunately, having truthfully informed the Army of her intentions, there was no choice but a full separation – transferring to even the Inactive Reserve was not compatible with her new career choice.

With just a little trepidation, Skippy said goodbye to family and friends in Australia and set out for Iraq in early October 2004.

First was a training course in country, which, although physically and mentally challenging, was not too out of the ordinary for a CPP qualified former MP.

She settled in fairly quickly and, in an email home on November 11, gave her worried family an insight into her routine...

"Things here are fine. I mostly spend my days sitting at the Convention Centre just creating a security presence. When I am not

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doing that, we have time off for admin and doing various small tasks around the area.

"We've only had one major operation so far. I did not go on that one, but all others I will. I am trying to source some local attire (the black dishdash that covers women from head to toe), so that when we do our recons, I blend into the community.

"The guys have also grown beards and dress like the local men too. I swear I actually thought they were Iraqi's when I was picked up from the airport.

"The food here is great. We eat with the Americans, so there is a huge selection of food available. I have to watch what I eat so that I won't come back weighing more than when I left. In our house kitchen we don't really cook food, but we do have a stove, microwave and fridge. The fridge is always stocked with soft drink, milk, bottled water and beer. The team normally gets together once a week for a few drinks.

"The toilet system here is crap (excuse the pun). The toilets barely work and it is the norm to throw your toilet paper in a bin and not the toilet. The drainage system is too small and clogs up quickly.

"We have a small group of cleaning staff who do our cleaning (especially the kitchen, which can get quite messy) and do the laundry. They wash and iron our clothes ready for the next day.

"I went to wash my coffee cup the other day and the lady nearly had a heart attack. She rushed over and told me not to do it. I guess she must get in trouble if us 'westerners' do any work.

"There are about three or four ladies cleaning and one man who is in charge of them all. They do all the yukky tasks and he has the more elite job of ironing."

Despite settling in to her accommodation fairly quickly, her new colleagues and bosses were at first a little sceptical about her abilities on the job.

They had already seen two other females come and go in recent months, and Skippy would have to prove her worth.

Her people-management skills as an officer came in handy in the early days as she set about sorting out an unworkable leave roster for the next six months.

On 14 November she wrote home again...

"Everything is going really well over here. I spend most of my time in the Green or International Zone. We rarely go out into the Red one, and if we do, then we are dressed as locals. I think we are in more danger of being shot at by the Americans than the insurgents though! I hope that alleviates any of your worries, Mum.

"I can't speak much Arabic yet. Only two words – lam (no) and na'am (yes). It's pretty limiting, but everyone in the Green Zone speaks English anyway.

"I get paid quite a bit of money to do nothing much during the day. We occasionally will have to go out to another town, but that is usually a major operation for us and there is a lot of planning involved.

"When I get some photos of my team mates I will send them your way.

"I am having a great time here and enjoying myself."

A week later...

"We have a new project manager that has just come into the job. He's had a look at my resume and is talking about me assisting with training and taking over the training of our team when the tactical commander goes on leave. I don't know what I have got myself into! It should mean an extra \$75 US a day though.

"I almost got a trip out of the country with one of the VIP's. It would have been a 'swan trip' for a couple of weeks, but it fell through at the last moment.

"I've heard the elections are planned for about 30 Jan. I am due for leave that day. This will now vary depending

on the threat level on the airport road and civilian aircraft leaving Baghdad around that time."

Skippy's need and desire to blend into the local community received a boost later in the month when the personal assistant to the chief Iraqi commissioner gave her a scarf as a gift. She also showed the young Aussie how to wear the scarf properly and how to apply makeup in the same fashion as the local women. By the end of November Skippy was reporting a very typical phenomenon that any soldier could relate to – "sliding between very busy and dead bored"

As the only female on the team, she was assigned anything to do with female VIPs, including sitting in on personal profiling

down. The people are used to seeing males all dressed up in security kit, but they were obviously not used to seeing a female. They were staring at me as though I was an alien. So I stared right back at them."

Later in the same email she mentions that she sees the Aussie troops around town quite frequently. Some were former colleagues or subordinates. Now they are all mates.

A couple of days later, while filling sandbags, it was the former lieutenant's job to tie the little piece of string around the neck of the full sandbag. While the job wasn't too taxing mentally, it was a welcome diversion on an otherwise boring day. It also gave her cause to smile as she recalled the many times she did the exact

eaten anything too exotic.

"We do have a choice of eating either the food at the house or eating where we were previously. I was initially eating at the other place, but felt sorry for the poor bloke cooking and slaving over the kitchen. Anyway, compared to my cooking abilities, how could I pass judgement on him? I just hope the food has not been poisoned!"

"P.S. Attached is a picture of me and two of my close friends. No I am not intoxicated – my hair is a mess because I am a busy person with not much time for personal grooming!"

After surviving a mixture of work and parties over Christmas, Skippy was back at the computer terminal composing another letter to the family she left behind in Australia...



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and medical interviews. By now she was fully settled in, accepted by her colleagues as part of the team and beginning to get some of the real missions she went there to experience in the first place.

Her email of 29 November reports...

"We did a really good job the other day. We had to take one of the female VIPs out into the Red Zone to Baghdad University, to give a lecture on the upcoming elections. Naturally, I was the bodyguard for her. She was very nice.

"We did all the recons, planning and preparation for the event, as it was a major operation for us. When we arrived she met some people and had lunch. She wanted me to sit right next to her and share her meal. I thanked her very much for the offer, and took one chip out of courtesy, but I couldn't actually share her meal, because I was 'on the job'.

"Later, as she gave her lecture to a large group of people – I didn't understand a word she said – I sat nearby watching the crowd. The rest of the team were scattered around the area.

"I am glad I lowered my profile by sitting

same task in the Australian Army – but for a lot less money.

Just before Christmas, Skippy wrote again to her family, who were missing her even more, given the season that was in it. To their relief, the report from the front line was, as was becoming the norm, filled with everyday domestic-type news...

"You will be happy to hear, we now have our own cooks in the house, so we are not just eating American food any more.

"We have a couple of Iraqi cooks that do our meals for us. I don't have breakfast though. I buy porridge from the local PX store (American-run shop like an IGA supermarket), and coffee.

"We were initially concerned about the hygiene and so on of the cooks, but as it turns out, the food is not so bad. It's normal-type food. They cook chicken drumsticks, steak and even a spaghetti and mince dish. They also cut up tomatoes, cucumber and capsicum for a salad. So I have not

"I did at one stage have stomach aches for 17 days in a row. It was driving me crazy. I knew it was something in the food, but I didn't know what.

"I have now worked it out – the milk over here is not fresh, we use the artificial stuff. All the preservatives and crap in it was upsetting my stomach. I stopped using it with my cereal and have now gone onto the powdered stuff. I feel like a brand new person."

She also had further complaints about the inadequate plumbing. With the outside temperature as low as five to 15 degrees in the middle of winter, warm showers had become a luxury.

"We are living in a house built for five people that is currently being used to house 30. The plumbing and hot water system just can't keep up with it. Unless you get up very early in the morning, or anytime before nine at night, you will have a cold shower.

"Unfortunately, if I go for a run during the day, I can't wait until 9pm to have a shower, so I have to hold my breath and shower in freezing water.

"But, no one else usually showers at night, so at least I get a nice hot one then."

Perhaps surprisingly, it wasn't until almost the end of December that the former military police officer mentioned weapons to any great extent. She reported that many operators in the country have bought their own guns.

"Every person I talk to has their own depending on their individual preferences.

"I am thinking about getting an MP4. It's a good, light, versatile weapon for a female. We also jump in and out of vehicles quite regularly, so it is good for that as well. It is 5.56mm as well and better than the Steyr I recon.

"Unfortunately, I would have to sell it again before I leave the country."

Then immediately changing the subject...

"Enough about guns. I still have time for facials and French manicures. It's still nice to relax in my room and be a girl.

"We are getting another girl here very shortly. Hopefully she will be all right and not like the previous ones they had then fired. Some of the guys know her and say she is good. If she doesn't work out well, they probably won't let me go on leave."

The New Year brought a noticeable change in tone...

"It is getting quite crazy over here leading up to the elections. Our greatest danger is travelling out along the BIAP (airport) route. It is the most dangerous road in the world. It is more dangerous than any other place that you can imagine.

"To allay your fears, Mum, army convoys and overt CPP teams are the ones being hit. We don't look like a conventional CPP team



– we blend in very well. The other groups are more overt in their vehicles and driving drills, and are much more attractive targets.

"We still have to worry more about the Americans hitting us.

"Fortunately we haven't been attacked yet, but we are mostly afraid (or concerned)



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about the suicide bombers. People drive up in vehicles and then blow themselves up.

"The governor that was killed the other day would have had a western team on him. Apparently the bodyguard was also killed."

But even in the middle of a battle zone, even on a serious mission, there are lighter moments...

"I did a trip to Kirkuk the other day. Four of us flew by Black Hawk helicopter to a secure compound so three of our commissioners could have a big important meeting with the Kurdish people. That was a straightforward trip for us.

"There was one funny incident, however. We were told to make sure we wore all our kit so that we would look professional in front of the other security companies there. We were told to borrow M4 and MP5s instead of using our AK 47s – God forbid if the other companies saw us using archaic weapons.

"Anyway, there we were, looking Gucci with all the kit and weapons of a slick CPP team. But when the Black Hawk landed, one of our guys (with all his kit) fell out of the helicopter in front of all the other teams. It was hilarious. I laughed all day and half the night over that one."

Summing up her motivation for CONTACT, Skippy says that after training all her adult life to serve in combat areas, she has finally been offered the chance to do the job for real.

"It is ironic that I have been training all of my army life to do this job, but could not do it until I became a civilian.

"Sure the money over here is great, but it is not the motivating factor.

"From my perspective, it is the chance to finally put skills I've been trained to use, to good use. It is the adrenaline rush at completing a daily task without incident. It is the bonding and mateship you get from working in a team environment."

Sound familiar?



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The Northern Territory Police Force is an equal opportunity employer. Applications from women, indigenous people and people from non-English speaking background are particularly welcome.

TUBETALK

WORDS IAN BOSTOCK

If there's one element critical to the viability of any army it's the ability to bring as much firepower to the fight as possible. Whether this is achieved via the latest generation direct and in-direct fire support systems fed by advanced sensor-to-shooter data and communications links or by the battle-proven method of concentrating fire on an area until nothing inside that zone lives, the intent is the same; only the approach differs.

If anything has emerged from the most recent combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq it's that the well known tenets of survival and success on the land battlefield – firepower, protection and mobility – were relearned and reinforced among US and British forces.

For the Australian Army, being as it is rich in skilled people but manpower and asset poor, the ability to offset its small numbers of men and materiel will be crucial to it remaining viable as a fighting force into the future. Thankfully, there are several projects within the current Defence Capability Plan which seek to address deficiencies in Army's fire-support capabilities. Among these, a certain Project Land 17 is set to provide a serious improvement in the delivery of in-direct fire support.

Land 17 will also, of course, acquire a range of integrated command and control systems and enhanced artillery munitions, but it is the type and nature of the delivery platforms that are of most interest. With a budget allocation of \$600-\$750 million, entry into service of new artillery systems will commence between 2008-2010.

Essentially, both the Army's Hamel 105mm light guns and the M-198 155mm towed howitzers are to be replaced, although a quantity of 105mm guns will probably be upgraded and retained for use by light forces.

While few concrete details have emerged about precisely what capabilities (and therefore corresponding artillery types) the Land 17 project office will seek out, it is known that the new system will be characterised by improved responsiveness, greater tactical mobility, autonomy and survivability.

It is generally accepted that this rather vague outline of a new artillery system will translate into a self-propelled howitzer

(SPH) of some description. The calibre is likely to be the same as that being introduced or planned by most western armies – 155mm 52 calibre.

At the upper end of the capability scale resides full-tracked SPHs such as the British AS 90 Braveheart and the German PzH 2000. Big, armour-encased and turreted, such systems are almost certain to fall outside what is required under Land 17 and what is affordable – both in unit cost and in-service support costs.

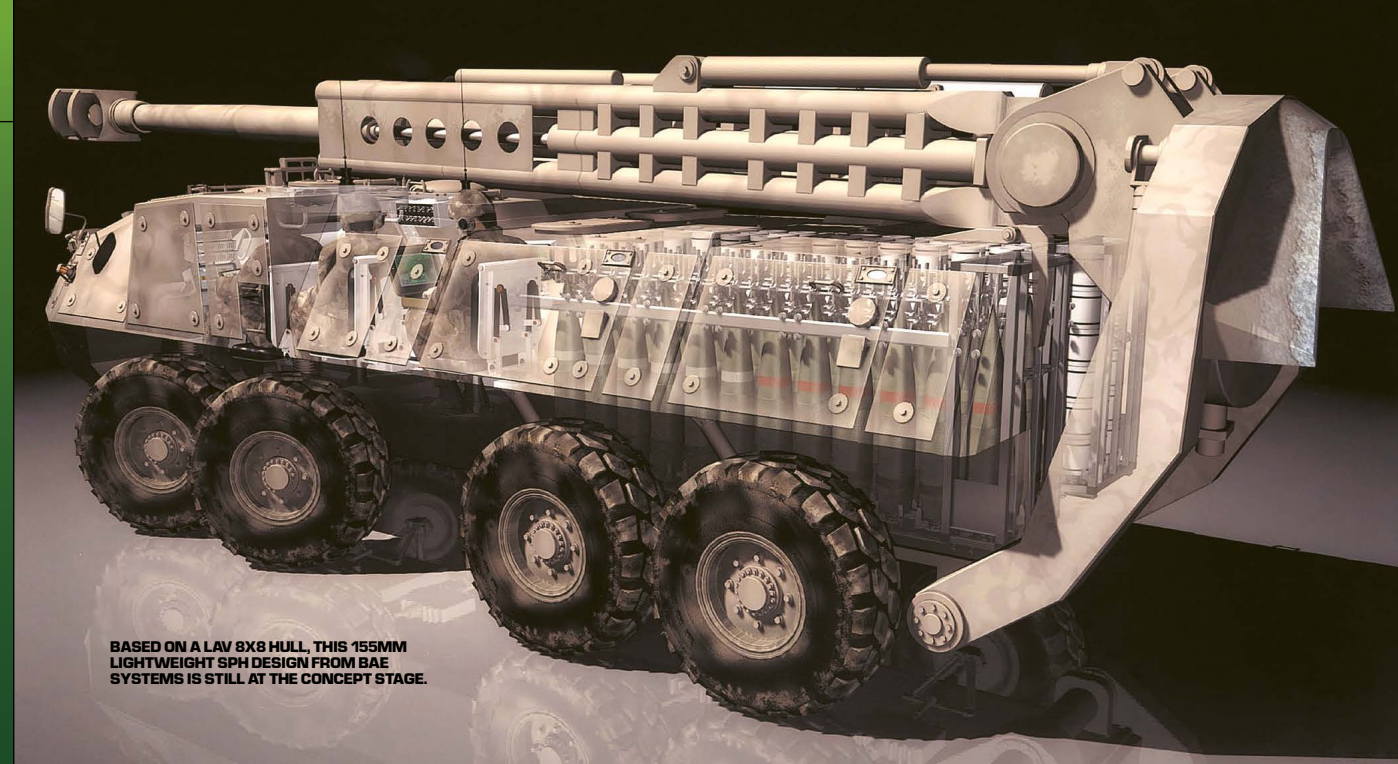
Besides, does Army really need a heavily

armoured SPH, when about the only chance an enemy might get to loose off an RPG at a future Australian artillery battery would be when it moves in convoy? That's a big maybe. Would it not be sufficient to ensure that protection is provided for the SPH crew only?

Tracked versus wheeled platform considerations also come into play, where the need to close with the enemy over all types of difficult terrain requires direct-fire armoured fighting vehicles to be tracked, but where the ability of SPHs to stand-off and engage the enemy enables selection of ground to suit wheeled vehicles. This, however, won't stop Germany's Krauss-Maffei Wegmann from offering its new Artillery Gun Module (AGM) for Land 17. Installed on a surplus Multiple Launch Rocket System tracked hull and with a fully automated and unmanned turret, the AGM has a combat weight of 27 tonnes.

Such ponderings bring us to the next category in SPHs: those that are mounted on a wheeled chassis. Smaller overall, lighter and cheaper to buy, operate and own, there are numerous suppliers of wheeled SPHs that will no doubt come under close scrutiny for Land 17. But even here, there are limits to just how big and heavy a wheeled SPH can be before it becomes unattractive from the Australian Army's perspective.

Systems such as the giant South African G6-52 6x6 155mm SPH is regarded as

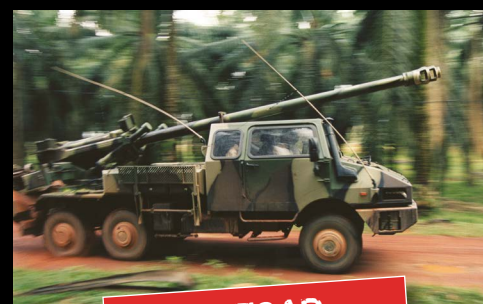


BASED ON A LAV 8X8 HULL, THIS 155MM LIGHTWEIGHT SPH DESIGN FROM BAE SYSTEMS IS STILL AT THE CONCEPT STAGE.



THE US ARMY IS CURRENTLY FIELDING THE HIMARS SIX-ROUND ROCKET LAUNCHER.

CONTENDER WHEELED SPHS FOR LAND 17



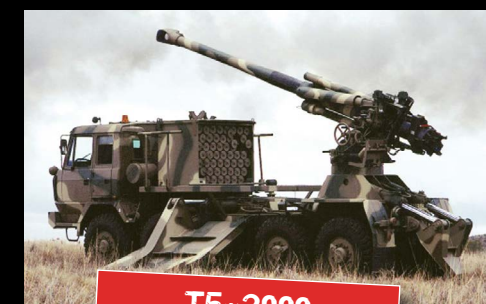
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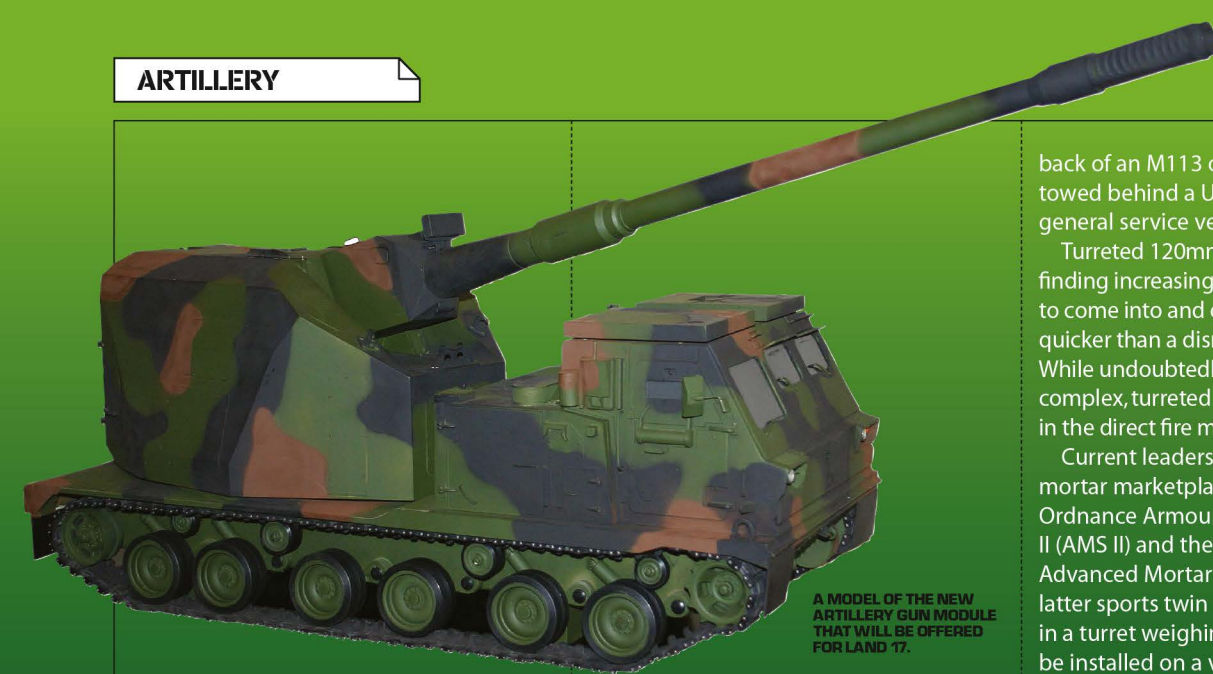


FH77 BW L52



T5-2000

Calibre:	155mm/52	155mm/52	155mm/52	155mm/52
Max. Gun Range (standard ammo):	42km	41km	40km	40km
Maximum Firing Rate:	6rpm	5rpm	6rpm	8rpm
Time into Action:	<60 sec	90 sec	30 sec	90 sec
Time Out of Action:	<60 sec	90 sec	30 sec	90 sec
Onboard Ammo:	18 rounds	28 rounds	24 rounds	22 rounds
Mobility Platform:	Renault 6x6 truck	Tatra 6x6 truck	Volvo 6x6 truck	Tatra 8x8 truck
Crew:	5	4-6	3-6	6
Combat Weight:	17.7 tonnes	22 tonnes	30 tonnes	22 tonnes
Road Speed:	100km/h	80km/h	70km/h	80km/h
Road Range:	600km	1000km	500km approx.	600km



A MODEL OF THE NEW ARTILLERY GUN MODULE THAT WILL BE OFFERED FOR LAND 17.

having a fine pedigree but at a combat weight of 47 tonnes, there must be question marks over its ability to self-deploy off-road in Australia's near region and across other difficult terrain.

The Bofors Defence FH77 BW L52 comes in at around 30 tonnes and is under development for the Swedish Army. It may also prove a tad too heavy for Australia's needs, although the very capable Volvo A25C 6x6 articulated truck chassis it sits on may offset this to some degree.

Probably the most refined of the world's latest generation wheeled SPHs is the Caesar from French arms manufacturer Giat. Ordered by the French Army in quantity (77 units to date), the Caesar system has all the indications of being a particularly well conceived and designed product. Even with a cursory evaluation of the system, it becomes clear the French have done their homework on this one: every feature has been designed based on operational experience; reduced crew requirements; retention of vehicle mobility in confined environments such as mountain roads and bush tracks; ease of transportability; and an effective interface between crew and gun operation.

Like the FH77 BW L52, the Israeli ATMOS (Autonomous Truck Mounted System) from Soltam Systems and the T5-2000 from South Africa's Denel group are still under development and yet to receive a formal domestic or export production order. All four systems (detailed in the table below) feature armoured crew cabs that provide protection from 5.56/7.62mm ball ammunition and shell splinters.

Given that many arms suppliers make much of the ability of their respective equipment to be transported internally by C-130 Hercules, C-130 transportability is, in fact, not as relevant for the ADF as it is for others such as the US with its huge numbers of available aircraft. The RAAF simply doesn't have enough airframes to

entertain the idea of moving SPHs by air. Ditto for armoured vehicles. When was the last time you saw an RAAF C-130 deliver an ASLAV to a distant theatre of operations? Sure they can do it, but it rarely happens in real life. Same goes for SPHs.

Remember also that Australia's C-130J-30 models (while featuring a stretched fuselage to take longer loads or an extra pallet of cargo) have a total payload capacity that is actually 3000kg less (at 17,000kg) than the older H models, thereby effectively ruling out carriage of even the lightest of the candidate wheeled SPHs, and leaving such tasks to the C-130H fleet. The reality is, therefore, that Army's new SPHs will be transported wherever they need to go via ship, not aircraft.

Other weapon systems might also get a guernsey in later phases of Land 17, including 120mm mortars. Long established in many western armies, 120mm mortars are said to enjoy lethality levels close to that of 155mm artillery. However, due to their much smaller size and weight and lower manning requirements 120mm mortars can be mounted on a wider range of mobility platforms.

In Australia's case – although there are no known projects calling for such a capability at this time – options would include operation from a turntable in the

back of an M113 or ASLAV 8x8 or simply towed behind a Unimog or equivalent general service vehicle.

Turreted 120mm mortar systems are finding increasing favour for their ability to come into and out of action much quicker than a dismounted mortar. While undoubtedly more expensive and complex, turreted mortars can also be used in the direct fire mode out to about 800m.

Current leaders in the 120mm turreted mortar marketplace include the Royal Ordnance Armoured Mortar System II (AMS II) and the Patria Hagglunds Advanced Mortar System (AMOS). The latter sports twin smoothbore barrels in a turret weighing 4400kg that can be installed on a variety of tracked and wheeled armoured vehicle hulls. AMOS is able to come into action in under 30 seconds, out of action in less than 10 seconds and can fire off the first four rounds in 8 seconds. Maximum range using standard ammunition is 10km, with maximum rate of fire a staggering 26 rounds per minute. The AMOS turret installed on a stretched M113 hull has a combat weight of 17.5 tonnes.

It is likely that the early phases of Land 17 will focus on the procurement of tube artillery. That is not to say that other less conventional (for the Australian Army at least) forms of providing in-direct fire support to ground forces may not be evaluated in the fullness of time. These include new kit such as the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) mounted on a Stewart & Stevenson 6x6 truck and recently introduced into US Army service; and the new British Army Lightweight Mobile Artillery Weapon System (Rocket). Both systems carry a six-round launch pod firing 227mm rockets.

But in the medium term and if I had to put my money on which wheeled SPH I considered most likely to get up under Land 17, the hard earned would go down on the Caesar.

Ian Bostock is an independent defence analyst and the Australian correspondent for Jane's defence magazines.



AMONG THE LATEST GENERATION OF SELF-PROPELLED 120MM MORTAR SYSTEMS IS THE AMS II, SHOWN HERE MOUNTED ON A STRETCHED M113 HULL.

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Find out why thousands of
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ARMY JOINS

The acceptance of the first two Eurocopter Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter (ARH) Tigers into the Australian Army Aviation (AAAvn) Corps puts Australia with the top nations in the world of armed reconnaissance and strike helicopters.

WORDS BARNEY O'SHEA PICS ADF

Chief of Army Lieutenant General Peter Leahy described the event as, "A great day for the Army," when he accepted the first two Tigers on behalf of the Army on 15 December last at the Army Aviation Centre, Oakey, Queensland.

Far more important than the symbology of the delivery, is the part Tiger will play into making the Australian Army, and other services the "mobile, fast, hard-hitting force," the ADF has worked and planned for.

The need for more assault helicopters was emphasised in numerous Defence White Papers and documents. The mobile element will also be improved with the introduction into service of the Eurocopter MRH90, the procurement of which was separately announced late last year under Project AIR9000. These two machines will provide a force multiplier to the present AAAvn capability, which has been proven again and again in operations in many countries.

That capability, however, has been demonstrated in aging, under-equipped aircraft for a long time — and with a prestigious safety record. Night flying for instance, using the Kiowa (first introduced in 1971) fitted with forward-looking infra red, both to develop the capability in operations such as East Timor and to enable the pilots to gain experience with new technology.

Tiger will provide an armed-reconnaissance-force capability, essential to success in any action, "to find, identify and react," but now with the added armed capability. This will enable reconnaissance by fire, the Tiger to protect itself and to provide armed response quickly if required. The new systems and sensors will enable the Tiger to include others, such as HQ Army Aviation and the Land Commander, in its data download.

Until now, the main element in reconnaissance was described by army

aviators as the mark-one eyeball. AAAvn has been preparing for the round-the-clock capability by using the Kiowa fitted with infra red, to work at night. The Chief of Army emphasised this point when addressing Dr Lutz Bertling, Australian Aerospace Chairman, and his team, "I know that you understand, that at 2am on a dark night in the future, our soldiers will be relying upon your product for their lives and will be glad that you designed it and built it the way you did."

Tiger makes the greatest use of modern technologies with composite airframe to minimise weight and reduce radar cross section, the latest generation engines and rotors, an integrated suite of sensors

and weapons, latest generation target identification and acquisition sight — and all built with low-cost maintenance in mind.

The capabilities of the Tiger not only greatly improve AAAvn capability they provide greater safety for the aircrews. One feature in particular — to observe with sensors from a safe distance — reducing risks to the crew and helicopter, day or night. The roof-mounted sight coupled with helmet-mounted sights and displays enable the crew to acquire targets quickly and accurately and bring the weapon systems to bear speedily.

The Tiger brings with it a tremendous capability with its sensors and systems, with the ability to communicate the

land-battle situation to ground forces and prosecute targets with cannon, rocket or Hellfire as the case may require. These capabilities are all a quantum leap forward in Army Aviation's contribution to the hardened and networked Army being developed by the Chief of Army and Staff. By integrating this Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter capability into the combined arms team, that is soon to include the Abrahams tank, we will force multiply our combat power and effectiveness to make our most demanding war-fighting task more achievable.

The acceptance of the Eurocopter ARH Tiger on 15 December 2004 established the Australian Army Aviation Corps as

AVIATION LEADERS

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being among the world front runners in army aviation capability in this role. The order for 12 Eurocopter MRH90 (multi-role helicopter) to provide additional troop lift capability will greatly enhance the lift capacity of AAAvn. The two new helicopter types added to the proven capability of the Black Hawk and Chinook, will do much to provide the Army with the ability to, "Provide rapid response with fire power and mobility to move troops as the occasion demands".

In a summing up at Oakey, Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy observed that a hardened and networked Army is not just about changes in equipment and technology. The force must be structured correctly in order to allow it to meet the rapidly changing and complex environment in which we operate. In addition to the delivery of the first two Tigers, today also marks the restructure of the 16th Brigade (Aviation) [16 Bde (Avn)]. I have ordered this reorganisation to facilitate the delivery and development of Tiger and MRH90, the withdrawal of the Kiowa and Iroquois from operational units and the ability to relocate from Townsville to Sydney, our Black Hawk squadron that supports special operations. This restructure will serve to enhance the combat capability of the combined arms team, in particular Army Aviation, by allowing soldiers to focus on these discrete but significant capabilities, thus maximising the effectiveness of the new weapon systems.

Project AIR87 gave AAAvn the ARH Tiger while AIR9000 has led to the MRH90 — two of the most advanced helicopters of their

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type. The ARH Tigers, delivered on time and on budget, come with a unique life-of-type support contract from the manufacturer that is quite comprehensive. The new service contract and the time flown in testing and training will help greatly in the introductory stages and any possible teething problems. Eurocopter establishing an assembly plant in Australia for both the Tiger and MRH90 has created a facility well equipped to international standards to maintain the helicopters for their lifetime.

Proof of the truly international spirit of the aircraft's delivery and introduction was demonstrated in the fact that both airframes were flown on the Oakey parade by Australian pilots. The commonality between the ARH Tiger and MRH90 on systems and construction techniques will also be invaluable for the maintenance and support teams of both helicopters.

There are still decisions to be made with regard to standardising the ADF helicopter fleet through Project AIR9000. This will cover the Kiowa as trainers, determining whether there is a need for a light utility — as Iroquois has demonstrated often — and consolidating the number of different aircraft types. All these decisions are absolutely essential for a small force like the ADF, to simplify operations and maintenance and to make the utmost use



of available funding and personnel, both of which are in short supply.

There is no doubt that there is an exciting time ahead for all involved in Australian Army Aviation. To date, the corps has shown great professionalism in its many duties and roles on operations and mercy missions. That so much has been flown, often under difficult conditions, while maintaining an enviable safety record, speaks highly of all concerned. In case one forgot that

members of the Australian Army Aviation Corps are soldiers first, the Change of Command Parade was an excellent showcase. Escorting the pilot of A38-001 with a sabre-armed honour guard as he presented the 'keys' of his mount to the CA was a neat thing. As were the WWI Light Horsemen reminding us of our heritage and of how reconnaissance used to be done.

There is no doubt that the ARH Tiger and the MRH90 will be put to good use alongside the other helicopters on which the Australian Army Aviation Corps has worked so professionally and safely for so long.

But, AAAvn, like all organisations, has to plan for the future. To support the new helicopters there is a new acquisition process coupled with ongoing support for the life of the helicopter; training is built into the acquisition process, as is logistics and maintenance support; and, AAAvn has developed, through a number of dedicated individuals, to become a full combat arm or the Army in the form of 16 Bde (Avn) — a brigadier's command. The brigade is currently commanded by Brigadier Tony Fraser who is responsible for the airworthiness of AAAvn, reporting Directly to the Chief of Army and the Commander of Land Forces.

A great achievement in a short time, with more improvements to come through the planning and full delivery of Project AIR9000. All concerned with these impressive developments, are to be congratulated and thanked for their efforts to take the ADF and AAAvn right up to the front line of army aviation capability.

Barney O'Shea is President of the American Helicopter Society, Australian Chapter.



AUSTRALIAN ARMY AVIATION CORPS

HQ 16 Bde (Avn), Enoggera
Deployable HQ

1 Avn Regt, Darwin

HQ Sqn
Tech Spt Sqn
161 Recce Sqn — ARH Tiger
162 Recce Sqn — ARH Tiger

5 Avn Regt, Townsville

HQ Sqn
Tech Spt Sqn
A Sqn — MRH90
B Sqn — Black Hawk
C Sqn — Chinook

171 Sqn, Sydney — Black Hawks

173 Sqn, Oakey — Super King Air

Support units and schools will re-equip as training is finalised on new types.

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OPERATION SUMATRA ASSIST

Within hours of the tsunami disaster on Boxing Day 2004, the Australian Defence Force was swinging into gear for yet another major overseas operation.



While a number of nations were severely affected by the tsunami, Australia has focused its major effort on assisting the Government of Indonesia in the northwestern region of Sumatra.

Since 27 December 2004 when Australia's Minister for Defence, Senator Robert Hill, first announced the ADF's dispatch of C-130 Hercules aircraft to support international humanitarian relief efforts, the commitment of ADF personnel, equipment and stores has continued to build.

With the official death toll soaring, Health Support Company (Field Hospital) deployed early to Banda Aceh, following a request from Indonesian authorities.

"Following the destruction of virtually all infrastructure, it is crucial that Australia not only provides support, but provides the right type of support in the right places. The Health Support Company will provide essential medical support in the area where it is needed most," Minister Hill said.

The ADF also sent a small team of air-traffic control specialists to assist in the establishment and operation of an air operations centre. The centre streamlined the flow of urgently

needed aid by reducing congestion and coordinating air movements at Banda Aceh's airport, the focus of the international aid influx.

Senator Hill said a total of 14 Australian C-130 air crews would be used to crew the ADF's six C-130 aircraft engaged in the relief effort. The additional crews would allow the aircraft to be used to maximum efficiency, moving stores, equipment and personnel necessary for the provision of disaster relief.

A RAAF B707 transport aircraft also continues to assist with the transport of people and stores.

"Having this many crews will ensure that we are able to provide the maximum amount of support possible without compromising safety or having our aircraft under utilised," Senator Hill said.

New Zealand has also deployed one C-130 Hercules and crew as well as 30 medical staff to work alongside ADF members in providing humanitarian relief in Indonesia. On the ground and in the air, the ADF is once again working alongside its New Zealand counterpart — continuing an Anzac tradition that was born in Gallipoli 90 years ago.

ADF personnel and assets contributing to Operation Sumatra Assist include:

- g About 1000 ADF personnel
- g Four C-130 Hercules transport aircraft
- g Two C-130 Hercules and one Boeing 707 transport aircraft conducting sustainment flights to and from Indonesia and within Australia
- g One Beech B200 King Air
- g Four UH-1H Iroquois helicopters
- g Two water purification plants with a third to be deployed (the three plants will be capable of producing up to 1.1 million litres of clean water per day)
- g Engineering personnel
- g Logistics/loading personnel
- g Medical teams and aero-medical evacuation specialists
- g Field hospital, providing:
 - 90 beds
 - Surgeons
 - Intensive care
 - Resuscitation
 - X-ray facilities
 - Pathology
 - Environmental health services
- g HMAS Kanimbla left Darwin on 7 January carrying the following personnel and equipment:
 - Two Sea King helicopters
 - Two large landing craft (LCM8)
 - Medical facilities and personnel
 - Accommodation
 - Communications
 - Stores
 - Self-sustaining floating base
 - An Engineer detachment including:
 - 150 personnel
 - Ten four-wheel-drive Unimog trucks;
 - Six Mack trucks;
 - Four bulldozers;
 - Three front-end loaders;
 - Twelve Land Rovers;
 - and
 - Various other construction supplies.



F18 HORNET SQUADRON

It's not just the 32,000 pounds of thrust that gets the 20 tonnes of F/A-18 fighter into the air. There's a small army – or rather, an air force – of men and women behind the scenes and in the wings who ensure our primary air defence asset gets off the ground and stays there.

WORDS BRIAN HARTIGAN PICS BRIAN HARTIGAN AND ADF



The F/A-18 jet fighter is the backbone of Australia's airborne defence capability with 55 of the highly capable strike fighters organised in three squadrons in our country's front-line defence.

With more power at his fingertips than any of us mere mortals are likely to experience, today's Aussie fighter pilot commands the respect of not only the world's air-combat fraternity, but also the not-so-secret awe of many a young tyke around Australia.

While many of us may harbour a secret desire to fly an F/A-18, the reality is that

there are very limited opportunities to experience that thrill first hand. And, while many average Australians content themselves with all-too infrequent opportunities to see the beast in action at airshows, car races and other major public gatherings, there are hundreds of young Aussie men and women who have more than a passing interest in the health and wellbeing of our Hornets.

Based at Williamstown, north of Newcastle, NSW, 77 Squadron is one of three F/A-18 Hornet squadrons arranged under the umbrella of the Royal Australian Air Force's Air Combat Group. But more importantly

than that, 77 Squadron is a family of almost 300 men and women who love their Hornets.

Closest to the front line are the pilots, of course, and, confirming what we all suspect, Squadron Leader Phil Eldridge, the squadron's XO (Executive Officer) says – with a huge grin – that flying the Hornet is a real adrenaline rush, and always was.

Citing Exercise Red Flag in the US late last year as some of the most intense, exciting and rewarding training he has experienced, he says flying the Hornet can get very intense at times.

"We actually led some missions over there where there were up to 70 aircraft

flying at once and we were flying against real SAMs (surface-to-air missiles) that were locking us up with their radar and simulating shooting at us," Squadron Leader Eldridge says.

"We had lots of adversaries flying against us and we were dropping live ordnance on targets on lots of different ranges.

"Even the terrain we were flying over was very different to anything we see here in Australia – mountains over 10,000 feet high and a desert floor that was more than 6000 feet above sea level."

But it's not always knuckle whitening. Working 12 to 13 hours a day, mostly in mission planning, it all comes down to just 20 minutes or so of seat-of-the-pants action in a mission of less than two hours total flying time.

"Sometimes it's all cool, cruisy and calm with nothing much going on, but then as the words "fight's on" comes over the radio, everyone's attention starts to peak a bit. And when someone actually shoots at you or you get locked up by enemy or SAM radar, then yeah, you don't want to die so you start manoeuvring and it can get real physical up there."

In an aircraft capable of pulling 7.5g (7.5 times normal gravity) 'real physical' makes for a heavy workload, yet, probably with a fair degree of modesty, Squadron Leader Eldridge says that F/A-18 pilots are not super-fit individuals.

"A few of us go to the gym to stay in shape, and some run but, while I'm sure we are probably above the average fitness level of the general populace, we are certainly not in the athlete category. It's really a matter of just being healthy overall."

One man who is super fit (and not shy about saying so!) is physical training instructor Sergeant Tony Benfer. Tony is very interested in the health and wellbeing of the pilots – as well as everyone else in the RAAF – and is also integral to keeping the Hornets in the air in his own small way.

"Of course pilots need to be physically fit to fly jets but there are no special requirements for them. Everyone in the RAAF has to pass a basic fitness test and maintain a minimum standard," he says.

"Most pilots seem to like doing their own fitness regimes, but many of them will also supplement what they do by coming here for a personalised program to help them in specific areas. When they do, I consider not just the requirements of the individual but the requirements of the job as well.

"Cardiovascular fitness is probably the most important thing for pilots in keeping their weight down – to ensure that they can actually fit in the aircraft – and to help them cope with the similar workouts they get in the cockpit."

Coping with the cockpit workout,

according to Squadron Leader Eldridge, is a matter of conditioning.

"The first time you experience g forces, it feels very weird, but you get used to it. Then, in a mission where you'd be trying to out manoeuvre a SAM, for example, there'd be times where you're pulling 5 or 6g for extended periods. That is very physically draining, but you get used to that too."

Senior NCO (non-commissioned officer) in charge of maintenance, Warrant Officer Nev Engler says that another area that requires a lot of hard work – especially now that the jets are getting older – is in the maintenance hangar.

Daily flying operations require two shifts of maintainers at 77 Squadron – from 7am until 1 or 2am, with a changeover at 4pm.

A typical flying day starts on the flight-line with up to 10 maintenance specialists laying hands on each aircraft before it leaves the ground.

"About 30 blokes start a typical day about two hours before the first flight, checking everything on each aircraft from



YOU DON'T WANT TO DIE SO YOU START MANOEUVRING AND IT CAN GET REAL PHYSICAL UP THERE



REPLACING OUR FIGHTING HORNETS

Australia's F/A-18 Hornets are nearing the end of their service life after being on the RAAF's inventory for 20 years.

With replacement in mind, the Australian Government has taken the unusual and possibly very prudent step of signing up as a partner in the research and development phase of a new generation of fighter aircraft – the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

JSF, already at test-flown-prototype stage, is expected to be an affordable, supersonic, multi-role, stealth fighter with an internal weapons bay, that will take full advantage of developments in software and radar technology.

Three models are planned with the RAAF interested only in the conventional take off and landing version.

It's relative affordability stems from economies of scale in the size of the production run – up to 6000 airframes – and through cost-sharing partnerships with customers like Australia and the UK.

Getting in on the ground floor will not only allow opportunities to influence the design but benefit our economy through flow-on contracts that have already begun to pour in to Australian aeronautic and support industries.

Full-rate production and delivery of the F-35 is expected to commence from 2012.



the ground up," Warrant Officer Engler says.

"One bloke does a general before-flight inspection, a gunnie checks weapons, an armourer inspects the ejection seat and any loaded stores, another two blokes check and replenish nitrogen systems on the undercarriage and on missile cooling systems. And, if chafe/flares are required for the mission, then that's another five blokes on that alone.

"So, by the time the aircraft launches, we have had between five and 10 blokes working on it for a couple of hours – and we could have up to 10 aircraft flying at any one time."

Further along the airfield is a man highly trained to cope with emergencies if things go wrong in the sky – especially during takeoff or landing – Corporal Mark Eadie.

Mark is a team leader in 381 Expeditionary Combat Support Squadron's Fire Section. He, his team and their colleagues at Williamtown Fire Section are a dedicated bunch, on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year – one of a handful of sections on any military base to be manned so extensively.

As a military fire-fighter, Mark and his team of four are responsible for all domestic and airfield fire-fighting emergencies at RAAF Base Williamtown and at the collocated Newcastle commercial airport.

The airbase is staffed by a total of 35

military fire-fighters, although this figure is likely to almost double in coming years.

"Williamtown is a CAT 5 airfield, based on the number of air movements it caters for and the size of the aircraft that use it," Corporal Eadie says.

"When the new AEW&Cs and air-to-air refuellers are based here, that's likely to be increased to CAT 6 or even CAT 8 – which will require twice the personnel and extra vehicles as well."

While fire fighting and emergency response is the core of the section's responsibilities, the mere fact that they operate in the military environment means further considerations and training are imposed on the fire-fighters. The threat of nuclear or chemical attack, for example, means these men could have to operate in very hostile environments indeed. Consequently they are trained and equipped accordingly.

Of the three different trucks at their disposal, the RAAF fire-fighters at Williamtown have one – the Truck Fire-fighting General Purpose – in which they can don a full suite of personal protective equipment while still inside the fully-airtight vehicle.

This truck, unlike the primary truck of the section – the Crash Truck – is fully air deployable and has, in fact, seen operational service in East Timor. In this

roll it is painted in the standard military camouflage pattern, but while at home, traditional fire-engine red makes them both stand out on the paddock.

The third truck on the inventory is a Hino Ranger tanker truck used for supplying water to the scene of the fire. Like all the trucks in the vehicle bay at RAAF Williamtown's Fire Section, the tanker is four-wheel-drive.

As mentioned, RAAF fires operate in an environment where potential military or even politically motivated attacks are considered a real threat. The value of the aircraft and facilities at RAAF Williamtown in financial as well as strategic terms, means the fire-fighters cannot afford to take anything for granted. Consequently they work very closely with one other section on base that is also permanently manned – Military Working Dogs Section.

Military working dogs at Williamtown are specialists in trailing and detecting humans and are trained to attack on command as well as in self-protection or the protection of their handler.

Shift Commander at the Military Working Dogs Section Corporal Robert Samara says the dogs, which are trained as a team with their individual handlers, would not normally allow a stranger to approach them or their handlers without letting the stranger know he was intruding.

"They are taught to disregard any command given by anyone other than their own handler. In other words, if I command him to attack, he will not desist until I call him off," Corporal Samara says.

"I can also put him in 'stay-watch' whereby he needs no further command from me if the intruder does anything threatening or untoward."

Just as the fire-fighters must respond to any fire alarm whether suspected false or otherwise, the doggies also respond, accompanying the fires – just in case.

All this hard work would surely make any man or woman hungry? In that case, the staff at the various mess' (Other Ranks', Sergeant's and Officer's Mess') on RAAF Base Williamtown step in to do their bit in

small sandwich-type meal, just because of the space restrictions in their cockpits, whereas on a Herc, they have reheating facilities and so on and can therefore take a larger meal. Their flights are more usually longer haul anyway, so they need more sustenance."

Squadron Leader Eldridge points out one exception to that generalisation – transiting from Williamtown, New South Wales to Los Vegas, Nevada for Exercise Red Flag.

"Getting to America is a huge task. It's about 20-odd hours of actual flight time, staged through Guam and Hawaii, in a four- to six-day cycle."

On this particular occasion, 77 Squadron enlisted the assistance of American air-to-

"We regularly do it on training missions, but it's really just a number on a clock. There's no big voodoo associated with it like there was 40 years ago."

If the Hornet was a big stick, then its sharp end is the weapons suite. The F/A-18 as a fighting platform is capable of deploying a wide array of air-to-air and air-to-surface weapons on its nine external weapon stations, as well as its internal 20mm cannon.

All these are maintained, loaded and restocked by 77 Squadron's Armaments Section, manned by five leading aircraftsmen, five corporals and five sergeants.

Senior NCO in charge, Sergeant Gianni Querin, says that the variety of weapons



support of flying operations.

Sergeant Graham Hogno, Senior Non-Commissioned Officer in charge of the OR's (Other Ranks) Mess, knows all too well that an army – or in this case, an air force – marches on its stomach.

He and his staff – made up of both uniformed and civilian personnel – are responsible for providing three square meals per day to between 100 and 180 people, below the rank of sergeant, depending on base activities.

"It can get quite busy here with various courses going through. We may have to cater for troops in the field by providing hot-box meals, or have an influx of extra visitors here for a short time. And we cater to individual diets for medical, religious or other special requirements."

He says a lot of effort goes into planning meals and menus so as to offer a wide variety of choices, but at the same time considering all the rules of a healthy diet. And considering the physical constraints of aircraft types.

"We are responsible for preparing in-flight meals for all kinds of aircraft and these vary depending on the aircraft type.

"F-18 pilots for example can only take a

air refuelling aircraft.

"We typically plug in ever hour-and-a-half or so, so if it's a five-hour leg you'd plug in three or four times for a top-up.

"We try to leave the tanks as full as possible on a flight like that, but on a normal transit we could go about three-and-a-half hours or so."

He says that on a typical transit flight he and his colleagues would normally only fly at about the same speed as an average commuter jet, just because it is more fuel conservative – and fuel consumption is their biggest issue.

"We normally fly at about 747-type speeds – that is, about .84 or .81 Mach or even slower.

"At other times, for example Townsville back to Williamtown, I might shoot it out to about .9 Mach.

"Of course we can also go supersonic if we wanted to but then you really start consuming your fuel."

Flying supersonic, he says with a shrug, is no big deal.

"You notice a slight bump as you go over and a slight bump as you come back under the Mach, but it's really nothing these days.

available and the mixture of configurations that can be mounted on the aircraft makes for a very interesting and varied working day.

"Of course we look after the aircraft out on line, but we are also responsible for servicing the bombs, guns, missiles, ejection seats and chaff/flare systems and all the associated elements on the aircraft.

"Actually arming an aircraft is not a straightforward exercise. We need to be told first of all what configuration is required for a particular mission, then we order stocks, test the aircraft and systems, fit the stores to the right pylons and test the whole lot again.

"Hypothetically, if we had to arm an aircraft from scratch, we could do it in less than 24 hours. We did an exercise recently where we rearmed four jets in under 24 hours, but that was air-to-air only."

Sergeant Querin says that working around so much explosive materiel is not dangerous if procedures are followed.

Most of the work they do around the weapons and on the aircraft is based around a three-signatures system whereby a junior person does most of the actual work under the guidance and supervision

F/A-18 HORNET

Manufacturer: Boeing

Role: Multi-role fighter

Engines: Two low-bypass
General Electric
F404-GE-400 turbofans
7258kg thrust* each

Thrust-to-weight ratio: 8:1

Airframe:
Length: 17.1m
Height: 4.7m
Wingspan: 12.4m
Weight: 10,660kg basic,
20,412kg maximum

Speed: Mach 1.8 (2,200km/h)

Fuel: 11,000 pounds internal (approx.)

Range: 2700km ferry
(without refuel) 740km combat radius
1000km interdiction

Ceiling: Above 45,000 feet

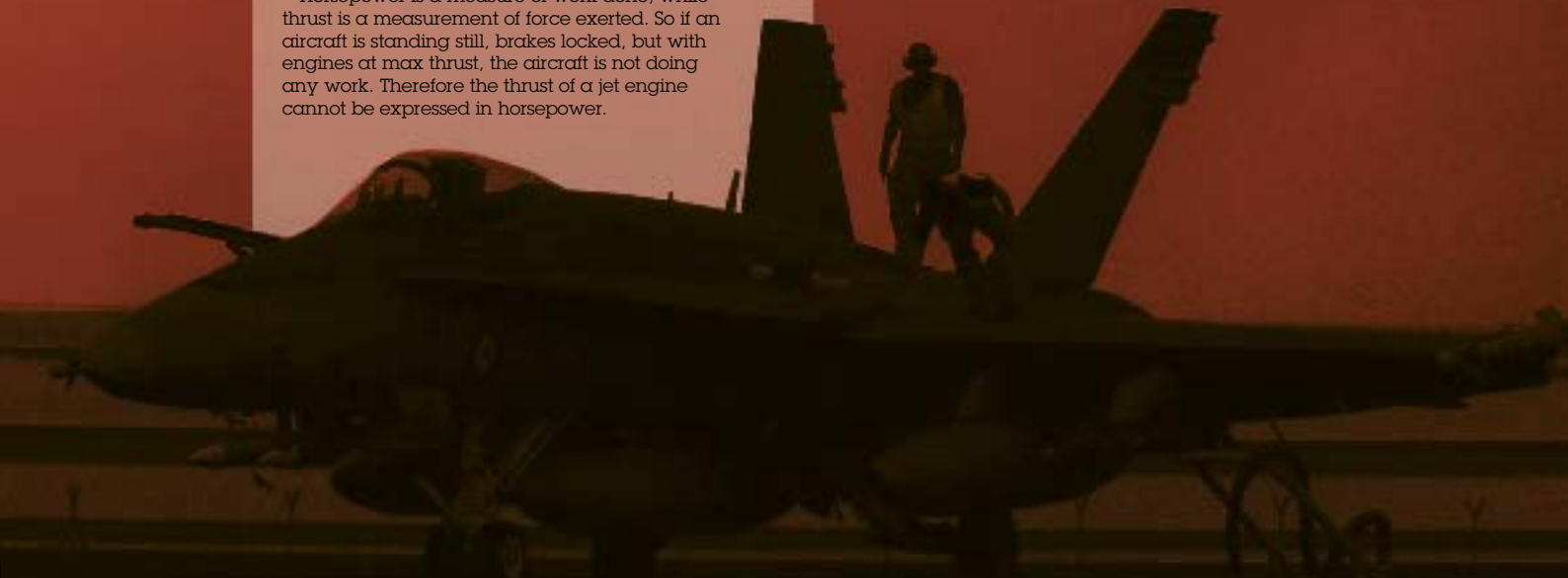
Weapons: Up to 17,000 pounds on nine stations
AIM-120 AMRAAM active radar guided missiles
AIM-7 Sparrow radar guided long-range missiles
AIM-9 Sidewinder infra-red-seeking missiles
Harpoon anti-ship missiles
Conventional and laser-guided bombs
M61 20mm nose-mounted cannon

Avionics: Hughes APG73 multimode radar
GPS
Inertial navigation system
VHF omni-directional range/instrument landing System
Two mission computers
Head-up cockpit display
Multi-functional cathode-ray-tube displays

Crew: Pilot

Force Size: 54 single-seat F/A-18A
17 two-seat F/A-18B

* Horsepower is a measure of work done, while thrust is a measurement of force exerted. So if an aircraft is standing still, brakes locked, but with engines at max thrust, the aircraft is not doing any work. Therefore the thrust of a jet engine cannot be expressed in horsepower.



of a corporal. Then, finally, a suitably authorised sergeant or other senior person, who has not had a hand in the job, performs an independent inspection on the completed work or on specified stages of it's progress.

"There's hardly a single system on the aircraft that doesn't require three signatures. Everything we do is based on teamwork."

He also outlined an aspect of weapons delivery that came as a little surprise to me – it seems small explosions in the weapons stations essentially throw bombs away from the aircraft rather than simply allowing them to fall off.

"There are two primary cartridges that fire when the pilot picks the bomb. They open the hooks holding the store and push it away from the pylon or the rack.

"There's also a third, backup cartridge that allows the pilot to let the bombs just fall away in emergency situations. For example if he has to make an emergency landing and doesn't want bombs hanging off his wings when he does it, he can drop them without arming them and they fall to ground without exploding.

"In a case like that, or if one that was supposed to explode on the range and didn't, we also have guys here in this section who are qualified to go out and find those bombs and destroy them."



WE ALSO HAVE GUYS HERE WHO ARE QUALIFIED TO GO OUT, FIND UNEXPLODED BOMBS AND DESTROY THEM

Sergeant Querin confided that he is well paid and usually works fairly standard hours, "Except when we go on what we call bombing camp.

"That's when we work the hardest. That's when it's real. Because whether it's on exercise or on operations, the bombs are real and our job doesn't change much."

There's one more section of RAAF Base Williamtown I was invited to visit in researching this story of which I will give but a passing description. It's a section cloaked in secrecy that actually wields more power than even the Hornet itself.

Think of old war movies where, as intelligence and battle reports came in over radio waves, commanders pushed model airplanes and ships around on a giant map, indicating the progress of the battle. EASTROC (Eastern Region Operations Centre), or at least one part of it, houses what is essentially the modern equivalent of that battle control room. Except in place of giant maps, are projected computer graphics, in place of banks of radios are individual computer screens. And, whereas the WWII room tried to keep up with the progress of the battle based on after-action

reports, today's ROC, thanks to real-time computer inputs and communications, is designed to actually orchestrate the progress of the battle.

From what I was allowed to see, I can best equate the system to a real-life version of Age of Empires or Warcraft, where every Orc (F/A-18) can be tasked individually or in groups and each one's "health" status is available by clicking on his icon.

On my recent tour of RAAF Base Williamtown, I didn't get to meet everyone who has a hand either directly or indirectly in supporting our Hornets. Nor have I attempted to mention them all here, for in doing so, I am sure to leave out some important element. But I will point out, for the sake of clarity, that not all those mentioned above are part of 77 Squadron, but are in their own way, part of the RAAF Base Williamtown family, without whom our Hornets couldn't fly.



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LIFE GUARD

KING'S TROOP QUEEN'S LIFE GUARD

PICS GARY RAMAGE

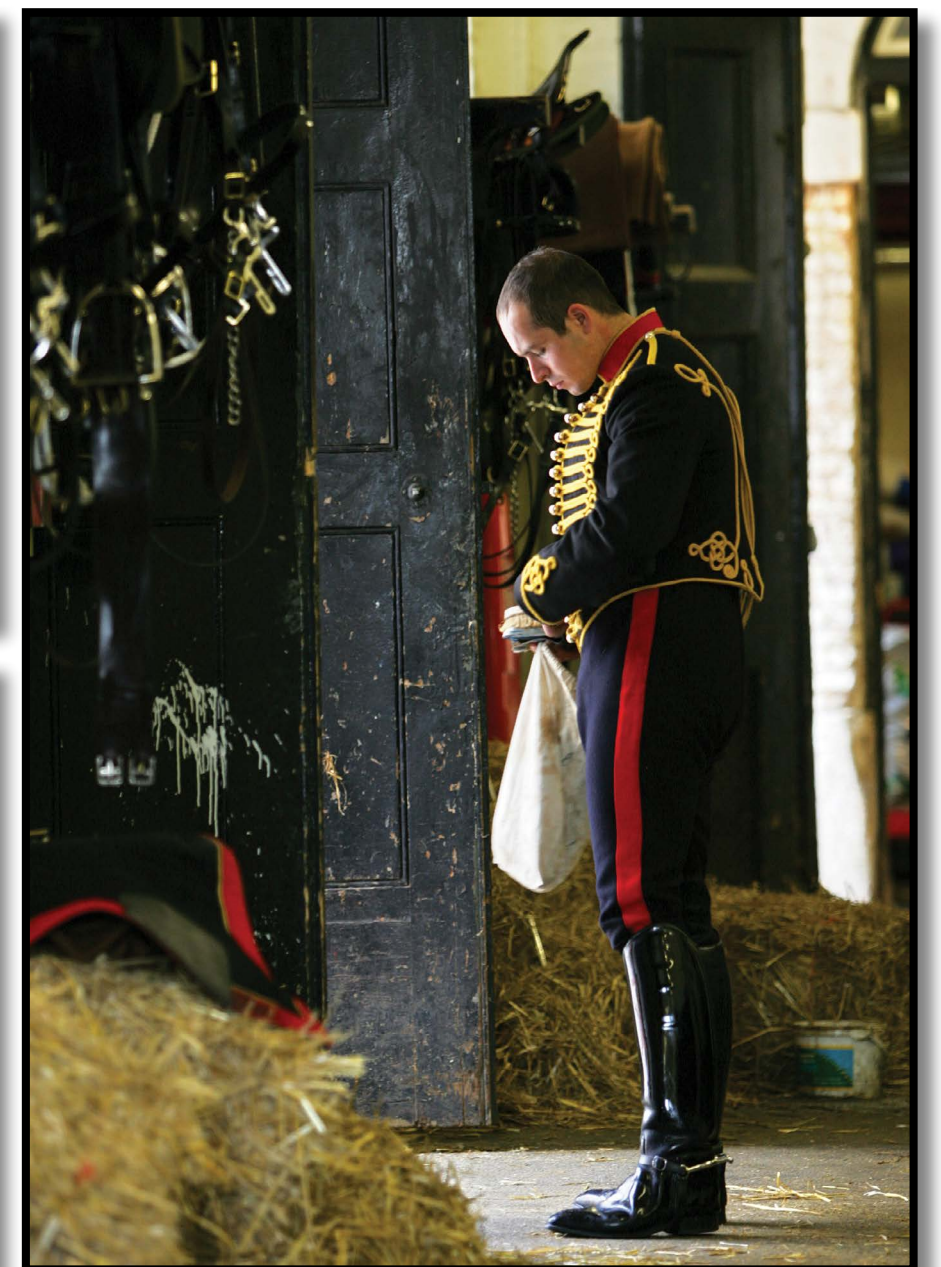
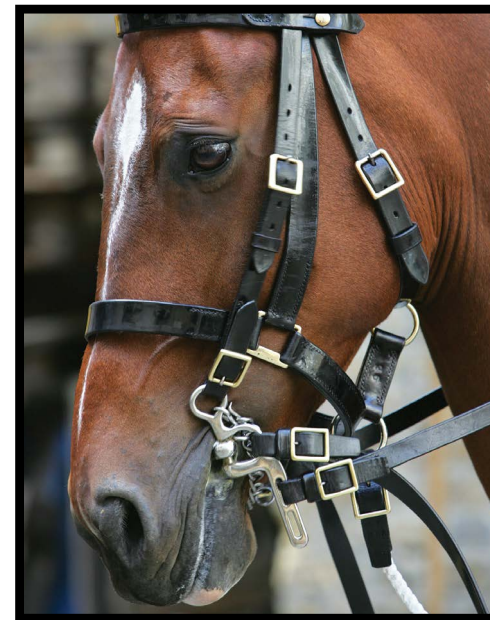
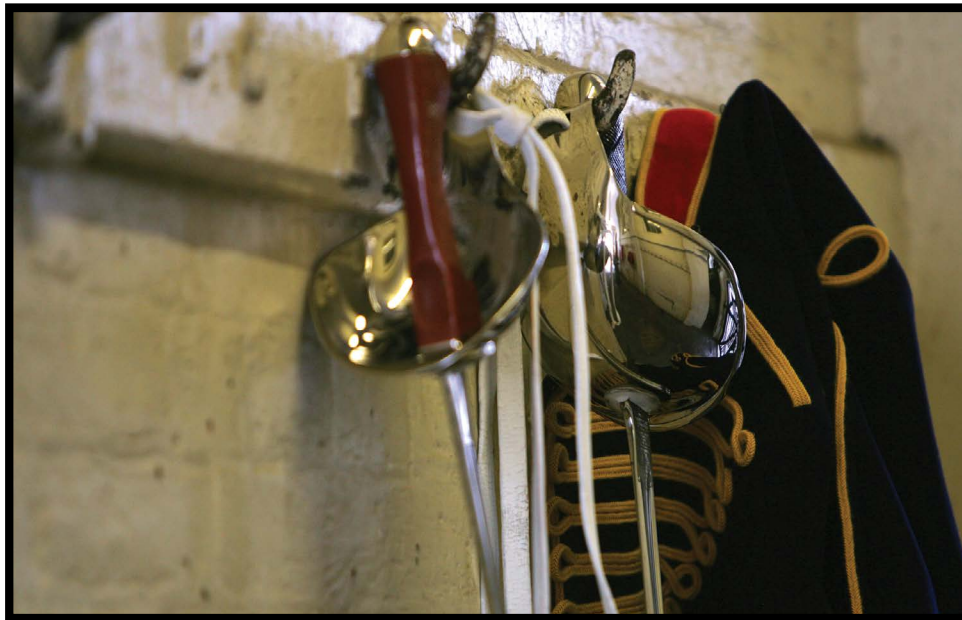
In a place where pomp and ceremony are an everyday occurrence, photographer Gary Ramage takes us behind the scenes to give us a unique perspective on a day in the life of the Queen's Life Guard.

In this first instalment, Gary captures members of the The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery, as they prepare to mount duty at Horse Guards, Whitehall, London.

Horse Guards remains the official entrance to the London Royal Palaces and is normally guarded by the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, but in summer, this regiment deploys on training camp for a month, and The King's Troop take over official duties in their absence.

Although established primarily to carry out state ceremonial and routine public duties such as Royal Salutes and the Queen's Life Guard, The King's Troop may also be tasked with military aid to the civil community. They fulfilled the duties of civil firefighters during a strike in 2002-03.

Next issue – on parade.



BOILERS STOKED NO MORE

WORDS KIWI MAC PICS RNZN

The era of steam propulsion is about to pass into history within the Royal New Zealand Navy as HMNZS Canterbury makes her final port calls across New Zealand.



Commissioned in 1971, the Leander-Class frigate is the last steam-driven ship serving in the Commonwealth.

Though her manned turret's twin 4.5-inch guns were never fired in anger, Canterbury's presence has enabled other to do so.

In 1982 and '83 Canterbury joined the Royal Navy's Armilla patrol, thus freeing up RN vessels in the Middle East to join the Falkland's conflict and to recover from their losses.

Other notable deployments included being part of New Zealand's protest against French nuclear testing in the Pacific in 1973, Middle East patrols in 1996, Bougainville in 1997 and East Timor in 1999.

With the arrival of the ANZAC-class frigates, Canterbury became the RNZN's principle training platform and it was planned to keep her in service until 2007. However, the New Zealand Government decided it was uneconomical to keep repairing Canterbury and the decision was made to decommission her last year.

This leaves the RNZN without a training platform before the delivery of seven new vessels under Project Protector.



It also means a reduction in the RNZN's blue-water capability with only the two ANZAC-class frigates remaining.

Canterbury began her farewell port calls in November and will sail to her homeports of Timaru and Akaroa in March, finishing up at Lyttleton with a Charter Parade through the city of Christchurch.



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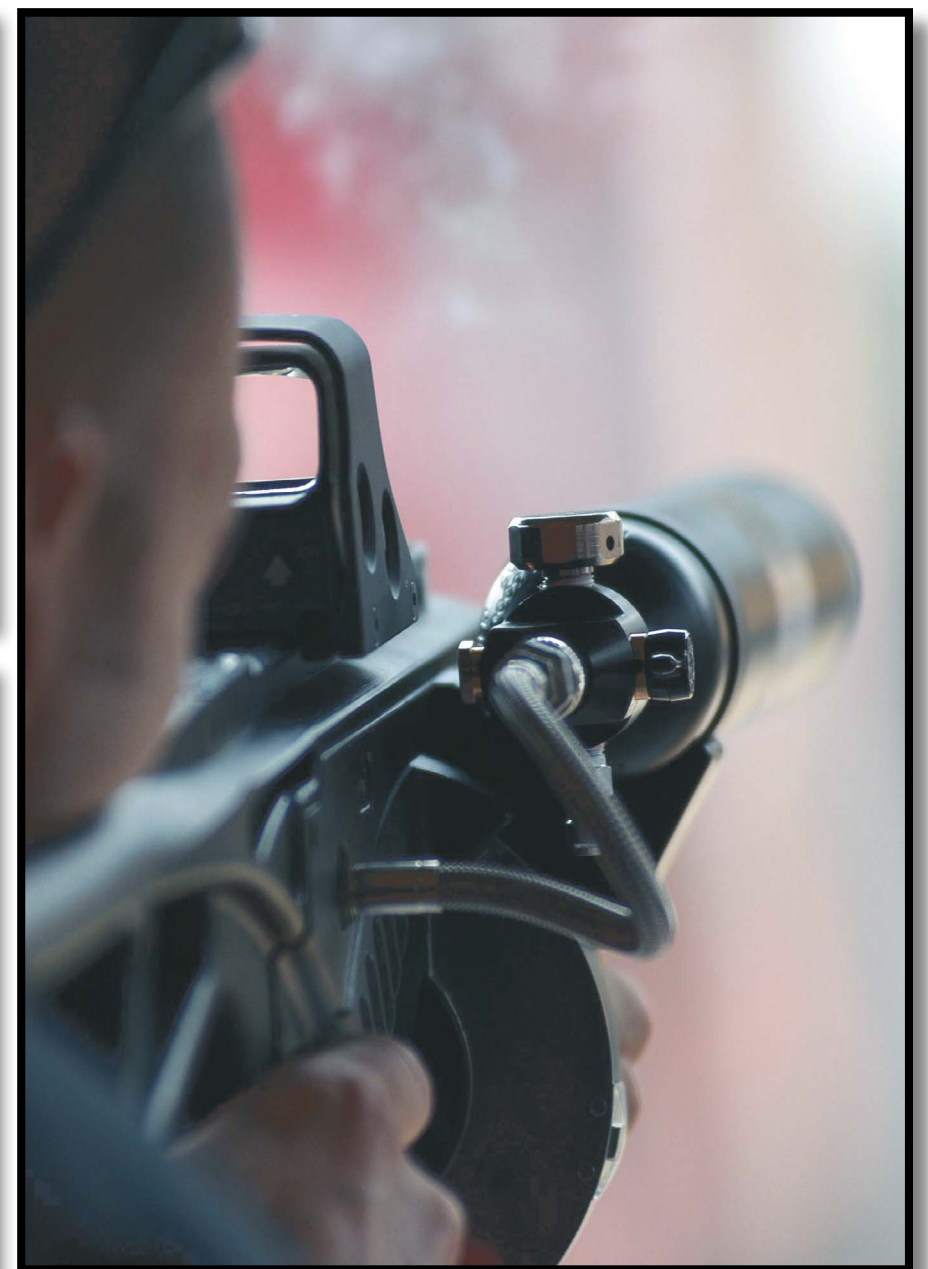
WORDS & PICS BRIAN HARTIGAN

At the 2nd International Police Conference in Adelaide late last year, more than 150 delegates availed of an opportunity to inspect an assortment of the latest in less-lethal weapons.

On show were a range of devices – aimed at police and military forces alike – designed for use in civil disturbance situations where deadly force is not desirable.

Gas, chemical, sonic and kinetic devices were demonstrated by experts in the field while many delegates were also allowed behind the trigger.

South Australia Police's newly acquired dog capability was also demonstrated as a 'weapon system'. Unlike the military working dogs discussed on page 37, these dogs attack when released and do not divert from their mission for any reason – shouted commands, flash-bang grenades or other distractions will not stop them once released – they must be choked off a target by their handler. Their release, therefore, is treated in the same light as pulling the trigger on any other weapon system.



I read the newspaper speculations on the events surrounding his death. Some said that he simply disappeared from a moving vehicle during the firefight. Others say he survived only to have his ambulance attacked on the way to hospital in Basrah. What was he thinking as the battle raged? Why was he willing to crawl so deep into the Devil's jaws for a story? I suppose, in the end, the commitment he felt to his profession, and our commitment to accomplishing our mission to find him, was the same Siren's song. Terry Lloyd got his story — and took it with him to his grave. My five comrades and I went looking for the answers — and it nearly cost us our lives.

SHOOTOUT IN AZ ZUBAYR

WORDS & PICS SUPPLIED BY JOE PLENZLER



CAPTAIN JOE PLENZLER AND HIS TRUSTY 12-GAUGE

The sun rose on southern Iraq on Sunday, March 23, 2003. Smoke from an oil fire drifted lazily in a futile attempt to block it. The forecast said it would get hot. We didn't fully realise just how hot it would get.

I rolled out from the camouflaged netting concealing our HMMWV that Staff Sergeant John Jamison, my Public Affairs Chief, had stencilled 'El Bandito' on the windshield. He greeted me with his usual, "Got some coffee brewing, Sir," as he stooped to awaken the green pile of camouflage that was Sergeant James Goff, our driver.

Passing on the coffee, I walked to the Combat Operations Center (COC) to find Lieutenant Colonel John Ewers, the Staff Judge Advocate (SJA), who said, "Round up the team. We're heading out to conduct another RIAT mission" (RIAT – reportable incident assessment team).

I returned to give the warning order, began packing and noticed that Jamison and Goff had further personalised the vehicle with call-signs on the doors. Jamison painted "Windows" on Goff's door – for his ugly military glasses. Goff marked Jamison's door with, "Axehole" in retaliation,

Ewers' with, "The Judge," and mine with, "Gunslinger" – a jab at my insistence on carrying a 12-gauge shotgun.

Ewers approached and said, "We're heading back to the 'Crown Jewel' where we were yesterday investigating the report of the 'mutilated body' found by 1st Battalion, 7th Marines. Division received a report last night of civilians killed in the crossfire between 1st Tanks and the Saddam Fedayeen near the Shat Al Basrah. When the shooting stopped, they reported seeing a destroyed SUV with 'TV' duct taped on the doors. We're going there to figure it out."

Lieutenant Colonel Pete Zarcone, Civil Affairs Officer, and Lance Corporal Henry Lopez, a Combat Cameraman, joined the team, so Goff requisitioned another HMMWV, that was marked 'Chow Hall'. It would not survive the day.

We departed the CP, 60 miles southeast of An Nasariyah, intent on linking up with the 7th UK Armored Brigade – the famous Desert Rats – in order to gain access to the incident site that now, due to a boundary shift, fell in their area of operations.

Jamison drove 'El Bandito' with Ewers in the front passenger seat, Zarcone in

the rear driver's seat and Lopez in the rear passenger seat. Goff and I followed.

Our 80-mile journey on Highway 8 led across a flat, sun tortured plain punctuated by fortified gray concrete highway overpasses and crude green-and-black-flag-waving mud-brick hovels. Hundreds of displaced civilians and sullen-faced former soldiers lined the roads, many of whom recently discarded uniforms to don white robes and flip-flops to begin the long walk home. The pained look on their faces reflected the full tragedy of Saddam's brutalisation of the Shia. Their eyes told a tale of torture, poverty and subjugation. I saw embarrassment and defeat in its lowest form. They were nomads in a wasteland.

Drawing my mind back to the mission, I wondered who are these men we are looking for? What will we find when we get there? How could they have gotten themselves so horribly mixed up?

At the border town of Safwan, we began our fruitless search for the 7th UK Headquarters, which had displaced during the night. Ewers decided to head to the 'Crown Jewel,' since it was a likely alternate site for their HQ.

We found a small British security unit there. Ewers and Zarcone approached the soldiers who told them that there were two UK checkpoints along the road to Az Zubayr where we could coordinate safe-passage to the incident site.

We departed, passing several burning oil manifolds. Sweat-soaked and bleary-eyed ex-soldiers wandered lazily about in small groups begging for food, water and cigarettes – most likely the shattered remnants of the Iraqi 51st Mechanised Infantry Division.

Passing a roundabout, we came to the 1st UK checkpoint. In the distance, a Challenger tank squatted on the cracked asphalt road that stretched to the dirty city on the horizon. A large cluster of shoddy, concrete-brick houses appeared on our right 10m from the road where groups of Iraqis gave a hearty thumbs up.

As our convoy passed the housing complex, I saw two men in brown robes running from the nearest building. I aimed in on them, clicked my weapon off safe, and placed the buttstock in my left shoulder to get a better range of motion in the passenger seat. I tracked them for about 15 feet when they suddenly disappeared – jumping into a fighting position. I knew then something was foul in Denmark.

Two heartbeats passed and the Iraqis popped up from the hole and volley-fired two RPG-7 rocket-propelled grenades. The football-sized projectiles streaked across the front of our HMMWVs, leaving their telltale contrails, and exploded on the wall to the north side of the road shooting chunks of concrete in all directions.

At such close range, they really should have hit us. They're such lousy shots to have led us by so much.

Time and space dilated as my training smashed into the forefront of my consciousness.

"It's go time."

I squeezed the trigger and pumped another round into the chamber, firing round after round of 00-buckshot at our assailants.

If we can just keep them suppressed long enough to get out of the kill zone.

To my left, I saw 'El Bandito' surge forward. "Goff, stay with him!" I hollered as I fired at the enemy.

Why do you want to kill me? We're just looking for a few dead men. Well, if that's the way you feel about it.

We followed 'El Bandito' – speeding into Az Zubayr. On our left, a portrait of Saddam

grinned sinisterly – waving us in to the staccato chatter of gunfire.

Iraqis scurried, desperate to get out of the way. Jamison looked for escape routes only to find that rubble and other debris blockaded each side street. We were being canalised into a series of kill zones. The entire city attempted to swallow our small convoy into the depths of its bowels.

Ewers, with a map in one hand and pistol in the other shouted directions to Jamison while shooting at the enemy.

Time lost all meaning as the moment stretched into one long, continuous, eerily detached second. Iraqi fighters appeared and shot from doorways and alleys. I felt the recoil of my shotgun as it pounded my shoulder and spat its lethal cargo at my victims. The sharp rap rap rap of Goff's M-16A2 told me that he was alive.

My God you guys are close. Must be 20 feet or less. Left to right, here's another one. Shoot. Recoil. Reload. Another. Zip zip. That was close. Crack-pump-crack. Come on Goff! Keep moving! Get us out of here.

Zarcone shouted for Jamison to pass back his M-16. First refusing, Jamison realised he couldn't effectively shoot and drive at the same time, so he gave his weapon to Zarcone, grabbed the colonel's M-9 pistol, hunkered down, and sped on.

Jamison found an unblocked boulevard heading south and took a wide turn spinning around the corner at full speed into oncoming traffic.

Zarcone saw an Iraqi to his right running to a sandbagged machine gun emplacement. The Iraqi dove for cover to avoid the fire coming from our convoy. He didn't make it.

To the left, Iraqi men armed with AK-47s, RPGs and RPK machine guns ran through an open field, jumped into fighting positions, and began firing.

Rounding the corner, we took fire from our left and rear. More Fedayeen appeared in doorways, second story windows and sandbagged rooftop positions. Ahead, an Iraqi with an RPG prepared to fire.

"Eleven o'clock!" Jamison hollered to Zarcone whom, at first, could not see the gunner. Jamison wheeled the vehicle to the right over the median as the Iraqi fired. The screeching projectile missed and Zarcone now had a clear view of the gunner.

"What the hell is he doing?" I hollered to Goff.

"RPG! RPG!" he shouted. I couldn't see anything.

I SQUEEZED THE TRIGGER AND PUMPED ANOTHER ROUND INTO THE CHAMBER, FIRING ROUND AFTER ROUND OF 00-BUCKSHOT

AFTER THIS I'M NOT GOING TO KILL A BUG – PEOPLE MAYBE – BUT NOTHING ELSE

A slew of continuous obscenities and the report of my weapon reassured him that I was alive.

"Son of a bitch! I'm going to die in this shit-hole of a country."

Goff started cursing the canteen that fell from overhead and dangled in front of his face.

I wish I had a kid.

Straining to see Jamison through the smoke, he tightened his grip and punched the accelerator while shooting out the left side of the vehicle.

We're done for.

Goff felt his weapon violently slapped from his shoulder into the steering wheel. A bullet impacted his M-16 near the buttplate and ran down the stock just before exiting near the charging handle.

Realising I expended all of my 12 gauge ammunition, I drew my 9mm pistol and leaned out the window to shoot more Fedayeen. Bullets whizzed by, while explosions shook us to the core. Twenty metres ahead, I saw the lead vehicle taking fire from the ground floor of a building on the north side of the road. As we approached, I saw a group of Fedayeen in a wide courtyard doorway. They were laughing. Infuriated, I aimed my pistol and began firing rapidly into the crowd.

"You bastards! This should wipe that smirk off."

I will never forget the look of shock on their faces as their demeanor snapped from laughter to panic as they dove for cover and scattered like cockroaches. In a blink, we were gone.

After running and weaving for about 2km, the road came to a Y junction. Jamison banked right and headed west-northwest to find the road ending at a T, with an open field directly ahead. He slid around the corner and headed north.

Goff cut the corner very close to the curb. A door opened quickly to the right. I aimed in on the man in the doorway and, just as he fully appeared, I saw he was holding a child in his arms. I could almost have reached out and touched him. Reflexively, I released the trigger pressure and pulled the pistol towards the sky. For a split second, our eyes met. A decision made in a nanosecond was the difference between life and death – we both knew it. Rubbernecking during a firefight? You are one lucky SOB – me too. I'm glad I didn't shoot you. Life is too

precious. After this, I'm not going to kill a bug. People maybe, but nothing else.

Jamison turned west on the same road on which we entered the city. He could see that the Iraqis had placed tyres and other debris in the road, but he weaved skillfully through the obstructions. 'El Bandito' was bogging down, thanks to a shot-out front left tyre. Ewers was bleeding heavily.

Goff pulled into the oncoming traffic and accelerated. The housing compound where we took the initial two RPG shots appeared on the left.

This isn't going to be good. If I could only get a bead on them – no, I'll hit Goff. They can't possibly miss now.

Goff started to pull abreast of 'El Bandito.' "Slow down and get behind Jamison!" I shouted so that we would not place ourselves between the lead vehicle and housing complex.

Pop-pop. Whoosh! Bang-bang. The Fedayeen fired two more RPGs. The deadly projectiles raced by us and exploded harmlessly on the prison wall to our right.

These guys really suck – thank God. There's the British tank. What a beautiful sight. If we can only get past it – thank you Jesus!

Jamison passed the tank and pulled over at the checkpoint. Goff stopped and I started to get out. Just as my foot hit the deck, Jamison waved for us to follow him and pulled away. He continued for another 100m and took shelter behind two Warrior APCs at the roundabout. Jamison and Zarcone exited the HMMWV and ran to the passenger side.

Jamison shouted to Lopez, "Put the chock-block under the wheel."

No response.

"He's hit," Zarcone said.

Jamison yelled, "We need a medic!"

Zarcone, Jamison and several British soldiers gingerly pulled Ewers and Lopez out of the vehicle and laid them carefully on the asphalt.

I returned to the high-back and brushed spent brass and plastic shell casings off the old demo-kit I use to carry my GPS and Iridium satellite phone. I turned both on, determined our location and called the COC.

"Blue Diamond. Maj. Weede," the receiver crackled.

"Sir, Juliet 2," I said. "Two casualties.

Request immediate MEDEVAC."

I headed over to the casualties as a British medic administered a shot of morphine to Ewers. As he turned to Lopez, Jamison

reached down to check his pulse.

"You're not going to give him any of that," Jamison told the medic, "it could kill him."

"We need to MEDEVAC this one now," the medic said pointing to Lopez. "There's an aid station about 15km away. He's not looking good at all."

Jamison cradled Lopez' head and said, "You're going to be fine Marine. The bird is on the way."

"Go into my gas mask carrier and get me a dip (of Skoal)," Ewers demanded.

Damn. That's pretty funny – and hard-core – he's laying there concealing what must be excruciating pain, with both of his forearms blown open and a hole in his boot, and all he wants is a lip of snuff.

A soft thwack-thwacking of helicopter rotors began in the distance as a Brit pulled out a smoke grenade and ran to mark an LZ north of the roundabout.

Wide-open fields with small buildings dotted the area. Small bands of Iraqi men were moving around us a few hundred metres away.

I shouted to Goff, "Cover those guys and stay sharp."

Confident he had our rear covered, I asked a British soldier to help me cover the litter team when the bird landed.

The thwack-thwacking grew louder as a US Army Black Hawk MEDEVAC bird appeared, circled around the orange smoke and landed on the road.

Zarcone and a few British medics grabbed the stretchers and headed off into the whirlwind of dust.

Come on. Faster. Get them on board and get them the hell out.

The few minutes it took to load the

casualties seemed like an eternity. The Black Hawk pulled collective and eased away in a cloud of dust.

Thank God – and thank God for Brits. We should be dead.

What would have happened if Jamison was hit instead of Lopez? We'd all be lying in that filthy street in that filthy town. We'd be lucky if they'd have buried us. Jamison and Goff really kept their heads. We should have been dead. That, and some good shooting pulled us out of the Devil's jaws.

Damn I'm proud of Jamison and Goff. Especially Goff. He was a nervous kid. You'd never be able to tell that now. He'll be talking smack for the rest of his life. Good. He earned it.

God, it is good to be alive. I want to live for a long time and die old and worn out.

I learned months later that the reporter we set out to find was Terry Lloyd of the Independent Television News. Apparently, he and his comrades got mixed up in a convoy of Fedayeen that approached and

RIAT – Reportable Incident Assessment Team – formally established before Operation Iraqi Freedom to investigate enemy or friendly violations of the Law of War (or any other significant incident).

'Crown Jewel' – The Commanding General coined the term, "the Crown Jewel," to describe the Central Pumping Station for the Rumaylah Oil Fields near Az Zubayr where oil is processed and stored before being pumped down to the Al Faw peninsula for loading on supertankers.

attacked 1st Tanks' position. Lloyd got his story – unfortunately, it wasn't the one he or any of us wanted. We never did find out what happened along the Shat al Basrah – we had failed in our mission.

I often think about Terry Lloyd and wonder what really happened to him. I hope that in some strange way he knows we tried to find him, and spilled some of our own blood along the way.

GOFF, ZARCONI, PLENZLER AND JAMISON AFTER SURVIVING AN AMBUSH



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SOME OF THE DAMAGE, INCLUDING WHERE LOPEZ WAS SITTING



Zarcone spotted the gunner and pulled the trigger several times. The gunner's chest convulsed from the impact as he crumpled over.

The mirror on the right side of 'El Bandito' exploded as a bullet smashed through Ewers' left forearm. Miraculously, he retained his pistol, swapped it to his good hand, reloaded, and leaned back out to shoot more Fedayeen. A thunderous cacophony shook the streets as RPGs flew past and detonated. A second burst of fire tore through Ewers' right forearm. Incredibly, he again retained his pistol. A third bullet found its mark in his left heel.

Two rounds smashed through the canvas behind the rear passenger seat and burst through a case of water and a two-by-four before zipping into Lopez's back, stopping a half-inch away from his spine.

Zarcone emptied another magazine into the Iraqi fighters on the left. As he stopped to re-load, he looked at Lopez and shouted, "Hey! You've got to shoot!" Lopez was unresponsive, staring straight ahead, and slumped in the corner of the seat.

Goff continued down the street in the oncoming lane. At the next intersection, both Jamison and Goff turned hard to the right.

We were met by a hailstorm of fire immediately upon finishing the hairpin turn. Bullets snapped by and clang-pinged as they impacted the vehicle. Fire rained down from all directions as rounds tore through metal and canvas and zipped about. One snapped terribly close past Goff's right ear and smashed through the windshield. Another cracked terribly close behind me and punctured the windshield again. Goff saw the glass shatter out of the corner of his right eye.

"The captain is dead," he thought.

A NIGHT ON THE TOWN

Somalia in 1993 was not a pleasant place to be. In fact, if the saying 'Hell on Earth' ever applied anywhere, then it applied in that place.

WORDS WAYNE COOPER PICS PETE REEVES, WAYNE COOPER & ADF

Hundreds of thousands of people had died in the decade of civil war and famine leading up to the UN intervention and hundreds more were dying in Somalia every day.

In one of the world's most desolate environments, a humanitarian tragedy of biblical proportions was unfolding. Australia had sent 1000 Diggers to Somalia to assist the humanitarian mission that the UN had undertaken, to bring order out of chaos. We had been in country less than a week and we were already in the thick of it.

My section had already had a fair share of adventure and misadventure. In the first days of our tour we had been shot at, chased bandits and, unfortunately, had already suffered our first casualty. The Section's 2IC, Lance Corporal Ken Nelliman, had the top of his index finger blown off in an ammunition malfunction on our first patrol.

The damage to Ken's finger, though dramatic, was not extensive, but it was going to see him out of action for a month. This left the section a man down and a vehicle off line. With the workload the

squadron had undertaken, this was a situation that could not stand for long.

On the afternoon of our second day together as a section, the members of 23 sat in the back of section commander Corporal Darren "Moose" Ferriday's vehicle as he gave orders. He started by announcing we had a new section member. The revelation that Lance Corporal Darrin "Rex" Neale, a storeman, would replace Ken drew some perplexed looks.

"Rex?" I asked. Moose just looked blank faced at his notes and nodded.

"Dead set – Sexy Rex?" Trooper Tino Siliato wanted confirmation of his new crew commander. Moose's blank face darkened into a frown.

The reason for the puzzlement lay in the fact that most of us thought there to be more eminently qualified, full-time crew commanders languishing in the Squadron Head Quarters, and that the choice of a part-time Q'ey was a bit of a backwards step. Our disquiet was amplified by the fact that this particular Q'ey was considered by most of us to be – well – a little odd.

In fairness to Rex none of us really knew him well. Most of us had only dealt with him at the Q Store where he seemed to be efficient, if not a little disengaged from the general rhythm of the squadron.

I guess it could be said that Rex seemed to possess a unique personality and many of us found him a little difficult to relate too.

He had been a full-time crewman, but had changed profession and moved to the Q stream a couple of years before we found ourselves in Africa.

It may seem that poor Rex was to be condemned without trial from the start, but that was not the case. It went without saying – though Moose publicly demanded it anyway – that we give the guy a fair go.

It occurred to us that Rex may be coming in as the new section 21C. It was a little unsettling to have such an unknown quantity come into the section, but to have him come in as 21C was downright alarming.

I replied in the affirmative, suddenly realising I may have stepped over the line. "The decision's been made so that's what we'll do. Get on with it," he stated emphatically before turning away.

I did not know Moose all that well at that stage, but I knew enough not to push the issue any further. I was treading a fine line and the last thing I wanted was to have my section commander think I was a whinger. Besides, gaining Moose's respect meant more to me than the perceived snub from the squadron hierarchy.

Rex joined the section later that day and we did our best to make him feel welcome in the short time he had to get ready for the evening's tasks. We were to drop Recon Platoon and the Snipers in the bush outside Baidoa, conduct a patrol through town on the way back to the airfield and, before dawn, make our way back out and pick up our passengers. After the first day's

at risk, they had so far forced the Aussies to stay their hand.

The difference between bad guy and bystander was the few seconds it took to fire from a concealed position, stash the weapon and mingle with the crowd.

In such a dense urban environment, it was often difficult to identify where you had been engaged from. Sometimes after sniping at a patrol, a bandit would wonder into the street and give directions to where an imaginary assailant had fled. In the early days, this impertinence was compounded by the fact that bystanders were initially reluctant to identify a bandit for fear of reprisals. In Baidoa very few bad guys had the decency to stand and fight.

So, it was good fire control and discipline under pressure that so far had ensured the Australians had not overreacted when they had been fired upon. And perhaps this had been interpreted as weakness by

During the night, rivalry escalated into bloody violence as two clans clashed in an unpatrolled part of town. By the time the Aussies got to the scene the firefight was over and all that remained were five dead clan members. Back at the airfield, after completing our patrol, I was woken by the sounds of the battle and watched the tracer stream out over the city, from my stretcher. There was never a dull moment.

After a couple of hours sleep it was time to head out again. We made our way past the front gate and through the northern section of the city before once again passing through Seaview. On the run up the dusty road between Seaview and Langs, our second night out on the town was about to get more interesting.

Moose's vehicle spluttered and died just as the radios burst into life with a contact report – 21 section was under fire a few hundred metres away just as 23 laboured

This would usually mean the driver of the damaged vehicle and I would wait for assistance. However in a warlike situation, we could not leave a vehicle stranded without protection. I started to unstrap the tow cable as the distinctive sound of a machine gun cracked through the night a short distance away.

With Pete remaining in the driver's hole of 23C, Moose mounted my vehicle and instructed 23B to remain with me. He said we should recover 23 to the nearest safe area and wait for the Spanners. Trooper Andrew "Johnno" Johnson, 23's driver, would stay with his stricken vehicle and Moose would pick up reinforcements from 22 Section at VCP Langs.

As the newly crowned 23 and 23A headed off towards the south-east, I could see Micky P's shit-licking grin through the darkness as he passed. I flipped him the finger and smiled in spite of myself. P could

commander's attention through the vehicle IC (inter communications). In the circumstances, I thought I'd try the old Jedi Mind Trick and suggested we make tracks to Langs and hang out with the remnants of 22 Section until the cavalry arrived.

Rex was quite understandably a little flustered, but to my relief and his credit, got himself together and agreed. I guided his vehicle to the front of 23 and hooked up the cables. Climbing into the turret of 23, my relief was short lived as HQ radioed through an alarming change of plans.

To my dismay we were told to tow 23 back to the airfield ASAP. Didn't they know there was a gun battle going on up the road? The thought of dragging a disabled vehicle through a shit fight at night didn't appeal at all. I was beginning to think there was a conspiracy against us.

As I tried to decide whether I was going to go to jail for disobeying a lawful



CORPORAL WAYNE COOPER SUPERVISES AN AID DELIVERY



CORPORAL WAYNE COOPER (FRONT) AND COLLEAGUES



LANCE CORPORAL DARRIN 'REX' NEALE WITH CAKE (AUTHOR THIRD FROM LEFT)

Moose quickly clarified by announcing that Lance Corporal Mick 'Micky P' Holmes would fill that position while Ken was unservicable, and that Rex come in as 23B.

My relief that P would be 21C changed to resentment as it dawned on me that I would effectively be subordinate to Rex. What were they thinking? I had been a crew commander for a couple of years and, in my humble opinion, was vastly more qualified to step up than a Q'ey part-timer!

As I stewed through the rest of orders, my indignation grew into full-blown outrage. This could not stand and, after everyone had returned to their vehicles, I resolved to tell Moose exactly this.

Now Moose Ferriday had a healthy, if not strange, sense of humour and as I outlined my discontent he smiled patiently. But Moose was also not a man to trifle with and, at some point, I began to sound too much like a whinging kid and his smile dropped away – "Finished?"

GAINING MOOSE'S RESPECT MEANT MORE TO ME THAN THE PERCEIVED SNUB FROM THE SQUADRON HIERARCHY

dramas we all hoped we would have an uneventful night to initiate our new section member. It was not to be.

Incidents in the city were increasing as the power struggle between the bandits and the new Australian authority played out. In the first week of our occupation of the town, Australian patrols had been fired upon every night, but for a number of reasons, had not yet returned fire. Some might argue there was a reluctance born of inexperience among the Aussies, but the real reasons were quite the opposite.

Baidoa was a very densely populated town and the bandits made full use of this. By engaging patrols from behind groups of innocent people, near occupied dwellings or in other ways that put the general public

the enemy and led the bandits to become bolder. In any case it was not to be all one sided for long.

At dusk, the new-look 23 Section rumbled out from the airfield into the fading light. We skirted the busy city centre and passed through VCP Seaview and VCP Langs, the vehicle control points named in honour of two notorious Townsville pubs. As we ventured out to our drop point east of Baidoa, trouble was brewing in town.

Conflict in Baidoa was not restricted to Aussies and bandits. Rival clans struggled to fill the power vacuum left when the larger armed factions had fled the city before the UN troops arrived. It seemed everybody wanted to fight somebody in Somalia.

to a halt. We listened to the report as we closed in around the crippled 23. Moose quickly dismounted, inspected his engine and confirmed what he already new by the grey smoke issuing from his exhaust – his vehicle had done a blower shaft and wasn't going anywhere without help.

Shots rang out from the streets to the west and it was time for a quick decision. Stuck in the open with a crippled vehicle during a contact was no time to muck about. Moose made the announcement my driver Pete and I knew was coming and I stepped down off my car.

Unfortunately for me, it was a standard operating procedure that whenever the section commander's vehicle broke down, he would commandeer the junior call sign and crack on. Moose's car would have to be towed to a safe location for repair, but he was required to complete the night's work. As crew commander Charlie I automatically drew the short straw.

always bring a smile to your face no matter what the circumstances.

More shots rang out to the west as I walked over to consult with Rex. He was, technically, in command and I had to follow his lead. I knew what I wanted to do, which was quickly hook up 23 behind his car and tow it to Langs ASAP, but procedure dictated I get my orders from him.

Things were starting to get a little intense at this point and poor Rex had been thrown in the deep. Sunrise was still an hour off, there was a gun battle nearby and people were rushing through the bush on either side of us. When I looked up to ask what he wanted to do, Rex's turret resembled a lighthouse as he spun it around in a vain attempt at illuminating the surrounding bush. I tried to get his attention but he seemed intent on playing lighthouse keeper for the time being.

A grinning Tino winked at me from the driver's hole as he got his crew

command or risk driving through a contact with a crippled vehicle, the commander of 22 Section, Corporal Ray Moore, came to our rescue. In no uncertain terms he told SHQ how silly their order was. That was all we needed to hear and, as Ray continued to argue with SHQ, I waved Rex on and we started to make the slow journey to Langs.

Ray was renowned for speaking his mind and a pointed exchange ensued. The head shed eventually acquiesced, to my great relief. Ray earned my undying respect.

We reached Langs just as dawn broke. Relieved, we pulled into the VCP as 21 Section rumbled past. Their engagement had broken off with no injuries to friendlies and enemy casualties unknown.

We learnt later that they had returned fire with their .30 cal machine gun after being fired upon from a roof top. This action was the first time Australian troops had fired in anger since Vietnam. We knew at the end of that long night it wouldn't be the last.

REVIEW

WRC 4 – OFFICIAL GAME OF THE FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Evolution Studios

PS2

RRP \$49.95

Reviewed by David Hartigan

WRC 4™: The Official Game of the FIA World Rally Championship builds on the expansive environments and elements of its predecessors. Although the great leaps-forward in graphics quality are perhaps beginning to slow to walking pace, and this game is quantifiably better than the previous version, the 'wow' factor can no longer be guaranteed.

The game overall, however, is a better experience. Previous un-wanted forays into the scrub, caused by pace notes not keeping pace with progress on the road, are less frequent. Game navigating thru menus and so on has been simplified also.

We now get a smart-arse co-driver on board who (all-too frequently in my case) queries, "What are you doing?" and issues very helpful advice such as "Calm down!" Oh, the joys of it – a back seat driver on screen!

The damage model and collision physics have been greatly improved. Progressive car damage means that the car will now degrade in stages, making repair decisions just as important as driving the stages themselves. Tape barriers can be broken, bits fall off the car and roadside objects provide additional hazards that respond to the level of impact.



WRC 4 features all the 2004 championship teams, cars and drivers. Evolution has also introduced two new car classes – the Super 1600 and Group N4. The shakedown also plays a vital role, as set-ups can be modified and tweaked and then used on coming stages.

Although I didn't visit it, WRC 4 now also incorporates Network Play, encouraging players to take their rallying skills to a new level in an online time trial, which allows them to race any stage at any time, against the clock or against a number of rally fans. The top 100 drivers on any stage can upload their times to the web and let the world know how fast they are!

In offline mode, competitors can experience key moments in the career of a professional rally driver, progressing through 11 levels to reach the top. Honing their driving skills and learning how to set up and repair their car under the pressure of deadlines, players must learn through experience in order to earn a drive at the highest level.



The limited access to special stages, cars and set-up allowed by the Press Demo disc I tested were enough to suggest that aficionados of rally/driving games will definitely want to upgrade to this version – it promises to be much better (I really want a blast through Catalunya in the extreme cars available on the retail version of the game).

Certainly, if you are looking around for a driving game, then this is the one to get. Having been a die-hard Grand Turismo fan for many years, WRC 3 converted me. WRC 4 promises to be better still.



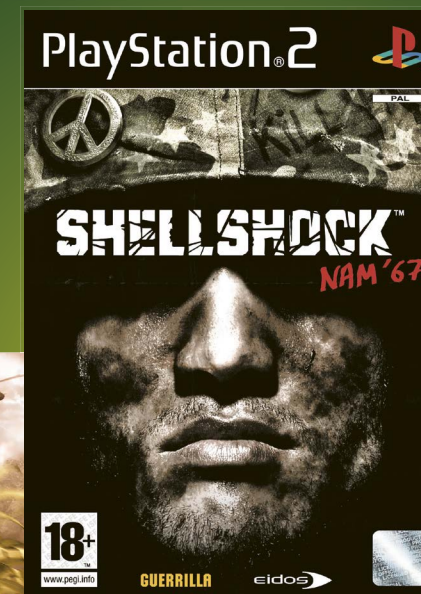
www.militarycontact.com

SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67 ready to lock and load

Eidos
PS2, Xbox, PC
RRP \$99.95

Eidos, one of the world's leading publishers and developers of entertainment software, announces that the highly anticipated *ShellShock: Nam '67*™ is out now in retail stores across Australia and New Zealand.

ShellShock: Nam '67 is an action game based on the Vietnam War. Developed by Guerrilla, available



on PlayStation 2, Xbox and PC and classified MA15+ (medium level animated violence, adult themes, sexual references and drug references), this game is ready to blow your socks off...literally!

ShellShock: Nam '67 depicts the reality of the Vietnam War for the first time in a video game. You take on the role of a rookie soldier on his first tour of duty as he experiences the fear and chaos of the most controversial war of modern times. From napalm bombardments and Viet Cong booby traps, to the permanent threat of invisible foe and deadly ambushes, it delivers a realistic portrayal of the terror of combat.



Thanks to Eidos, **CONTACT** has two copies of *ShellShock: Nam '67* to give away. To enter, visit our internet web site: www.militarycontact.com for details.

IT'S A LONG WAY TO THE TOP



In the tradition of the Lone Piper strutting the walls of a fortified Scottish Castle, Sergeant Andrew Iverson has performed a sunset lament from the steely top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, as a lead-up to the Edinburgh Military Tattoo in Australia.

This year's tattoo was held at Aussie Stadium in Sydney in early February. CONTACT gave away two Platinum tickets to the event to Jakub Marciniec of Sutherland, NSW.

Sgt Andrew Iverson is the Pipe Major of 3 RAR Pipes and Drums and is a renowned piping competitor at the highest level. He has won prizes in Australia and overseas and was selected to be the lone piper during the 1988 Bicentennial Tattoo.

HENRY WRIGHT

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT LINE

Unfortunately for Henry Wright there was a certain amount of truth in the poem published in **CONTACT** issue #4, as he was wounded by shrapnel in an attack on Hill 60 on 21 August. From hospital in England, Henry wrote a detailed letter describing the fighting that led to his wounding.

My Dear Mother,
You no doubt are very anxious about me, for I suppose you would get a telegram to say that I was wounded and you are wondering how badly. I am pleased to say my wounds are not serious, and also that I am a lucky man to be sitting up in bed in dear old England, writing this letter to you. I will start from the [illegible] of August when we started to make an advance to straighten up our firing line. (I am writing of our battalion only but there were scores of others engaged in this big move). We moved at about 10 o'clock at night in full fighting order, each man carrying 250 rounds of ammunition. We were told before we started that our job was to go two miles along the beach then push inland for about a mile or so. We were to take the Turks by surprise.

After doing our two miles (in strict silence) we got the order to fix bayonets, then we started to push inland. We had taken John Turk by surprise. He stood his ground for a little while but when he heard the Australian war cry, he was soon on the run. But what a great treat we had; the Turks knew where they were going, we did not, and the country was nothing but hills and gullies covered thickly with small bushes behind which the Turks would hide and try and put up a bit of a stand until we routed them out with a bayonet. We were not to fire a shot – all work to be done with the bayonet.

They were blazing away all the time, but it was so dark they could only fire in our direction. A few of our chaps were hit. One of my mates next to me suddenly called out and dropped. I asked him what was up. He said, "Only a bullet in the knee, but never mind I'm alright. Go on Australia, give it to them, show 'em what you're made of" etc.

The bullets were cutting up the dust

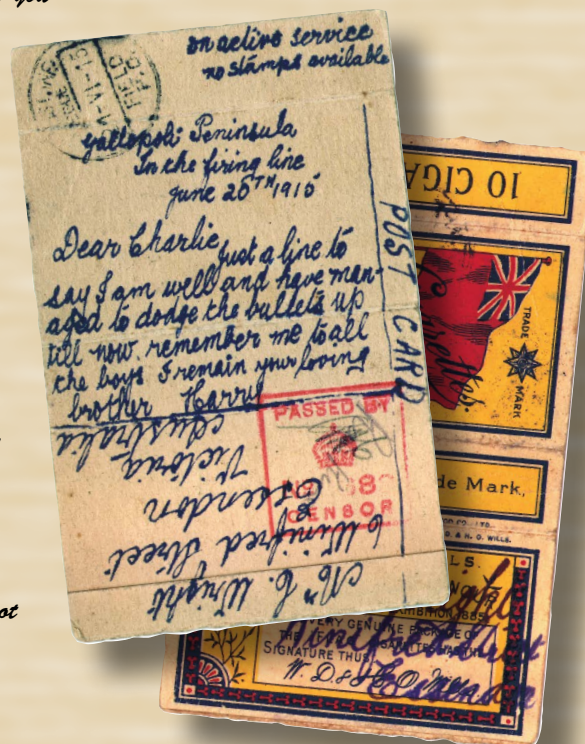
around us when I got a bullet through the butt of my rifle, but I was not hit. Frank Trevillian, myself and a few more of our boys got cut off from the rest of the battalion that night, and thank goodness it was dark or we should certainly have had a hard time of it. We thought our chaps were still coming on. We had just got to a small rise with a fringe of bushes when in front of us we could hear a party of Turks talking. We dropped behind what cover we could. It was while we were lying there that we found out that we were on our own, and that the Turks were creeping up. We had an officer in our party, and we owe him our escape. He belonged to the 13th Battalion N.S.W. He said to us, "Well boys, we are in a tight corner here and with a little bit of bluff, I think we can manage them". So, while some of us dug in, others were keeping watch. We had just made a rough cover for ourselves, when one of the observers saw a movement in front. The officer had us ready. We were to wait until they got within a dozen yards and fire for all we were worth, and if necessary, use our bayonets. I cannot explain the feeling when you know you are going to have a scrap at close quarters. It makes one feel that he is good enough for half a dozen. We allowed them to come up within a few yards. They could not see us and I think they imagined we had gone. Then we got the order to fire. We pelted lead into them as fast as we could pull the trigger and then got up and yelled like a lot of Indians. We had no occasion that time to use the bayonet. John Turk broke and fled screaming "Allah, Allah" and disappeared down the hill going like blazes. It was just breaking day so we worked our way back to the rest of our Battalion whom we found five or six hundred yards back. We do not know what damage we had done, but guessed we had settled a few.



We moved from this position early that morning and joined the rest of our brigade (4th Brigade). Our casualties in this were not a great lot. The Turks got a big surprise that night all along the line. We found bags of bread, pots and pans, ammunition and equipment. They bolted in such a hurry they had no time to bother about these things. The Turks were now entrenched on a big hill called 971. This hill was always well fortified, and we were brought round to help take this...

Continued next issue.

HENRY WRIGHT OFTEN WROTE HOME ON WHAT SCRAP OF PAPER HE COULD LAY HIS HANDS ON, SUCH AS THIS CIGARETTE PACKET



WHO USES CARINTHIA...

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PORTUGUESE ARMY
SLOVAKIAN ARMY
SLOVENIAN ARMY
SWEDISH ARMY
SWISS ARMY
TURKISH ARMY
U.A.E ARMY

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GERMAN AIR FORCE
FINNISH AIR FORCE
ROYAL AIR FORCE
PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE

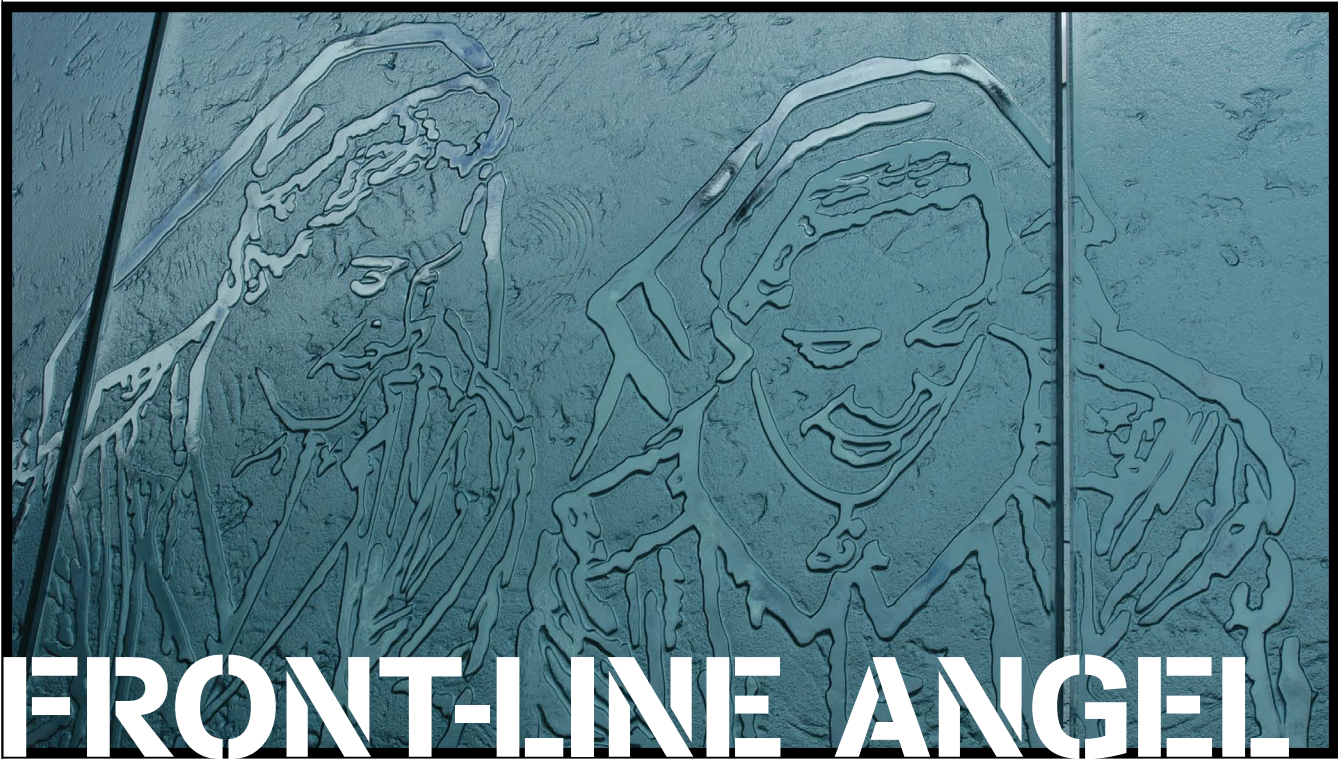
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SISTER ALICE ROSS-KING ARRC, MM

The grief-stricken woman hugged her infant daughter as she struggled to come to terms with the tragic events of the day. What was to have been a day's fishing on Perth's Swan River had claimed the lives of her husband and two sons. All she had left now was young Alys and she vowed she would never let anything happen to her.

WORDS WO1 DARRYL KELLY PICS BRIAN HARTIGAN

Alys Ross was born in Ballarat, Victorian in August 1891. She was of hardy Scottish stock and while still a toddler, her father had moved the family to Perth in search of a better life. Following the shocking accident that claimed her husband and sons, Mrs Ross returned to Melbourne with her daughter.

Alys attended some of the finer schools for young ladies and from an early age decided on a career in nursing. She trained at the Alfred Hospital and remained there until she completed her Certificate in Nursing. As Sister Alys Ross she continued at the hospital, where she added theatre sister to her qualifications, and at times was called upon to act as matron.

With the onset of war, Sister Ross enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in November 1914. During her AIF service she used the surname Ross-King and changed the spelling of her Christian name to Alice.

Her mother was extremely upset with her daughter's decision to go to war. Alice was all the family she had left and the thought that her only child might be killed or injured weighed heavily on her mind.

Alice was allocated to 1 Australian General Hospital (AGH) and sailed for Egypt on 21 November 1914 aboard the troopship Kyarra. 1AGH was based in the Cairo suburb of Heliopolis and the nursing staff was kept busy with a constant stream of patients emanating from the AIF desert training camps at Mena.

It wasn't all work in those early days in Egypt, and the nurses enjoyed an active social life hosting afternoon teas on the lawns of their quarters and attending dances at the various officers' messes dotted around Cairo.

With the imminent departure of 1 Division to Gallipoli, it was decided to prepare other hospital facilities in anticipation of a tide of wounded soldiers. Alice, along with a number of other nurses, was detached to the nearby city of Suez, where they were tasked to prepare suitable buildings for clearing stations for Gallipoli casualties.

Their worst fears were realised when, in late April 1915, the first of the wounded

from the Gallipoli beachhead reached the wards. Alice and the other dedicated nursing staff worked around the clock, tending to their patients and fighting overwhelming odds to improve the survival prospects of many of the most seriously wounded. Sometimes they were successful. Other times they had to face the heartbreaking reality that their best efforts had failed. To those in their care they were truly front-line angels.

It was decided that some of the more gravely wounded would be returned to Australia – to make room for others of the

increasing number of casualties. As the wounded would need nursing care during their voyage home, it was necessary for some of the nurses to accompany them to provide ongoing treatment during the trip. Sister Ross-King was among those chosen to return to Australia.

Alice was aware that a shortage of nursing staff at home might jeopardise her chances of returning to the front. Immediately after she landed in Australia, she sought to secure orders to be sent back to Egypt. She enjoyed a short leave with her mother before again bidding her a tearful good-bye.

In April 1916, Sister Ross-King helped establish 1AGH in France. The hospital was based in Rouen and the medical staff quickly prepared for the onslaught of casualties from the 'real' war. They didn't have to wait long – actions at Fromelles in the north and Pozieres on the Somme kept the hard-pressed nurses working around the clock.

Ross-King remained at 1AGH, Rouen for the duration of the Somme offensive then joined the 10th Stationary Hospital at St Omer in the north of France. In July 1917, Alice was moved forward to the 2nd Australian Casualty Clearing Station, close to the battlefield near Trois Arbres.

One night, only five days after arriving, Alice was making her way back to her tent at the end of a shift. As she followed a young orderly along the duckboards, she heard the high-pitched sound of approaching aircraft. Staring skyward, she could see the grey outline of planes and, as they came closer, she could distinguish the bold crosses on their wings.

She knew that the hospital was clearly marked with large red crosses but, despite this, the German pilots seemed hell-bent on attacking. She heard the whistle of falling bombs just before one exploded directly in front of her, knocking her to the ground. Regaining her senses, Alice looked around for the orderly but could not see him. Realising the enormity of the situation, she rushed back to her patients.

The deadly bombs were now bursting amid buildings and tents. As she ran to the wards, she found what was left of the pneumonia ward tent.

The extract in her diary reads:

Though I shouted, nobody answered me or I could hear nothing for the roar of the planes and artillery. I seemed to be the only living thing about. I kept calling for the orderly to help me and thought he was funkling, but the poor boy had been blown to bits.

Struggling under the collapsed canvas of the tent and in partial darkness, she tried to lift a delirious patient from the floor.

I had my right arm under a leg which I thought was his but when I lifted I found to my horror that it was a loose leg with a boot and a puttee on it. One of the orderly's legs... had been blown off and had landed on the patient's bed. Next day they found the trunk up a tree about 20 yards away.

During the ensuing hours, Alice's actions were inspirational. Little did she know that her work on that terrible night would result in her being awarded the Military Medal, 'for great coolness and devotion to duty'.

By now, the AIF was locked in the Third Battle of Ypres and the casualty clearing station was filled to capacity with wounded diggers. The doctors and nurses worked against the sheer volume of casualties and, as the severity of their wounds taxed them to their limits, Alice wrote: *The Last Post is being played nearly all day at the cemetery next door to the hospital. So many deaths...*

In November 1917, Alice returned to Rouen where she was promoted to Head Sister, 1AGH. Accompanied by a number of other sisters and nurses, she moved to an advanced dressing station just behind the front lines. The stream of incoming wounded seemed endless. After one long shift, when they had finally gained the upper hand, the doctor said, "That's the lot for now, sister. Why don't you get some sleep while you can?"

As she made her way back to her tent, she heard the feeble, anguished moans of wounded men. She searched until she found the source – 53 badly wounded German prisoners who had been all but forgotten for the past three days. "Doctor! Doctor! Come quickly!" she called frantically.

Alice's diary entry summed up the situation that confronted her: *I shall never forget the cries that greeted me. They had gone without*

food or water... everyone on our staff was dead beat but I got the doctor to come and fix them up. We did 40 patients in 45 minutes (the other 13 had died). No waiting for chloroform... amputations and all, and onto the train an hour and a half after I had found them.

Alice was twice Mentioned in Despatches and was awarded the Royal Red Cross, 2nd Class, in the King's Birthday Honours of 1918.

With the cessation of hostilities following the Armistice, Alice returned to England.

In January 1919 she boarded a troopship bound for home. It was during the voyage that she met her future husband, Dr Sydney Appleford. The pair married later that year and settled in rural Victoria.

With the onset of WWII, Alice Appleford took on the task of training members of the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) – medically trained but not fully qualified nurses who worked in convalescent hospitals, on hospital ships and in the blood bank, as well as on the home front. On 3 October 1941, Appleford was appointed to Headquarters, Southern Command. She became the backbone of the Victorian VADs and worked tirelessly to improve their capabilities.

The VADs were the forerunners of the Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS). In 1942, Alice was commissioned as a major in the AAMWS and appointed Senior Assistant Controller for Victoria.

Her military service did not end with the Japanese surrender, which heralded the end of the war, but remained a member until the AAMWS disbanded in 1951.

In 1949, Alice was awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal for her considerable efforts in support of the Red Cross and Service charities. An extract of the citation sums up this amazing woman:

No-one who came in contact with Major Appleford could fail to recognise her as a leader of women. Her sense of duty, her sterling solidity of character, her humility, sincerity and kindness of heart set for others a very high example.

Alice Appleford died on 17 August 1968, but her memory lives on in the Alice Appleford Memorial Award, which is presented annually to an outstanding member of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps.



PHOTOS: DETAIL FROM THE AUSTRALIAN SERVICE NURSES MEMORIAL ON ANZAC PARADE, CANBERRA

NOBBER HITS THE WALL

WORDS JONATHAN GARLAND ILLUSTRATION GREG@TWIST

As he had practiced so many times before, Nobber flattened himself out, sending the shock of impact into the wall. Regrettably, however, Nobber had only ever practiced this manoeuvre with brick walls – the fibro wall of the school was not so hardy.

There was a tearing, ripping sound as Nobber penetrated the barrier, leaving a jagged hole in his wake. The music staggered to an uneven halt and the children's cheering reached new levels of enthusiasm as bits of fibro fell like shards of broken mirror and clouds of grey dust billowed into the hall.

On the other side, Nobber coughed through the dust and debris and used the bent sword to lever himself up on to unsteady knees. He raised his eyes and found himself facing an angry stare.

Looking about, Nobber quickly came to the realisation that he was on his knees in the principal's office – similar to many other such offices he had occasion to visit over the years.

Uncertain now whether he was in more danger here or returning to face the OC, the hapless soldier adjusted his glasses, gave an uncertain half-smile and aimlessly waved the pathetically bent sword.

What happened to Nobber in the aftermath is perhaps best left unsaid, but the effect of his actions was undeniable – at every performance for many years afterward, schoolchildren inundated the band with requests for that particular song.

The incident occurred during a temporary placement with the Army band.

The band was about to embark on a short tour of the region and, through the intervention of some miraculous force, Nobber found himself detailed to be part of the group, despite the lack of any significant musical talent. He could carry a tune, but most listeners were vocal in their wish that he carry it somewhere else.

A mainstay of the tour was performing to various school groups and, perhaps eager to remove any chance of Nobber making music for at least one number, the OC detailed him to do a bit of clowning around during the show.

The plan was as follows – the band would play a piece of music filled with fanfares and trumpet calls. Nobber, dressed in costume as an old cavalry soldier, would enter the hall waving his sword and lead the children in yelling a warcry at appropriate moments.

Nobber became extremely enthusiastic about his role. In the lead up to the tour, he spent many hours practicing his clowning, looking for ever more interesting and unusual ways to get a laugh out of the young audience – tripping over his scabbard, losing his hat, waving his sword by the blade – all were conceived, practiced and added to the repertoire. Fellow soldiers were heard to remark that Nobber seemed at last to have found a way to make his talent for idiocy reap dividends.

The crowning glory of his act was his own inspired invention – the wall slam.

Nobber, assuming children would find the sight of an old man bumping into a solid object amusing, began practicing walking into walls.

Wary through long experience with potential self harm, however, he began slowly, but soon found a way of absorbing the impact so that the energy of collision went into the wall rather than his own body.

Before long he was charging at full pace into the walls at the band complex, flattening himself against the bricks with a loud slap, then falling back harmlessly to the ground.

The big day came, the band arrived in the first town and set up in the local school.

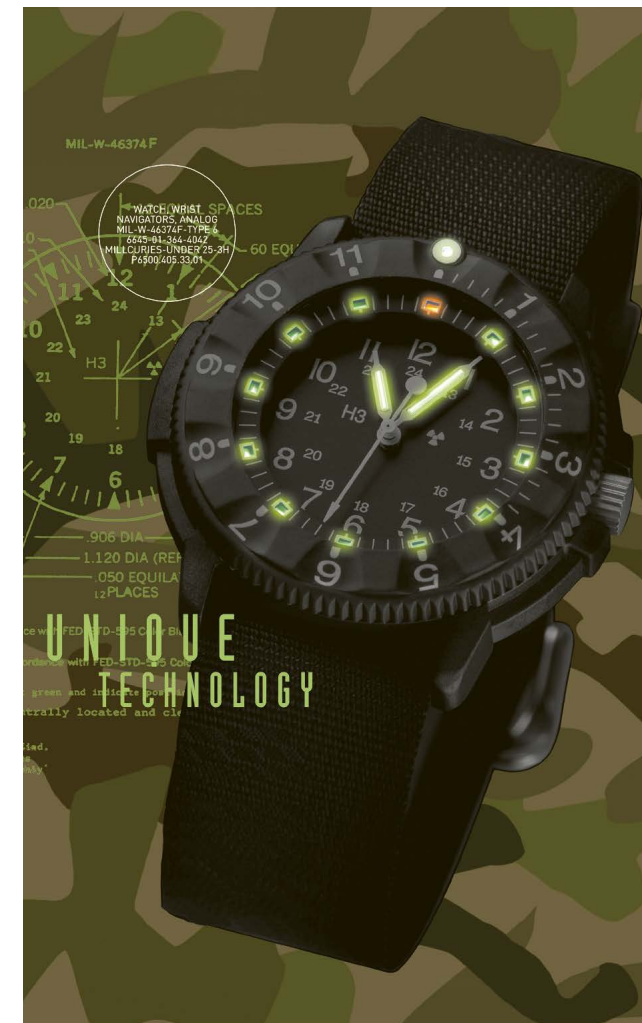
The auditorium filled quickly with children, and the band launched into their

concert program. The kids were having a great time as Nobber slipped unnoticed out of the hall and quickly donned his cavalry costume. The music started.

To much fanfare, Nobber ran into the hall, waving his sword wildly. The children roared and cheered as he raced up and down tripping over his scabbard, losing his hat and hollering – “Charge!”

As the music neared a climax and the fanfares built to a crescendo, Nobber launched into his ultimate party piece – the wall slam. At breakneck pace, he charged into a nearby, appropriate-looking wall of the auditorium.

AS HE HAD DONE SO MANY TIMES BEFORE, NOBBER FLATTENED HIMSELF OUT, SENDING THE SHOCK INTO THE WALL



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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.

Available at all good book shops or www.anzacday.org.au



Stories of ordinary Australians doing extraordinary things in time of war

Darryl Kelly

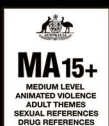
Just Soldiers



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