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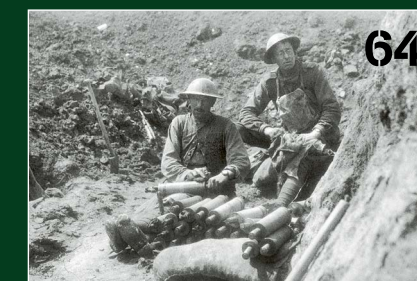
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## THE EDITOR'S LETTER

Issue 13 – March 2007

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AIR, LAND & SEA

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RIGHT: CONTACT editor Brian Hartigan contemplates how to get his new company car back to Australia. Pic Ben Doherty

**J**ust as well I'm not superstitious – this being issue #13 of CONTACT. That means we are entering our fourth year of production. This year promises to be huge for me and for CONTACT – but I can't give away too many business secrets. Suffice to say that the second phase of my grand plan to take over the world is about to be put in place! You may not notice much difference in the short term, but as stage two gathers momentum and rolls into stage 2.2 – watch out!

Avalon Airshow will be big for us this year – if the last outing was any gauge (I can't believe it's been two years already). We will be in the same trade booth as last time (along the wall closest to the runway in the main hall) and we'd love to see there. If you are at the show, please drop by and introduce yourself.

The Airshow itself promises great things too. With so much new equipment recently purchased and a few big projects still to be decided (there's even rumours that Australia is considering a large F-18F Super Hornet buy – see page 48), Defence industry reps from all over the world have been clambering for space. As I understand it, the usual two trade halls were sold out months ago and demand was so great that two more were added – and sold out. And it's not just aircraft on show. In a very astute move, the organisers added a ground-based defence section to the last Airshow, and that too has grown and, I'm sure, will continue to grow in size, significance and interest in the years to come.

Hopefully we'll see you in Avalon, but, for now, back to business. This issue sees me up-stumps in Afghanistan and move on to Iraq for a report on the few days I spent with our troops, both in Baghdad and further south in Tallil. It was a very interesting journey and great to see our military personnel doing such a good job, sometimes in very trying conditions. While the dangers of living and operating in Iraq are well documented (just ask an American how dangerous it is over there), our people have fared relatively well. There have been just a few attacks on Australians there – and, mercifully, casualties have been light – but the danger is ever-present. Just yesterday (as I write this) an Australian convoy came under direct machinegun fire on the streets of Baghdad.

I'm delighted with the cover story this issue. Not only are the photos fantastic, but I think Gunner Shannon Joyce has also captured the essence of the live operation that continuously plays out on our northern borders. Australia is a fantastic country and I salute our brothers in NORFORCE who daily do their bit to keep it that way.

  
Brian Hartigan  
Managing Editor





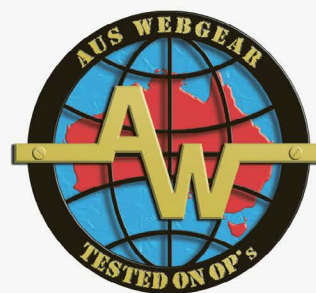
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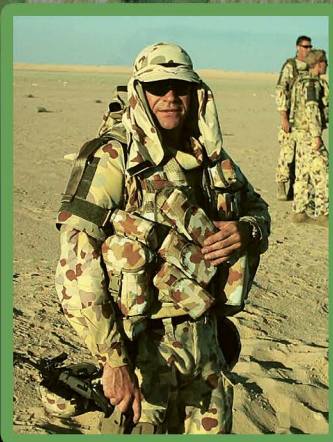
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# INCOMING

### FRIENDLY FIRE...

I was after the photo of the 13 American C-17 Globemasters in the Big Picture spread in issue #9 to hang on my wall at work.

**Several different authors**

*That was a US Air Force photo that can be found at [www.af.mil/photos/index.asp?galleryID=60](http://www.af.mil/photos/index.asp?galleryID=60)*

Like probably everyone else in Australia, each month I stand at the newsagency's defence section like a kid in a toy store. Then I see CONTACT!!! Boy has the magazine evolved and become well rounded. Being an ex-Brit I'm not as familiar with Aussie military history as I would wish. Thus I'm finding myself turning to the rear of the magazine first! Keep it up.

**Stephen B, Canberra, ACT**

Thanks for another great issue – special mention to Just Soldiers, 1/15RNSWL and MEAO articles. But the main reason I'm writing is to express my admiration of the work done by the recently returned SFTG. From the outline we have been given, it appears that they were involved in some heavy stuff and performed excellently, and this is also shown by the details in the medal citations that were recently made public. I understand that SF blokes are generally a closed-mouthed mob, but I hope that, in time, a more comprehensive story of the deployment will be available, along with first-hand accounts. I'm sure it would make another fine chapter in Australia's military history.

**Clarkey, 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](http://www.coolkit.com.au)*

I am a great fan of the magazine from issue 1, which had an article about 4RAR that ended with the line, "What are you waiting for? Throw your hat in the ring".

That inspired me to have a go and, every time I feel the lactic acid searing in my muscles, and during the late-night pack marches, I think of that article and your magazine.

So, thank you for your understanding and your inspiration those years ago.

**RQ, Zetland, NSW**



### SUSTAINED BURST...

In your Heads Up article 'Protected Howitzers get the nod' you stated the K9 is the only SPH to be seen in Australia. This is incorrect. In 1998 two Paladin (US Army SPHs) were shipped to Australia and took part in a firepower demo on the range at Mt Bundy in the Northern Territory as part of the A21 trial. Included in the demo were TOW-missile firings as part of a tank/cav live-fire attack. I might add, if not for ammunition restrictions, we also would have had a live firing of the 120mm AMS instead of just driving demos.

**Tony D, via web-site feedback**

*Your comment is completely valid, Tony. The article should have (and meant to) say 'K9 was the only Land 17 contender to be demonstrated in Australia' – Ed.*

I was browsing your magazine today at a newsagent, and I must say it looks very nice.

Unfortunately, in your article on the Aust M-113 upgrades, I found the word 'Gavin'. This is not and has never been an official name in any service for the M-113. It's the result of a lone crusade by a bloke called Mike Sparks. A quick Google search will turn up no end of his work, and a few hours reading should provide some idea of his character.

Whatever else might be said about it, any use of 'Gavin' as an alternative name for the M-113 is nothing but beating the drum of one man's ego.

If your magazine is happy to be such a stepping stone, I wish you well. But alas, it does little for your general creditability with anyone who knows half of what they are talking about.

**SL R, via web-site feedback**

*I'm glad you liked the magazine in general and hope your reaction to the 'Gavin' reference will not cloud your judgment too much.*

*You are right when you say that a Google search for Mike Sparks*

*will bring up a lot of info – but in all fairness, how in God's name would I know to do that search in the first place?*

*The nickname did strike me as something I should check when editing the story so, naturally, I did a Google search and came up with no end of references to 'Gavin' – including Wikipedia (I believe the entry has since been edited). Based on the results of that search, I saw no cause for concern in using the term.*

*Thanks to your objection, I have had a closer look at 'Gavin' specifically and Wikipedia in general. Apart from accepting your objection, I also undertake to treat Wikipedia with a degree of healthy scepticism in the future – Ed.*

I've been part of 338 Squadron (City of Shellharbour), Australian Air Force Cadets for three years now and am hopefully going to be enlisted in the ARA in early 2007 as a field communications operator.

I have read every issue of this glorious magazine since it hit our shelves and I am sorry to say I am disappointed by the lack of cadet-related articles. I'm sure that there is most likely one on the way!

Next month I am hopefully going to attend my first promotion course at RAAF Wagga and then I hope to be enlisted in the ARA and head down to Kapooka!

I've been lucky enough to attend so many courses in my cadet career and I think it would be a great honour for us cadets to grace the pages of this awesome magazine.

Keep up the good work, and keep doing what you do best.

**James B, Shellharbour, NSW**

*I'm very sorry to disappoint anyone, but I know I continue to do so by not doing a cadet article. I promise, I swear, I really really will – soonish. Sorry for taking so long to get around to it. But, in the mean time, thank you for your support – Ed*



**BY A STUNNING COINCIDENCE, I BUMPED INTO JAMES PAPAS, WINNER OF OUR "FLIGHT IN A REAL JET FIGHTER" COMPETITION FROM ISSUE #3 (STORY ISSUE #6). HE ONLY JOINED THE ARMY IN JANUARY LAST YEAR AND HERE HE IS (RIGHT) ON OPERATIONS IN IRAQ IN OCTOBER – ED.**

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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Height (turret) 2438mm  
Width 3658mm

**WEAPONS:**  
Main gun  
120mm M256 smooth-bore cannon  
Commander's weapon  
12.7mm (.50cal) M2HB QCB machinegun  
Coaxial  
7.62mm MAG58 machinegun  
Loader's weapon  
7.62mm MAG58 machinegun  
Smoke grenade system  
M250 66mm grenade launchers  
Driver's Hatch

MAIN PIC BY BRIAN HARTIGAN  
OTHER PICS ADF

Following delivery of the first 18 of 59 Abrams M1A1 AIM SA main battle tanks and five M88A2 Hercules armoured recovery vehicles before Christmas, the Army's new heavy hitter has been strutting its stuff and getting used to the Aussie bush in Puckapunyal at the School of Armour. It also made its first public appearance in January at the horsepower-heaven Summernats car festival in Canberra. A further 41 tanks and two recovery vehicles are expected to arrive in Darwin this month, the majority to be operated by the 1st Armoured Regiment in Darwin, with a smaller number allocated for training purposes.

**POWER PLANT:**  
Gas turbine AGT-1500  
Power 1119Kw (1500 horsepower)  
Power-to-weight ratio 23.8hp/tonne  
Fuel Diesel  
External APU 1 cylinder, 4-stroke diesel  
Transmission 4 forward, 2 reverse

**SPEED:**  
Governed top speed 66.8km/hr  
Cross-country 48.3km/hr  
Acceleration (0-51km/hr) 7 seconds

**RANGE:** up to 475km

**OBSTACLE CROSSING CAPABILITIES:**  
Vertical 1244.6mm  
Trench 2700mm  
Ground clearance 483mm  
Ground pressure 13.8psi





## 6X6 G-WAGON UNVEILED

Daimler-Chrysler chose the Land Warfare Conference in Brisbane in October 2006 to unveil details about a new 6x6 G-Wagon under development and aimed initially at the Army's \$3 billion Project Overlander.

Designated as the 280 CDI, the 6x6 is the latest variant of the successful and well-proven G-Wagon (also known as G-Class) and comes powered by a Mercedes-Benz, 6-cylinder, 3 litre, intercooled turbocharged diesel engine.

With 135kW of power, 400Nm of torque and a powered third axle, the 6x6 vehicle can carry a 3 tonne payload.

It has a range of 600km on a standard fuel load, and its maximum road speed is electronically limited to 120km/h.

The 6x6 version is in the final stages of development in Germany where it will undergo company tests before being brought to Australia for demonstration and trials.

A 4x4 version of the new 280 CDI has also been developed.

## DUTCH BUSHMASTERS ON ACTIVE DUTY

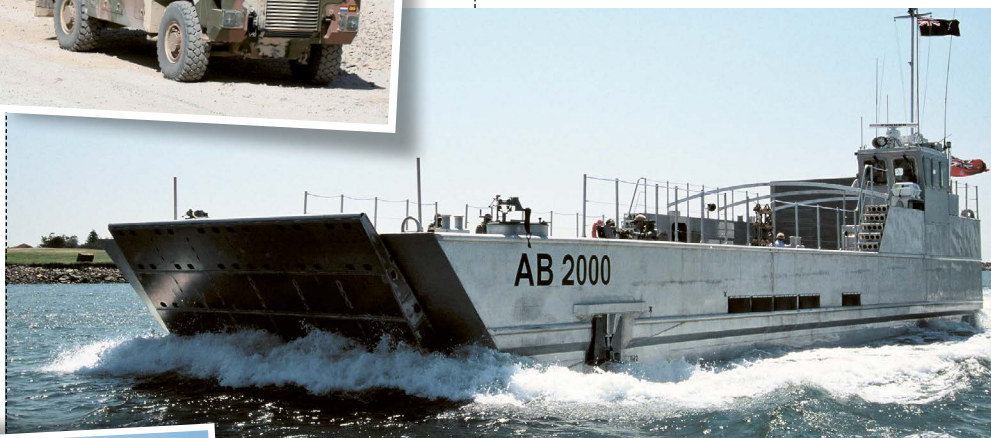
The Netherlands Army is now operating the Australian designed and built Bushmaster 4x4 infantry mobility vehicle in southern Afghanistan as part of its commitment to the International Security Assistance Force in that country.

In July 2006, the Dutch government ordered 25 Bushmasters from Thales Australia (then ADI) to fulfil an urgent requirement for a protected, mine-resistant and highly mobile wheeled vehicle that also offered personnel inside good protection against roadside and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices.

With a need for another 100-150 protected troop carriers in the same mould, the Dutch are as yet unsure whether it will place a follow-on order for additional Bushmasters.

Dutch vehicles differ from stock Australian Army Bushmasters by way of additional appliqué armour, an overhead, remotely-operated weapon station (not fitted during initial deployment, pictured), no spare wheel/tyre and no self-recovery winch.

■ Meanwhile, the Australian Army is to receive more than 100 extra Bushmasters to accommodate the planned fielding of two new infantry battalions. One of these battalions will be motorised, with Bushmaster to provide organic protected mobility. The additional vehicles will ensure that the new battalion has adequate resources to rapidly self-deploy by road in a single lift.



## LCM8 REPLACEMENTS REPLACED

The Royal Australian Navy has been forced to offload its new landing craft from HMAS Manoora and Kanimbla after proving unsuitable to the rigours of deployment at sea.

Delivered by Thales Australia in 2006, the six craft have reportedly experienced difficulties when being lifted on and off the foredeck of their mother ships.

Industry sources have confirmed that the new craft's aluminium construction has proved less than robust for craning on and off the foredeck, sustaining damage to their hull and structure.

Designed for ship-to-shore movement of troops, vehicles and cargo, the new craft were supposed to provide a higher offload rate than the LCM-8s they were to replace. They were expected to take over from the LCM-8s until Manoora and Kanimbla are withdrawn from service in the 2012-2017 timeframe.

The craft are now in Darwin where they are performing ad-hoc patrol duties in coastal waters until their long-term future is decided.



## ARMY HUNTING FOR ATVS

The Australian Army has released a request for tender for 30 new all-terrain vehicles (ATV) to carry the in-service Javelin missile launcher.

'Javelin ATV' will be required to carry two soldiers, their packs, personal weapons and at least two Javelin rounds, stowed in their shipping containers.

As the requirement calls for the carriage of two soldiers, a certified two-seater ATV is the likely option. Polaris, the incumbent supplier of quad bikes for Army, last year released a new two-seater 4x4 ATV known as the X2.

An important requirement of the Javelin ATV is air transportability inside C-130J/H Hercules, as either internal cargo or underslung load on CH-47D Chinook, or as underslung load on the new MRH 90 multi-role helicopter or existing S-70A-9 Black Hawk. Carriage by Unimog 4x4 and Mack 6x6 trucks is also required.

To provide a measure of protection for rider and passenger, a removable roll-over protection system has also been mandated.

The new Javelin ATVs will enter service in 2008 with 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) in Sydney and 1RAR and 2RAR in Townsville.

## NEW TANKER IN SERVICE

The RAN's new double-hulled fleet oiler was commissioned into service on 16 September 2006, undertaking the first replenishment-at-sea activities the following month. She has now replaced HMAS Westralia, which was sold to commercial interests.

Purchased new, off-the-shelf, from a South Korean yard for \$52 million, Sirius will increase the endurance of RAN surface combatants, thereby allowing more days at sea and operations at greater distance from Australian ports.

Delivered to the RAN under budget and ahead of schedule by Tenix Defence, the 176m Sirius has a full-load

displacement of 37,000 tonnes and will carry bulk fuel as its primary cargo. A dozen 20ft ISO containers can also be stowed on the deck without encroaching on liquid stores capacity.

Under the \$60 million contract with Tenix to convert the ship, modifications were made to ensure the vessel was fit for naval service and included new accommodation and hotel services, greater above-deck stowage, installation of an ADF-standard command, control and communications system and the addition of a single-spot helicopter landing deck large enough to operate an MRH 90-sized helicopter for vertical replenishment tasks.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

**RAN OPEN TO FIRE**  
The government has approved new rules of engagement governing the use of force by the ADF when dealing with uncooperative illegal vessels. Specifically, the RAN will be able to employ escalating levels of force against suspected poachers and smugglers, including a new clearance to fire on a vessel's stern to disable its engines and steering gear.

## KOREANS COMPLETE AMMUNITION CARRIER

A strong contender for the Australian Army's replacement artillery project has unveiled



a key component of its bid to supply 155mm self-propelled howitzers (SPH). South Korea's Samsung Techwin completed the first production K10 Thunder ammunition resupply vehicle (ARV) for the Republic of Korea Army late in 2006. The K10 ARV is the partner vehicle to the K9 Thunder SPH which the company is offering to Australia.

## FIRST GERMAN NH 90

The German Army received the first of 80 NH 90 Tactical Transport Helicopters (TTH) on 13 December 2006, and will take delivery of a further 17 this year. The 46 MRH 90 helicopters on order for the ADF are almost identical to the German TTH.

## SINGAPORE EYES LEOPARD 2

Singapore Armed Forces look set to receive around 60 Leopard 2A4 main battle tanks, surplus to German Army requirements, under a deal that could see first deliveries take place in 2008. A further

30 tanks may be ordered as a ready means of spare parts supply. It is expected the Leopard 2A4 will replace Singapore's ageing AMX-13 light tank.

## IED ATTACKS ON RECORD

Figures released by NATO's Supreme Command show that from August to November 2006 there were 580 IED incidents across Afghanistan, accounting for 219 coalition personnel killed. The number of IED incidents in and around Kabul had fallen, but were increasing in the Kandahar area, where some Australian soldiers are deployed.

## KAM DELIVERS TRACTION

A small British company has launched an axle diff-lock system designed to improve the traction, mobility and off-road performance of 4x4s. At the heart of the system from Surrey-based KAM Differentials is a solenoid-operated locking device that significantly increases traction in difficult



conditions. The company hopes its new system, which can be retrofitted, will appeal to military users.

## NEW US UTILITY HELO

EADS North America has delivered the first UH-72A Lakota light utility helicopter to the US Army under a contract worth an initial US\$167 million. At least 30 UH-72A Lakota will be procured to replace aircraft from the UH-1H Iroquois and OH-58A/C Kiowa fleets. The first US Army aviation unit will be fully equipped with Lakota by September 2008. The US DoD also recently ordered 352 UH-145s from EADS.





# HEADS UP



## JSF TAKES OFF

Lockheed Martin's F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) achieved its maiden flight on 15 December 2006 over Fort Worth, Texas, with the 40-minute flight deemed a success by the company officials and the US Air Force.

US military sources indicate that the JSF program is on track to proceed with an order for 12 aircraft in 2008 – six conventional take-off and landing and six short take-off vertical landing variants.

Around the same time, Australia has committed further to the program with the signing of a Production, Sustainment and Follow-on Development Memorandum of Understanding in the US. This provides a framework for the procurement and in-service support of the aircraft over life-of-type.

Project Air 6000, Australia's procurement of up to 100 JSFs, achieved first-pass approval in November last year.

## UAV ON OPS

Boeing Australia has been awarded an \$11.5 million contract to supply the Australian Army with its ScanEagle autonomous unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) under a leasing arrangement that includes provision of a specified number of flying hours.

ScanEagle, already flying on operations with the Overwatch Battle Group in

southern Iraq, will provide an interim tactical reconnaissance and surveillance capability for deployed ground units until the Israeli I-View UAV is introduced and reaches full operational status.

OBGW, with the assistance of Boeing, have been operating ScanEagle on operations in the Al Muthanna and Dhi Qar provinces. The aircraft provides live imagery to Australian soldiers on the ground, operating from Camp Terendak, Ali Air Base, Tallil.

## GOVERNMENT WANTS LHD BEFORE ELECTION

Defence Materiel Organisation (DMO) has called on the candidate suppliers of the RAN's two LHD (Landing Helicopter Doc) amphibious assault ships to finalise the fine print of their bids before a source selection is made around mid 2007.

French shipbuilder Armaris, teamed with Thales Australia, and Spain's Navantia, teamed with Tenix Defence, are currently in discussions with DMO to clarify all aspects of their respective bids.

While this step in the acquisition process of a major equipment procurement project is normally reserved for after the preferred tenderer is announced and leading up to the final signing of a contract, DMO has been instructed to commence talks with the two bid teams as early as possible to save time. This, it is hoped, will enable DMO to move more swiftly through contract negotiation and signature stages before a federal election is called later this year.

The two LHD designs on offer are the 21,000 tonne 199 metre long Mistral Class from Armaris and the 27,000 tonne, 230 metre BPE from Navantia.



Australian Customs Service has entered into a 12-month, \$17 million charter of a 98m trimaran from the United Kingdom to help combat illegal fishing in Australian waters.

Built in the UK in 2000, Triton is a diesel-powered vessel able to sustain 20 knots and remain at sea for extended periods.

Her standard complement is 14 with accommodation also provided for up to 28 armed customs officers that may be embarked for boarding duties. The hold can also carry up to 30 detainees if required.

Armament will comprise two deck-mounted 12.7mm heavy machineguns.

Two 7.3 metre rigid-hull inflatable boats will also be carried.

Upon inspecting Triton last year, Customs officials were impressed with the ship's modular flexibility, overall design, propulsion systems and low fuel consumption. She has an economical cruise speed of 10.5 knots. The lease contract calls for the vessel to be at sea for 240 days in the 12-month period.

Her sole mission, according to Customs, is to "hunt down and seize illegal boats that are foolish enough to fish in Australian waters".

Triton will form an integral part of Border Protection Command's ability to respond to illegal incursions at sea.

## CUSTOMS CHARTERS TRIMARAN



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- In November 2006, RTI signed its first joint commercialisation agreement with Tactical Aerospace Group (TAG), an American company which designs and manufactures Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs).



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## TONGA – JOB WELL DONE

Recent events have led to a surge of troops being rushed to hotspots on Australia's and New Zealand's doorstep with Fiji, Timor, the Solomon's and Tonga all experiencing difficulties in recent months.

Seventy-one New Zealand troops sent to restore order in the Kingdom of Tonga in November returned home on 2 December last year. They were part of a 150-strong Australian and New Zealand Joint Task Force, led by Kiwi Lieutenant Colonel Darren Beck, that was rushed to the Pacific island nation after riots in the capital Nuku' alofa.

ANZAC troops worked alongside Tongan Defence Service and police personnel to restore order and secure Fau' amotu, the nation's sole international airport, allowing the resumption of vital international flights.

Much of Nuku' alofa's central business district was destroyed and at least two people killed in the riots, before order was restored.

## KIWIS FLY TO LEBANON

In the latest deployment of Kiwi peacekeepers, 10 NZDF personnel left home mid-January for the first of two six-month rotations in Lebanon.

Rear Admiral Jack Steer, Commander Joint Forces NZ, said the army and navy personnel would be working with the UN Mine Action Coordination Centre in southern Lebanon.

"We're deploying an unexploded munitions clearance team made up of four navy divers and six army engineers. They'll be using their specialist skills to remove unexploded munitions and reclaim areas for civilian occupation," he said.

New Zealand has a robust and well-respected unexploded ordnance disposal capability that has previously deployed to Afghanistan (see CONTACT # 12), East Timor, Cambodia and the Tokelau Islands.

MAJOR EUGENE WHAKAHOEHOE, OC D COY 2 / 1ST BATTALION, LEADS A HAKA TO GREET AUSSIE COMMANDER BRIGADIER MICK SLATER IN BECORA, EAST TIMOR



## TIMOR GUARD ROTATES

The original 142 New Zealand troops rushed to Timor Leste after the riots, gunfights, looting and burning of Dili in May last year returned home in November.

Mostly from Burnham-based Delta Company, 2/1<sup>st</sup> Battalion RNZIR, the Kiwis were tasked with carrying out joint patrols with UN police in Dili's CBD and eastern suburbs.

Led by Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Fox, the contingent worked alongside 950 Aussie troops as part of an Australian-led mission to restore order.

Both contingents have backed up a 1000-strong UN police contingent (which also included some Aussies and New Zealanders) taking over situations that became too difficult for the police to handle.

Australian and New Zealand troops were rushed into Dili in May at the request of the Timor Leste Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta after a mutiny by troops.

Lieutenant Colonel Fox said the contingent had worked hard to reassert authority.

"When we arrived during the riots it was a difficult place to be, but we've fostered a strong relationship with the community

and government of Timor-Leste," he said.

"As a result, life on the streets of Dili is returning to normal. The job isn't finished yet but our progress so far shows what can be achieved."

## KIWI REVENGE

New Zealanders looking for solace after the extra-time loss to Australia in the Rugby League Tri Nations final need look no further than the efforts of two Kiwi cadets at the Royal Military College Duntroon for satisfaction.

In a mid-December graduation parade at RMC, the NZ Army's Lieutenant Sean McCulloch from Auckland was presented with the Sword of Honour by Australia's Governor General Major General Michael Jeffery.

The 23-year-old beat 147 future military leaders from Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, the Philippines and Thailand to take the Sword of Honour – the first New Zealander since 1974 to win the honour and only the twelfth ever.

Backing up Lieutenant McCulloch's power-play was Lieutenant Ellen Ford, from Fielding, who took the Ronald Syme Trust prize for second place on the Queen's Medal List.

After graduation and leave, both officers returned to Linton Military Camp.



KIWI LIFE SAVERS

Private Brown, Corporal Hagen and Privates Carragher and Wilkes, four New Zealand reservists were credited with saving the life of an unconscious man in Honiara in January. The four were on patrol when they found a man, lying in a pool of blood, being assaulted. After securing the area, the stick administered first aid before handing over to police.

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# BRING ON THE GUNS

## MODIFIED LAND 17 AIMS FOR HEAVIER TUBES

BY MARK AZZOPARDI

When the powers presiding over the Army's rather long-winded Land 17 Replacement Artillery project decided in early 2006 that the requirement for a self-propelled howitzer (SPH) needed to be amended to better reflect operational realities and threat levels, those SPH systems that had previously been the project front-runners were suddenly ejected from the game.



G6-52 ON OFFER FOR LAND 17 IS A MODERNISED VERSION OF THE ORIGINAL G6 (PICTURED) IN SERVICE WITH SOUTH AFRICA SINCE THE '80S



M777 IS A STRONG CONTENDER FOR A 155MM LIGHTWEIGHT TOWED GUN REQUIREMENT



ARCHER SPH IS BASED ON A VOLVO ARTICULATED TRUCK CAB-CHASSIS. SWEDEN HAS ORDERED 24



SOUTH KOREA AND TURKEY WILL FIELD K9 THUNDER



The ousted contenders included the Giat Caesar gun on a truck (GOAT) 6x6 system and the Israeli ATMOS 6x6 from Soltam, also a GOAT design. The new requirement for the SPH to provide protection for the crew during not only transit, but also during all gun firing and reloading processes effectively ruled them out of contention.

With this change, the Land 17 requirement, in broad terms, now looks like this;

- > Minimum of 18 x 155mm 52 calibre SPHs
- > Up to 35 x 155mm lightweight towed howitzers
- > Or, alternatively, upgrade of the existing M-198 towed guns
- > A 'Battle Management System for Fires'. The original in-service schedule was re-instated last year and will now aim to get first deliveries of both SPHs and towed 155mm guns (upgraded M198 guns or new purchase) by the end of 2010. Final deliveries would take place a few years after that, probably around 2012.

The minimum number of SPHs required

is 18 (two batteries plus training and attrition stocks), with up to 35 lightweight towed guns to equip up to four batteries (if preferred over an M198 upgrade).

Final numbers will depend on a range of factors including, but not limited to the type of SPH selected, its unit and ownership/operating costs over life-of-type (LoT), manpower requirements, logistics burden and battlefield efficiency/effectiveness – that is, the most number of targets able to be engaged by a single SPH in a sustained-fire mission.

Chief of Army Lieutenant General Peter Leahy indicated to media in early January this year that his preference would be for more SPHs over additional towed guns. This would seem to fit with his endorsed vision for a hardened and networked army.

"We're trying to get some prices and have a look at some equipment to see what we're getting for our money. My preference would be for the self-propelled and have more of that rather than towed artillery," General Leahy told *The Australian*

newspaper on 9 January. At time of writing (late January), the plan for Land 17 is to release a request for tender (RfT) in May 2007, with source selection due by the end of 2008.

However, in recent months there has been speculation that the Federal Government is exploring the possibility of acquiring Dutch Army PzH 2000 SPHs that are surplus to its requirements. These platforms are still coming off the production line and so are brand new and to the same standard as those in service with Germany and the Netherlands and those on order for Greece and Italy. It just so happens that the Dutch have exactly 18 surplus PzH 2000 on the books, which they've been trying to offload for a few years.

It is known that the Land 17 project office paid a visit to the Netherlands to discuss these and related issues.

Bypassing the RfT process and opting instead to purchase the 18 PzH 2000 SPHs from the Netherlands in a semi-rapid

acquisition of sorts would certainly be a more straightforward and direct route to gaining an advanced and highly capable SPH capability.

Any such deal would likely be government-to-government and may involve (as has been variously speculated in the press) a barter deal whereby the Dutch Army fulfills an outstanding need for additional wheeled troop carriers via a follow-on order for extra Bushmaster vehicles.

If more than 18 SPHs are sought (as General Leahy would seem to indicate) then these would have to be added on to the Dutch PzH 2000 production line. This is not seen as problematic.

A Korean solution should also not be ruled out of the Land 17 game, with Samsung Techwin offering a cost-effective and technically sound SPH package comprising the K-9 Thunder gun and the K-10 ammunition resupply vehicle. Both share the same hull, running gear and powerplant.

K-9 Thunder is in service with the South Korean and Turkish armies, with a combined total of more than 1000 slated for eventual production.

Should the decision be made to hand in the M-198 guns in favour of a new lightweight 155mm towed gun, then the BAE Systems M777 is the closest thing to a dead cert for the job. It is already in service in quantity with the US and UK, and Canada has a few in Afghanistan doing the business. It is a late generation, low risk option and would allow a six-tube battery to be underslung below as many CH-47D Chinook helicopters complete with crew and ammunition (although that would of course leave no Chinooks available to do anything else).

The reduced crew requirements of the M777 also facilitate significant cost savings over LoT. Its reduced weight compared to the M-198 (3745kg versus 7163kg) enables a smaller and lighter tractor truck to be used, providing reduced fuel and maintenance costs over the long term.

While it is true that the M-198 towed guns are manpower intensive and not cutting edge by any means, they can still send a 155mm shell down range a long way. They have also been combat proven many times, most recently in Iraq, where the US Marine Corps used them extensively in the second battle for Fallujah in late 2004 and since – indeed, whenever heavy in-direct fire support is needed.

So, while the new and advanced M777 is far superior in terms of its ability to be rapidly deployed and airlifted into an area of operations, the terminal effectiveness of its stock 155mm ammunition is no different to that of the M-198.

An upgrade or service-life extension for the M-198 cannot, therefore, be ruled out at this stage of the equipment acquisition process, as it is clearly the cheaper of the two options. An M-198 upgrade costing tens of millions less than buying new lightweight 155mm towed guns would also leave more funds in the kitty for purchasing extra SPHs.



### SPH contenders get heavy

Because of the shift in requirement from a GOAT-type system to an SPH with all-round crew protection during both transit and gun operation and loading, the candidate platforms queuing up for the SPH slot are now bigger and heavier. More armour means larger and heavier chassis and gun turrets to accommodate the weight of armour protection over all areas.

The SPH contenders for Land 17 can now be divided into roughly two distinct groups; those that provide the capability for the crew to remain under complete armour protection during transit and all aspects of gun operation, including reloading; and those that enable the crew to stay protected during transit and the gun firing process but require that they alight the vehicle to replenish the gun's magazine at the rear.

In the first camp are systems at the heavy and more traditional end of the SPH spectrum – the K-9 Thunder, Krauss Maffei-Wegmann PzH 2000 and the Denel G6-52. The second group has just one member – Bofors Defence Archer.

The K-9 Thunder, PzH 2000 and G6-52 feature a large and fully enclosed turret in which all gun and reloading operations are carried out. The first two systems are tracked, while the G6-52 is a 6x6.

While the modern SPH has the look of a bona fide close-combat vehicle, it is not. Therefore the enduring argument of wheels versus tracks does not quite have the same relevance with Land 17 as when discussing main battle tank (MBT), infantry fighting vehicle or armoured personnel carrier (APC) choices.

The Land 17 SPH – whether it ends up being wheeled or tracked – will not be required to close with the enemy in the final phases of an assault across the most difficult terrain. Its cross-country mobility requirements can, therefore, be somewhat more relaxed.

Australian SPHs will be required to deploy with, at times accompany in close proximity, and stay in touch with the new M1A1 Abrams MBT and M113AS/AS4 APC but not necessarily cross the same patch of ground or take the same route. They will provide in-direct fire support well back – in some cases 30km or more – from the forward edge of battle areas in which MBT and APCs are employed.

It is rare that the Australian Army is so spoilt for choice in a reasonably large and important capital equipment acquisition program, but Land 17 seems to be one such project. This is principally because the Australian Army has never had a modern SPH and therefore any decent system will obviously be a giant leap forward in capability, and also because there is not a huge amount of difference in terms of what each of the candidate SPHs provide on the battlefield.

Sure there are some differences in rate of fire, fire-control and command-and-control systems and platform complexity, but at the end of the day, any of the SPHs to come under consideration later this year will be up to the job of delivering sustained, accurate and highly lethal in-direct fire out to around 40km in a fight. And that's what the Army needs.

So what discriminating factors are likely to get one and not another SPH system over the line? Typically, it is often a case of capability versus cost – how much capability is affordable given the funding allocated?



**IT IS RARE THAT THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY IS SO SPOILT FOR CHOICE IN A REASONABLY LARGE AND IMPORTANT CAPITAL EQUIPMENT ACQUISITION PROGRAM, BUT LAND 17 SEEMS TO BE ONE SUCH PROJECT**

The small number of SPHs sought will certainly see less emphasis placed on Australian industry involvement during the acquisition phase and more on the ability of local industry to provide in-service support over LoT.

The level of technical maturity will also be of critical importance, as more technical risk often results in cost and schedule penalties. For instance, the PzH 2000 is combat proven despite being very complex, while the K-9 Thunder is in service and technically mature. Of the other contenders, Archer has been ordered for Sweden but is yet to enter full-rate production, and the G6-52 – an updated and modified version of the original and proven G6, in service with South Africa and Oman – is still at the advanced prototype stage with no recorded orders to date.

PZH 2000 HAS SEEN COMBAT IN AFGHANISTAN WITH DUTCH FORCES.



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Over the past 10 to 15 years, force-on-force tactical training has significantly improved the quality of small-team training within the law-enforcement and military communities.



**F**orce-on-force training using non-lethal paint-marking training ammunition is dynamic and very stressful for the participant. Instead of shooting at paper or other static targets on a one-way firing range, the participant is fighting against adversaries who think and react – and shoot back!

The actions and words of a participant during a training activity change the behaviour of the adversaries, so each scenario can have a different conclusion despite having had the same start point. The penalty for a participant in force-on-force training, for not moving, not being decisive, not being fast enough, not anticipating an adversary's next move, or just making a poor decision, is a potentially painful hit from a paint-marking projectile. Force-on-force training using non-lethal paint-marking training ammunition reinforces to each participant that every situation is different, and that each

participants' actions have a direct effect on the outcome of a situation. Winning or being successful in force-on-force training is not measured by score – it is determined by whether or not a participant is 'marked' during an activity, and whether or not the threat was stopped.

Force-on-force training using paint-marking training ammunition creates high levels of stress in participants without placing them in any real danger. Consequently, this type of training provides an ideal medium for preparing soldiers and/or police officers for real-life dangerous situations without actually putting them in danger. Force-on-force training emphasises to participants the importance of being able to accurately hit an adversary while the participant and the adversary are moving, as opposed to shooting at a static target from a static firing point. It also emphasises that quick decision making, decisive action and understanding the tactics, techniques, and procedures of a threat are all issues that are as important as sound marksmanship and weapon handling.

Force-on-force training using paint-marking training ammunition also emphasises to a participant when *not* to shoot. This is achieved by the use of scenarios that require participants to quickly and accurately assess a situation before either deciding to use lethal force or not, or become a casualty themselves.

Despite the advantages force-on-force training provides to the military and law-enforcement training organisations, it can also reinforce the wrong lesson as well. The shortfalls of current force-on-force training include the following:

- determining who was hit first after a shooting has occurred. Adjudicating the result can be very difficult and requires many umpires, reducing the 'realness' of the training;
- a scenario can degenerate into a game. In some instances the scenario stops when all participants have emptied their magazines – but training should be as close to reality as possible. In reality, when a soldier or police officer (depending

## FORCE-ON-FORCE TRAINING USING PAINT-MARKING TRAINING AMMUNITION ALSO EMPHASISES TO A PARTICIPANT WHEN NOT TO SHOOT







on rules of engagement) engages a threat, they should see a reaction from the threat. That is, the threat should 'go down' after being hit. If the decision to shoot has been made, the soldier or police officer should continue to engage the threat until it ceases to be a threat. Once the threat has 'gone down', shooting must stop. In current force-on-force training activities, unless role players are highly disciplined, this can be very difficult to achieve;

- current types of non-lethal paint-marking ammunition have a number of tactical, technical, safety and logistic shortfalls that can reinforce the wrong lessons.

Introducing the Bioval Tactical Simulation Vest (TSV), a wireless system that is worn by participants of force-on-force training can improve the training outcomes. The system consists of a vest with sensor plates in the front and rear, a helmet with sensors and a facemask/goggles with sensors in the goggles. All the sensors are connected to a small, armoured transmitter located on the back of the vest. The transmitter communicates with a laptop, using very simple software, and allows the exercise controller to remotely see when and where a participant is hit. Using simple radios, participants can be directed by the exercise controller on how to behave based on what he sees on the TSV screen on the connected computer.

Ultimate Training Munitions (UTM) is the manufacturer of a new generation of non-lethal paint-marking training

ammunition that has the following advantages over existing paint-marking ammunition systems:

- realistic muzzle flash in low- or no-light situations,
- shoots to the same point of impact as live ammunition out to 20m in pistols and 35m in rifles,
- leaves a small paint mark on the target, which encourages the shooter to look for an effect on the target and not just paint marks,
- the paint marks the target even with a glancing hit,
- there is no 'Matrix' effect – that is, participants cannot see the projectiles flying towards them and move out of the line of fire,
- realistic weapon function and recoil. Up to 300 rounds can be fired through a

UTM-adapted pistol without stopping or without being cleaned,

- minimal protective equipment is required – facemask/goggles/helmet and gloves with two layers of loose clothing are all that's required,
- three-year shelf life, and,
- safe, consistent muzzle velocities.

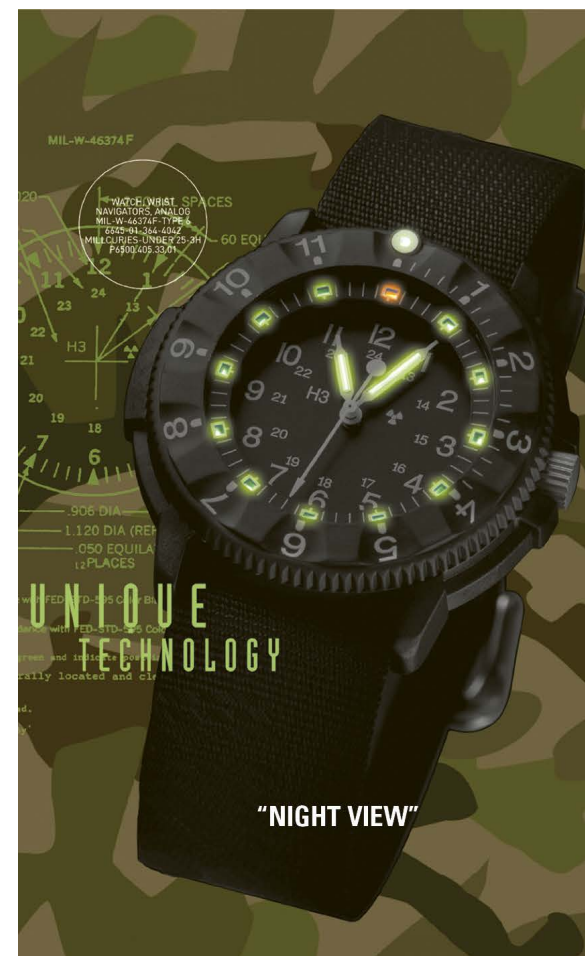
By conducting training using UTM Man-Marking Rounds with the Bioval TSV, and equipping each participant with a simple radio, force-on-force training becomes much closer to reality. As a scenario runs, the exercise controller can see the exact time and location on the body that a participant has been hit, and can make an immediate determination on the shooting. The exercise controller directs the participant that was hit first to 'go down' and the scenario continues. By conducting training using this technique, more complex scenarios with multiple decision-making activities can be successfully conducted. The other upside is that a realistic quantity of ammunition is used when a shooting occurs.

At the end of a scenario, all hits are saved on an Excel spreadsheet and can be used in the training activity's after-action review.

Without using the Bioval TSV and UTM Man-Marking Rounds, achieving this level of resolution when conducting force-on-force training is almost impossible. This technology completely resolves the issue of who was hit first and who was ultimately successful.

For more information regarding UTM non-lethal paint-marking training ammunition or the Bioval TSV, contact Chris Burton at XTEK Ltd on (02) 6280 6321.

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# ANOTHER CHAPTER

## DESERT PATROLS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

As the RAAF C130J Hercules thundered down the dusty gravel runway in Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan, I swing between sadness and excitement – sad to be leaving a 'fair- dinkum operation with your mates', but excited to be heading west and heading into who-knows-what.

Operations in Iraq have somewhat overshadowed those in Afghanistan for a long time, and prolific media attention has not painted a pretty picture.



In the flight that took me from one war zone to the next, I had the most surreal moment of all my 15-year's experiences with the ADF. Sitting in the jump seat, smack bang in the centre of the relatively spacious cockpit, I chatted with the two very level-headed young men in the forward seats as we chased the Sun westward over the Persian Gulf. As the natural light outside dimmed to match the subdued cockpit lights on the inside, I watched Palm Island (construction of which I had learned about on Discovery Channel just two weeks earlier) and dozens of flame-throwing oil derricks in the inky blackness drift below us. But that wasn't the surreal bit. What struck me hard – and I couldn't shake it – was an unnatural, unnerving and yet wholly satisfying sense of being actually and physically inside either a video game or a movie set. This feeling grew stronger the darker it got outside and the closer we got to landing. And that bit – holy cow! – what a thrill!

But enough of that – fleeting moments of personal euphoria aside, this really is a theatre of war and our soldiers need their story told.

Our first port of call between the two theatres was a place all Australians (except, perhaps, shipboard Navy personnel) in the MEAO will visit at least four times during their six-month tours of duty – the Force Level Logistics Asset-Middle East Area of Operations (FLLA-MEAO). Located within a much bigger American distribution base, the FLLA-MEAO is the central Aussie logistics hub through which everyone and everything going into or coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan must pass. It feeds it's materiel to the troops on the ground through other similar, but smaller, FLLA hubs in each location (for example FLLA-B (Force Level Logistics Asset-Baghdad)).

Initially, all Aussie personnel stop at the FLLA-MEAO for at least four days of in-theatre briefings and training. They receive lectures on everything from pay and entitlements to cultural briefings. They also spend time on the best, most realistic (read fun) weapons range they are ever

likely to see, zeroing weapons and chalking up accuracy scores that leave American observers gobsmacked and insanely jealous. Those who go deeper, either into Iraq, Afghanistan or any of several other outlying support hubs, will pass through here again on their way out and back for two weeks of ROCL (relief out-of-country leave), and again on final exit.

By the way, the cultural brief I mentioned was all about how to live and operate in close proximity to – Americans!

The Americans really are a breed apart and, as with any education, first-hand encounters teach the greater lessons. But the 'cultural awareness' lecture certainly came in handy. Individually, they are nice guys in the main, always up for a chat or a 'how-you-doin'?' in the DFAC (dining facility) queue. Over all, though, the culture is eye-opening – the scale of their logistics, their attitude to the war, life and religion, and their penchant for the 'finer' things of home – McDonalds, KFC, Subway etc etc (but more on that in the next issue).

Of course, the FLLA-MEAO is also home to a great bunch of Aussie logisticians, keeping

the mail and the thousands of tonnes of other supplies and equipment flowing. People like Private 'Tommo' Tomkins from Townsville. Aged 29 with three-years service under his belt, Tommo joined the army to do his bit for his country. His grandfather, whom he never met but is very proud of, was a member of the famous 39th Battalion that held the Japanese on the Kokoda. The older Tomkins survived the Japanese only to be killed by a drunk driver, one Anzac Day, back home. And, as Tommo served on the other side of the world, his first child was born, and was proudly christened with the old digger's name – Jack.

Ops Officer Captain Megan Bruhwiler, also

from Townsville, says the FLLA-MEAO is like a giant post office with lots of freight and people moving through it, almost daily.

"It's not rocket science, but there are a lot of moving parts," she says, "and when something goes wrong, it's the movers who cop the blame."

But, with tongue firmly in cheek, she adds that it's always the RAAF's fault!

Jokes aside, though, I did see Tommo cop a mouthful from a disgruntled officer when he announced that a flight had been cancelled because of a problem with the airplane. With typical laconic humour, the expert mover diffused the moment with a quick, "Sorry, ma'am – bird flu".

When the next healthy 'bird' did come, we were off to Iraq, specifically Baghdad.

Our arrival at the military side of Baghdad International Airport and the subsequent ride to the headquarters of Joint Taskforce 633 – the headquarters that covers all Australian personnel in the MEAO, including Afghanistan – was uneventful, yet quite interesting.

The 'arrivals hall' was a small, weedy paddock off the side of a very large concrete apron, alive with the activity of a major airbase. Photography here, as in most American-controlled sectors, was strictly prohibited. In fact, it was a photographic incident a couple of days later that brought on our scariest moment of the whole trip (but, tease that I am, I'll say no more on that 'till next issue).



Fully kitted up in 18kg of body armour, carrying 14kg of cameras, batteries etc and lugging a civilian-styled and -coloured backpack containing the bare necessities for a three-week trip into the relative unknown, I was glad (for the thousandth time) that I didn't have the added burden and responsibility of a weapon and webbing.

The ride to HQ took what seemed like half an hour (I didn't time it) but didn't take us 'outside the wire'. We actually passed through two or three different American bases on the trip, but they have grown so large they are now essentially one super base.

Aussie HQ is picturesquely situated in one of several palaces on the side of a massive man-made lake. It is said that when the lake was constructed, Saddam turned off the water supply to the whole city for a month while his new lake filled up.

As with most Iraqi palaces, though, outward appearances and the craftsmanship of finish belie an underlying shoddy construction. Beautiful marble tiles hide structural concreting that would not nearly meet 'Western' construction standards – support pillars too thin in the first place are made of crumbly concrete, riddled with air voids and using chicken wire or little better in place of proper iron-bar reinforcement.

History and construction notwithstanding, if you really must visit one of the world's worst contemporary war zones, Aussie HQ in Baghdad is a relatively nice place to stay. And, possessing the only functioning swimming pool – Saddam's own swimming

pool – it is the envy of all, and a very popular place for the American neighbours to drop in to. This fact alone means you could never get truly lost on this American super base – just ask anyone how to get to the swimming pool, and you're set!

Headquarters Joint Task Force 633 is home to the Australian task force commander, Brigadier Mick Moon (since replaced by Brigadier Michael Crane), who commands Operation Catalyst – the ADF's contribution to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq – as well as Operation Slipper – Australia's contribution to the international coalition against terrorism, which currently includes the Reconstruction Task Force and CH-47 Chinook detachments in Afghanistan. He also commands other Australian personnel and assets that are 'dual-assigned' to both operations – HMAS Warramunga (since replaced by HMAS Toowoomba), patrolling the Persian Gulf, two PC-3 Orion maritime surveillance aircraft and the aforementioned FLLAs and C-130s.

On our first evening in Baghdad – quiet, save for the half-hourly passage of two Black Hawks on their regular shuttle service around the eight-or-so heliports in central Baghdad – we visited FLLA-B, a small piece of Australia, complete with fully grown gum trees, and got the usual briefings on how the soldiers fill their day. Apart from the interesting statistics that pointed to a very busy schedule for a small bunch of people, the most interesting thing for all four journalists on our tour was to sit in their 'bunker' and just imagine what it must be like to ride out an 'incident' in such confined quarters. Essentially the bunker was a square concrete drainage pipe (of the type you'd see holding up a road over a small gully) not

big enough for a tall man like me to stand up in, and furnished only with a couple of army stretchers for seats and a telephone to make reports and receive the all clear. Cooped up in here for a couple of hours at a time and on an almost daily basis (they had reason to do so six hours before our visit and 12 hours after), their busy work schedule, in offices located just metres away, gets no relief. But far from being a simple encumbrance, the necessity for cover has been made all too obvious on a couple of occasions when members were forced to scurry across the open yard with bullets skipping in the dust just metres away.

Flight Lieutenant Wendy Walker, officer in charge, says "nothing is directed at us, per say, but when trouble breaks out in the neighbourhood, we take the sensible precaution of heading for the bunker."

"There's lots of weapons out there and not all of them are fired in anger, but what goes up must come down."

The Aussies usually stay holed up like this for at least 20 minutes after the last shot is fired.

Day two in Baghdad saw us visit what is probably the furthest forward on the 'front line' any of our soldiers go – the Australian Security Detachment, 10th rotation – SECDet X. These guys are responsible for the day-to-day security of the Australian ambassador, his embassy and staff.

While they live within the relatively safe International Zone – commonly referred to as the Green Zone – in central Baghdad, the work of the ambassador takes them outside, into the Red Zone, as many as three to four times per week.



SECDet X is a combined-arms combat team at its core, with armoured, infantry and military police elements doing the actual front-line duty, ably supported by six other corps – intelligence, signals, RAEME, medical, logistics and catering.

Their area of operations is geographically ill-defined, however, with their brief of protecting the Ambassador taking them anywhere and everywhere he wants or needs to go. Therefore, traveling in ASLAVs, they may find themselves ranging over urban, rural or desert territory.

With a brief for VIP protection, and a wide range of travel throughout one of the most dangerous cities in the world, SECDet X often see trouble on the street – but they do not engage.

"We don't pursue attackers – we are not here to fight. We have a job to do and we just get on with it," officer commanding SECDet X Major Terrence Cook says.

"Small-arms fire directed at an armoured vehicle just doesn't bother us."

While the mission to date has been relatively quiet for SECDet X, previous rotations have come under attack. In October 2004, two civilians were killed and three Aussie soldiers injured when three ASLAVs were hit by a car just 350 metres from the Australian Embassy. In August this year, four soldiers from SECDet IX were injured when their accommodation was hit by a 122mm rocket – one of three randomly fired into the Green Zone. One of these soldiers – Corporal Sarah Webster – required evacuation to a US military hospital in Germany for treatment of head and lower

limb injuries before being repatriated to Australia for recuperation.

Notwithstanding the relative quiet for the Australians, October was one of the worst months on record for the Americans with more than 100 killed.

As well as close personal protection of the Australian Ambassador and embassy staff, SECDet X is also responsible for static security of the embassy building. They also maintain a security overwatch of the city from an elevated position close to the heart of the action. Soldiers in this elevated post are tasked to scan the city for signs of trouble and report it when they do see something. This report – complete with distance and bearing readouts taken through laser range-finding binoculars – when combined with reports from other locations, helps authorities to triangulate the exact location of the trouble and dispatch ready reaction forces to deal with the aftermath.

As if running to a script designed to impress the visitors, immediately after I photographed the two soldiers on duty in their lookout, a bomb went off a couple of blocks away. The pair, non-plussed by the disturbance, quickly reported it was 1300 metres away. Without fuss or fanfare the report was sent and logged and everyone went back to what they were doing. All the while, the monotone chant of the local mufti echoed through a poor-quality speaker system as he led lunch-time prayers at the mosque, and an F16 thundered overhead – but he was just passing.

Less than ten minutes later, automatic gunfire was heard in the neighbourhood of the bomb site and was still running as we

departed the observation post. It was time for lunch.

SECDet X is self-sufficient in all respects. While they travel in their armoured convoy to the FLLA-B once per week to pick up supplies, they are capable of operating independently for at least three weeks.

I am pleased to report that their kitchen is staffed by a good-old Aussie Army cook, who served up one of the best lunches I had in the whole MEAO.

With just a couple of days spent in Baghdad (which was probably enough), we were in the air again, traveling south to Dhi Qar province, home of the newly formed Overwatch Battle Group-West (see page 18, issue #11).

Housed on the largest military air base in Iraq, and right next door to the ancient city of Ur, these are the guys living and working in the very heart of the 'cradle of civilisation'. I'll go into this more in next issue's wrap-up, but understand that the 5000-year-old city of Ur is where the first form of writing was invented, the Garden of Eden is thought to have been and the house where Abraham was born still stands (albeit without its roof). I recommend a quick read in Wikipedia for the full story.

Today, however, Tallil is a significant air base, home to another major American logistics hub. It was once one of Saddam's major air-force bases. With parallel runways and copious hardened aircraft shelters (now severely bomb damaged) it is second in size only to Baghdad International.

The 500-strong Australian Overwatch Battle Group-West is Australia's largest single



ANOTHER BOMB GOES OFF IN BAGHDAD - RANGE 1300M





contribution to the multinational force in Iraq. It is responsible for an area covering 72,000sq/km and more than 2 million people across al Muthanna and Dhi Qar provinces. The mission of the battle group is to support Iraqi security forces, support the local government and to maintain situational awareness in both provinces. This means that, while they do participate in mainly reconnaissance patrols over vast and diverse terrain, they do not get directly involved in either security or governance issues. They maintain and 'overwatch' and would only get involved in military action in necessary self defence or if called upon by the Iraqi government to help out in dire circumstance.

To help the Iraqi's help themselves, elements of OBG(W) conduct training for the Iraqi Army and expend a good deal of time and effort in helping the local civilian communities through the provision of civil/military liaison projects.

While Tallil airbase has come under indirect rocket attack on occasion, the last previous occurrence was some six weeks before my visit. Heavily armed and highly protected in ASLAV and Bushmaster vehicles, the Aussies have not, however, come under direct attack.

Officer commanding A Squadron 2/14 Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry) Major Shane Wakley says that the ASLAVs under his command (35 in all) are ideally suited to the terrain and are well protected for the mission.

"While many of the vehicles are fitted with bar armour, we don't actually know if it works because we have never been hit," he says, "and, to be honest, we are more than happy to continue just believing that it works."

Despite being on operations, soldier training continues. In fact, being on operations may offer the best opportunity to complete specialist courses such as qualifying members on the 84mm Carl Gustaf recoilless rifle. With wide open spaces on which to lay a range template and greater availability of ammunition, more soldiers than normal can be run through such training. It was also the first time I had seen one of those things go off – and it was pretty damn cool. I also got to sit on the roof of an ASLAV as the 30mm Bushmaster

cannon ripped into a hapless old Russian BMP. I didn't know it before, but the ASLAV's ammo self destructs if it tumbles off course after a ricochet, dying in its own little fireworks display.

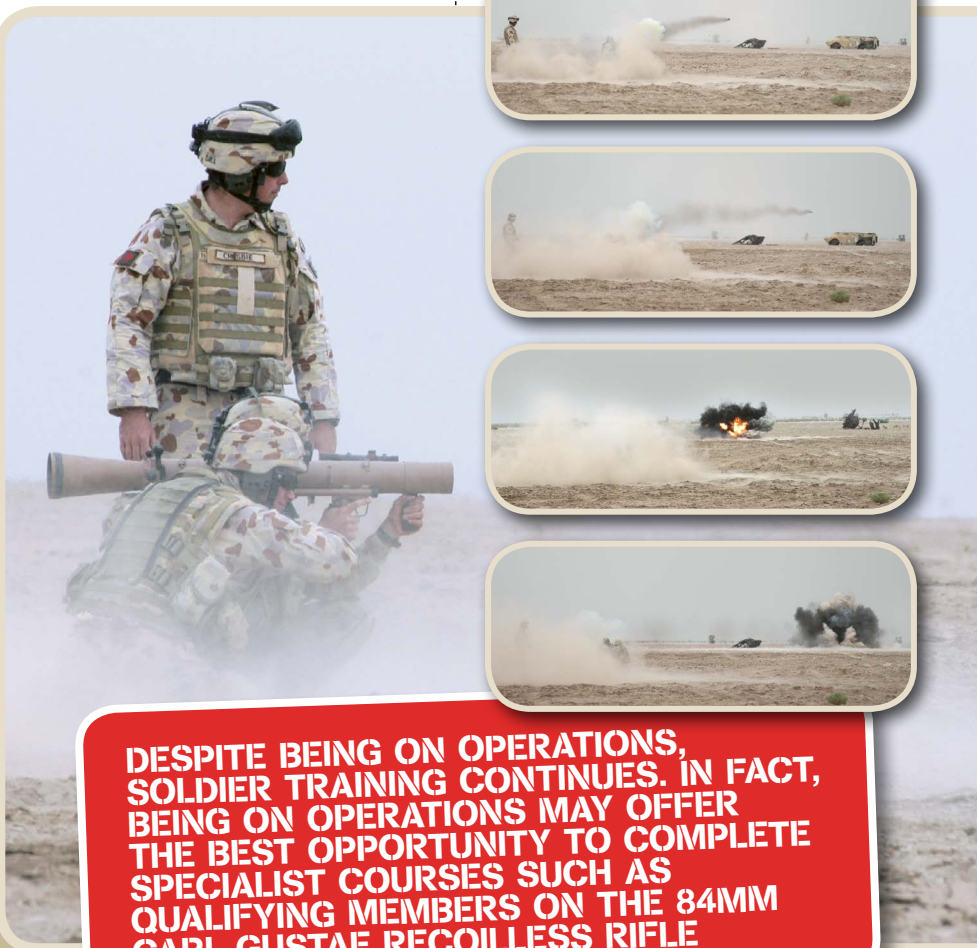
Tagging along with elements of OBG(W) as they conducted normal operations was

insightful. After our visit to the weapon's range on our first full day in loc, we were out again the next day, this time to visit with the local police commander for a regular chat about his issues, concerns and needs in terms of support. After a fairly lengthy meeting in which not a lot of actual business was conducted (thanks to the local custom of discussing family and other preliminary issues over a glass of strong, very sweet tea) the police chief relayed that he was pretty happy and had a good class of keen new recruits nearly ready to march out.

Then it was off to the local army barracks for more business, before heading out into very dry countryside to meet villagers who had recently benefited from an OBG(W) civil/military liaison project. Designed to install new power poles and a transformer to deliver a more reliable electricity supply to the small community, the actual work was conducted by local contractors. This in itself

is designed to inject money and activity into the economy to aid in the general recovery process for the country, but for this small community, it means a huge improvement in delivery of the very basics of life that we in Australia take for granted.

At the end of the day (and the end of my trip) I was left with a sense of the enormous scope of activity and responsibility heaped upon the shoulders of Australia's military men and women. Operating in countries half a world from home, the same people are soldiers one day – trained to fight and kill – and diplomats the next – naturally empathetic and innately compassionate. I felt privileged to walk among young diggers, threading the deserts of the Middle East and writing their own chapter in Australia's proud military history.



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A U S T R A L I A



# RTF IN AFGHANISTAN

PICS ADF

While we bask in summer sun here in Australia, cold nights and spectacular scenery greet Australian soldiers on patrol in Afghanistan's southern Oruzgan Province over the northern hemisphere's winter months.

The contingent of Australian Defence Personnel are working in Afghanistan as part of the Netherlands-led Provincial Reconstruction Team under the NATO International Security Assistance Force's Stage III expansion into southern Afghanistan.

Australia's contribution, known as the Reconstruction Task Force (RTF), is a mix of engineers and security personnel deployed to Afghanistan for up to two years and is working mainly on reconstruction and community-based projects as part of Australia's commitment to assisting Afghanistan achieve a stable and secure future.

The majority of the task force is drawn from the Darwin area. The core of the force is made up of combat engineers and tradesmen (carpenters, plumbers, electricians and plant operators) from the 1st Combat Engineer Regiment who undertake the majority of the RTF's construction activities. This includes skills training for the local population to ensure the benefits of the deployment continue well after our personnel have returned home.

Protection for the RTF is provided by the Brisbane-based motorised infantry of the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment and the Darwin-based 2nd Cavalry Regiment. Command, logistics and support elements have come from Darwin's 1st Brigade.

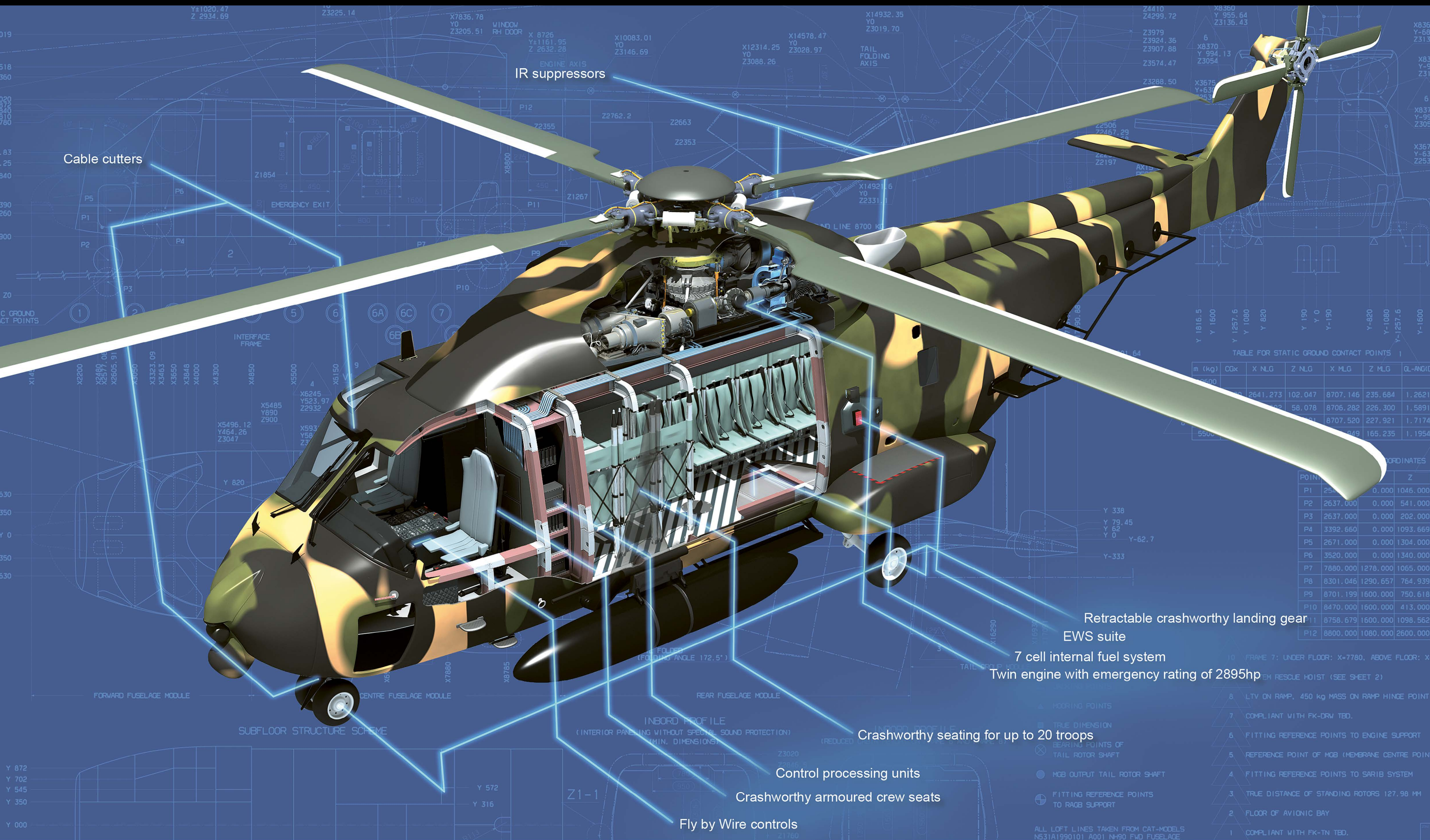
Much of the work conducted by the Australians and their Dutch counterparts is done after extensive consultation with local elders and officials. Meetings, or 'shurah', with local leaders ensure that time and effort isn't wasted on projects inappropriate to the needs of the community.

In Tarin Kowt, the nearest centre of population, the small district hospital and the local police station were among the first facilities to receive much needed attention. However, the Australians also venture further afield into more remote villages and hamlets, at which times they really get to soak up the atmosphere of one of the oldest countries in the world.



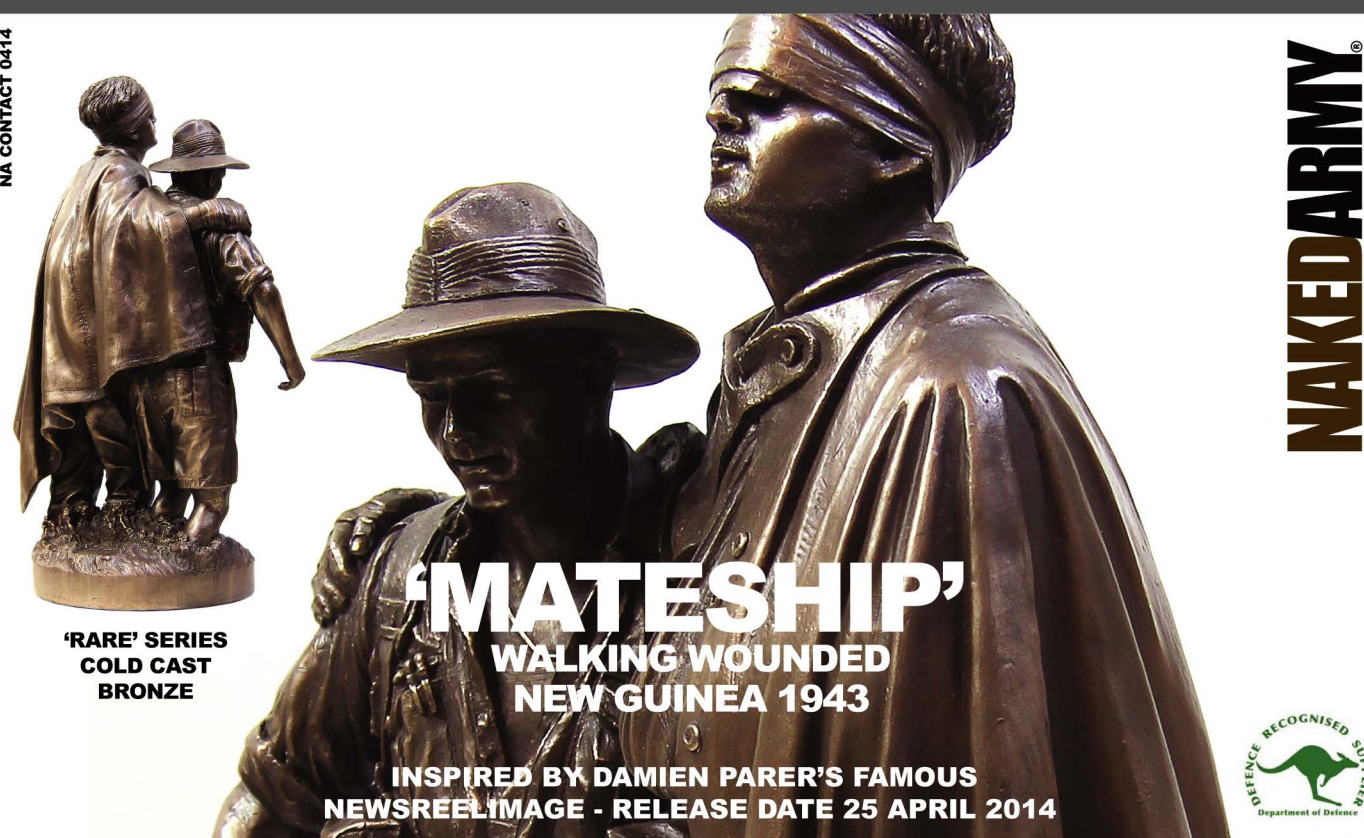


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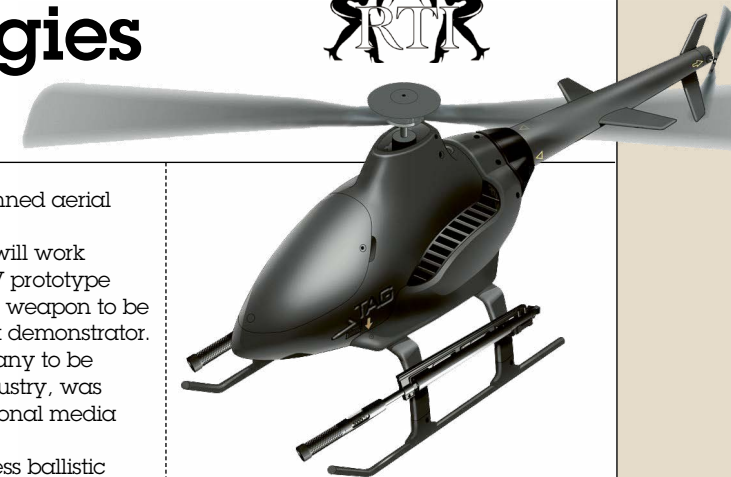
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### WHAT'S IN A NAME

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WORDS AND PICS RTI



The long name might sound complicated, particularly for those with a limited knowledge of firearms or defence systems, and throughout this article there will probably be other phrases that will make you scratch your head and say 'what?'

With that in mind I'll try to keep the technical talk to a minimum and, instead, focus on explaining why this Melbourne-based company, is creating such a buzz, not just in Australia, but globally.

Recoil is the 'kickback' force generated when a projectile is discharged from a weapon and, for as long as firearms and other defence weapons have been around, manufacturers have tried to limit or reduce recoil, in the pursuit of greater capability and accuracy. To date, their efforts have resulted in rather limited success.

After hundreds of years and as many attempts, the general feeling within the firearms industry was that the complete elimination of recoil was simply not possible.

Then, 30 years ago, RTI founder Richard Giza had an idea that turned conventional theory on its head.

While the third law of motion theory – every action has an equal and opposite reaction – can never be broken, through a unique and innovative rearrangement of conventional weapon components, RTI's system actually controls recoil to the point of virtually eliminating it.

"My father was a soldier and I can still recall the stories he swapped with colleagues late at night," Mr Giza says.

"That's where it began for me, and from those early days, I've always had an interest in military weapons and how they best function.

"What first started as curiosity, grew to interest and, finally, became my passion."

He mused that if recoil could be eliminated or controlled, more powerful yet lightweight weapons could be produced.

"So much hard work has gone into researching and developing this technology to make it a reality. Now we're in a position to capitalise on these advancements as we move forward with commercialising the technology," Mr Giza says.

In November 2006, RTI signed a joint commercialisation agreement with Tactical Aerospace Group (TAG), an American company that designs

and manufactures unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

Together, RTI and TAG will work to produce an armed UAV prototype equipped with a recoilless weapon to be used as a proof-of-concept demonstrator. This venture, the first of many to be forged within defence industry, was well received by international media – particularly in the US.

Mr Giza says the recoilless ballistic armament system that RTI will develop for TAG's unmanned aircraft will elevate the 'detect first' platform to a much coveted 'strike first' capability, without disrupting the aircraft's flight characteristics.

One of the many advantages of recoilless technology, particularly from a defence perspective, is that it will allow for considerable advantages in weight reduction and accuracy in weapon systems, with consequential improvements in mobility, manoeuvrability and, ultimately, survivability.

While defence industry leaders have so far been impressed with the

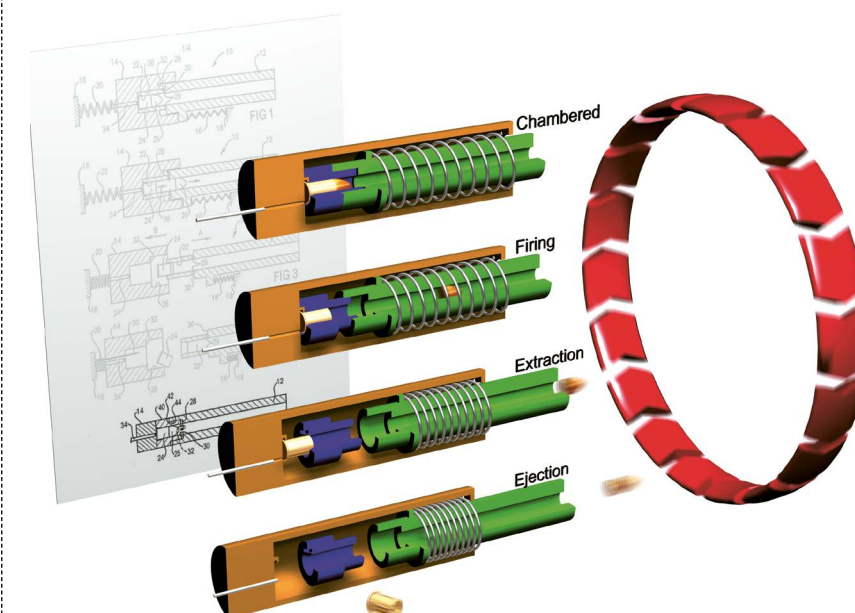


technology and its potential across a number of platforms, perhaps the true value behind RTI's recoilless technology stems from its adaptability.

Not only does RTI look like shaping the future of defence systems worldwide, but because its technology can apply to virtually any impact tool, the uses appear endless.

"One of the most exciting aspects is that its application is not limited to just weapon systems. Impact tools across a variety of industries, such as construction and mining could also benefit," Mr Giza says.

Melbourne-based RTI is looking forward to a big year in 2007 and an even bigger long-term future. There's already been a healthy interest shown in the recoilless technology and its potential application and, as RTI continues to increase its public profile, the company's future could be huge. With a global defence market worth more than \$960 billion a year, RTI could potentially attract a sizable share of that business to Australia.





# SOVEREIGN DEFENCE

## NORTH WEST MOBILE FORCE

In 2005, more than 8000 foreign fishing vessels were sighted in the waters off Australia's northern coast. Official reports say that in the first half of the year alone, more than 100 illegal vessels were detected within sight of the coast. Worse still, the Northern Territory Government concedes that several foreign vessels have actually landed in remote areas and their crews have set up camp on Australian soil. These intrusions pose a far greater risk to Australia than the immediate damage to commercial fisheries and livelihoods, however – "When it comes to our biosecurity, these incursions are a major loophole in Australia's frontline defence," Kon Scrymgour, NT's Acting Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, says. Domestic birds – even a monkey – have been discovered on foreign fishing boats in Australian waters. Given that the coastline of the Northern Territory alone spans about 10,000km, the ongoing challenges faced by federal and state border-patrol agencies in maintaining effective surveillance of our sovereign shores is significant...

A stingray glides placidly under our Zodiac patrol boat in the warm tropical shallows, without a worry in the world. Its unusual behaviour is enough to catch the attention of our Indigenous bowman for a second, but his eyes are soon poised on the beach in front of us again.

The distant sound of another two Zodiacs coming to rest somewhere to our flank confirms our water operations patrol is ready to hit the beach.

An infantry headset crackles a few words in the ear of our coxswain, and our craft patters cautiously towards the landing point.

INTRO CONTACT  
STORY AND PICS GUNNER SHANNON JOYCE

For the aboriginal patrolmen travelling from across Arnhem Land for this Operation Resolute deployment – today feels like their D-Day. There are no opposing enemy on the beach, nor slaughterous lines of fire, but the weightiness they offer this landing can still be seen in their faces.

The specialist nature of their unit means they will never see a deployment to foreign soil, but the concept of protecting their sovereignty over northern Australia from foreign incursions, is an ideal they hold very highly.

Back in their home communities, wearing the Australian Army camouflage-patterned uniform attracts friendship and respect from complete strangers, because members of the North West Mobile Force (NORFORCE) are considered protectors of the land. Nowhere is the warrior ethos more engrained in the values and traditions of its soldiers, than in NORFORCE.

The Indigenous soldiers' connection with the land they're patrolling puts them at an instant advantage over any adversary, even before they have attended any military training. This is because a high proportion of NORFORCE patrolmen come from traditional-living backgrounds, where

### GROOTE EYLANDT

English is their third or fourth language, and hunting consumes most of their days.

This particular deployment has a good mix of older, experienced hands with younger, newer soldiers. Two of our patrol members are fresh off their basic training course and seem to hide their anxiety about the deployment through tense stares.

The older more experienced members of this patrol though – like our bush medicine expert Private David Garambarker – have been doing this for years, and the enticement of fresh seafood rations weighs heavily on their minds.

"Crab is good – boiled or thrown in the fire," Private Garambarker yelled at me on the Caribou flight.

"Oysters are good too – straight off the rocks, you have them raw."

"Crayfish is best. They're harder to find but."

We haven't stormed the beach yet, but already Groote Eylandt sounds like a majestic place.

Tucked up against the left side of the Gulf of Carpentaria, the archipelago is steeped in aboriginal legend, achieving classification as an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) in 2001.

A lot of the land, though, is off-limits to non-Indigenous persons and is protected by hefty fines, to preserve the sacred aboriginal sites peppered across the island.

Storming this revered Indigenous paradise with rifles at the shoulder and the military mind flicking past postcard beauty to the landscape's tactical values, might seem over-precautious and unnecessary to an outsider, but the tragedy of what could happen to this region ecologically, if left unchecked by a credible and efficient surveillance force, is of much greater concern.

In 2005, Coastwatch sighted 8000 illegal foreign fishing vessels (FFVs) in northern Australian waters. In 2006, the deterrence value of increased surveillance flights and the introduction of the Sea Rangers program





was evidenced by a drop of 40 per cent in FFV sightings – this is despite an anticipated increase, because of the extra eyes on the water.

The coordinated Border Protection Command's (BPC) surveillance and response strategies between Defence and Australian Customs authorities appear to be stemming the problem that has become significant over the past two years.

Headquarters Northern Command (HQNORCOM) manages the Defence response to the incursions and the NORFORCE soldiers operating under their control are continuing to do what they can on the ground to stem the problem.

"Go!" shouts our Bowman unexpectedly from the front of the Zodiac, leaping into the boot-deep surf and galloping up the shore, the prowess and proficiency in his drills evident in every move.

Before I have time to unwrap my camera, the patrol members have fanned-out from our Zodiac in a series of quick glances and field signals, to clear the beach for an observation post (OP).

Any doubts that these soldiers are somehow less professional in their methods of operation because of the stigma that's sometimes associated with a Regional Force Surveillance Unit (RFSU), are immediately allayed.

Our OP is concealed under some natural vegetation where the bush breaks out to the beach, providing a good view of any sea traffic that might travel through the region.

Intelligence received by HQNORCOM from the civilian reporting networks that exist in the remote Indigenous communities across northern Australia, has indicated the presence of an illegal foreign fish-poaching operation targeting reef fish, in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The purpose behind our observation task today is to watch and report on the movement of such suspected FFVs. Information relayed back to NORCOM will be processed by an operations room, where a coordinated response will be devised, involving Australian Customs and other Defence assets.

For the moment though, our observation lanes seem clear.

"Boats have been coming fishing in our water for a long time," explains Private Michael Wununugumurra at the OP.

"But that's not the worry – it's the big ones taking all the fish."

What Private Wununugumurra is talking about are iceboats that are capable of moving enormous quantities of fish. One day in July last year, the Australian Navy apprehended and escorted seven of these foreign iceboats into Darwin Harbour for

fishing illegally in our waters. A combined haul of 4.3 tonnes of reef fish was found on the vessels, the crews were detained and the ships were eventually destroyed, in line with Australian policy.

Sophisticated navigation and communications equipment found onboard the boats suggest such operations are very well organised.

In recent times, there has been an increase in the resistance of foreign fishing crews to apprehension by Australian authorities, with some situations escalating to potentially hazardous levels. In an attempt to deter Navy and Customs boarding parties from boarding their boats, some foreign fishing crews have used sharpened poles, concrete missiles and, in one instance, the Master of the boat threatened naval personnel with a Samurai sword.

Commander NORCOM Commodore Campbell Darby says that with the increase in resistance being experienced by Defence and Customs, the Australian Government has authorised the use of a range or more robust enforcement measures. These new measures will allow boarding parties to safely overcome those boats that resist apprehension.

The new powers follow the release of last year's Coastwatch figures that prove the co-ordinated strategies of the Indigenous



GROOTE EYLANDT

**IN JULY LAST YEAR, THE NAVY APPREHENDED AND ESCORTED SEVEN OF THESE FOREIGN ICEBOATS INTO DARWIN HARBOUR FOR FISHING ILLEGALLY IN OUR WATERS. A COMBINED HAUL OF 4.3 TONNES OF REEF FISH WAS FOUND ON THE VESSELS**





communities and Australian authorities are having the desired effect.

"Hey bulla – good fishing up there," says Private Garambarker, returning to our position with the beach-clearing-patrol-cum-hunting-party.

"Lots and lots a stingray," he adds, indicating the abundance of the sacred aboriginal totem in the mouth of the nearby inlet.

The returning soldiers drop their buffet of seafood, which includes crab, crayfish and barramundi, on the sand. It was evident that the spears I saw tied to the sides of our Zodiacs earlier would be getting a good work-out this trip.

Seafood rations will provide the majority of sustenance for the patrols this deployment, allowing us to operate in the field with less stowage requirements. Living off the land also provides a patrol with an excellent degree of self-sufficiency, allowing them to remain deployed for extended periods, without a requirement for resupply.

The hunting methods the Indigenous soldier employs to gather rations – such as spear fishing – are techniques that can be picked up with a bit of practice. But reading the land to know where the best tucker is found, involves a good understanding of the subtleties in an environment. A skill one wouldn't expect to learn in a few days.

A transport corporal from the regular Army though, who knew nothing of

Indigenous cultures before he was posted to Arnhem Squadron in Nhulunbuy, is taking away with him a good insight into one of the world's oldest cultures.

"When you work with these guys for the first time, you're an outsider and you need to develop a level of trust before they will open up to you," Corporal Darren Dowsett says.

"Once that barrier is broken though, you will have an extended family like no other," he smiles.

Corporal Dowsett was adopted by Private Garambarker during his two-year posting to NORFORCE – a uniquely Aboriginal relationship he doesn't take lightly.

"My Aboriginal name is Cudurcow Gananear, named after the Brolga bird.

"The adoption came about after I recognised the fault in a disciplinary matter that Private Garambarker didn't understand completely," Corporal Dowsett says.

"I think a lot of the guys respected that, and that's when I became lucky enough to be called their friend."

NORFORCE surveillance of our northern coastline is not just limited to the scope of water operations. A vehicle patrol of two modified landrovers has deployed to Groote Eylandt as well, with a diverse range of tasks that have taken them across the archipelago so far.

Our Zodiacs cut through a maze of estuaries towards an inland RV, where my mid-deployment transfer between the

patrols has been organised, for a little insight into vehicle operations.

Trying to navigate these waterways with a map doesn't work with anything less than absolute pin-point accuracy.

Local resident and NORFORCE patrolman Private Wayne Wurrawillya though, was raised on Groote – and his local knowledge is used to guide us speedily through an area occupied by a crocodile population.

Ahead of us on an estuary bank, a menacing shemagh-covered figure steps out from the mangroves – the lead scout for the vehicle patrol.

I jump out of the Zodiac unceremoniously into a boot-deep bog, and we both trudge up to higher ground, and towards the vehicle patrol's position.

A fading magenta sky makes it more and more difficult for the scout to track back along the path he came down, but a light, relaxed tone of chatter indicates we've arrived at the position.

"Night-time can be the most dangerous time," says Private Daryl Numaradi, a young, keen Aboriginal soldier with his sights set on getting to Iraq.

The darkness of night represents an ominous force in a lot of Indigenous cultures around the world, but Private Numaradi has a more practical reason for his warning.

"Water buffalo – they are hard to see with all the trees," he explains. "We found one in the position already this trip."

## A CROCODILE LEAPT OUT FROM A MURKY ESTUARY TO TAKE PRIVATE GENGHI, DURING THE CLEARANCE OF A MANGROVE INLET



GROOTE EYLANDT



Wildlife is one of the most prevailing dangers for NORFORCE soldiers in northern Australia. Live ammunition is carried by all patrols in line with standard rules of engagement (ROE) protocol, but is more likely to be used for self defence against wildlife. One round has already been fired this deployment by the patrol commander, to neutralise the threat posed by wildlife to another patrol member.

"A croc nearly got Genghi yesterday," Private Numaradi says.

A crocodile leapt out from a murky estuary to take Private Genghi during the clearance of a mangrove inlet by foot. The patrol commander fired his rifle at the reptile, hitting it under the left eye and causing it to retreat, wounded, back into the water.

"We don't know if it's dead or just angry now," Private Numaradi says.

The next day we drive south to investigate a basic campsite on the beach, reported to the vehicle patrol yesterday by a community elder when the patrol stopped briefly at an outstation to give some local kids an up-close look at a NORFORCE soldier.

The campsite is not characteristic of the communities' residents on the island, and Groote is seldom affected by 4WD trespasses, unlike the mainland. One

possible explanation is that an FFV crew, active in the area, has come ashore recently.

As we near the coast and the campsite's location, an unusual foreign chatter starts to dance on our Pintail radio communications.

"We must be hearing them," explains our patrol commander 2nd Lieutenant Jamie Pitcher, "their radio signal is coming through on our sets."

Information from locals suggested the campsite we're moving to investigate would be empty – but could they have returned?

We stop short of the sand dunes where we're met by a cool sea breeze.

Dismounting our vehicles, the lead scout moves ahead with the patrol commander to conduct a quick reconnaissance of the beach. But there is no FFV.

The carcass of a rotting reef shark with its fins and tail cut off lies 300 metres up the beach.

"It sells for more than \$100 a kilo on the Asian market," Lieutenant Pitcher says, indicating to the missing fins.

"The body isn't worth the stowage on their vessel, so they just dump it overboard."

The campsite we set out to investigate is found a little further up the beach. An assortment of footprints around the site brings a conclusion from Corporal Norman Daymarringu.



## GROOTE EYLANDT

"They been here today – not Aborigines," he says.

The nuances picked up by Corporal Daymarringu that reflect the footprints' age and ownership are lost on myself and the patrol commander, but foreign writing on burnt tin cans and wrappers in a makeshift fireplace support the corporal's assertion, and suggests the previous occupants may be Asian in origin.

A number of evidentiary items that could link the intruders to the campsite when they are eventually apprehended, are bagged, and our headquarters notified of the find.

The patrol commander relays his suspicion that the vessel is still in the area, and we push north, slowly, keeping eyes on the coast along the way.

come from that know first hand the good work being done.

The work of NORFORCE though, doesn't stop at military operations.

The surveillance unit fosters a very close relationship with Indigenous Australia, engaging remote communities through sports and fundraising, and providing a degree of social support where possible. The unit's positive influence on the children from Indigenous communities – where there's a shortage of male role models and where truancy is rife – is a welcomed role.

Unlike a regular Army unit, NORFORCE predominantly draws its manning from a range of communities in its AO, producing its own basic support network that involves teachers, school principles, medical

to live in the long grass in suburban areas, where they're exposed to alcohol abuse and any number of associated health problems.

Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough says he recognises the extent of the problems faced in Indigenous communities and believes Indigenous affairs in Australia are at a crossroads.

"Sadly, too many Indigenous Australians are not leading independent lives, trapped in an intergenerational cycle of dependency – a



Within hours, our imagery is being analysed on the big screen of the operations room at NORCOM and response vessels are being vectored to the area.

As a surveillance unit, NORFORCE operates on an information-gathering basis. They will not apprehend or arrest unless life is threatened, and will break contact if challenged by an adversary.

"We'll keep watch for the FFV to direct Customs or Navy onto their position," Lieutenant Pitcher says.

"The boys reckon they could be back tomorrow morning."

"There's nowhere to hide anymore," he says, with a beaming smile.

And he's right. Communities are identifying and reporting suspicious activity in their region, knowing NORFORCE will investigate.

While a lot of the specific operational tasks must remain classified and unshared, it's the communities that these soldiers

professionals, prominent community elders and even bus drivers in the Army Reserve – all well placed to use the unit's resources where they're needed most.

While the North West Mobile Force could be considered fairly young – raised in 1981 – parallels are often drawn to the unit's World War 2 uncle, the 2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> Northern Australia Observation Unit (NAOU), where Indigenous Australians were used as trackers and guides.

NORFORCE still follows in the proud traditions of 2/1NAOU, but its Indigenous members now play a more active military role.

Getting to know some of these soldiers and learning about their lives at home, you can't help but wonder about where Arnhem Land and its communities will be in a decade or two from now.

A poor standard of basic services in Indigenous communities, and the way some are managed, is causing a migration to the city where a lack of support forces many

welfare trap that needs to be broken," he says.

"The government's blueprint [for Indigenous affairs] identifies three priority areas for special attention – early childhood intervention; safer communities; and building wealth, employment and entrepreneurial culture."

As the biggest employer of Indigenous Australians in the country, the North West Mobile Force recognises its responsibility to Indigenous Australia, both symbolically and practically.

For many Indigenous Australians, the North West Mobile Force is an opportunity to protect their country. While an income can be the main motivator in going to work – in anyone's book – to some NORFORCE soldiers, who receive mining royalties that many of us could only dream of, they're just giving their time back to the land.

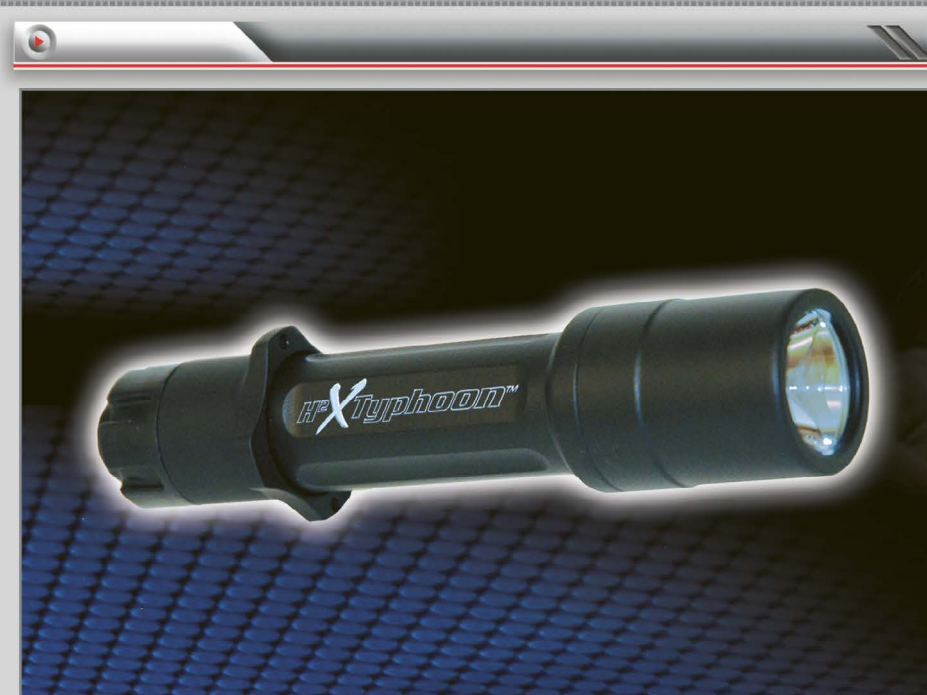
It also offers a symbol of hope for a people and a culture undergoing a dramatic coming of age.

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# IN GALLANT SERVICE

WORDS BRIAN HARTIGAN  
PICS ADF

## BRAVERY AND DEDICATION RECOGNISED

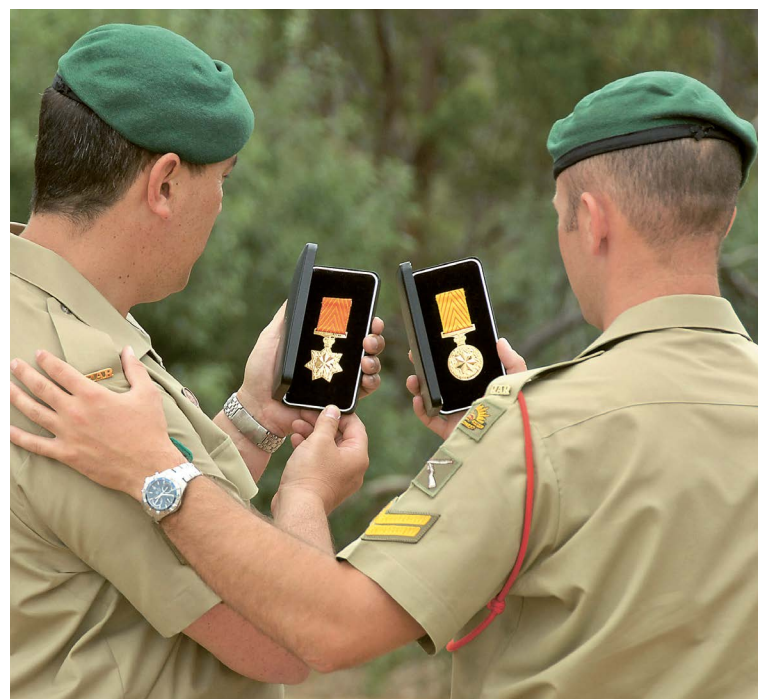
Australia's first ever Star of Gallantry – second only to the Victoria Cross – has been awarded to a sergeant from the Sydney-based 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (Commando).

**O**n separate parades in Sydney and Perth late last year, Major General Michael Jeffrey, Governor General of Australia, presented several medals for gallantry to members of the Special Forces Task Group who had recently returned from operations in Afghanistan.

The Governor General also announced that combat elements of the SFTG would receive a Unit Citation for Gallantry, while the task group as a whole would be awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation.

He described the actions of our soldiers as being in the highest traditions of Special Operations Command, the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.

The soldiers, predominantly from 4RAR (Cdo) and the Special Air Service Regiment encountered a tenacious enemy in Afghanistan, almost daily, during their 12-month deployment. They were involved in some of the most ferocious fighting Australians have seen since Vietnam.



### MERITORIOUS UNIT CITATION

The Australian Medical Detachment deployed to Balad, Iraq from May to September 2005, was awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation for service and outstanding professional competency in the provision of health care in support of the United States Air Force Theatre Hospital, Balad.

During its deployment as part of Operation Catalyst in 2005, members of the detachment were involved in treating more than 5000 patients.

The detachment comprised 45 regular and specialist reserve medical personnel from the Army and Air Force from across Australia.

In presenting the award, the Chief of Air Force Air Marshal Geoff Shepherd acknowledged the hard work of all the men and women who deployed in medical roles in support of Operation Catalyst.

"Our medical personnel are very highly regarded among our international colleagues who were most impressed by the professionalism and dedication displayed in support of Operation Catalyst," he said.

"Your invaluable work as part of coalition medical facilities in Balad, often in very challenging circumstances, is something for which we should all be very proud."



### SERGEANT 'A' – STAR OF GALLANTRY

For conspicuous gallantry in action, and for leadership

**D**uring the conduct of an operation in southern Afghanistan in 2006, a combined coalition force conducted a direct-action mission against a target in Oruzgan Province.

Upon insertion, the assault force, provided by another Coalition partner, was surrounded, and suffered two wounded and one killed in action.

A commando reaction force was deployed to assist by securing a helicopter landing zone and covering their withdrawal. As Sergeant A's section was the lead element of the commando reaction force, he received the most intense weight of enemy fire.

At the landing zone, the commandos came under immediate heavy fire from rockets and small arms, from multiple flanks. The commandos held the position, under fire, for more than an hour.

Sergeant A was responsible for securing the northern flank, repelling a number of assaults while being engaged from ranges as close as 50m.

After the extraction was complete, the commandos began their return to base. The enemy anticipated this and had prepared a series of ambushes. Critically, Sergeant A's vehicle was the first to be engaged at each ambush location. In each instance, he led his section to assault and clear opposition from the route, in rapid and aggressive counter attacks, despite frequent heavy fire.

On one occasion, with absolute disregard for his own safety, Sergeant A conducted an assault on a machinegun position not more than 30m to his front.

On at least two other occasions, while being engaged from positions as close as 5m, and receiving multiple bullet strikes on his vehicle, Sergeant A was forced to fight his way through ambushes by driving directly through the killing ground, which he did without hesitation.

Through outstanding leadership and composure under fire, Sergeant A led the commandos through several ambushes without injury.

To read the abridged citations of other Gallantry-award recipients, visit our web site at [www.militarycontact.com](http://www.militarycontact.com)



## STAR OF GALLANTRY

### DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

An Australian Army helicopter pilot was presented with a British Distinguished Flying Cross by the Queen at an investiture at Buckingham Palace in November.

Major Scott Watkins served on exchange with the British Army in the Joint Helicopter Force-Iraq in 2004-05. He was awarded the medal for his actions while flying in support of the 1st Black Watch Battlegroup.

Chief of Army Lieutenant-General Peter Leahy said Major Watkins was recognised for his service, professional ability and courage.

"Major Watkins exhibited skill and calm decision-making during difficult and dangerous operations," he said.

In one incident, Major Watkins took control of the British Lynx helicopter in which he was the co-pilot, after its pilot was injured by small-arms fire while flying in support of Black Watch operations south of Baghdad. Watkins, a captain at the time, piloted the helicopter to a nearby coalition base and the pilot was evacuated to hospital.

Lieutenant-General Leahy said that on other occasions, and despite a very real threat to his aircraft, Major Watkins repeatedly placed himself in exposed positions in order to provide support to other aircraft and the ground forces they were supporting.

"In the opinion of the Commanding Officer of the Black Watch, Major Watkins' actions undoubtedly saved the lives of a number of soldiers in the battlegroup."

Major Watkins is the first Australian to receive the UK honour since the Vietnam War.

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# INCOMING? SUPER HORNETS

WORDS MARK AZZOPARDI  
PICS US NAVY

When the news story broke in *The Australian Financial Review* in mid December last year about the government's plan to acquire up to 24 F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fighters it took most observers by surprise. Surprise because for a year or more the RAAF and the Defence Minister's office had been consistent in quashing rumblings and rumours that Australia needed an interim combat aircraft to ensure a 'capability gap' did not open up between retirement of the F-111 fleet and introduction of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) next decade.

The article's content or accuracy was not subsequently refuted by Defence, normally a reflex reaction when a newspaper gets it wrong. While neither the Department nor Mr Nelson's office has since issued a press release verifying or providing further details about the Super Hornet buy, it has been confirmed that the information for the article came first hand (that is, directly) from Brendan Nelson himself. It doesn't get any higher up the food chain than that in Defence circles.

So if we are to go ahead and acquire two dozen Super Hornets, what exactly will their intended purpose be?

Firstly, they would presumably replace the medium strike role to be left vacant once the 30 or so remaining F-111s are retired around 2010-2012.

The strike role is a capability that provides a recognised strategic deterrent, particularly in our near region of interest.

Then there's the matter of bridging the gap between withdrawal from service of the F-111s and introduction of the first full squadron of JSF (about 20-25 aircraft).

In the face of constant denials from JSF prime contractor Lockheed Martin, the US Air Force and the Federal Government, most analysts agree that there is almost

the first Australian Super Hornets enter service around 2010; although an initial tranche of half a dozen or so aircraft may be pulled from the US Navy Super Hornet production line and delivered as early as 2008. This would enable instructors, crews and maintenance personnel to develop an initial operational capability well before the F-111s leave town.

Combat proven over both Iraq and Afghanistan, the Super Hornet is oft described as a 'Hornet on steroids'. It is bigger, heavier and can carry more ordnance than the Hornets currently serving our nation.

See the table below for further detail, but essentially the Super Hornet will have twice the mission radius of, and a greater weapons load than, the stock model Hornet. It will also permit RAAF commanders to switch between air-to-surface and air-superiority roles at will as mission and operational threat parameters dictate.

What can taxpayers expect to fork out for such capability? A rough-order-of-magnitude figure being bandied about is at least \$2 billion, with upper estimates nudging the \$3 billion mark.

That's a lot of folding stuff no doubt, but it may actually work out nicely for the

RAAF, as it could result in fewer JSFs being required than the currently projected 80-100 platforms, effectively offsetting the cost of the Super Hornet buy.

How long will the Super Hornets be in RAAF service? Based on the numbers involved and the likely price tag and complexity of the acquisition and associated through-life support package, this has all the hallmarks of a serious purchase – one intended to provide a capability (predominantly strike) over the longer term, rather than an interim measure of a few years duration.

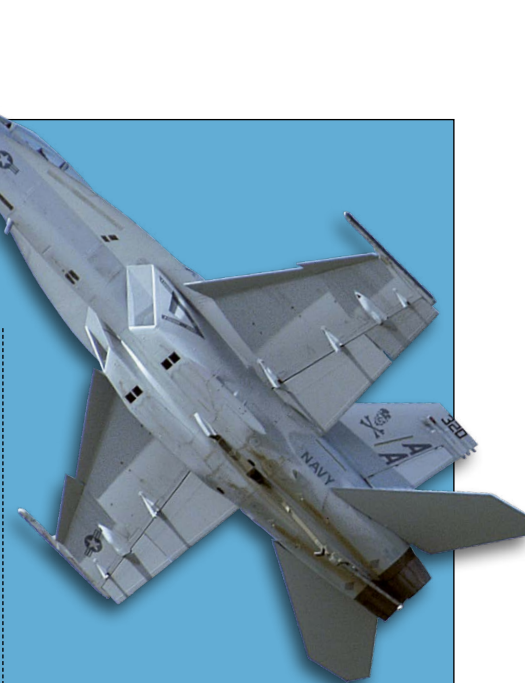
It would not surprise this author at least, if the Super Hornet was still listed on the RAAF's inventory two, maybe even three decades from now.

## PERFORMANCE AND WARLOAD COMPARISON

	F-111C	F/A-18E/F Super Hornet	F/A-18A/B Hornet
Empty Weight:	21,537kg	13,864kg	11,200kg
Max Take-Off Weight:	44,896kg	29,900kg	25,400kg
Internal Fuel:	15,454kg	6352kg	4926kg
Dry Engine Thrust:	120kN	124kN	98kN
Thrust w/Afterburner:	186kN	196kN	158kN
Max Speed:	Mach 2.5	Mach 1.8	Mach 1.8
Combat Radius (strike mission)	1475km	1080km	535km
External Weapons Load	11,500kg	8032kg	7030kg

certain to be slippage in the production and delivery timetable of these fifth-generation multi-role aircraft. Some believe the RAAF will be lucky to receive its first batch of JSF by 2014/2015 – others think 2017/2018 is more realistic.

The current plan, according to the article in the *Financial Review*, is to see



## SOLDIER ON HELPING OUR WOUNDED WARRIORS



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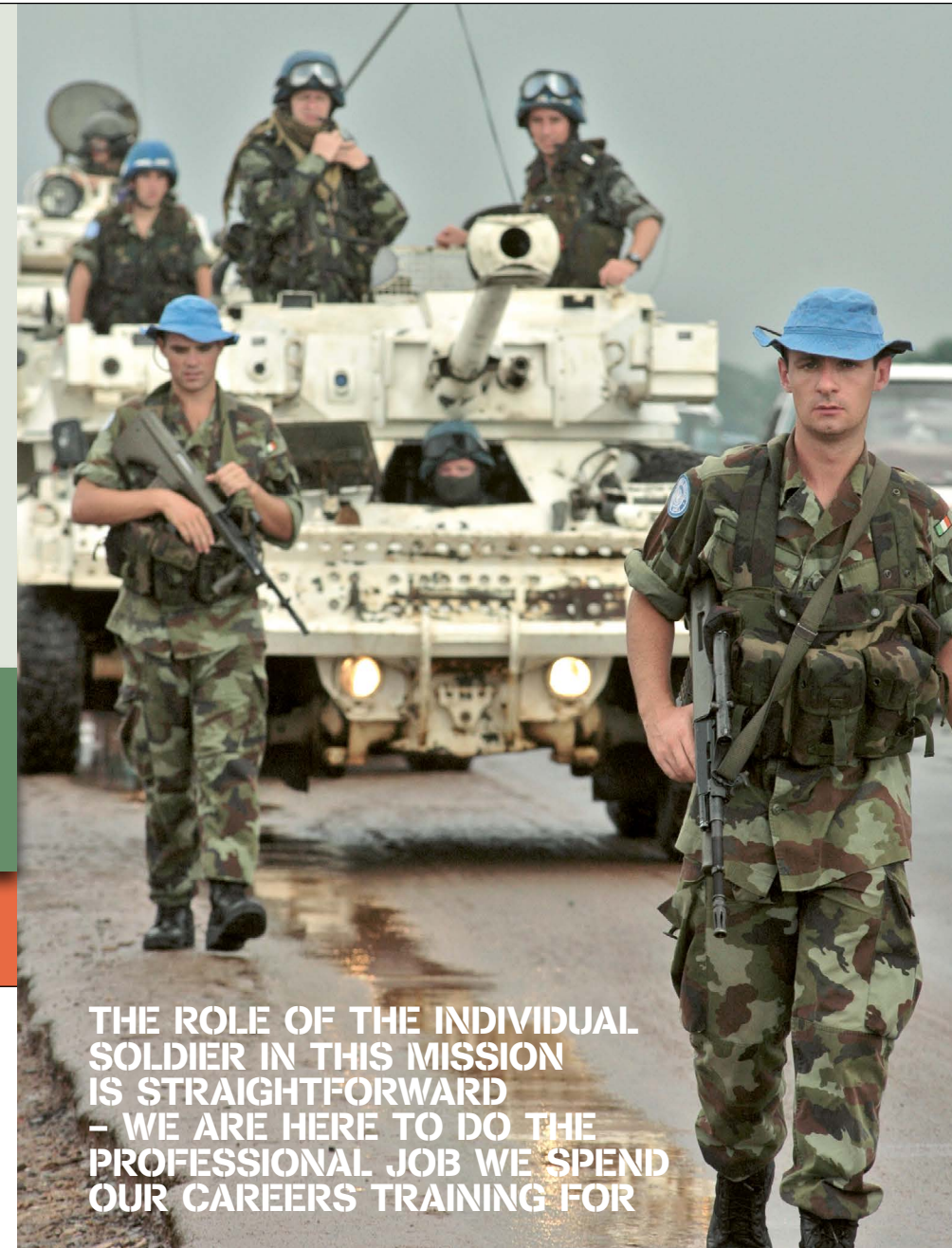




Author: Capt Eóin McGeeney is a Mortar Platoon Commander, Team Bravo, FQRF. Back home he is an Officer Instructor at the Artillery School, Combat Support College, Defence Forces Training Centre, Curragh Camp, County Kildare, Ireland.

#### Mission of the FQRF:

*FQRF deploys an armoured battalion on peace-support operations in Liberia in order to act as UNMIL force reserve, support UNMIL sector commanders, support the election process and undertake special security taskings as directed by the force commander in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1509 and 1609 (SCSL).*



**THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL SOLDIER IN THIS MISSION IS STRAIGHTFORWARD – WE ARE HERE TO DO THE PROFESSIONAL JOB WE SPEND OUR CAREERS TRAINING FOR**

patrol is self sufficient while deployed. A typical LRP could last anywhere between three to 15 days.

The mobility and speed provided both by UN air elements and organic APCs of the FQRF are important in affording the unit the ability to tackle its third main mission tasking. That is, to provide security to the UN Special Court in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The previous Irish battalion (March to November 2006) was deployed operationally in Sierra Leone for the successful extradition of former Liberian President Charles Taylor under 11 charges of varying crimes which brought war and instability to much of western Africa in the 1990s. He now awaits trial in The Hague, in Holland, under the auspices of the UN Special Court of Sierra Leone. The court moved venue because of the potential security risk involved, and the operation to extract Charles Taylor was seen as the final opportunity for guerrilla forces loyal to him to launch an attack and prevent both his trial and extradition. His successful extradition and the facilitating of the onward transportation by the FQRF significantly reduced the chances of Liberia returning to conflict.

The role of the individual soldier in this mission is straightforward – we are here to do the professional job that we spend our careers training for – to soldier in an operational environment. With the ever-changing geopolitical climate of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, overseas service is long established as a regular part of military life for the Irish soldier.

Irish Defence Forces first contributed to peacekeeping in 1960 in Congo (also the UN's first peacekeeping mission) and our peacekeeping service has been continuous ever since. Our most notable mission was a 23-year contribution to the UN force in Lebanon from 1978 to 2001, to which we contributed more than 32,000 individual tours of duty. Forty-seven of our colleagues gave their lives on that mission. In October 2006 we returned to Lebanon following the conflict in July/August. This brings the Irish Defence Forces' current contribution to more than 830 troops currently serving overseas in 21 separate crisis-management operations in 19 countries. Our other sizeable contributions are to Kosovo (KFOR) and Bosnia (EUFOR).

How do the sights, smells and sounds of a foreign country such as Liberia affect the young Irish soldier? For a fair portion of the 96<sup>th</sup> Irish Battalion, this is their first overseas tour. At home, mission preparation and training, allied with double checks of personal gear and last-minute personal and financial arrangements were the norm.

To say that Liberia is a change from the lush green fields of modern, urbanising Ireland is a huge understatement. Liberia

The Irish Defence Forces make up the main body of the Force Quick Reaction Force (FQRF) of the United Nations' Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The current six-month rotation of the 330-strong, 96<sup>th</sup> Irish Infantry Battalion is drawn from the 4<sup>th</sup> Western Brigade, in the west of Ireland.



## IRELAND'S QUICK REACTION FORCE IN LIBERIA

WORDS CAPTAIN EÓIN MCGEENEY PICS IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

**U**nlike many Australian units on peacekeeping missions, this is an ad-hoc unit made up of troops from combat, combat support and combat service support units in Ireland. It is this flexible, highly skilled make-up that gives the Irish much needed independence in conducting operations throughout Liberia.

Camp Clara, home of the Irish contingent, is situated in Monrovia on the grounds of the once-famed Hotel Africa. The hotel, like the country, has seen better times. The main building is little more than a burnt-out shell, while its chalets are in a much better state after receiving attention from Irish engineers. Camp Clara is a little part of Ireland overseas where, outside of operational commitments, "ceol agus craic\*" abound. This has been home to Irish troops since our first deployment here in November 2003.

Camp Clara is also home to the incoming Pakistani element of UNMIL's FQRF. They have recently taken over from Swedish counterparts who have withdrawn from the mission. The 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Pakistani Frontier Force will take over operations as the FQRF in entirety by May 2007 when Irish involvement will cease.

Liberia is an extremely poor country with large mineral resources. Much of this

inherent wealth was misused to procure arms and fund conflicts within and across its borders – hence the UN involvement. Currently, UN sanctions prevent the mining and selling of diamonds while earlier sanctions on the export of timber have been lifted.

Liberia's main exports include rubber and timber. The Government of Liberia has recently regulated these industries and controlled trade is commencing. They do this with UNMIL assistance.

The mission of the Irish contingent means that the FQRF are prepared to deploy at one-hour's notice to move to any location in Liberia by sea, air or road, acting as the main asset to the force commander. He may deploy our unit against any escalating situation in the country that demands a robust, mobile, mechanised element to contain or suppress a situation. The tasks for Irish soldiers on the ground are relatively straightforward and are broken down into three main operational functions.

The first are platoon-strength, mobile and foot patrols within Monrovia – Liberia's capital city – and are conducted within a designated sector of the city and surrounding areas. Criminal activity is a concern and these patrols are designed as a proactive deterrent. They support the

local and international police elements that operate here.

Sector patrols are a short-term operation for the FQRF. The main tools used for this job are the MOWAG Piranha III APC, personal weapon – and a good measure of Irish sociability.

Patrols serve two distinct purposes. Firstly, to show a strong UN presence in the area and also to act as a visible deterrent against potential militia or criminal activity.

Monrovia has a population of approximately one million people. It is the largest centre of ex-combatants in the country and saw some of the fiercest fighting during the civil war years up to 2003. It is recognised that the Irish peacekeeper has a natural, cultural ability to engage with local civilians and it is through this that information and local knowledge are gathered at street level. These patrols give

the battalion an accurate intelligence picture as Irish troops are tasked to find answers to regularly updated information requirements.

The second function of the FQRF is to conduct long-range patrols (LRPs) to all parts of Liberia, including the border areas with Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote D'Ivoire. These LRPs are in support of UN troops who have a ground-holding responsibility throughout Liberia. The Irish assist them in their respective area of operations through aggressive local patrolling and by easing the security concerns of the local people, hence building local confidence. These LRPs can be deployed by land, sea and air. Air and sea support is provided by UN force assets from other nations. They are always a minimum of company size (110-140 personnel) and the necessary service support elements, such as medics, engineers, maintenance and communications to ensure that the





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MOMENT

is an extremely poor country that has been embroiled in conflict for a long time and the effect on the population and infrastructure will be felt for many years to come. The country, its lack of infrastructure and its extreme climate would surely remind Australian servicemen of their worthy contribution in East Timor – a mission the Irish Defence Forces also made a small contribution to. It was here that our first operational deployment of Irish special forces – Army Ranger Wing – took place. This was followed by a more robust and mobile, but limited deployment of an element of the same unit to Liberia in November 2003 to February 2004. We take pride in knowing that our robust presence, professionalism, cultural awareness and lengthy peacekeeping experience have contributed to the relative stability in Liberia at the moment.

Christmas for the young soldier away from home can be a challenging time. Through the efforts of the battalion chaplain and the civilian and military cooperation (CIMIC) committee, some energy was channelled into worthy causes. Money was raised through the production and sale of specially designed Christmas cards. Funds raised were available to purchase food and Christmas gifts for some of the poorest families and children of Monrovia. Shortly, 19 containers are due to arrive from Ireland with a variety of essential items and gifts to be distributed all over the country. This effort will be largely powered by the work of battalion personnel.

Christmas Day started in good military fashion with a 10km road race and finished with all Irish troops attending a dinner hosted by the battalion commander, which saw a traditional

menu with an Irish touch served up. Later, it was time to contact family and friends, who support us back home, with our Christmas wishes.

As 2007 dawns, the battalion will have more LRPs to conduct across Liberia as well as the daily sector patrols in Monrovia and an operational deployment to the Special Court in Sierra Leone. Importantly too, leave rotations begin in January, allowing each soldier a three-week break at home.

The lengthy preparation in our home form-up phase and the physical discomfort of our intense Mission Readiness Exercise (MRE) are worth it, when we realise that the people we encounter in towns, villages, schools and roadsides on our patrols have a chance in life to avoid the fate of the child soldiers associated with many parts of western Africa.

This year will see the end of Irish involvement with UNMIL after three-and-a-half years, as command is formally handed over to the Pakistani battalion in May.

Operational and logistical experiences gained in Liberia have been very important for all ranks of the Irish battalion and have given us continued opportunity to test and challenge ourselves. Naturally, this experience feeds into our training at home and gives valuable insight to leaders and soldiers alike. It is this experience, adaptability and professionalism that we can readily bring to the table for any future overseas missions.

\* *Ceol agus craic* = music and fun – in the truly Irish sense.



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# CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

WORDS WAYNE COOPER PICS ADF AND COOPER COLLECTION

Our time marched on in the Baidoa AO. We had been in country for several months and things had settled down into a fairly predictable schedule of patrols, raids and VCPs. While we were still working pretty hard, it seemed there was little left that we hadn't already seen or done, and what was once extraordinary was now becoming routine.

To say we had become complacent would be incorrect. We were too disciplined and motivated to allow that sort of serious decline in our attitude. We were aware that Somalia still held lurking dangers, but familiarity breeds contempt, and in my case at least, a little arrogance.

I guess I felt I had seen or experienced most of what Somalia could throw at me. It wasn't exactly old hat, but I felt it held few remaining surprises. However, while I don't believe in fate, two events would transpire in close succession to shock me out of my burgeoning arrogance and remind me that I had not yet seen it all, and that I was not home yet.

The first wakeup call happened at the end of a morning's patrol of a stretch of the highway between Baidoa and the southern town of Buurhakaba. 23 Section had been out with an infantry platoon paying a visit to some of the villages along the MSR and, as had been the trend of late, had little to show for its efforts. While we didn't expect to discover a gang of bandits taking tea at a local café, there was always the hope that there might be a little action on offer somewhere.

The section was stopped in the shade of a copse of trees outside a small hamlet when we received a radio message from the APC section conducting a VCP on the highway further to the north. They said that the passengers on one vehicle that had been stopped had complained they had been accosted by bandits at a point on the highway not far from our current location. While this was a story we had heard many times before, and one that was sometimes used to divert attention from the storytellers themselves, we were compelled to check the area, even though there was little chance of bagging any bad guys.

The section with infantry in tow swept into the area described by our comrades in a three-up formation on the off chance that there were actually evil doers lurking in the

bushes. Not surprisingly we discovered no sign of banditry, but stumbled across a small group of camel herders and their flock. For prudence sake, the infantry platoon commander decided to have a chat to the bemused looking Somalis and was quite surprised to hear them tell, in very broken English, that they had indeed seen bandits in the area, and that they believed they were headed to a nearby watering hole to make trouble.

After receiving directions to the dam, we set off, flat strap, back up the highway looking for a dirt road running off to the west, which we had been assured would lead us to where the bandits were.

Finding the track as described, we adopted the three-up formation again and headed off toward the dam. Making our way down the track, we passed several more groups of camel herders leading their four-legged charges to water.

After several hundred metres, the track straightened out and we could see part of a high dam wall. A herder with his half-dozen camels was working his way back up the track as we rounded the corner. Seeing the APCs coming toward him, he began to wave excitedly.

Moose stopped his carrier next to the agitated Somali and the infantry platoon commander leaned over the side of the vehicle to try and hear what the man was saying.

"Teaf, Teaf, Teaf," he exclaimed while pointing down the track toward the dam.

"Thief?" asked the grunt, also pointing toward the dam.

"Haa, yes, Teaf."

"Guns?" the lieutenant asked while pointing to his own rifle.



"Yes, gun... Teaf!"

It seemed the bandits were either still at the watering hole or had not long left there. The low-odds lead was quickly becoming a genuine tip-off and the potential to see some action quickly increased our enthusiasm for visiting the dam. Moose gave some quick orders and we got back on the track, choosing speed and surprise over tactical security.

As we came to the end of the track, the extent of the dam became clear. It was a very large structure, extending out by 100 metres on each side, with sloping dirt walls 20 feet high. There were dozens of camels making their way up from a large clearing to access the water within.

The section split off into pairs, Moose in 23 and Micky P in 23 Bravo, broke right, while Kenny and I veered left toward the southern end of the dam. The idea was that

the fleeing suspects before they reached the treeline.

As we closed the distance, it became obvious that one of the gunmen was not a man at all, but at best a teenage boy.

The kid sprinted as best he could toward the treeline while desperately holding on to his rifle. It also became obvious that the fleeing Somalis were going to beat us in the race to the camelthorn scrub that bordered the clearing.

Pete and I in 23 Charlie were closer to the younger of the pair. Kenny gave us the word to pursue the gunmen as they reached the treeline, a scant few metres before us. With a quick word to our infantry passengers to brace themselves, Pete launched us into the camelthorn at top speed as Kenny and Tino in 23 Alpha did the same.

The APC crashed through the viciously barbed trees as Pete did his best to follow

the vehicle as I took a sight picture on my fleeing target.

In my mind, time slowed to a crawl.

"Joogsoo!" I yelled at the boy as I pushed across the safety catch on the Steyr.

My heartbeat seemed to keep time with the kid's footsteps.

"Joogsoo...stop you silly bastard!" I yelled again.

The kid couldn't have been more than 12 years old. He kept running, the rifle butt dragging in the dirt as he struggled to keep hold of the weapon. He wasn't much taller than the rifle itself.

"Joogsoo!" The circle in the middle of the crosshairs seemed huge on his back.

"Take the shot," someone yelled from behind me.

My finger was on the trigger, I couldn't miss. The rules of engagement flashed through my mind. Our ROE said that we

the trail. As the grunts began to patrol slowly in the direction the boy had fled, I replayed the events of the past few minutes through my mind.

"I couldn't have justified shooting the kid," I said to Pete. "We don't know for sure he was a bad guy."

"I think he was," Pete replied, to my surprise.

"So you think I should have shot him?"

"I'm not saying that. I'm just saying I think they were clearly bandits. But it was your decision to make, not mine," he said.

I wanted to ask him if he would have taken the shot, but didn't. We sat in silence and waited for the word to move forward to pick up the peads.

The kid could have been a bad guy – experience had shown us that youth didn't preclude boys from being involved in banditry. He was armed and determined

returned, having lost the trail in the dense bush. The young gunman had disappeared without a trace and, according to Kenny's report over the radio, so had his older accomplice. With disgruntled grunts in the back we returned to the dam empty handed.

We received conflicting stories from the Somalis still at the watering hole. With no interpreter to properly interrogate the camelherders, there we were, neither able to confirm whether the two fleeing gunmen were indeed the bandits, or just other herders who had armed themselves because bandits had been in the area, and who had fled to avoid having their weapons confiscated. For me, regardless of the intentions of the gunmen, the confrontation had reminded me that we were only ever a heartbeat away from a life-and-death decision.

After my hour in the turret, I had wandered over to Ken's vehicle to hand over the picket list before returning to my own car to wait for someone to appear in Alpha's turret before I could stand down for a rest.

I placed my rifle on the engine grill before climbing on top of the vehicle. Rather than pick up the rifle and get back into the turret to wait for Tino or Ken to go on picket, as procedure dictated I should, I sat on the front of the turret and lit a cigarette. With my rifle at my feet and my bum against the .50 cal machinegun, I sat and watched the world go by.

As I stared out into the crowded street, lost in my own thoughts, a car made its way down the thoroughfare and slowed as it drew closer. Just as it began to register that something wasn't right, the rear window of the car rolled down and the barrel of an



we would sweep around it from two sides and try to barrel up any bad guys in our paths. As Ken and I approached the corner of the dam, more Somalis waved at us and pointed toward its southern end.

Rounding the corner at speed, more or less side by side, we were confronted by a large clearing with a group of Somalis standing near a flock of camels, some 50 metres away. As the group turned toward the noise of the M113s speeding toward them, two people broke off from the group and ran towards the bush. As they ran, it was clear to see they were both armed with rifles.

Kenny quickly radioed Moose to tell him we were in contact with at least two gunmen attempting to flee the area. Moose acknowledged the contact and said he and Mick would continue around the dam from the other direction and meet up with us on the southern side.

In the driver's hole, Pete put his foot to the floor as we attempted to catch up to

the young gunman while trying to avoid having us torn to pieces by inch-long thorns. The 13-ton armoured vehicle made its own path through the trees as the boy ducked and weaved a few metres in front of us. While Pete did an admirable job in steering us through the spiny mat of barbs, our quarry was nothing short of incredible in his ability to sprint through the treacherous jumble of camelthorn branches, seemingly unscathed.

It was clear the young gunman had no intention of stopping and would have to be persuaded to do so.

I did my best to brace myself in the turret and avoid the groping branches as I brought my rifle up to my shoulder. As luck would have it, we broke into a small clearing and the boy had nowhere to hide.

My heart pounding in my chest I was faced with an awful decision. For several long seconds I had an unobstructed field of view and a clear shot. I told Pete to stop

could fire on personnel clearly identified as enemy or to prevent injury to ourselves or others.

A kid running away from me, barely big enough to hold up a rifle, didn't qualify for mine.

I reapplied the safety catch. The kid and the rifle disappeared into the bush. The infantry section commander in the back of the vehicle swore at me.

As the adrenaline rushed through me I was both exhilarated and terrified. I was happy that, despite the objections from some of the infantry we were carrying, I had made the right decision – horrified that for a few seconds I had actually considered shooting a mere boy in the back.

I radioed in that we had lost sight of the gunman and was told to drop the infantry and let them follow up on foot. The disgruntled section commander was none too happy that, not only had I let the kid get away, but now they had to make their way through the camelthorn and try to follow

## CAUGHT LIKE A RABBIT IN THE HEADLIGHTS, I JUST SAT AND WAITED FOR THE INEVITABLE CRACK OF AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE THAT WOULD PROBABLY SIGNAL MY END

to flee at the risk of being shot in the back. Surely if he were just a camelherder not wishing to lose a weapon he would not risk everything to keep it?

I decided it didn't matter. Whatever the boy's disposition, he had posed no immediate threat to me or my crew. There was not clear justification to take him out.

I realised then that the boy had probably done the smart thing by not stopping. Had he stopped and turned with the weapon still in his hand, and with adrenaline pumping and my finger on the trigger, I may have decided he was indeed a threat. To this day I am still glad the kid kept running.

In due course, the infantry section

Another incident followed shortly afterward that put me at the other end of the equation.

23 Section had returned to Baidoa in the days following the contact at the dam and had begun another cycle of patrols through the city. This particular day we found ourselves outside the World Vision compound on the main drag through town. My vehicle and 23 Alpha were backed up against the compound wall, facing out toward the busy street.

In the late afternoon, Moose and P were off conducting a patrol with an infantry section elsewhere in the city. While Kenny and I waited for them to return, we shared a security picket between the two vehicles.

AK47 protruded from within. For the second time in a week, time slowed almost to a standstill.

With cigarette in hand, I looked from the barrel pointed at me to my own rifle. The two feet that separated me from my weapon might as well have been 20. The gunman in the car had the drop on me and I was sitting on top of the turret instead of in it.

A few surreal seconds went by as the car continued to roll slowly past, while I waited for the white flash to appear at the end of the barrel. Caught like a rabbit in the headlights, I just sat and waited for the inevitable crack of automatic gunfire that would probably signal my end.

But it never came.

As I looked on in stunned disbelief the barrel withdrew into the vehicle and was replaced by the grinning face of a young Somali man. The joker waved a disciplinary finger at me in mock disapproval before bursting into laughter as the car sped off.

Ok – I'm paying attention again!



## JUNGLE GYM

### Workouts on deployment

BY DON STEVENSON

The good news is that this doesn't mean your training needs to suffer. In fact, many of the best workouts for developing combat fitness use equipment that can't be found at the local gym, but which is abundant on operations.

For a start, you can always use your own bodyweight to perform a massive variety of exercises (refer to last issue), however, to build and maintain the strength and endurance needed for combat operations you are going to need some heavier gear.

#### Equipment

Forget fancy gym machines and isolation training! Combat fitness is about high-intensity, total-body workouts and handling awkward objects. Working with odd objects will challenge your core, grip and stabilisers and will improve your power and work capacity far beyond what you can achieve in the gym alone.

To get a killer workout on deployment, track down the following bits of equipment. Most units will have this stuff lying around in the Q store and all you'll have to do is talk to

your commander about cutting some of it free for PT a few times a week.

**Rocks** – get a few, from 20kg to 60kg. Rocks can be used for deadlifts, cleans, squats, presses, carries and much more.

**A big tyre** – a Unimog or other truck tyre will do at a pinch but, if you can find a combat engineer unit, try to get a tyre off some earthmoving equipment. About 150cm tall and 45cm wide is a good place to start. Tyres are practically a gym on their own, they can be flipped, jumped on, smashed with a sledge hammer and used as a bench for other exercises.

**Sledge hammer** – most units should have these for driving star pickets and tent pegs. If you can find a better cardio workout than smashing a tyre with a sledge I'd like to know about it!

**Sandbag** – Hessian sandbags can hold a fair bit of weight and can be used for carries, presses and even swings, but for a harder workout, scam an extra echelon bag and stuff two or three Hessian bags inside for a sandbag weighing 40-70kg. Use for deadlifts, cleans, lunges, carries and ab work.

In these times of high operational tempos and overseas deployments, ADF personnel could find themselves sent to far-flung corners of the world at a moments notice. This often means that even the most basic fitness equipment could be left behind and that you'll have to make do with what you can beg, steal, borrow, build or improvise.

**Water jerries** – the ubiquitous water jerry weighs roughly 20kg when full and has a handle on top, making it ideal for carrying during sprints.

**Personal equipment** – you might be able to do 20 chinups in PT gear, but how many can you do in webbing and armour? The addition of your webbing and armour to PT sessions can make simple things like bodyweight exercises and running into a very tough workout. Packs can also be used for many of the same drills as sandbags, just make sure they aren't full of valuable gear like radios!

#### Workouts

Once you've gathered a few bits of equipment together for your unit gym, you'll need to figure out a training plan.

There are literally hundreds of different workouts you can put together with the gear listed above. Just keep in mind that, for combat fitness, we want to work on full-body functional movements. This means the majority of things you do in training should involve picking up heavy stuff off the ground, pressing it over

your head, squatting with it, carrying it for time or distance and short, intense bouts of interval training.

Workout schemes such as five sets of five reps of heavy squat, deadlifts, presses and pulling movements all work well for developing strength and can incorporate novel exercises like tyre flips and sandbag work.

Try this sandbag circuit

5 rounds of:

- 5 shoulder + lunge each side
- 5 deadlift + bent-over row
- 5 clean and press
- 5 weighted pull-ups

For conditioning, try timed crossfit-style workouts such as...

as many rounds as possible in 20 minutes of 5 tyre flips, 10 jumps on to the tyre, 15 pushups with feet elevated on the tyre.

or

as many rounds as possible in 20 minutes of 5 sandbag get ups, 10 clean + squat, 200m carry.

Alternate strength days with interval days and, within a few weeks, you'll be prepared for anything.

**Want more workouts like the ones described in this article?**

Go to [www.octogen.com.au/dvdmagazine](http://www.octogen.com.au/dvdmagazine) and sign up for our newsletter to get four free fitness reports including "20 Home Gym Workouts for Ultimate Strength, Speed and Endurance" and "Beat the Beep Test".



## MACE reps visit Australia

BY MAJOR TRAVIS FAURE

At the invitation of the Australian Army, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Shusko, Director of the USMC Martial Arts Centre of Excellence (MACE), and four other senior instructor staff visited Australia in December to provide two weeks of training to the ADF Military Self Defence (MSD) instructors at the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra.

The aim of the visit was two fold. Firstly for the Australian MSD instructors to experience the teaching methodologies of USMC MACE and, secondly, for our instructors to experience the USMC MACE curriculum of techniques and to workshop areas of interest.

The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) has been designed by Marines for Marines. It is a program that complements other military courses and is intended that all Marines will train once or twice a week for the duration of their career, within the martial arts program. MCMAP has 184 techniques which are divided into belts (Tan, Grey, Green, Brown and Black). The Tan Belt is the first division and is taught at recruit and officer training establishments. They then progress through Grey, Green, Brown and Black Belts. Black Belt is their instructor-level division.

Actual belts are the same design and material as the riggers belt worn by some Army members. Initially, the USMC thought the belt system would not work, as the system would not be accepted by marines, however history has proven it a success and the program is now in its eighth year. The belt system has kept marines inspired to train and learn more.

MCMAP has three aspects – the physical techniques component, which are sound and practical for today's operations; the warrior mentality component, which is concerned with developing the warrior mindset within each marine; and the character

component aspect which is about producing good citizens. Success of the program is due in part to the integration of these three aspects. The three aspects together provide the framework for the marines to execute their skills.

Australian MSD instructors, including Army, Navy and RAAF reserve and full-time members as well as VIPs from the Australian Federal Police were trained in various techniques by the MACE staff. Techniques included; standup, ground, weapon retention and disarm, knife, bayonet and improvised weapons. Throughout the training, various operational self-defence aspects were workshopped.

Training was also conducted during this time with Hunter Armstrong, a world-leading authority on combative mindset training. Hunter is a specialist in bayonet fighting. He took participants through his approach to this aspect of combat. It was different to the Australian Army approach. Hunter uses bayonet fighting to develop a calm combative mindset, totally focused on the task at hand. The approach used by the Australian Army is to use bayonet training as a tool to develop aggression through large movements and lots of noise. While these approaches appear on the surface to be contradictory, at a higher level they seem complementary and have given Army bayonet doctrine writers and specialists some points to discuss and work through. Major Len Tracey, who is drafting the



new bayonet fighting doctrine, was one of the participants.

In summary, USMC is 180,000 strong with 150,000 Marines trained in MCMAP, 10,000 instructors, and 1300 Black Belt instructor trainers. The exchange was a complete success and MSD instructors have been invited to the USMC MACE to participate in further exchanges and training in 2007.



## CALL OF DUTY 3

[www.callofduty.com](http://www.callofduty.com)

Activision

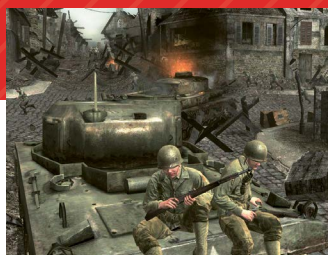
**Game System:** X360, Xbox, PS3 (if it ever gets released in Australia) PS2, Wii

The *Call of Duty* franchise was Activision's answer to Electronic Arts' juggernaut, *Medal of Honor*. Both titles have had their highs and lows within their respective series' and have faced stiff competition from the deluge of WWII-themed shooters on the market. What they have both had, though, is mass appeal, and *Call of Duty 3* has not strayed too far from the formula in this regard.

It is the first of the series developed to take full advantage of the next generation of consoles and, as you would expect, the level of graphical clarity and sound quality is well beyond previous titles. The extra horsepower offered by the new consoles have also allowed larger maps and far more moving parts than

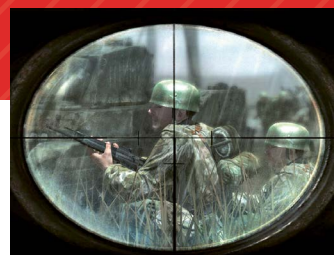
have been seen on the screen before. In fact, so busy is the new level of movement, graphics and sound effects that concentrating on the game at hand can become a real problem – there is just too much going on to really focus.

*Call of Duty 3* is meant to be a squad-based FPS game but, in reality, it is a straight out FPS with a few AI-controlled friendlies on the map. AI soldiers are extremely scripted, and, for the most part, are there more to provide noise, movement and graphic prettiness to the game than actual fighting ability. The game also plays through invisible trigger points that have AI moving to the next position and, on the enemy side, simply appearing through a hedge or out of a building. The AI is such that, supporting friendlies will march on to the next trigger point blindly, while the player is cowering in a crater, pinned by tied-in MG42s. They will then stay at the trigger point until the player gets enough ticker to run through the maelstrom and catch up.



*Call of Duty 3* also introduces cut-scenes between missions that require a level of interaction from the player. These are as varied as rapid trigger mashing in a hand-to-hand struggle with a German in a house, through to rapid button mashing to dislodge concrete onto a group of completely unsuspecting (not really as they are blazing away with every weapon system they can carry) group of Germans below. Unfortunately the cut scenes are also required viewing and can't be skipped despite trying to beat a level for the 10<sup>th</sup> time.

On the positive side, *Call of Duty 3* has created a WWII environment that must be seen to be believed – the scenes in *Saving Private Ryan* don't come close to the intensity in this game. The character dialogue is distinctly adult (but works well within the game) and the ability to commandeer



vehicles and weapon systems certainly mixes up play.

In multiplayer, the standard death-match options are available and, on X360, up to four players can join a live game from the one console using the split-screen option. Unfortunately the split-screen multiplay option doesn't include the ability to introduce AI characters, so the great maps are left devoid of action in one-on-one games.

There is also no option for co-op play in the single-player storyline, something most Xbox gamers have been demanding since *Halo*.

*Call of Duty 3* is simply the next progression in the series and, in spite of its flashier appearance, is nothing new. Fans of the series will lap it up while the more technical WWII gamers will still crave the next *Brothers in Arms*.

**Score: 2.5/5**

## GEARS OF WAR

[www.gearsowar.com](http://www.gearsowar.com)

Microsoft

**Game System:** X360

No doubt you have seen the advertising frenzy that surrounded *Emergence Day* in December 2006. Hardly a Sydney bus can drive past without Marcus staring menacingly at you.

Microsoft are extremely proud of *Gears of War* – and justifiably so. This is to the X360 what *Halo* was to the original Xbox.

Set in the post-apocalyptic world of Sera, *Gears of War* is a futuristic squad-based first-person shooter with a streak of horror. In fact, the atmosphere generated in this game is unlike anything since *System Shock* scared the bejesus out of PC gamers in the early 90s.

Players take on the role of Marcus Fenix, a hard-arse soldier fighting for survival against the mutant horde that has overtaken his home planet. Like every good hero,



Marcus has a checkered past and a distinct disdain for authority, but soon proves to be an extremely competent dealer of death. *Gears of War* was lovingly created by Unreal developers, Epic, and the locust horde have the distinct look of some of the evil foe that series produced for the PC. The environment they have created is amazing and, on a high-definition television, is almost cinematic in its

quality. Internet rumours even have Epic convincing Microsoft to double the memory in the X360 after a show-and-tell session with an early build of *Gears of War*.

*Gears of War* plays like most modern first-person shooters, but it has emphasised the use of cover over many previous titles. Players can make Marcus take cover behind anything on the map and engage targets from a degree of safety. Unfortunately, however, such are the weapon systems used in the game that most cover has a short use-by date and is shredded to pieces around the player.

*Gears of War* also introduces a new form of melee weapon to the gaming world, a rifle-mounted chainsaw, which is frightening to see in action.

Epic have also introduced a system that rewards careful players through quicker reloads. On changing magazines, a small bar moves across the screen that, if stopped with a button tap at the sweet spot, will cause Marcus to dump and

reload in record time – stuff it up, though, and Marcus will fumble, swear and likely take a couple of hits for good measure.

The AI present in *Gears of War* is also at a level that makes playing difficult, but extremely rewarding. Marcus' fellow Gears are not just there for the plot, and actually fight as hard and smart as they can throughout the game. Likewise the locusts display a variety of AI attributes depending on their character class and their overall number. When it is coupled with the graphics, imposing audio and intriguing storyline, the result is a game that oozes tension and had me jumping out of the couch with fright.

*Gears of War* is a title that truly deserves its MA15+ rating, but is an experience that every X360 owner cannot do without. It's a perfect game that will be remembered as the title that brought the X360 to the fore in the console market.

**Score: 5/5**

## RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS

<http://rainbowsixgame.uk.ubi.com/vegas/>

Ubisoft

**Game System:** X360

Ubisoft's Canadian studios got its hands back on the Rainbow Six franchise after the lackluster *Rainbow Six: Lockdown* of early last year.

The team that introduced the revolutionary *Rainbow Six 3* to the gaming world has managed to surpass their previous level of expertise with this latest release. *Rainbow Six: Vegas* is a cunning mix of realism and Hollywood that has resulted in one of the most intense and enjoyable CT gaming experiences to date.

Once again, a single team takes on strongholds that would, in reality, require Australia's complete ADF and State CT forces to secure. But this team has been reduced even further to only three personnel.

Players take on the role of US operator Logan Keller, teamed with a South Korean and a Brit. Together they move out to save the world (well, the US anyway).

The story starts with a compromised clandestine activity in Mexico and quickly



jumps to the dazzling lights of Sin City. Mission maps are as varied as a complex tunnel system, a multi-story theatre complex and a brilliantly created street fight in front of one of Vegas' biggest casinos.

Enemy AI has been tweaked to the point that they are among the most cunning foe yet faced in a game environment. The tangoes communicate, provide covering fire for one another and often use grenades of various natures to turn the tide in battle. They are also ruthless, with hostages suffering a swift death if a player hesitates a fraction too long in planning a room clearance.

While it is all very fast-paced and action-movie-like, the game does reward sensible tactics and use of available technology. Gone is the heart-beat sensor of old and a new fibre-optic camera system can be used to see what's behind closed doors. Breaching charges and distraction grenades assist entry and the judicious use of the humble frag grenade in an enclosed space makes short work of bunched terrorists.

The game also introduces a new option to take cover and snap shoot from behind obstacles as well as unleashing suppressing blind fire down corridors to cover team-mate movement.

*Rainbow Six: Vegas* also introduces several new animations to the series allowing players to fastrope into a stronghold, rappel down lift shafts with the ability to lock off and engage targets and, for the first time ever in a game, gain entry through a brick wall rather than just a doorway.

Weapon selection is a mix of the old CT favorites such as the MP5 and PSG1 through to the new kids on the block such as the Steyr AUG-A3 and UMP45.

*Rainbow Six: Vegas* is one of the first releases to really make use of what the X360 can offer in terms of graphics clarity and gameplay and it has quickly become one of the standout-games for the platform. The multiplayer community is alive and well on Xbox Live and tournaments are nearly always underway.

Easily the best title in the series in terms of gameplay, even if they have taken some major liberties with realism in order to achieve it.

**Score: 4.5/5**

## MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

[www.totalwar.com](http://www.totalwar.com)

THQ

**Game System:** PC

The *Total War* series successfully brought the Grogard world of turn-based ancient warfare, with its thousands of men, animals and crude machines of war, into the real-time gaming environment. In doing so, it opened up the fights of the Romans, the Barbarians and of course the



numerous kings of medieval Europe to a wider audience.

Such is the success and historical realism of this series that a whole series of programs on *The History Channel* use animation from the game to illustrate major campaigns and battles.

Latest in the game series, *Medieval II: Total War* hasn't just updated from previous versions – it's rebuilt the game from the ground up, to pack in even more slash-and-hack action.

*Medieval II* is an epic gaming experience and not a wargame to be taken lightly. Its amazing graphics drag players into the game, and the battlefields expand beyond the horizon – something that just seems unbelievable in a PC game.

With the option of playing out a complete campaign, fighting with one of 17 factions across three continents, the

replay value in *Medieval II* is immense. The grand campaign offered in single-play mode spans four-and-a-half centuries (1080-1530) beginning with the age of chivalry and the Crusades through to the discovery of the Americas and the fight to subdue the Aztecs.

On the multiplayer side, *Medieval II* has also been revamped offering a more accessible batch of scenarios and options for custom battles with improved play balancing. The team at *Total War* have also included a battle editor in the package to allow skilled users to create their own battle maps and scenarios.

If you can only purchase one PC game a year, and you're looking for the maximum enjoyment, historical accuracy and replay value, *Medieval II* is it.

**Score: 4.5/5**

## Competition Winners

### TRASER NAVIGATOR

The winner of the fantastic Traser Navigator watch from last issue was **Amy L**, from Canberra. Answering the question of how a Navigator would help her survive in the bush, Amy wrote...

*If I won this marvellous watch, It would make my boyfriends' jaw drop, I could say something rude, About him and me in the nude, And him using the illumination to find his way around my bush!*

Congratulations Amy – I'm still laughing – and the Traser is navigating its way to you right now.

### COMPANY OF HEROES

Thanks to THQ, one copy of *Company of Heroes* was won by **Ben McMahon, Sandy Beach, NSW**.

### IL-2 STURMOVIK

Thanks to Ubisoft, three copies of *IL-2 Sturmovik* were won by **WO2 Dave O'Reilly, Carrum Downs, Vic; David Williams, Braeside, Vic; and, Craig Rowland, Ngurnawal, ACT**.

Thanks to a comedy of errors in the editing department, the promised *IL-2 Sturmovik* for PC review has been delayed until the June issue.

## Giveaways

Hunt, hide and kill as you take command of US submarines and navigate the treacherous waters of the WWII Pacific.

*Silent Hunter* has been the industry-leading naval warfare franchise for more than 10 years and now returns to its roots with next-generation graphical realism, immersive gameplay, innovative crew evaluation and more action than ever before. This instalment offers the most memorable and empowering submarine simulation experience ever.

Thanks to Ubisoft, CONTACT has three copies of *Silent Hunter 4* for PC to give away. To win, explain in 50 words or less why subs were called wolves. Comp closes 15 April '07. Send entries to [editor@militarycontact.com](mailto:editor@militarycontact.com)

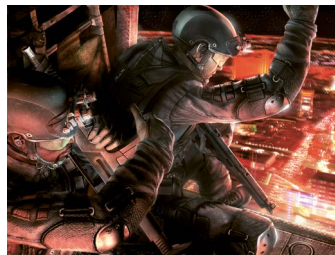
Thanks to THQ, we have an excellent Medieval prize pack to give away – including a copy of *Medieval II: Total War*, the complete *Total War* back catalogue in *Total War: Eras* AND a limited-edition *Total War Stein Glass*!

To enter, tell us in 50 words or less how you would put the stein glass to use. Remember, the Editor likes humour.

The winner will be the one judged by the Editor as the funniest, most original composition. Comp closes 15 April '07. Send entries to [editor@militarycontact.com](mailto:editor@militarycontact.com)

In all giveaways, the Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.





## STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR: FORCES OF CORRUPTION

www.empireatwar.com

Lucasarts

Game System: PC

Lucasarts was always renowned as a home for quality games, but somewhere along the way, the *Star Wars* franchise slipped into quantity over quality. In recent years however, it has been revitalised (timed nicely with the prequels) and releases are once again highly anticipated.

The release of *Empires of War* last year was a marked change from recent titles. Gone was the first-person shooter of the *Battlefront* experience and the role-playing of the *Knights' games*, and the hit-and-miss world of RTS was broadened into a galaxy far, far away.

*Empires* is an interesting concept – part *Homeworld* space-fleet battle and part *Close Combat* ground-tactical combat. The release of the *Forces of Corruption* expansion has taken the widely known Rebel-v-Empire conflict that introduced Han Solo, Luke Skywalker and Chewbacca to a generation and added another threat element that only those with exposure to the expanded *Star Wars* universe have previously encountered. While the Zann Consortium – a criminal element fighting both the Empire and the Rebel Alliance – is not the Black Sun of the expanded novels, the parallels between the two are obvious. In *Forces of*

*Corruption*, players take on the role of Tyler Zann, a galactic crime lord and all-round nasty bloke, and use the ongoing rebellion to further his criminal gain throughout the galaxy.

While the new take on galactic civil war, with the introduction of the corrupt side, is a great expansion on its own, it's the updates to *Empires of War* that are most welcome. Several tweaks to space combat, such as identifying a communication relay hardpoint that can be targeted, negating planet-based support and the introduction of the B-Wing and Rogue Squadron.

Planet-side, ground combat has become far more advanced with new options to design base layout and the introduction of ground-transport units and fire support from an orbiting fleet.

The Zann Consortium introduces a range of new and unique units and characters to the mix including bounty

hunters Boskk and IG-88 as well as specific gameplay options such as slavery, black markets, intimidation and piracy.

While being a *Star Wars* nerd will help understand the wider impact of each new option (and probably several references in this review) it is not necessary before playing the game. Those in the know will enjoy seeing aspects of the universe they have only read about while those with little knowledge of George Lucas' fantasy world will still enjoy the great gameplay on offer.

Lucasarts have sat back and taken the best of recent space and ground-combat games and blended them into a quite defined storyline and gaming world. That they have managed this with such success harks back to the developer of old.

*Forces of Corruption* requires the complete *Empires of War* to play.

Score: 4/5

## BODYSOURCE KOMPRESSORZ

Over the past couple of years there has been a new wave of training apparel released that promise to improve performance and decrease post-exercise muscle soreness and recovery times. These products have been adopted by a lot of athletes looking for an edge over their opponents.

I am always looking for new methods to improve the effectiveness of the programs I write for myself and other athletes, so when I got a call from the editor and was asked to review a pair of Kompressorz from Bodyscience, I jumped at the chance.

First up, let me say that I'm a huge skeptic by nature, and with a hard science background, I always like to see studies that prove things as well as explanations for how things work. However, like many areas of sports science, our understanding of the mode of action of compression garments is limited, and sometimes the data doesn't match with the anecdotal results experienced by coaches and athletes. I should also note that doing a study of one athlete (myself) is hardly scientific!

So, where to start with the review?

Let's start with a look at the product. The knee-length quad

shorts I received are black with some heavy-duty grey stitching and BSc logos on the legs. They look very professional, however I suggest wearing them under some training shorts as some of the stitching perhaps draws a little too much attention to the crotch!

As the name suggests, Kompressorz have a very snug fit. At first, this takes a little bit of getting used to, however, it turns out to be very comfortable and, even after extended periods of training, I never felt that my movement was restricted. During hard exercise, the feeling of support actually feels like you have something to push against and makes squats and deadlifts feel a bit easier.

The shorts also seemed to assist in warming up quickly. The material used is heavier than regular lycra and, after a few minutes of light exercise, I felt like my legs were warm and loose.

During exercise the material also kept sweat build up to a minimum, preventing chafing.

My only concern with the shorts is the placement of one particular logo and some stitching. For most people it won't be a concern, but if you train for any strength sports, you need to be careful as there is a

sticky logo on the right thigh and a line of stitching that occasionally got caught when deadlifting or Olympic lifting.

Overall, I found the shorts to be excellent for training in. However, it was the day after my first session that the shorts played their trump card.

To test the manufacturer's claims about enhanced recovery, I decided to put myself through a very tough squat program for a couple of weeks. The Smolov cycle is the daddy of all leg programs and, when I've done it in the past, I've been damn near crippled every time. The first few workouts in particular have left me dreading stairs for days. After the first workout this time, I genuinely expected to be unable to walk the next day, however, when I rolled out of bed, I was astounded that my legs were barely aching! The rest of my body was killing me from overhead presses and deadlifts, but my legs were fine.

For two weeks I continued hard with the weights, but, despite my best efforts, I couldn't seem to hurt my legs.

I have to admit I was very surprised. I was skeptical of the shorts to start with but they went



WORDS  
DON STEVENSON

from being something that looked nice to train in, to an essential part of my training gear.

I can't conclusively say that the Kompressorz were responsible for the lack of pain I felt, however, I recommend that you give them a try. I know I'll be using them this year.

HENRY WRIGHT

# LETTERS FROM THE FRONT LINE



Henry Wright sent the following letter from the School of Musketry in England, dated 16 April 1918. It contains a reference about two relatives that illustrates Henry's perceptions of a lack of commitment to the war effort. The Bruce brothers, Ernie, Herb and Robert were Henry's cousins who lived in Bulla Road, North Essendon. Robert enlisted in 'C' Company 46th Battalion as a driver on 31 August 1915. He fought in France and was wounded at Pozieres on 4 August the following year. He recovered in Number 11 Hospital in 8 weeks and later fought at Bullecourt and Ypres. But he was invalided home on 18 September 1917. It is not known why the other two brothers didn't enlist....

My dear Mother,

Just a few lines to say I am well and still going strong at the Musketry School. All those rumours of having to go to France again have now died down and we are going on as usual. I am very thankful, for I should not like going over there again. I have had all the fighting I want for all time.

Well, dear Mother, I was very pleased to receive 6 letters today from Australia, three from you, two from Pauline and one from Charlie, and you can guess how pleased I was to hear Charlie had returned home safely. I only wished I could see you all seated down in the old home, so happy and contented all would be.

Well cheerio dear Mother, my time is coming along by next Xmas and don't forget to keep that Hogshead of beer on ice. Joves, I get thirsty every time I think of it. I guess I can do justice to my share of it. I do not mention Champagne now as I reckon the Australians have drank all that in France. You can bet I had my share when I was there.

By Joves, young Gordon is a brick and is sticking to that job in NSW. I reckon it will be the making of him. I sincerely hope he sticks to banking his money as he is doing for it is the finest thing for a young fellow

to have a few pounds behind him. I will write him a letter next week and address it to Mr McGeoch.

I really had no idea work was at such a standstill in Australia. Is Leslie a carpenter? For some months back you mentioned that he was working for Mr Musgrove.

So, Fred is once again a postman. Does he think it better than soldiering? I wish I had half his luck. I suppose Bert is a gentleman, gets out of bed at 6 every morning (I mean 10) By Joves, I laughed at Gordon's letter that you enclosed. He said his boss had been to America, South Sea Islands and Christ knows where (I wonder where that place is?).

I am very pleased to know Miss Adley writes to you. Every letter I get from her you are mentioned and I have always an invitation to call and see them whenever I can get leave. Charlie will be

able to tell you what a lovely home they have and how splendid they treated him and myself. It is indeed a home away from home. I hope Charlie will not forget to write a few lines to her.

I was surprised to hear Bob Bruce is in hospital. Still, he is indeed having a bad time of it. Remember me to him when you write. I suppose Herb and Ern won't attempt to join up and fight for their King and Country. By Joves, those are two beauties. I wonder does it ever enter their mind what cowards they are. Well, thank goodness, people cannot say the same of your sons.

Well, Mum, I will soon be out of the twenties, only a few days to go now and I will be 30 years of age and reckon it quite time I was home and looking after my little son and heir and I am sure he will want a little sister to play with. I am thinking he will soon be following his old dad over here if this war lasts much longer.



HENRY'S BROTHERS FREDRICK (LEFT) AND ALBERT WRIGHT

To be continued...



# THE ICEBERG

2LT HENRY 'ERNIE' EIBEL

BY WO1 DARRYL KELLY

Long, black belts of thick barbed wire formed a formidable barrier. Beyond the wire were reinforced concrete pillboxes, the deadly barrels of machine-guns jutting from the openings. The air was thick with bullets and the red-hot splinters of artillery rounds. A young second lieutenant calmly waved his men forward, his commands delivered with cool efficiency. He seemed oblivious to the deadly projectiles that whistled around them. Suddenly, a high explosive round exploded in front of him and he sank to his knees.

On 21 September 1914, barely six weeks after the outbreak of the First World War, Henry 'Ernie' Eibel enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). Like so many of the early volunteers, Ernie was a country lad. He had grown up on the family property, Yangan, near Warwick in southern Queensland. Working on the land offered little in the way of adventure for the young farmer and the thought of joining so many of his countrymen on an overseas trip to fight the Hun proved irresistible.

Time passed quickly for Ernie and the other new recruits, as they endured and became accustomed to the regimentation and rigours of training and life in uniform.

Ernie enjoyed being a soldier and the camaraderie of the other young men in his unit was a far cry from the lonely and often isolated life of the bush.

The long sea voyage followed by the months of training in the desert environment of Egypt only heightened young Eibel's resolve to serve his country to the best of his ability. He was young, fit and, so he thought, indestructible.

It was a calm, clear night. As the moon sank below the horizon, a small steam pinnacle took the landing boats in tow, their human cargo excited, yet apprehensive, about what lay ahead.

"Cast off," came the whispered signal for the soldiers to man the oars and head for the beach. As the bows of the boats grated on the shingle a few metres from the beach and the first men started wading ashore, all hell broke loose. Some made it to the sand and headed for shelter under the cliffs. Many of the men in the boats were struck by a hail of bullets fired by the Turks entrenched in the hillsides overlooking the cove. Others, laden with full packs, were cut down as they struggled through the shallows – never having fired a shot in anger. In the months that followed, Australia would suffer 26,111 casualties including 8141 deaths, in this place called Gallipoli.

Eibel's reputation among his fellow ANZACs was second to none. His composure and imperturbable demeanor had a calming effect on those fighting alongside him – inspiring many of his mates to suggest that iced water

flowed through his veins, so giving rise to the nickname, 'Iceberg'.

On 12 May 1915, the Turks launched a savage attack against the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion's position. As the enemy soldiers rushed towards them, the responding firepower of the ANZACs cut them down with deadly accuracy. Ernie set his rifle sight on one Turk after another, each shot finding its mark, each bullet eliminating yet another adversary.

Suddenly, the tables turned for Eibel. The enemy bullet that struck him had the same effect as a kick from a mule, the force of the impact throwing him to the rear of the trench. As he took his hands away from his head, he saw that they were covered in blood. He calmly ripped open his field dressing and wrapped it over the side of his face. He slung his weapon over his shoulder and made his way to the nearest dressing station.

Eibel's wounds were serious enough to warrant his evacuation to the Australian General Hospital in Egypt. He required treatment and recuperation that would continue for the next four months.<sup>1</sup>

In September, on his return to ANZAC, Eibel was promoted to corporal. Five weeks later he was promoted to sergeant. Ernie again joined the fray with relentless determination as if trying to make up for the weeks he had been away. During his absence from the battle, many men had been less fortunate and been killed in action.

In late November 1915, yet again, 'lady luck' deserted Eibel. He was once more sent to hospital, this time suffering from mumps – one of the many diseases that was now rife among the Allied troops on the peninsula.<sup>1</sup>

After the December evacuation of Gallipoli, the exhausted troops returned to Egypt. In the months that followed, they were rested, reorganised and re-equipped.

Successful recruiting drives during the Gallipoli Campaign meant the government could now implement a plan to double the size of the AIF. The strategy was simple – halve each of the veteran battalions to form the nucleus of new battalions. Thus, the 15<sup>th</sup> was divided

to form a second battalion – the 47<sup>th</sup>. With the split, Eibel remained with the 15<sup>th</sup> and was promoted to company sergeant major.<sup>1</sup>

In June 1916, the AIF sailed for the Western Front. The force was now prepared to take on the German Army, in what many believed to be the real war against a real enemy. As a veteran of the Gallipoli Campaign, Eibel did not share this opinion. For eight months the ANZACs had fought a long, hard, bloody battle against 'Johnny Turk'. That some 10,000 ANZACs had lost their lives during the campaign had proven that the Turks had been a very worthy adversary – in a very real war.

Upon its arrival in France, the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion deployed in an area known as the 'nursery sector', for it was here that the men could become accustomed to the sights and sounds of warfare on the Western Front.

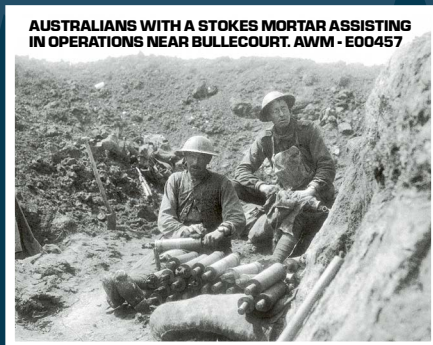
Their introduction to life under constant artillery fire concluded, the battalion moved forward as a part of the force tasked with capturing vital ground at Pozieres and Mouquet Farm.

The German artillery fire was awesome. Around the clock, their guns launched continuous salvos of every calibre into the Australian trenches.

Eibel's unit (C Company) occupied more than 500 metres of trenches.<sup>2</sup> Unperturbed by the situation, Ernie patrolled the line, between shots, placing his hand on a digger's shoulder and comforting him with words of support and encouragement.

"How's it going, mate?" he would ask. "I'll be right, sir," would be the reply. The Iceberg's cool, unflustered demeanor brought a sense of calm to a situation that could otherwise only be described as Hell on Earth.

Ernie's company was ordered to launch a forward assault and seize a vital section of German trench. As the whistle blew, the men of C Company swarmed over the top. The enemy was caught off-guard and began to break and run. As the diggers pursued the Germans into their trenches, they were met with a merciless hail of bullets. Casualties were high and follow-up companies were forced to



retreat to their original lines. C Company was now cut off.

A runner braved the fire to bring a message to the company commander. "Fire your SOS flares, sir, and fall back under the cover of the barrage," he gasped breathlessly.

As the friendly fire began to fall, the order was given to retire. Eibel's head-count of his men established that several were missing. Jumping back into the trench, he searched until he came to a collapsed section of the trench wall. Huddled together, some wounded and others stunned by the shell blasts, were about a dozen men. Eibel organised the group. Those who were slightly hurt were tasked to carry the more seriously wounded and those who were only dazed were ordered to man available weapons to provide covering fire for the withdrawal.

Suddenly, in broken English, a German called for the party to surrender as they were outnumbered and apparently cut off.<sup>2</sup> Eibel took Mills bombs from his pocket, pulled the pins and threw the grenades in the direction of the voice.

Grabbing a couple of men by the collar, he dragged them to their feet. "Hurry up. Let's get out of here," he urged.

As the retreating party stumbled over broken ground, Eibel would stop, drop to one knee and snipe at the enemy. With crisp, clear directions, he ordered his remaining Lewis gun team to engage larger targets. Upon reaching, but before entering the safety of his own trench, Ernie paused to survey the ground they had just covered. Satisfied that he had not left anyone behind, he dropped below ground. For his actions that day, CSM Henry Eibel was Mentioned in Despatches.<sup>3</sup>

The Australian battalions had suffered heavy losses at Pozieres. The 15<sup>th</sup> was no exception and Eibel was promoted to fill a vacancy among the officers. He now proudly wore the rank of a second lieutenant.

On Christmas Day 1916, the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion was out of the firing line. As the officers of the battalion toasted the festive season and

feasted on a fine dinner, Eibel glanced around the room and asked himself, "I wonder how many of us will be alive next Christmas?"<sup>4</sup>

In late April 1917, the front was unusually quiet. Australian forward patrols found the German trenches empty. But as the Allies advanced, the reason became apparent. The Germans had not retreated – they had withdrawn to shorten their line and hence make it easier to defend. The Diggers were confronted by belts and belts of thick, black, barbed wire, supported by large pine logs. Beyond the wire barricades were reinforced concrete pillboxes, their machineguns positioned to fire in overlapping arcs – deadly fire that would be impossible to penetrate.

This series of fortifications was dubbed the Hindenburg Line and the history books would refer to this action as the First Battle of Bullecourt.

High command devised a strategy whereby the Allies would launch surprise attacks with no artillery, just infantry and tanks. Field commanders were dumbfounded by the plan. "This'll be murder," they declared.

Eibel briefed his men and made it sound so simple, "Move forward, no matter what, move forward."

As the diggers advanced towards the tape that marked the line of departure, the usual cheerfulness was missing. As they lay on the ground waiting for zero hour, a light covering of snow fell on the khaki-clad figures.

When the second hand reached 12, the lines of troops rose as one and advanced towards the enemy.

The Germans had suspected that something was brewing and were ready and waiting. A barrage of artillery rained on the ANZAC ranks but the diggers did not falter until they hit their first obstacle. Using wire cutters, they breached the initial line of barbed wire entanglements. They continued to advance until they reached the first row of German trenches. It seemed they had achieved the impossible.

However, fortune was not on their side.

They had outrun their tanks, which had either bogged, broken down or been destroyed. The ANZACs would have to face the enemy without mechanised support.

Eibel moved his men forward. His platoon was leading the battalion's advance. They successfully eliminated the first machine-gun they encountered before suddenly becoming the target of the German field gunners. Incoming artillery rounds bombarded the platoon. Then their worst nightmare was realised – the 'Iceberg' crumpled to his knees.

His batman raced to the officer's side and knelt down beside him. He took the shell dressings from his kit and packed them into his officer's shattered chest. As the distraught batman tried to stem the flow of blood, Eibel calmly removed his maps, papers and flares from his pockets. "Take these documents to Captain Dunworth and tell him I'm finished," he whispered.

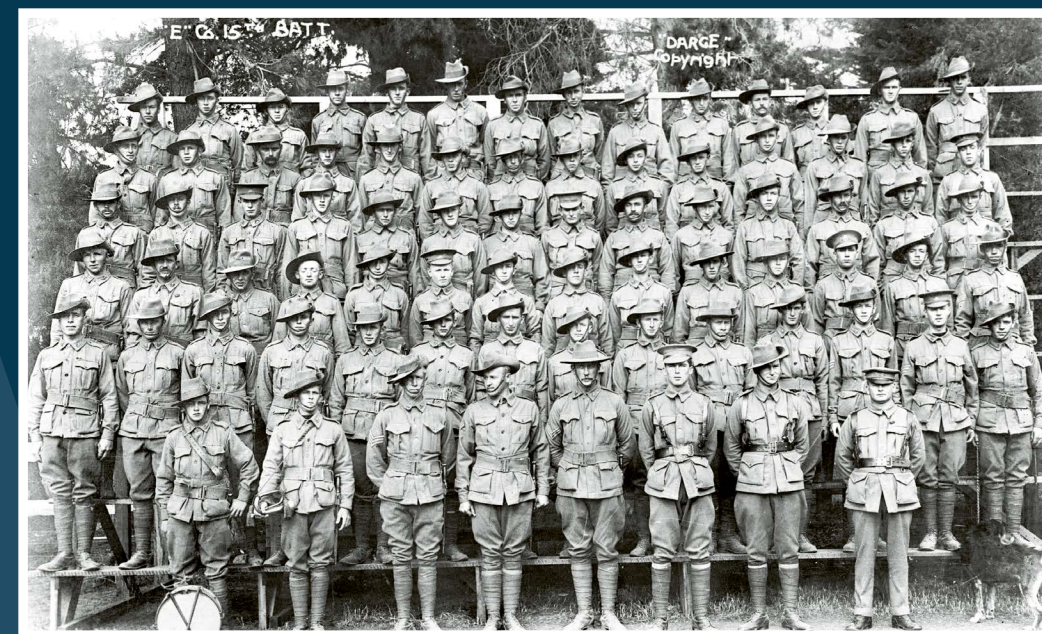
"But sir, you're not dead. I'll get a stretcher-bearer," the batman protested.

"No," gasped Eibel. "But I will be dead by the time you get to Captain Dunworth."

Reluctantly, the loyal batman took a last look at his platoon commander. Tears welled in his eyes as he clutched the documents and flares tightly in his hands. With a heavy heart and an impending sense of loss, he set off to find the captain.<sup>2</sup>

The Hindenburg Line did not fall that day. The Australians, having expended their supplies of ammunition and bombs, were forced to withdraw. Those who could not escape through the maze of barbed wire were confronted with two options – fight to the death or surrender.

15<sup>th</sup> Battalion suffered heavy losses as a result of this hastily planned and mounted attack. As the enemy forces swept forward in pursuit of the retreating Allies, they passed hundreds of Australian bodies suspended on the wire entanglements. They would also have passed the body of Henry Eibel, the gallant Australian who accepted death as he accepted life, without fear or favour.



- 1 National Archives of Australia: B2455, WW1 Service Records, Second Lieutenant HA Eibel
- 2 Chataway TP, Goldenstedt P, History of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF during the Great War 1914-18, revised edition, William Brooks & Co, Brisbane, 1948
- 3 AWM 8, Unit Embarkation Nominal Rolls, 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF, 1914-18 War
- 4 Autographed Christmas Menu, 1916, held in author's collection

LEFT: NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN OF E COMPANY, 15<sup>th</sup> BATTALION. HENRY EIBEL IS SECOND ROW, SECOND FROM LEFT. AWM - A03577





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