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ISSUE 10 **\$8.95**

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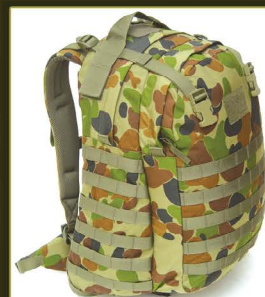
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THE EDITOR'S LETTER

Issue 10 – June 2006

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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 Pirion, Fyshwick, ACT

CONTACT – AIR LAND & SEA is published on the first Friday of March, June, September and December each year. All advertising, subscription and general enquiries should be addressed to the editor.

Subscriptions \$34 per year (incl GST, postage and handling within Australia). Check web site for costs to other countries. Fill out credit card details on the subscription form available in this issue, send a cheque or money order made payable to Contact Publishing, with the completed form, to the editor, or use our secure on-line credit card subscription page on our web site – www.militarycontact.com

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RIGHT: Editor CONTACT Air Land & Sea Brian Hartigan does his bit to promote the cause of peace in Solomon Islands (2003)

It's a small world. In October last year I travelled to Holsworthy Barracks in Sydney to watch and photograph students on a Snipers' Course at 3RAR for a feature article in Contact magazine. I didn't gather names to go with the photos as they were to be used to generically illustrate the article. One photo I took that day was used on the front cover of the December issue. The subject of the photo was Private Jake Kovco, who was tragically killed in Iraq on 21 April.

I wish to extend my personal condolences to the Kovco family for their tragic loss and I wish them to know that I shared their outrage at the subsequent debacle in the repatriation of Jake's remains.

My thoughts also go to the boys at 3RAR who have suffered the loss of three brothers in little more than a year.

Let's not try to lay blame for what has happened but, for the future, let us strive to maintain the dignity of our fallen – wherever they are from.

Our guys and girls are doing great work overseas in myriad places. This issue we visit a couple of them.

The violence and wanton destruction of Honiara's Chinatown in April, probably and unfortunately overshadowed the excellent work done by our soldiers, sailors, airmen and – let's not forget – policemen over the past nearly three years. But, as explained on page 20, were it not for the great success of that earlier work, we could have been counting body bags by the dozen.

Sinai and Cyprus are two small Aussie outposts one could almost be forgiven for forgetting – but the Forces Advisory Committee on Entertainment didn't. Our boys and girls were entertained by a welcomed concert tour of both places (and a few staging posts along the way). Pages 28-29 shows just a little bit of the colour from this fun tour.

An excellent little report on Op Larry Assist, starting on page 30, showcases the selfless work of Aussies in uniform turning out to help neighbours in need – only this time, for a change, it was on home soil.

Our main feature this issue examines why anyone would want to jump out of a perfectly good airplane! And goes on to outline why Australia maintains the capacity to conduct 'vertical invasion'.

Continuing our look at Aussies overseas, pages 44-45 stops in on our aviation support elements in Afghanistan as they settle in to a new routine of high and dry flying in this ancient desert.

Still overseas, but this time back with the Danish Army (who we visited last issue in Iraq), 1st Lieutenant Lars Olesen talks us through the day he played the part of live target, caught in the middle of a nasty war – this time in the Balkans.

For all our Special Forces fans, flick straight to page 50 now for a rundown on an amazing range of special-purpose vehicles – one of which could be selected to replace the ubiquitous Land Rover in the role.

We've also got a few prizes for you to take away again this issue. I know there's more than a few of you out there who are desperate to get your hands on one of Don's kettlebells. Well, you better dash to page 58 to find out how you can.



Brian Hartigan
Brian Hartigan
Managing Editor

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INCOMING



FRIENDLY FIRE...

Just wanted to say that CONTACT is looking better and better as an overall product. I hope it is working well for you.
Jason, via e-mail

Great mag guys! It's awesome to see a read which has high-quality articles, stories and pics all in one package. I particularly enjoy the PT section as I am currently applying for an officer position in the Army and pride myself on physical fitness.

I do have a question for you though. Do you know which ADF detachment provides close-quarter personal protection for the PM and other Australian dignitaries here in Australia and abroad? Is it the SF or MPs or a separate unit altogether? Any help would be great.

Kyle W, via web-site feedback

Close Personal Protection of the Governor General, PM, visiting dignitaries and certain foreign ambassadors is actually provided by the Australian Federal Police.

Also, general protection and security for Parliament House, The Lodge, Kirribilli House, the Embassy precinct, major Defence installations and our major airports is provided by another arm of the AFP called the Protective Service - Ed

Iwould just like you to know that I bought my first CONTACT mag at issue 8. CONTACT blows every other military magazine out of the water. Your magazine has the best range, articles, pictures, information - the list goes on. I can't believe I never bought one before now. Keep up the great work. I'm converted.

Sam C, via web-site feedback

Iused to hate sitting around at home doing nothing after work but now, thanks to this great mag, I finally have some entertainment and on weekends provides hours of great relaxing.

'Ratboy Gunner', via web-site feedback

Iwould just like to thank you for awarding me one of the Call of Duty games. Opening up the package and seeing that I had actually won something was the biggest surprise. Keep up the good work, I can't wait until the next issue.

Brett McG, via web-site feedback

Ireceived the mag last night and have just given it a bit of a read. I must commend you firstly on publishing that negative letter [from Kevin R.] and also on your solid and professional response. Really shows the mag can take

it as well as dish it out. The mag looks great, with an excellent collection of stories which is of course great for the many readers out there. I like how you set out the forum 'Backbrief' section and the poll results down the bottom. Looks good and I think will boost the forums and web-site. Don and Major Travis have again done a great job on their articles and you wrote up a great article on 'the boss's driver'.

Thanks for another great issue.

Jakub M, via email

The first issue of CONTACT I purchased was the December '05 issue. I would just like to say that you have a fantastic magazine, with excellent articles and an awesome website to match. I'm currently undergoing the necessary physical training to join the RAAF. I thank you for an excellent magazine and I look forward to the next instalment.

Peter L, via web-site feedback

As an OOC and ex ARA plumber/gasfitter with the Corps of Engineers (army apprentice, 36th intake), I would like to take the opportunity to thank your establishment for the coverage of the men and women of the ADF in all theatres of operations and at home doing the hard work in the job of defending our country and just being there. They all need recognition and the understanding of their country, of their life as a patriot.

You're a champ.

Ian G, via email

Just a quick email to say thanks very much for the copy I received of "Call Of Duty 2: The Big Red One". It's definitely the best first-person-shooter I've played on the PS2 to date.

Also I just wanted to take the opportunity to say thanks for the great job you guys do with this mag, it really is the business.

Glen R, via website feedback

I'm happy to say I am the proud owner of every magazine ever produced by the CONTACT team. It's informative and to the point. The caliber of the stories is very high, especially those of the WWI diggers and nurses. The pictures featured are fantastic quality.

But, I reckon the game reviews, which take up the best part of two pages, should be canned just like Nobber. In saying that, if they act as a source of income for the magazine then by all means, disregard this comment. I hope you keep around for a long time.

Tere T, via website feedback

ON TARGET...

Our Star letter writer wins a 3ltr Hydrapak worth \$115, from Cool Kit Australia - visit www.coolkit.com.au

Reading issue number 9 of CONTACT, I was quite surprised to read the "Sustained Burst" from Kevin R. He either misses the point or has some real issues to deal with.

Kevin, I am a well and truly post-pubescent male, as are most of the male readers I know who read this magazine. I am not a "gunna" either, having served six years in the Australian Army Reserve in Infantry.

Firstly, your comments about standing up a base, though commendable, miss a fundamental point. In emergency services and the military world, to 'stand up' is a common and standard term for making a team or unit available for service. At least within the ACT and NSW Rural Fire Services, the term or derivations of it are used and expected.

The derogatory comments about the RAAF and their informality, though humorous in intent I am sure, are nevertheless demeaning and insulting. Inter-service rivalry is one thing - your comments are entirely another.

Further in your letter you mention the article "Into Harm's Way - Part 2". Strangely, nothing referring to the initial "Part 1".

The comments are unfair to CONTACT and, I feel, reflect a lack of lateral thinking or thinking outside the square on your part. This magazine is about reality.

Secondly this is not the first article in the magazine about the work of private security firms and freelance protective security details.

The Australian and other defence forces have seen a major exodus of skilled personnel to these firms. Also, many former servicemen and women are heading to these organisations.

I personally think it is a good thing to be informing potential servicemen and women of the risks involved. If that means getting information from experienced personnel at "the sharp end" who may be outside of the forces but nevertheless have the experience and therefore the mindset (something I can assure you has not left me 10 years later) of the Australian serviceman/woman.

Yes, some Iraqi (not towel-head thank you) driving in his own country has the right to use the roads. One would also hope he has the intelligence to know there is an insurgent war going on.

When all attempts are made to wave him off and he insists on pushing the envelope with an obviously armed convoy protecting itself - maybe discretion would be the greater part of valour. Under these circumstances I know I would back off.

As for the comment about the profile of a 'VIED' - you might want to do as much research on that as you did regarding the phrase 'stand up'. Even just rereading the article you might get an idea.

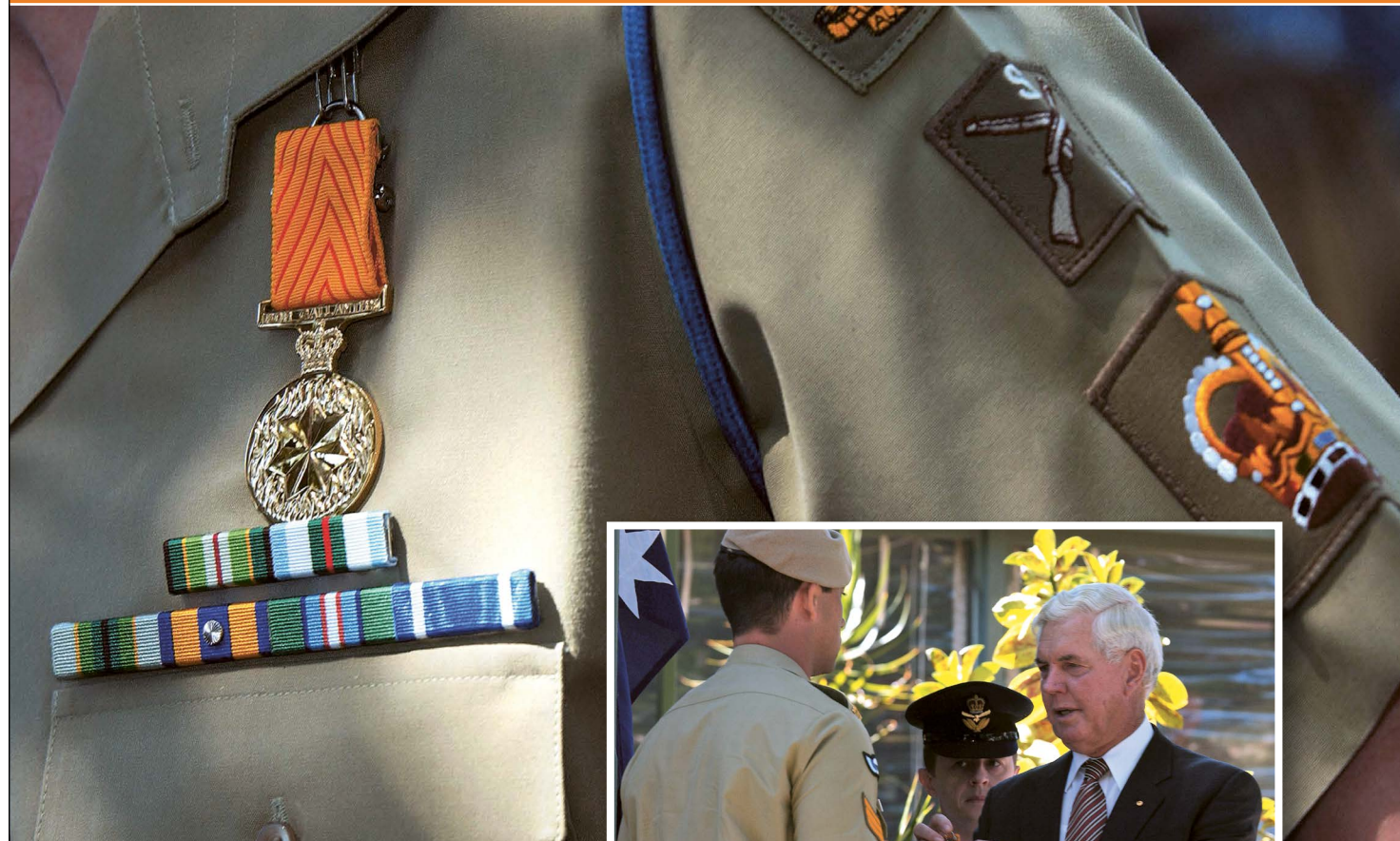
Congratulations CONTACT - excellent information and commentary. Keep up the good work.

Travis E, Canberra

Please keep your letters short and to the point, to fit more in. The Editor reserves the right to abbreviate and otherwise edit letters for any reason including to make them fit.

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HOME ARE THE BRAVE



Governor General of Australia Major General Michael Jeffery and Prime Minister John Howard joined Chief of the Defence Force Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston and Chief of Army Lieutenant General Peter Leahy in welcoming Western Australia-based members of the Special Forces Task Group (SFTG) home from Afghanistan in March.

During the ceremony at Campbell Barracks the Governor-General and Prime Minister praised the professionalism and courage of the SFTG members who they said had operated in an extremely demanding environment against a resourceful, capable and tenacious adversary.

Their mission was to assist coalition forces to destroy Taliban and Al Qaeda resistance to Afghanistan's democratically elected government. The SFTG has been engaged in dangerous work that is vital to Afghanistan's stability and a major contribution to fighting terrorism.

The dangers faced by the SFTG were highlighted by the presentation of two gallantry awards by the Governor General. A sergeant and a warrant officer class two, both members of the SASR, were awarded the Medal for Gallantry for their outstanding actions, leadership and bravery

during long and difficult engagements with anti-coalition militia elements early in their tours of duty.

The Medal for Gallantry is the third highest award for gallantry in the Australian Honours and Awards system.

The SFTG is comprised of soldiers from SASR, 4th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (Commando), Incident Response Regiment, 1 Commando Regiment and the Special Operations Combat Services Support Company. Specialist staff from the wider Australian Defence Force filled other roles within the task group. SFTG conducted a rotation earlier this year and its operations in Afghanistan will conclude in September.

The identities of the gallantry-award recipients and full details of the actions in which they were awarded will not be publicly released for operational security reasons. An extract from each citation reads:

Australian Army
Sergeant Y
To be awarded the Medal for Gallantry

For Gallantry, as a Patrol Commander, while under intense Anti-Coalition Militia (ACM) fire and showing total disregard for his own safety he manoeuvred forward to recover a machinegun in order to protect the left flank and to neutralise enemy fire positions.

During the conduct of an Operation in southern Afghanistan, an Australian force was engaged by a numerically superior ACM element. In the lead up to the engagement, Sergeant Y was tasked, by the on-scene commander, to conduct a foot patrol to clear and secure a potentially dangerous obstacle in order to facilitate the safe passage of the Australian patrol. Whilst conducting this task Sergeant Y commenced to clear and secure the south-western sector of a village and obstacle choke point.

An engagement on the south-eastern sector of the village and subsequent contact resulted in the south-western clearing patrol being separated from the remainder of the call-sign. Sergeant Y placed himself in an extremely hazardous situation whilst under heavy fire to gain situational awareness and command of his patrol in order to linkup with the main-force element. On linking up with the main-force element Sergeant Y, whilst under fire, retrieved a machinegun from a tactical vehicle in order to move to a position to put effective fire onto ACM positions. This action turned the balance on the left flank, enabling the entire Australian element to regain the initiative. Sergeant Y, with assistance from another patrol member, occupied a fire position under extreme ACM fire with the intent to suppress the ACM. This action enabled the Australian element to regain the initiative and was pivotal in preventing loss of life on the south-eastern sector of the contact site. It also enabled further elements to move into positions to prevent an ACM advance and to facilitate the withdrawal of the Australian patrol from the engagement area.

Sergeant Y's actions of gallantry and disregard for his own safety in order to reinforce the main-force element, and his ability to recover a machine gun in order to suppress the ACM while under fire in

extremely hazardous circumstances, displayed courage of the highest order and is in-keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.

Australian Army
Warrant Officer Class Two Z
To be awarded the Medal for Gallantry

For Gallantry, as a patrol commander, while under intense ACM fire and showing total disregard for his own safety, attempted on three occasions to recover a critically wounded Afghanistan National Army soldier.

During the conduct of an Operation in southern Afghanistan an Australian patrol was engaged by a numerically superior ACM element. In the leadup to this engagement, WO2 Z was tasked, by the on-scene commander, to conduct a foot patrol to clear and secure a potentially dangerous obstacle in order to facilitate the safe passage of the Australian patrol. Whilst conducting this task, WO2 Z commenced to secure the south-eastern sector of the obstacle choke point. In doing so, WO2 Z and an Afghanistan National Army soldier, were engaged by ACM at close range. This engagement resulted in the critical wounding of the ANA soldier. The decisive reaction of WO2 Z contributed to the early initiation of the ACM ambush which in turn prevented the remainder of the Australian element from entering the ambush killing ground.

The Australian patrol then became engaged in a sustained-fire fight with the ACM for several hours. During this time, WO2 Z made three attempts to recover the critically wounded ANA soldier whilst still under extremely heavy fire from numerous enemy positions. Unfortunately, the critically wounded ANA soldier died of his wounds before he could be recovered.

WO2 Z's actions of gallantry and disregard for his own safety in attempting to rescue his fallen comrade in extremely hazardous circumstances displayed courage of the highest order and is in-keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.

In 2004, another member of the Western Australia-based SASR was also awarded a

Medal for Gallantry for his actions while on patrol in Iraq during Operation Falconer.

As reported in CONTACT issue #1, Trooper X and his colleagues were on a patrol tasked with clearing an Iraqi installation, to prevent it being used for the command and control of theatre ballistic missiles. Trooper X was the machine gunner in the exposed .50 calibre machinegun mounting ring in his patrol vehicle.

"When contact was initiated we found ourselves screened by other vehicles, which provided an ideal position to use Javelin [a newly acquired, man-portable, anti-tank missile system], "Tpr X said.

The enemy force comprised utility vehicles mounted with machine guns, and about 20 dismounted infantry, who were aggressively advancing on the SAS patrol's position. During the entire action Trooper X was under enemy fire.

"Using the vehicle as a stable-firing platform, I engaged an enemy vehicle, which was firing a heavy machinegun in our direction, with a Javelin missile. This vehicle was destroyed.

"In the interim, I passed the expended tube to my offside, who conducted a reload. As this was occurring I engaged advancing enemy with the vehicle .50 (calibre) machinegun. Once the Javelin had been reloaded and handed back to me, I engaged a second vehicle at a much closer range."

The second vehicle was destroyed and, subsequently, as the patrol closed on the enemy position, Trooper X engaged a mortar tube with his sniper rifle, hitting the tube with his first round and causing the weapon to explode killing its operators.

During the final stages of the contact, Trooper X used the Javelin system once again to engage and destroy, at long range, a communications building in which enemy soldiers were located.





STAFF CADET LUKE BOSWARVA MEETS BAKKAR - LONG TAN COMPANY'S MASCOT

LIVING BREATHING MASCOT FOR CADETS

Long Tan Company at Royal Military College, Duntroon, welcomed a new member to their fold in April.

Bakkar, an 11-year-old, 190kg Royal Bengal Tiger, who lives nearby at the National Zoo and Aquarium, has been adopted by the cadets as a living breathing mascot to replace an erstwhile cardboard-cutout replica.

Staff Cadet Luke Boswarva of Perth had the distinction of feeding the new mascot for the first time - an honour he won in a company raffle.

Staff Cadet Boswarva said it was a real thrill to meet Bakkar and an honour to be the first to feed him.

"Having the tiger as our mascot represents the strength that lies behind the company, and having a real tiger feels very empowering," he said.

In exchange for the honour of adopting Bakkar, Long Tan Company will dedicate six Saturday mornings a year to help with general maintenance around the zoo.

National Zoo and Aquarium staff said workshops of up to 70 fit, young volunteers would make a real difference to the zoo and they were delighted to

welcome a great bunch of young Australians into the zoo family.

While just one cadet got to feed Bakkar on the first visit, all Long Tan Company

cadets will get their turn to get up close and personal with their new mascot.

Long Tan Company is the Sovereign's - or lead - Company at RMC, an honour won through sport, academic and military-skills prowess.

AUSTRALIA JUMPS FOR JASSM

Lockheed Martin's Joint Air-to-Surface Stand-off Missile (JASSM) has been selected as the new long range air-to-surface missile to equip the RAAF's F/A-18 Hornet fleet and should be operational by 2009.

Introduction and fitting of JASSM to the Hornet marks an important capability upgrade for the F/A-18 that could be a key enabler for the retirement of the F-111.

JASSM will provide the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) with the capability to strike both land-based and maritime, fixed and moving targets. It is an autonomous, precision-standoff 'cruise' missile designed to destroy high-value, well-defended, fixed and

relocateable targets at a stand-off range of more than 200 nautical miles.

The missile will be equipped with a data link to permit position updates on moving targets or missile retargeting after launch and, with tested and proven pinpoint accuracy and a 1000-pound warhead, should make it highly effective against a wide range of targets.

A previous option to also equip AP-3C Orion with the same missile was dropped because of overall cost and project complexity.

Australia is the first overseas customer for the stealthy weapon.

Manufacturer Lockheed Martin recently upgraded manufacturing facilities for JASSM to produce a steady-rate 40 missiles per month. The US Air Force anticipates purchasing 4900 of the missiles over the life of the program.



AUSTRALIA'S PURCHASE OF JOINT AIR-TO-SURFACE STAND-OFF MISSILE (JASSM) TO EQUIP THE F/A-18 FLEET COULD ALLOW F-111 TO RETIRE ON SCHEDULE. PHOTO LOCKHEED MARTIN



THE FIRST SPECIAL-FORCES VARIANT CV-22 OSPREY HAS BEEN DELIVERED TO THE USAF. PHOTO COURTESY BELL HELICOPTER

OSPREY SPREADS ITS WINGS

A new chapter in US Air Force aviation opened in March as the first operational CV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft was delivered.

The aircraft was flown from the test wing at Edwards Air Force Base, California by commander Air Force Special Operations Command Lieutenant General Michael Wooley to the 58th Special Operations Wing at Kirtland Air Force Base in New Mexico.

Osprey has the unique ability to take off, land and hover like a helicopter but can tilt its propellers fully forward to fly like a conventional airplane.

This dual capability gives the CV-22 extended range, speed and versatility over any other special-forces aircraft, which will allow the USAF to conduct long-range infiltration and exfiltration missions.

The aircraft is 75 per cent quieter, can fly higher and has one-tenth the

infrared signature of most rotary-winged aircraft.

CV-22 is a special-operations variant of the MV-22 currently used by the Marine Corps that differs from the Marine Corps' version mainly in the electronics suite. Unit cost is currently \$89.1 million, however, cost-reduction initiatives and a multi-year procurement contract are expected to significantly reduce this.

Osprey can transport 24 combat troops nearly 4000kms (with in-air refueling) or lift up to 20,000 pounds of internal or external cargo.

The first operational CV-22 unit is expected to come on line out of Hurlburt Field, Florida, in 2007 with the USAF planning to buy 50 of the special-forces variant over the following 10 years. The Marine Corps requires 425 aircraft while the Navy and Army are also evaluating its potential.



"HAVEN'T WE MET BEFORE?" - PROUD GRANDMOTHER, QUEEN ELIZABETH II GREETED HER GRANDSON 2ND LIEUTENANT WALES ON HIS GRADUATION PARADE AT SANDHURST. PHOTO BY CHRIS FLETCHER, BRITISH ARMY

ROYAL GRADUATION

HRH Prince Harry graduated as a commissioned officer in the British Army on 12 April, on a parade reviewed by his grandmother the Queen.

He is posted to the Blues and Royals regiment, a part of the Household Cavalry. Cornet (2nd Lieutenant in the Blues and Royals) Wales will train to become a troop commander, eventually serving in an armoured reconnaissance unit and is expected to undertake a full range of training and operational deployments.

The Queen has previously reviewed graduating parades at Sandhurst in 1949, 1965, 1985 and 1991. In 1991 she presented new Colours to the Academy.



FLEET MOVEMENTS

>> Commander Malcolm Wise and the ship's company of ANZAC Class Frigate HMAS Ballarat were farewelled by family, friends VIPs and other well-wishers on 1 March enroute to the Persian Gulf for her first tour in the region. She subsequently took over duties from HMAS Parramatta protecting Iraq's offshore export oil terminals.

>> HMAS Parramatta returned to Sydney on 13 April after conducting more than 900 individual boat operations, including 86 boardings and 76 security patrols on her six-month tour in the Persian Gulf. She was also involved

in training other coalition warships as well as the Iraqi Navy, which involved Iraqi Officers spending considerable time on board.

>> Underway replenishment ship, HMAS Westralia and crew were welcomed home to Fleet Base West for the last time on 6 April. The ship, which saw active service in the first Gulf War, will be decommissioned in September. She will be replaced by HMAS Sirius.

PAKISTAN ASSIST ENDS

All Australian Defence personnel have returned home from Pakistan following the conclusion of

Operation Pakistan Assist - a medical assistance mission in the highlands of Kashmir following a devastating earthquake in October last year.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence Senator Sandy Macdonald welcomed the last of the contingent home at Townsville Airport on 9 April. "These soldiers have saved many lives, formed valuable links with the people of Pakistan and even helped deliver three babies," he said.

"It has been a great example of the ADF performing at its absolute finest. Australians can be

proud of the efforts of all personnel involved."

INDIAN ARMY BUYING BIG

Textron's Bell 407 helicopter and the Eurocopter AS 350B3 have been short listed for an Indian Army requirement for light utility helicopters.

The army intends to buy a total 197 helicopters in a deal worth US\$500 to \$600 million. The first 60 will be bought outright with the remainder to be built under license locally.

The new helicopters will replace the Army Aviation Wings' ageing fleet of Allouette IIs and IIIs, some of which will be upgraded.

CLOTHES TO BITE THE BULLET

A CSIRO-led lightweight ballistic armour project is applying a number of new ceramic and composite materials and fabrication technologies to produce lightweight, low-cost, high-performance helmet and body armour for Australia's Defence personnel.

The Lightweight Ballistic Armour project is a collaborative arrangement between the Department of Defence, Australian Defence Apparel, CSIRO and the Victorian Centre for Advanced Materials Manufacturing of Deakin University.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, Senator Sandy Macdonald, who recently witnessed a demonstration of the new ballistic material, said, "We are constantly striving to introduce new capabilities that will reduce the burden on our soldiers and allow them to operate more effectively and safely, and this development shows promise in that direction".

MIAS COULD BE FOUND

The Australian Government has approved a grant of \$37,500 for Operation Aussies Home to search for the likely burial sites of two Australian

soldiers killed in action in Vietnam.

Lance Corporal Richard Parker and Private Peter Gillson were killed during fighting between A Company 1RAR and Vietcong forces in Bien Hoa province in 1965. Heavy enemy fire at the time meant the bodies could not be recovered.

HIGH ACHIEVERS

No. 36 Squadron was welcomed home in April from its most recent deployment to the Middle East Area of Operations.

This marked the successful completion of its second rotation through the theatre

and included operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan in support of Australian and Coalition Forces.

To date, the C130 detachments from No.86 Wing (of which 36 Squadron is part) have achieved more than 1100 missions and moved in excess of 2.1 million kgs of cargo.

The unit's deployment also included support to the redeployment of Australian SASR personnel in Afghanistan.

Upon return, the squadron was handed the keys to new headquarters buildings it will share with 37 Squadron at RAAF Base Richmond.

OLD FAITHFUL LOSES YOUNG DIGGER SOLDIER KILLED ON ACTIVE SERVICE

On 22 April, Chief of Army Lieutenant General Peter Leahy had the very sad duty to report the first death of an Australian soldier serving with the Operation Catalyst Security Detachment (SECDet) in Baghdad.

Private Jacob 'Jake' Bruce Kovco was killed by a single gunshot to the head in what is believed to be an accidental discharge of an Australian weapon on the afternoon of 21 April.

The soldier was taken to a United States military hospital close by where he later died surrounded by his mates, draped in an Australian flag, with a paratrooper's beret on his chest, as his mates said the Lord's Prayer.

Full details of the incident were not immediately available, though officials said it was not related to combat action, and a full investigation had been launched.

Jake Kovco was born in Melbourne and grew up in Victoria. He enlisted in the Australian Regular Army on 26 March 2002.

After successfully completing the recruit training course at Kapooka, he was selected for the Infantry Corps and was posted to the School of Infantry, Singleton in May 2002.

Jake completed infantry basic training and was selected for service in the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) – known as Old Faithful – Australia's only parachute infantry battalion.

At 3RAR he served in a range of positions as a rifleman, heavy weapons operator and was a member of the highly trained sniper section.

He was photographed by CONTACT magazine in October 2005 while engaged on his sniper's course and appeared on the front cover of the magazine in December.

He was a highly qualified soldier who had completed a number of specialist courses in his four years of service. He deployed to Iraq as a member of the Security Detachment (SECDet) in Baghdad in March 2006.

The SECDet consists of around 110 personnel who provide protection and escort for Australian Defence and Government personnel working in Baghdad.

During his time in Baghdad, Private Kovco demonstrated high levels of devotion to duty and professionalism. He was a valued team member and is sorely missed, not only for his skills and professionalism, but also as a mate and comrade.

He was married to Shelley and was a proud father of two young children, Tyrie and Alana.

Unfortunately, an embarrassing chain of events marred the return of Private Kovco's body to Australia. His remains were somehow mixed up with another person in Kuwait and the wrong coffin was initially brought to Australia.

It wasn't until Saturday 29 April – 2 days behind schedule – that Private Kovco's family could properly commence the grieving process.



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HOME-GROWN CORVETTE

Western Australia's Austal Ships has released details of its new multi-mission surface combatant known as the Multi-Role Corvette (MRC) – a vessel adopting the same trimaran hullform as that designed by Austal for the US Navy's Littoral Combat Ship program.

While it is only 72m long and has a beam of just 19m, the MRC has a relatively large multi-use mission deck that is 36m long by 16m wide. The mission deck is an open area which would enable the vessel to undertake a variety of roles across a broad spectrum of operational scenarios, including armed patrol of maritime borders, anti-submarine warfare, command and control, humanitarian relief and at-sea replenishment.

The mission deck is accessed by two large doors aft, with access for vehicles and troops via a fold-up ramp. The ramp is strong enough and the doors large enough to allow all of the Australian Army's armoured vehicles (M113, ASLAV, Bushmaster)

bar the new M1A1 Abrams tank to drive on and drive off at wharf facilities.

A 22m-long by 13.8m-wide aft flight deck can support the operation of a helicopter of up to Seahawk/MRH 90 size. A one-aircraft hangar is also provided to allow the extended embarkation of integral helicopter support. Two 7.2m rigid hull inflatable boats are carried on davits at port and to starboard for boarding parties and the transport of special forces teams ashore.

The MRC has a 250 tonne deadweight and is able to reach speeds of 35 knots. Typical maximum range is around 3000 nautical miles. A 3m draught allows the MRC to operate in the confined and shallow waters so prevalent across the Asia-Pacific region.

Unit price for an MRC would be well below the A\$100 million mark, which is cheap as chips in the naval shipbuilding scene.



CANADIAN G-CLASS - ARMOURD AGAINST IEDS

G-CLASS SURVIVES IED HITS

The Mercedes-Benz G-Class 4x4 – strong contender for the Australian Army's general service vehicle replacement program, Project Overlander – is proving itself in the world's hotspots against the threat of improvised explosive devices (IED).

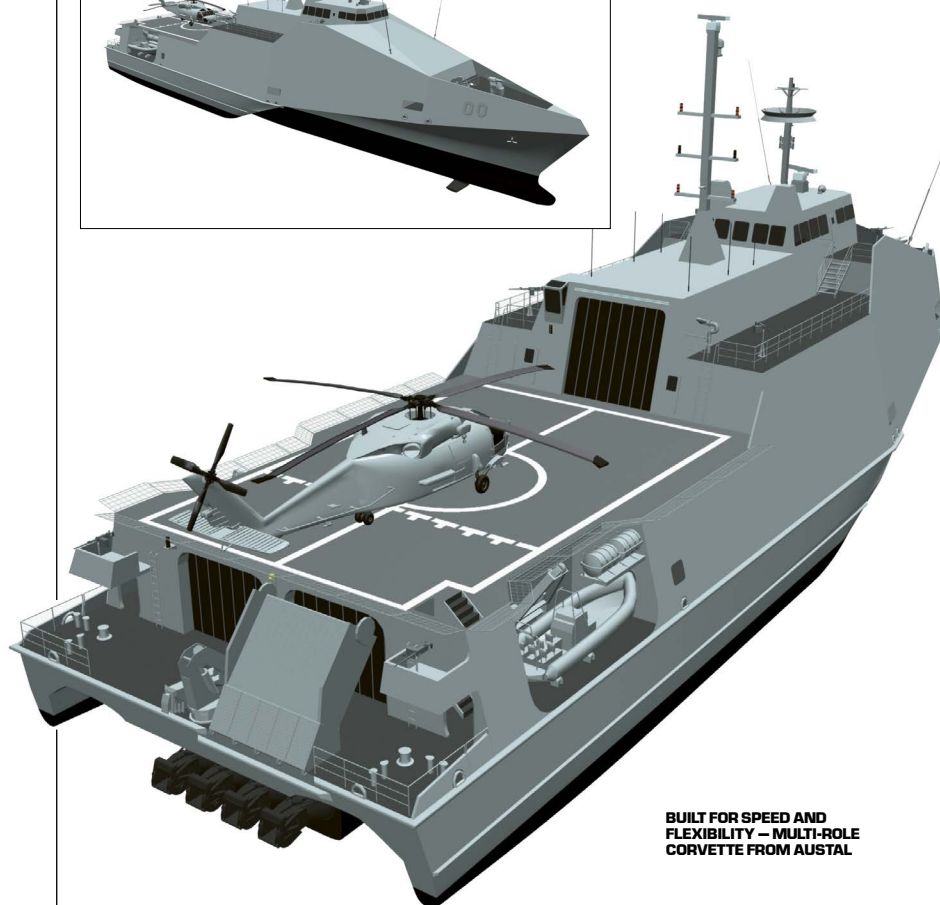
On offer to Australia to replace the venerable Land Rover Perentie 4x4 and 6x6 fleet, the armoured version of the G-Class has saved the lives of crews and passengers during incidents involving IED blasts in Afghanistan and Iraq, according to reports from the Canadian and Norwegian defence departments.

Canada, which operates more than 1100 G-Class (the Canadian Army calls it G-Wagon) including around 100 fitted with the add-on Armour Protection System (APS), has been using the vehicle in Afghanistan since 2004. In the past eight months or so, insurgents have attacked Canadian Army patrols mounted in G-Class vehicles with IEDs, no less than three times. Each time the occupants have walked away with minor injuries.

In one attack in February this year, a G-Class travelling in convoy had its whole front end torn off in the blast, but the crew compartment – encased in the APS – remained intact.

In Iraq, a Norwegian Army patrol was hit recently by a roadside IED. The crew, travelling in a short-wheelbase uparmoured G-Class, survived the blast with only minor injuries.

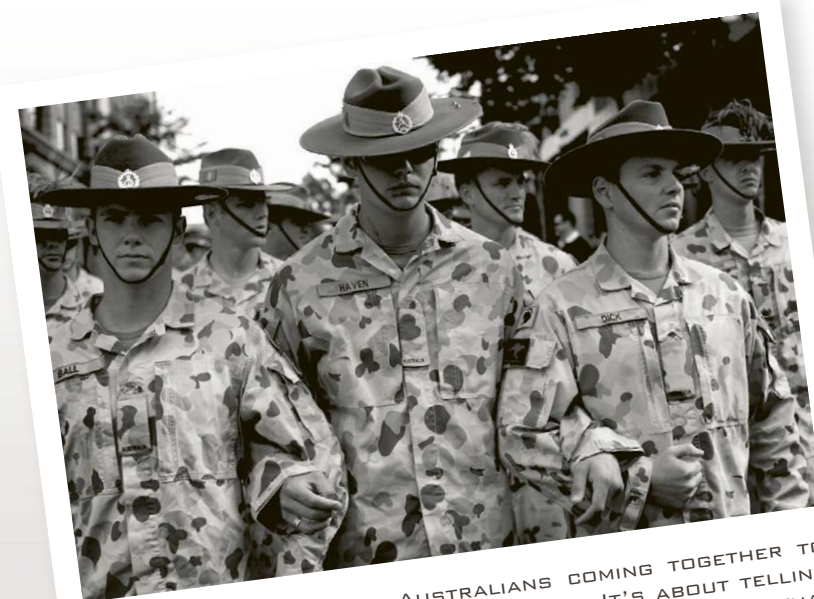
The APS, which adds around 500kg to the all-up weight of the vehicle, is designed so that it is virtually impossible to distinguish an unarmoured G-Class from one fitted with the APS kit.



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The RAAF will acquire up to four new Boeing C-17 Globemaster III heavy-lift aircraft and associated equipment in a fast-tracked acquisition project announced on 3 March.

Defence Minister Brendan Nelson said the C-17 was the only aircraft currently in production that had a proven capability to meet ADF operational commitments, in Australia, the region and globally and was selected for its ability to meet the needs of the ADF over the next 30 years.

"C-17 has four times the carrying capacity of the RAAF C-130 Hercules," Dr Nelson said.

"This aircraft has the load capacity and range that will allow the ADF to rapidly deploy troops, combat vehicles, helicopters and heavy equipment including the M1A1 Abrams Tank. Each C-17 has the capacity to transport five

Bushmaster infantry vehicles, or three Tiger helicopters."

The minister said the fleet will give Australia a new Responsive Global Airlift capability, significantly enhancing the ADF's ability to support national and international operations, and major disaster rescue and relief efforts.

As the C-17 aircraft is currently in production, the first aircraft is expected to be delivered as early as this year with the balance of the fleet to be delivered by mid 2008, giving the ADF the operating capability it needs within a short time-frame.

Acquisition of the C-17 Globemaster III – estimated at up to \$2 billion – will also provide significant opportunity for our aerospace industry, with Boeing proposing an Australian Industry Capability program valued at \$345m over the life of the aircraft.

NEW SERVICE AWARDS ANNOUNCED

Australia will recognise the service of more than one million current and former military personnel with the issue of a new Australian Defence Medal (ADM) recognising a minimum commitment of four year's Defence service.

Anyone who served in the armed forces of Australia since WWII and completed at least four year's service (with some exceptions) are eligible to apply.

Minister for Veterans Affairs Bruce Bilson said this medal was an important tribute to those who had given so much for our country.

"I encourage all those eligible, to submit applications and supporting evidence as soon as possible to receive the recognition they deserve," he said.

Information and application forms are available at www.defence.gov.au/dpe/dpe_site/honours_awards/ and from RSLs and other ex-service organisations or phone 1800 111 321.

The Government anticipates there are in the order of about 1,000,000 Australians entitled to apply.

>> Meanwhile, the Chief of Army has announced an Army Combat Badge to recognise soldiers, male or female, who engage in warfighting against an armed enemy on warlike operations.

With similar design and qualifying criteria to the Infantry Combat Badge, the new award will recognise, for the first time, the fact that soldiers other than infantry are increasingly exposed armed aggression. The award will be initially back dated to the commencement of the Al Muthanna Task Group and may be made retrospective for Somalia, Rwanda, East Timor and other theatres.

Coincidentally (or otherwise?) the ACB was announced in November 2005 following the instigation of a similar combat award in the US Army in May.



CAESAR - IN THE RACE TO REPLACE ARMY'S ARTILLERY PIECES

LAND 17 STEPS CLOSER

The Government has provided first-pass approval for the replacement of Army's current 105mm and 155mm artillery pieces with new, more capable, artillery systems under a project known as LAND 17.

Defence will now develop the project which will invest in artillery systems with longer range, improved precision, and better crew protection.

Options for replacing the current towed artillery pieces include a mix of protected self-propelled artillery systems, and lightweight towed artillery systems.

As an additional benefit, the project will also examine advanced high precision munitions and a networked command and fire-control system.

LAND 17 will provide combined-arms battlegroups with improved firepower, extended range, greater mobility and greater accuracy.

The new system is expected to enter service over the period 2011-2013 at a total cost of between \$450 million and \$600 million.

Once in service, the new artillery pieces will be used to re-equip units based in Darwin, Townsville, Brisbane and the Combined Arms Training Centre at Puckapunyal, Victoria.



BIG BEAST - C-17 GLOBEMASTER III WILL SOON FILL AUSSIE SKIES. PHOTO BRIAN HARTIGAN

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RIOT CONTROL

HONIARA'S CIVIL UNREST CALMED

THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE AUSTRALIAN-LED REGIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION TO THE SOLOMON ISLANDS (RAMSI) IS CALLED OPERATION ANODE

WORDS BRIAN HARTIGAN PICS ADF

The sterling work accomplished by the AFP-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands suffered a setback in April as political tensions turned violent and left Honiara's Chinatown all-but reduced to ashes.

Seventeen police were injured in the initial rioting – two, who suffered broken bones, required repatriation to Australia for medical treatment.

But, as AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty pointed out, were it not for the earlier removal of thousands of guns from the streets of the capital, we could certainly have been counting dead bodies instead of broken bones or burned buildings.

In response to the violence – as it has done in the past – Townsville's rapid deployment group, called the Ready Company Group (RCG), was deployed within 24 hours and – as in the past – had an instant calming effect on the streets.

About the same time, more than 80 additional Australian Federal Police officers were also dispatched onboard a charter flight out of Brisbane.

The initial deployment of approximately 110 infantry soldiers drawn from the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), based at Lavarack Barracks in Townsville was augmented within 48 hours by a further 110 soldiers from Sydney-based 3RAR.

After arriving in Honiara, the soldiers set to work supporting the Royal Solomon Islands Police and the RAMSI Participating Police Force, conducting patrols in and around Honiara.

They were highly trained and well

equipped to react to a wide range of contingencies at short notice but, thankfully, were not required to use lethal force.

The deployment in April reinforced the 60-strong military force from Australia, New Zealand, Tonga and Papua New Guinea already on the ground as part of the regional assistance mission – the strengthened military presence provided support to the local and international police forces, who are ultimately responsible for enforcing the rule of law across the islands.

Royal Australian Air Force Boeing 707 and Hercules aircraft also provided support to the movement of Australian troops, and the return of Australian nationals and others from Honiara, while two Royal Australian





Navy patrol boats adding another, somewhat symbolic level of support in the capital's harbour.

The deployment of the RCG, while initially to quell rampant and wanton destruction in the capital and to prevent it spreading to other centers, was aimed at ensuring the ongoing success of RAMSI in improving law and order in the Solomon Islands and preventing the country sliding out of control.

Contrary to earlier, low-profile philosophies covering the use of military assets in Solomon Islands, ADF personnel this time around were ensuring they were highly visible on the streets of the capital – a philosophy that was said to be acting as a strong deterrent to potential trouble

makers and had an almost immediate calming effect on the general populace.

The Australian Defence Force's contribution to the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands is called Operation Anode.

RAMSI's assistance to the country, aimed at restoring law and order and preventing the country becoming a 'failed state', is known as Operation Helpem Fren and includes judicial, financial and administrative assistance and guidance as well as the more visible police presence.

Both operations began under the RAMSI umbrella on 24 July 2003.

Since RAMSI began, thousands of firearms (many of them high-powered,

military weapons) and hundreds-of-thousands of rounds of ammunition have been removed from the streets and destroyed. Almost 7000 people have been arrested and nearly 10,000 charges laid.

One Australian soldier and one Australian Federal Police member have died on the mission. Private Jamie Clark, 3RAR, died after falling down an abandoned mine shaft while on patrol in March 2004 and Protective Service Officer Adam Dunning was shot in an ambush just before Christmas the same year.

Since the riots in April, several people, including elected officials, have been arrested and charged in relation to the violence.

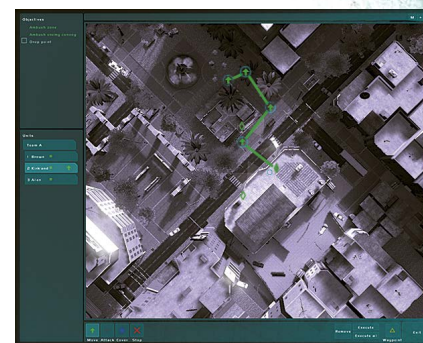


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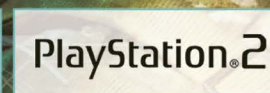


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COMMONWEALTH GOLD

While a massive world-wide audience enjoyed the opening ceremony of the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games – the ADF was involved in its own record-breaking performance.

A SAFE AND SECURE GAMES

Under the guise of Operation Acolyte, 1000 members of Joint Task Force 636 patrolled the skies, land and waters of Melbourne while others assisted with ceremonial and general support to help ensure the Games were safe, secure and successful.

F/A-18 aircraft patrolled the night sky as tactical assault troops stood to. More troops remained at high readiness, prepared to support police and emergency services across the city.

Commander Operation Acolyte Brigadier Andrew Smith said he was pleased with how the task had been accomplished without any impact on the spectacle and grandeur of the opening night.

"I'm proud of how our people are working together," Brigadier Smith said. "Given the complexity of the operation and the force composition, they have performed as a remarkably seamless team. The ability of the three services and our civilian partners to work together has allowed things to go along very smoothly."

He said that although the size of the ADF contingent committed to the 2000 Sydney Olympics was larger, he believed that this was the first time the ADF had provided this combination of complex assets on this scale under a single task-force command.

"We are working in a post-9/11 world and, while Operation Gold was a bigger-sized force, there is now an additional

level of support that we need to provide in cooperation with our Victorian Government partners."

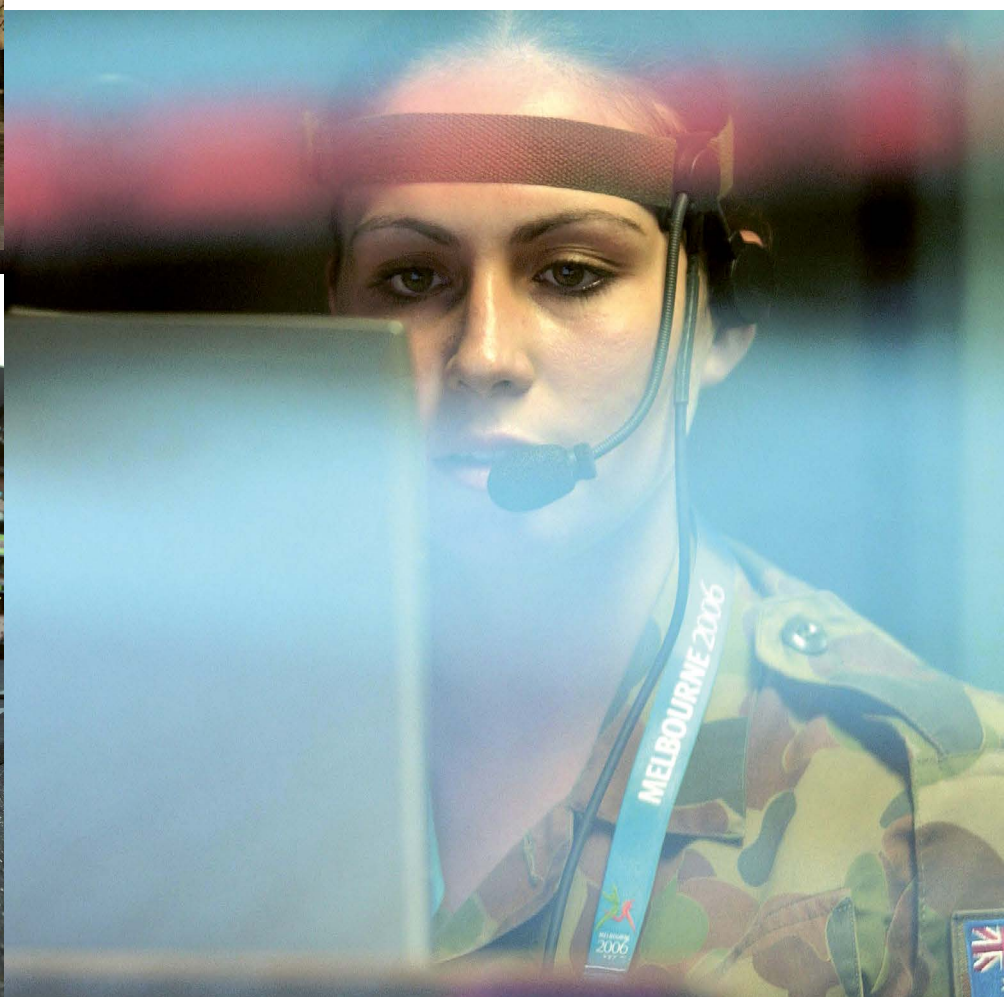
Defence's support to the Commonwealth Games was known as Operation Acolyte from the Greek word for 'helper' or 'assistant' and was chosen to symbolise Defence's supporting role.

Strategic planning for the operation began in Canberra in 2003, and in February 2005 a dedicated team of 17 people was established at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, to continue detailed planning.

Operation Acolyte involved around 2600 Australian Defence Force personnel from across the three services, performing a range of specialist roles, from the all-important security function to ceremonial and general support.

The troops were accommodated at, and worked out of existing Defence establishments in and around Melbourne, including; Simpson Barracks, Watsonia; Maygar Barracks, Broadmeadows; RAAF Williams, Laverton, and Point Cook as well as from Victoria Barracks in Melbourne itself.

About 1200 Defence personnel directly assisted Victoria Police with searching venues, operating vehicle checkpoints, responding to bomb threats and clearing any underwater parts of venues and events.



GAMES SECURITY

An Australian Defence Force Tactical Assault Group with appropriate support including Blackhawk helicopters was on standby throughout the games.

Maritime and air assets, including ships and aircraft with the capacity to intercept vessels at sea and to divert aircraft were available to counter specific threats which, thankfully, did not arise.

But it wasn't all about security. Within the ADF's overall support package was a fair emphasis on ceremonial support in the form of band support and a ceremonial training team. The Royal Australian Navy Band Detachment, HMAS Cereberus; the Australian Army Band, Watsonia; and the Royal Australian Air Force Central Band, Laverton provided musical support in the form of concerts and (recorded) national anthems for medal ceremonies.

Another team of 12 ceremonial experts trained M2006 volunteers on the conduct and protocols of flag and medal ceremonies, to assist volunteers in feeling confident about their very public ceremonial duties during the Games.

Defence also provided expert personnel to assist organisers in running and maintaining vital radio communication networks at venues and public sites.

Brigadier Smith said the best part of his command during the games was being able to get out and visit the troops under his command.

"I could sense their anticipation and see the thoroughness of their training, and it was great to see it all come together. I could share their enthusiasm, and their eagerness to move into the mission," he said.

While his team remained focused on their task, Brigadier Smith hoped the people in Melbourne had little cause to notice them.

"While security was 95 per cent of our task, it's important to remember that the Commonwealth Games was not a security operation – it was a sporting carnival and cultural event that was based on friendship across the Commonwealth.

"That's what we want people to remember about the Games. So, while we were working, I hope people focused on enjoying the them."

With the Commonwealth Games now over and no adverse headlines splashed across the front pages of the world, the Australian Defence Force, the Victoria Police, the Australian Federal Police and the myriad other agencies who worked together to ensure the games went on successfully and securely have packed up and simply moved on to the next job with little fuss or fanfare – and we thank them for a job well done.



Four years of training paid off for one Army Reserve soldier at the Commonwealth Games. Brigadier Bruce Scott, Commander 11 Brigade in Townsville, won a gold medal in the Full Bore Rifle Individual competition in a white-knuckle finish. Brigadier Scott was in second place before the final shoot at 1000 yards, but managed to aim true and beat Englishman Parag Patel by one point (Scott: 403.57 points, Patel: 402.57 points). He also won Silver in the Open Full Bore Rifle Pairs competition, with partner James Corbett.



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FORCES ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
ENTERTAINMENT

ENTERTAINERS VISIT SINAI

PHOTOS BY MANDI MELDRUM, AFP

Led by country singing legend James Blundell, another entertainment troupe winged its way overseas in March to entertain our troops on deployment – this time to the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai, and to Cyprus where 15 Australian Federal Police officers work with the UN.

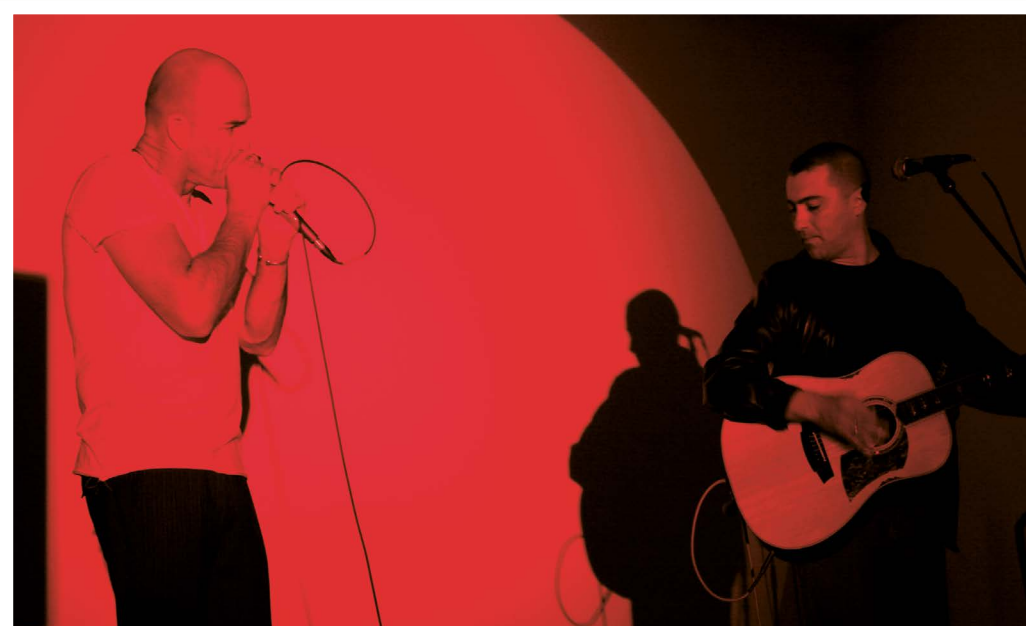
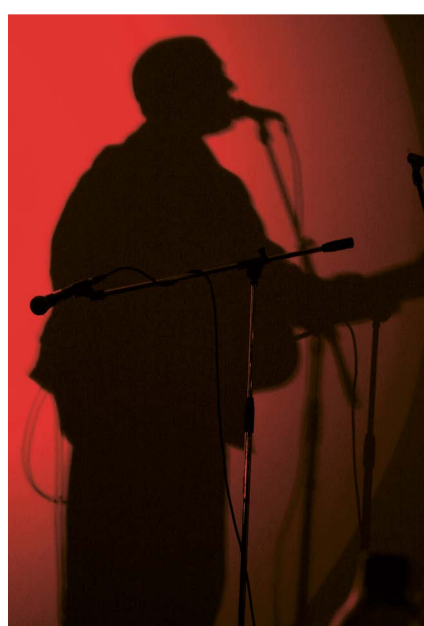
Organised by the Forces Advisory Council on Entertainment (FACE), other recent tours have included Iraq, the Persian Gulf, Solomon Islands and East Timor.

As usual, these Australian performers donated their time and talent free of charge – a long-established tradition that pre-dates Vietnam where FACE patron Little Pattie famously sang for our Diggers in the '60s.

The full line-up for this tour was country music legend James Blundell (who performed in East Timor in 1999), country music singer Rebecca Lavell, and comedian Wayne Deakin.

James Blundell, also an ambassador for the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, said he believed Australians in uniform had acquitted themselves with distinction in every deployment since their inception.

"Each time I'm asked, I jump at the chance – and I think as many Australian entertainers as possible should do the same," James said.



TOWER OF STRENGTH!

BY MAJOR MATT GRANT

While Aussie athletes were powerlifting for gold in Melbourne, 5 Aviation Regiment aircrew completed an unusual lift of its own to help the cyclone-affected north.

Their Chinook heavy-lift helicopter lifted a 32m-high, four-tonne Powerlink Queensland steel lattice transmission tower and transported it to the stricken town of Babinda, north of Innisfail.

Powerlink Queensland Chief Operating Officer Simon Bartlett said the tower was essential equipment to help enable bulk electricity supply to be restored to the Innisfail region. "The ADF transported the steel tower more than 200km from Townsville in less than two hours, avoiding delays that would otherwise have been caused by road transport and having to navigate around flooded rivers," Mr Bartlett said.

EFFORTS SEND A POSITIVE SIGNAL

BY MARK TANZER

"WHERE'S the local radio station?"

This was one of Captain Rob Kirk's first questions when he arrived in Innisfail the day after Cyclone Larry.

Captain Kirk, the 3CSSB Regimental Signals Officer, knew that local radio stations played a key role during and after cyclones. Innisfail's Radio 4KZ was no exception, with announcers staying on air to broadcast warnings until violent winds smashed masts and satellite gear.

"When 4KZ went dead, it must have been a lonely feeling for their listeners," Captain Kirk said.

He briefed a team of RAEME electrical tradesmen from 102 Field Workshops, 3CSSB, and set to work.

"I can't speak more highly of the RAEME soldiers - Corporal Mick Gordon, Craftsman Joe Rains and Craftsman Anthony Wicks," he said.

The team worked in harnesses on 4KZ's damaged roof and in the ceiling. With rain still falling, water soaked their equipment and started an electrical fire, which was quickly extinguished.

The 3CSSB team soon had 4KZ on air, using a temporary frequency.

Two days later, the station was back on its usual frequencies, broadcasting vital relief-effort information.

SOLDIERS BRING HOPE AFTER DISASTER



The ADF's prompt response to Cyclone Larry's obliteration of the far north Queensland coast and Atherton Tablelands alleviated the human suffering as Defence delivered life-saving aid to those in dire need.

HOPE

Many of the units involved in the relief effort were redeployed from the field and refitted in order to assist.

After taking a helicopter flight over the devastated area, Commander Operation Larry Assist Brigadier Mick Slater - along with members of Queensland Emergency Services - formulated a plan to commit resources where they would be most effective.

The plan was simple - sustain and protect. Water, food and shelter was the priority in material terms, along with troops and engineering equipment to clear debris blocking roads and endangering the population.

Brigadier Slater said the aim was to stabilise the situation until the civil authorities could consolidate and fully manage the situation without Defence support.

Cyclone Larry struck on March 20 and by midnight a convoy from Townsville's 3CSSB was on the Bruce Highway headed north. Troops from 2RAR and engineers from 3CER, along with their heavy plant, followed early the next morning.

The convoys beat rapidly rising floodwaters to be among the last vehicles into Innisfail before road access was cut. Movement was hazardous because of bad weather and debris on the road. By 0600hrs - only 19 hours after the cyclone - the first troops were on the ground in Innisfail.

The ground commander, logistician Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Bottrell had established a Joint Task Force (JTF) that coordinated CSSB, engineer and infantry elements. At the height of the operation, more than 400 ADF personnel were involved on the ground.

Higher-level coordination and command was run out of a JTF HQ located at 3 Bde in Townsville. The State Disaster Coordination Centre was responsible for taskings.

The process proved effective, as JTF operations officer Major Brad Robertson said, "Once on the ground we were able

51NQR'S QUICK RESPONSE

BY CAPTAIN ROGER PHILLIPS

As Cyclone Larry smashed its way through the most populated towns in 51FNQR's area of responsibility, plans were made to deploy patrols to the devastated region.

The next day, patrols were launched from A Company, 51FNQR, to the Babinda area, just south of Cairns, where many homes were damaged and most crops were destroyed.

During the next five days, 20 patrols were conducted in the devastated town, its surrounding area and the Atherton Tablelands.

51FNQR Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Paddy Evans said the on-ground efforts focused on providing access to key infrastructure.

"Our role was to reconnoitre and assess the situation then assist the State Emergency Service in the provision of emergency relief. Specifically, our emphasis was on assessments, route clearance, emergency relief and assistance in the functioning of key community infrastructure," he said.

"The Officer Commanding, Major Michael Doyle, was given very strict guidance, and tasked the patrols accordingly. He was able to quickly establish effective liaison within the town of Babinda and ensure that our patrol capabilities were maximised."

After the initial deployment, 51FNQR was reinforced by elements of 3 Brigade and HMAS Cairns. Coordination with 3 Brigade HQ ensured duplication of effort did not occur.

Lieutenant Colonel Evans praised the spirit of 51FNQR members who deployed despite damage to their own properties.

"The Reserve and ARA soldiers did a terrific job under very difficult circumstances. They willingly volunteered their time and worked incredible hours with little or no relief," he said.

"Some had lost their own farms – completely trashed – and other members suffered damage to their own homes, but they still turned out and did an outstanding job. They put their own loss behind them and focused their efforts on the community."

"It doesn't get any more Australian than this."



to create an immediate effect in our core sustainment role."

This was assisted by the creation of an airbridge into Innisfail by RAAF Hercules and Caribous transport aircraft. In the first four days of Operation Larry Assist these aircraft delivered 75,000 litres of bottled water and 15.5 tonnes of tarpaulins.

As the relief effort gained momentum, soldiers from Cairns-based 51FNQR assisting in Babinda were joined by 3RAR soldiers with 3CER engineering support. 5 Aviation Regiment and School of Army Aviation Black Hawks flew the troops in.

Three Iroquois were also on line, as well as a Chinook for heavy lifting.

Reconnaissance and aid drops to communities still cut-off from help became one of the helos' main operational roles as they delivered water and food to outlying areas.

1RAR's Recon Platoon was active in the Atherton Tablelands, reporting on damage

in remote communities that the helos could not access because of heavy cloud.

The helicopters played a critical role in the aeromedical evacuation of patients in serious condition, including a car-crash victim, from Innisfail hospital to Cairns.

Not all evacuations were airborne, however. Major Ben Butson and a medical team from 3CSSB were involved in the rescue of a sick infant from across a swollen river in terrible weather and little light.

"The mother, having trouble waking a one-month-old baby that was breathing irregularly, made a distress call," he said.

"A Unimog forded the flooded river and the medical team was able to stabilise the infant's breathing before taking him to hospital."

"Happily the baby is recovering well."

Major Butson said the soldiers also helped out at the Innisfail hospital.

"Our medics, under supervision, have been asked to assist with surge capacity at Innisfail."

COME HELL OR HIGH WATER

BY MARK TANZER

Drenched in pouring rain north of blacked-out Cardwell, I listened closely as an RACT corporal gave orders to convoy drivers about to cross a flooded creek in a desperate attempt to get humanitarian supplies to Innisfail.

Corporal Tim Owens, 9 Transport Squadron, 3CSSB, inspired confidence with his cool, we-can-do-this attitude. The drivers, sheltering under a damaged awning at a service station, were wet and tired, but keen to complete the mission that night.

Engines running, their Mack and Unimog trucks were loaded with food, water and other supplies needed by people in the shattered region. If anything, the soldiers were frustrated – they wanted to push through as fast as they could.

Other 3 Brigade packets had got through that day, but Corporal Owens' night-time convoy would face the challenge of dangerously rising post-cyclone floodwaters.

Finally, we hit the last checkpoint. Corporal Owens got out and spoke to the police, who were reluctant to let anyone past. He told them of his vital supplies, of his soldiers' skills and of the capabilities of his vehicles – and they waved him through. I could have cheered.

The police stopped photographer Corporal Rachel Ingram and I, as no 4WD was allowed past. They were already trying to rescue the driver of a civilian 4WD vehicle trapped in the floodwaters.

We turned back, but Corporal Owens' convoy made it in to Innisfail that night before the Tully River went over. The drivers had fought floodwaters, hands clenched on the wheel against the force of the raging torrent. They were soldiers on a mission, in the finest traditions of the Australian Army.

"The hospital staff have appreciated having extra skilled staff to lend a hand."

Elsewhere, a field kitchen prepared more than 1500 fresh meals for displaced locals. Portable shower facilities were also provided to bridge the gap until water could be reconnected.

One of the subtle aspects of the uniformed presence was the stabilising effect. For example, 2RAR soldiers tasked to reach a small community that had been cut off, arrived to find much tension and stress among the locals. As they methodically set about providing food and water, cleaning up and tarping roofs, the negativity soon evaporated.

With 1RAR, 2RAR and 3RAR providing the clean-up crews and tarp-roofing teams, engineers were free to use their specialist skills to best effect.

"Our priority was to facilitate mobility and to help re-establish essential services," OC 25 Support Squadron Major Ken Martin said. To that end, his troops cleared roads

for access and re-established utilities for water."

As the initial emergency eased, schools became the focus for the engineers who repaired roofing, boarded up broken windows, reconnected water services, cleared fallen trees and made powerlines safe.

Lesley Hughes, the principal of Inclusive Education Centre, a school for special-needs children, said the work done by the engineers was outstanding. She said 3CER sappers not only removed debris, but carefully raked the playground to make it safe.

Lieutenant Colonel Bottrell said all the soldiers were incredibly focused and dedicated to the cyclone-recovery effort.

"The hardest thing was to get them to slow down and take a break to ensure they wouldn't fatigue too early or suffer accidents."

"Aussies helping Aussies in need is indeed a great motivator," he said.

Reproduced courtesy of ARMY newspaper

BLASER2 TACTICAL

The Blaser R93 Tactical 2 is a specialised tactical rifle optimised for engaging man-sized targets out to 1500m. It is built on an aluminium frame, with non-slip polymer-covered aluminium furniture. The stock is adjustable for length of pull via spacers. It also has a vertically adjustable cheek piece and the butt plate is adjustable both up and down and pivots 15 degrees right or left. The rifle also comes with a buttstock monopod that can be fine-tuned via a threaded 'foot'.

The single-stage match trigger is adjustable for pull-weight, take-up and overall travel. The R93 Tactical's comes with two barrel options – the standard barrel is hammer-forged chrome molybdenum steel, cryogenically treated and fluted to minimise vibration and optimise cooling. A muzzle brake reduces perceived recoil in the .338 Lapua Magnum to approximately the same as the .308 Win.

The R93 Tactical 2 is a manually operated straight-pull bolt-action rifle. Feeding is from a detachable four-round box magazine.

When the bolt is pressed fully forward, an internal stud expands the collet lugs, locking the bolt and barrel together. When fired, chamber pressure against the bolt face actually forces the locking collets more tightly into the locking ring. There is no bolt rotation.



Calibre	.308 Win (7.62NATO)	.338 Lapua Magnum
Overall length	1130mm	1190mm
Barrel length	627mm	685mm
Length of twist	1 in 11 inches	1 in 10 inches
No. of grooves	4	6
Magazine capacity	5	4
Weight (W/O scope)	Approx 4.8kg	
Trigger pull	Approx 1200-1500g	



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MILITARY PARACHUTING

DROPPING IN ON HISTORY – AND THE FUTURE

Almost since the advent of mechanical flight, man has used his new invention as a weapon of war. Yet the new machine had its limitations. The necessity for fixed-wing aircraft to use prepared or semi-prepared takeoff and landing strips, and the limited capacity of rotary-winged aircraft to lift vast loads over long ranges, had the potential to limit the aircraft's usefulness in delivering overwhelming numbers of fighting men to a battlefield. That was until someone proposed that the men jump out of the airplane while it was still flying!

Among the many drawings of Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) was a concept for a device that would allow a man to jump from any height without injuring himself. While there is no record of whether he or anyone of his time tested the design, an Hungarian mathematician living in Italy, Fauste Veranzio constructed a device similar to da Vinci's drawing and jumped from a tower in Venice in 1617. More recently, in June 2000, British sports parachutist Adrian Nicholas descended from 10,000 feet using a "parachute" constructed to da Vinci's specifications, and made with materials and tools that would have been available in Milan 500 years earlier. After landing, he declared the ride to be even smoother than afforded by most modern devices.

In 1783 the famous Montgolfier brothers succeeded in parachuting animals to the ground from rooftops and balloons while during the same year, Sebastian Lenormand jumped from a tower using a 14-foot diameter parachute.

The first emergency parachute drop was made by Jean Pierre Blanchard in 1785 after the hot-air balloon he was riding in exploded. It was Blanchard who also constructed a foldable silk parachute –

WORDS BRIAN HARTIGAN
PICS ADF

until then all parachutes were constructed around a rigid-frame design.

In 1797, Andrew Garnerin made the first jump with a parachute without a rigid frame. During one of his jumps, a French astronomer, Lalandes, observed severe oscillations in the parachute. He suggested cutting a small hole near the top of the canopy to allow some pressure to escape, a feature still incorporated today, that did indeed dramatically increase canopy stability.

In the years following, parachuting was confined to carnivals and daredevil acts. Acrobats would perform stunts on a trapeze suspended from a descending parachute, released from a hot-air balloon.

The first parachute jump from an airplane was claimed by two men in the United States – civilian

Commandos are highly skilled special-forces soldiers capable of advanced infantry tactics. They are trained and qualified in a range of advanced specialist weapons and equipment and can deploy to their area of operations over long distances using a wide range of insertion methods including parachute. They can operate in a variety of demanding operational situations conducted in complex terrain.

The commando is mentally tough, quick thinking and innovative, and can keep a cool head in difficult situations.

Commandos are part of Australia's highly respected special-forces fraternity and may be employed to undertake 'special operations' – measures and activities conducted by specially trained, organised and equipped forces to achieve military, political, economic or psychological objectives. 4RAR (Cdo) is Australia's only full-time commando unit. It provides the ADF with a unique capability as it spans the gap between conventional infantry operations and unconventional or 'special' operations.

Training is principally focused on developing the individual's ability to participate in large-scale operations, potentially conducted outside Australia using stealth, surprise and shock action.

One of the principal methods of rapidly deploying commandos into an area of operations is by parachute. Therefore, as a commando, soldiers must volunteer to become parachute qualified and will be trained at the Parachute Training School, Nowra.

Special Forces in Australia are made up of the Special Air Service Regiment, Commandos, an Incident Response Regiment and Combat Service Support elements.

They are tough, intelligent, highly disciplined, have very strong personal standards and are extremely professional. They possess unique attributes such as a sense of adventure, determination, initiative and an appetite for accepting challenges.

Successful applicants to join Special Forces will generally be employed as Commandos, however, a very select few may progress to the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR).

Australia's SASR is currently heavily involved in direct enemy action in Afghanistan, with many operatives acclaimed for displaying gallantry of the highest order.



enthusiast Grant Morton in 1911 and US Army Captain Albert Berry in 1912. Conjecture reigns, but credit by the skydiving community usually goes to Berry. Morton jumped with a silk parachute folded in his arms which he threw out as he left the plane, while Berry had his parachute packed into a metal case beneath the fuselage.

The idea of dropping men behind enemy lines in support of an attack was first put forward during WWI, but the idea came just days before war's end – too late to employ.

It wasn't until the second Great War that the concept was used to real effect. By this time, all major powers had developed the concept to some degree. At a sports carnival in Russia in 1930, the military demonstrated a concept for 'vertical invasion' of an enemy headquarters by a group of armed men. But when war came it was probably the Germans who used the concept to greatest effect, its military having been in serious development of the vertical-invasion idea as early as 1935. American programs were a lot slower to get off the ground, the US Army opening a development and training unit in the spring of 1940 at Fort Benning, Georgia.



Although WWII stands out as the primary example of the use of parachuting as a practical and important battlefield insertion method, the capability has been used on a number of occasions since.

During the Korean conflict, the Americans, under United Nations command, carried out a mass airborne drop in South Korea; during the 1956 Middle East crisis, British and French paratroops combined to form an airborne assault force against Egypt in an effort to capture the vital Suez Canal; and, in 1968, in South Vietnam, the United States Army carried out an airborne attack involving 800 paratroopers against North Vietnamese forces.

However, probably the largest and most heroic use of paratroops since World War II occurred between November 1953 and May 1954 when French forces inserted into Dien Bien Phu, in an offensive that was to be the beginning of the end for French colonial rule in Indo China.

The initial insertion, known as Operation Castor, saw more than 4100 men dropped into battle in two days, jumping from more than 175 Dakota aircraft. Later, during



MC-5 PARACHUTE

TECHNICAL SPECS

Assembly Weight	52lbs (23.6kg)
Maximum Suspended Weight (sea level)	360lbs (164kg)
Service life	8 years or 500 descents

DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS

Canopy	
Type	Rectangular wing
Size	370sq/ft (112.85sq/m)
Material	Type I rip-stop nylon
Construction	Spanwise-panel and ribbed with crossport
Number of cells	7
Ripcord assembly	
Handle	Cadmium-plated steel
Pins	2 pins, flat elbow type
Cable (stainless steel braided)	
main	46 inch (116.8cm)
reserve	30 inch (76.2cm)



T10B-D PARACHUTE

TECHNICAL SPECS

Assembly Weight	31lbs (14kg)
Maximum Suspended Weight (sea level)	360lbs (164kg)
Rate of Descent (@360 lbs suspended)	16–19ft/s (4.8–5.8m/s)
Maximum Deployment Speed	150kts (278km/h)
Minimum Deployment Altitude	495ft (150m)
Service life	12 years

DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS

Canopy	
Type	Parabolic
Diameter	35ft (10.7m)
Material	Type I rip-stop nylon
Number of Gores	30 in 5 sections
Suspension Lines	
Length	25.6ft (7.8m)
Number	30
Breaking strain	400lbs (181.6kg) each



the final days of what had become an impossible siege, French and Vietnamese paratroopers conducted further para-drops onto the battlefield in what was ultimately a futile attempt to relieve their besieged garrison. As it turned out, the 4306 replacements parachuted between 14 March and 6 May 1954 did not make up for the losses suffered between those dates with 1500 killed and more than 4000 wounded. Among the replacements were 709 non-jump-qualified men, including Vietnamese, who volunteered for the fight.

When the garrison was finally overrun on 7 May, more than 70 per cent of the 11,700 men on post were never seen again. As with any skill – and the self discipline to safely jump out of a moving airplane is surely more skill than raw courage – parachuting is taught rather than instinctively learned. Teaching of the skills

required for parachuting in the Australian military falls to the Parachute Training School in Nowra, NSW.

Here, a staff of 77 men and women put students through intensive courses that include theory, ground drills, lectures, more ground drills and – eventually – several live jumps by day and by night.

Jumping unretarded from any height greater than about 10 feet can result in injury, the severity of which increases with height. Jumping from 1000 feet or more from a moving aircraft – especially when carrying up to 65kg of combat equipment and supplies – would obviously be lethal, were it not for proper training and conduct of tried and trusted drills.

Military parachute training in Australia commenced in 1951 with the establishment of the Parachute Training Wing at RAAF Base Williamstown. The wing was RAAF



T10R

FOR GENERAL MASS BATTLEFIELD DEPLOYMENTS, THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY USES THE T10B-D PARACHUTE – A STANDARD ROUND DESIGN VIRTUALLY UNCHANGED SINCE WWII – BACKED UP BY THE SMALLER BUT SIMILARLY DESIGNED T10R RESERVE ‘CHUTE.

controlled but staffed by both army and air force instructors. Its role was to conduct parachute training for all three services and to develop parachute equipment, techniques and doctrine for the ADF.

Initially, only the Basic Parachute Course was conducted at PTW as sufficient instructors had been trained in the UK or during the war. But a year later, instructor courses had also commenced in parallel.

In 1974, the Army took full control and the unit was upgraded to school status.

Parachute Training School was relocated to its current location at Naval Air Station, Nowra, south of Sydney, in 1986 into purpose-built facilities.

The school enjoys an enviable reputation in the global parachuting community having conducted more than 400,000 parachute jumps without a single fatal accident.

Commanding Officer at the School Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Grace makes no apology for the duration and repetitiveness of the exhaustive ground-drill regime endured by students who pass through his school.

“Yes, they spend a lot of time in our facilities on the mats, going through drills – ad nauseum,” he says, “but as I say to them at the start, once they exit that aircraft, they are on their own, so they simply have to know those drills.

“It’s not really a case of ‘get it right or die’, but we pride ourselves on our safety record here and really knowing what they are doing helps in that regard.”

But, as Lieutenant Colonel Grace also points out, an excellent fleet of tried and trusted parachuting equipment, properly manufactured and maintained, acts in concert with safety drills to maintain a reliable and safe capability for the ADF.

For general mass battlefield deployments, the Australian Army uses the T10B-D parachute – a standard round design virtually unchanged since WWII – backed up by the smaller but similarly designed T10R reserve ‘chute.

When precision insertion is required, the more modern, square, steerable MC5 parachute is employed. By pulling on the risers of this parachute, the dynamics

and lift characteristics of its wing-shaped canopy allow it to be steered and even ‘flown’, much like an unpowered glider, forced to eventually return to earth without the power to sustain flight.

This parachute is deployed in two guises – freefall, where the paratrooper must pull a rip-cord to deploy the parachute at the time of his choosing – the other where a static line is attached to the aircraft, thus deploying the parachute automatically as the paratrooper exits the aircraft. This later configuration is designated RAPSL (ram air parachute static line). In both cases, the exact same parachute is used – only the method of deploying is changed.



The Basic Parachute Course conducted at the Parachute Training School is two-and-a-half weeks long. Students undergo a week and two days in the ground phase, conducting the ubiquitous ground drills before taking to the air for their first, tentative leap into the great unknown.

Lieutenant Colonel Grace says the first part of the course can be very physically demanding, students continually pulling their own weight up and down in practice harnesses suspended from the facility’s high roof.

With a throughput of about 30 courses a year at the school, a typical day revolves around instructing. Course sizes vary depending on the level of intensity involved – a Basic Parachute Course comprising more than 100 students, while an instructors’ course typically sees just two to four students under instruction.

Lieutenant Colonel Grace says the school is staffed by very dedicated people who all want to be there – because they love parachuting.

“It’s a very good posting here – a lot of the guys enjoy it as a posting location, living by the sea in a small, quiet town.”

One of those keen staff members is Private Sam Christopher, a free-fall cameraman. Part of his job is to jump with free-fall students, filming their actions in the air for use in later debriefing on the ground. He also plays a ‘stooge’ – acting as a mock student on a course designed to train free-fall parachute instructors. As such, Private Christopher logs up to 200 parachute jumps per year.

“If you are someone who likes parachute jumping, this is definitely the job you want to be in,” he says. “It will be a sad day when I eventually get posted from here – but then it’s also good to move on so you don’t get stale.”

The Parachute Training School celebrated its 20th anniversary in April this year and (at time of writing) had been invited to exercise its Freedom of the City of Nowra. It also planned a formal function to mark the occasion and – what else would you expect – a 20-man jump over the city.

As with the airplane itself, today’s military engagements rely on the relative cheapness of technologically advanced machinery to fight precision battles than



THIS SPREAD DEPICTS A 3RAR PARATROOPER READY FOR DEPLOYMENT, WITH JUST SOME OF HIS EQUIPMENT UNPACKED FOR DISPLAY. THE PACK LOAD OF A 3RAR SOLDIER WHEN HE JUMPS FROM AN AIRCRAFT IS ANYWHERE BETWEEN 45KG AND 65KG DEPENDING ON HIS ROLE AND MISSION. IN ALL CASES, HOWEVER, THE TOTAL WEIGHT OF SOLDIER, EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES AND WEAPON COMBINED CANNOT EXCEED THE LOAD CAPACITY OF THE T10R RESERVE PARACHUTE – 164KG.



on the mass deployment of overwhelming numbers of men. It is hard to imagine that the scale of loss we saw in the first half of this century could be countenanced or sustained on today’s battlefield – Australia losing more than half as many killed in action during the 1940s as serve in the entire ADF today. Indeed, the overall global casualty count for WWII is greater than today’s total population of Australia.

In recent years, many countries have developed parachute technologies and techniques, taking advantage of more accurate, steerable parachutes in the military offensive role. High-altitude, low-opening (HALO) parachuting is one such innovation where small, well-trained guerrilla or special-forces are dropped from great heights, undetected and well above most anti-aircraft fire, and fall thousands of feet before deploying their parachutes at

THE AUSSIE PARACHUTE RIGGER – WHEN YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT

The rigger parachute soldier is a member of the Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps (RAAOC), which is one of the largest logistic organisations in Australia – when compared to civilian companies – and is responsible for a very large range of tasks. RAAOC is concerned with the provision of logistic support to the Army (with some overlapping responsibilities to the RAN and RAAF), specifically with providing, managing, warehousing and issuing all the Army's equipment.

RAAOC is also responsible for the demolition and disposal of explosives, salvage of battle-damaged equipment, re-packing of parachutes and many other support services.

The rigger is a specialist soldier who performs a wide range of technical functions on parachutes and aerial delivery equipment, including:

- > Pack, test, repair and maintain the Army's range of parachutes and airborne delivery systems.
- > Inspect parachutes, parachuting instruments, aerial-delivery equipment and helicopter-lifting equipment to determine serviceability.



- > Repair, modify, wash and clean airdrop equipment.
- > Service and reassemble metallic items from airdrop equipment.
- > Repackage cargo and personnel parachutes and refold other airdrop equipment.

All riggers are required to qualify as static-line paratroopers and, on promotion to corporal, are required to be free-fall qualified. In many instances, riggers have diversified their employment further by becoming parachute jump instructors. Riggers are critical to all Army parachute operations. Every parachute packed, repaired and maintained by a rigger can affect the safety of others. Failure to observe correct technical and safety procedures can result in significant loss of life, aircraft, supplies or other expensive equipment or resources.

As a means of quality control, riggers are required to regularly jump with parachutes they packed themselves. This is echoed in the motto, "Be Sure Always".

A rigger is usually employed in a small-group environment, often working closely with the Army's parachute forces, including special forces – thus offering travel opportunities around Australia and overseas.

Rigger parachute is one of the few Army trades that performs the same role and duties in peace as in war.

the lowest safe height above ground. These men then maximise the element of surprise and create havoc behind enemy lines.

In Australia, our special forces already practice for this dangerous but highly effective mission, jumping from as high as 35,000 feet. Regardless of the season or latitude, soldiers can face extreme cold and oxygen deprivation on these missions, and so, protective clothing and special breathing apparatus are standard issue.

Failure to open the main 'chute is the obvious danger in these circumstances, so the reserve parachute is rigged to open automatically at a pre-determined altitude. This is done by a small explosive charge, primed by airspeed and initiated by a barometric-pressure trigger.

Another variation is high-altitude, high-opening (HAHO) whereby paratroopers can be deployed, again at heights of 30,000 feet or more, but this time deploying their parachutes at a much higher altitude, thus allowing the paratrooper to glide for horizontal distances of up to 50km.

Ancillary equipment such as rigid-hulled inflatable boats can also be parachuted on specialist, covert-insertion missions – airdropping men and machinery far enough off foreign shores to remain undetected by enemy radar, and making the final approach – usually under the cover of darkness – from behind the line of surf.

In Australia, 3RAR has carried the major responsibility for maintaining the

parachute-insertion capability for many years. This is about to change, though, with a recently announced Government rethink on the disposition and focus of the ADF into the future. Under the plan, announced in December last year, 3RAR will be redeployed and reconfigured as the core of a new mechanised battlegroup based near Adelaide from 2011 and thus handing off its airbourne responsibilities. In the shakeup, parachute capability will pass to 4RAR (Cdo) – who are already qualified – in a move that probably best reflects the modern trend towards precision specialist use of special or shock forces away from the mass deployment of overwhelming "regular" forces.



Yet the ability to insert armed forces rapidly, with a degree of precision, into an area of operations, remains an important and potent short-notice insertion option for today's commanders and therefore we are likely to see the capability practiced and maintained into the foreseeable future.



I BET THIS GUY'S GLAD HE PACKED A 'CHUTE THIS MORNING...

Captain Christopher Stricklin ejects from USAF Thunderbirds number six aircraft shortly before it crashes at an air show at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho, 14 September 2003. Stricklin, who was not injured, ejected after guiding the jet away from the crowd of more than 60,000 people and ensuring he couldn't save the aircraft. Photo by USAF Staff Sergeant Bennie J. Davis III

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AVIATION TASK GROUP

AUSSIE AIR IN AFGHANISTAN

PICS ADF

More than 100 additional Australian soldiers have deployed to Southern Afghanistan – the majority of these personnel and their two Chinook helicopters drawn from Townsville's 5th Aviation Regiment – and join 190 Australian personnel already operating in that country.

The Chinook group will form part of the Combined Forces Command (Knighthawk Task Force) in Afghanistan and will provide air mobility support and aero medical evacuation capabilities for coalition forces and the Australian Special Forces Task Group.

Australia's Aviation Task Group, based at Kandahar Airfield, has already received high praise from taskforce commander, Lieutenant Colonel Mark Patterson, US Army.

"Everything they do is on par or better than our current forces here in theatre. On several missions I've put the Australian aircraft in charge of US aircraft because of their capabilities. And that's in the very first week of their employment," he said.

Executive Officer of the Australian Aviation Task Group Captain Michael Whitney said spirits were high and the Australians were proud to be part of this important mission.

"Our pilots are enjoying flying in the region, which is as diverse as Australia. The landscape is fantastic – it is an amazing place for our pilots and crews to fly."



BELOW: SERB ARTILLERY HITS CROAT POSITIONS.



ABOVE: CANNON FIRE.



ABOVE: CROAT 20MM ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE.

BY 1ST LIEUTENANT LARS OLESEN

IN THE LINE OF FIRE

CAUGHT IN A BALKAN CROSSFIRE

When civil war broke out in the Balkans in 1991, Danish troops were among those eventually deployed under a UN flag to monitor and maintain a fragile peace. Hamstrung by restrictive rules of engagement, their 'fairly safe peacekeeping operation' turned deadly, however, as their area of responsibility placed them centre stage in a feudal war.

My tour to the Balkans came as an extension of my national service. I never doubted that I wanted to go abroad on a military mission, several family members and friends having done so before me.

As with so many soldiers before me, I looked upon this as a great opportunity to test my skills – and as a great adventure.

Shortly before my deployment in the beginning of August 1995, the Croat armed forces overran the mainly Serb-inhabited Krajina region during an operation they called Oluja (Storm). For the Croats, it meant recapturing territory from where they were expelled in 1991. For the Serbs, it meant exodus – approximately 180,000 people forced to flee.

When it was over, the UN peacekeeping mission in Croatia ceased to exist – there were no lines of separation to monitor, no zone of separation to patrol – so our only remaining task was to break down our OP/CP in the area and withdraw – in one piece if we could.

Still on the offensive, the Croats initiated a fresh push on 18 September 1995, partly in support of the Bosnian Army Fifth Corps

(Bihac-Corps) breaking out from the Bihac pocket and partly in a race to grab as much territory as possible before the Dayton negotiations began.

This story concentrates on my own experience, from a front-row position between the warring parties.

Early in the morning on 18 September, my mate SR and I were manning the main gate at Dvor na Uni. Our section wasn't usually based in this camp – we had been delegated for a few days of guard duty there.

Enjoying some scoff, we had a hard time believing fighting was about to happen. Some distant gunfire was believed to be the usual local idiots shooting in the air.

Shortly after, however, the shooting grew into long bursts of .50 cal and an assortment of small-arms. We radioed the duty-officer about the growing level of small-arms and crew-served weapons being used not far from the camp, and then continued jotting down our observations on shot-rep papers.

To add to the drama, the Croats began employing tank fire and, in the hills behind our camp, a T-55 was pumping round after round into Serb positions on the other side of the Una River. The first couple of rounds passing over our heads were quite a shock.

After a couple of hours, the exchange had disintegrated into what could only be termed all-out war. Unfortunately for us, we were right in the middle of it, and were receiving a fair share of incoming rounds. Documenting it with my video camera, I captured the sounds of several shells crashing inside our perimeter as well as several Serb positions close by being hit repeatedly.

Around noon, SR and I were relieved at the main gate and went to another bunker well inside the camp. From that position, we watched as the Croats crossed the Una River in rubber dinghies. The volume of fire was very intense.

Having crossed the river, the Croat soldiers of the 2nd Gardijska Brigada (Grom/Thunder) stormed the Serb positions, firing wildly and throwing hand grenades. The attack continued into a small patch of forest where the Croats consolidated their gains. The fighting eventually eased a little, though sporadic fighting still occurred.

During the pause, further Croat forces passed our camp in plain view of Serb

positions 600 metres away. Had the Serbs chosen, they could have cut down the whole lot. I have never been able to understand this troop movement by the Croats.

A return to reality and a sudden wake-up to the danger we were in came when a Serb shell landed 20-30 metres away from our bunker, showering us with pebbles and dirt. Luckily, we had a sandbag wall between us and the artillery shell, but we swiftly returned to our bunker, where we entertained ourselves with water, biscuits and a Nintendo Gameboy (absolutely marvelous).

After noon, the shelling was so bad that an average of 440 rounds an hour (20mm to artillery) hit inside and in the area immediately surrounding our camp. Movement outside of cover was close to impossible.

At 1433hr, a frantic call came over the radio from Bunker Yellow 2, 'We've been hit, we are all wounded, two mortally'.

FUCK!

We looked at each other, instantly knowing this was really bad. Several more expletives were uttered in our bunker.

Frantic though not panicky coordination went over the radio net as the injured were evacuated, some were walking wounded, others had severe traumatic wounds to their upper bodies.

Until it was possible to evacuate the wounded, medics worked on them, getting advice over the radio from battalion doctors based at our main medical facility in Kostajnica.

I don't remember exactly when it happened, but an armoured ambulance eventually arrived with one of our doctors and a couple of nurses, the wounded were loaded into the M113 and a South African-built mine-resistant vehicle and driven away to the sound of automatic gunfire. The medical personnel did an excellent job working under very difficult conditions, providing care to trauma patients inside armoured vehicles, on a bumpy road, between two warring parties.

Sustaining such a large loss was, of course, quite a shock to us, but people cracked-on at the camp, reporting what was happening in and around their area of observation.

In our bunker, we had two radio sets, one for local comms and on the other we could listen in on the battalion frequency. Through this we learned that one of our wounded colleagues had died and the second severely wounded was going the same way.

Needless to say we were filled with anger. Here we were, excluded from the fighting, yet deliberately targeted by Serb units on the other side of the Una River.

We later established that the round that killed and wounded the Danish UN soldiers was a tank-fired SABOT. This excluded any argument that the bunker was hit accidentally.

This wasn't the last deliberate attack on Danish UN troops that day. Late in the afternoon, a Serb Gazelle helicopter armed with Sagger missiles fired at a Danish observation post. However, debris in front of the tower deflected the missile causing it to explode just outside – most likely saving the lives of three more soldiers inside. As it was, they 'only' received superficial wounds.

Being in the Balkans with a crap set of rules of engagement (ROE) was what prevented us from doing anything to fight back. Any Balkan UN soldier will tell the same tale – unless you were right next to the local culprits and could read their minds, one could not open fire on anyone representing any kind of threat to you.

Twice, a request was made for air-support. Both times it was denied, either from UN HQ in Zagreb or the UN in New York.

Night came and the fighting almost subsided, yet both sides kept each other (and us) awake with the occasional artillery round. I guess everybody was able to get some down time, although I personally had difficulty falling asleep.

Morning came and the warring parties had had enough sleep, the fighting started



ABOVE: EARLY MORNING BEFORE THE HEAVY SHELLED KICKED IN.
RIGHT: AS THE FIGHTING INTENSIFIED THE MAIN GATE WAS STRENGTHENED WITH A TOW-ARMED APC.



afresh and grew stronger into the morning. In our bunker, we enjoyed more water and biscuits with cheese spread, trying to ignore the fighting and artillery right outside.

While enjoying our very basic breakfast, a frantic voice came over the radio, 'All stations, all stations, fighter jets inbound, fighters inbound' – immediately followed by the whine of jet engines and cannon fire. My mate SR stuck his head out of the bunker, only to see the next jet strafing the Croat bridgehead, before climbing back into the sky with two missiles trailing it. No hits were made.

Both sides used air assets during the battle. We heard a (presumably Croat) helicopter over Dvor later that day, but couldn't determine what kind of task it was carrying out.

In the middle of the day, it was SR and my turn to man the main gate again and, as stuff was flying back and forth, the guard change was carried out running the 40m stretch uncovered. I think we both felt a rush of adrenaline doing that.

The afternoon at the main gate was very noisy. Both sides were really hammering each other with a whole inventory – tracer fire criss-crossing the sky and mortars impacting left, right and centre.

Some time late in the afternoon, the Croats had had enough and retreated

THE RETREAT WAS COVERED BY AN EXTREMELY LOUD BARRAGE LAID UPON THE SERB POSITIONS. 20MM ANTI-AIRCRAFT CANNONS SWEEP TRENCHES AND HOUSES, AS MORTARS DROPPED FROM THE SKY

back across the Una River. The retreat was covered by an extremely loud barrage laid upon the Serb positions. 20mm anti-aircraft cannons swept trenches and houses, as mortars dropped from the sky.

Having been sucker-punched, it took the Serbs a little while before they could return fire, but when it happened, it grew into yet another crescendo of war sounds.

Strangely enough this was an extremely exhilarating experience.

But the fascination ended when several bullets ripped close by the main gate forcing us to dive into our bunker. This proved to be a good decision as the TOW APC at our position came under heavy machinegun fire seconds later. Frantic voices came up on the radio, 'We're taking fire, we're taking fire. We are pulling back'. Because they couldn't determine where exactly the fire was coming from, our ROE once again prevented any return fire.

Approaching dusk on 19 September, plans were being put together to

evacuate the camp. This came as quite a relief to most of us – it wasn't funny anymore, playing live target.

The evacuation would take place shortly before midnight with a small force of about 20 soldiers in two APCs staying behind to guard non-removable vital equipment. This force was strictly on a volunteer basis.

At about 2300hr, we mounted our armoured vehicles and drove out under the cover of darkness. There were no lights on any of the vehicles, the drivers and vehicle commanders wearing night-vision goggles.

The evacuation went without any significant problem and two to three hours later we arrived at B Company's camp in Petrinja. Those guys did a fantastic job of taking in about 150 extra soldiers with minimal warning time. We were all served a nice dinner and offered rudimentary accommodation. Anyone in need of medical attention was also taken care of – including myself, as I had ripped my left thigh on barbed wire earlier in the day.



ABOVE: A STANDING LEAK WAS ONLY POSSIBLE THE SECOND DAY OF THE BATTLE.

BELOW: PREPARING TO GO OUT TO DISMANTLE UN BUNKERS.



BELOW: CROAT TROOPS PASSING OUR POSITION.



All-in-all, our battalion lost two soldiers and 14 were wounded during some of the worst fighting experienced by Danish soldiers in modern times.

To the soldiers involved, this day represented a ground-breaking experience, which we all handle differently. Personally I don't regret serving as a UN soldier. I found the experience exhilarating and satisfying in many ways – but I hope I will never serve under the same kind of mandate or ROE again. A soldier must have the ability to defend himself and not just be someone else's punching bag.

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SOV NIRVANA

SPEC OPS GET MOBILE

BY MARK AZZOPARDI

The one thing that sets the latest generation of soft-skinned special operations vehicles (SOV) apart from those of yesteryear is that they are all based on a stock, heavy-duty 4WD of one type or another.

For a while, during the 1990s, there was considerable interest shown by several Western armies – the US and UK in particular – in light dune-buggy style SOVs such as the Chenoweth fast attack vehicle and the Saker and Longline light strike vehicles. The hope back then was that the small size, light weight, low profile and agility of these machines would prove worthy of a permanent place in the inventory of their respective special forces units. They could be airlifted internally or externally by almost any chopper, easily concealed and cost less to buy than more traditional 4WDs modified for the special operations role.

However, limited deployment in the first Gulf war and subsequent excursions and exercises since, revealed a number of inherent weaknesses in the dune-buggy concept that could not easily be overcome without a radical redesign – lack of interior and rear floor space for cargo stowage, short range, lack of protection for crew, low ground clearance, supportability and structural integrity.

As these shortcomings were inherent to the overall design concept, the dune-buggy experiment had pretty much run its course by the turn of this century and few serious special-forces operators (bar the US Navy SEALs) still use them in significant numbers.

So it is for good reason, the shift over the last five years or so has been towards the fielding of SOVs which use a full-size commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) or a military-off-the-shelf (MOTS) 4WD chassis and powertrain. MOTS 4WDs in particular are built from the outset to endure hard use by professional soldiers and generally have higher axle loads, a higher gross vehicle mass (GVM) and higher payloads than their COTS counterparts.

Take, for example, the Light Infantry Vehicle (Special Operations) (LIV(SO)) from Rheinmetall Land Systems that is in service with the German Army's commandos (KSK), where 21 examples of the vehicle, known as the 'Serval', are in service.

Based on the latest model of the legendary Mercedes-Benz G-Class (formerly known as G-Wagon), the LIV(SO) has a kerb

weight (more than 3000kg) that is higher than the GVM of the Toyota Land Cruiser. Add to that, a payload of at least 1500kg and you're talking about a hard-core piece of kit. Switzerland has also adopted the LIV(SO), taking delivery of a small number early this year.

The LIV(SO) is currently the only SOV to feature a powered weapon station – in this case, a Rheinmetall 609K electrically-powered gun ring that enables the gunner to traverse the main armament 360 degrees, even when the vehicle is on steep slopes or uneven terrain. If this doesn't sound like much of a technology advance, you've probably never tried swinging 50kg of gun, ammo and mount on a manually-operated gun ring attached to a vehicle clinging to a hillside.

Standard weapon fits include a 12.7mm heavy machine gun or 40mm automatic grenade launcher (AGL) for the 609K weapon station, supported by a 7.62mm machine gun (MAG-58 or MG3) on a swing mount at the commander's position.

A modified version of the LIV(SO) – known as the Monitor – sporting extra

range and greater cargo-carrying capacity is to be offered to the Australian Army under Project Redfin to replace its extant Perentie 6x6 and 4x4 Land Rover SOVs.

Several European countries have made use of earlier model 290 CDI G-Class vehicles, including Norway, as well as the US Marine Corps' Force Recon. In early 2005, the French Special Operations Command selected the latest 270 CDI G-Class based SOV known as the VPS from Panhard General Defense. Delivery of the first of 40 vehicles commenced in March 2006.

In some ways, the VPS can be considered a lighter and cheaper version of the LIV(SO), as it features a manually-operated gun ring, less mission endurance and less rear cargo space because of its shorter wheelbase (2.85m versus 3.29m). Nonetheless, the VPS manages to fit a decent amount of capability into a small package and features two spare tyres, jerrycan racks, stowage boxes, a self-recovery winch and underfloor protection against anti-personnel mines.

As it is 100 per cent G-Class automotively, the VPS is powered by a Mercedes-Benz

156hp 5-cylinder turbocharged intercooled engine and 5-speed auto box with Touchshift. Mobility on rough terrain is aided via three diff locks (front, centre and rear) and the factory-standard electronic stability program and electronic traction system.

While the G-Class continues to attract special forces customers, the venerable Land Rover Defender has been overtaken in the capability stakes by vehicles such as the LIV(SO) and others. This is not so much a reflection of its off-road credentials, but rather the fact that it can't handle the kind of GVMs and payloads that other, later generation vehicles can (750kg versus 1000–2000kg).

Nevertheless, the Brit SAS continues to use its tricked-up Land Rovers, although these, like Australia's, are getting long in the tooth. Nor has it discouraged UK firm Ricardo from developing the Rapid Deployment Vehicle based on the Defender 110 series, complete with roll cage and weapon mounts for existing and prospective Defender customers.

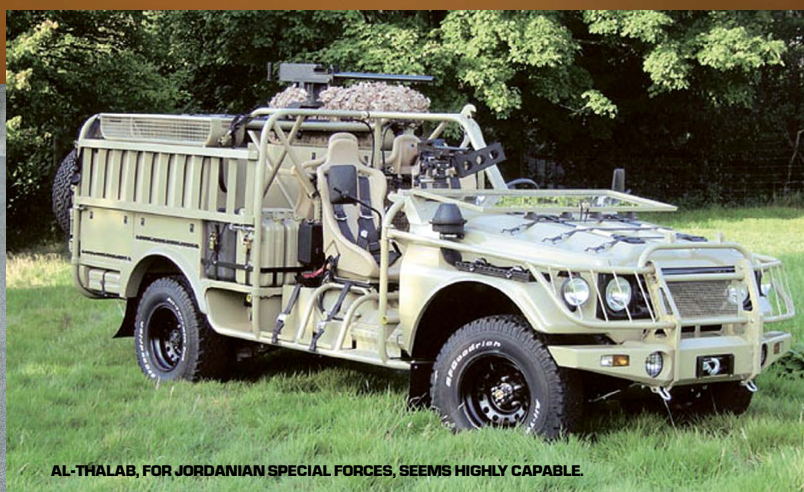
US Army Rangers also still use 60 modified Land Rovers as a principal mobility platform. In service since the early 1990s, this version of the Defender has a low-profile roll cage and novel seating arrangements for crew in the back, of which up to seven can find themselves a seat.

In 2004, Ricardo developed a solution for the Irish Defence Forces based on a Ford F-350 pick-up. Known as the Special Reconnaissance Vehicle (SRV), it employs a weapon mount installation kit similar to that bolted on to Land Rovers used by British paras. Smoke grenade launchers are fitted front and rear.

Powered by a 6-litre 325hp V8 turbocharged diesel coupled to an automatic transmission and electronic shift-on-the-fly two-speed transfer case, the SRV has a GVM of 4500kg, 1500kg of which is payload. Maximum road speed is 150km/h. At 2m wide and 1.9m high (with roll cage folded down) the SRV is claimed to be CH-47 compatible, but at those dimensions it would be a very tight squeeze.



G-CLASS-BASED VPS.



AL-THALAB, FOR JORDANIAN SPECIAL FORCES, SEEMS HIGHLY CAPABLE.



US SPECIAL OPS HMMWVS PATROL IRAQ.



4X4 PINZGAUER DEMONSTRATOR.



IRELAND'S RANGER WING'S FORD F-350 SOV.



NORWEGIAN 290 CDI G-CLASS ON A TRAINING RUN.



US SPECIAL FORCES 'MOTHERSHIP'.

MOST US SOVS HAVE THE DOORS EITHER REMOVED OR CUT DOWN TO SAVE WEIGHT AND ENABLE QUICKER ENTRY/EGRESS FOR THE CREW



LAND ROVER DEFENDER ADOPTED BY US ARMY RANGERS.

Again in England, Automotive Technik continues to market the latest iterations of the successful and long-running Pinzgauer series of 4x4 and 6x6 light vehicles. We know the Kiwis recently took delivery of 13 Pinzgauer 6x6 SOVs, deploying these to Afghanistan in late 2005.

A cab-over design with heaps of space out back for equipment and personnel, the Pinzgauer is renowned as a rugged off-road vehicle and in its special operations guise is fairly stock. Standard fit-out includes a low-profile roll cage to enable CH-47 Chinook transport, manually-operated gun ring and a MAG-58 as back up.

While the 6x6 version has a lot of length rear of the gun ring, the available floor area is quite narrow and therefore less versatile than it may appear. Other than the New Zealand SAS and perhaps a small number in UK service, it is not known which other nations use the Pinzgauer in the SOV role.

One SOV based on a COTS vehicle is the new Al-Thalab long-range patrol vehicle

developed for the Jordanian armed forces, more than 20 of which are on order, as well as 15 for an undisclosed African customer. Built around a 79 Series Land Cruiser cab chassis, the Al-Thalab looks to be a clever design.

According to the manufacturer, Jankel Armouring, standard features include two spare tyres, roll-over protection system, full bull bar and side-rail bar work, front-mounted winch and rear equipment lockers. A manual gearbox and six-cylinder 129hp diesel engine have been adopted. Designed for a mission endurance of 10 days with a four-man crew, the Al-Thalab can conduct operations stretching out 1500km without resupply.

Although it's been around for a long time, US special forces continue to take advantage of the AM General HMMWV's ruggedness and cross-country mobility, with dozens operating throughout Iraq and Afghanistan. Most US HMMWV SOVs have the doors either removed or cut down to save weight and enable quicker entry/egress for crew.

Some versions retain the roof, while others go for a sturdy roll cage that extends to the rear corners of the vehicle, as seen on those HMMWVs used by Canadian special forces.

While the twin-cab configuration of the HMMWV does not exactly lend itself to the SOV role, US operators manage to get plenty of jerrycans, packs and ammunition into and hanging off their steeds.

HMMWV special-forces patrols are often accompanied by a cut-down Stewart & Stevenson FMTV 4x4 truck carrying a huge quantity of stores. Typical loads might include 36-40 jerrycans for fuel, 20-24 jerrycans for water and four HMMWV tyres plus a stack of ammo cans. This 'motherhip' concept enables extended mission durations and quick tactical resupply.

So, as the Australian Army looks to the future and a replacement for its Perentie 6x6 and 4x4 Land Rover SOVs under Project Redfin, the scope of choice in this very special field seems quite large. Time will tell.

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT LINE



Time heals all wounds, and so Henry Wright found himself in good form again. A very long letter to his brothers, written in England, show excellent insight into Henry's adventures thus far, as he recounts his time in Egypt, sums up Gallipoli and paints an excellent word picture of the fertile fields of France...

I have been hungry many a time and scores of times been without a smoke. Just sitting down to bully beef and biscuits for three meals a day. Of course next day, you would get a change to biscuits and bully beef.

Well dear Brothers, I will begin my explanation of the countries I have visited, with Egypt. Now Egypt is a pretty but dirty place.

The natives are a very stinking lot of devils and if you do not watch them, they will put a knife between your ribs.

They are very treacherous and the only way to treat them is to make them frightened of you.

When we first went to Egypt, we could get things very cheap, but when they found out the Australians had plenty of money, everything went up double the price. We could buy 2 big oranges for a halfpenny, 6 eggs for twopence or a good feed for sixpence.

The native women do all the work. It is a very common sight to see them carrying heavy loads on their head and a baby on their back.

Of course these are the Arabs and they are black. The Egyptians are as white skinned as us and are a very fine race of people.

As you know by the history books, Egypt is a very old place and has some very old interesting sites.

The Pyramids are a wonderful sight and the tombs which date back thousands of years ago.

I think every Australian who went to Egypt took the opportunity of seeing these wonderful old places.

We were camped at Heliopolis about 10 miles from Cairo and close to our camp was a very old burying ground and often our boys would go over and dig up the remains

and find beads, coins and other curios.

I have seen some of the boys come home with a skull and put a lighted candle inside of it at night time. You can guess it would give the boys who came home late a big scare especially if they were a bit tipsy.

Heliopolis camp was only a desert when we first landed there but all sorts of shops went up like lightning and many a nigger made a fortune in no time. Our boys spent thousands and thousands of pounds in Egypt.

Australians are the best paid soldiers in the world and they deserve it for they are bonza fighters.

Well dear brothers, we did not have the luck to take Constantinople.

I cannot tell you much of the Turkish cities but I saw plenty of Turks at Gallipoli. I can say they are a fine body of men and dash good fighters.

My remembrances of the four months on the Peninsula are like a big nightmare.

I had a charmed life there and don't know how I escaped being blown to pieces many a time. I could fill a book of narrow escapes.

Now we will pass on to France, the land of frogs and snails.

By Joves, it seemed a lovely country after Egypt and Gallipoli. Everywhere you

see lovely fields of grape vines, fruit trees, cultivated land and rivers.

The people are a splendid race and women work in the fields like a man. It is a common sight to see them ploughing and hoeing in the fields and we Australians were always greeted the time of day.

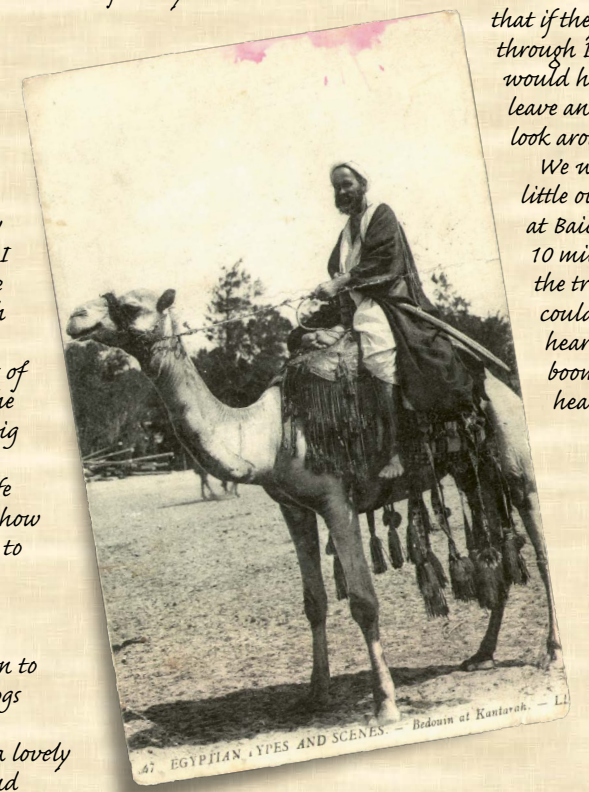
We often bought bread off them instead of eating our biscuits.

Our three days trip from Marseilles to a place called Baielui was through the prettiest country I ever saw.

We were within 8 miles of Paris and could see the Eiffel Tower plainly.

It was a certainty that if they took us through Paris, we would have taken leave and had a look around Paris.

We were only a little over a week at Baielui about 10 miles from the trenches. We could plainly hear the booming of the heavy guns.



To be continued...

HOME AND AWAY

For many of the young men and women of the 1 RAR Battalion Group, the 17 weeks on the Horn of Africa represented the most time they had spent away from Australia. Adjusting to the change from peacetime training to warlike operations was one thing – dealing with the physical and psychological separation from family and friends was another. As even the most hardened professional soldiers among us felt some pangs of homesickness, we all had to find ways to invest a little bit of home into our strange new environment.

The Aussies working in Somalia in 1993 represented the biggest combat force to leave Australia since Vietnam, and we differed little in terms of our national character from the generations of diggers that had left our shores before us. Staunchly patriotic in our own way, we were not as overtly nationalistic as some of our comrades-in-arms from other nations. While perhaps we were not the flag-waving extroverts of the North American forces, we did continue the well-established Australian tradition of making ourselves at home.

I was one of those who had never set foot outside Australia before landing in Somalia and, at what I had considered a very worldly 23 years of age, the sense of alienation and estrangement I initially experienced came as quite a surprise.

Though we had stopped over in Singapore on the way to Africa, we were not allowed to leave the terminal and I could hardly consider an hour and a half in an airport my first experience of another country. However, I do have a memory that is distinct to this day, of stepping off the concrete hardstanding at Mogadishu Airport onto the coarse Somali sand and realising it was the first time I had stood on foreign soil.

The stopover in Singapore had been a mixed blessing. The flight from Townsville was made as comfortable as possible by the attentive Qantas aircrew, who had even allowed the smokers to feed the need at the back of the chartered 747. But, after a month of buildup, we were all impatient to be on our way, and while the chance to stretch the legs in Singapore was a welcome reprieve from the confines of the cabin, we all wished we could just bloody get there.

After being cramped up in an aircraft for six hours, anxious and bored young diggers will always find ways to amuse themselves.

Combined with the apprehension of the local authorities at having a small army of foreign soldiers sashay through their airport, the larrikin nature of the Aussie soldier was bound to cause a stir – and inevitably it did.

It was about 5 in the morning and the terminal at Changi was relatively empty

but for us diggers and several well-armed and serious-looking Singaporean soldiers.

Eyeing the Aussies suspiciously, the soldiers stood at the exits of the terminal to ensure their visa-less guests did not leave the building. Having been told in no uncertain terms that we were not to do so, most of us wandered aimlessly around the transit lounge and didn't give much thought to exploring outside the airport. Not so a young trooper from 1 Troop.

The bored Digger decided to test the resolve of our hosts and wandered nonchalantly toward the doors. Ignoring disapproving glares from the Singaporean soldiers, he pretended not to notice them as he made for the exit. As he got close enough for the automatic door to open, the guards moved in.

"No need to get up fellas, I'm just ducking outside for a breath of fresh air," the cheeky Digger quipped as he approached them.

The two Singaporeans were immune to his cocky charm and stepped in front of the trooper, with automatic rifles held boldly across their chests. As he stepped closer still, one of the guards began to berate the young Aussie in the local language, pointing at him and then back over his shoulder toward where several of us were watching the show from the lounge area.

Sensing he had reached the boundaries of good humour with the guards, the trooper stopped and pointed to himself with an incredulous look.

"Who! me?" he enquired innocently.

Met only with frowns from the Singaporeans, he gave them a surprised look.

"Are we not allowed to go outside? Well why didn't you say so guys?" he said in an apologetic tone.

Sticking his hands in his pockets, the Digger turned and walked slowly away from the exit with his two new friends close behind him. After they had escorted him an acceptable distance from the door, the two Singaporeans turned sharply and returned to their post to glare at anyone in Auscams with more fervor than before. As the young trooper wondered unperturbed past us, he winked.

"We aren't supposed to leave the terminal fellas," he informed us with a smile and sauntered off to seek amusement elsewhere.

Three months down the track, and we had reached the point in our 17-week operation where there was as much time ahead of us as there was behind. This was a psychological hump that I was struggling to overcome. I missed my family terribly, and thoughts of my two young daughters growing up quickly in my absence weighed heavily on my mind.

I received a small package of goodies for my upcoming birthday. Though it was a welcomed surprise, it was really a double-edged sword in that it also contained some recent photos of my children. Their rapid growth only served to confirm my anxiety. But, with a fresh stash of treats and a timely reminder that my daughters would be waiting for me when I got home, I resolved to wake up to myself and get on with it.

In April 1993, 2 Troop was back in Baidoa conducting day and night patrols through

situation – but I was looking forward to having a hot shower to mark the occasion.

Just as Pete and I finished re-stowing our vehicle, Moose Ferriday stepped onto our ramp with some bad news.

“Sorry boys, SHQ has just received a request from CO 1RAR. He wants a couple of carriers to go into town and pick up some NGOs and bring them back here for a dining-in night at Battalion HQ,” he said, with the hint of a smile on his face.

Pete’s face said it all as he looked over at me in weary indignation. I felt my frustration surging to the surface and shot Moose my most disgusted look, only to get a wry grin in return. I knew it was preaching to the choir to voice my outrage at being treated like the CO’s personal taxi, but I did anyway.

Moose just stood in the rain and stared at me until I finished my rant.

WITH MY 24TH BIRTHDAY SPENT TAXIING INTOXICATED CARE AUSTRALIA WORKERS TO AND FROM BAIDOA AIRFIELD IN THE RAIN, I LOOKED FORWARD TO CELEBRATING A MORE AUSPICIOUS OCCASION – OUR FIRST ANZAC DAY ON ACTIVE SERVICE

was at stake and we would have to put on a good show.

The day began well before first light with the 1RAR Battalion Group parading at Battalion HQ. A platoon of Turks had been flown in from an AO in the north to join us for the dawn service. Lined up facing each other across the makeshift parade ground, the great grandsons of Gallipoli eyed each other with interest.

As the sun rose over the airfield, the Last Post sounded out over Australia’s newest operational arena. Once again, after almost 70 years, young Turks and Australians, with rifles in their hands, peered at each other through the breaking dawn. The moment was not lost on any of us – how much better to face each other in tribute than tribulation.

As the parade was dismissed, we wondered over to mingle with the Turks.

In the preceding weeks, word had gone out that the new sport of kings was to be turtle racing, and any self-respecting Cavalry section should acquire a thoroughbred racing turtle for the big event. The trade in turtles soon boomed in Baidoa. When word got out, that those mad Australians would rather buy a turtle for entertainment than food, every kid in town was digging up turtles to present to the next Aussie they met.

With such a large selection, the competition quickly evolved into a contest of – not who had the fastest turtle – but who had the biggest. While 21 Section managed to get their hands on a monster that must have weighed 30kg, the fact that the animal could barely shift its own weight, let alone move at anything approaching racing pace, seemed lost on our proud comrades.

Being small in stature and big of heart, 23 Section’s very own Trooper Andrew ‘Johno’ Johnson had been chosen to carry squadron pride in the blue-ribbon event. Lined up with the other impromptu jockeys, Johno gave his enthusiastic troop-mates the thumbs up before climbing onboard a nervous mount. After several aborted attempts, thanks to the displacement of numerous jockeys, the event was finally set to get underway.

With the drop of a bush hat, the race was on. Spurred on by enthusiastic masters and cries of ‘Yar Yar!’ from the Cavalrymen in the crowd, man and beast were set loose – with hilarious results.

One donkey took three steps and stopped dead, sending his novice pilot face first into the gravel. A second reared up after about 20m and, while the spirited jockey gave his best bronc-

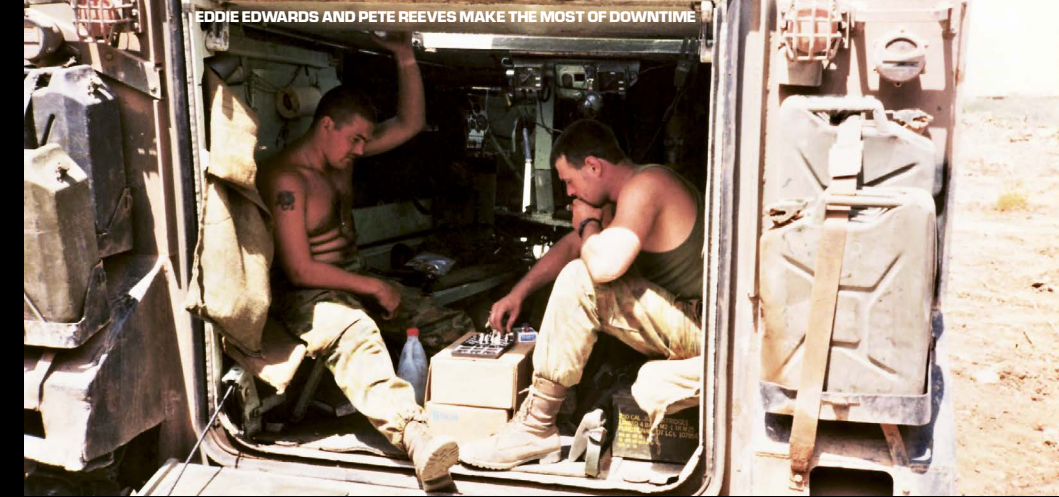
3/4 CAV LINES AT BAIDOA AIRFIELD



STEVE GIBBS MAKES A BET AT THE B SQN CASINO



EDDIE EDWARDS AND PETE REEVES MAKE THE MOST OF DOWNTIME



the city with the infantry companies. April 17 was a miserable day, even by Somali standards. Hot and humid, torrential rain had bucketed down all day, turning the already fetid city into a quagmire.

23 Section had been patrolling through the night. Before and after a few hours sleep, however, some downtime at the Baidoa Airfield was scheduled to conduct long-overdue servicing of our M113s. Rain, hail or shine, the vehicles had to be maintained, and we spent a humourless day in the mud outside our squadron’s makeshift lines, breaking track, changing oils and pumping grease into overworked vehicles.

By late afternoon we’d had enough and were all looking forward to a rest and a rare shower in the recently constructed facility near Squadron HQ. After a tub, we were to have a feed at the mess and an hour or so rest before orders and our return to the city to resume the patrol cycle. Though I hadn’t told anyone, it was my birthday – it didn’t seem particularly important in our current

“Coops, you are the CO’s personal taxi. Now shut up and get ready to go – and make sure you’re back in time for orders!”

I was tired and pissed-off. It could be weeks before we got another chance to have a hot shower. I thought of continuing my tirade, but realised I had probably pushed my luck far enough. Besides, Moose was already walking away. The only thing left to do was sulk.

As I grumpily stuffed what passed for clean cams back into my pack, Moose stopped and turned back towards us.

“Oh, by the way – happy birthday Coops,” he said, barely able to keep a straight face.

I must have looked fit to burst. Even Pete, who seconds before was as cranky as I was, burst out laughing. I just sat there with my head in my hands, trying not to say anything that would get me charged with insubordination.

Pete was still chuckling as he slapped me on the back of the head.

“Nice of the CO to put on a do for your birthday Wayne,” he managed through the laughter.

With my 24th birthday spent taxiing intoxicated Care Australia workers to and from Baidoa Airfield in the rain, I looked forward to celebrating a more auspicious occasion – our first Anzac Day on active service.

SHQ had organised to have all the APC sections back in the Baidoa area for the 25th. While some had to continue to support the patrol plan the night before, we would all be at the airfield for the dawn service in the morning, and most would have several hours off to enjoy the day. Best of all, rumour had it that a few sly beers had been organised to mark the occasion.

Preparations for the Anzac Day festivities had begun early. The squadron would host a gambling night, and everyone in the Battalion Group who was not working would be invited to attend. Cavalry pride

After shaking hands, a few of us managed disjointed conversations in broken English and pantomime. The occasion was as big an event for them – if not bigger – than for us; after all, they were celebrating a major victory, we were commemorating an honourable defeat.

With the dawn service over, it was time to prepare for the day’s activities. The early plan had been quite modest – a few table games and a two-up ring. Of course, for young soldiers devoid of any real recreational excitement, this was the opportunity to have some fun, and the event soon took on the scope of opening night at a Las Vegas casino.

A night to remember had been planned by the lads in Squadron HQ. Led by the biggest lad in the squadron, Lance Corporal Troy ‘Sheriff’ Dillon, the SHQ boys delivered a schedule of activities that any Fairstar cruise director would be proud of. Everything from Two-up to turtle racing would be on offer – yes, turtle racing.

Needless to say, the behemoth never made it off the blocks.

As all bets were to be made in the much diminished local currency, another new lucrative trade sprung up overnight. Exchanging coveted US dollars for wads of worthless Somali shillings gave the locals even more cause to think we were a crazy race. However, no gentleman of the Cavalry would dare show up at this gambling den without an athletic racing turtle under one arm, and at least a million shillings under the other.

Before the gambling night got underway, however, we were treated to another spectacular sporting event. In what could have been called ‘The Inaugural John Simpson Kirkpatrick Classic’, four brave souls representing various units in the Battalion Group were to race donkeys up the main drag of the airfield. With a very nervous-looking Somali owner watching on, the four bemused beasts were paraded before an enthusiastic crowd of punters.

riding performance, the incensed donkey eventually won out and the hapless jockey crashed to the ground.

It came down to a two-horse race – Johno and his rival neck and neck down the main drag, both barely managing to stay upright. Just as it seemed Johno’s opponent might get the upper hand, his rival’s trusty steed took an unexpected sharp detour and ploughed straight through a group of startled onlookers, handing victory – most appropriately – to the Cavalry rider.

As I sat back later that evening enjoying my first beer in three months, watching Diggers rob French and Turkish soldiers and US Marines in the betting ring, my nagging sense of self-pity dissolved. I realised what an extraordinary day I had just had – surrounded by mates, in the middle of the biggest humanitarian mission the world had ever seen, playing Two-up with Turks on Anzac Day.

There could have been worse things to be doing that night.



Kettlebell Training – Part 2

Let the pain begin!

BY DON STEVENSON

In the last article, I outlined the reasons why military, police and fire personnel should use kettlebells in their training. Now it's time to outline some exercises and a basic kettlebell routine to get you started.

Selecting a kettlebell

One of the most frequent questions I get asked is about which type of kettlebell people should start with. For most men you'll want a 16kg kettlebell to start. If you are over 90kg and fairly muscular or with a background in heavy weight training, then you could start with a 20kg. For women, start with an 8kg or a 12kg if you are bigger. If you are attempting the kettlebell exercises with a dumbbell you'll need to choose a dumbbell that is about 20 per cent heavier.

The exercises

Once you've got your kettlebell, it's time to get working.

The fundamental drills in a kettlebell program are the one- and two-arm swing, the windmill and the Turkish get up. An abbreviated program of these three exercises plus a bit of running, pushups and chinups is enough to keep most service personnel in pretty

good shape. Of course you can always add more, but if you only had a few minutes a day you could still maintain a reasonable level of fitness on this program.

The swing – is the first kettlebell exercise you should learn. It develops power and strength in the legs, hips and back and, when performed for high reps, it is a cardio treat. The swing is also the foundation for the clean and jerk, and snatch.

To perform the swing, set up with your feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart and the kettlebell on the ground between your heels. Bend the knees and push the hips back into a squat. Pick up the kettlebell with one or two hands and drive the hips forward, swinging the kettlebell to around chest height. Allow the kettlebell to swing back down between your knees and repeat for 5–50 reps.

Note that the swing is NOT an upper body exercise. All of the work is done by the legs.

For safety, you'll need to keep your head up and back flat at all times. Breathe in at the bottom of the swing and out at the top.

The windmill – is a great exercise for developing strength and flexibility in the lower back, glutes, hamstrings and abs. To start with, you can practice

this empty handed or with a light weight.

Stand with feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart and facing a wall or a line on the ground so that you have a reference point. Now, turn both feet out in the same direction. The front foot (right foot if turning right) should be turned out so that it is almost parallel with the line, and the back foot should be at about a 45-degree angle. While turning the feet, make sure the hips and shoulders continue to face the line.

Now, you need to take the back hand overhead and press the weight up.

It is vital that you keep an eye on the weight the whole time and dump it on the ground if something starts to go wrong (practice outside).

Now breathe in, hold your breath and push your hips out along your reference line and fold over toward the front foot. Try to keep the chest up as much as possible and don't breathe out again until you are back upright.

Once you have done 3–5 reps on one side, swap hands, turn the feet out the other way and repeat. Once you can do multiple reps with 50 per cent of your bodyweight, you should have a pretty strong core!

The Turkish get up – This monster of an exercise is far too complicated to describe here, but if you want the low-down on this total-body exercise, you can email me and I'll send you out the training guide with full instructions on how to perform the get up and many other exercises.

The workouts

Add the following two workouts to your fitness program and I can guarantee that you'll end up with increased strength and endurance.

Workout 1 – Cardio killer

This workout is an example of how kettlebells, bodyweight and cardio can all be seamlessly integrated to make for a killer workout.

Your aim is to complete the whole workout as quickly as possible, your only rest is what you need to catch your breath and finish all the reps. Record your time and try to beat it next time out.

3 rounds of:

- > Run 400m
- > 21 swings with a 24kg kettlebell
- > 12 chinups

Workout 2 – Strength circuit

- > Windmill 5 x 5/5
- > Pushups 5 x 70 per cent max
- > Turkish get up 5 x 3/3
- > Kettlebell shoulder press 5 x 5/5
- > Chinups 5 x 70per cent max

Finish with 10 minutes of swings where you aim to do as many head-high swings as you can in the 10 minutes.

Next issue we'll look at what may just be the world's best conditioning system for military personnel and I'll show you how kettlebells fit into the mix as well. As always, if you want more information on anything fitness related send me an email at fitness@octogen.com.au or visit www.octogen.com.au and subscribe to our monthly newsletter.

MILITARY SELF DEFENCE



BY MAJOR TRAVIS FAURE

An emerging trend in modern militaries is the increased training emphasis on non-lethal applications of the use of force to control various situations ranging from UN humanitarian relief through to war-like operations. The kill-or-be-killed attitude of previous eras is certainly under the spotlight. Today's military operations have CNN and other media outlets, capable of projecting situations moments after they happen, to a world-wide audience for comment – and judgment.

Designers of current military self defence programs have had to adapt to the ubiquitous coexistence of media representatives in military environments and change the application of techniques to ensure they are media friendly. Military members are now held accountable for their actions by a much wider audience and need to have the necessary skill-set to handle these non-lethal threats while still making their country, service and unit proud.

The Australia Army has developed a Military Self Defence (MSD) Course, a package of five days of intensive training designed to meet emerging operational non-lethal needs. The course is open to all members of the Australian Defence Force.

From day one, the course sets the operational context and focuses on the use of force continuum – that is, the correct application of force is used to control a situation.

The course has an integrated philosophy combining such topics as; the use-of-force continuum, rules of engagement, orders for opening fire, psychological and physiological effects of combat, the combative mind set and applicable protective techniques.

The aim of the course is to train military members to be able to capture and control a situation using the correct amount of force. Participants must be able to escalate and de-escalate the responsive level of force depending on

the situation. The course is delivered by conventional military lessons; students learn techniques, are revised and practiced and then subjected to various levels of scenario training.

Scenarios are designed to cause a response from the participants. They are realistic and invoke participants to act and then think about their response and use of force. They build on each other and bring out many lessons for the participants who can then practice the lessons learnt and apply them in the next scenario.

Participants are also tested through reflex training and, as the name implies, this training is designed to improve the reflex response to various attacks. The course focuses on the initial natural response of the participant to a situation and turns this reflex response into a highly effective protective counter response using efficient body mechanics to dominate a situation.

A simple yet effective training aide is the use of verbal skills. Under pressure, these skills decline. MSD requires participants to be able to verbalise their intent to opponents. Verbal skills are a must for military members. Often in peacekeeping, military members are seen as the law, and as such, need to be able to dominate and control a situation quickly. The civilian martial arts 'yell or grunt' is not the desirable response. Clear, verbal direction, mixed with sharp controlling techniques applied with the correct use of force is the desired outcome.

Another issue that affects today's self defence courses is the occupational health and safety of participating members and the commander's duty of care. Commanders at all levels do not want their members injured, yet the nature of these courses exposes participants to potential injuries. MSD has been designed to minimise injury while still exposing participants to realistic training. The low injury rate attained by MSD courses is down to the use of world's-best practices, competent and highly skilled instructors, adherence to sound safety procedures and the wearing of protective equipment. MSD uses the latest in protective equipment, makes full use of protective suits, vests and simulated weapons. Without sacrificing technique application, MSD instructors are able to provide dynamic operationally focused training with minimal injuries. I personally have conducted many courses without any serious injuries requiring students to be withdrawn. Remember we hold highly the character trait to fight on, no matter how we feel. Some feelings of being uncomfortable are only natural during this type of training.

MSD training is economical and efficient to run. Over a short period, units can build up the required self-defence expertise to conduct the initial exponent courses and continuation training.

Commanders at all levels can be reassured that their soldiers, airmen and sailors are learning concepts, skills and behavioural attitudes which will complement their other service skills and make them more effective members of their units. The Australian Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, has stated his intent for all Army members to be qualified in MSD. It is our task, as MSD instructors, to pass on these skills and make his intent a reality.

STEEL BEASTS PROFESSIONAL PERSONAL EDITION

www.steelbeasts.com
eSim Games

Almost six years ago I stumbled across what was then the greatest tactical armoured/mechanised warfare simulation available on the home PC. The original *Steel Beasts* was a game that had me hooked for years and prompted the purchase of a ridiculously expensive broadband Internet connection just to enjoy the amazing experience of virtual combined-arms combat (without the dust). *Steel Beasts* was a game that proved gameplay outshone visuals, and immersiveness was more important than continuous action – it set ‘simmers’ apart from ‘gamers’.

Since the release of the original, the team at eSim have been working methodically to build on their first title. *Steel Beasts* however, like all sims, lives in a niche market that, despite its success was unlikely to keep the development team in Bentley’s and allow for rapid development of a new title. Without widespread public appeal, the eSim crew have taken a step that many developers can only dream of – they have taken their original product, updated it, made it far more technical and, most importantly, expanded the options to suit those funding the title – the military.

Steel Beasts Professional is a title available only to major

defence organisations. The *Personal Edition (Steel Beasts Pro PE)* is essentially the same simulation adjusted for home/desktop use. It does away with some of the detailed AAR tools and the need for observer/controllers, and limits the size of engagement areas and participants to allow for lower system requirements. It is, however, a military simulation and not a ‘tank game’ and, as such, comes in at a hefty US\$125 (works out to about AU\$180 by the time it gets here). *Steel Beasts Pro PE* has been available through eSim’s online store since late February and judging by forum activity, the relatively high-cost has not deterred many of those who were prominent members of the original *Steel Beasts* community.

Like the original, *Steel Beasts Pro PE*, offers a tactical combined-arms simulation using vehicles and equipment that are common to armies of today. Four major main battle tanks are modelled, the Leopard 1A5, the Leopard 2A4 and 2A5 and of course, the now very battle-proven M1A1. Gunner and crew-commander positions are also included for the M2A2/M3A2, the LAV-25/LAV-PC and M113 family. Then, of course, there is the amazing range of other vehicles and equipment in the game that can be controlled or fought against. On the Eastern Bloc side, most vehicles up to and including the T80U are modelled for an extremely capably OPFOR.

While some are deterred by the lack of crewable Russian armour (a fully simulated T72 is rumoured to be in the



works) the decision to include certain vehicles has essentially been made through defence contracts stipulating the development of specific types. It is for this reason the *Steel Beasts Pro PE* shines in the Aussie market. When the program is explored, all of a sudden ASLAV variants, and the M113AS4 (the Tenix upgrade) pop to life. Australian mechanised infantry (wearing DPCU) clamber out of the back of carriers and all of a sudden Battlegroups’ Leopard (what will the ADF change that to?) and Tiger spring to life either as they currently stand, Leo AS1 and M113 or as it will be in a couple of years, M1A1 and M113AS4 with ASLAVs charging across the AO on their recce tasks.

The Australian aspect of the simulation gets even more specific when the map and mission editors are opened. Height maps for most Aussie training areas are included within *Steel Beasts Pro PE* so, with a bit of time and effort, that defence of Pine Mountain Sector is eminently feasible.

If you must, you can even charge up the Swan River to have a crack at Perth in an urban scenario or annoy the neighbours in Cultana.

In reality, it is this mission development tool that is the real selling point of the simulation. Battalion-sized or larger engagements (depending on system specifications) can be crafted

with up to eight players taking charge of everything from an individual vehicle through to company-sized combat teams. It is even possible to get a couple of players online in a single vehicle operating as the gunner and crew commander.

And a full range of supporting fires, obstacles and CSS options are available to mix up the activity.

The ability to script PC-controlled elements through a range of ‘what-if’ scenarios provides a realistic and extremely capable OPFOR and supporting BLUEFOR.

My only real niggle is some of the AI pathing when water obstacles are encountered – watching a troop of tanks push each other off a blown bridge into a watery grave is not fun.

Steel Beasts Pro PE adds several things that were highlighted as problems in the original – better DirectX 9 graphics including better obscuration effects (a personal bug-bear from the original), attack helicopters, a wider range of vehicles and some amazingly detailed missions – just check the Battle of 73 Easting for an example of how much detail can be put into mission development.

A game-orientated version of this sim, *Steel Beasts 2*, is in development. The eSim crew have indicated it will probably look better but options and detail will be reduced.

The sim community is already hard at work on vehicle skins, mission development and other enhancements for *Steel Beasts Pro PE* to improve on the retail version that will keep downloads flooding in for months to come. For my money, *Steel Beasts Pro PE* is a one-off purchase that will keep me occupied for several years – just like its predecessor.

Score: 5/5

Late-breaking news from eSim Games says Army Simulation Wing at Puckapunyal will purchase an army-wide license for Australia and New Zealand so that every active ANZAC soldier can get a free copy of *Steel Beasts Pro*. Check this page for more detail next issue.

GAME REVIEW

COMMANDOS: STRIKE FORCE

www.commandosstrikeforce.com

Eidos

The *Commandos* titles, particularly the second in the series, have become synonymous with hard tactical strategy gaming, the like of which most developers have tried to emulate but rarely have they succeeded. At its peak, the series had gamers using the specific skills of a small group of *Commandos*, from a dodgy dog through to a muscle-bound killing machine, to wreak havoc in wartime Europe and further afield.



The games required an amazing amount of patience, forethought and suspension of disbelief (each ‘highly-trained’ commando was the epitome of a specialist – only certain members could drive, climb, snipe, hide and so on, and if a player tried to make one of the others do something outside of their job description, the war ended). This limit of skills was required for play balancing but it introduced players to a range of characters – the

Green Beret, sniper, driver, spy, marine, the big-breasted French tart and their mates. Yet the game was only really suitable for PCs as strategy does not translate well without a keyboard and mouse. *Commandos: Strike Force* has done with the isometric-view and succumbed to the first-person fight in order to expand the series to the console market.

Only three of the original cast play a role, the sniper, Green Beret and spy, and missions are far more hectic than the originals ever were.

While success in the original series was getting through the game without firing a shot, *Commandos: Strike Force* takes a more up-the-guts approach.

With three characters (who have had some expanded skills-training since the demise of their team mates), a player often has the choice of swapping between characters in order to achieve a mission. Yet, in the high-tempo environment that is *Strike Force*, there never seems to be the time to think ahead and use the right guy for the job. The first mission sets the scene with the player afforded the choice of using the sniper or the Green Beret to fight their way off a compromised drop zone. While the mission could be achieved using both characters to achieve certain objectives, it is also possible to succeed just using one of the characters. I played the mission as the sniper and then again as the Green Beret and each time the mission was a success – there is just not the requirement to swap between the commandos like with the originals.

In later missions, where the spy comes into his own, there is more of a need to mix it up between the covert and overt elements but never to the same extent of the original.

Yet, does this make *Commandos: Strike Force* a bad game? Well, it is not quite strategy and not quite first-person shooter as we know it, so it will always raise a few eyebrows. Those who became addicted to the original strategy version will enjoy the new-found freedom

but also crave the deliberate planning aspect. Console gamers will take time to adjust to the character-swapping routine. Yet, in a market flooded with WWII FPS titles, innovation is truly a thing of beauty and, for this reason alone, *Commandos: Strike Force* should succeed.

It’s detailed, graphic, deadly in AI execution and, after getting to grips with the console-control funnies, very rewarding.

If only they had kept the Marine – there really was nothing like harpooning an unsuspecting Gestapo officer!

Score: 4/5

We have four copies of *Commandos: Strike Force* for Xbox to give away thanks to Sabrina at Atari. Send 50 words or less to editor@militarycontact.com stating why you should win. Humour works best. Comp details on the web.

WINNERS ARE GRINNERS



TRASER NAVIGATOR WATCH worth \$500+

Thanks to Traser Australia

Ben Clarke, Warburton, Victoria

VBS1

Customised full-version training platform

Thanks to Bohemia Interactive

Zayne Breadmore and Rick Fishbourne

CALL OF DUTY for PC

Thanks to Activision

Brett Evans, Jakub Marciniak, David Rynne and Dan Amos

CALL OF DUTY: BIG RED ONE for PS2

Thanks to Activision

Sam Collins

Naughty people – not enough entries – 3 copies of CoD: Big Red One left! – 50 words or less to editor@militarycontact.com

POWERFUL L1 HEADLIGHT FROM SILVA



SILVA RELEASES HEADLIGHTS

Swedish kit manufacturer Silva has released its L-series cammo LED headlamps in Australia.

Four models, distributed by Macon Trading, come in various power ratings.

The headlamps run on AA batteries, all are waterproof, have a 2-year warranty and are available from hunting and military shops.

SAS CHOOSES NITE WATCH

British SAS have taken delivery of 300 NITE MX10-001 watches after extensively testing various competitive gaseous tritium light-source (GTL) military watches.

Illumination in NITE watches is 100 times brighter than ‘normal’ luminous dials and can be read in zero light conditions without the need to press buttons or drain batteries.

Cases are in rugged titanium nitride gunmetal finish and have a scratchproof sapphire-crystal face and a screw-down crown with double o-ring seal, making them water resistant to 100 metres.

MX10-001 watches are available in Australia through Macon Trading on (03) 9489 9766.



Thanks to Don Stevenson at Octogen Fitness, CONTACT has one 16kg Kettlebell plus a DVD and personalised training program (total value \$400) and a runner up prize of a DVD and personalised training program (value \$180).



Send 50 words or less to editor@militarycontact.com stating why you should win. Humour works best.

Don’t forget to include your full postal address and phone numbers.

Competition details on the web.

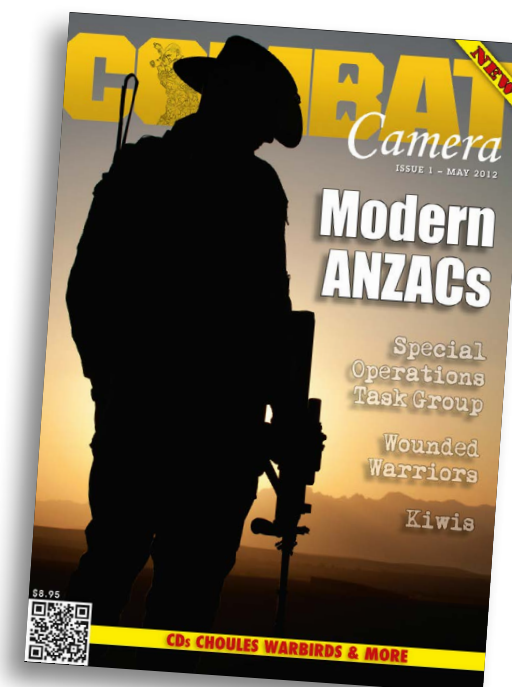
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by the surprise of the attacks, keep the enemy off balance.² Many a German spent a sleepless night clutching his rifle and jumping at every noise, fearful that he might be snatched at any time by the Australian raiders.

When his platoon commander was killed, Brodie assumed command. The men immediately accepted the leadership change as Ben already had earned their trust and respect. Their faith in his judgement and common-sense approach to soldiering was imperative, as their lives were in his hands.

In October, the battalion was engaged in the battle around Passchendaele. Heavy rains had reduced the area to a quagmire, the thick mud hampering movement and fouling weapons.

The battle was a disastrous defeat for the Allies and the 34th Battalion suffered casualties of higher than 50 per cent.

Following the Passchendaele campaign, the men were sent to the rear for a rest – to enjoy warm billets and dry clothes for the first time in months.

During the break, the commanding officer called Brodie into his office and passed an envelope to the sergeant. A very proud Brodie discovered the contents to be two pips – he had been commissioned to second lieutenant.

A brief stint at the Officers' Training School at Amiens followed, but then it was back in the line for the young platoon commander.¹

He was popular among the troops who regarded him as one of the boys, but one who was not averse to delivering a severe reprimand when necessary.

Brodie was a tyrant in battle, moving his men forward to seize one objective after another, so it was not surprising that he was soon promoted to lieutenant.

On one occasion, Brodie led the company to its objective when the officer commanding was taken out of the action. In early 1918, he was promoted to captain and took over as second in command of C Company.¹

At the beginning of March, the 34th Battalion occupied the front line as part of the 9th Brigade. On the night of 3 March, a brigade raid consisting of 10 officers and 225 men attacked the German trenches. The raiders killed more than 50 of the enemy and captured an officer and 10 men, before retiring to the safety of their own lines.³

As the commanders contemplated their next move, they agreed the best strategy was to repeat the action the following night – the Germans would never expect them to hit the same place two nights in a row.

That day, his company commander summoned Brodie to his dugout. "Warning order, Ben. We've got a manoeuvre on tonight and our company's drawn the short

straw. Make all preparations, will you? And by the way, you'll be leading the push."

Brodie passed on the information to his platoon commanders and then settled into his dugout to get some rest. Too stimulated to sleep, he reached into his pack and extracted a writing pad to start a letter to his wife.

Later, the commanding officer conducted the briefing on the plan of attack for the night's raid, which was to be the same strength as the night before.

"Sergeant Mudford, you'll take the covering party on the left flank. You'll have the Lewis guns, the bombers and plenty of bombs. The right flank will be handled by the 33rd.³

"Lieutenant Fell, you'll have the taping party and support Sergeant Nunn with the demolition charges.³

"Brodie, you'll be leading our blokes – about a hundred in all. Your mission is to blow up the tunnels and the dugouts, capture whoever you can and get the hell out.

"And don't worry, we'll have artillery support. The barrage starts at 0050 hours. Any questions?"

The men checked their weapons again. Most carried pistols, some carried clubs studded with nails and each of the raiders carried three or four bombs stuffed into the pockets of their tunics.

As they waited till it was time to make their way to the assembly point, the heavens opened up, soaking the diggers to the skin and creating a sea of viscous mud that clogged the soles of their boots. Volunteers of the YMCA and Salvation Army mingled with the troops, handing out cups of hot cocoa and coffee until it was time to go.

As the 18-pounders commenced firing, signalling the start of the raid, Brodie dispatched the officer and four diggers to lay the forming-up tape.

Seven minutes later, he sent out Sergeant Mudford's covering party.³ Using the tape as a guide in the dark, they took up positions in the German wire emplacements – a mere 45 metres from the enemy.

The main raiding party moved out, passing through the gaps that had been cut in the wire.

Suddenly, a flare burst above them, creating pandemonium as the pale light illuminated the battlefield.

"Go! Go! Go!" Brodie yelled, waving his troops forward.

The enemy attacked relentlessly with grenades and machine-guns. Brodie stormed up to the parapet, urging the diggers into the trench. As he directed his men towards shelter, a burst from a machine-gun hit him in the side and chest.⁴ He dropped to his knees, but continued to yell commands.

The stretcher-bearers grabbed their fallen captain and frantically pushed shell dressings into his gaping wounds.

Brodie's second in command, Lieutenant Fell, went about setting the explosives, while Sergeant Nunn led a party along the trench to the left. Reconnoitering around a bend in the trench, Nunn saw a large enemy force moving toward them. The Germans had anticipated the incursion and planned on trapping the raiders before they could withdraw.

Nunn sent a runner to Fell with a message, "Germans coming, lots of them!" Fell immediately gave the order to withdraw.

He then hurriedly made his way back to Brodie and knelt down beside the badly

wounded officer, who by now had been placed on a stretcher with a knapsack supporting his head.

Brodie grabbed Fell by the uniform, pulling him closer.

"Make sure you account for everyone before we leave, Fell," he muttered.

As they made their way back to their lines, Brodie repeatedly questioned his stretcher-bearer, Private Frew, on the state of his men.⁵ Frew reassured his patient that all was well, realising that although Brodie was gravely wounded, the officer's concern was not for himself but for the safety of his men.

As they reached the protection of the parapet, a relieved Frew leaned nearer the officer's head. "We've made it, sir, we've..."

But it was too late, Brodie was dead.

CAPTAIN BENJAMIN BRODIE

THE RAIDER

BY WO1 DARRYL KELLY

As the officers and sergeants sat in the dimly lit dugout, the etched features of the commanding officer (CO) were accentuated in the eerie light cast by the hurricane lamp. The men listened intently as he presented the plan in intricate detail. After each was assigned his task, the CO looked at the captain and said, "Brodie, you'll be leading our blokes".

Benjamin Greenup Brodie was a stalwart of the unit. He had enlisted as a private and, from the earliest days, displayed the leadership qualities that led to his rapid promotion through the ranks.¹

Ben was posted to the 34th Battalion AIF and left Sydney, bound for the United Kingdom, in May 1916.

The battalion spent several months training before crossing to France in late November where the men were soon in the trenches of the Western Front – just in time for the onset of the terrible winter of 1916–17.

As they made their way up the line on their first night in combat, Brodie stood alongside the duckboard as the troops filed past. "No smoking, no talking," he whispered. When the line ground to a halt, a nervous young digger asked, "You think we'll see any action tonight, sarge?"

"Don't worry, mate. We'll see it soon enough."

In the ensuing months, their actions in the trenches of Armentieres, at Messines, and their strike against the Oostaverne Line established the 34th as formidable fighters, but their 'apprenticeship' came at a terrible cost – the loss of so many young Australian lives.

The men of the 34th became experts in the art of trench-raiding. Under the cover of an artillery barrage, the diggers would sortie forward, rush the German trenches, snatch prisoners and blow up strongpoints, before vanishing back into the night.

These incursions were devised primarily to identify opposing German units and,

THE ENEMY ATTACKED RELENTLESSLY WITH GRENADES AND MACHINE-GUNS. BRODIE STORMED UP TO THE PARAPET, URGING THE DIGGERS INTO THE TRENCH. AS HE DIRECTED HIS MEN TOWARDS SHELTER, A BURST FROM A MACHINE-GUN HIT HIM IN THE SIDE AND CHEST

¹ National Archives of Australia: B2455, WW1 Service Records, Captain BG Brodie

² Bean, CEW, The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918, Volume III, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1936

³ Bean, CEW, The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918, Volume V, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1936

⁴ AWM 1DRL/0428, Australian Red Cross Society, Missing and Wounded Enquiry Bureau

⁵ The All Australian Memorial, An Historical Record of National effort during the Great War, British-Australian Publishing Service, Melbourne

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Posted subject: Defence recruiting

Author: Robert

Posted:

2.43pm

Fri 3 Mar 2006

via email

From what I have read, most members who use the forum seem to be young school-age boys.

Also, I note that you have at least two veterans, one Vietnam Veteran and another a peacekeeper.

As young men are impressionable at this age, from what I am reading, the wrong message is being passed on to them about the reality of war. They seem very eager to listen to what these veterans have to say and, by their return posts, I imagine they think war is great – when in fact it is very dangerous and much-too-often fatal. As a veteran myself, I can assure you the users of your forum are much too gung-ho for their age.

Your member, Rick (a Vietnam veteran), often speaks of the horrors of war, whereas another user, Gerty (a Somalia veteran) seems to glorify it. I had thought of signing up to try and get my point across, but I believe it would be difficult with Gerty's arguments.

Young men and women need the truth and I believe, in part, if you are going to host a forum like this, you need to take some responsibility for what is said on your site.

War is not a game and is not something one should enter into lightly. I for one find this sort of forum rather disturbing.

Author: Brian –
Admin God

Posted:

8.34pm

Fri 3 Mar 2006

via email

I appreciate the sentiment of your letter, but I'm not sure I agree with you. Yes, I do agree that war is not so glamorous as the enthusiasm of the 'kids' on the forum might suggest. But surely you too were full of youthful enthusiasm before you joined up? As we all were.

The other point is that if we all knew then what we know now, then our Defence recruiters would have a very hard job to do.

You are right of course about some of the attitudes on the forum, but my attitude is that they are as entitled as anyone to their opinions – even if we don't agree with them.

Having monitored the forums since the beginning, I have to say I think your assessment of the young ones is a little off the mark. Yes they are very gung ho, but in fact, I believe they appear to be getting much more sensible and keenly interested – for the right reasons – since the long, heartfelt dialogue between Gerty and Rick started.

Feel free to join in – it could be interesting – and addictive!

Author: Robert

Posted:

11.44am

Sat 1 Apr 2006

via email

You are right of course – as all young boys from almost anywhere dream of fighting wars.

I may have come across too strong, but something about Gerty worried me.

That Aussie Vietnam Vet (Rick is it?), on the other hand comes across a lot more sincere and seems to know what he is talking about, reminds me very much of my experiences in Vietnam and my return to the States.

I will be joining your forum on my return home and give a Yank's version of things and I am sure my buddies will be very interested as well.

I am all for teaching kids about war, as long as they realise it's not a game, but a very deadly life-or-death situation.

Anyway keep up the good work and I am glad you are keeping an eye on things – you need to.

You will be hearing from me again soon, once I am settled back home and am organised again. I will also get some of my veteran buddies to check your site out. We Americans had great admiration for the Australians in Vietnam. The Australians and us combined in a lot of operations together. The Australian soldier is equal if not better than any other soldier in the world. Great sense of humour as well.

All the best, be proud of your armed forces, because they are great.

**Do you agree with former
CDF Admiral Chris Barrie
that Australians should
reconsider conscription?**

Yes



53.80% (92)

No



46.20% (79)

Total Votes: 171

POSTED COMMENTS ON THE ABOVE POLL

Just doesn't sound Australian to me, we're such a free and happy country – Lore

In my opinion, the real question is: should we force such a numerical change on the ADF when the quality of the conscripts (and especially their motivation) may be questionable? – Sinker

HELL NO!! it was bad enough serving with useless, lazy people that wanted to join it would just worsen the situation by MAKING people be there. What's next, giving people the choice between going to gaol or joining up? – Gerty

I originally voted yes with the reason that when we're in need of numbers for the defence force we need to get them from somewhere. But then, after voting, I read Gerty's comment on the lazy people that already joined up and I remembered a few stories I had heard in the past and now claim my vote as no – King-Savage

I think it's time to reconsider conscription for the Reserves (as then some may consider full-time service). Then it will bring all the Australian Services into the public eye – Tricky