

ISSUE 49

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CONTACT

AIR LAND & SEA

MARCH 2016

THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

A close-up photograph of a soldier in a desert environment. The soldier is wearing a red beret with a small crest, a tan desert uniform, and a patch on the sleeve that reads 'الله أكبر' (Allahu Akbar). He is holding an assault rifle with both hands, aiming it directly at the camera. The background is a bright, hazy desert landscape. The text 'ANZAC trained Daesh ready' is overlaid on the bottom half of the image in a large, distressed, white font.

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EDITORIAL

Issue 49 – March 2016

CONTACT
AIR, LAND & SEA



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CONTACT magazine is changing just a little, to realign itself with the new realities of the 'media empire' I'm designing – although 'designing' is probably not quite the right word – more like evolving.

This issue of CONTACT is about four pages shy of what it's typically been of late, though it's still actually 12-16 pages chunkier than the first dozen or more issues.

What's missing from this issue is mainly the news pages. I didn't think they were worth the considerable effort of their very fiddly layout, especially given that most if not all of the news that comes my way these days gets posted to the CONTACT web site on the same day I find out about it – so there's no real advantage in regurgitating the same stuff on these pages.

CONTACT magazine is and always has been about good, solid feature articles. And that's what I want to concentrate on going forward.

Which leads nicely into my next point. The promo for a recent ABC doco about the war in Afghanistan claimed the story of Australia's involvement in Afghanistan 'hadn't been properly told, until now'. Bullshit, I bellowed – CONTACT told that story 'live' in every single issue from 2005 through 2012, and we still include articles when we can get them. But, that's the real crux point right there. How do we get stories about Australia's involvement in Afghanistan. The answer is simple, of course – from the people who were there.

I'm looking at two CONTACT magazine covers framed on my office wall right now, with two of the most powerful first-person stories I've ever read (anywhere) splashed across the front cover – "That first patrol after your best mate kicks a mine" (issue 32) and, "Trooper tells how, 'I survived four IEDs'" (issue 33). Both those soldiers told CONTACT their stories, with their names included – and neither got their arses reamed (as far as I'm aware).

So, if you served in Afghanistan at any time, I'd love to hear your story. Tell me in writing or on the phone or over coffee (I'll travel anywhere inside the Newcastle, Nowra, Canberra triangle for a good yarn) – tell me officially, unofficially or anonymously (I'll keep your name out of it if you want me to – or I'll advise you on official ADF clearance processes).

The bottom line is, Australia's story – your story – deserves to be told, and you are the person best qualified to tell it.

In the CONTACT media empire more broadly, I am thrilled to say – and I hope you've noticed – that our small cadre of guest bloggers has started to produce material for the new 'CONTACT Blog Spot'.

I won't name all the volunteer contributors here (only because the list is likely to grow/change before you read this), but check it out, towards the bottom of the CONTACT homepage, or click on 'CONTACT Blog Spot' in the 'Categories' table in the right-hand sidebar to find all of them in one spot – and volunteer yourself if you want to write your own story in your own words via this informal forum.

Anyway, a big thank you to all those who have submitted stories so far, and also to those who have volunteered but not yet found their voice.

Sincerely,

Brian Hartigan
Managing Editor

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INCOMING

FRIENDS OF FIJI

I write to raise awareness of the devastating impact of Tropical Cyclone Winston throughout Fiji recently, the extent of which is as yet, not fully known due to the damage to communications systems and airfields throughout Fiji.

Fijian authorities have estimated that up to 80 per cent of Fiji's 800,000 population have been impacted in some way however many have lost everything they own and in some cases, loved ones. Many families are without basic essentials for survival and are resorting to boiled river water and fallen coconuts to survive.

This weather system has been declared by several world renowned weather experts to be the largest most destructive tropical cyclone ever recorded in the southern hemisphere. Given its severity and the tremendous and widespread damage caused to this small nation, it will no doubt take a good many years to fully recover.

Anyone who has ever visited Fiji or who is familiar with the Fijian spirit will know that Fijians are a very resilient people and although it will be a hard, tough struggle, they will not let this defeat them. They will pick up the pieces and, together with the help of family and friends

at home and abroad, will get their small nation back together, just as they have done each time this nation has faced such challenges.

Fijians and Australians have always had a very close relationship, and Australia has come to Fiji's aid many times under similar circumstances as they are doing again this time.

I humbly request you consider including a suitable advertisement or article in your next edition in order to raise awareness of the desperate plight of Fijians as a result of Cyclone Winston. I'm sure those donations, of any amount, would be extremely helpful in assisting affected Fijian families in their time of need.

There are many local Fijian, international and church aid agencies and groups who have set up specific TC Winston appeals and fund-raising facilities – the Fiji Red Cross Society for example.

Already Australian and New Zealand Defence assets have begun delivering disaster relief and medical supplies, which I know will be gratefully received by the Fijian people. And kind donations of money from friends of Fiji all over the world would be very humbly received.

Lieutenant Commander Mark Sorby, via email

OLD PHARTS

I am looking forward to seeing the 2nd episode of 2 Pharts later tonight. I'm in Melbourne doing volunteer work with Veterans today.

Gordon, via email

I wanted to thank you for the CONTACT TV episode *Passion and Patience in Photography*. I wish I had been up to date so I could have submitted some questions for you both. I will keep an eye out on the next episode. Love your work!

Angie, via email

Thank you both. It's great to hear that someone appreciates the Two Old Pharts gas-bagging. If you want to submit questions in advance via editor@militarycontact.com, I'll gladly take them to the next shoot. It's kinda hard and distracting trying to read the questions off the phone's small screen when you're broadcasting. Follow Contact magazine on Periscope to catch us live.

VIET MEDAL

Under the National Service Act 1964, all 20-year-old males were required to register for call-up into the Army for two years. Those who refused to leave their civilian jobs were threatened with 2-years jail and a criminal record. Some 18,000 men were conscripted to fight in South Vietnam.

Of those, about 3000 were sent home after a short tour of duty. But, because these men did not fight for a least 181 days, they have been denied a medallic award.

The former Vietnamese government gave the Australian government a clear mandate to determine eligibility of its personnel to accept and wear this foreign award, however, they have denied all appeals.

I maintain that these conscripts have been discriminated against through no fault of their own. I have a petition on www.change.org (search my name). Please feel free to visit and add your support and comments.

Richard Barry, via email

TARGETS UP!

This page is a great outlet for fans to vent or to praise. Please, let us know what you think of our magazines so we can deliver more of what you want. Feel free to write to editor@militarycontact.com about CONTACT or any on other military subject – Ed

The Editor reserves the right to abbreviate and otherwise edit letters for any reason, including to make them fit in limited space.

Sister ships with new ability to see far

Anzac-class frigates HMAS Ballarat (155), HMAS Anzac (150) and HMAS Stuart (153) transit through Cockburn Sound in Western Australia on their way to Fleet Base West. Of note is that the first two ships have undergone the ANZAC-class upgrade program, evidenced by the fact they sport the distinctive Australian designed-and-built CEAFAF radar assembly that radically changed the profile of their masts.



THE INNER SANCTUM

AN AUSTRALIAN POLICE SNIPER

BY JASON SEMPLE

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN, WAITING IN THE AIRPORT LOUNGE FOR MY FLIGHT TO LAS VEGAS. ANOTHER YEAR AND ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO CATCH UP WITH MATES FROM ALL ACROSS OUR INDUSTRY. IT'S HELD IN LAS VEGAS, NEVADA – AND IT'S BIG! IT'S THE 2016 ANNUAL SHOT SHOW! AND IT'S HARD NOT TO GET A LITTLE EXCITED. AFTER ALL, IT'S GUNS GUNS GUNS – AND ITS IN VEGAS!



The Surgeon Rifles PSR (Precision Sniper Rifle) in .338 above, and CSR (Concealable Sniper Rifle) in .308 below.



In truth, it's not just about guns. The Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade Show – SHOT Show – is the largest trade show of its kind in the world and the fifth largest trade show in Las Vegas, featuring more than 1600 exhibitors filling booth space covering 640,000 square feet. A trade-only event, it attracts more than 68,000 industry professionals from all 50 states and 100 countries, and generates around \$90 million in non-gaming revenue in the Las Vegas economy over the week.

Hosted by the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), attendance is restricted to the shooting, hunting and outdoor trade and commercial buyers and sellers of military, law enforcement and tactical products and services only. And, while it is not 'open to the public' (and no one under age 16 shall be admitted, including infants) all you have to do is purchase your ticket online and supply photo ID and personal details. Realistically it's open to anyone who buys any kind of weapon or outdoor equipment – it's just not a walk-in-off-the-street kind of show.

I have attended SHOT Show on a number of occasions to look at particular weapon systems and kit, and also on behalf of our company Advanced Accuracy Solutions LLC. I'm sure my wife thinks we are all over there having beers and catching up with buddies rather than working.

SHOT Show starts officially on the Tuesday at the Sands Convention Center, but there are live-fire range shoots set up for the Monday all around Vegas. Some are strict invite only, but others you can attend by registering online with the company running the range. Sig Sauer runs a huge range day every year and is definitely worth a look. I went to four range shoots this year and this burnt the entire day quite easily.

The 2016 show was every bit as spectacular as previous years. The reality is I probably saw about 30% of the show content this year – and that's good going. It is so immense that you really need to know what you want to look at and have a plan.

Browsing all the booths and actually looking at kit properly is almost impossible due to time, space and the fact that you will inevitably get stuck at a booth when you find something you really like or have an interest in.

Things don't stop once the convention center closes at 5.30pm either. This is when the real schmoozing and industry meetings begin. There are hotel room meetings (parties), venue parties and dinners and drinks with those in your network.

The CRYE Precision party is well known to be the biggest party related to the show. This year was a 'Jungle Theme' and partygoers were required to swing via a rope over a river of mud to get in. It is Vegas where anything is possible.

P.S. This might be where my wife doubts my work ethic or motivations.

I was also happy to see some excellent Australian companies represented at the show again this year. Companies such as Australian Defence Apparel (ADA), Australian Munitions (Thales/ADI) and Marathon Targets.

ADA and Australian Munitions shared booth space and were super busy. I spent some time at ADA with CEO Matt Graham, Alvaro Carvajal, Chris Dixon, Darren Swindells and Victoria Cross recipient Daniel Keighran. ADA is an outstanding Australian company with more than 100 years of experience in their field. Matt and his team are some of the nicest and most professional people in the industry, and true innovators.

The volume of interest in ADA from various military and police units reflects their strong presence in a tough market. Keep an eye on ADA's numerous systems, especially the adjustable pack rack they have developed. I was impressed by the adjustable pack rack, which allows you to set the rack length for your body size and the load you are carrying. ADA have also created the SKD covert body armor that will stop a .357 round – and it weighs only 900 or so grams! I know there was a tonne of interest in this product.

I caught up with Stuart Norman from Marathon Targets too. Stuart and his crew were set up at Nellis Airforce Base for a live-fire shoot at roving robot targets 30-40m away and a few at 300m. These target systems are seriously the best training tool in the world at the moment – a man-like target on a wheeled armored chassis with artificial-intelligence-reaction to gunfire. These targets are being requested by many tier-1 military and special-operations units around the globe. The uses for these superb targets are virtually unlimited, from basic range drills through to complex attacks by targets that operate in sync. [Editor's note: I saw these targets in action at AASAM a couple of years ago. [Check out this video](#) to get a better idea of what they do]

I have spent time shooting these targets previously and I am not one to waste an opportunity to shoot them any chance I get. So, my business partner (former US special-forces operator) Andy Butler and I shot them relentlessly until we thought it decent to hand over the carbines to some eager spectators waiting patiently behind us. Besides, shooting next to another 15 shooters under a tin roof was starting to defeat my disposable hearing protection.

Time to drive to the next venue.

Andy and I attended the Surgeon Rifles live-fire range shoot to check out two of their outstanding rifles that we have been interested in for a while – the CSR (Concealable Sniper Rifle) in .308 and the PSR (Precision Sniper Rifle) in .338.

I got behind the PSR and asked the Surgeon rep to give me the furthest target – which turned out was only 725m away in the mountain range – head-sized rock painted with a red circle.

I was the first shooter for the day and the rep gave me half a mil for wind adjust, and the round missed by .2mils (14cm) to the left. We washed this correction off the next shot and got a direct hit.

I shot another dozen or so rounds through the PSR and was super impressed with the rifle's smooth action and supreme accuracy. A pleasure to shoot.

This PSR was fitted with an AWC PSR THOR suppressor which was designed by AWC with Surgeon. This suppressor also ended up as one of my favorite items at the show. Not that being suppressed helped when there were guys 15m away firing RPGs!

The Surgeon CSR looks great with a rugged and high-tech austere finish. The appearance made me want to grab hold and start shooting on sight. The rifle is simple to adjust for cheek weld and eye relief with its patented stock, and I was comfortable with its ergonomics in minutes.

I got the same 725m target with a first-round hit now that we were dialed in to the atmospheric. I could happily have shot the CSR all day. In fact, I have to say I fell in love with this gun 100%. It



640,000 square feet of display space – 68,000 attendees – 1600 trade booths – SHOT Show is **BIG**

shoots with excellent accuracy even with a 16inch barrel. Thanks to the folding stock and weapon length, you can easily transport this beast in a regular pack or case for covert sniper work. The CSR was also fitted with an AWC suppressor.

The Surgeon guys asked to shoot The Reaper Weapon Support System that our company, AAS, has developed. I gave a demo with The Reaper and the .338, hitting the same 725m target standing. The Surgeon reps were blown away – especially after they too got first-round hits at 725m standing. Our system was very popular at the show with numerous special forces and tactical groups wanting demos. Should be a busy year ahead.

The SHOT Show is also about meeting up with training providers and groups providing cutting-edge techniques that obviously change with time. I caught up with some of my American mates from VATA Group who love having their customary 110kg Aussie floating around with them to amuse people with the accent.

VATA group provides specialist combat shooting and LE/Mil tactics training in the States and around the globe. The guys who run it – owners Greg Lapin and Destin Mounts – are very close friends and it's awesome being associated with them. They are

true superstars behind a pistol or assault rifle, and are very well known in the industry. Greg and Destin have a wealth of operational experience in military and special operations.

Destin and Greg have shown me the levels to which you can take your combat shooting. I would like to think I was very competent before, but the exposure to their drills and how far you can push shooting skills has been amazing over the past few years. I'd like to see some Australian law-enforcement groups and military reach out to groups like VATA to update training and skills transfer. My old team always looked outside to find the guys who were the best in any skill we wanted to update.

Greg's take on shot show – "If you want to rub elbows with the who's who of the gun, shooting and everything tactical world you have to go to shot show. We go every year to foster relationships with our trusted firearm and related companies and partnerships as well as make new ones and meet new folks".

"It also serves as an amazing networking opportunity for administrators and trainers from every law-enforcement agency and military unit in the world.

MCX Assault Rifle



"If you're in the industry it's a must."

There were way too many weapons and various kit options at SHOT Show to ever cover in a single article – or even 100 articles for that matter. I've only glossed over it here, and picked a few of my favorite items from this year's show.

I was super impressed with the following;

- The CSR and PSR rifles with AWC suppressors from Surgeon Rifles,
- The MCX assault rifle system from Sig Sauer,
- The Schmidt & Bender 3-27x 56 PM2 High Power Digital BT Scope,
- The new belt-fed machine gun in .338 from General Dynamics; and,
- The OSS suppressors for automatic machine guns (M249 & M240)

Do yourself a favour and check these items out on line – it's well worth your time.

And it's definitely worth the trip to SHOT Show if you're in the industry and you're thinking of purchasing kit for your unit.

I saw a number of Australian military and a few police-tactical guys floating around at the show this year, including two top blokes from Victoria special operations groups, Sergeant Peter Wickham and the SOG Commander Simon Johnston.

We're already booked in for the 2017 show – from 17-20 January.



CONTACT is extremely excited to have Jason Semple on board for this continuing series of enlightening and inspiring insights into the rarely seen realm of snipers.



LEFT: Greg Lapin left and Destin Mounts right, from VATA Group, pose with good buddy Max Michel – the current IPSC World Champion and the only shooter in history to hold five World speed-shooting championships.

ABOVE: The author checks out ADA gear assisted by Dan Keighran VC.

ABOVE LEFT: Andy Butler demonstrates The Reaper with a suppressed Barrett .50 cal – heavy beast!

TOP: The author demos The Reaper to a Japanese special-forces soldier.

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SOLDIER COMBAT ENSEMBLE

180-DEGREE PIVOT IN APPROACH TO DESIGN

Twelve months ago the Australian Army initiated a 180-degree pivot in its approach to the design, development and provisioning of Soldier Combat Ensemble (SCE) to land combatants. Gone were the bad ole days of a 'one size fits all' approach to SCE design and provision. In its place, the Army rolled out a world-leading SCE tailored to meet the universal and unique protection and mobility needs of land combatants from Army, Navy and Air Force – be they mounted, dismounted, close or general combatants, male or female.

The Result?

Well, the overwhelming feedback from recipients is that the SCE issued by Army meets their common and bespoke requirements; it is truly scalable – both in protection and load carriage; it allows one to truly 'train as one fights'; it is superior to any SCE they have been issued in their careers to date; it is better than the pouches and packs they have purchased privately; and, as a consequence of annual, spiral development initiatives, it keeps getting better and better.





Main elements of SCE

1 Tiered Combat Helmet (TCH):

The acquisition of the Tiered Combat Helmet has included the following enhancements – common helmet type with NVG shroud and accessory rails as standard for both tiers; weight reduction from existing tier 2 and tier 3 helmets; high-cut design with improved integration for equipment such as hearing protection and CBRN respirators; boltless retention system for stability and improved fit; additional equipment options such as Peltors adapters and oxygen-mask adapters; design and development provisions to allow modifications to helmets in response to changes in user needs.

2 Combat Hearing Protection (CHP):

The new CHP solution is the INVISIO – X5 (similar X50 model shown for illustrative purposes) in-ear headset with S10 and V60 configuration options supplied by the Canberra-based Deifcon Technologies Group. The X5 is an in-ear system that is characterised by small size, weight and power usage; and, world-leading bone-conduction microphone that removes the requirement for a traditional boom microphone that can interfere with Helmet straps. The set offers superior noise attenuation and situational awareness.

3 Ballistic Laser Ocular Protection System (BLOPS):

The new Spectacles – Wiley-X VAPOR – are more robust and less prone to fogging than predecessors. The new Goggles – Wiley-X Spear – better integrate with combat helmets and are more comfortable to wear.

4 Load Carriage Elements (LCE) comprising Tiered Body Armour System (TBAS), belt webbing, a range of pouches and no less than four packs of different sizes and adjustable pack-carriage frame.

Protective Elements (PE), which includes soft armour for low-velocity projectiles, hard armour for both high-velocity and armour-piercing projectiles and edged-blade/spike armour to protect combatants against knife attack in crowd-control environments.



ADJUSTIBLE PACK FRAMES



The Elements of SCE

The SCE being delivered by Army comprises five elements, as follows:

- **Ballistic Laser Ocular Protection System (BLOPS)** comprising spectacles, with interchangeable lenses and prescription inserts, and goggles.
- **Tiered Combat Helmet (TCH)**, which affords protection against bumps to the head and projectiles/shrapnel.
- **Combat Hearing Protection (CHP)**, which provides active hearing protection and the ability to communicate with up to three radios simultaneously.
- **Load Carriage Elements (LCE)** comprising Tiered Body Armour System (TBAS), belt webbing, a range of pouches and no less than four packs of different sizes.
- **Protective Elements (PE)**, which includes soft armour for low-velocity projectiles, hard armour for both high-velocity and armour-piercing projectiles and edged-blade/spike armour to protect combatants against knife attack in crowd-control environments. While only a few units are issued live PE, all recipients receive training PE of the same size and weight as live PE, to allow combatants to 'train as they fight'.

The Logic of SCE Design

The objective of the SCE delivered to ADF land combatants since mid 2015 is to optimise the performance of the Soldier Combat System (SCS) – and namely its survivability (force protection) and mobility sub-systems.

"This is a constant challenge", Colonel Scotty Palmer, Director Military Systems Development Army said.

"If we want to increase protection, we invariably increase the weight combatants have to wear/carry. In turn, this can compromise their mobility and sustainability.

"Achieving the balance involves a nuanced approach to design and configuration."

Nuanced, or tailored, SCE is at the heart of Project LAND125-3B.

Brigadier Chis Mills, Director General Modernisation Army, said that, for the first time, Army was scrutinising the specific needs of combatants via a tiered classification system.

"This has been, and continues to be, a significant driver in the design and configuration of the SCE," he said.

Indeed, the ADF's new SCE is not merely a mobility and force-protection platform based on an infantry-only design delivered to everyone. It is far more nuanced than that.

When evolving the design of the SCE, Army continually scrutinises what dismounted, mounted and combat support/combat service support combatants, both male and female, from Army, Navy and Air Force, require.

By example, the new Large Assault Pack (LAP) and adjustable frame will meet 100% of the ADF's male and 95% of its female size requirement. By comparison, the field pack issued since the 1990s meets 0% of the female population requirements.

Moreover, capability deep-dives are regularly conducted into the specific needs of select dismounted, mounted and general PMV combatants to better tailor the SCE to their unique requirements.

SCE evolution

It is a worthwhile exercise to take a trip down memory lane and review the evolution of SCE since the mid 1990s. In summary, SCE has undergone a radical, continuous process of evolution over the past 20 years.

During the mid 1990s, there was no need for significant protective elements. It would be fair to say the design had not evolved substantially since the Vietnam era. From INTERNET in 1999, the need for protective elements became more prominent.

Chest webbing, of sorts, emerged in the mid-2000s with the introduction of the Enhanced Combat Body Armour System and the Modular Combat Body Armour System (MCBAS).

MCBAS, in particular, was developed to meet the additional force protection requirements for battlegroups deploying to war-torn Iraq.

Recognising the requirement for greater mobility, the Tiered Body Armour System (TBAS) was introduced into use in 2011 for those deploying to the Middle East.

Finally, 2015 saw the advent of SCE provided by Project LAND 125 Phase 3B. This SCE is sustained and issued to force generation units and formations.

While the new SCE is leading edge, it is subject to constant scrutiny to ensure it rapidly evolves in response to emerging threats, coalition modernisation programs and commercial developments.

Adaptive Acquisition circa 2016

One of the most encouraging aspects of the first 12 months of L125-3B SCE is the scale and speed of evolution. In short, every aspect of the SCE has been scrutinised for iterative improvements by soldiers, sailors, airmen and women. Indeed, many of these enhancements have been driven by user feedback or rigorous trial.

BLOPS has been improved to resolve issues for improvement with the 2015 issue identified on operations and by 1st Brigade.

TCH has been replaced with one helmet for all combatants that is lighter than both the Tier 2 and Tier 3 helmets delivered during 2015.

CHP transitions from an over-ear system to a state-of-the-art in-ear active system.

The weight and ergonomics of the LCE have been improved. Specifically, the version 4.4 TBAS is a significant enhancement on that delivered during 2015 – as is the LAP and a number of pouches.

Army is already progressing adaptive acquisition priorities for 2017. Headlining this effort is the development of the next evolution of a scalable TBAS system, version 5, and the ongoing development of pouches.

What's Coming?

A new Large Assault Pack (LAP) has been designed by Diggerworks to improve comfort and sizing and provide detachable storage pouches.

A new adjustable pack frame, the ONE299, has been custom designed by Australian Defence Apparel (ADA) for manufacture in Australia and delivery in 2016, replacing the Downeast and Alice frames, providing a one frame fits all solution.

A new TBAS version 4.4 designed by Diggerworks will provide incremental improvements to version 4.3 and will be delivered with enhancements such as adjusted shoulder strap angle and padding for increased comfort, adjusted plate pocket sizing, and revised cummerbund designs upgraded for improved stability and soft-armour insert integration.

The Tier Zero Heavy and Light, the basic belt webbing systems have been upgraded for improved stability, comfort and integration with TBAS and the new field pack.

The pouch remediation has yielded improvements to the Minimi pouch, medium dump pouch and medic pouch, and a multi-purpose/water-bottle pouch has been added to contain a standard water bottle and cups canteen, or to carry miscellaneous items.



ANZAC Training

Aussies and Kiwis with direct influence on Iraqi battlefield

Australian and New Zealand soldiers from Task Group Taji 2 have conducted a range of training scenarios for the Iraqi Security Forces, including a bayonet-fighting package for the first time.

The Iraqi soldiers were instructed on the process of conducting bayonet fighting, including the ready position, on-guard, parry and thrust.

Soldiers from the Ninewa Operations Command, Commando Battalion, recently received the training as part of their 'extended period of instruction'.

It was the first time this type of training had been delivered by Task Group Taji and the first time the Iraqi soldiers had received bayonet-fighting instruction.

The lessons proved so successful it was extended to other Iraqi troops currently training with Task Group Taji.

Australian Captain Gareth Rochester said the training had been well received.

"They loved it," Captain Rochester said.

"Bayonet fighting is all about focusing people

on overcoming the enemy and the guys really absorbed what we were trying to teach them.

"They enjoyed it so much they asked for more."

Training was delivered over three days, with each company cycling through the lessons.

Each officer and soldier was taught the basic moves including the ready, high port, thrust, slash and butt stroke, before attempting the bayonet assault course.

Captain Rochester said the commandos had quickly absorbed the concepts.

"They learnt the techniques quickly and performed quite well on the obstacle course.

"Because it was so successful we will look to include some bayonet fighting on their culminating activity and also include it in future training packages."

Other training included weapon handling, building clearances and obstacle breaching techniques, as well as training in the tactics, techniques and procedures for squad- through to company-level operations, to use in their fight against Daesh.



All photos this page by Corporal Jake Sims, ADF





Photo by Corporal Jake Sims, ADF

Task Group Taji's BPC contribution is part of Australia's broader Defence contribution to Iraq, codenamed Operation Okra, which also includes a Special Operations Task Group and an Air Task Group.

About 780 ADF personnel are deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Okra – approximately 400 personnel assigned to the Air Task Group, 80 assigned to the a Special Operations Task Group and 300 assigned to Task Group Taji.

The commandos were just the latest in a long line of soldiers who have been trained by the Aussies and Kiwis.

On 2 February, more than 900 soldiers from the Iraqi Army's 71st Brigade, 15th Division, graduated from their training program that commenced on 30 September last year.

This graduation took Task Group Taji's total number of Iraqi soldiers trained to more than 3000.

The 71st Brigade received training in military skills including marksmanship, urban building clearances, the employment of combined arms, medical instruction, obstacle breaching techniques, international humanitarian law and the laws of armed conflict.

Task Group Taji Commander Colonel Gavin Keating said the graduating soldiers were well prepared to take the fight to Daesh.

"We have seen significant improvements in the brigade since they began training and we

are confident they are well prepared for future operations," Colonel Keating said.

"Their graduation was an important milestone and it was auspicious that it was held [so soon] after Ramadi was retaken."

During the graduation ceremony, Iraqi Army Ground Forces Command Training Director Major General Sa'eed Na'eem Abd Allah wished the brigade well in their future operations.

"This intensive course has produced good results and has prepared you to defeat Daesh," he said.

"You are just some of our brave soldiers and fighters from all over the Army who will liberate Iraq from the hands of the terrorists.

"I wish you every success in your future endeavours and we will hear good news about the Brigade when you achieve victory after victory."

Colonel Keating said Task Group Taji could be proud of its efforts.

"This was very much a team effort between the Iraqi Army and New Zealand and Australian trainers," he said.

"I am extremely happy with the efforts made by our trainers since we assumed responsibility for training at Taji.

"They have displayed excellent professionalism under very fluid conditions.

"This is the first graduation parade we have attended since we arrived in Iraq and it was a great privilege to be here."

Briefing media in December, Australia's Chief of Joint Operations Vice Admiral David Johnston updated the situation in Iraq, starting with a brief overview of how tumultuous the operating environment was.

"Some of the key events that have occurred [in the past six months] – we've had the downing of the Russian airliner in the Sinai, the downing of the Russian fighter jet by the Turkish Air Force, the attacks in Paris and the dreadful tragedy associated with that, and a number of national decisions by governments about changes to their contribution across the Middle East and South Asian region, including Afghanistan.

"All of those events have had and will have an ongoing influence on the way the ADF conducts operations," Vice Admiral Johnston said, before elaborating specifically on the tactical situation TG Taji-trained Iraqi soldiers were graduating into.

"The counterattack by Iraqi security forces in Ramadi commenced in mid July. As expected, Daesh had used the period of occupation to prepare significant defensive measures, including heavy concentrations of improvised explosive devices and concealed fighting positions, and we have seen both used extensively.

"Over a number of months, the Iraqi security forces have made progressive gains in recapturing Ramadi.

"Progress has been made to the north, west and south of the city.

"Earlier this week [early December] the Iraqi security forces captured the area of Al-Tamim, an important area within the urban environment on the West Bank of the Euphrates in Ramadi.

"This has effectively split Daesh forces and isolated several Daesh elements from resupply.

"While it's too early to predict the date for the counterattack to be completed in Ramadi, there is consistent progress being made on the ground.

"In general, within Iraq, Iraqi security forces and coalition momentum is increasing.

"Daesh now finds itself under pressure on multiple fronts in Iraq, at Sinjar, Baiji and Ramadi.

"This, in combination with successes in northern Syria and strikes on oil-generation facilities that limit their finances, is having a significant impact upon their force availability, their freedom of movement and effectiveness.

"The Iraqi government, with coalition support, has continued to consolidate its operational position.

"Iraqi forces are reconstituting and improving their skills through the conduct of further training, often delivered by coalition partners, including our own efforts."

Shortly after Christmas, an ADF update indicated that Australia's Special Operations Task Group and the RAAF had been directly involved in assisting Iraqi forces retake Ramadi.

Vice Admiral Johnston said Australian Special Operation Task Group joint terminal attack controllers had assisted with precision air strikes and

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Photo by Sergeant Kalie Jones, US Army



Photo by Sergeant Kalie Jones, US Army

RAAF fighter jets had dropped several bombs during two missions, at least one of which killed several Daesh fighters in central Ramadi.

"This, combined with the obvious affect of Australian and New Zealand training on the Iraqi forces allowed the locals to raise the Iraqi flag on government buildings and officially and fully retake the important city on 28 December.

Vice Admiral Johnston congratulated the Iraqi Forces on retaking key territory in Ramadi and highlighted the Australian Defence Force's contribution to the operation.

"After months of fighting through the complex urban environment, the Counter Terrorism Service 1st Iraqi Special Operations Force Brigade (1st ISOF) raised the Iraq flag over government buildings this week, symbolising the liberation of Ramadi on 28 December 2015," Vice Admiral Johnston said.

"The success of the CTS is just one aspect of the efforts of Australian Defence Force personnel in Iraq which encompasses the Advise and Assist, Building Partner Capacity, Air Task Group and embedded personnel in coalition headquarters."

Vice Admiral Johnston said the 1st ISOF Brigade supported remotely by Australian SOTG joint terminal attack controllers, had successfully fought their way to the government buildings in the heavily defended Daesh-held centre of Ramadi.

"SOTG-I advisors enabled more than 150 airstrikes in support of 1st ISOF Brigade's offensive, resulting in the destruction of some 50 Daesh fighting positions, 16 heavy machine guns and numerous vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices.

"It is deeply satisfying to see how the Australian Special Operations Task Group have supported 1st ISOF Brigade."

He said SOTG-I had provided training assistance to 1st ISOF Brigade for more than a year, including advanced skill sets needed in the Special Operations environment, such as tactics, medical aid and counter IED skills.

"Other Australian Task Groups in the Middle East have also contributed to the Iraqi operational successes.

"The F/A-18A Hornets from the Air Task Group were vital in striking Daesh fighting positions that were hampering the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Services to advance through Ramadi," he said.

"Air Task Group Hornets conducted two missions on 22 and 29 December where five and two munitions were released respectively.

"As a direct result of at least one attack, the Daesh fighters were silenced and the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Services were able to continue with their clearance of central Ramadi.



Photo by Sergeant Kalie Jones, US Army

"Overall, the Air Task Group has completed 99 missions and released 96 munitions since July for operations in Ramadi."

Vice Admiral Johnston said the combined Australian-New Zealand Task Group Taji training mission also contributed to the Ramadi operation.

"Soldiers from Iraq's 76th Brigade, previously trained by Task Group Taji, have been occupying defensive positions around Ramadi since July," he said.

"During this major operation, 76 Brigade coordinated indirect fires to suppress enemy positions, cleared obstacles laced with IEDs, seized objectives and maintained momentum despite casualties.

"It has taken time, but the continual efforts of our troops and our coalition partners are paying off, and the Iraqi government and security forces are deeply appreciative of our help."

Elaborating on Australia's wider contribution Vice Admiral Johnston said Australia had been a key contributor in the fight against Daesh throughout 2015.

"We are the second-largest contributor to the military effort on the ground in Iraq, and one of the major contributors to the air campaign.

"Each of the Australian force elements have made significant contributions to the overall effort against Daesh.

"I received overt recognition of the scale and quality of Australia's contribution from several senior coalition military commanders, with whom I met in Iraq, and Afghanistan.

"In addition to supporting their operational planning and manoeuvre, our advise-assist efforts

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included enabling some 917 strike missions [to early December].

"The majority of these missions occurred in the vicinity of Ramadi, resulting in significant numbers of Daesh fighters killed, the destruction of more than 420 defensive fighting positions and 85 Daesh vehicles destroyed, many of them vehicle-borne IEDs.

"This contribution has been a genuine combat multiplier in the grinding battle to recapture Ramadi, and has been a key factor in aligning the Iraqi security force ground assault with coalition air support.

"Additionally, the Special Operations Task Group continues to train and prepare the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service for operations.

"Our Special Operations Group has now qualified more than 830 Iraqi special operation force soldiers in a range of combat skills.

"This is building their capability and, importantly, their confidence.

"Task Group Taji has trained and has in training several contingents of the Iraqi army.

"Our training has upskilled more than 3000 personnel, including Iraqi army brigades, the junior NCO academy and specialised units, many of whom are now involved in operations around Ramadi and elsewhere in Iraq.

"The feedback from the Iraqi Ministry of Defence and senior Iraqi military commanders regarding the building partner capacity mission has been extremely positive.

"Iraqi commanders [told me] they have observed a commensurate improvement in the competence of their forces who have received this training."



JUNIOR LEADER COURSE

Around 235 Iraqi Army soldiers marched out of the third Junior Leaders' Course (JLC) on 22 February 2016, bringing the total number of soldiers trained by Task Group Taji, the combined Australian and New Zealand task group, to around 4220 since it commenced training last April.

Below: Australian Army officer Captain Matt Sebesfi gives orders to Iraqi Army soldiers during an urban-clearance scenario, which was a culminating activity of the recent Iraqi Army Junior Leaders' Course at the Taji Military Complex, near Baghdad, Iraq.



MARCHOUT PARADED

Iraqi Army soldiers demonstrated their parade-ground prowess during their graduation parade from a Junior Leaders' Course of Iraqi Army non-commissioned officers at Taji Military Complex, Iraq, in February.

More than 200 Iraqi non-commissioned officers completed training provided by New Zealand and Australian troops at Camp Taji, bringing the total number of Iraqi soldiers trained by the ANZAC training force to more than 4000.

The 235 soldiers who marched out of the third Junior Leaders' Course on 21 February, brought the grand total number of soldiers trained by the combined Australian and New Zealand Task Group Taji, to 4220 since it commenced training last April.

Major General Tim Gall, Commander Joint Forces New Zealand, said this marked an important milestone in New Zealand's ongoing contribution to international efforts to train and build the capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces.

"Building the capability of the ISF to a level necessary to secure the defeat of ISIL will take time," Major General Gall said.

"But what is encouraging is that the Iraqis are regaining their confidence and have begun to demonstrate, like in Ramadi, the capability and determination they need to mount a successful counter-offensive."

Commander Task Group Taji Australian Colonel Gavin Keating said the training provided by the task group would lead to the long-term development of the Iraqi Army.

"This training is significant because this is all about developing their junior leaders and junior non-commissioned officers," Colonel Keating said.

"And that's critical for the long-term institutional development of their Army."

A new Junior Leaders' Course will commence in mid-March.



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Australian Army soldier Private Jesse Brockway of Task Group Taji 2's Force Protection Company.



Australian soldiers from Task Group Taji 2's Force Protection Company provide security to Australian and New Zealand soldiers from Task Group Taji at the Taji Military Complex, north-west of Baghdad, Iraq.

It's a tough but important job that currently rests with D Company 8/9RAR with an attached platoon of New Zealand soldiers from the 1st Battalion, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment.

Photos by Corporal Jake Sims

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Foreign relations

Photos by Corporal Matthew Bickerton



Chinese-born Australian Army officer Lieutenant Yikang Feng has lived the corporate life but wanted something more – eventually exchanging stocks for bang-sticks.

Yikang Feng moved to Australia in 1999 when he was 18, and completed a maths and finance degree at the University of Technology Sydney.

"I was a stock broker for a number of large firms for about eight years following university," he said.

"But I wanted to do something different.

"It is a bit of a romantic idea to have a bigger calling – a purpose – but I wanted to serve the country."

"I initially joined the Army as an infantry reservist in 2006 and became full-time in 2010 when I attended the Royal Military College, Duntroon, to become an officer."

Now Lieutenant Feng has completed a deployment to Iraq as an infantry platoon commander in charge of around 30 soldiers.

"We oversaw security on the ground and provided a safe working environment for the trainers to teach lessons to the Iraqi Army.

"It was my first deployment, a good experience and great opportunity.

"I felt like my platoon and I did our bit during the deployment. We had no incidents.

"I even celebrated my 37th birthday in Iraq, which not many people can say."

Lieutenant Feng said he wants the community to see a different perspective of the Army.

"We see people with different heritages and cultural backgrounds in the Army but it's rare to find someone from China.

"There is a saying in Chinese that good steel doesn't make nails and good boys don't join the Army.

"I think this is a false idea and we are missing out on opportunities to serve our country."

Lieutenant Feng completed approximately seven months in Iraq as a part of the Australian government's commitment to build the capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces.

He is looking forward to his next adventure and the challenges that the Australian Army can provide.



Lucky Luke fulfils Driving passion

Photos by Corporal Oliver Carter

Toowoomba man Luke McKinnon always had a passion for driving.

When hoards of schoolies descended on Surfers Paradise in 1995, Luke was among them, not to party, but to start his first job as a delivery driver for Marie's Pizzas.

Little did he know back then that his enthusiasm for driving and his conviction for hard, honest work would take him to some very strange places on Earth – even stranger than the Gold Coast during schoolies.

Luke's father served 20 years in the Australian Army as a combat engineer and ordnance clerk. His great grandfather served and died in World War II in Burma, and his mum's great uncle perished in Changi, Thailand.

Despite this military pedigree, however, Luke said he grew up with a dislike for the army.

"We moved from town to town, place to place far too often," he said.

Before joining the Army, Luke spent 18 months living and working on dairy farms in New Zealand and, after returning to Queensland, spent another three years working in an abattoir.

"I did short stints on the kill floor, the boning room, fresh meat packing, and inedible offal," Luke said.

"After three years I thought, no, I'm done, I can't do this anymore.

"That's when I thought about joining the Army."

Twelve years later and Luke, now a transport driver with the rank of corporal in the Australian Army, has just returned from his third overseas deployment – his second to Afghanistan – the first being to Uruzgan province, in 2012.

On this second Afghanistan deployment, in 2015, Luke was deployed to Kandahar and Kabul as a member of the Force Protection Element, driving the Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicle (PMV) and Mack trucks.

He said that despite the risks, the opportunity to drive on the open road in cities like Kabul and Kandahar had been rewarding.

"Most people in the military spend their time in training and on exercises," he said.

"I feel like it's a privilege to be able to do my job in real-time."



As a transport manager he supervised a fleet of PMV's, Mack trucks and 20-tonne trailers, including maintenance, servicing, equipment and cargo.

"It was our job to resupply the forward operating bases with food, water, firewood – anything they wanted we would try to get to them.

"We provide the transportation and force protection for Australian Defence Force mentors as they conduct their meetings and provide advice to their Afghan counterparts," he said.

"It's a good feeling being able to drive into an Afghan National Army barracks and lower our weapons.

"We wave at people and they wave back and we share a lot of mutual respect."

Luke said that although the tempo of driving had been higher in 2015, the threats were greater in 2012 when he and his colleagues were constantly targeted by insurgents using IEDs.

Around 250 ADF members and Defence civilians are currently deployed in Afghanistan on Operation Highroad.



Unique family gathering

HMAS Darwin had a very special encounter in the Top End on her way to official duties in the Middle East when the ship met the families of two of its crew – at sea.

Seaman Boatswain Mate Edmond Tomsana and Seaman Boatswain Mate Amber Phineasa were delighted to welcome family aboard HMAS Darwin during the highly unusual encounter – and introduce them to the captain, Commander Phillip Henry.

Following the all-too-brief encounter at sea, the crew of HMAS Darwin was farewelled by the families before their seven-month deployment to the Middle East Region.

During her deployment HMAS Darwin will be tasked with a variety of roles to help the coalition forces in the fight against terrorism, piracy and smuggling in the Middle East.



Above: Seaman Edmond Tomsana introduces his mum to HMAS Darwin captain Commander Phillip Henry.



Right: Seaman Boatswain Mate Amber Phineasa with her family onboard HMAS Darwin in the Torres Strait.



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SHARING HISTORY



Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull says Australians can best honour the Anzac Centenary and our diggers of old by helping today's veterans deal with the physical and mental impacts of recent service.

Speaking at the launch of Soldier On's new Robert Poate Reintegration and Recovery Centre in Canberra, Prime Minister Turnbull said; "It is critical that we do not ever forget that we best honour the veterans of 1916 by caring for the veterans of 2016. That's how we honour that ANZAC memory best, most powerfully".

"The grandsons and the great-grandsons and the great-granddaughters of the Diggers of 100 years ago, they are the veterans we care for today and we do that very well when we support Soldier On.

"I'd encourage everybody, everyone who's watching this here today or elsewhere, to consider supporting Soldier On.

"It is a great charity and it's worthy of private and indeed of course public support."

The Robert Poate Reintegration and Recovery Centre is named in honour of Canberra's Private Robert Poate

who, along with Sapper James Martin and Lance Corporal Stjepan Milosevic, was killed on 29 August 2012 while serving in Uruzgan province, Afghanistan.

In 2015 the centre supported more than 300 registered veterans in the ACT region and, each month, had around 275 individuals involved in community events and support programs.

John Bale, Soldier On CEO and a young veteran himself, said the expanded Robert Poate Centre, which is funded solely by private and corporate donations, would help even more veterans by offering additional psychological support and new programs such as writing workshops, photography courses and other education and employment support.

"Initially the centre offered case management, social events, family days and small workshops," Mr Bale said.

"With the expansion, Soldier On now has the capacity for two full-time psychologists working on site, more comprehensive educational programs, office space for other ex-service organisations to deliver

OPPOSITE PAGE: Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Hugh Poate, Defence Minister Marise Payne and "Trooper Bert Jones" (the PM's new bear) at the official opening of Soldier On's new Robert Poate Reintegration and Recovery Centre in Canberra.

RIGHT: Stephen Davie, John Bale, Malcolm Turnbull and Lindsey Davie.



& SAVING LIVES

services under the same roof, and a much greater scope for assisting many more veterans and their families."

Mr Bale also used the official opening to reiterate the need for ongoing funding to support services for veterans in all communities.

"Our work is certainly not done, as there are still thousands of veterans around Australia who are struggling and need support.

"We want to coordinate that support and make sure everyone who needs help gets it across Australia," he said.

"We can't do that without funding, but working with government, corporate Australia and the general public, we can reinvigorate the way our wounded are supported."

Mr Bale presented the Prime Minister with an *Australia in the Great War* commemorative bear, which will be the 'face' of a national Diggers' Tribute campaign in 2016 to raise funds to support individuals and families living with PTSD.

"Too many of our soldiers are taking their own lives. Too many are suffering every day because of the emotional wounds carried home from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. And too many families are suffering because of their PTSD. We need to do more to help our veterans and their families" he said.

"Together we can make a difference. This little Great War Diggers Tribute bear is about sharing history and saving lives.

"We want people to buy these amazingly detailed bears. The profits will go toward building and running more centres like this one – helping more of today's

diggers, and their families, deal with the impacts of PTSD.

"Together we really can save lives."

Mr Bale singled out the Military Shop, which raised \$250,000 for Soldier On in the first year of its 2014-2018 *Australia in the Great War* commemorative campaign.

"This is not a big company. Military Shop is a small family business in Canberra which has been supporting military and veterans for 30 years," Mr Bale said.

"They donate 10% of all *Australia in the Great War* sales directly to our work."

Lindsey Davie from Military Shop said being able to support the opening of the Robert Poate Centre had been one of the family's proudest achievements.

"When you hear directly from soldiers struggling to keep their lives and families together, and know that you can do something to help, it is a great sense of honour," she said.

"In 2016 we will gladly give Soldier On the profits from our Great War bears for their Diggers' Tribute. We have thousands of collectors who love these bears and hopefully they, and even more people and corporate supporters, will jump on board.

"We will continue to provide 10 per cent of all sales from our other collections, but the bears will now be something special."

John Bale said the AGW bears were a tangible way for all Australians, new and old, to share our history of service while helping today's servicemen and women.

To find out more about the AGW Bears and Soldier On, visit [Australia in the Great War](#).

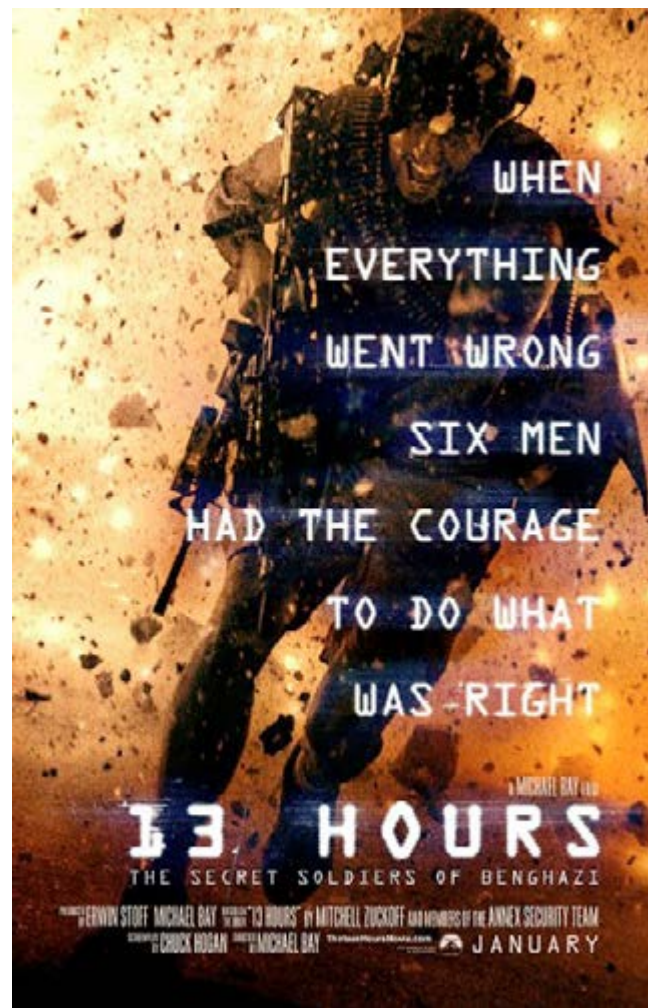
SHARING
HISTORY



SAVING
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Great entertainment – but no hidden shocks



I listen to an American podcast called SOFREP Radio (thanks to CONTACT fan Justin for the pointer) and much of their commentary on *13 Hours – The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi* (before they saw it) has been along the lines, “this could kill Hillary Clinton’s presidential race”. At least they hoped it would.

After seeing the movie at a pre-release media event in Sydney last week, I’m afraid the SOFREP boys could probably be disappointed, unless American’s Joe Public is much more educated on this incident than I am.

13 Hours – The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi is a very good Hollywood movie based on the true story of the death of US Ambassador to Libya Chris Stevens on the night of 11 September 2012 – less than four years ago.

There was a lot of controversy surrounding the ambassador’s death and several enquiries failed to cause anyone’s head to roll in the aftermath.

And I can’t actually see this movie rectifying that perceived ‘injustice’.

This movie tells the story of that night from the viewpoint of a small cadre of American contractors whose job it was to protect a clandestine CIA compound in Benghazi – plus the odd side gig, such as advising the official US compound on their (well-below-acceptable-standards) security arrangements in advance of a visit by Ambassador Stevens – visiting without his own security, from Tripoli.

Anyway, so the official five-acre compound, about a mile from the CIA clandestine compound is attacked after dark on the anniversary of 9/11, and is quickly overrun.

Ambassador Stevens and two bodyguards are trapped in a strongroom when the building is set on fire. One security guard makes it out alive, but the other is killed and Stevens gets lost in the confusion – official cause of death, smoke inhalation.

Meanwhile, the contractors at the CIA base are tooled up and itching to respond to frantic SOS calls, but are held back by their base commander – because, “we’re not here – we don’t exist – this compound doesn’t exist”.

But eventually they defy his orders and race to assist.

What I’ll say at this stage is that, if the movie depiction is even the least little bit accurate, these blokes were super professional and not at all Holywood-gung-ho in their actions. The number of gun-toting locals I probably would have shot that night but they didn’t doesn’t bear thinking about.

Anyway, with some pretty heavy action behind them, the survivors of the initial attack make it back to the CIA compound – and prepare for an expected counterattack.

Wave on wave of bad guys attempt to overrun the obviously not-so-secret CIA compound – and dozens are mown down by the far-better equipped, organised and professional contractors.

Towards the end of the fight, very accurate mortar fire kills two Americans. Ten others are wounded.

In the light of day, 13 hours after it started, the CIA compound is abandoned and a safe evacuation effected.

13 Hours – The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi is a very good, very entertaining 2.4-hour movie that’s really well worth seeing – for the entertainment value. It’s very well cast, very well acted with great action and not too much ‘Hollywood bullshit’.

But I don’t think it’s the informative, enlightening, controversial, career-ending exposé that some people were expecting or hoping for.

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A NEW NATIONAL BASELINE

Have you ever thought about your home country's 'territorial waters'? Have you ever wondered how the limits are measured and boundaries set – or, from where they are measured? It's not like there's a terrain feature or anything you could point to and say, "there's the border".

So let's say you're on a boat, in the process of committing a crime, and a naval vessel pops over the horizon and nabs you. You go meekly to face justice. But then, your lawyer pulls a rabbit out of the proverbial hat and argues that you weren't actually inside the arresting country's territorial waters, and they should prove that you were.

In Ireland's case in recent years, the state ran into difficulties proving such cases, for the simple reason that no one knew from which fixed points on land the edge of the territorial waters were measured.

So, a major project to fix the problem was launched – and recently completed.

Ireland's 'territory' at sea is now measured from known, fixed baselines along the coast and on key islands.

Each point from which these baselines are established has been resurveyed in a joint operation, in which the Naval Service and the Air Corps supported the Geological Survey of Ireland and the Attorney General's office to physically visit the entire west and south coasts and key islands, find suitable spots to drill holes in rocks and permanently anchor brass survey markers.

And the project officially and formally concluded when on 13 January this year, An Taoiseach (prime minister) Enda Kenny signed Statutory Instrument SI22/2016, The Straight Baselines Order, bringing legal certainty to the dimensions and the claims to Irish Territorial Waters.

Andy McGill, Senior Operations Manager, Surveying Infrastructure & Technology, Ordnance Survey of Ireland, said OSi took a lead role in this project, but couldn't have done it without the Navy and the Air Corps.

"The Baselines Project brought together multifarious resources of the state – the Department of Foreign Affairs own the project because it is international territorial limits that are being established – the Attorney General's office, because of the legal interpretations – the Department of

Defence because they enforce the law of the sea with the Navy and with the Air Corps – Geological Survey of Ireland because they completed the seabed survey – and OSi was requested to carry this out because such work comes under our remit," he told Irish TV and radio icon Pat Kenny.

"We approached the Department of Defence to get support from the Navy and the Air Corps and this was quickly put in place.

"The Air Corps took a team of five OSi surveyors to Baldonnell and spent a day training in winching and helicopter operations.

"Then we spent another day down in the National Maritime College, where the team again were trained in seafaring activities and also in the potential of ditching helicopters in the sea and how you survive and get out of that.

"The Atlantic Ocean is an extremely hostile environment to work in – you just can't take chances on that and, in fairness, the Air Corps and the Navy provided us with great support.

"These guys can read the sea and read the conditions – it's second nature to them.

"They don't allow any chances to be taken either, which is great from our perspective because we depend on them."

The survey also looked at Rockall, a tiny lump of rock about half way to Iceland, over which Ireland, The UK, Iceland and Denmark all claim ownership – though it is not reflected in the final Statutory Instrument, SI22/2016.

Editor's note: Seeing this is chuckle-worthy to me because, as a lad growing up in Ireland, the following 'rebel song' was popular and well rehearsed...

"Rock on Rockall, you'll never fall into Britain's greedy hands – You'll meet the same resistance that you did in many lands – May the seagulls rise and pluck your eyes and the waters crush your shell – And her natural gas will burn your ass and blow you all to hell."



Ireland's Straight Baselines Survey saw members of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, assisted by the Navy and Air Corps visit many and varied, rugged, beautiful – and dangerous – remote coastlines and outcrops on the west and south coasts of Ireland.



Home delivery Antarctic style

New Zealand's contribution to scientific research in Antarctica received a boost in late January with a 60-strong team from the New Zealand Defence Force unloading a year's supply of the science equipment, food, and construction materials needed to sustain researchers in one of the world's most inhospitable laboratories.

Senior officer Major Mac McColl said soldiers and logistics specialists from Burnham and Linton military camps had been deployed to offload 468 containers packed with science equipment, construction materials and fresh, dry and frozen food and drink supplies from the Ocean Giant.

A crane and a tractor were also unloaded.

Simon Trotter, General Manager of Operations at Antarctica New Zealand, said the NZDF's support through the Joint Logistics Pool was a lifeline for our scientists and other staff working on the continent.

"These supplies are crucial for us to get through the season."

Maj McColl said only 60 of the 468 containers onboard Ocean Giant were for Antarctica New Zealand – the rest were earmarked for the United States Antarctic Programme at McMurdo Station.

After all the cargo had been offloaded, NZDF personnel, assisted by US Navy personnel, reloaded it with excess equipment, items for repair and waste from the previous 12 months.

Major McColl said the entire operation was expected to take nine days.

"We have highly trained people to do this operation but, even during summer, weather conditions can be challenging.

"In addition, we are handling 20 per cent more supplies this year compared to last year."

Chief of the New Zealand Defence Force Lieutenant General Tim Keating visited Antarctica a few days before the ship's arrival to meet NZDF to visit both the New Zealand and US Antarctic programmes at Scott Base and nearby McMurdo Stations respectively.

"About 220 NZDF personnel every year are involved in the Antarctic operations," Lieutenant General Keating said.

"New Zealand has important sovereignty, security, economic, environmental and scientific interests in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, and the country's presence is maintained at Scott Base, with the Defence Force being an integral element in sustaining that presence."

"The relationship between New Zealand and the United States benefits from the very good co-operation on logistics and science work that has existed here for decades.

"Since 1965, the NZDF has been supporting New Zealand and American scientists as they carry out important research on the ice.

"We are proud that our partnership with Antarctica New Zealand is contributing to the continued advancement of their work."

Overall, the NZDF provides search and rescue support, air transport, terminal operations in Christchurch and McMurdo, and support for the unloading of the annual container ship.

Up to 220 NZDF personnel, including air crew and ground support staff, passenger and cargo facilitation staff, logistics staff, fuel specialists, Army engineers and heavy-plant operators, cargo handlers and communications specialists, are deployed during the summer season to support both Scott Base and McMurdo Station.

Antarctica New Zealand manages Scott Base and supports scientific research in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, particularly the Ross Sea region.





OUTBACK

TOUR

**SUPPORTING
THOSE WHOM OUR
GOVERNMENTS
NEGLECT**

**Words John Arnfield
Pics Mark Sonter**

At the beginning of 2015, the Pipes and Drums, National Servicemen's Memorial Band, decided to commemorate the Centenary of Anzac by participating in a concert tour of outback and central Queensland to honour the sacrifices made by those remote communities during WWI and since.

To this end, the band raised more than \$30,000 through sausage sizzles and selling badges for Anzac, Long Tan, and Remembrance Days.

The band also decided to ask for donations from Nasho and RSL branches, with this money to go directly to people in need in the communities we were to visit.

The actual tour was a whirlwind seven days that started from Gallipoli Army Barracks on Saturday 21 November at 0400hrs and saw us perform 17 concerts in 13 towns over nine days.

On Sunday 28 November, we staggered back home to Gallipoli Barracks, very tired but very happy.

This tour was a real eye opener for all the members of the band.

We had all seen on TV and heard about the drought, but until we actually saw first hand the devastation this ongoing drought has brought to the outback, we never realised just how bad things really were.

The people in the outback were at their wits end. They had not had a drop of rain for more than four years, and had little, if any, support from all levels of government of either party.

The scale of their problems were really brought home to us when a lady from the Winton Branch of the Queensland Country Womens' Association told us that a lot of local people wanted to attend our concert, but couldn't even afford the fuel to come in to town.

A local grazier explained that five years ago he ran more than 20,000 sheep, but was now down to 100 of his breeding stock, as that was all he could afford to feed.

In Longreach, a local couple, in their early 30s who lived in the town, told us that our concert, (being free) was the first time they had been able to go out together for entertainment, as they were struggling to just put food on the table for their three

kids, and sometimes went without themselves, so that the kids could be fed.

People in the outback have really lost heart. They feel forgotten by our politicians who seem quite happy to spend billions to help people with questionable backgrounds from overseas just so they can look good on the world stage, but do nothing for the wonderful people of the Australian outback.

Providing 'low interest' loans, which they will never be able to repay, does not help. These people need cash with no strings attached.

The people of the outback have been the backbone of Australia for years. Remember when Australia grew wealthy 'off the sheep's back' as the catch cry used to be?

These people deserve better.

The Pipes and Drums, National Servicemen's Memorial Band is now seeing what we can do to raise funds for QCWA branches out west. These 'girls' are trying to keep their towns going under very trying circumstances, and need all the help they can get.

We cannot allow our people just to walk off their

farms or, worse still, take their own lives, because they can no longer cope.

Our concert tour was a little relief to the people of the outback who really appreciated the diversion – and the fact they were free helped them have that little break from the day-to-day drudge.

All band members were amazed just how well behaved the kids in the schools were, compared to other schools we have entertained on the coast. They clapped and cheered and, afterwards, swamped us with questions.

The looks on their faces made our long trip well worthwhile.

Everyone who attended the concerts took the time to talk to us, and to thank us for being in their community.

All of us have come back with pride in what we achieved, but humbled by the sheer agony the people of the outback are suffering.

The tour has made a lasting impression on all of us.

To the Nasho and RSL Sub-branches who assisted with donations, rest assured your money will be put to very good use.

NATIONAL SERVICEMENS MEMORIAL BAND OUTBACK TOUR 2015



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The flagship community project of the Anzac Centenary national programme is the “Spirit of ANZAC Centenary Experience” – a travelling exhibition of the Australian War Memorial.

Spirit of ANZAC Centenary Experience tells the story of Australia’s involvement in the First World War to the present day.

The Australian Government and the Australian War Memorial, supported by the Commonwealth Bank and Telstra are proud to be bringing the Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience to a wide range of communities right across Australia.

It is a travelling exhibition that follows a chronological timeline spanning from pre-war Australia to the present day, using a mix of arresting visuals, artefacts, audio and film to engage visitors.

A key feature of the experience is curated ‘local stories’ zone that changes in every location. These zones will be created in close collaboration with local communities and will contribute to the legacy of each region.

The Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience commenced its national tour in September last year in Albury-Wodonga.

From there it moved on to Launceston, Hobart, Ballarat, Bendigo and Wollongong – where **CONTACT** visited. Then it moved to Melbourne for much of February and is currently (March 2016) in Adelaide.

After Adelaide it moves to Tamworth (26 April to 1 May), Toowoomba (17-23 May), Brisbane (17-30 June), Mackay (specific dates in July yet to be announced), Cairns (Aug), Townsville (Sept), Darwin (Oct), Port Augusta (Nov), Perth (Nov/Dec), Bunbury (Jan ‘17), Kalgoorlie (Jan/Feb), Geelong (Feb), Orange (Mar), Newcastle (Mar) and finally Sydney in April 2017.

For more details and specific dates as they become available, visit the Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience web site www.spiritofanzac.gov.au

It is a very well organised, self-paced interactive tour with a lot to see, hear and experience. Most visitors could skip through the exhibit in 45 minutes, but the more engaged visitor could easily wipe out a couple of hours or more.

Entry is free, but booking is essential. School and group bookings are encouraged and can be easily arranged via www.spiritofanzac.gov.au

And photography (but no flash) is definitely allowed.



THE TRIGGER

In Sarajevo, on 28 June 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a radical Bosnian Serb nationalist, assassinates Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This event acts like a trigger for a general war between the two rival European alliances. Austria reacts first, declaring war on Serbia. Russia, which has an alliance with France, backs Serbia. Germany supports its ally Austria, and soon declares war on Russia and then France. It invades neutral Belgium in line with its plan for attacking France. This event prompts Britain to declare war on Germany and its allies. As a loyal dominion of the British Empire, Australia immediately declares its support for Britain.



1 A NATION IN THE MAKING: Take a brief journey back in time to what life was like in Australia before the outbreak of war.

2 WAR IS DECLARED: War in Europe leads enthusiastic Australians into the unknown – a war many thought would be over swiftly.

3 SETTING SAIL Travel with the young recruits as they head off overseas. Learn about the Royal Australian Navy’s initial involvement, including the sinking of Emden and the loss of HMAS AE1.

4 TRAINING IN EGYPT: Disembark – but not in Europe as first intended. Explore Egypt as the Australian and New Zealand troops undertake the first part of what they thought would be a great adventure.

5 GALLIPOLI: Step onto the shores of Gallipoli with the Anzacs; discover the key facts of the campaign from the dawn landings to the evacuation.

6 TRENCHES ON THE WESTERN FRONT: A truly immersive experience with a taste of what life was like for those who lived and died in the fields of Belgium and France.

7 WESTERN FRONT 1916 AND 1917: An in-depth look at the key battles that Australian troops were involved in, and the weapons they used.

8 WESTERN FRONT 1918: Step into the open fields, demolished towns, and rubble and destruction that were the battlefields of 1918.

9 SINAI/PALESTINE: Discover the often-overlooked Australian battles of Sinai and Palestine in 1916, 1917 and 1918. Find out more about the important role the Australian Flying Corps, the Camel Corps and The Light Horse played on this very different battleground.

10 AFTERMATH: The huge task of an orderly repatriation and the challenges faced by returning soldiers.

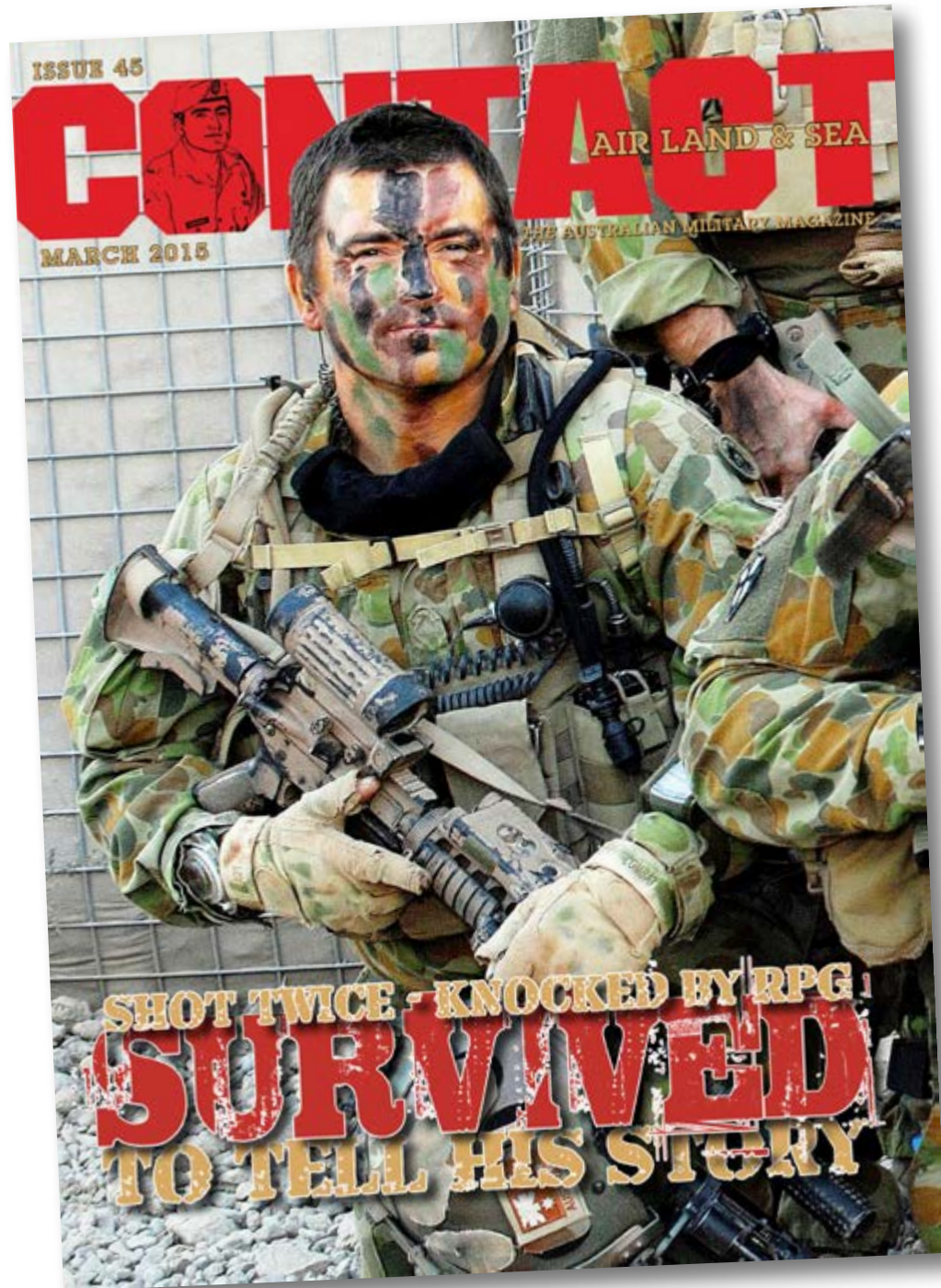
11 LEST WE FORGET: A place for reflection, contemplation and commemoration.

12 CENTURY OF SERVICE: For more than 100 years, Australia’s armed forces have been involved in conflict, peacekeeping, peacemaking, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief around the world.

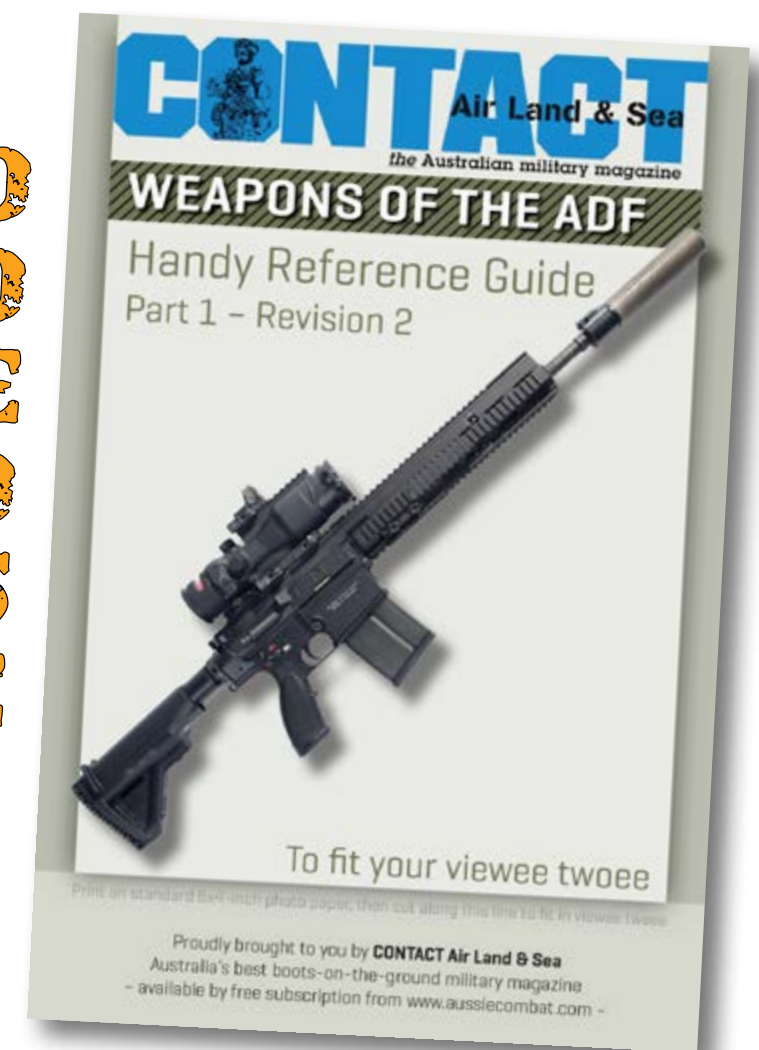


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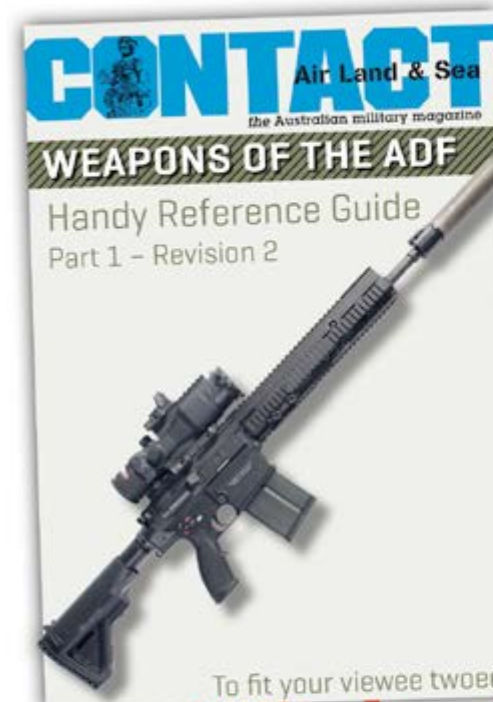
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CLOSE BUT NOT CLOSE ENOUGH

Australians recommended for the VC but not awarded

BY MAJOR DARRYL KELLY

Sergeant Cyril Victor Besanko DCM, MM – 4th Battalion, AIF

#6 IN THE 4TH

“There were bombs, both Australian and Turkish, flying in all directions. The Diggers ran around with half filled sandbags, trying to smother the deadly grenades before they exploded. The Lance Corporal stood on the parapet throwing his bombs with deadly accuracy but the issue was certainly in doubt...”

Cyril Besanko was born in the South Australian town of Willowie in 1886, to English-immigrant parents Benjamin and Loveday Besanko. He was the youngest of 14 children.¹

After leaving school, Cyril became an electrician working in the mines. He met a young lass named Florence Woods in 1910 and they married in 1912. In their early married years the couple had two daughters, Maxine and Joan. The Besanko's moved to Sydney so Cyril could secure work. The family resided in a modest home in the then leafy suburb of Ryde.

With the onset of war in August 1914, Cyril was among the first to enlist in the AIF. He was allotted to A Company of the newly formed 4th Battalion and allocated Regimental Number 6. He was no stranger to military service having served in the militia forces, some time previously.²

Cyril marched proudly through the streets of Sydney as the battalion made its way towards the waiting troopship HMAT³ Euripides. Even though the city was bathed in rain, thousands of well-wishers were on-hand to farewell the troops, who were off to “the great adventure.”

It wasn't until they were well at sea that their destination was revealed. Instead of the fields of France, as was expected, it was to be the sands of Egypt. It was here that the troops would undergo their final training. The decision to choose Egypt as a training destination was a milestone that would profoundly affect Australian and New Zealand military history. The ANZAC⁴ troops, as they were now known, trained hard in the Egyptian sands and, when circumstances allowed, enjoyed all that nearby Cairo had to offer. Some soldiers enjoyed themselves a little too much

in Cairo and, with the alarming rise in the onset of venereal disease, the Commanding Officer of the 4th stipulated that any man reporting with the ailment would be returned to Australia in disgrace and their place taken by a reinforcement.⁵ Many a soldier suddenly developed an itch in the crotch which was either out of necessity, guilt or just plain sympathy.

In April 1915, the word came down to “prepare to move”. As officers attended briefings, the Diggers, starved for information, whiled away the hours lounging on their kit bags, playing cards, writing a hurried note home or contemplating the thousand and one rumours that were flying around camp as to where they were headed.

In the early hours of Sunday 25 April 1915, the 4th Battalion was assembled on the deck of the blackened ship. In the pre-dawn gloom they could make out the distant hills and features of the coastline. A young digger writing in his diary edged Cyril in the ribs and whispered “What's the name of this place we're goin' again?”

“Gallipoli” Cyril replied under his breath.

“Oh yeah – how do you spell it again?”

“Hey, keep the noise down!” a curt command came and the two soldiers fell silent once again.

From the outset, the allied foothold on continental Turkey was paid for in blood, lives, sanity and sweat. The ANZAC forces had landed and fought their way up the gullies and ridges and, by night's end, the frontline soldiers were content in their position and confident in their intention to remain.

The high echelons of command weren't so sure, as talk of evacuation was openly discussed.

Cyril soon proved himself a good, competent soldier. He was tough, dependable and smart. These personal traits were vital on Gallipoli – that's if you wanted to stay alive.

Weeks turned into months and the stalemate continued. As the weather grew warmer, the ANZAC forces not only had to battle “Old Johnny Turk” but lice, flies, disease, dysentery, lack of water and bland food.

In late July 1915, the high command planned to land fresh British troops further along the coast at Suvla Bay.

To cover the landing, a series of diversions, raids and assaults would take place along the ANZAC front. The 1st Brigade's task was against the heavily fortified area dubbed Lonesome Pine or, as it became more commonly known, Lone Pine.

Lone Pine was the gateway to an area of key terrain known as the 400 Plateau. Seizing and holding this patch of ground, would give the occupier a significant influence over the surrounding area. The problem being the Turks also knew how vital was possession of the ground and in the preceding months had gone to great lengths to strengthen their hold on the position.

The assault was scheduled for 1730 hours on 6 August. The troops would be able to assault with the sun low on the horizon and at their backs, hopefully hindering the Turkish vision.



As the action would develop into a night fight, the troops were to attack wearing tell-tale white cloth bands on each arm, so as to aid in identification in the darkness.

To cut down on the requirement to attack over open ground, a number of tunnels were dug towards the enemy held feature, which would allow for a closer jumping off point for some of the assaulting troops.⁵

As zero hour approached, the Diggers readied themselves. As with any tense wait leading up to an attack, a thousand thoughts of family, friends and home rushed through a soldier's mind. Hushed whispers flowed along the trenches. Some scratched out a last note to home, others tried to fake sleep in order to hide their fear to their mates, others joked and kidded with their cobbles. Cyril, now a Lance Corporal, munched on a dry biscuit as he checked and rechecked his kit. He then ran a lightly oiled rag over the bolt of his rifle. As he slammed the bolt home, he knew he was as ready as he'd ever be.

The 4th had the task of attacking from the exposed northern or left flank, whilst the 3rd Battalion had the centre and the 2nd was to attack from the southern or right flank. The 1st Battalion would be held in reserve and ready to be called forward when needed to add additional weight of numbers or firepower.

As the hands of watches approached 1730 hours, the order “Make ready” went from mouth to mouth along the trench line. A series of ear splitting explosions heralded the word to go.

Whistles blew and men yelled as they surged forward, all intent on hitting the Turkish trenches as soon as possible. The Turkish rifle- and machine-gun fire was initially sporadic but increasing in both tempo and accuracy.

Cyril's eyes were focused squarely on the expected location of the trench lines. Although his mates were dropping around him, he knew he had to keep moving forward – ever forward.

As he looked down, he saw the trenches were covered with heavy pine logs and a covering of thick, hard, sun-baked dirt.

Others around him started to prise the logs up with their bayonets and in some cases, bare hands, in an attempt to get at the Turkish defenders.

Cyril kept moving until he and others found the open communication trenches behind the main fortifications.

The Diggers let go with a flurry of bombs and jumped down into the darkening trenches. Some of the Diggers headed back into the covered area, dispatching Turks with bayonet, rifle and, at times, fists. They had to be ever careful not to engage their own men moving towards them in the darkness.

Cyril was compelled to keep moving forward along the trench line in an attempt to hold off any Turkish reinforcements from moving towards them from the rear or the flank.

One of the NCOs gathered the group.

“Right – set up a bomb block here!” he ordered.

While some covered the group and picked off Turks as they appeared, Cyril and the others dragged wire, sandbags, timber, ammunition boxes, Turkish bodies and anything else they could find, to block the trench and provide cover.

Cyril took up manning the parapet to observe downslope into an area known to the ANZACs as Owen's Gully. If a counterattack was to come from the enemy, then Owen's would be the likely launching point.

Cyril first used a trench periscope to observe, but this just seemed to attract attention, and one after another was smashed by rifle and machine-gun fire.

Cyril had no choice but to stand up on the firing step to observe the gully, and the higher his elevation the better his observation. His torso was shoulder high above the relative safety of the parapet⁷ and was certain to draw fire from every Turk in the area.

Major Mackay, who was in command of the group stated of Besanko, “Although periscope after periscope was smashed by bullets, he seemed to bear a charmed life and stuck to his post for hours”.⁵

As the Turks attempted to hit the Australians from the gully side, Cyril and the others responded with a flurry of rifle-fire and bombs. If he wasn't observing, he was active in the trench. Diving on Turkish bombs and smothering them with a half filled sandbag or taking his turn on the bomb block, throwing bombs at the enemy for hours on end,⁹ and even picking off Turkish infiltrators with well-aimed rifle shots.

Cyril Besanko's actions, which lasted well over 48 hours were draining, but he did what had to be done at the time. At other times he remained alone to man the post, especially after the men were ordered to retire. Cyril Besanko, the humble well-disciplined soldier, provided an outstanding display of courage and determination to all around him.

In a strange twist of fate, Cyril's actions resulted in an initial recommendation for the award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) which was later changed to a recommendation for the highest of awards, the Victoria Cross (VC)⁹, only to be then downgraded again to the DCM.



CLOSE BUT NOT CLOSE ENOUGH

Australians recommended for the VC but not awarded

BY MAJOR DARRYL KELLY



HMAT Euripides in port at Alexandria, having off-loaded AIF troops, December 1914.

The authorities finally settled on the recommendation for a newly instituted award, being the Military Medal (MM).¹⁰

Over a year would elapse before the award was officially announced. Further recommendations for a Mentioned in Despatches (MID) also went unnoticed and unrecognised.²

A total of seven Victoria Cross were awarded for actions around Lone Pine, with four awarded to the 7th Battalion, who were involved in reinforcing the post and were not part of the main assault or the initial defence. The men of the 4th Battalion felt that their actions covering the assault and the first two days thereafter were severely overlooked.⁵

Cyril was forced to withdraw from the forward trenches of Lone Pine when, on 9 August, he received a gunshot wound to the foot. The wound was serious enough to warrant his evacuation from Gallipoli. He was destined not to return to the peninsula until 30 October. A couple of days later he was promoted to the rank of corporal.²

As history shows, our forces were withdrawn from Gallipoli in December and, during their stay back in Egypt, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was totally reorganised and readied for its deployment to the Western Front and a crack at the German Army.

Cyril remained with the 4th Battalion although many of his mates were reassigned to form a new Battalion, the 56th, which would carry on the proudest traditions of the old 4th while carving out its own history on the battlefields of France and Belgium.

In February 1916, Cyril was promoted to the rank of sergeant.²

As the ANZAC Divisions deployed into France, they had to adapt to a new style of warfare against a first-rate enemy, although many of the Diggers would never under-estimate the fighting ability of "Old Johnny Turk".

But now, this warfare consisted of a line of trenches stretching from the English Channel to the Swiss Border, with every inch covered by weapons' fire. Gains were measured in yards, not miles and the line had not advanced for either side in months.

The 4th took its turn in the area dubbed "The Nursery Sector" where new units could sample life in the forward trenches. On the first night as Cyril dared to peak over the line of sandbags atop the trench line, he saw a myriad of mud, shattered barbed wire, dead animals and exploding shells and flares. He muttered to himself "How the bloody hell, are we going to survive this?"

The Diggers enjoyed the local villages, with their shops, wine and female attention. Some enjoyed it too much and Cyril was no exception resulting in his admittance to the 1st Casualty

Clearing Station suffering from a case of gonorrhoea.² This was to keep him away from the Battalion until 1 July.

On 1 July 1916, the British High Command launched a new offensive in the Somme Valley, designed to seize the vital high ground around the Theipval Ridge as the British objective and the key village and associated features around Pozieres reserved as the focus for the Australians.

If a place could be described as hell on Earth, then Pozieres fitted the bill. The Germans knew its importance and they threw everything they could at the hapless Diggers with round-the-clock artillery fire, attacks and counter-attacks.

The time came for Cyril Besanko and the remainder of the 4th Battalion to do their time in "hell" and on the night of 22/23 July, they advanced at right angles to the Pozieres Road. As the battalion secured its frontage, Cyril noticed a wounded figure signaling for help 50m into "No Mans Land". He quickly took stock of the situation – the ground was being swept by shells, machine guns and rifle fire,¹¹ but something had to be done and done now.

Cyril grabbed a pistol and, gauging his time, launched himself up and over the lip of the trench and ran towards the helpless soldier. It seemed that every weapon in the area now centred on him and him alone. He ran, stumbled, crawled and gouged his way forward and was finally able to dive, unscathed alongside the soldier.

"Where you from mate?" Cyril asked as he assessed the soldier's wounds.

"The Royal Warwickshire's," he replied.

"A bloody Chum" Cyril said jokingly. "Well mate, best get you back to our side."

Cyril jumped up and threw the wounded soldier over his shoulder and stumbled toward the Australian lines. Rounds whistled over their heads and peppered the ground around them. A couple of times they fell but repeatedly Cyril regained his balance and pushed forward. Suddenly a burst of fire caught Cyril, wounding him in the thigh, chest and arm. Cyril continued towards the trench and stumbled just short. It was as if a thousand hands reached out and pulled both the victim and rescuer into the safety of the trench.¹¹

The call went up, "Stretcher bearers – stretcher bearers", while the Diggers went to work on the wounded soldiers, trying to stem the flow of blood with first field dressings.¹²

As the stretcher bearers assessed Cyril's wounds one said, "You'll be right sarge", but the look in their eyes didn't promote confidence in the surrounding soldiers.

Sergeant Besanko's wounds were serious and he was quickly evacuated to the rear, where further, more elaborate treatment could be performed.

The same guts, determination and fortitude that carried Cyril through the carnage of Lone Pine, now carried him through the healing of his wounds.

For his actions, not only at Pozieres but also at Gallipoli, Cyril Besanko was recommended for the Russian Cross of Saint George (1st Class)¹³ and from the Australian Forces was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.¹⁴

Cyril's wounds were serious enough to warrant his return to Australia on 12 November 1916 and to his eventual discharge from the AIF on 4 April 1917.²

On discharge, Cyril returned to civilian life and he and Florence went on to have another child, a boy, Benjamin, who was born in 1918.¹

The Besanko family moved from Sydney to their native South Australia and finally back to Sydney, and little was heard from them until 1940.

With the onset of the Second World War, Cyril again wanted to do his bit – where able. He was already an active member of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), the forerunner of today's RSL, and a member of the Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC), which was initially raised by the RSSILA as a militia-type force.

On 6 October 1940, aged 54, while attending a VDC parade, Cyril simply dropped dead. The Reveille Magazine of November and December 1940, published articles relating to Cyril's passing and, of interest, was the fact that even though his actions at Lone Pine and France were mentioned in the text, his recommendation for the Victoria Cross was not.

It was a fitting end for a brave soldier – in that he was to die serving his country, again as a volunteer.

Today Cyril lays at rest in Sydney's Botany Cemetery.

Notes

1. www.myheritage.com – Cyril Besanko
2. National Archives of Australia: B2445, WW1 Service Records, 6 C.V.M. Besanko 4th Battalion
3. HMAT – His Majesty's Australian Transport
4. Code name for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC)
5. Fighting Fourth, History of Sydney's 4th Battalion, 1914-1919, by Ron Austin, Slouch Hat Publications 2007
6. Key terrain is a tactical term for an area, that if taken provides the occupying force with a marked advantage over the surrounding features and ground
7. Bean, CEW, Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Volume 11 Australian War Memorial, 1939
8. Article entry 'The Fighting Fourth' appearing on moonfruit.com (since removed)
9. Recommendation for the Victoria Cross, 6 C.V.M. Besanko, 4th Battalion AIF. Of note, the recommendation had Besanko fifth in the order of merit for the award.
10. Recommendation for the Military Medal, 6 C.V.M. Besanko, 4th Battalion, AIF
11. Recommendation for the Cross of St George (1st Class), 6 C.V.M. Besanko, 4th Battalion, AIF
12. A first field dressing is sterile gauze pad and bandage with tie off tapes. These dressings are carried by all soldiers and additional dressings are usually carried by stretcher bearers (SB)
13. Foreign Awards to Australia for World War One to the Korean War, Kerry Bulow. Besanko not listed as being awarded
14. Recommendation for the Distinguished Conduct Medal, 6 C.V.M. Besanko, 4th Battalion AIF
15. Reveille Magazine November and December 1940



These days the fitness industry is dominated by extremes. Everyone is trying to sell you their product or system and often attempting to do so by claiming that theirs is the one true path to the results you want. From extreme bodybuilding and powerlifting to ultra-marathon running and yoga trainers will try to sell you a method by espousing it's benefits while warning you of the dangers of other fitness methods.

These extreme points of view tend to resonate with consumers and many people adopt one training method exclusively because they find it works for them and it fits their lifestyle.

The problem with this approach for military personnel is that, while it's fine for your accountant to run marathons and look like a stick insect and it's great that your local barista discovered yoga and can now tie her self in knots, any such extreme specialisation is going to lead to problems in the kind of situations the military deals with.

Even methods such as Crossfit, which train a variety of exercise modalities can fall into the trap of a lack of balance.

In this article I want to outline some of the critical areas of military fitness and how to achieve balance in your training to maximize performance and minimise your risk of injury.

Rush and Run

Everyone loves to train the muscles on the front of their body because that's what you see in the mirror. Biceps, chest, abs and quads get all the love while the posterior chain gets relegated to the 'do I really have to' pile. The hard truth for military personnel is that for every rep or set you do for your mirror muscles, you should do at least one for your posterior chain (and really you'd be better off with an extra 25-50% of work on your back). If you benchpress, make sure you do some rows and/or a bunch of squats. Make sure you do some deadlifts or swings too.

Heavy and Light

For many people, every time they do a session in the gym they lift the heaviest weights they can and train to failure. For beginners and bodybuilders, this is a reasonable approach. However, for a more balanced level of fitness, it's important to alternate between sessions of maximum load and intensity and sessions with lighter weights and higher reps to create resistance to fatigue and joint stability, which is critical to injury prevention. Military work often requires both maximal lifts and sustained repetitive lifting over many hours, so training both is critical.

Fast and Slow

When it comes to aerobic exercise the same considerations apply as to lifting. While maximal-speed running, rowing or cycling is important to increase your fitness many people these days have been lured into the promise that interval training fixes everything, without understanding that both high intensity intervals, long, slow distance work and some sessions in the middle are all required for optimal progress. This need for balance extends to 'hardcore' training systems such as Crossfit that often involve maximal workouts several days in a row. My advice is that, while Crossfit sessions can be an awesome way to build military fitness, it is also advisable to balance those sessions with longer, less intense sessions, to simulate the demands of pack marching and other military tasks.

Inside and Outside

This one should be obvious, but many people seem to think that they can get all of their fitness needs in a gym. For military members, it is critically important to both build a base of strength in the gym but then to get outside and apply that basic fitness to training sessions that mimic combat

duties. Even if your unit doesn't put them on regularly it is a great idea to include sessions of battle PT in your program. Practice stores carries, fire-and-movement sprints, obstacle courses and pack marching to round out your fitness.

Hard and Soft

Smashing yourself in the gym or pounding out a fast 5km run is winning the battle, but how do you make sure you are fit to win the war? The answer to long-term fitness is to apply all of the already mentioned balancing factors, but also to include some work from the softer sides of the fitness spectrum (although some of them can be surprisingly hard!). Massage, stretching, physio, foam rolling, yoga and even pilates all have their place in keeping tactical athletes fit and healthy in the long term, and yet these are some of the most neglected aspects of fitness that I see in military fitness programs.

For programs that cover all aspects and stages of military fitness check out my growing article archive on the new "Military Fitness" button on the [CONTACT web site](#), and check out my e-books **Couch to Commando** and **Beat the Beep Test** now also available through **CONTACT**.



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AAFC 75th kicks off in Perth



WORDS AND PHOTOS BY SQUADRON LEADER (AAFC) ROGER BUDDRIGE

Australian Air Force Cadets began their 75th Anniversary Year on 9 January when cadets and staff of No 7 Wing (Western Australia) held a commemorative church service in St George's Anglican Cathedral in Perth.

The National Banner of the Australian Air Force Cadets was paraded into the cathedral, carried by Cadet Under Officer Callum MacDonald and escorted by Cadet Warrant Officer Rohan Khanna and Cadet Flight Sergeants Nicholas Bouffler and Ethan Hodgson.

During the service, the more than 130 cadets, staff, VIPs, former colleagues and many parents, reflected on the history of air force cadets in Australia, while recognising the achievements of the AAFC in recent years in developing dynamic

leadership and citizenship skills in young Australians.

The service was led by two military chaplains who related well to the Cadets and staff, delivering thoughtful and appropriate messages regarding the importance of community leadership and service to others.

Assistant Bishop of Perth and Coordinating Chaplain of Army Headquarters 13 Brigade Kate Wilmot blessed the Australian Air Force Cadets, by saying, "Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour everyone; love and serve the Lord; rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit."

801 Squadron shines

While most students were enjoying a hard-earned break over the Christmas school holidays, 16 young Territorian men and women spent up to three weeks of their six week break sitting in classrooms all across the country. But it wasn't maths, biology or art they were studying, but leadership, personal development, teaching and outdoor skills, as they sought to gain qualifications for promotion within the Australian Air Force Cadets.

Five cadets attended RAAF Base Wagga Wagga in NSW on their first steps towards

becoming junior leaders within the AAFC – and successfully qualified for promotion to cadet corporal.

At the same time, another seven cadets from Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs were at RAAF Base Pearce in WA working towards becoming qualified as cadet sergeants.

Cadet Corporal Moby Edwards, 15, from Alice Springs said he couldn't wait to get back to the squadron and start putting into practice what he learnt on course.

Meanwhile another four cadets from Darwin and Alice Springs had already spent two weeks at RAAF Base Townsville in order to reach the pinnacle of their cadet career, becoming qualified as cadet under officers and cadet warrant officers. Cadet Flight Sergeant Geoffrey King, 17, from 801 Squadron in Darwin, did the Northern Territory proud when he was presented with the 'dux award' for the highest academic achievement on course.

All squadrons are currently recruiting cadets and staff for the 2016 training year. Visit www.aafc.org.au for details.



Australian Air Force and Navy cadets get a spectacular coastal-Tasmanian view out the back of a C-130J Hercules. Two flights, on 20 January, departed Hobart carrying No 5 Wing Australian Air Force Cadets and their invited Navy counterparts. Photo by Corporal David Gibbs

Room with a view



Closer ties with Duke of Edinburgh Awards

An historic National Award Unit Licence Agreement signed on 21 January between the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award and the Australian Air Force Cadets (AAFC) will benefit both organisations, Group Captain (AAFC) Greg Williamson, National Commander AAFC said.

"This licence will enable AAFC to have a single, consistent, cost-effective and national approach to its involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, leading to more efficient outcomes for all," he said.

"Although we've been involved with the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award for more than 30 years, there has been some disparity between operations in each of the States. Today's agreement will greatly improve coordination between our two organisations as well as delivering cost savings, which in turn will benefit our members."

CEO of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Australia Peter Kaye said award encouraged and recognised practical experiences and life skills to create committed global citizens and help equip young people for life.

"Since 1956, more than eight million people in more than 140 countries and territories have participated in the award," Mr Kaye said.

Both leaders agreed there was a good fit between the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award and the Australian Air Force Cadets.

"At present, nearly 40,000 young Australians are undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, including a record 937 Australian Air Force Cadets," Group Captain Williamson said.

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is a leading youth development program, empowering young Australians aged 14-25 to explore their potential, regardless of location or circumstance.

"Each participant learns a skill, improves their physical wellbeing, volunteers in their community and goes on an adventure," Mr Kaye said.

"Through a challenging journey of self-discovery, participants are equipped and empowered to achieve their personal best, learn to take responsibility for goals and choices, make real contributions to their community, learn important life skills, overcome barriers to success, and increase career opportunities."

Group Captain Williamson said AAFC was one of the most dynamic, effective and satisfying youth programs available, and was open to young people aged 13-20 years.

"Air Force Cadets get to do the things that most

other young people only watch on television, including learning to fly aircraft solo while still in their mid-teens, using civilian and military rifles, going bush wearing camouflage uniform, operating military radios, using field signals, learning cooking and survival skills, as well as enjoying interstate and international travel.

"Involvement in the Air Force Cadets can also generate credits for the Year 12 Certificate of Education.

"Cadets may also undertake three weeks per year full-time tertiary-level training in leadership, decision-making, initiative, self-discipline, time-management, clear thinking, public speaking, management and administration that will qualify them for a TAFE Certificate III in Business Management."

Group Captain Williamson said that about 70 per cent of current RAAF personnel developed their interest in aviation as cadets.

"Many public figures ignited their involvement in community affairs through service in the Air Force Cadets, which continues to be fully supported by the Royal Australian Air Force.

"Now, in partnership with the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, the Australian Air Force Cadets is a real game-changer for Australia, giving young people autonomy, responsibility, skills and courage so they can effectively help lead Australia in every facet of government, business and community life, well into the 21st Century."

"Sixty-one Australian Air Force cadets have just joined the Australian Defence Force, and 13 of them will be training as pilots"

– Group Captain (AAFC) Greg Williamson,
National Commander AAFC,
at Commander's Conference, Canberra,
February 2016.

Did you notice – this issue's Cadet Corner was dedicated to AAFC only. Why? Only because Army or Navy didn't send us anything. Please let us know what's going on in your unit, via editor@militarycontact.com



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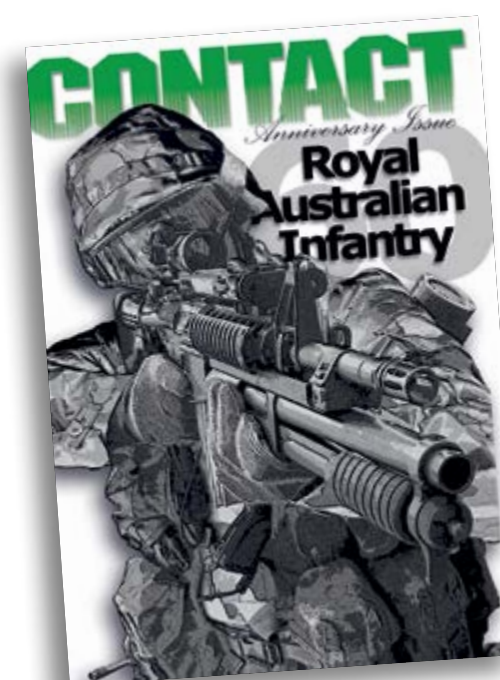
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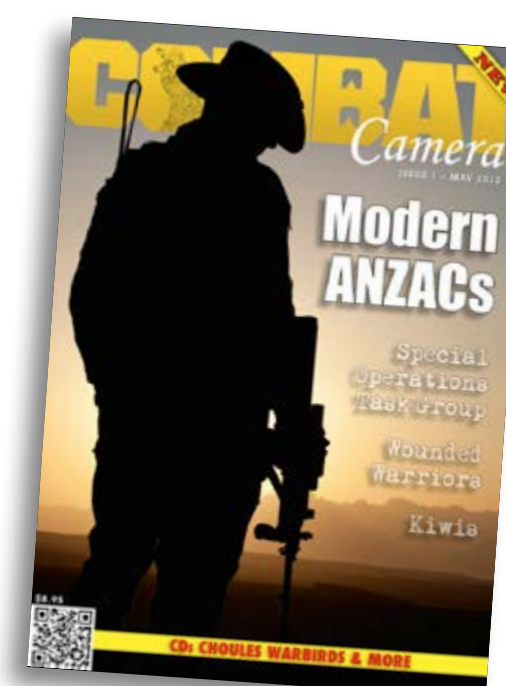
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