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WORTH \$500**
DETAILS PAGE 3



Company of Heroes and
Sturmovik – page 64



ISSUE 12 **\$8.95**

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AIR, LAND & SEA

THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE



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ORIGINAL REVIEW - CONTACT ISSUE #9 - BY PHIL BOYD

traser navigator

Traser makes watches that are aimed at the military and law enforcement markets and, as such, their watches are essentially rugged, functional and reliable.

The Swiss-made quartz watch supplied for review – or 'Watch, Wrist, General Purpose' in military-speak – certainly embodies these characteristics. The body of the watch is stainless steel, and includes some well-designed shoulders that protect the winding crown, generally the weak point in any watch. The winding crown itself screws firmly into the body of the watch when not in use, making a fully water- and dust-proof seal.

The carbon-fibre bezel takes some force to rotate, and locks into place with a definite 'click' that makes me believe it's going to stay exactly where I put it.

With this, as in most quality watches, the 'glass' is made from sapphire crystal (optional upgrade at \$45), second only in hardness to diamond. This guarantees a scratch-free watch face even after years of use and abuse.

The design of this watch clearly focuses on function rather than aesthetics – you're left with the distinct impression that this is a tool, not a fashion accessory. In keeping with this, the face is plain black and white, with unnecessary clutter omitted.

This watch came on a plain nylon NATO strap. Personally, I would have to admit, I'd be inclined to do some shopping for one of the metal straps that

Traser offer as an option. Not that the nylon strap is bad. In fact, for people wearing the watch where it's likely to get banged around a lot, it's probably a better option than metal or leather. The advantage is that accidental breaking of one strap pin won't result in the watch coming off your wrist.

It's in low light, however, that the Traser really shines. The unique feature of Traser watches is that the hands, face and bezel all feature an active illumination system, powered by low levels of radiation. Unlike traditional phosphorous watch hands, which require 'charging' by exposure to light, the Traser emits a consistent light level, and will continue to do so for up to 25 years. This comes from the radio-active element tritium, housed in laser-cut pockets – tritium and laser = Traser.

I really like this feature of the watch – regardless of how long it had been in the dark, its hands still had a bright green glow about them – easy to read, no matter what the environment, including underwater at night.

In summary: the key word for this watch is functionality. No unnecessary features or concessions to fashion, just the time, date and a rotating bezel. The constantly glowing hands make the time legible in any light conditions and operate all the time – you don't need to push a button to read the time at night.



DAY VIEW



NIGHT VIEW

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THE EDITOR'S LETTER

Issue 12 – December 2006

CONTACT

AIR, LAND & SEA

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

Printed by Pirion, Fyshwick, ACT

CONTACT – AIR LAND & SEA is published on the first Friday of March, June, September and December. General enquiries should be addressed to the editor. Advertising queries should be directed to the Advertising Manager. Subscriptions are \$34 per year (incl GST, postage and handling within Australia). Check our web site for costs to other countries or 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 Subscriptions Manager. Alternatively, use our secure on-line credit card subscription page at www.militarycontact.com or phone either the editor or the Subscriptions Manager.

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RIGHT: Crocodile Hunter Steve Irwin tackles another monster – this one in Dili, East Timor, in February 2000 during INTERFET. Pic Brian Hartigan

Australian operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have not been well covered in this magazine. Reports from there (or anywhere) require either a visit to the theatre or a report from someone who is, or has been in loc. A personal visit was highly unlikely and Defence, until now, has been somewhat secretive. That has now changed – on both counts.

Now that our Special Forces Task Group has been withdrawn from Afghanistan, the veil of secrecy has lifted a little and Defence has opened up with some startling detail on the scope and scale of the SF mission over the past year. While most of us were aware that our boys were involved in some hairy stuff (they don't hand out the Medal for Gallantry for nothing), the extent of what's now been revealed points to far more 'excitement' than most had envisaged (story starts page 32).

I recently received an invitation to travel to the Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO) on a Defence-guided media tour to see the war for myself. Naturally, you can read all about it in the magazine but, I have to say, Afghanistan in particular surprised me. Surely, I thought, if our SF boys were home, then their job must be finished? Far from it. With our engineer-based 1st Reconstruction Task Force all-but firm on the ground now, the fighting continues. And, while 1RTF is well protected – as outlined in my report commencing page 38 – the extent of the danger in that country is neither denied nor concealed and should not be underestimated.

Space being limited, I have chosen to cover my visit to Afghanistan in detail this issue and hold over the report on Iraq for March – so stay tuned for that one. As a third installment (to get greater value from my time away), in the June issue I will wrap up with a look at the eye-popping scale of operations in general in the Middle East, particularly on the American side of the fence. Everywhere you go over there, there's eye candy for the trainspotters among us and statistics that will blow your mind.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those in Defence who were involved in organising the trip. I especially single out Captain Lauchlan Simond, our escort, whose patience was boundless. Thanks also to the boys from ABC television and The Age newspaper for their excellent companionship.

Back in September, I was flabbergasted by the news of Steve Irwin's sudden and untimely demise. I met Steve Irwin in East Timor in early 2000 and, yes, he really was as mad in the flesh as he was on tv. While I wasn't a fanatical 'fan', I did like the guy and had the greatest respect for him, what he stood for and what he achieved. I too will miss him. Rest in peace, mate.

Brian Hartigan
Managing Editor



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INCOMING

FRIENDLY FIRE...

Just like to say the article in issue #11 about what worked and what didn't in Iraq – weapons etc – was very interesting. I recently joined the Reserves and am thinking of going to Regs because I'm loving it. Keep up the good work.

Andreas, via web-site feedback

First, I found out about your magazine from a winner of a previous comp, Nick S. Since he first showed me his issue I've been hooked. The bright look and true Australian articles are brilliant.

A small question on the cover of issue #11 – what type of communicator is on the soldier's head, and can civilians get hold of them? Keep up the good work.

Josh, via web-site feedback

The comms set is called Personal Role Radio (PRR). As a mil-spec piece of kit, it is not available to the public – Ed.

Just finished reading issue #11. It was one of the best so far. I really enjoyed the kit review from Iraq. Maybe you could do one about the Aussie gear. I was also wondering if you guys were going to produce a CONTACT binder or folder that we could buy to protect our mags?

Kerry S, via web-site feedback

I am making enquiries about a binder or box. This, however, is proving difficult. If anyone has any insights, I'd love to hear from you – Ed.

I just opened issue #11 and tried to play spot-the-difference with image 1 and 2 of 'Big Bird Belly Flop'. I have failed...

Max S, via web-site feedback.

Well done Max – you spotted the deliberate error!!! Not really – but you are the first to point out my carelessness. I hope the error doesn't spoil your enjoyment of the rest of the magazine – cheers, Ed

Nothing could ever spoil my enjoyment of reading CONTACT!!!

Max

Thanks again for another well-produced informative read. CONTACT magazine is a standout and I recommend it to all my mates. Being ex ADF, I am always trying to keep in touch with what is going on around the traps and your magazine and website fills that gap well. I am re-enlisting soon, so it keeps me motivated. Keep up the great work.

Peter B, via web-site feedback

My name is Campbell and I'm 12 years old and live in Victoria. I read your magazine every time it comes out. I have loved the Army since I was little and some day hope

to join the ADF. I hope your magazine keeps going for years to come.

I was wondering, if I was to design a poster with cut-outs of pictures from your magazine, would you put it in the mag?

Campbell H, Nagambie, Victoria

While I would have to see your work before deciding to publish it, I encourage anyone to send me letters, articles, photos and other materiel to consider for publication. The decision will always be made on quality and relevance – Ed.

On behalf of my son Paul, I'd like to extend my sincere thanks for the game he won in a recent competition. He was so excited when the latest copy arrived and I showed him his name! He said there were only two winners in Australia and he was absolutely excited to be one of them.

Keep up the good work with the magazine, it is a much needed and professional publication and we both look forward to its arrival in the mail!

Dave M, Canungra, Queensland

The picture of yourself on page 7, for your column 'The Editor's Letter', brought back many good memories. It is always good to see a Digger with an SLR in his hands, holding it like he's ready to use it, the way it should be carried...

But, one question – why isn't your hat on your head????

Don E, Ipswich, Queensland

Don, either our secco allowed us to put hats away, recognising the futility of trying to keep it on during physical activity, or it was hanging on barbed wire somewhere back along the track. Perhaps it was keeping the base-plate of my magazine company – look at the picture more closely and you'll see the entrail that was my mag spring, dangling! – Ed.

May I just say, awesome job on the coverage of Op Larry Assist. And an enthusiastic pat on the back to the men and women from the various Townsville units who gripped it up, got stuck in and really made a vital difference to the affected population after the cyclone. Well Done!!

Adrian H, via email

CONTACT has the best photo quality and feature content I've seen in a magazine in a long time. Keep up the good work and never stop producing this mag!

Joe L, via email

Love the mag. Keep up the good work and keep the Somalia articles coming.

Hoysted, via web-site feedback

ON TARGET...

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

This magazine continues to go from strength to strength with each issue, with interesting articles covering all three forces. And maybe in a future issue there could be a piece done on police special operations groups.

I appreciate the help from Don Stevenson's Military Fitness page as I'm enlisting into the Army in November and need all the help I can get. So, keep the advice coming Don.

The new CONTACT merchandise is a good idea (I've already purchased a cap) and I look forward to more products coming soon. Keep up the good work.

Heath P, via email

Thanks Heath, your continued support is much appreciated. Good luck with your training and I wish you all the very best for a long, safe and rewarding soldiering career – Ed.



A KIWI IN AFGHANISTAN GETS READY FOR ANOTHER HEAVY CONTACT!

FLESH WOUND...

I read your article on the ADGies, which is currently one of the hot topics for many, many members of the Army, and I am sure there will be plenty of responses. When I read this article I was insulted by the amount of untruthful statements about infantry. If a bit more research was done in the role of the infantry, and then do a comparison, I think you might find one will be a lot better than the other.

Andrew O, via web-site feedback

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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Federal Treasurer Peter Costello (rear seat) gets close to the action in a RAAF F/A-18 fighter jet during an air-combat familiarisation flight. Pilot for the mission was Commanding Officer Number 3 Squadron Wing Commander Vincent Iervasi.

"We took out all the enemy aircraft, we hit our targets and we won the dogfight on the way back. It's a bigger buzz than facing the Opposition in question time," the Treasurer said.

"These pilots are the most skilled people imaginable." Observers reported that the man who hands out big dollars to keep the Hornets in top shape was beaming with an unreserved smile and shaking from the adrenalin rush after his mission.



JDAM TESTED

First flights of the extended range version of the Boeing GBU-31/32 Joint Direct Attack Munition Extended Range (JDAM-ER) took place at Woomera, South Australia, in August. The tests were part of integration trials of the weapon onto RAAF F/A-18 Hornet strike fighters and included a number of direct hits by inert bombs. Operational testing of 500lb and 1000lb bombs fitted with the JDAM-ER kit were due in October, with Initial Operational Capability achieved by mid 2007.

BRAKES ON M113 UPGRADE

The M113 Upgrade project has again been delayed by technical issues. According to Tenix, the latest delay has been caused by failure of the hand brake to hold the 18 tonne vehicle on a slope while stationary. The company expects the problem to be rectified and the solution certified by next year.

M113 NAV BOOST

A new navigation system will be fitted to the Army's fleet of M113 armoured personnel carriers after DMO recently contracted Honeywell Germany to supply the new TALIN 500 Inertial Navigation Unit at a cost of \$11 million. TALIN integrates GPS and inertial navigation functions, which enable effective navigation in all environments, including regions where GPS is unavailable because of terrain masking or enemy jamming. It will be available to both the commander and driver.

SAM TO IRAN

Russia has confirmed it will supply its Tor-M1 (SA-15 Gauntlet) mobile low-to-medium altitude surface-to-air missile (SAM) system to Iran. The US\$1.4 billion contract includes 16 launch vehicles, four battery-level command posts and other equipment sufficient to equip one air defence regiment. The Tor-M1 SAM system is capable of tracking 48 separate targets. Its missiles have an engagement range of 12km.

ADI ALL FRENCH!

ADI Limited is now 100 per cent owned by French systems house Thales, with the company now known as Thales Australia. The acquisition is believed to be worth more than A\$160 million. It is unclear at this stage whether a restructure of Thales Australia will follow.

SCAR STARTS PRODUCTION

US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) has given the green light for low-rate production of the new Special Operations Forces Combat Assault Rifle (SCAR) from FN Herstal.

SCAR comes in two versions; the 5.56x45mm Mk 16 SCAR Light and 7.62x41mm Mk 17 SCAR Heavy. A quick-change barrel feature enables the operator to swap barrels for the standard, close

quarter or sniper mission. The two versions share 90 per cent parts commonality.

SOCOM sees SCAR eventually replacing the M4A1 carbine, the Close Quarters Battle Rifle, the Mk 12 sniper rifle, the Mk 11 Stoner (SR-25) and the M14.

Initial deliveries of SCAR are scheduled for January and will be followed by an operational test and evaluation phase between March and June 2007.



THE NEW SCAR ASSAULT RIFLE DESIGNED FOR US SPECIAL FORCES. PHOTO FN HERSTAL

RAAF PREPARES FOR C-17 ARRIVAL

The first of four C-17A Globemaster III airlifters for the Royal Australian Air Force has made its maiden flight in the United States in preparation for its delivery voyage to Australia. The aircraft was rolled out of Boeing's Long Beach, California, facility on 10 October.

It is intended for the Australian C-17 to be ready for operations very soon after delivery, which is scheduled for December. Australian aircrew and maintainers have received training in the US on the aircraft and its operating systems in preparation.

It is understood the C-17s will operate out of RAAF Base Amberley. Each aircraft will carry the No 36 Squadron's black stallion insignia on the tail.

Pulled from the Block 17 tranche of aircraft, the RAAF C-17s are identical to USAF's. The second Australian airframe is scheduled for delivery in 2007, with the final two handed over the following year.



THE FIRST RAAF C-17 COMES OUT OF THE BOEING PAINT SHOP IN ITS NEW COLOURS. PIC BOEING

RESERVE SQUADRONS HAND IN THEIR TRACKS

All but one of the Army Reserve's armoured personnel carrier-equipped units have almost completed handing over their tracked M113A1 APCs as part of a transition that sees their roles change from protected battlefield mobility to light cavalry.

Part of the Hardened and Networked Army push and a reflection of the fact that maintaining Armoured Corps skills in a reserve unit is very difficult and resource intensive, squadron members are undergoing training in the cavalry scout role to reflect their new modus operandi.

Western Australia's A Squadron, 10th Light Horse was the first ARes unit to make the switch, trading in its armoured steeds for cut-down Perentie 4x4 and 6x6 light vehicles. These are understood to be similar in configuration to those operated by the Army's three Regional Force Surveillance Units.

The principle armament on the new vehicles will be the MAG-58 7.62mm general purpose machine gun and the M2 12.7mm heavy machine gun. A 40mm rapid-fire grenade launcher capability may also be considered.

12/16 Hunter River Lancers is the only ARes squadron that will retain an armoured vehicle capability and will be issued with the 4x4 Bushmaster infantry mobility vehicles.

COLLINS UPGRADE PROGRAM ROLLS ON

Collins Continuous Improvement Programme (otherwise known as Phase 5B.2B of Project Sea 1439) has been given the go-ahead to introduce selected technology insertion upgrades into the RAN's six Collins-class diesel/electric submarines.

Described as a 'rolling upgrade concept', the programme is a more flexible and efficient approach than the traditional mid-life upgrade and is intended to provide cost savings and reduce technical and schedule risk.

Valued at up to A\$150 million, a range of measures are being canvassed, including the redesign and upgrade of the submarine communications centre, improvements to electronic warfare capabilities and self-defence, and options for the enhancement of optronic sensors as part of an upgrade of the periscope system.

PROTECTED HOWITZERS GET THE NOD

Artillery manufacturers are gearing up to respond to a request for tender in early 2007 for the supply of at least 18 155mm 52 calibre self-propelled howitzers (SPH) for the Australian Army. The new SPHs are planned for introduction into service around 2010.

Under a revitalised Project Land 17, valued at A\$450-\$600 million, a decision has been taken to do away with the concept of adopting a gun-on-a-truck (GOAT) solution in favour of a system which enables the gun crew to fire and reload under all-round armoured protection.

This has effectively ruled out the Giat Caesar and Soltam ATMOS GOAT systems, both of which are based on 6x6 truck platforms and require the crew to be exposed at the rear of the vehicle to operate the gun (see article starting page 24, CONTACT Issue #5).

This decision has elevated at least three SPH designs to the fore of Land 17 considerations; the Bofors Defence Archer 6x6, the Denel G6-52 6x6 and the tracked Samsung Techwin K9 Thunder.

To date, the K9 Thunder, in service with South Korea and Turkey, is the only SPH to be demonstrated in Australia, with a vehicle undergoing mobility demonstrations in Puckapunyal during early November.

Land 17 will also involve acquisition of a 155mm lightweight towed howitzer. The upgrade of Army's extant M-198 155mm towed howitzers may also be considered.



SOUTH KOREAN K9 THUNDER HAS CONDUCTED COMPANY-SPONSORED MOBILITY DEMONSTRATIONS AT PUCKAPUNYAL

SIRIUS JOINS THE FLEET

Tenix Defence has completed the conversion of the RAN's new double-hulled tanker HMAS Sirius several weeks ahead of schedule, thereby enabling the ship to be commissioned in late September.

Purchased new as the merchant tanker Delos from a South Korean shipyard in 2004 for A\$50 million, Sirius will replace the single-hull auxiliary oiler HMAS Westralia.

The conversion cost A\$60 million and included work to enable the ship to undertake replenishment at sea, the addition of an aft helicopter flight deck, additional safety and damage-control systems, internal and external communications, and enhanced hotel services to address issues concerning ventilation, air conditioning, heating, sewerage treatment and the provision

of fresh water. In addition to its central role of transporting bulk fuel, the 176m long, 37,000 tonne Sirius can also carry a dozen 20ft ISO containers on a specially built cargo deck.

The aft flight deck can support the operation of an MRH 90 helicopter, but has no adjoining hangar.



HMAS SIRIUS AT THE COMPLETION OF HER CONVERSION BY TENIX. PIC TENIX

F MODEL CHINOOK FLIES

The first example of the initial production CH-47F Chinook heavy-lift helicopter underwent its maiden flight on 23 October. This included a structural performance evaluation and the testing of aircraft systems and avionics.

Improvements in the CH-47F over the D model include new cockpit displays and digital automatic flight control systems to provide safer low-speed flight and greater situational awareness. Payload, speed and range are also increased.

The US Army plans to replace its CH-47Ds with the F model beginning in 2007. Boeing expects to upgrade around 300 CH-47Ds to F model configuration.

FIRST FLIGHT OF THE NEW CH-47F CHINOOK. PIC BOEING



ARMY SEEKS 40MM GRENADE LAUNCHER

The Australian Army is expected to release a request for tender calling for an advanced 40mm automatic grenade launcher (AGL) capability under Phase 2 of Project Land 40.

The new weapons will be issued to the heavy weapons platoon within each infantry battalion.

Being a crew-served weapon, the predominant configuration will be tripod-mounted for dismounted firing and man-portability.

It is unclear how many weapons are to be sought but it is known that firms such as Germany's Heckler & Koch and US defence giant General Dynamics will contest the contract. This will see the HK 40mm Grenade Machine Gun and the Mk 47 Mod 0 Striker offered by both firms respectively.

The Mk 19 40mm AGL, in service with the SASR since 2002, will not be considered as it is deemed by the project office to be in the final stages of its development life.



HK'S 40MM GRENADE MACHINE GUN IS ALREADY IN SERVICE WITH GERMAN AND US SPECIAL FORCES. PIC HECKLER & KOCH



GENERAL DYNAMICS' MK 47 MOD 0 STRIKER IS A LIGHTWEIGHT 40MM AGL WITH ADVANCED FIRE-CONTROL SYSTEM. PIC GD&P

ARMY SET TO EXPAND

The ranks of the Australian Regular Army are to be boosted under plans that will see an increase in troop numbers by 2600 before 2010. This is in addition to the 1500 extra troops announced in late 2005 to flesh out existing high-priority Army units.

To be provided under the 'Increased Capacity' plan, the additional troops will be used to form another two regular infantry battalions (taking the number of battalions to eight), with the remainder addressing hollowness in extant units.

Most significant of the changes to come out of the Increased Capacity initiative

will see 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) losing its parachute capability and transforming into a light infantry unit; 5/7RAR will be split to form two complete mechanised infantry battalions, 5RAR and 7RAR; and 8/9RAR will reform and be established as a light infantry battalion.

The extra 2600 soldiers will cost around A\$10 billion, with more than half of that already allocated to raising and sustaining the two additional battalions. The remainder is for the procurement of weapons, vehicles and other equipment.

NEW ARMY STRUCTURE UNDER INCREASED CAPACITY INITIATIVE		
Battalion	Role 2006	Role 2015
1RAR	Light infantry (Townsville)	Light infantry (Townsville)
2RAR	Light infantry (Townsville)	Light infantry (Townsville)
3RAR	Parachute (Sydney)	Light infantry (Townsville)
4RAR (Cdo)	Commando (Sydney)	Commando (Sydney)
5/7RAR	Mechanised infantry (Darwin)	Would not exist
5RAR	Does not exist	Mechanised infantry (Darwin)
6RAR	Light/motorised infantry (Brisbane)	Light infantry (Brisbane)
7RAR	Does not exist	Mechanised infantry (Adelaide)
8/9RAR	Does not exist	Light infantry (Brisbane)

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HEADS UP



TWO M1A1 ABRAMS AIM SA MAIN BATTLE TANKS ARRIVE IN PORT MELBOURNE, PIC ADF

ABRAMS HIT HOME

The first 18 out of 59 M1A1 Abrams AIM SA main battle tanks for Army arrived in Australia on 22 September, where they were quickly hauled up onto low-loaders and trucked to the School of Armour at Puckapunyal.

Five M88A2 Hercules armoured recovery vehicles (ARVs) accompanied the tanks on the voyage from the US.

In addition to the 59 tanks (41 of which will go to 1st Armoured Regiment in Darwin), the Abrams 'package deal' includes seven M88A2 ARV, eight tactical fuel trucks, 14 heavy-tank transporters (HTT), live and training 120mm ammunition, and gunnery and driving simulation systems.

The remaining tanks and two more ARVs will be delivered in March 2007. The full complement

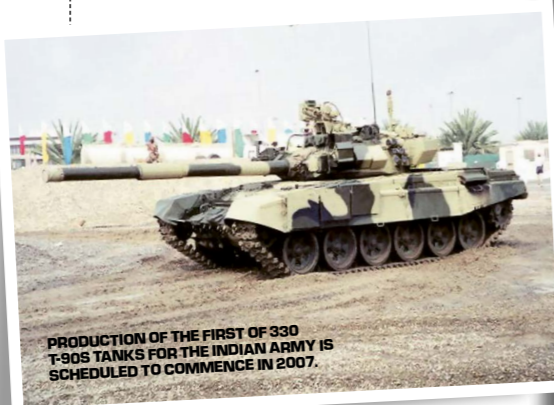
of HTT (built by MAN and Drake Trailers) will also be in place by this time.

INDIA ORDERS T-90 TANKS

The Indian Ministry of Defence has signed a follow-on order with Russia for the licenced manufacture of 330 T-90S main battle tanks (MBTs) for the Indian Army. These will add to 310 T-90S in Indian service since 2002, where they equip six armoured regiments.

Russia's latest generation MBT, the 46-tonne T-90S is considered a well-protected vehicle by modern standards. It features a 125mm smoothbore gun matched to an advanced fire-control system including a Thales Catherine long-range thermal imaging camera.

Secondary armament includes a roof-mounted 12.7mm anti-aircraft gun and 7.62mm co-axial machine gun.



PRODUCTION OF THE FIRST OF 330 T-90S TANKS FOR THE INDIAN ARMY IS SCHEDULED TO COMMENCE IN 2007.

NEWS IN BRIEF

US MULLS SEA LIFTERS

US Navy officials have outlined broad-performance expectations for a new fleet of eight Joint High Speed Vessels (JHSV) to be ordered from 2008. These include transporting a payload of up to 700 tonnes at 35 knots, an unrefuelled range of 1200 nautical miles and the ability to operate in conditions up to Sea State 3. The US Army is also expected to buy five JHSVs.



NEW NAVALISED RWS

Norway's Kongsberg has revealed a navalised variant of its Protector Remote Weapon Station (RWS) that is suitable for fitting to light vessels unable to accept weapon mounts which require deck penetration. Known as the Sea Protector, it is considerably lighter than the Protector RWS in service on Australian Army ASLAV-PC 8x8 armoured cavalry vehicles.

JAKARTA SEEKS ANTI-SHIP MISSILES

Indonesia is looking to renew its inventory of anti-ship missiles (ASM) via at least three acquisition projects to equip its navy. Options under consideration include replacing the ageing MM38 Exocet ASM with the Chinese CSS-N-8 Saccade medium-range weapon, additional RGM-84/UGM-84 Harpoons from the US or the latest Exocet MM40 Block II.

ISRAELI ARMOUR VULNERABLE

Analysis of the recent Israeli-Hezbollah conflict in Lebanon has revealed that the latest advanced armour fitted to Israeli tanks failed to stop Hezbollah anti-tank weapons, with 45 per cent of Israeli Merkava tanks (Mk 2, 3 and 4 variants) hit by anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) penetrated.

In excess of 500 ATGMs of Russian and Iranian origin were fired in the first month of combat alone.

CUSTOMS GET AIR POWER

The Australian Customs Service is to receive a mid-size twin-engine helicopter for use in the rapid-response role against illegal fishing and smuggling across northern Australia. To be based at Gove in east Arnhem Land and held at 60 minutes readiness level, the helicopter will have the ability to transport six Customs officers and enable the firing of weapons from the cabin at surface targets.

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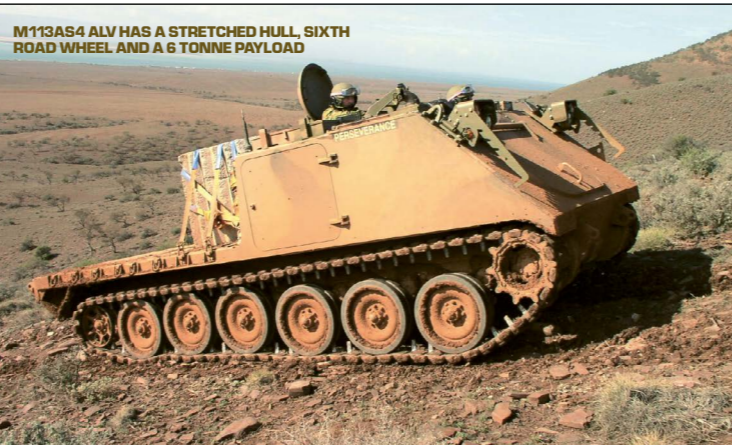
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BOLT-ON APPLIQUE ARMOUR



M113AS4 ALV HAS A STRETCHED HULL, SIXTH ROAD WHEEL AND A 6 TONNE PAYLOAD



DESPITE SEVERAL DEVELOPMENTAL SETBACKS, THE UPGRADED VEHICLES WILL BE MORE MOBILE, MORE RELIABLE AND BETTER PROTECTED



M113AS4 APC(S) IPV - THE NEW ONE-MAN TURRET IS AN ALL-AUSTRALIAN DESIGN

ARMY'S APC UPGRADE

BY MARK AZZOPARDI

M113AS3/AS4 VARIANTS

ROLE	DESIGNATION	NO.	PRINCIPLE MODIFICATIONS
Armoured Personnel Carrier	M113AS4 APC(S)	171	New turret and enhanced protection, mobility
Armoured Fitters	M113AS4 AF	38	New crane capacity and reach, capacity for powerpack
Armoured Mortar	M125AS3 AM	21	Enhanced protection and mobility
Armoured Ambulance	M577AS3 AA	15	New capability based on version of AF variant
Armoured Command Vehicle	M577AS3 ACV	43	New capability based on version of AF variant
Armoured Recovery Vehicle Light	M806AS4 ARVL	12	New winch capacity to suit upgraded fleet
Armoured Logistics Vehicle	M113AS4 ALV	50	New protected logistics capability with crew under armour

They say every dog has its day. In the case of the ubiquitous M113 tracked armoured vehicle family, that day must be the longest in history.

For the Australian Army, its relationship with the M113 began in the mid-1960s and continues to flourish today – more than 40 years after first deliveries. No one could ever accuse Army of not extracting maximum bang for the taxpayer buck out of its 'Gavins'.

Given their advancing age and the complete lack of any upgrades since their introduction, it is not hard to understand the rationale behind the long-running Project Land 106 M113 Upgrade. Engines, transmissions, suspension and electrics are utterly worn out, only kept working over

the years by Army mechanics and crew who know both their trade and vehicles inside out.

With the tactical lift function of B Squadron, 3rd/4th Cavalry Regiment now transitioning from the M113A1 to the Bushmaster 4x4 infantry mobility vehicle, where it will become more of a battlefield taxi service, the two principle users of the upgraded M113s – to be designated M113AS3 and M113AS4 – will be Army's two mechanised infantry battalions, 5RAR and 7RAR, by 2008. Allocation per battalion is likely to be around 80 to 90 M113AS3/AS4, with all vehicles delivered by 2010.

As part of the mechanised 1st Brigade, the upgraded vehicles will undertake much the same roles as they do now – namely the provision of protected mobility and intimate fire support for dismounted infantry. In essence, troops will still exit the vehicle to close with the enemy on foot, not fight from the vehicle; so the capability is not that of a true infantry fighting vehicle (IFV). Army is adamant that the M113AS3/AS4 will remain as armoured personnel carriers (APCs).

In view of the now well-entrenched Hardening and Networking the Army reform process, had the contract for the M113 Upgrade been signed two or three years later than it actually was (July 2002)

there is every likelihood that the vehicles would have come out of the factory with capabilities more closely resembling those of an IFV than an APC, especially in the area of armament. But that's another story, and one that's largely irrelevant now.

The acquisition schedule for Land 106 is such that there is no margin for further delays while the project is re-scoped and/or re-tendered to incorporate further upgrade modifications. Nor is there sufficient funding within the project's \$585 million budget to introduce anything other than what is already planned – a significantly upgraded APC.

When one accepts that the upgraded vehicles are not going to come out looking like IFVs, it becomes obvious that the Army will end up with a very capable APC and one vastly superior to the long-since vintage M113A1.

There is little doubt that the M113AS4 APC(S) variants – 'S' for stretched – could make good use of increased firepower to replace or augment the new Tenix-designed one-man 12.7mm heavy machinegun turret, but the venerable .50 cal is still a hard-hitting and highly capable weapon on the modern battlefield.

While the armament housed within is identical to that in the existing T-50 turret, retrofitted to vehicles during the Vietnam War, the new turret has numerous improvements over the old. Chief among these are the additional internal volume, better ergonomic design and ease of use, electric drives for traverse, better vision

under armour, automatic fume extraction and fire-inhibit zones.

The dual-mode electric drives enable single-handed operation in powered mode and a reversionary (back-up) mode using hand cranks.

The gun sight is also a step up in capability and features a magnified day channel and night channel through the commander's image-intensifier sight.

Of the 350 M113A1s to be upgraded, 171 will become M113AS4 APC(S) variants, each fitted with the new turret.

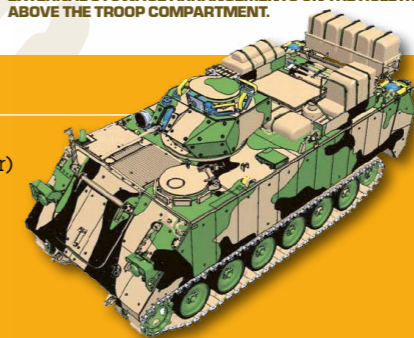
Like the other AS4 variants – the M113AS4 ALV (armoured logistics vehicle), M113AS4 AF (armoured fitters) and M806AS4 ARVL (armoured recovery vehicle light) – the APCs feature a 'stretched' hull and the addition of a sixth road wheel. Other variants (see panel)

retain the five road wheels, albeit with a modified hull.

The M113AS4 ALV is an interesting variant and intended to take the place of the old M548A 'Tilly' tracked load carrier. Essentially an armoured ute in overall design concept, the ALV provides all-round armoured protection for the two crew and an expansive rear deck for transporting palletised cargo and other bulk loads.

Designed, among other things, to take on the role of re-arming and refueling deployed formations, the rear cargo deck can handle a 6-tonne payload or a 10-foot ISO container. Other loads would include bulk water, rations, engineering equipment and vehicle powerpacks.

LATEST RENDERING OF THE M113AS4 APC(S) SHOWING TO GOOD EFFECT THE NEW ONE-MAN TURRET AND THE EXTERNAL STOWAGE ARRANGEMENTS ON THE HULL ROOF ABOVE THE TROOP COMPARTMENT.



M113AS4 APC(S) - SPECS

Crew:	2 (driver plus commander/gunner)
Troops Carried:	9
Kerb Weight:	11,600kg
Max Combat Weight:	18,000kg
Length:	6m
Width:	2.62m
Max Road Speed:	65km/h
Max Road Range:	500km
Engine:	DaimlerChrysler MTU 6V199TE 4-stroke, turbo-charged diesel
Power Output:	350hp
Transmission:	ZF LSG 1000R automatic with 6 forward and 2 reverse gears
Fuel Capacity:	360ltr
Armament:	1 x M2HB QCB 12.7mm HMG or 1 x MAG-58 7.62mm MG

Depending on mission needs, the cargo deck can be enclosed with side panels and a tailgate or canvas covers. Small rear doors provide access to an under-deck stowage compartment.

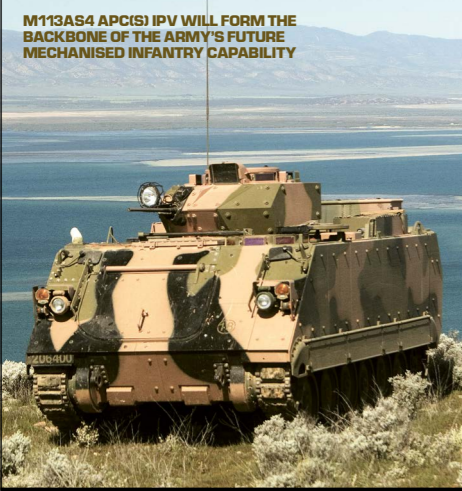
All seven variants will share the same powerpack, new suspension and reinforcement of the hull to improve protection against land-mine blast.

The APC and selected other variants feature passive applique armour on the hull and turret sides, front and rear. In combination with the original aluminium baseline hull, this extra bolt-on armour is understood to increase the protection level to that which can withstand 14.5mm fire. It may also keep at bay early generation RPGs.

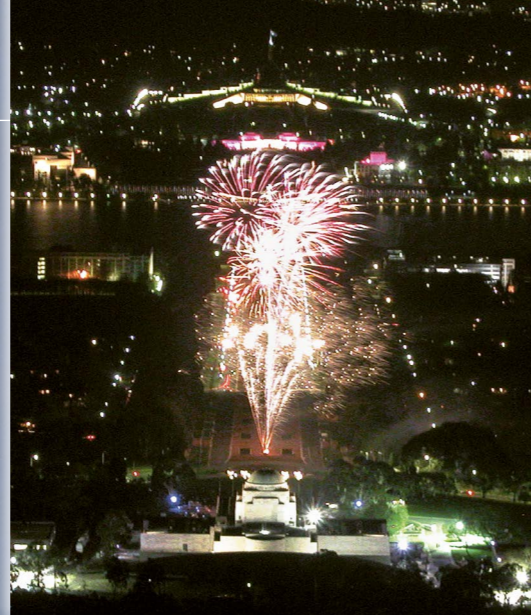
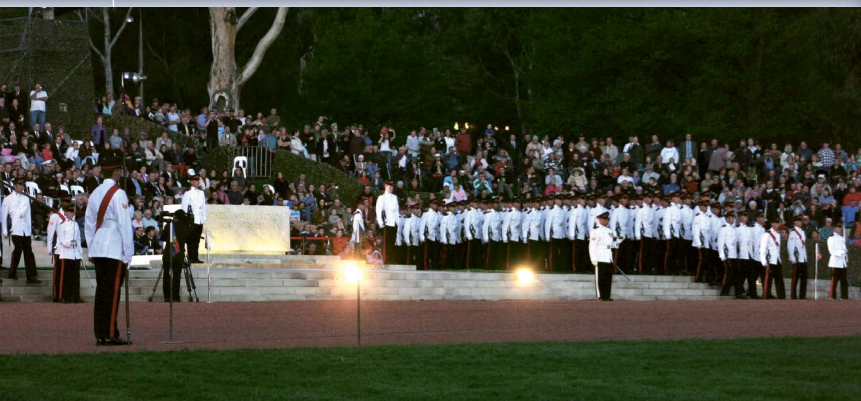
Another survivability feature is the external relocation of the two fuel tanks to improve safety for vehicle occupants. These are located on the APC variant on either side of the rear ramp.

Production and subsequent delivery of the first 16 initial production vehicles (IPV) has been delayed by problems with the parking brake, but it is hard to see this hiccup being a show-stopper and the expectation is that the issue will be resolved by about mid 2007. At press time the only two IPV variants to be given a public airing were the APC and ALV.

In bringing the M113 family up to speed with respect to replacing outdated and obsolete components and systems, Army has ensured it will be operating a world-class APC capability out to 2020.



M113AS4 APC(S) IPV WILL FORM THE BACKBONE OF THE ARMY'S FUTURE MECHANISED INFANTRY CAPABILITY

WORDS NATHANIEL SLATER
PHOTOS JOHN LAFFERTY

BEAT RETREAT

History lives at
the War Memorial

Beat Retreat is a visual and musical spectacular performed annually by the staff cadets of the Royal Military College, Duntroon – this year, ably accompanied by the Australian Army Band, Newcastle – and marks the culmination of months of arduous military training for Australia's future officers.

For the first time in the ceremony's 38-year history, the well-known and much anticipated annual spectacle was held at the Australian War Memorial because

the well-worn parade ground at RMC was undergoing extensive reconstruction.

Beat Retreat, a stylised ceremony that hails from the annals of history, was, as always, augmented by other elements of skill and precision, including an exciting Volley of Fire using the Australian service-issued F-88 Steyr.

A crowd favourite – Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture – was superbly rendered by the Army Band, Newcastle, supported by artillery fire provided by RMC's Wallaby Troop – cadets of 2nd Class

who will eventually graduate as artillery officers.

Although Beat Retreat is now purely a ceremonial performance, its origins are founded in the operational necessity and military routines of the past. As early as the 16th century, drums were used to communicate battlefield commands and call soldiers and field workers to return to the safety of the castle at sunset, while the firing of volleys was used to ward off the ghosts of dead enemies.



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SYDNEY AIRSHOW

PICS ADF

The Royal Australian Air Force celebrated its 85th birthday in style in October with a major airshow at Richmond, near Sydney.

At what was formerly known as Ham Common, now RAAF Base Richmond, aircraft new and old delighted large crowds with static and flying displays over two days.

The airshow featured a variety of exhibitions and ground displays to entertain the whole family, including the Air Force's two military bands, the Air Force hot-air balloon, police dogs and a variety of civilian exhibitors – including CONTACT magazine.

An exhilarating flying program incorporated some of Australia's finest vintage propeller-driven aircraft, through to the jets and helicopters in service with the ADF today – and tomorrow, with the giant C-17 Globemaster wowing spectators.

Over two days, huge crowds were entertained by a variety of aircraft from a Tiger Moth through to WWII Spitfire, Kittyhawk and Mustangs. These aircraft were enhanced by the first aircraft of the jet age, the Meteor, with a Vampire and a Canberra bomber rounding out the early jet age. The current breed of Air Force aircraft – C-130, PC-9, F-111 and F/A-18 Hornet – also blazed through the mostly cloudy but dry sky.

This year's spectacular was hailed by the RAAF as the most comprehensive air show seen in New South Wales since the 1988 Bicentennial spectacular.



SILENT ANZAC

AE2 was the first allied submarine to penetrate the Dardanelles as part of a successful campaign to paralyse enemy shipping in the Sea of Marmara. On April 30, 1915, she came under heavy attack from a Turkish torpedo boat and was severely damaged. Her crew were ordered to abandon the stricken boat and she was scuttled in 73 metres of water.

President of the SIA Rear Admiral Peter Briggs (Retired) welcomed the funding offer.

"All activities will be carried out with the agreement of both the Australian and Turkish governments and in accordance with the best practices for the management of shipwrecks," he said.

"Following the dived survey, SIA will prepare a report and facilitate a joint Turkish-Australian workshop to agree on options and make recommendations on the future management of the AE2."

An option to raise the submarine – possibly in time for the centenary ANZAC Day in 2015 – was mooted at the press conference in Canberra. Since all hands escaped the vessel before she sank, it is not considered a war-grave site, thus leaving this option open.

For options to sponsor this unique history project visit www.submarineinstitute.com

THE LAST TANGIBLE RELIC

WORDS BRIAN HARTIGAN
PICS AWM, ADF & BRIAN HARTIGAN

The Australian Government announced in November that it will provide the Submarine Institute of Australia (SIA) with \$368,500 in funding for a project aimed to protect, preserve and tell the story of the Australian submarine HMAS AE2, which played an important role during the Gallipoli campaign of 1915.

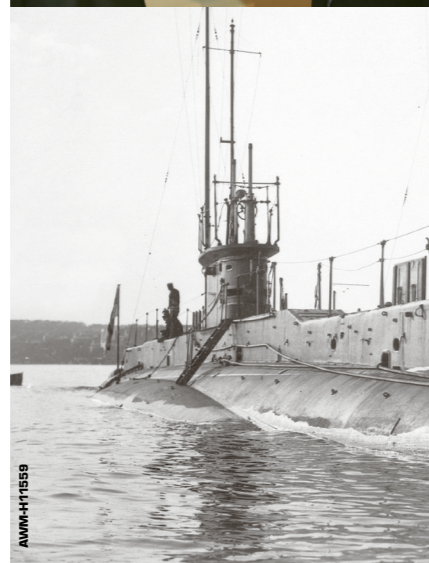
Minister for Veterans' Affairs Bruce Billson fittingly made the announcement at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, accompanied by officers of the Royal Australian Navy as well as representatives from the Turkish Embassy.

The funding, which represents half of that needed (the other half to be raised by public and corporate sponsorship), will allow the SIA to survey and protect the AE2 and to share the unique story of the submarine with the broader community.

"Data collected [during the underwater archeological survey] will assist with the development of a range of future management options for the submarine for consideration by the Australian and Turkish governments," Mr Billson said.

Use of the name "Silent ANZAC", to promote the work in relation to AE2, was also formally approved by the government. The word ANZAC is protected by law in Australia, and its use is strictly monitored.

BELOW: MINISTER BRUCE BILLSON DISCUSSES THE FATE OF AUSTRALIAN SUBMARINE AE2 WITH TURKISH AMBASSADOR MURAT ERSANCI AT THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL.



PHIL BELBIN, COURTESY AWM



BUDDHA'S TIME BOMB

WORDS KIWI MAC PICS SUPPLIED BY KIWI MAC

Members of the Kiwi Provincial Reconstruction Team, who returned home recently, thought they'd seen it all.

That was until the call came in to deal with a 500kg incendiary bomb found at the site of a 2000 year-old Buddha in the center of Bamyan city – and the bomb had to be removed and destroyed without causing further damage to the larger of the two giant sites the Taliban had tried to destroy in May 2001.

International Council on Monuments and Sites representative Edmund Melzl explained that workmen excavating the site had at first thought the bomb was a piece of scrap metal.

"It appeared to be a piece of rubbish, but we have had many finds of ordnance around these sites, and they knew to be wary. Over the past couple of years we've found grenades, mines and mortar rounds, but it quickly became apparent this was something more sinister," he said.

The task of removing the bomb fell to the New Zealand PRT Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team of Captain Paul Garrod and Air Force Armourer Corporal Jim Johns – with rent-a-crowd in tow, including CONTACT's Kiwi Mac, to provide unskilled labour.

Captain Garrod said one of the first priorities for the EOD team was to establish exactly what the item was.

"We weren't sure if it was a cluster bomb, which is highly explosive, or an incendiary bomb, as both appear pretty similar," he said.

"We had to do quite a bit of research before we could assess the best method of safely removing and then destroying it."

Eventually identified as being of Russian origin, there was some speculation about 'our bomb's' chequered past.

"It could've been dropped by the Russians fighting here against the Mujahadeen, failed to detonate and been recovered by them," said Johns.

"Then when the Taliban came, they probably buried it alongside other munitions in 2001 when they blew up the Buddhas, but it failed to go off and ended up buried underneath the rubble."

As we dug away in the midday sun, Sapper 'Crackers' McCracken reflected on the irony of a bunch of Kiwis so far from home, on an archaeological dig as old as these 6th century Buddhas.

"Who would've thought we'd be doing this mate – you can't fail but be moved by it," he said.

Removing the bomb was done by what Captain Garrod called a semi-remote method. "We used a block and tackle

to remove it from its original site," he said.

"Then we rigged up a second pull to change its direction and to get it into a prepared protective site for destruction."

While this was happening, Corporal Johns prepared two shaped charges designed to provide a controlled ignition of the bomb's contents.

While the rest of us took cover, Captain Garrod carried out the final pull of the bomb from the safety of an armoured Humvee, then prepped the charges for demolition.

Acting through an interpreter, he checked that all Afghan National Police-manned checkpoints gave the all clear for blasting – and fired the charges.

A loud explosion ripped through the air as a large, white mushroom cloud slowly rose above the Buddha site. And the only damage done – to the locals' midday peace.

Mr Melzl was ecstatic over the PRT's safe removal of the threat.

"I'm so happy with what has happened here today. Thanks to the Kiwis we can resume our work at the site and there has been no further damage done to the Buddha, which was our biggest fear," he said.

The eighth rotation of New Zealand personnel to Afghanistan returned home on 30 October, Kiwi Mac happy to be among them.



AUTHOR'S GOT THE BOMB!



LANCERS ON THE CHARGE

WORDS AND PICS
BRIAN HARTIGAN

ROLE AND EQUIPMENT CHANGE
INJECT NEW LIFE INTO AN OLD WARHORSE



Entrusted with the pride and traditions of one of Australia's oldest and most decorated military formations, the soldiers of the 1st/15th Royal New South Wales Lancers are today invigorated by a new role, a new training drive and increasing numbers of new recruits.



they were equipped with Matilda infantry support tanks in the jungles of New Guinea and conducted the largest amphibious armoured assault

in Australian history, with 33 tanks and two D8 tractors of the then 1st Australian Armoured Regiment (now RNSWL) at Balikpapan in support of 7 Div.

After WWII, the regiment was equipped with Centurion tanks until 1971. Then, in another major re-roling, it was converted to a reconnaissance role and equipped with the M113 family of light armoured vehicles.

Today, 1/15RNSWL is in the midst of a new transition to a light cavalry scout role, mounted in B-class vehicles, ideally suited to swift, mobile operations.

The new role and equipment seem tailor made for the reserve regiment. Gone are the headaches of maintaining the labour- and maintenance-intensive M113 tracked vehicles. Gone is the heartache of seeing rows of M113s, ramps down, soaking up all-too-valuable training and parade time with

maintenance. Gone is the logistic nightmare of mass vehicle uplifts for transport to very limited off-road training areas.

Instead, today's regiment is looking forward, gearing up and training for the arrival of a new fleet of self-deployable 4x4 Light Cavalry Patrol Vehicles and 6x6 Light Cavalry Mobility Vehicles.

Adjutant 1/15RNSWL Captain Tom Booler says the new role for the regiment is a welcome shift in the right direction and fits well with the aims of the new High Readiness Reserve.

"Under the HRR, the 1st/15th is committed, as a sponsorship arrangement, to work beside full-time soldiers, thereby offering our guys some real opportunities for operational deployments," he says, "and this is a real incentive for the guys to perform."

The light cav scout role is essentially an embedded mobile infantry-style force or 'assault troopers' within an armoured unit. But, with the carrying capacity and maneuverability of the light vehicles, this infantry-like role comes much more heavily armed – the standard suite of infantry-section weapons augmented by Mag58 and .50 cal machine guns, Carl Gustav 84mm anti-armour and a carrying capacity for copious ammunition.

The mission of the 1/15RNSWL is to raise, train and sustain 'real' capability bricks of up to cavalry-troop size in order to provide individual and small-group reinforcements and round-out to the Army's regular cavalry regiments. Their role is to locate the enemy through the conduct of limited offensive, defensive, reconnaissance, surveillance and security operations that enable a supported commander to maneuver his force with enhanced security and to preserve combat power until it can be employed decisively.

The light cav scouts themselves are Royal

Tracing its roots back to the Sydney Light Horse, a volunteer cavalry troop raised in 1885, today's 1/15RNSWL is riding a new wave of community interest on the back of a redefining of its role and a return to unit-based recruiting.

Young men from both urban and rural backgrounds across New South Wales are as strongly drawn to part-time, volunteer military service today as they have been across history. In pre-federation days, units such as the Sydney Light Horse sprang simply from young men's desire to give volunteer service and, perhaps, to gain a little stature and respect in their communities. These units were neither sponsored nor directed by the government of the day, but were certainly welcomed, admired and respected by the communities they swore to serve and protect.

In 1899, members of the Sydney Light Horse, who had been training in England, stopped off for supplies in South Africa on their way home – and became the first colonial troops to give active service in the Boer War. Thus began a long and proud history of active military service that sees today's formation carry 21 Battle Honours on parade.

Through the years, the units of today's regiment have amalgamated, linked, succeeded and been re-rolled many times to suit the needs, technology and political climate of the day. During WWI, they fought at Gallipoli and later in Sinai and Palestine as part of the Desert Mounted Corps. The leather saddles of the original establishment were traded in 1936 for mechanical mounts as the unit became a mechanised machinegun regiment. In 1942,



Australian Armoured Corps soldiers who operate as members of a mounted troop and on dismounted patrols. They conduct reconnaissance, surveillance, offensive, security, peacekeeping and support operations using specialist equipment and a range of weapon systems.

Today's 1/15RNSWL is headquartered in the uniquely historic Parramatta Barracks, west of Sydney, with sub units at Holsworthy and Goulburn. It attracts members from a catchment as wide as Bathurst to Canberra and the greater Sydney area.

One young soldier I met on a recent field trip with the regiment, who hails from Canberra, joined the Goulburn-based B Squadron, 1/15RNSWL because, he says, the cav-scout role seemed a lot more interesting than anything on offer in any of the Canberra-based reserve units.

Two lance corporals I spoke to – Jim and Jason – were both ex infantry and joined the cavalry regiment because they “were sick of walking”. Both had chosen Army Reserve to fill their spare time because they enjoyed the challenge, enjoyed hanging out with like-minded blokes – “and the extra money comes in handy”.

Neither of these two guys were interested in joining the full-time Regular Army, mainly because the pay cut from their civvie jobs would be too great, but they did point out that the biggest loss of men from the reserve unit seemed to be through blokes signing up full time.

“The ones that transfer to the ARA usually go after about 12 to 24 months,” Jason says. “Reserves gives them a taste for what military service is like and they want more of it.”

“The feedback we’ve got from those guys is that they love it – and most of them have had a tour of East Timor or somewhere since they left us.”

After completing 28 days of basic recruit training at Kapooka, near Wagga Wagga, cavalry troopers must then undertake two blocks of 16-day light cavalry scout courses to become fully qualified. These courses consist of weapon and communications phases followed by dismounted infantry-style training. They are conducted at local level as part of the unit's annual training program. After a period of service as a cav scout and/or driver in a cavalry regiment, qualified and experienced troopers may be nominated for further training as patrol commanders and complete one of four prerequisite courses for promotion to corporal.

During the closing stages of a recent Patrol Commander's Course conducted by 1/15RNSWL at Majura Range in the ACT, I witnessed a healthy level of enthusiasm at all levels for the course and for the new regimental role. Participants on the course certainly seemed to engage in the physical and mental challenges of command responsibility with gusto; instructors expressed satisfaction with the standard of potential leaders about to graduate; and support staff were exuberant with enthusiasm for their own future and that of the regiment they love.

Sergeant Vince Donlon, who has served for 40 years in the army reserve, 27 of those at 1st/15th, is a passionate advocate for the unit and its future and puts much of his effort into recruiting fresh bodies to swell the ranks.

“Most kids you meet who are enthusiastic or inquisitive about the army

want to be infantry,” he says, “but many of them show a hell of a lot of interest in the cav-scout role when it is explained to them.”

“Cav scouts are not infantry, but they are not armour either. I reckon they sit just nicely between the infantry role and commandos.

“The mobility aspect of the job also suits the mindset of today's kids, too – their preference towards driving everywhere over walking.”

Recruiting at 1/15RNSWL is once again a unit-based activity (after responsibility was assumed solely by Defence Force Recruiting for some years). From a low of just two new recruits three years ago, the unit saw 47 new faces through the gates last year and hopes to build on that resurgence in the current financial year.

“It's just my personal gut feeling, but I think the return to unit-based recruiting plus the shortened recruit course at Kapooka and the new cav-scout role for the regiment have a lot to do with the new interest in the regiment,” Sergeant Donlon says.

While many in the regiment and wider may express a sadness in seeing the M113 removed from reserve units, those who have accepted the inevitable have identified the advantages of the situation and are happy to embrace the future.

Sergeant Donlon says he's very excited about the regiment's new role.

“I firmly believe soldiers were frustrated by getting bogged down in complicated equipment, training and maintenance. I think they'd much prefer to be learning new things, get qualified a lot faster and perform meaningful tasks.

“With the 1st/15th Royal New South Wales Lancers, they now can.”



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FIGHTING IN SECRET

AUSSIE SOLDIERS
SURVIVE A YEAR
AT THE TRIGGER

WORDS BRIAN HARTIGAN PICS ADF

Riding high on a bar stool, sharing a cold beer with some friends in the media/marketing section of a non-defence department recently – many of whom are astute media watchers – I was told, in all seriousness, that “our soldiers in Afghanistan are sitting on a protected base, flying the flag for politics, far from the dangers of any real fighting. Aren’t they?”

AUSTRALIAN SPECIAL FORCES TASK GROUP OPERATION SLIPPER, AFGHANISTAN	
Days deployed	395
Days on patrol outside secure base	306
Number of patrols or missions	100+
Number of fights with the enemy	139
Offensive air-support missions called in	217
Australians Killed in Action	0
Australians Wounded in Action	11

I was aghast. Not knowing much of any great detail myself, I argued that there had, to that time, been at least two Medals for Gallantry awarded, and those things did not come in cornflakes packets. Even the (somewhat sanitised and detail-depleted) citations for these medals made it pretty clear that at least some of our boys had seen some serious action.

Today, thankfully, I can go back to those friends and, with the weight of fact, point out the gross error of their assumptions.

Not that it was their fault, of course. The level and detail of media coverage over the past year has been very scant. Nor can we blame the media for this – though blame is probably not the right word to use under the circumstances.

Our boys were in a very rough part of the world, fighting against some very serious and experienced opposition. Their lives literally depended on keeping their exact location, their movements, their methods of operation – and their successes – secret.

Even now, when they have been relieved of the task, the full extent of their exploits

cannot be revealed. Why? Because they may be asked to go back and do it again – for the third time.

Conceding that Australians have a right to know how our soldiers perform on operations, Chief of Defence Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston convened a press conference in Canberra in September, following the end of our Special Forces’ commitment in Afghanistan. He also conceded that our soldiers had been through an experience which in terms of prolonged battlefield stress and combat intensity was unlike any encountered by Australians for more than 30 years.

“Now that they are home and safe, their brave deeds and the success of their operations should be told. I have absolutely no doubt you will leave here today very impressed with what they were able to achieve in Afghanistan,” he said.

“Their story is an inspirational tale of courage, resilience and exceptional skill involving a determined and dangerous adversary in an environment that is both harsh and unforgiving.”

However, it was the soldiers’ commander, Major General Mike Hindmarsh who put

detail on the bones of their story.

“Afghanistan is a physically unforgiving and confronting country.

“The province of Oruzgan, in which the task group operated, is dominated by dramatic natural features that restrict movement, observation and communications, where extremes of temperature and wild climatic conditions, such as electrical and windstorms are characteristic.

“In summer, temperatures routinely soar above 50 degrees Celsius, while in winter they plummet to well below zero, with snow falling regularly, and where anything exposed to the elements freezes.

“The geography itself creates an environment tailor made for guerrilla warfare and Oruzgan, nestled as it is against the southern edge of the central Afghanistan mountain spine, is one of the more remote and physically difficult regions, which makes it very attractive as a Taliban sanctuary area – an area where traditionally the Taliban have felt relatively safe from Coalition interdiction.

“It was into these sanctuaries that our forces launched themselves in September



RARELY A DAY WENT BY
WHERE THERE WAS NOT
SOME SORT OF CONTACT
WITH THE ENEMY





THE VEHICLES, ON THE OTHER HAND, WERE PEPPERED WITH BULLET AND FRAGMENTATION HOLES

last year. Their mission was to disrupt the adversaries' freedom to base within these areas, thereby undermining their overall insurgency capability across Afghanistan. This was a very meaningful task, striking as it did, at the heart of the Taliban.

"It also represented a high-risk operation and it's not surprising that the Taliban reacted extremely aggressively to our arrival in their backyard. It was akin to poking an ant bed with a stick.

"As severe as the Afghanistan environment can be, it remains home to an adversary who is tough, resolute, agile and more dangerous than anything Australian Special Forces have encountered at least since the Vietnam War. The enemy we faced included hard-core Taliban leadership and their supporters, local militants intent on retaining power and criminal groups involved in protecting Afghanistan's prolific drug industry.

"These groups were so intertwined as to be virtually indistinguishable and were therefore loosely termed as the Anti-Coalition Militia or the ACM.

"Throughout the Special Forces Task Group's deployment, the ACM retained the ability to mass a large number of fighters in a very short period. They also maintained a command and control structure that allowed senior leadership to coordinate attacks from afar on Coalition Forces and government officials.

"They have a structured logistical chain which readily supplies fighters with a steady flow of money and weaponry from both within and beyond Afghanistan's borders.

"Our adversary was armed with every conceivable weapon – the legacy of years of conflict. Most equipment was of Russian origin, but much was also bought from the

bourgeoning arms bazaars that are prolific throughout central Asia.

"The image you may have of the rugged mountain fighter with his baggy pants, beard and traditional headdress taking on the might of the Soviet Army in the '80s was not too different from that portrayed by the ACM today. They are tough and courageous fighters.

"Thankfully, the Coalition has faced far fewer surface-to-air missiles than the Russians did. What has become far more prolific, however, is the now-ubiquitous rocket-propelled grenade – the RPG. This relatively cheap, unsophisticated weapon system caused most of the casualties suffered by the Task Group during this deployment. In one incident during the early phase of the commitment in which two Special Forces members were awarded the medal for gallantry, SAS patrols were engaged from all sides by synchronised volley fire from multiple RPG grenadiers over a number of hours.

"Throughout the tour, it was common practice for the ACM to respond to our presence with well-placed RPG attacks, supported by heavy machineguns, mortars and recoilless rifles and, of course, large volumes of small-arms fire.

"The battle I just referred to involved all of that with a relatively small SAS force, virtually surrounded for upwards of six hours by a couple of hundred fighters, hell-bent on scoring an early and decisive victory over the Australians.

"As it turned out, the ACM suffered heavily in that engagement, thanks to a combination of the superior and more disciplined combat skills of our soldiers, together with timely offensive air support. This event and its outcome set the tone for

the rest of the deployment, with the ACM periodically seizing opportunities to quickly mass and attack our forces, invariably at great cost to themselves.

"Our soldiers were constantly in danger wherever they went and rarely a day went by where there was not some sort of contact with the enemy.

"Constant vigilance and attention to detail, along with the highly disciplined application of basic field-craft and fighting skills was imperative for survival.

"Let me give you some facts. Of the 395 days the Special Forces Task Group was deployed, Australian Forces were in the field, in harms way and remote from their secure operating base for some 306 of those days. During that time they conducted more than 100 patrols or missions of different sizes, configurations and durations. Some were combined with Coalition Forces from as many as five different nations. The Special Forces Task Group was involved in 139 combat incidents with the enemy. These incidents ranged from skirmishes with small groups of ACM to pitched battles involving hundreds of fighters over a number of hours, often so intense that hasty aerial ammunition re-supplies were necessary. The task group, over the course of the 12 months, employed more than 217 offensive air support missions that provided direct fire support to the troops when they were in contact with the enemy.

"In retrospect, you could say we are extremely fortunate not to have suffered any fatalities over the course of the deployment. We had a total of 11 wounded in action – a combination of gunshot and fragmentation wounds. All, I am happy to say, are fine now and continue to serve within my command.

"I would say, however, and with some



pride, that while there is always luck involved in war fighting, I think the quality and expertise of the soldiers, their superb fitness and levels of training, their controlled aggression, their outstanding teamwork and the world-class equipment at their disposal – along with the exceptional support they received from Coalition air assets – had much to do with the fact that they all came home to us alive.

"Let me give you some more details about the deployment itself and the forces involved. As you know, the first Special Forces elements deployed from Perth and Sydney in late August last year, directly into their base area adjacent to the town of Tarin Kowt, within Oruzgan Province. Our operating base was called Camp Russell, named in honour of Sergeant Andrew Russell who was killed in a mine incident during the previous SAS deployment to Afghanistan in 2002.

"The deployment occurred on the cusp of a crucial election in Afghanistan, which was a key step in the development of the country's fledgling democratic process. Accordingly, while their mates were busy establishing the base camp at Tarin Kowt from scratch, two large Special Forces' patrols ventured out, virtually immediately after arrival in country, to provide overwatch on several remote polling locations in the north of the area of operations, some 70km from their base and from safety. Thus, in less than two months from Government directions to deploy, we had troops in country and postured for combat in one of the most remote and toughest areas of Afghanistan.

"Our Special Forces Task Group consisted of 200, and included soldiers from the Special Air Service Regiment [SASR or SAS], the Fourth Battalion Royal Australian Regiment Commando [4RAR (Cdo)], the Incident Response Regiment [IRR] and a myriad of communications, intelligence, logistics support, administration and liaison staff from across Special Operations Command and the wider Australian Defence Force.

"It was also enhanced by the introduction in March this year of an Australian CH47 helicopter detachment working with the Coalition Aviation Support Regime. It remains in theatre now supporting a reconstruction taskforce.

"The SAS elements provided the classic long-range clandestine surveillance and reconnaissance function using their inherent mobility, firepower and excellent field craft. These patrols pushed deep into the northern ACM sanctuary areas where they remained independently for extended periods.

"Initially, the patrols focused upon familiarising themselves with their areas of

operation and gathering information on enemy movements, routine and intent.

"Launching intermittently from safe bases was not the answer. Existing and patrolling in depth, over lengthy periods – and I'm talking about weeks – smack in the centre of the ACM havens, was a tactic the SAS employed that the enemy did not expect. It did have the desired effect of unsettling them psychologically and undermining their ability to function with their normal expected impunity in these areas.

"While the ACM had an excellent early warning network, the SAS with its every increasing familiarity with the environment and displaying characteristic audaciousness and skill were regularly able to penetrate to attack Taliban leadership. This heralded a second phase for the deployment, with the task group actively targeting, to good effect, key ACM leaders in carefully planned and coordinated direct-action operations involving both SAS and the commandos.

"A good example of the commandos' outstanding war-fighting skills occurred during the latter stages of the deployment. As a precursor to a large offensive operation to clear an ACM enclave just north of Tarin Kowt, the Special Forces Task Group coordinated and participated in a pre-planned raid against an important ACM leader. The Australian commandos and Australian CH47 helicopters ultimately played a pivotal role in ensuring the mission did not end in complete disaster – which, at one stage, appeared likely.

"The Australian helicopters conducted the incursion directly onto the target of the assault force, which was provided by another Coalition partner. Shortly after landing, and having managed to successfully conduct the search and clearance of the compound,

the assault force began receiving extremely heavy fire from all directions, took casualties and were under threat of being overwhelmed.

"The commandos, located nearby in vehicles as a quick reaction force, responded and fought their way to a blocking position to support the extraction of the assault force, providing a corridor for them to exfiltrate safely to the helicopter landing zone, which the commandos had also secured.

"When the assault force, by now carrying a number of dead and wounded, finally reached the landing zone, the Australian CH47s landed in a maelstrom of enemy fire, picked them up and departed, leaving the commandos to fight their way out on the ground. Very quickly, they were engulfed in a series of ferocious running battles through a swarm of ACM that threatened to overwhelm them. At one stage they had to circle their vehicles and resist fierce close-quarter attacks from all directions for up to an hour. Displaying magnificent teamwork, and potent fighting skills, the small force eventually broke out and fought their way through to safety, ultimately linking with an SAS patrol and returning to base, intact.

"They assessed that they were in close combat with the enemy for more than four hours. It is quite extraordinary that, apart from a number of concussions from exploding RPG rounds and minor shrapnel injuries, there were no casualties. The vehicles, on the other hand, were peppered with bullet and fragmentation holes.

"This operation preceded a large multi-national offensive operation led and coordinated by the Australian task group to clear a large ACM enclave just to the north of Tarin Kowt in a place called the Chora Valley. This enemy sanctuary area, only 15km from Camp Russell, had resisted all Coalition efforts to remove it, and was looming as an increasing threat to Tarin Kowt itself. The Coalition force comprised in excess of 500 soldiers from six different nations, all led by the Australian commander on the ground. It included fixed- and rotary-wing support, including the Australian CH47s.

"Throughout a 10-day period of intense combat, members of the SAS, the commandos and our Coalition partners systematically fought through and cleared the valley of hundreds of ACM fighters through a series of synchronised and closely coordinated operations. Despite meeting extremely stiff resistance, the overall operation was a resounding success, with the ACM taking such heavy casualties that the remnants eventually fled the valley.

"I believe the task group has been able to set the conditions under which the Australian Reconstruction Task Force will have the best possible chance of conducting successful operations. Ultimately, our success can be measured by the difference that has been made to the people of the Chora



and Tarin Kowt districts – areas where only recently the task group was fighting pitched battles with the ACM, and where the RTF intends to operate. People in these districts now openly welcome the Coalition and express their gratitude for the removal of the ACM.

"Was the overall Special Forces Task Group deployment a success? Did it achieve the objective of disrupting the ACM's ability to operate within its sanctuaries? I would say emphatically, yes. Oruzgan is a big province, and we could not hope to cover the entire area simultaneously, with the troops we had at our disposal. But we did go where we felt the key and most threatening ACM enclaves

were, and the task group was relentless in maintaining the pressure in these areas to good effect. Its ability to operate independently and remote from friendly ground forces for long periods, coupled with the outstanding fieldcraft and combat skills of our soldiers, enabled it to constantly keep the ACM off balance in their own backyard. Although difficult to quantify, the indirect effect of this was to disrupt the Taliban's overall capacity to prosecute insurgence operations elsewhere.

"I think the Australian public can be very proud – as I am – of the performance of their Special Forces troops in Afghanistan. They have made a very meaningful contribution to the future stability and security of that country. And in doing so, they have once again exhibited that unique mixture of Aussie determination, practicality and compassion which has traditionally set the Aussie Digger apart. They have done us all proud. But most importantly, they have helped Afghanistan."

Australia's Special Forces Task Group is now back in Australia for a well-earned break. Over the past few years, and particularly the past 12 months, they have been very heavily committed on Australian, regional and global security missions. Apart from Afghanistan, they've been heavily committed in East Timor and at the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne and, through all of that, maintained two on-line, anti-terrorist tactical assault groups – one on the east coast and one on the west.

As Air Chief Marshal Houston put it, they are a finite resource, their operational tempo has been very heavy and there is a need to give them a break and give them a rest.

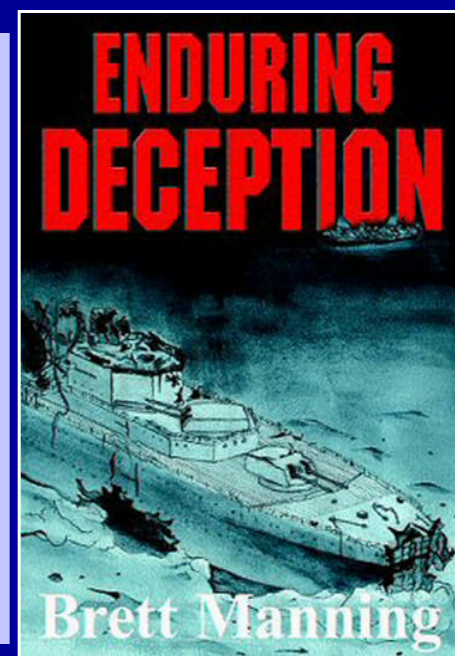
But, he added, "it's not beyond the realms of possibility that, sometime in the future, the government might decide to send them back again [to Afghanistan], but at this point, they need a rest because we've asked a hell of a lot of a very eager, enthusiastic and highly skilful group of people."

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Gary Warner
Geraldton Guardian Newspaper - 16 March 2005

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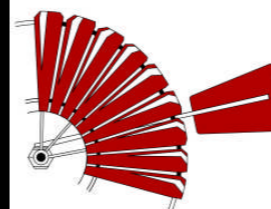
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A NEW DAWN

DUAL BATTLEFRONTS IN THE MEAO

WORDS AND PICS BRIAN HARTIGAN

As the sun begins its long, slow climb over the high peaks of the Hindu Kush mountains in Afghanistan, and marches relentlessly westward across the cradle of civilisation, a new and dangerous day in the lives of our diggers on operations has already begun.

Over the next few issues, CONTACT will take you into the heart of both Operations Slipper and Catalyst to see our service men and women in action. We start, this issue, in Afghanistan, then follow the sun westward to Iraq.



MAKE NO MISTAKE – WARFIGHTING IN SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN IS FAR FROM FINISHED

Following a time-worn pattern, major conflicts (or natural disasters) are inevitably followed by a usually much longer period of healing and reconstruction. In the case of Afghanistan, however, the reconstruction phase has started early – even before the fighting has ended.

Torn by 29 years of all-but continuous warfighting, coupled with recent devastating drought, the countryside and the people of Afghanistan are weary and desperate for assistance.

For the people of Tarin Kowt in the southern Oruzgan province of Afghanistan and other regions, help could not have come too early. But for those charged with the responsibility of rebuilding a seriously damaged community, the inherent challenges of the task are complicated all the more by the need to balance personal safety against mission goals and expectations.

Those expectations – apart from the obvious rebuilding of public infrastructure, institutions and governance frameworks – includes the expectation of the Australian public, and the fervent hope of the Australian government, that our soldiers and airmen will all come home safe and well.

And therein lies a key dilemma. Our Special Forces Task Group had dominated the same area of operations over the previous 13 months with aggressive, seek-and-destroy patrols that kept the enemy on the back foot (see story starting page 32). But the over-stretched and over-worked SFTG was, in the eyes of our government, in need of a rest and in September/October withdrawn from theatre while the war effectively still raged. The danger now is that replacing the SFTG's aggressive tactics with the purely defensive, albeit, capable, tactics of a large, well armed and well equipped reconstruction-focused task force, the enemy may find the time and the wherewithal to regroup and resume large-scale operations.

Dutch contingent commander Colonel Theo Vlaugels, an

infantry officer, agrees that the enemy is both showing signs of reorganising and flexing their muscles in what he says is probably a push to get them into better position for a spring offensive.

"In this country, though, it is very important to show that you are the strongest guy on the field – and we are strong enough," he says.

"We are strong, but we will only use necessary force."

As a reasonably keen observer of military affairs, I was surprised by what I saw in Afghanistan. A fleet of 12 Apache gunships, long-range Panzer Howitzer 155mm self-propelled artillery and other very heavy-duty defences piqued my surprise a little – especially given that this is, after all, billed as an engineer-based reconstruction mission. But then, the sight of two A-10 tank killers circling an area barely outside the camp's wire for 30 minutes before breakfast, and anecdotes of missions involving B1 bombers and Spectre gunships, set me to asking some deeper questions.

Make no mistake – warfighting in southern Afghanistan is far from finished. This is not a peacekeeping mission after the fashion Australia has become used to over recent years. There should be no doubt that our soldiers on the ground in Afghanistan are engaged, or could be engaged in, direct action against well-armed and determined enemy combatants who patrol the hills and valleys in groups of 100 or more.

As the Aussie commander on the ground, Lieutenant Colonel Mick Ryan, puts it, "This is a counter-insurgency operation, not peacekeeping. But it is intelligence led with the right balance of kinetic and non-kinetic effects."

"That means we balance between proactive defence, robust response to attack and employment of effective fire on the one hand, versus quality interaction with the population and the government,

collaboration with our Dutch partners and choosing the right engineering projects in the right place at the right time," he says.

"But, we are facing a very dangerous enemy here, and there are security challenges, but we are well equipped to deal with that."

In the end, Lieutenant Colonel Ryan is confident that the mission will be a success because it is designed to "kick the Taliban where it hurts most" – by winning over the support of the people. To that end, he says, they aim to provide the people with the things they want, not what the foreigners think they want.

"We meet regularly with local engineers and planners, develop personal relationships with them and find out what exactly they need in the town."

"The local town planner is an intelligent, very-well educated man, who is very keen to see the lot of his people improved."

While the Aussies' mission is clear, they are nonetheless working in austere conditions and a very hostile environment. Far from playing down the conditions or the danger, however, Lieutenant Colonel Ryan says it is important that the Australian people can see what their sons and daughters are doing.

While I was 'promised' some indirect rocket or mortar attacks during my visit to Tarin Kowt, I was not so 'lucky'. Nonetheless, the camp had been attacked at least twice in the preceding week. Just days after I left (but still in the MEAO) another incident not far from the base saw 70 suspected militants killed and a number of friendlies wounded. Two days later, in neighbouring Zabul province, one NATO soldier was killed in a six-hour battle that left about 55 militants dead and 20 more wounded.

While body counts are played down by our politicians and military leaders, and may well be a poor indicator of success or progress, they do point to the fact that large numbers of armed and dedicated militant fighters still patrol – if not control – the mountains, towns and villages in the same areas that our engineers are doing their duty.

During my visit, I was taken on a 'normal' Australian patrol that gave some indication of the seriousness of the mission in Tarin Kowt. The patrol involved a simple visit to the local hospital to deliver some medical aid packages and to take some last-minute measurements before a refurbishment and expansion of facilities could commence. Under any other circumstances, this would involve no more than the few medical staff, tradesmen and interpreters required for the task – but in Tarin Kowt it was a military excursion of significance 'outside the wire'.

More than 60 heavily-armed personnel and a dozen vehicles, including ASLAVs and Bushmasters were involved. While it may be safe to assume that the show of strength was a little heavier than normal because of the media presence, there was no doubt that any venture outside the wire is cause for serious military planning.

Notwithstanding the clear and present danger to our soldiers on the ground in Afghanistan, it is fair to say that our military personnel are well equipped, well trained and more than capable of handling themselves in a scrap. Naturally, the soldiers' training and preparedness sees them well placed to handle allcomers, while the capability of their Bushmaster and ASLAV fleets are beyond reproach.

I am happy to report that they are also in good health and morale is high – save for a few 'minor' complaints.

The Australian contingent (referred to as the Reconstruction Task Force (RTF)) consists of more than 400 mostly army personnel working as part of the Dutch-led Provincial Reconstruction Team, itself part of a wider NATO International Security Assistance Force.

1st RTF is a mix of engineers and security personnel deployed for up to two years to work on reconstruction and community-

based projects. The core of contingent members are drawn from the Darwin area – combat engineers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians and plant operators from 1st Combat Engineer Regiment (1CER). Security is provided by Brisbane-based motorised infantry of the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR), equipped with Bushmaster vehicles, and 5th/7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (5/7RAR). The heavier armour of Darwin-based 2nd Cavalry Regiment with its ASLAVs will add much-needed weight to the firepower of the force. Other command, logistics and support elements have also come from the Darwin based 1st Brigade.

Operating under the umbrella of the Dutch mission, the Australian contingent share a huge, forward operating base at Tarin Kowt. Aptly named Kamp Holland, this is home away from home for the Aussies on their standard six-month rotations. The base, at 1400m (4600ft) above sea level, sits roughly in the centre of a massive, natural amphitheatre surrounded on all sides by mountains, soaring to more than 4000m. This amphitheatre, of about 60km diameter also contains the town of Tarin Kowt – a population centre of about 7000 – and numerous small hamlets and homesteads,





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some very recently built within close range of Kamp Holland's outer perimeter.

The base is a sprawling, dusty affair contained within thick, heavy walls of Hesco fencing. Hesco is a relatively new design, invented – word has it – by a British soldier sick of filling sandbags. It is essentially a heavy steel-mesh basket with cloth lining that is filled in a few minutes by a front loader, skid-steer or other mechanical means, making a bullet-proof barrier about 1.5m tall and about as thick. Make the wall two baskets thick and add another single layer on top, pyramid-like, and you have a ready-made fortress, complete with parapets. Imagine, if you can, trying to complete the same task, to anywhere close to the same effectiveness, with hand-filled sandbags – especially given that the outer perimeter (not counting the addition of several inner fortifications and local enclosures) is somewhere in excess of 10km long.

Inside the base is home to the Dutch task force, it's supporting Aussie contingent and a smattering of other coalition representatives.

Life in Kamp Holland – in relatively early stages of development when I visited in mid October – feels very much like 'groundhog day'. Working days start early, with a shower, shave (for the males) and basic breakfast (more on that later), before setting to the myriad jobs relevant to each trade or mustering. Also, of course, doing one's share of guard duties at various posts during the day – and night. And, with work progressing seven days a week – only some people benefiting from 'reduced activity' on Sunday – having no 'weekend' only adds to the sameness of each day. One young digger almost missed his scheduled 3pm guard duty one Thursday because his mind's clock was still ticking through Monday morning.

Kamp Holland itself is essentially a dust-covered, working military base-cum-construction site.

First, the dust is worth describing. It is of the finest, silkiest texture imaginable – more fine than good-old Aussie bulldust – so fine it feels like a silky lubricant under foot. While I witnessed the camp at its driest, it doesn't take a huge leap of imagination to envisage

the quagmire-to-come when, or if, rain is added to the mix.

Speaking of weather – summer temperatures frequently rise above 50 degrees centigrade, while winter's mercury can drop below the -20C mark. I, however, was more than happy to see it in a very tolerable autumn phase.

Base accommodation and working facilities are impressive. While construction – or rather, instillation – of our soldiers' accommodation blocks was not yet complete, when they are finished and occupied, Aussie mums and dads can rest assured that while their boys and girls are tucked up in bed at night, any amount of rocketing or shelling will barely disturb their sleep, let alone do them any physical damage whatsoever.

Called Feldlagers, they are essentially armour-plated shipping containers – further protected by yet more Hesco walls. These modular, air-conditioned accommodation units can protect against large-calibre ammunitions and explosions, and they can be used for just about anything – living, working, recreational, messing or medical facilities. If the base receives rocket or mortar attacks while our soldiers are enjoying a Dutch-prepared meal in the mess, for example, at the press of one button the whole facility is sealed tight and the soldiers simply remain inside until the all clear is given.

The mess – which opened the day I left – is constructed from about 50 or so Feldlagers bolted together (with numerous, seriously large bolts), with internal walls removed to make one, large, open-plan room. Recreation rooms (similarly constructed) are lavishly appointed and equipped with lounges, TVs, Internet computers, books, dart boards, pool tables and other games etc, to standards far-and-away better than most home-based soldiers' clubs I've seen.

I mentioned both food and morale earlier and, as is often the case, the two are inextricably related. But before I get into the food, though, two other issues I found that were affecting soldiers' morale were cameras and medals.

Our soldiers in Tarin Kowt are banned from using personal cameras, "for security reasons". This, I found, was the number one issue affecting morale across the board. While the soldiers ostensibly have access to an official Defence PR photographer, this over-stretched member cannot hope to cover all photographic requests. And, in the mean time, diggers watch moment after historical moment pass them by without being recorded. It was suggested by some that if they were allowed to take photos, they would be happy to submit them to a central collection point for vetting and clearance. In the interests of soldier morale and the recording of history, CONTACT fully supports this proposal and encourages Defence to consider it before it's too late.

Medals are always a contentious issue on operations. While our soldiers are entitled to the Australian Active Service Medal and a specific campaign medal, they have also been offered a NATO medal. However, Honours and Awards back in Canberra has decreed that while our soldiers may accept this medal, they may not wear it. Representations are afoot to rectify, or at least clarify this contentious issue – especially in light of precedences having



SUMMER TEMPERATURES FREQUENTLY RISE ABOVE 50 DEGREES CENTIGRADE, WHILE WINTER'S MERCURY CAN DROP BELOW THE -20C MARK





been set in other conflicts – but, at time of writing, our soldiers in Tarin Kowt watch as their Dutch brothers get the medal pinned to their chests on parade while the Aussies put out their hands to receive the medal that then goes in the deep dark recesses of trouser pockets.

But, back to the menu – at Tarin Kowt, catering is provided to the Australians on a contract basis by the Dutch who lay on four sittings a day at their well-appointed armour-plated mess. Trouble is, Dutch pallets and tummy sizes seem to differ slightly from Aussie ones. Being, perhaps, a more multi-culturally diverse society in Australia, our guys are more used to a wider range of tastes, textures and flavours and are spoilt for choice on the home front. The Dutch, on the other hand, seem to prefer simpler tastes, smaller portions and the same-old same-old day in and day out – adding to the sense of ground-hog day.

Morale in this regard is especially low for the Aussies first thing in the morning when the Dutch are satisfied by a light, cereal-based breakfast, while the Aussies hang out for a few slices of fatty bacon and a couple of fried eggs. As at time of writing, however, I can report that the contingent catering officer is working very hard, through fair means and foul, to rectify this shortcoming.

Culinary differences aside, though, every Aussie I asked said they loved working with their Dutch counterparts. Why? “Because they are exactly like us – if anything, they are even more laid back – and always up for a laugh. They are also very professional in what they do and there’s no bullshit about them.”

Not all of the work in Afghanistan is left to the foreigners, however. The Afghan National Army (ANA) is included in most missions, from warfighting to engineering tasks. They participate as partners and, where appropriate receive extra training along the way as well. My visit to Tarin

Kowt coincided with the start of a basic engineers’ course conducted for an ANA engineering unit brought in from Kandahar. From day one, as is the wont with the Aussie Army, the students sat through the fundamentals of basic first aid; occupational health and safety; selection, use and care of appropriate tools; basic theory of building construction and so on, even though many had been working in the field for years – better to take nothing for granted than to assume too much prior knowledge.

But as engineer Major Meggitt, who designed the course, says, “We have as much to learn from them as they do from us. They have been here forever, they know the lay of the land and may have more expedient ways of doing things.”

He also says that the training delivered now would not only help the ANA engineers to help the Aussies help the local

community, but would leave a legacy for when the foreigners do inevitably leave.

“Incorporating the ANA into the RTF where possible will show the Afghan face in the community and thus we can help bolster community opinion of its own army so that when we leave we will, hopefully, have established the ANA’s credentials.”

Another way the Aussies hope to leave a legacy is by building a TAFE-style college in Kamp Holland to teach locals the fundamentals of carpentry, plumbing, electrical, masonry and small-engine maintenance.

Warrant Officer Class Two Jed Watson – a self-proclaimed museum piece – casts an expert eye over construction of the trade training school and says he is “super impressed” by the brickwork of the local contract labourers assigned the construction task.

“While I think the Aussies can teach the Afghans a lot, the learning definitely goes both ways,” he says.

“I think we can teach the old dog a few things to polish up his old tricks, but this is great work they are doing. Rather than show them how we do it we’ll simply help them improve their own methods and then help them to teach new tradesmen.”

While he was a brickie by trade before joining the army, Jed confesses he never really mastered the art of rendering and became very excited when he sought and got permission from the building foremen to learn from the local tradesmen, who were true artists in cement finishing.

Abdul, the foreman – a man who had seen many years – took time out to tell me how happy he was that the Australians, the Dutch and the other coalition participants were here to help his country. Through an interpreter he said, “We do not see this as an invasion – an invasion is when one country comes here. We know the coalition is here to help us and we very much appreciate that.”

He also told me that he very much respected the Australian lady engineering officer who bossed him around a lot – “She even made us dig up a foundation that she said was not good enough.”

“If a woman like that leaves the comfort of her own country and her family to come to my country, then I am sure that she has come here to help the Afghan people.”

Many of the soldiers on this mission have had a very busy life of late. Iraq, Pakistan, Aceh, Solomon Islands, East Timor, Innisfail and the ongoing ATSIC Army Community Assistance Program (AACAP) – most have had a hand in one or more of these, especially the hardworking engineers. But as one young sapper, who had been involved in AACAP and Aceh deployments in the past 18 months told me, “those were good for getting away to help others in need, but this is what every soldier wants to be doing – this is the real deal – on a fair-dinkum operation overseas.”

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AIR WARFARE DESTROYER

HOBART-CLASS ON COURSE

BY MARK AZZOPARDI

They are the ships that will restore a true blue-water warfighting capability to the RAN – they are big, fast and built to take on all comers. Only three in number, each will displace more than 8000 tonnes and stretch the tape to just shy of 150m. Meet Australia's Air Warfare Destroyers.

AUSTRALIA'S AIR WARFARE DESTROYER WILL BE EITHER AN 'EVOLVED DESIGN' BASED ON THE US ARLEIGH BURKE-CLASS (USS DONALD COOK FOREGROUND) OR SPAIN'S F100 (ALVARO DE BAZAN REAR).



(VLS) firing Standard SM-2 surface-to-air missiles. Quad-packed (four missiles to a cell) Evolved SeaSparrow Missiles (ESSM) will provide protection from airborne threats, particularly anti-ship missiles (ASM), at shorter ranges.

Various combinations of SM-2 and ESSM would be carried depending on the mission profile, although a standard mix might include 62 ESSMs occupying 16 VLS cells and the remaining 48 cells each holding one SM-2. That's a big war load in any navy, and represents enough missile rounds for multiple target engagements over a sustained period before the ship is obliged to rearm.

The AWD's anti-surface warfare punch resides in two principle systems – eight canister-launched AGM-84 Harpoon ASMs in two banks amidships, and the Mk 45, Mod 4, 62-calibre, 127mm naval gun mounted on the deck forward of the superstructure.

With a 220kg high-explosive warhead and a range of about 60nm (110km), the Harpoons are intended primarily for taking out ships – from the most nimble inshore patrol boats to frigates, destroyers and large afloat-support ships. It is a modest

capability but one which is well proven and adequate for the job.

The 127mm deck gun has a longer barrel than the Mod 2 version, enabling it to reach out further – about 60nm (110km) with extended-range guided munitions or 21nm (38km) when firing standard ammunition. HMAS ANZAC used its Mk 45 Mod 2 gun to good effect during the Iraq invasion on the Al Faw Peninsula in early 2003, supporting British troops ashore who had put in calls for fire support.

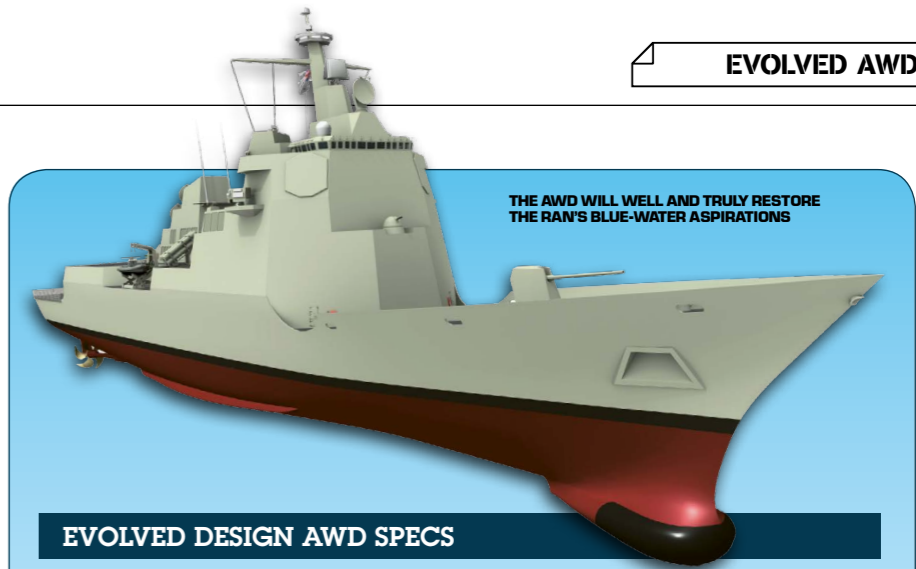
As useful as a single, large-calibre, accurate and reliable deck gun is, the installation of just one per ship limits the effectiveness of the AWDs in providing naval-gun fire-support. In the absence of any other means of providing indirect fire-support from out at sea, even the addition of an unmanned 76mm gun would have been welcome in complementing the 127mm gun up front. While less lethal than the 127mm and not able to hit targets as far inland, advanced 76mm guns are lightweight and compact to suit smaller surface combatants such as corvettes and light frigates. The Adelaide-class FFGs sport an early generation 76mm gun mounted high on the superstructure amidships, and it would have been handy if the RAN could have found space for a similar weapon on the AWD. Perhaps for a future upgrade.

Deck-mounted torpedo launch tubes make up the anti-submarine warfare capability, and will fire the ADF's new MU-90 Impact lightweight torpedo.

To defend against threats at close range or those that might get through the ring of steel thrown up by SM-2 and ESSM, two close-in rapid-fire guns will also be fitted, one fore and one aft. A pair of remotely-operated and stabilised lightweight naval gun systems will probably be mounted at port and starboard. This latter system is likely to be the Typhoon Mk 25 25mm gun as seen on the RAN's Armidale class patrol boats, or perhaps its smaller and cheaper cousin, Mini-Typhoon, armed with a stock M2 12.7mm heavy machine gun. This system is currently used onboard both Adelaide- and ANZAC-class frigates.

Each AWD will incorporate a range of below- and above-water self-protection systems, including acoustic countermeasures, an electronic warfare suite, infra-red decoys, Nulka active offboard missile decoys, mine avoidance systems and a bow-mounted sonar.

When all is said and done, whichever platform is eventually chosen, and when all the sea trials are complete, the Royal Australian Navy is set to step up as a capable, competent and formidably equipped blue-water fighting force for the future.



THE AWD WILL WELL AND TRULY RESTORE THE RAN'S BLUE-WATER ASPIRATIONS

EVOLVED DESIGN AWD SPECS

Hobart Class: HMA Ships Hobart, Brisbane and Sydney
Displacement: 8100 tonnes full load
Overall Length: 148m
Beam: 18.2m
Draft: 5.9m
Speed: 28 knots plus
Range: 5500 nautical miles (10,200km) at 18 knots
Accommodation: 230 including core crew and aviation support, training and task group commander detachments
Combat System: Aegis 7.1
Radar: AN/SPY-1D(V)
Propulsion Plant: Gas turbine and diesel engines; twin screw
Long-Range Anti-Air Missiles: Standard SM-2
Vertical Launch System: 64 cells

Short-Range Anti-Air Missiles: ESSM
Anti-Surface Missiles: 8x AGM-84 Harpoons
Naval Gun: Mk 45 Mod 4 62 calibre 127mm
Torpedoes: Deck-launch tubes for MU-90 Impact
Self-Defence Weapons: 2 x close-in weapon systems; 2 x stabilised lightweight naval guns
Aviation Support: Aft deck for 1 helicopter; hangar space for two helicopters plus UAVs



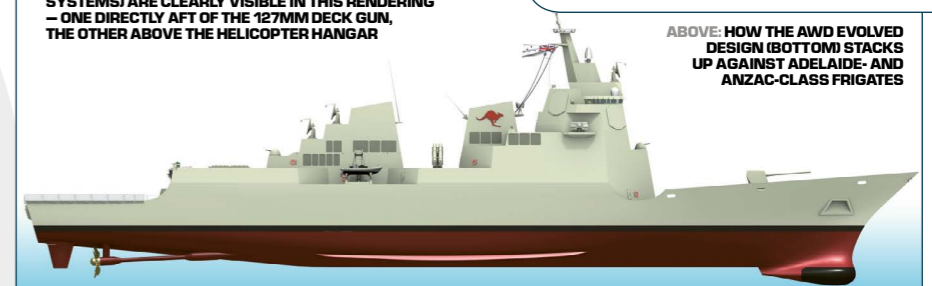
GOOD VIEW OF THE HELICOPTER DECK AND TWIN HANGARS



ABOVE: THE TWO MK 41 VLS (VERTICAL LAUNCH SYSTEMS) ARE CLEARLY VISIBLE IN THIS RENDERING – ONE DIRECTLY AFT OF THE 127MM DECK GUN, THE OTHER ABOVE THE HELICOPTER HANGAR



ABOVE: HOW THE AWD EVOLVED DESIGN (BOTTOM) STACKS UP AGAINST ADELAIDE- AND ANZAC-CLASS FRIGATES



THE EVOLVED DESIGN FROM GIBBS & COX – ALL 8000 TONNES OF IT. NOTE THE RELATIVELY LOW PROFILE OF THE SUPERSTRUCTURE HOUSING THE AN/SPY-1D(V) RADAR

To be commissioned as the Hobart class, Australia's Air Warfare Destroyers' (AWD) primary role will be to achieve control of the sea in conjunction with other ADF or coalition naval, air and land forces. Specifically, this involves control of the area air environment to extended ranges and controlling the surface and sub-surface environments.

Other primary missions will include the protection of shipping, intelligence collection and evaluation, and sustaining a meaningful presence in an area of operations – sitting off the coast of a potentially hostile nation, over the horizon, in international waters and doing nothing more than quietly letting the enemy know it's there. Sometimes, the mere presence of a ship as capable as the AWD can exert both strategic- and operational-level pressure without firing a single shot.

Secondary missions for the AWD will include all those that less capable vessels are typically tasked with – constabulary operations, defence aid to the civil community, collection of environmental data, service-protected and -assisted evacuations and diplomatic roles.

But it is the provision of a 150km protective umbrella over and around an Australian amphibious task force that is the AWD's raison de etre. In many ways – and despite what the destroyer die-hards might argue – the AWD exists to enable an amphibious task force to get on with the job of transporting, offloading and sustaining land forces ashore.

As with the two new Landing Helicopter Docks heading this way from 2012 onwards, the AWDs are a key part of an ADF increasingly focused on joint operations, each service supporting the other in pursuit of common military outcomes.

As highly complex and advanced

communications and surveillance platforms, the AWD will neatly complement the aerial capabilities of the RAAF's new Wedgetail AEW&C aircraft. So too the RAN's other surface combatant assets – FFG and ANZAC frigates.

While Project Sea 4000 – like virtually all major capital equipment acquisition programs the world over – is under pressure to contain costs within the allocated budget of \$6 billion, it will surprise few observers if the more expensive 'Evolved Design' AWD unveiled by Gibbs & Cox in August 2006 will emerge as the preferred design over the smaller, in-service, but lower-risk F-100 air defence frigate from Spanish shipbuilder Navantia.

Gibbs & Cox drew heavily on its experience as the platform-design authority for the US Navy's Arleigh Burke-class destroyers for inspiration in its 'Evolved Design', hence the 'Baby Burke' nickname for the slightly smaller and less crew intensive Australian version.

The first AWD will be delivered to the RAN in 2013. However, in this case, 'delivered' does not mean 'in service', rather the stage at which the first-of-class will be handed over to the customer for it to undertake sea trials and the multitude of activities required before a new piece of kit can be cleared for introduction into service.

A key component of these trials will be to certify the operation of the RAN's S-70B-2 Seahawk helicopter and, most probably, a grey version of the MRH 90 which will have entered service to replace the ageing Mk 50 Sea King by then. The hangars are large enough to also accommodate several unmanned aerial vehicles.

Key to the AWD concept is the area air defence capability provided via the proven Aegis combat system in combination with a 64-cell Mk 41 Vertical Launch System

TANKS FOR THE HISTORY LESSON

WORDS KEN WRIGHT PICS SUPPLIED BY KEN WRIGHT

THE DESIGN THAT WASN'T PASSED ON

By early 1915, fighting on the Western Front had stalemated and the death toll had reached unsustainable proportions. Static warfare was not how the generals wanted to fight, and solutions were demanded.

British Army writer Lieutenant Colonel Ernest Swinton observed the early battles and reported that, in his opinion, a petrol tractor on the caterpillar principal, with hardened steel plates, might be able to counter the ubiquitous machinegun.

Swinton's report was read by Winston Churchill who, in February 1915, set up a Landship Committee to develop the new war machine. Work was carried out in great secrecy under code-name 'water tank', reflecting the size and shape of the fresh-water tanks on the battlefield. This was eventually abbreviated by the soldiers.

The first prototype was disappointing but, after much trial and error, the first crude British tanks were shipped to the Western Front to spearhead the attack on the Somme on 15 September 1916. Historical records vary but, of 47 tanks brought up for the attack, only 11 actually went into battle. The long-hoped-for decisive victory was not achieved despite the surprise and terror the new weapon caused the Germans – the tanks were underpowered, unreliable and too few in number.

It is only conjecture, but the outcome of that and many other battles may have been different if the ideas of one Australian inventor had been used when offered.

Lancelot Eldin DeMole was born in Kent Town, South Australia, on 13 March 1880 and, by 1908, was a draughtsman and inventor working on several surveying and mining projects.

While working in rugged country in Western Australia, DeMole had an idea for a chain rail system of traction for use in heavy haulage. This idea led him to work on a design for a chain-rail armoured vehicle, which he submitted to the British War Office in 1912.

The principal operation of his vehicle was that the machine could be steered by altering the direction the chain rail could be laid. In effect, the rail was laid in a curve, thus altering the direction of travel. The War Office rejected his idea.

When war broke out, DeMole answered

the call but was rejected as too tall and delicate.

The Landship Committee and the development of the tank were, of course, unknown to DeMole when he re-submitted his plans to the British Munitions Inventions Office about July or August 1915. But, his design was not passed on.

DeMole received a letter suggesting that a working model must be provided to have any chance of consideration.

Not being the type to give up easily, he tried to get the South Australian Inventions Board interested in his idea. However, the official in charge could not understand the plans and the idea suffered another setback.

When the bitter fighting on the Somme was over and the secret of the tank became common knowledge, DeMole realised his design was superior and pressed on.

Still keen to enlist, he went on a special diet to improve his health and finally joined in 1917 as a private in the 25th Re-enforcements, 10th Battalion, Australian Imperial Forces.

With financial backing from a friend, Lieutenant Harold Boyce, [later to become Sir Harold Boyce and Lord Mayor of London] DeMole had a one-eighth-scale model constructed. Lieutenant Boyce managed to get Private DeMole assigned to him and they departed from Melbourne on the troopship A60 [Blue Funnel liner Aeneas] via the Suez Canal – model tank in tow.

On arrival in Plymouth, DeMole managed to get leave and took his model to the Munitions Inventions Office. By now it was January 1918.

His model passed the first test and DeMole was asked to demonstrate it to a



LANCELOT ELIDIN DEMOLE

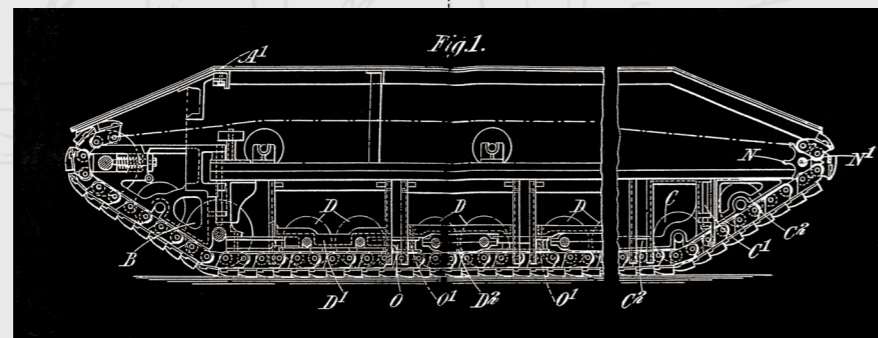
second committee. Just when it seemed he was actually getting somewhere, he fell sick and was unable to follow up with the second demonstration. He returned in March only to find his model had been left in a basement and the letter recommending it to the Tank Board had not been passed on.

Before he could arrange the second demonstration, the Germans launched their spring offensive and DeMole was called back to active duty. He fought at Merris, Meteren and Villers-Bretonneux.

He remained in France until the armistice, then returned to London to be demobilised, where he heard about a Royal Commission established to reward inventors for their contribution to the war effort. He lodged a claim.

In November 1919, the Royal Commission awarded 15,000 pounds to Wilson and Tritton for inventing the tank. They considered DeMole was entitled to 'the greatest credit for having made and reduced to practical shape, as far back as 1912, a brilliant invention which anticipated, and in some respects, surpassed that which was actually put into use in the year 1916'. They went on to say it was the claimant's misfortune, and not his fault, that his invention was in advance of its time, failed to be appreciated and was put aside because the occasion for its use had not yet arisen. He was awarded 965 pounds for out-of-pocket expenses.

After a long illness, Lancelot Eldin DeMole CBE died in 1950. His scaled model is currently in the Australian War Memorial's Treloar Centre for conservation.



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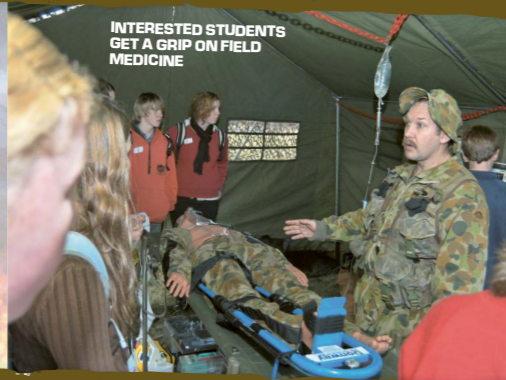
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Salary after training (Pay Group 3)	\$36,930/yr*
+ Service Allowance	\$9691/yr*
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Total	\$47,040*

* before tax and other deductions



EVEN TRADESMEN LEARN SOLDIERING SKILLS

WORDS AND PICS BRIAN HARTIGAN

ARMY TRADE TRAINING

CAREERS OPENED TO SCHOOLIES

Nestled in the picturesque Murray Valley near Albury and Wodonga, on the Victorian side of the border with New South Wales, a large tract of military land is home to, among other things, the largest Army schooling establishment in Australia.

In August this year, and for only the second time, the Army Logistic Training Centre (ALTC) threw open its doors and invited nearly 300 local Year 10 and 11 high-school students and their teachers to take a look at what the Centre and, indeed, the Army, has to offer by way of training and career opportunities.

For many, it was a real eye-opener. At the outset, most could be forgiven their assumption that the Army was all about guns and tanks, but, by home time, most had a much better understanding of the scope and variety of jobs on offer – as well as the high standard of training they could expect if they signed up for a stint in the Army, even if they weren't fully convinced to actually join.

This year's open day at ALTC also offered a little excitement to keep the students interested. The sight of a Leopard AS1 Main Battle Tank squashing four parked cars out of existence was almost too thrilling for words. A nonchalant "cool" or "wicked" wasn't nearly good enough – most opting for more excited, "AWESOME" or "NO WAY" delivered through huge grins.

Excitement aside, what the students learned on the open day – at least the majority who were actually listening – was that ALTC is the Army's biggest training campus, split into four schools – it also conducts training in Darwin, Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney and Puckapunyal – it employs 550 instructional and administrative staff with an additional 900 Defence and contract staff providing selected support activities, ranging from instruction to area maintenance.

Importantly for the few who may be seriously considering a support-based career in the Army, they were surprised to learn that Army Logistic Training Centre conducts 252 different courses, from one day to three years in duration, qualifying up to 7000 students per year, in competencies ranging from management to those that underpin 44 separate technical and non-technical trades – everything from plumber

or carpenter to medic or chaplain.

With so many trades and courses on offer, there obviously isn't the room to discuss all of them here, but a quick look at just one might give reasonable insight to the standard of training delivered – and the advantages of getting trade training through the Army (or indeed RAAF or Navy) system.

Would-be plumbers – as all soldiers – first complete 80 days of basic soldier induction training at Kapooka, near Wagga Wagga, before being moved to Latchford Barracks, Bonegilla, where their trade training begins.

What follows is 15 months of TAFE-style hands-on training on a very-well equipped and resourced TAFE-style training campus. Here they start from scratch, learning such basics as the proper selection and care of tools through to the fundamentals of drainage, roofing, water supply, gas fitting and mechanical services.

Structured teaching is delivered in a workshop-like environment but with ample materiel and space for hands-on practice – albeit in the controlled, contrived environment of a learning establishment.

Armed with the basics, however, the

students are then out-posted to work with civilian contractors, working on real building sites, for a further 18 months.

At the end of this, they are fully qualified plumbers, with real-world experience and, very importantly, a nationally recognised certificate that says they are qualified plumbers, capable of being employed anywhere in the country.

Unlike many of their counterparts in civvy street who go through an apprenticeship, however, Army plumbers are not thrown to the mercy of the jobs market – they have a guaranteed position to go to, with a very respectable basic wage and a range of allowances and other benefits that make a trade-based job in the Army very attractive indeed.

While they are committed to the Army for a minimum of six years service and may be asked to work in various parts of the World as well as all over Australia, this obviously has its advantages as well as its drawbacks.

On the one hand, while the Army plumber can't tell his boss to 'take his job and shove it', he can build on a portfolio of experiences that will make him an extremely sought-after tradesman in the civilian jobs' market.



TROOPER RYAN TRACY GIVES BROOKE ANDERSON FROM TRINITY COLLEGE, YAGOONA, A TOUR THROUGH AN ASLAV



TRINITY ANGLICAN COLLEGE STUDENT JARRYD PERSSON TAKES A GOOD LOOK DOWN THE BARREL OF AN ARMY CAREER AT ALTC

And that's not to mention the adventure and excitement of not being stuck in one place forever, or the comradery and mate-ship synonymous with Army life in general.

But, of course, completing the minimum six years' service does not mean the keen trade-trained soldier must leave the Army – if the individual likes the job, the lifestyle and the conditions, he or she can stay on and build a career within the Army – maybe even going back to Bonegilla to help train new batches of eager young tradesmen starting out on their own careers.

Commandant of ALTC Colonel David Shields says the opportunity to open the campus to students – who are at a stage where career choices are uppermost in many minds – was more than a simple recruiting exercise.

"What we have here is also an opportunity to take about 280 young people, plus some teachers and parents, show them what we're about and then have them go back into their communities and be like ambassadors for the good work we do here," he says.

"It also gives my staff a very welcome opportunity to showcase what it is they do, because they are all very proud of their work. Remembering also, of course, that they too are active members of the local community and many have families here."

ALTC – not all of which is located in the Albury/Wodonga area – is divided into a headquarter element and a development group, with four distinct teaching schools – the Army School of

Logistic Operations, the Army School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, the Army School of Transport and Ordnance, and the Army School of Administration and Health. About 7000 students attend courses run by ALTC each year – or about 600 students on any given day.

As with any career in the Army, Navy or Air Force, anyone wishing to learn more about technical or other trade courses at ALTC should call Defence Force Recruiting on 13 19 01 – or continue to read CONTACT magazine for more information.

Editor's note:

Having been through Army Adult Trade Training myself, I can truthfully recommend this option for any person between 17 and 50 years (I was 28 when I joined), male or female, looking for a hands-on job that pays well and (in most cases) is civilian recognised. Why pay (or get your parents to pay) for expensive tertiary education, when the ADF will actually pay you while you learn, and give you a guaranteed position when your training is finished?

In case you're wondering, Defence Force Recruiting does not pay for advertising in this magazine or support us in any way. But, I wish they would!

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Fitter Marine
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Mechanic Vehicle
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PART 2

REMOTE CONTROL

WORDS WAYNE COOPER PICS ADF AND COOPER COLLECTION

Since our arrival in the remote township of Dinsoor a few days before, we had managed to make ourselves at home. We had commandeered an old compound near the centre of town, which had a six-foot wall all around it. While the buildings within were without roofs, they offered precious privacy and protection.

The compound's courtyard was large enough to contain the five M113 APCs of our section, as well as providing space and a hard standing for us to service our vehicles. The back of the compound overlooked a large paddock, and we parked our cars so we could observe the open space, from our turrets, while we were on picket. The infantry had quickly rigged up a gate to close off the compound to the outside, and presto, we had a home away from home – away from home.

Our first few patrols through the surrounding countryside were uneventful. We had been told about recent bandit activity in the area by the locals, but were yet to come across any bad guys. While this was the cause of some frustration, the locals had also told us of another lurking menace that we were less eager to run into.

Almost as soon as we had arrived in town we started hearing stories about a lion that roamed the area. As if this wasn't unsettling enough, the animal apparently had rabies and stayed close to the town so it could pick off any unfortunate local that wandered by. According to the stories, this man-eating predator had ventured into the outskirts of town and taken several older folk and children in recent times.

Needless to say, we were more than a little anxious about the prospect of running into a deranged big cat in the middle of the night somewhere out in the sticks. Being Aussies, we were used to our fair share of nasties in the bush, but not many things in Australia would actually come into your hide and eat you. This was not the type of wildlife encounter we were particularly keen to undertake, no matter how well armed we were.

It did have a marvelous affect on our nightly routine though. Not since the first few weeks of Operation Solace had the boys been so keen to pull double-staggered pickets when out in the open countryside. It's amazing what the threat of being dragged away in your sleeping bag by a rabid lion could do for your enthusiasm to man a machinegun through the night.

However, after several days without a sighting or report of the beast, we started to get suspicious. Frightening

visiting troops with stories of deadly local fauna sounded like something we diggers would do. We had all extracted our fair share of pleasure by regaling nervous Americans with terrifying stories of deadly Australians, both real and imagined.

A rabid lion taking people in the dead of night – this had to be a gee-up. We'd been suckered by our own gag. It was the Somali version of the legendary hoop snake or drop bear.

The realisation that we'd been had was both a relief and a disappointment. The prospect of an encounter with the infamous feline had been unnerving, but it would have made a great story when we got home. Anyway, in hindsight, we hadn't really been all that worried about it – there probably weren't any lions left in Somalia anyway!

As more uneventful days passed, thoughts of big cats slipped from our minds. While the pickets were dutifully carried out, we went through far less batteries in our night-vision goggles (NVGs) than we had during the reign of the Dinsoor Demon. Manning the guns through the night had become a chore once again.

Following one night's fruitless overnight patrol through the surrounding countryside, 23 Section headed back to town with a platoon of infantry in tow. After the night's long patrols we were all exhausted and looking forward to some kip through the cool of the morning, back in our compound. As we meandered in our M113s through the hills on the outskirts of town, we came upon a sight that would keep us awake for many nights to come.

The APC section passed through a copse of trees, line ahead with Pete and I leading in 23 Charlie. As we broke into a clearing, we came across a young camel sitting in shade under a tree. The animal was in shadow, so it was hard to make out, but it appeared to have tar or some other dark substance all over its back.

It was strange that the creature did not bolt at the noise of the armoured vehicles rumbling toward it. It just looked at us with an unusual detachment. The reason for this and its strange colouration soon became apparent.

As we approached the camel I could see huge gashes in the animal's flesh.

The dark substance was dried blood from the gaping wounds it had sustained on its back and belly. Across its hind quarters were deep scratches, groups of three or four dark lines running parallel to each other.

Apparently there was a bit more to the rabid lion story than we thought. As we passed the stricken creature, the realisation that the locals had not been messing with us hit home. Pickets were going to be interesting once again.

Encounters with ferocious felines or not, the work of the Battalion Group went on unabated. As the various infantry/APC groups scattered around the extremities of the Australian area of operations (AO) began to establish themselves in these outlying areas, useful intelligence had begun to trickle in – vital detective work carried out by the Australian intelligence assets was about to pay dividends.

In the fading light of one Somali evening, we did just that.

Our infantry/APC group out of Dinsoor, consisting of 23 Section and an infantry platoon from Charlie Company, had joined up with another equivalent group operating out of nearby Ufurow, and the three APCs of 2 Troop headquarters carrying the Company OC and his team, to carry out a cordon and search on a village about 30km from Dinsoor. Intelligence had indicated that Dhegewayne had been conducting raids out of the village of Miisra, and there was a fair chance we may be able to find him there. Orders were given and in mid afternoon the combined-arms group closed in on the village.

With our dozen or so APCs we did our best to surround the town. This was no easy task as the village was fairly large and was situated in some thick bushland. But,

As we sped away from Miisra, after another seemingly unsuccessful raid, the company radio net began to buzz with traffic. There had been a number of unusual occurrences during the search and it was apparent something wasn't quite right. It seemed our business there wasn't complete.

Once we were several kilometres away from the village we stopped and formed a snap defensive hide. Infantry platoon commanders and APC section commanders were summoned into the centre for orders. After a few minutes of hurried instruction, we mounted up and prepared to head back the way we had just come.

Apparently, the village elders had given contradictory stories on the movements of bandits through the village. In particular, they were very nervous about a certain compound and had been unforthcoming

THE DARK SUBSTANCE WAS DRIED BLOOD FROM THE GAPING WOUNDS IT HAD SUSTAINED ON ITS BACK AND BELLY. ACROSS ITS HIND QUARTERS WERE DEEP SCRATCHES, GROUPS OF THREE OR FOUR DARK LINES RUNNING PARALLEL TO EACH OTHER

keep sight of the infantry who were lost in a swarm of irate villagers.

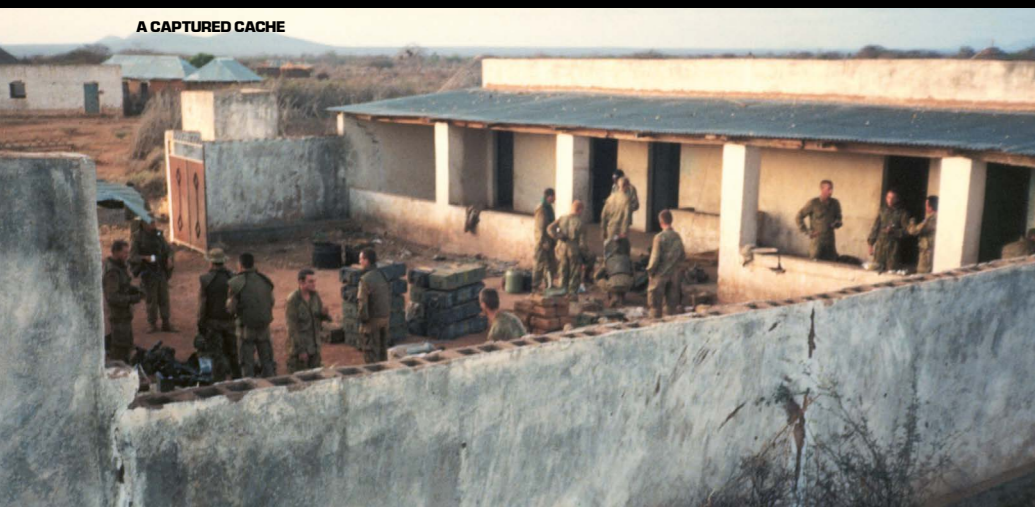
As we pushed on toward where we thought the target area was located, the situation began to get serious. We turned on all the vehicles' lights in an effort to illuminate our surrounds and keep track of the infantry. Even with the driving lights on high beam and the turret's spotlights arcing out over the crowd, it was near impossible to keep track of the Peads and we soon lost them in the confusion.

To make matters worse, the narrow streets and alleyways we had to stay on to avoid running over houses and livestock were corralling us away from our objectives. I started to lose sight of the other APCs. From the darkness, people would dart in front of the vehicle, and Pete had to keep backing off the throttle to avoid running them over.

buildings and high hedges we were really sitting ducks for anyone who wanted to creep up on us. This fact was not lost on Pete, who had popped his hatch and, with torch in one hand, rifle in the other, was shining a light into the faces of anyone who approached at the side of the vehicle.

Fortunately, no one took a shot at us and the grunts made it to the objective unopposed. What they found when they got there made the night's drama well worth the effort.

After crashing through the compound gate, they did indeed catch the bad guys with their pants down. Unfortunately those pants didn't belong to the ring leader Dhegewayne. But they did capture some of his henchmen and a cache consisting of tonnes of heavy weapons. With everything from 120mm mortars, 106mm recoilless rifles, anti-tank mines and Milan wire-



A CAPTURED CACHE



23 SECTION RECEIVE VISITORS



ALL IN A GOOD NIGHT'S WORK

We had originally been sent out to the far reaches of the AO because of the prevalence of organised bandit activity, reportedly carried out by three of the region's most notorious criminals and their gangs. Before we had made a permanent patrol base in Dinsoor, 1RAR's Recon Platoon, Counter-Intelligence Team and elements of Charlie Company had been successful in disrupting the activities of these gangs and had even captured one of the leaders. The operations in pursuit of the other crime bosses went on in earnest.

One of the key players in the region was Abdullahi Dhegewayne, who had led a notorious bandit group in and around the Baidoa region since the civil war. He was high on the list of most wanted, and earlier operations had come close to nailing him on a couple of occasions, but so far he had managed to evade capture. So, if we were unable to get the man himself, we were going to put a major dent in his operations.

with each APC facing inward toward the town, and within eyesight of the car on either side, we dropped our ramps and the infantry entered the busy hamlet.

Our job was to maintain a cordon while the Peads went door to door with the interpreters and Int guys looking for wanted personnel and weapons. A flying squad of infantry remained mounted in some of the APCs, ready to react to any attempted escape. As we sat under the afternoon sun in our crew positions, we watched and waited for any indication of suspicious activity, but nothing much happened.

After a couple of hours we got the word to stand down and move into town to pick up the infantry. As we loaded up our passengers, the company OC and intelligence team were engaged in an intense discussion with the local elders. After a few minutes of too and fro, the discussion broke up and we headed out of town empty handed.

with detail about its use. At the time, the infantry OC had feigned disinterest, but we were now heading back to try and catch them out.

The logic was that if there were any bad guys still hiding away in the village, they would be now letting their guard down, thinking we were long gone. The plan was to fly back into town and hit the suspect compound directly, trapping any occupants. The catch was that the sun was already on the horizon and it would soon be dark.

With the modern prevalence of GPS, squad radios and night-vision equipment, this would not have been such a big deal today, but in 1993 these pieces of kit were in short supply. Each infantry section may have had one set of NVGs and a GPS per platoon if they were lucky. We cavalry crews fared even less well, with one set of NVGs between four vehicles and no GPS. This type of raid at night was going to be tricky.

We hit the outskirts of Miisra at full speed. What little light was left gave us a

small window of opportunity to position ourselves closely to the desired area. This time, the cordon was going to be much tighter, concentrating on the part of the village containing the suspect compound.

Because of the poor visibility, we had to get in closer to the town and block the main roads. What had been a difficult town to cordon in daylight was going to be nearly impossible to secure at dusk. The noise of the armoured vehicles rumbling through the darkness close to their homes caused a panic with the town's inhabitants and things started to go pear shaped.

The plan was that we would isolate the compound by closing the cordon around it. We would dismount the infantry who would move inward, in line with the APCs, in an attempt to catch anyone fleeing the scene. Unfortunately, with the small streets filling with concerned people, it became impossible to tell who was going where. The plan soon became a farce, and as the town fell into darkness, we were not able to

With people all around the vehicles, we couldn't safely cover our defenses. Anyone could have walked up to the side of the APC and opened fire on us without being seen. With the drivers closed down, it was almost impossible to navigate the town's crowded streets.

Had a fire-fight broken out at that point, it would have been pandemonium. We had no idea where the infantry were in front of us, and we were not able to properly defend ourselves, let alone support anyone else. It was clear the APCs could not continue like this.

Mercifully, our troop leader called a halt to our faltering advance. The word went out over the radio to hold our current positions and the infantry would continue to the objective. As we stopped in our tracks, the swarm of people continued to rush by us.

While we had temporarily removed the possibility of running over some poor local, our own security had not really been improved by stopping. Surrounded by small

guided anti-armour missiles, this was a motherload of deadly contraband.

Apparently the OC's hunch had been correct. While there had been no bandits in the village during our earlier visit, they were close by, and had left the local elders with threats of savage retribution if their presence, or that of their cache was disclosed. With no confidence we would be able to protect them, the elders were left with no real choice but to concede to the bandit's demands.

So, all in all, it wasn't a bad day's work. Although we hadn't captured Dhegewayne, we had put a serious dent in his ability to terrorise the local population. And, luckily for us, the bandits had not been able to use any of the devastating weapons they had been caught with on us.

I was beginning to realise that luck played as big a part as military skill in our battle with the bandits. I was also left wondering how long our luck would hold out.

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Summer Workouts

WORDS DON STEVENSON
PICS MARIKA KAHLE

Summer is here and, for most people that means sun, sand and a bit too much good food and drink. It also means holidays and time away from the gym – but this is no excuse to turn into a pudding.

This issue we'll look at some ways to train anywhere, anytime, without equipment. Most people should be familiar with the basics of bodyweight conditioning such as running, pushups, situps and chinups so I won't go over those again.

Strength without weights

While cardio fitness and muscular endurance are relatively easy to train for without a gym, it takes a bit more creativity and some specialised exercises to improve your strength without weight training.

The main way to make bodyweight exercises more difficult and transform them into feats of strength is to make your leverage worse so that you are working against a bigger percentage of your own weight. Thus, pushups become hand-stand pushups or one-arm pushups, squats are done on one leg and a variety of gymnastic drills are employed to work the abs.

Here are a few tougher bodyweight drills to add to your routine.

The one-legged squat

Bodyweight squats are easy. Bodyweight squats on one leg are not! The one-legged squat, or pistol, requires a high degree of leg strength, balance and

posterior chain flexibility. It's a great exercise for soldiers.

The pistol is a butt-to-ankle squat with the free leg held out in front of the body. To start, simply lift one leg off the ground and hold it out in front of you. Breathe in and reach forward with the arms while you push your hips back and down. Descend slowly into the bottom position and then drive out with the working leg.

Try a few and, once you've finished falling over, apply the following techniques to improve your chances:

- Practice in bare feet – runners are bad news.
- To improve your balance, brace your abs and glutes hard the whole time. If you are still having trouble, you may need to hold on to a chair or pole for stability.
- Practice doing the squats onto a box or set of steps. Once you can do five reps, touch and go at a certain height, lower the step.
- Stretch your glutes, hamstrings, lower back and

calves – if you are tight you'll fall over backwards. If you really can't get down deep, use a 2cm block under the heel, but try to wean yourself off this ASAP.

Five reps each leg is a good start, 10–15 reps is good and more than 20 is bad-ass.

One-arm pushups

Once again, by changing the proportion of your bodyweight lifted you can make an easy exercise into a feat of strength. Even guys who can do 50, 70 or 100 pushups often fail at their first one-arm pushup.

Just like the pistol, the one-arm pushup requires strength and coordination. The main difficulty is in maintaining core tension so that you don't collapse at the bottom of the movement.

Here are some tips so that you don't wreck your dental work trying this humbling exercise:

- Spread the feet to double shoulder-width apart and balance on the toes.
- Place the working hand directly under the shoulder and keep the elbow close to the body the whole time. Actively grip the ground with the fingers to generate tension.
- Breathe in, brace the glutes and abs – total body tension is the key to success here.
- As you descend into the pushup, you may need to turn your body away from

the working hand slightly to maintain balance, just don't go too far and allow the hips to sag.

- In the beginning, it is acceptable to spot yourself with the free hand.

L-sit chin-up

This chin-up variation will have your back begging for mercy and your abs flying the white flag of surrender.

Hang from a chin-up bar with an over- or under-hand grip and then bring your legs up in front of you until your body forms an "L" shape with the toes pointed.

From here, start performing chin-ups. Make sure each rep is chin-over-the-bar to a full hang.

If you struggle to do even one rep you may need to practice hanging leg raises for a while.

Enjoy the pain!

Bodyweight strength program

The simplest way to work on these new exercises is to do a couple of sets of each exercise morning and night. Frequent practice will lead to rapid gains in skill and strength and you won't even have to break a sweat.

Once every two to three days include a longer session with some higher rep sets of regular bodyweight exercises and perhaps some interval running and, by the time the holidays are over, you'll be in pretty good shape while everyone else has gotten soft and lazy.

MILITARY SELF DEFENCE Vs MARTIAL ARTS TRAINING

BY MAJOR TRAVIS FAURE

The modern soldier carries ballistic weapon systems, wears protective equipment including helmets, night vision, ballistic vests, goggles, knee and elbow pads and is connected to his commanders through modern communication devices. All this extra war fighting kit costs, in terms of weight and mobility, and has dramatic effects on the wearer's centre of gravity, balance and reaction speed. Military Self Defence (MSD) has been designed for the soldier wearing this modern-day armour.

MSD, like any other form of self defence, is tailored to individual protective training for a particular operational environment. It addresses a requirement for military members to be able to handle certain situations using less-than-lethal force. MSD is niche training, integrating soldier weapon systems and protective equipment. It is a blending of individual weapons and protective systems that supports the modern-day warrior.

In this article, MSD designed for an operational purpose is compared to civilian martial arts training, which is generally designed for sport or development of the participant character.

Today's civilian martial arts often make reference to historic links with a previous combative system used by ancient warrior societies. However, most of today's popular martial arts (karate, tae kwon do, judo, aikido and BJJ included) have been created or substantially modified in the mid 20th century and are based on sporting concepts.

The majority of the arts that still teach ancient weapon systems are performed for participant character development rather than the actual practicality of learning the techniques to defend ones self, with techniques and weapon systems taught for historic and traditional reasons.

These previous combative systems (pre 19th century) do develop a combative mind, which is essential on today's modern battlefield, however, some soldiers would have trouble seeing the applicability of using spears and swords as valid training concepts for the 21st century warrior. Likewise, civilian martial arts training based on sport, where the participant is wearing a light-weight uniform and the techniques are performed in a safe training environment, would not be realistic enough for the modern battlefield. Sure, there are many techniques which military self-defence program designers have integrated into their system, but they must take into account the constraints of the military environment.

Martial arts training systems and schools are a 20th century concept. Before this, combative training was an holistic endeavor where students learnt techniques from people with various expertise. Later, these experts named their schools, usually after themselves.

Two distinct training methods developed. The first were designed for the warrior class and are classified as combative arts, the second group evolved to support civilian self-defence systems. The two systems are quite different and waters 'get muddy' when civilian martial arts instructors make linkage claims towards military combative arts.

In today's operationally focused ADF, there exists a real necessity to teach MSD to soldiers who want to know how to defend themselves in close combat with an adversary. Soldiers have an expectation that they will learn techniques which they can use straight away whereas, in a typical



modern martial arts class, it is not always that obvious that they are learning to defend themselves – the real necessity is not there. When a martial art is based on sporting competitions, then training is focused towards winning points. The goals and expectations of students are different and not always the same for all participants. Some attend for fitness, others for self defence, and some for the social interaction.

In a typical MSD class, the students are there to learn self defence and the motivation for learning is similar and focused. It is abundantly clear for MSD trainees where and when they will use their MSD training and they therefore apply themselves to the training with gusto.

In any self-defence training environment there are three types of motor skills – gross, complex and fine – that are used when performing self defence techniques.

Gross motor skills form the basis of nearly all MSD techniques. These skills do not deteriorate under the effects of stress, increased adrenalin or heart rate. These skills include the use of large muscle groups such as legs, plus knees and elbows. Techniques based on gross motor skills can be demonstrated and explained within 20 seconds and the students can basically perform the technique after a dozen practices.

Complex motor skills are best used within the heart-rate range of 115–145 beats per minute. They involve a sequence of movements to be performed. MSD uses complex skills to achieve certain operational outcomes to capture and control an adversary.

Fine motor skills are best used at heart rates below 115 beats per minute, involve hand and eye coordination and include activities reliant on finger manipulation. They require practice and are not always suited to MSD training.

Fine motor skills could be employed by the trainee once the situation has been contained. Civilian martial arts can spend more time instructing more complex movements using fine motor skills as they have a longer duration for students to learn the techniques – often months or years.

Civilian martial arts and military combative arts have evolved to serve different purposes. MSD uses techniques based primarily on gross motor skills to achieve the aim of capturing and controlling an adversary. The carriage of combat equipment has drastic effects on what skills an MSD trainee can perform.





COMPANY OF HEROES

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After many years of gaming there is still only one series that can have me reminiscing about the "good ol' days". You see, Sapper Gameboy has had a long-running love affair with Atomic Game's (yet another quality developer spat out by the big companies) series *Close Combat*. Considering *Close Combat Invasion Normandy*, the last in the five-part series,

was released in 2000, it's been a long time between drinks. Sure, there have been several hoping to emulate Atomic's masterpiece of real-time tactical wargaming such as *Sudden Strike*, *World War II Frontline Command* and even *Blitzkrieg*, but in the end, they all ended up just one tank rush after another.

Most of them were like playing *Command & Conquer* with Sherman tanks. In fact the continued disappointment in the genre had almost driven Sapper Gameboy to give up all hope – until I loaded THQ and Relic Entertainment's *Company of Heroes (CoH)*.

From the moment the ramp went down on the first mission and I found myself replaying

the now-famous scene from *Saving Private Ryan* on Omaha Beach, I was hooked. I'll be quite up front – *Close Combat 6* it is not. *CoH* offers a far more intense experience with a game pace that was at times difficult to keep up with. Maps are larger, units under a player's command are far more numerous and, all of a sudden, there is resource management to worry about within each battle rather than just part of an overall strategy. Being caught without the population allowance or a resource needed is something that I bordered on in most battles.

Having jumped straight into the campaign without playing the comprehensive training package, I'll openly admit I ended up with far more dead GIs on Omaha than I should have. Admittedly, I was pretty familiar with the game's style, graphics and interface having slogged it out against the Ork's in Relic's stablemate *Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War* and thought playing would be a breeze. It surprised the hell out of me at just how complex a WWII real-time tactical game could become. *CoH* rewards a strategic approach but only if you are willing to take large tactical risks.

CoH puts the players in control of Able Company in the post D-Day assault into Germany. Those familiar with the great preponderance of WWII first-person shooters on the market will recognise many of the scenarios played out during *CoH*. The isometric viewpoint, however, provides a whole

new experience in storming Rommel's Fortress Europe in Normandy and fighting through the hedgerows. For a while, I thought I was playing each episode of *Band of Brothers*, so familiar were the scenarios and missions. This in no way is a bad thing. The familiar settings are somewhat comforting in that they kept me alert for the MG42 in the tavern or the Panzer IV hiding among the rubble.

Like its *Warhammer* cousin, *CoH* is the complete cinematic experience with rendered cut-scenes between missions and interspersed during gameplay to increase the level of immersion. Sound effects are fantastic and sound cues are often the first indication that German armour is on its way. Voice cues for individual units are situation dependent and, in line with the remainder of the game, realistic – soldiers speak like soldiers and have no qualms about letting the player know just how dumb the decision was that exposed them to several machine guns. Similarly, the graphics are a step above anything the *Close Combat* series could have hoped to achieve. Soldiers are quite often blown apart by mortars and artillery, with limbless corpses flying across the screen or collapsing horribly in their cupolas when armoured vehicles take a vital hit.

Between the burning, exploding, swearing and outright physical destruction of the environment, *CoH* is not a game to be played in front of youngsters.

The game introduces fantastic options such as capturing crew-served or specialist weapons

dropped on the battlefield, building defensive structures that actually do something other than look impressive and a fully destructible environment. It also introduces larger strategic choice, offering three distinct game styles – the jack-of-all-trades infantry company group, the hard-hitting but resource limited airborne company group or the slow-to-reinforce armoured company group. Each offers unique game play and rewards different playing styles.

CoH is the first game of this genre that has kept me playing to completion in a long time. I spent a couple of days just trying to complete one mission and often got a tap on the shoulder at 3am, as time had run away from me during the intense battles – surely a sign of a good game. However, after finishing the single-player campaign and jumping online for a few multiplayer battles, I found I still yearned for my *Close Combat*.

CoH is just so intense that at times I felt I lost control of the situation. I didn't get the same level of attachment to my squads, despite watching them earn experience points and perfecting their battlefield skills, because the in-game resource and strategy system meant it was easy enough to just build or train a few more.

At times I was seriously under pressure, but the AI also did some stupid things. At times the game became more about meeting unrealistic timings than fighting a well-planned battle. Crap! I've just described war!

Perhaps my issue is not so much a yearning for my *Close Combat* as a final realisation that my long-time favourite has finally fallen from its perch. *CoH* has introduced battlefield effects unlike any game previously and such is its execution that the little niggles – like tanks that too often expose their weak points or German soldiers who just refuse to die – are soon forgotten.

If only there was an option to play as the Wehrmacht during the single-player campaign I could have almost given *CoH* a perfect score. There's something distinctly annoying about being on the receiving end of MG42s for a whole game.

Score: 4.5/5

Thanks to the team at THQ, **CONTACT** has one retail copy of *CoH* to give away. Tell us by email to editor@militarycontact.com in 25 words or less why you should win. Entries close 17 Dec.

MARINE CORPS GOES VIRTUAL

Bohemia Interactive has announced that the United States Marine Corps has purchased an enterprise license that provides an unlimited number of VBS1 and VBS2 licenses for use in tactical training, mission rehearsal and experimentation.

Under the deal, the company will deliver a wide range of VBS1 modules and functionality improvements including a range of USMC-specific enhancements.

Two versions of VBS1 will be delivered – VBS1 Developer providing a fully functional product for use in simulation centers, and VBS1 Lite for wider distribution.

Bohemia Interactive is also working closely with the USMC to finalise Virtual Battlespace 2 (VBS2), a completely new product based upon the brand new game engine Real Virtuality 2. The platform is being constantly improved in response to military feedback received from a range of VBS1 customers, including the Australian Defence Force and USMC.

VBS1 and VBS2 may also be integrated with C2PC to provide a high-fidelity, networked environment linking the live and virtual domains – live marines in the field, tracked by GPS, interoperating with virtual entities controlled from within a USMC simulation centre.



CONTACT GIVEAWAY



Oleg Maddox's world famous *IL-2 Sturmovik™* series of flight simulators continues to expand. The latest offering, *IL-2 1946*, adds 36 new planes, four new gigantic maps, more than 100 new ground objects, and nearly 200 new campaign missions.

Thanks to Ubisoft, **CONTACT** has three copies of this great game to give away in time for Christmas. Tell us in 25 words or less why you should win. Send entries to editor@militarycontact.com before 17 December, and we'll despatch a copy to the best three entrants (as judged by the editor) by 'air mail'!

And watch out for Sapper Gameboy's review of this game in the March issue of **CONTACT Air Land & Sea**.



LETTERS FROM THE FRONT LINE



With another stint in the trenches of the front lines in France behind him – and another scar to show for his efforts – Henry Wright finds himself back at the Musketry School in England, recuperating with the help of good food, good company and light duties. He has a story or two to relay back home...

Well brothers, everyone who goes to the front has narrow escapes and I have had mine. One day in the trenches, previous to doing this raid, Frank Trevillian and I were just killing time and having a sing-song and old Fritz was shelling our part of the trench with a 9-point-5 shell (known amongst the soldiers as coal boxes). Now, one of these coal boxes landed two yards in front of the trenches where Frank and I were, and by a piece of luck, missed fire. Had it gone off, we should have been in little pieces.

Frank and I looked at one another and then went on singing, but I can tell you, it made us think of better places than that damned old trench.

By Joves, as I sit here and write these lines to you boys, I am indeed thankful I am having a spell from it all and sincerely hope I have no more fighting for a while. I am not afraid to go back, but I think it only right that we old hands should have a spell. I have now six scars from bullets to show, so think that quite sufficient.

I had word from Charlie lately saying he was being discharged from hospital, so I am in hopes of seeing him soon. Poor old Bert will miss Charlie very much. I do hope he gets through alright. Fred is very lucky getting his discharge and I am very glad for it will help to cheer up Mother and Dad.

I'll bet you boys are proud of your soldier brothers and you have the satisfaction of saying that none of them were slackers.

Well dear brothers, war is nothing else but pure murder and the sooner it is all over the better for everyone concerned.

I am looking forward to the time when it is all over and we can come home again.

I guess we will have a good old time.

I am positive that at Dad's spree the champagne will get a severe hiding.

I have contracted a terrible thirst since joining the Army. Of course I put it down to bully beef.

Well dear brothers, we have some characters in the Australian Army. All kinds from bank clerks to bush whackers. Wherever there is a mix up with fists, some of our boys are in it, but a softer hearted lot you could not find in the whole world. They are ever willing to help a man wounded, or anyone down on his luck. They have taught many an Englishman manners by getting up and giving a lady their seat. They are rough and ready but no matter what country they go to, they are classed as gentlemen.

In hospital over here we are treated with great respect and want for

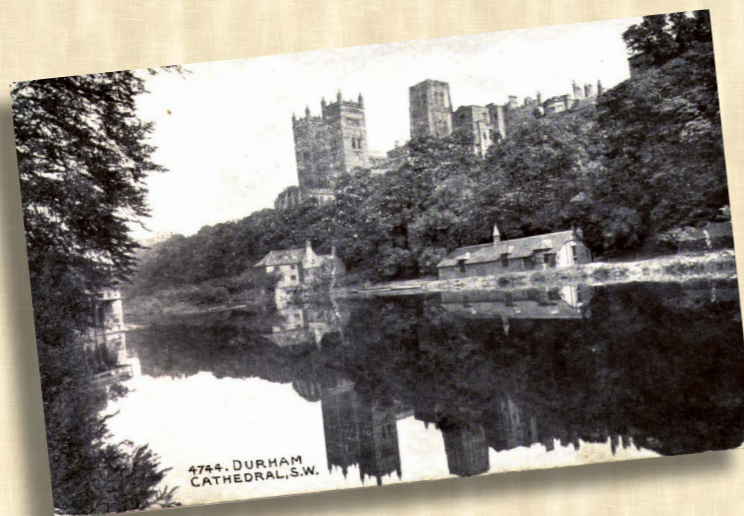
nothing. We get scores of invitations to visit the wealthy peoples' houses. I have had many an outing and hope for many more similar ones.

I have a nice light job now looking after these rooms in a musketry school. I have only to keep them tidy, and can finish them in two hours. The job may last six weeks or six months. I hope it hangs out until the end of the war. Three good meals a day and a nice warm bed to lie on so I can't growl.

Now Leslie and Gordon, I want you to write me a letter and let me know how you are getting on, what kind of work you are doing and if you want to know any particular news about different countries I have been in, just mention it in your letter and I will be only too pleased to give you any information I can.

I will now close, hoping this finds you both well.

I remain your aff brother,
Henry.



To be continued...

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AWM - REL 04728



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The stretcher-bearer crawled to the wounded Digger. Assessing the situation, he grabbed the man's thumb and rammed it into the gaping bullet hole in his leg to stem the bleeding while he ripped open a shell dressing.

The whistle of the incoming round pierced the air. Both men instinctively flattened their faces into the ground as the projectile exploded nearby, showering them with mud and debris. The stretcher-bearer slowly raised his upper body and shook his head as he took stock of his surroundings. He had survived unscathed, but the explosion had been too close for his patient.

Without further ado, he collected his medical haversack and crawled away in search of another man in need of help.

CORPORAL ERNEST COREY, MM

BY WO1 DARRYL KELLY

Ernest Albert Corey was born in December 1891 at Green Hills, a small town nestled in the shadow of the Snowy Mountains.¹ A lively lad, he grew up as one of eight children born to the family. On leaving school, he sought employment as a labourer in the surrounding district. He was a hard worker and, although short in stature, he soon developed a powerful, muscular physique.

In early 1916, Corey read with interest the reports of the heroic accomplishments of the Australian soldiers at Gallipoli and their successful withdrawal from the peninsula some eight months later. However, what caught his interest the most emanated from the pubs and shops that were abuzz with talk of a recruiting march to Goulburn. Here was his opportunity to be part of the action.

Corey looked proudly at the banner emblazoned with the words 'Men from Snowy River' under which the volunteers would march. As they wound their way through the Southern Tablelands, more and more recruits swelled their ranks as they passed through one small country town after another.²

On enlistment, Corey was allocated to the 55th Battalion as a rifleman. The battalion had been raised in Egypt in

February 1916 as part of the expansion of the AIF – half the recruits were Gallipoli veterans, the other half were fresh reinforcements from Australia.

Most of the new recruits, like Ernie, were from New South Wales. The training was tough and demanding, but Ernie was more than equal to the task and it was a fit, keen soldier who strode up the gangway of the troopship Port Sydney, en route to England.³

Corey's first eight weeks in England were spent at the training camp on Salisbury Plain. The local towns and villages accepted the cocky Diggers with open arms when short leave from the camp was either granted or taken. Then one night, the platoon sergeant gave the order they'd all been waiting for. 'Pack your kit, lads. We leave for France tomorrow.'

On his arrival at the battalion position on the Western Front in early 1917, Ernie was allocated to C Company where he learnt of the forthcoming attack on the fortified village of Doignies, a key outpost of the Hindenburg Line.⁴

Creeping forward in the predawn darkness, the Australians succeeded in taking the Germans by surprise. As the 56th Battalion stormed the village, the 55th took up their planned positions beyond

the eastern and southern outskirts – ready to cut the Germans down as they tried to effect their withdrawal. The town fell, the Australians suffering very few casualties.⁵

As he sat in the trenches that night, Ernie contemplated his first taste of action. He was rather surprised at how easy it had been and not at all what he had expected.

But his view of armed conflict would soon change, as the horrors of war became a reality the next time he went into action.

In May, his brigade was in the thick of fighting around Queant. Casualties were heavy and the stretcher-bearers were pushed to the limit. Volunteers were called to assist with the retrieval of the wounded and, without hesitation, Ernie put up his hand. For 17 hours non stop he roamed no-man's land, bringing in one wounded man after another.⁶

On one of these forays, he encountered two Germans who were treating an Australian casualty. The startled Germans stood back in amazement as the tough little Digger approached them without a hint of fear or hesitation. Then, under their very noses, he gathered up the wounded Australian and headed back towards his own lines, while the confounded Germans simply looked on in bewilderment.²

Following this battle, the 55th went into reserve trenches for a brief rest. As he sat on an ammo box, savouring his first hot drink in days, Ernie received notification that he had been awarded the Military Medal.⁶

He asked to be allowed to continue as a stretcher-bearer and, in view of the mounting casualties, his request was granted. He showed the greatest care and compassion when treating casualties, but his method of transporting them was rather unorthodox, particularly for someone of his stature. He chose to carry them under his arms rather than use the traditional method of evacuation by stretcher.⁷

In September of that year, the 55th was engaged in combat at Polygon Wood. Casualties were heavy and Corey, as always, was in the thick of things. Many wounded Diggers lived to see another day, thanks to the cool, calm efficiency of this courageous man. As he saw a soldier fall, Corey would calmly crawl forward, through the barrage of machinegun and artillery fire, until he reached his patient. After administering any necessary first aid, he would pick the man up under one arm and run the gauntlet of fire to a safer position. Once he knew the wounded Digger was in safe hands, he would return to the battlefield.

Elements of the citation for the bar to his Military Medal said it all; '...showed great courage, devotion to duty and untiring energy during the attack. Throughout the whole operation he set a fine example of bravery and coolness to all ranks.'⁶

The pocket dynamo was provided a brief respite when he was chosen to represent his battalion in the Independence Day March through Paris – providing an opportunity to also enjoy eight days of 'wine, women and song' in the French capital.

On 1 September 1918, the 55th was involved in heavy fighting on the outskirts of Peronne. Ernie was kept busy, crawling out to no man's land and repeatedly dragging the wounded to the safety of a shell hole. There he would stabilise the bleeding then call forward the stretcher-bearers. He seemed oblivious to the barrage of fire that surrounded him, and the Diggers watched in awe as the enemy machinegun bullets seemed to dance around him.

In part, the citation for the second bar to his Military Medal reads, 'His careful handling of the wounded and his knowledge of first-aid helped greatly to relieve their sufferings.'

At the end of September 1918, the Allied forces faced the apparently impregnable Hindenburg Line. The men were confronted by a visually daunting scene of seemingly endless bands of barbed wire and pillboxes shielding deadly machineguns.

Ernie, now a corporal, had a bad feeling about this one. As the Allied barrage rolled forward, the Diggers rose from their line and advanced toward the enemy positions. Suddenly, the German artillery opened up,

catching the Australians in the open. Men scattered to the safety of the shell holes, but many of the wounded lay where they fell.

Ernie spied his company commander lying in an exposed position, trying to control the flow of blood from the stump that was once his leg.

'I'll get him', Ernie shouted as he ran forward in the direction of the wounded officer. Scurrying from shell hole to shell hole, he crossed the open ground, crawling the last 50 metres or so to reach the officer's side. Corey wasted no time applying preliminary first-aid to the man's shattered leg.

Suddenly, a burst of machine-gun fire ripped into Corey's body, followed by a shell burst close by, which blew the medical haversack from his grasp. As Ernie gathered his wits about him, the officer crawled to retrieve the haversack, holding the stump of his shattered leg in the air as he went. He recovered the satchel and threw it back to Corey to enable him to dress the gaping wound in his thigh.

Both men knew they had to move before they became victims of more incoming fire.

Helping each other to their feet, they stumbled, crawled and scrambled back to the safety of their own trenches.⁷

As he lay in his hospital bed, Corporal Ernie Corey learnt he had been awarded a third bar to his Military Medal.

He was still in hospital when the Armistice was declared.⁶

Ernie Corey was repatriated to Australia and discharged as medically unfit in June 1919.¹ He returned to the Cooma area and found work as a rabbit trapper.

In 1922, he packed up and moved to Canberra, where he took on a variety of jobs.

On 23 September 1941, Corey again offered his services to his country.⁸ He was allocated¹ to 2 Garrison Battalion, which was tasked with guarding the vital Port Kembla steelworks. Ernie served with

distinction for the next two-and-a-half years until his poor health resulted in his being discharged.

He returned to his home in Canberra and life as a civilian.

In the 1950s, his health began to deteriorate. By the '60s, he was no longer able to look after himself and was forced to move into a nearby nursing home.

Though crippled with arthritis and confined to a wheelchair, Ernie retained a keen wit.⁷ He spent many hours gazing longingly at the snow-capped peaks of the distant mountains. One can only surmise that the view evoked memories of his long-gone childhood.

The quietly spoken hero of so many battles died in August 1972.

Today, Ernie Corey's medals are proudly displayed in the Australian War Memorial's Hall of Valour. He is the only soldier in the British Commonwealth to be awarded the Military Medal four times.

¹ National Archives of Australia: B2455, WW1 Service Records, 2143 Corporal EA Corey

² P Kelly, Albert Corey MM and 3 Bars – the Unassuming Hero, Article, Date Unknown

³ AWM 8, Unit Embarkation Nominal Rolls, 55th Battalion AIF, 1914–1918 War

⁴ Coulthard-Clark, CD, (Ed) The Diggers: makers of the Australian military tradition, Melbourne University Press, 1993

⁵ Bean, CEW, The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918, Volume IV, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1936

⁶ AWM 28, Recommendation Files for Honours and Awards, AIF, 1914–1918 War

⁷ Army Newspaper, June 1971

⁸ National Archives of Australia, WW2 Service Records, N280612 Private EA Corey



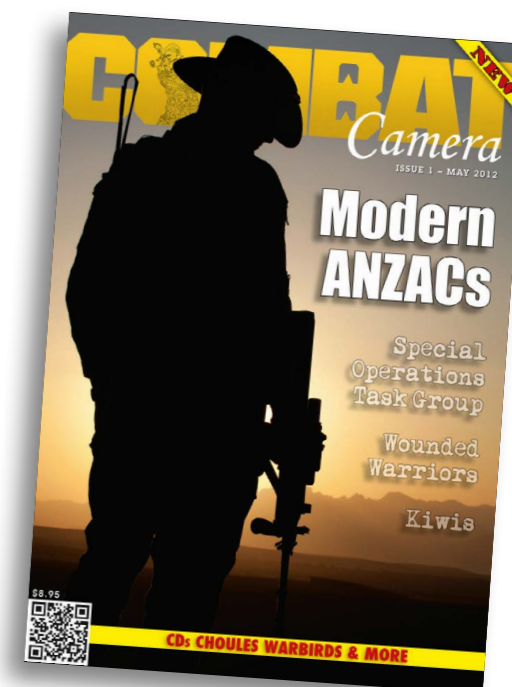
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Posted subject: CONTACT articles – Issue 11

Author: trappy	Just got the issue today. Have read it back to back and flicked through it again several times. Overall would have to be the best issue so far!!!
Author: Pete793	You take that back. Nothing will ever beat issue one in my eyes. But, to be fair, I am yet to get 10 minutes to myself to purchase the latest mag.

Posted subject: Australian Defence Force Recruiting – Duntroon

Author: Grimsleg	I was wondering if there was anybody else here who was planning to go through Duntroon on these forums. Seems that most of you are going for soldier entry! Just wondering, as I am wanting to go through Duntroon and be an officer, preferably in a combat arm, but that all depends on corps allocations.
Author: Lore	I was considering aiming for officer at first, then found out it's all paperwork and smiles so I got put off it.
Author: Jakub	I've been thinking about it for a while now and I am still really undecided. It's not all paper-pushing and such but it's something which you have to make sure really works for you. Let us know how you go mate and good luck.
Author: Rob	I want to go for GSO myself actually, once I've finished uni at the end of the year. That means starting RMC next January I believe – looking forward to it.
Author: Grimsleg	Rob, what corps you interested in? Or are you not too worried? What are your reasons for wanting to go GSO? If you don't mind my asking – just me looking for info.
Author: Rob	Still tossing up ideas about corps. At the moment I'm thinking Artillery. It would be pretty sweet to work with the new arty systems when they start coming, in 2010. Armoured and Infantry are also tempting. I want to go for GSO because I am interested in the concepts and technology involved with running large units and joint task groups etc. Definitely want to be around when the high-order NCW and ISR capabilities start coming on line – that's going to be pretty exciting. There is going to be a lot of change in the Army over the next 10 years, and I want to be there to be part of that. Should be a lot of work, but rewarding.
Author: Grimsleg	That's what I've been thinking. With the massive organisational changes and equipment changes, it will be exciting! There will be a need for innovation in tactics and strategy to meet this. Sounds like a good time to be an officer. Lots of hard physical work, but probably even more paperwork. Serves a purpose and is more meaningful than most office work.
Author: Rob	Yep, going to be a lot of fiddling; proving/disproving and developing new tactics/doctrine. Definitely better than working in an office – and you've got 'Australia' written on your shoulder. Sounds bloody good to me!!
Author: Pete793	Pay's not bad either.
Author: Grimsleg	I like that 'Australia' written on my shoulder! Sounds pretty coool!
Author: Gerty	Don't forget about the gin and ton tons in the officers' mess, old boy.
Author: Pete793	Jolly good show.
Author: Clarkey	Oh, I say, rather, old fruit.
Author: Grimsleg	I said DUNTROON not SANDHURST! You stupid gits!!!
Author: Gerty	Oooooooooooooooooooooo, touchy. Typical officer – no sense of humour. I was an enlisted soldier – it's my job to annoy you. Allow me to retort – DUNTROON, aka "the school of fools" where you too can learn the secret art of being able to walk upright, whilst still having your head up ya bunghole.

Do you agree that the Government had a responsibility to evacuate Australian citizens from Lebanon?

Yes  55.7% (73)
No  44.3% (58)

Total Votes: 131