

ISSUE 54



# CONTACT

AIR LAND & SEA

JUNE 2017

THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

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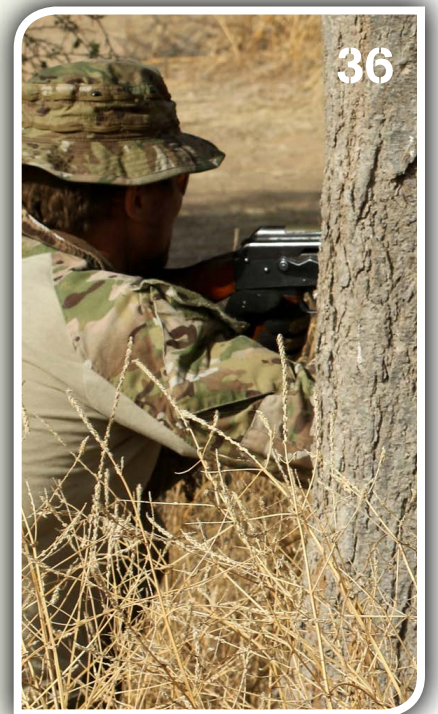
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Issue 54 – June 2017

**CONTACT**  
AIR, LAND & SEA



**A LOOK AT  
THE ADF'S  
MISSION IN  
AFGHANISTAN**

Cover photo by  
Sergeant Ricky Fuller

Story page 26

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appropriate.

I sincerely hope you didn't look at our cover this issue and dismiss the headlines as 'click bait' – that is not our intent. In fact both stories referred to were written and laid out before Defence Minister Marise Payne announced this week that 30 extra ADF personnel would be deployed to Afghanistan – and we amended the very few lines in the main story that were affected by this development.

Our intent is simply to ask some key questions for no other reason than to get you thinking on the subject. We aren't even offering answers to these questions – because we simply don't know for sure.

Questions like – why are we in Afghanistan; what are we actually doing over there; will our actions help us to achieve what we want to achieve (if we really knew what that actually was); are we doing it well; could we do it better – these are all legitimate questions.

But, in my experience (some quite recent), such questions are often 'verboden', as one former enemy would say.

It often happens that someone somewhere knows what the 'real' outcome is or should be, and everyone else plans and executes to achieve that – without standing back and asking 'why'.

And that's legitimate, especially in a military setting where you have little choice, and when you can (or should be able to) trust that the special someone at the top of the tree does actually know what the right outcome is.

Sorry – yes I am being vague and waffling on a bit here. But a key problem, especially in the case of Afghanistan – Australia's longest war – is that the certain someone(s) who sent us to Afghanistan in the first place, for their own special reasons, have long since moved on into the pages of history, replaced and replaced again by new leaders with new agenda and new plans.

The fact is, the 'real reason' we went to Afghanistan in the first place (whatever it was) is not the same reason why we are there today – and the outcomes we went there to achieve 16 years ago look nothing like the same outcomes we hope to achieve today. Our real and our stated missions have changed more than once too. And there is no end in sight (because we really don't know what 'the end' looks like – though I'm sure the spindoctors of the day will take a good shot at describing it to us, when the time comes).

All that aside, CONTACT always was and always will be about 'shining a limelight on the professional lives and work of (mainly but not exclusively Australian) soldiers, sailors and airmen, wherever they work and whatever they are asked to achieve'.

But, when one of those soldiers who has actually 'been there and done that' poses the very heavy question, "Was it worth it?", we have a duty to at least contemplate our own answer, and think about the bigger picture.

Sincerely,

Brian Hartigan  
Managing Editor



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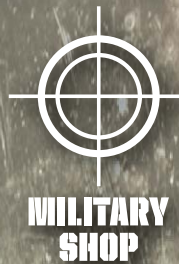


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Got something to say?  
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**INCOMING**

## BEERSHEBA UPDATE

I have recently seen some Army facebook posts which are lacking background information and I am hoping you may have some more details?

One post was from 5RAR. B Company had received bushmaster vehicles and the post said they were 'becoming a PMV mounted, motorised infantry battalion'.

The post from 7RAR had them receiving M113AS4s, transferred from 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured, as they are restructuring the battalion.

I can't find any media releases and haven't seen anything in the army newspaper.

Have you come across anything explaining the change?

I wonder if the 'Standard Infantry Battalion' and Plan Beersheba is old news and the army is changing to something else?

If you find anything, I look forward to reading about it in your next issue!

Keep up the great work, cheers,

**Brendan, via email**

*Thanks Brendan. I'll ask Defence if they want to give us a comprehensive update on Beersheeba – enough to run a magazine feature – Ed.*

This is what Defence replied...

As outlined in the 2016 Defence White Paper the Australian Army will modernise and invest in new and updated capabilities that meet the government's strategic expectations to address current and emerging threats. As part of Plan Beersheba, Army is working to improve the balance between combat and enabler capabilities. Infantry battalions will be restructured to enhance training-support capabilities. The restructure will include the transfer of Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) and Protected Mobility Vehicle (PMV) to provide an integral mounted capability and enhanced protected mobility, rather than creating a traditional motorised battalion. The introduction of the APC and PMV into the infantry battalions will provide greater firepower and targeting capability down to the section level. The infantry will continue to form part of an enhanced combat system with greater situational awareness and fighting potential. The infantry are now able to own, control and employ their vehicles. This provides a significant advantage as they can fight dismounted or as part of an integrated, protected, networked system. 2RAR will remain as Army's specialist amphibious infantry battalion. Information relating to this activity will be released to the public as part of the implementation.

## GOOD SHOOTING

Hi Brian, this is [Gareth Crook's](#) dad writing to let you know that I really enjoy reading CONTACT.

As a long-time IPSC shooter and a member of the IPSC Australia national executive, I particularly enjoyed the stories in the latest edition about the [ADF's new approach](#) to combat shooting. The new approach seems to build on some of the core skills we develop in IPSC shooters and even uses some of the IPSC equipment that we're so familiar with – such as the popper reactive steel targets, which we use to activate a wide range of other targets (flippers, twistlers, sliders etc) in our sporting matches.

Although the Yanks claim that they developed combat shooting (as usual) through the efforts of Colonel Jeff Cooper in the 1970s, the evolution of combat shooting really began with W.E. Fairbairn (who gave us the famous Fairbairn combat dagger that features on the SAS badge today) and E.A. Sykes back in the Shanghai Police Force pre-WW2.

Their book "Shooting to Live" shows us some training methods that were quite unique in the day and which are still used today – and which they used to train what

was the world's first SWAT or SOG team of highly trained Chinese police officers.

I've been training in the Martial Arts for more than 50 years and my first instructor was an ex-British Army NCO who had been trained in the Fairbairn systems of close-quarter combat and shooting (in fact, I've still got his scrawled-on, dog-eared copy of "All-in Fighting" by Fairbairn from 1943). So, it was also interesting to read the [views of Ken Murray](#) on the reality-based training philosophy that ties in with the new live-fire combat training. Spot on, Ken!!! Whether we are martial-arts training or combat-shooting trainers, we need to embed mechanically effective combat skills that can be applied under a wide range of circumstances and that allow for adaptability in the chaos of combat – the old rigid drills and lane firing stuff is just too limiting.

Keep up the good work!

**David Crook, via email**

*Thank you David. Your feedback and encouragement re CONTACT is most appreciated. And your insights and obvious expertise re combat shooting is enlightening – Ed*

## 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 and Internet sites so we can deliver more of what you want. Feel free to write to [editor@militarycontact.com](mailto:editor@militarycontact.com) about CONTACT or on any military topic – Ed



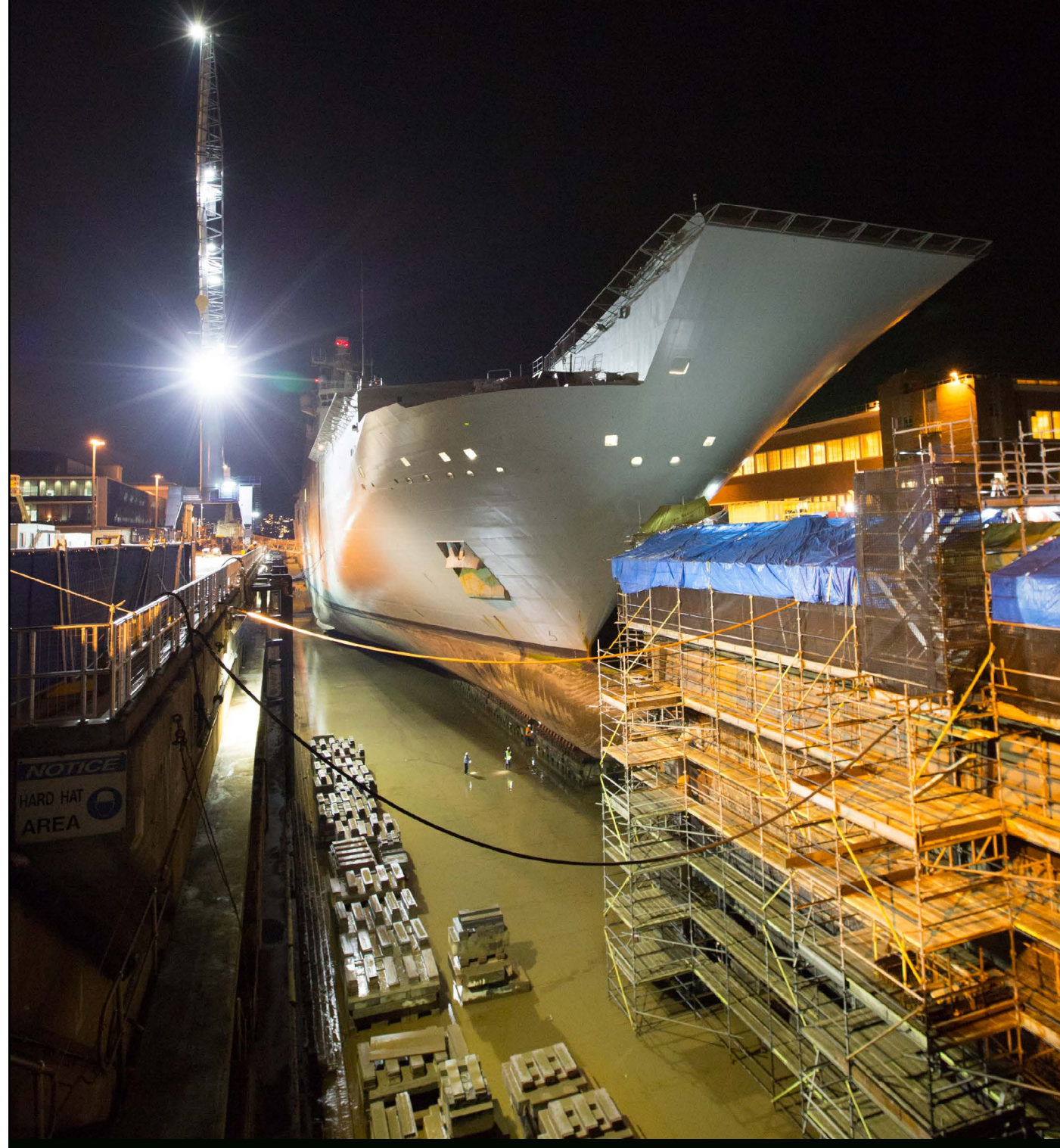
Aircraft from the US Air Force 23<sup>rd</sup> Wing conducted a surge exercise May 22, 2017, at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, in order to demonstrate the wing's ability to rapidly deploy combat-ready forces. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Wing maintains and operates A-10C Thunderbolt IIs for precision attack, HH-60G Pave Hawks for personnel recovery, and HC-130J Combat King II for combat support.

# SURGE CAPABILITY



## BIG PICTURE 2

Royal Australian Navy amphibious ship HMAS Adelaide sits on blocks in the Captain Cook Graving Dock at Garden Island in Sydney for a range of activities including access to and detailed inspection of her propulsion pods, defect rectifications and maintenance. Meanwhile, sister ship HMAS Canberra left Sydney to conduct sea trials on her propulsion systems, which underwent interim repairs. Defence is working closely with industry partners and original equipment manufacturers to rectify serious and unexpected propulsion issues after metal fragments were detected in lubricating oils.



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# THE INNER SANCTUM

## AN AUSTRALIAN SNIPER

BY JASON SEMPLE

It's only been 85 minutes since I left the deployment area, yet I'm sweating profusely and I am frustrated and angry at myself. It's a sniper live-fire stalking exercise and I have exactly 35 minutes left to be in position and fire off the first round in this traditional time-honoured training sequence.

I am angry because I am struggling to find that elusive position that I can fire from and yet remain completely invisible to the trained eyes that are continuously looking for me and my fellow snipers being assessed. Four snipers have already fired their first blank rounds. The pressure is self generating and is building rapidly.

I am running a \$380 leaf suit that is extremely light and allows for my body to breath and maintain temperature without overheating during my movement into position. The suit has a 'real-tree' disruptive pattern printed into it that works perfectly. No longer was I worried about running camouflage paint on my face that would sweat off or rub off when using Comms gear or binos, now we were running camouflage veils that breathed and presented nothing resembling the shape of a human face.

IN THIS ARTICLE, JASON SEMPLE EXAMINES THE TIME-HONOURED TRAINING SEQUENCE THAT IS A SNIPER LIVE-FIRE STALKING EXERCISE – AND EXPLORES WHY THIS MAY BE 'TRAINING FOR FAILURE'.

Stalk engagements range anywhere from 100-1500m depending on assessment requirements. Today's stalk has a 120-minute time limit and we are to set up between 500m and 100m from the target. Half the guys on the left side of the range, the other half on the right. The target is an enemy silhouette, one-dimensional cardboard in a frame. Out to 200m you're expected to deliver a head shot, from 200 to 500 you're permitted to bang a round into centre body mass. In an exercise where the name of the game is to shoot and not be detected, the smart money is on being as close as you can to the 500m maximum range allowance. Some guys would get in close but there is no reward for this in the assessment – only increased risk of failure.

So, from a shooter perspective the no-brainer for me is to use every bit of distance I have available. Why would I want to give the trained sniper sitting in front of the target any better opportunity to spot me, by me being closer than I have to.

There is no range finder permitted either, range is determined by using the mildots on our scopes or binos and the known height of the target.

The main rules to a successful stalk – use your



*A hasty hide – one you don't get a lot of time to set up. From Jason Semple collection.*

time wisely, don't ever move laterally to the the target unless behind cover, get a clean keyhole for your round to travel to the target, make sure you have multiple layers of depth in concealment between you and the spotter looking for you. If you get your depth right, you are impossible to see – it's all about layers of foreground against similar background.

The guy hunting me is sitting on an ammo crate in front of the target frame. I watch him traverse from his Steiner military 7 x 50 binos to a 20-60x spotting scope. I can see he is not quite looking on a bearing direct to me, so I can move a little still looking for my ultimate position.

Finally, after much tedious and careful scouting, I have found the spot. It will need a little work but I'm at approx 460m from the spotter and there is at least 175m of solid depth that he will need to burn through to see me – no chance! The catch for me, however, is that I have 175m of bush that my round needs to travel through without deflection. But, there is a very small window my round can travel through and I make some quick notes on a few suspect branches that are a risk to the bullet's trajectory. I measure those branch heights with my binos and I'm happy that the round will go over two suspect branches at their separate

ranges. Software now allows for perfect loophole calculations during operations to ensure the projectile flight is clear.

My engagement in this case requires me to shoot from a seated position, which is not uncommon when you're in the bush with so many items at prone height to block your view and your shot. I have three shooting sticks in my pack, connected by thick elastic bands about two-thirds way along the 60cm sticks. This allows me to make an adjustable tripod. I place a camouflaged rice bag in the newly made tripod, then my rifle and make sure it's all very stable and at the perfect height.

I'm happy I have everything ready. All my kit is ready to go if needed as well. Now it's up to me and my precision rifle to make this a success.

We are given two blank rounds at the start of the exercise and are later supplied with a live round once the walker (directing staff) is happy I'm safe to shoot relative to the position of other exercise participants. The next phase is upon me and I fire off my first blank round.

Now I'm really under the microscope. The spotter has heard the shot, is zoned in on my direction and is attempting to find my location. He gets nothing. If he cannot see me in a reasonable





timeframe, I am told to fire my second blank round. Now the spotter is carefully looking for movement or anything that might give my position away. He will be looking for muzzle flash and foliage being moved by the blast.

He sees nothing. He asks the walker to walk within 15m of my position. Still nothing. The walker gives me some encouragement, "There's no fucking way he will ping you there mate, great spot. You got a clear shot though? There's a lot of fuck'n bush between you and the target". I tell him its good to go. Well, I'm confident it is anyway.

The spotter holds up an A4-sized sheet with the number 9 printed in black. This is to ensure I have a clear view. I radio through what I see. He asks me in gruff monotone, "Range to target?" I send my estimated distance of 460m – lucky I had the reticle to help me get it very close.

Directing staff ensure I have no other participants within my shooting arc and the template is safe. Once deemed safe, the spotter leaves his position and I am supplied with the operational 175grain .308 match round by the walker.

"You may load your magazine only.

"Point of Aim?" he asks while adjusting his peltor hearing protection. I am cocky at 460m and call 'head'. He smirks, knowing the reaction on the other end when he transmits my intended POA.

"All call signs, sierra 5 going hot, standby."

"Sierra 5 you may load and you are cleared to fire."

Small amounts of my cammo scope veil are flickering in front of my objective lense in the slight breeze. I adjust slightly to the right of the target to counter this breeze coming from right to left across the range. I can see the target clearly. I'm not challenged by this distance, but the seated position requires a little more care for a super-stable position during shot release. I gently press my trigger and, in an instant, my hard work will either be success or failure.

I'm happy with my release, it felt good – you always know when a shot is released nicely.

I unload my rifle and I am cleared by the walker so the spotter can return and check my hit – or miss – on the target. I hear static over my comms.

"Sierra 5 has hit right cheekbone area of target head. Good shooting!"

I am directed to move 15m out of my position



Australian Army sniper on quick stalk at Holsworthy Barracks. Photo by Brian Hartigan.



Another good ghillie suit ready to go. From Jason Semple collection.

to determine if I would be seen on exfill. Nothing seen.

Success. The elation of beating someone with more experience at their own skill set is gratifying. The truth is, if you do the simple things right, it's virtually impossible to be seen. That is the art form.

Of course I am happy to have passed the training objective and find my score is near perfect.

This type of training has been going on virtually the same way for decades – the only changes being advancements in equipment.

So, what did I think of the training process I had just completed? It was professional training that measured and assessed specific training objectives and showed I could conceal myself and engage against a trained sniper instructor. It showed that I understood the necessary concepts and could apply them.

The problem with this type of training is the one-dimensional aspect of the employment of skills. I could conceal myself wearing high-visibility work wear if you give me enough depth for concealment. The problem is not concealing yourself, its doing so in a way that allows for maximising the observation area for a real-world target and providing the most flexibility for mission

outcomes. There is also the fact that groups in Australia, unlike the USA, assess their snipers as individuals during stalking tasks. Reality would never see guys operating alone. Fact is, they would be operating more likely in four- or six-man teams that split into pairs if needed.

In 2008 I was tasked with running a sniper course for the newly established Operational Response Group in the AFP, which would require guys to operate domestically in Australia but also in the jungles of Solomon Islands and potentially PNG and other similar locations where we had Australian interests.

I was designing the course outline using the same template that I'd experienced in NSW Tactical Operations Unit and also during sniper training all over Australia. This was my chance to try some new training techniques and break the mould that we'd used for so long.

As I said to guys in my command at the time, "we are training guys for failure" and this needed to be addressed immediately.

Here is the problem – sniper training such as delivered in live-fire stalks is not a true representation of what snipers are required to do in real-world activities. Of course the concepts of concealment, observation and delivery of fire are represented, but not in a realistic way.



Our targets never sit in a chair scanning the horizon for sniper teams. They are doing normal day-to-day activities. They are mobile, moving from one dwelling to another, or one village hut to another. They are arriving in areas of interest in vehicles, walking around, talking on mobile phones – MOVING! You get the drift! How long could a sniper team with a minuscule keyhole through 170m of brush be effective when their viewing area is limited to a metre or so. They would be out of work in no time and never able to deliver timely or accurate updates to their command – and not able to engage, if required.

Don't get me wrong, many targets constantly surveille their location and even run the odd patrol, but not the entire time, 24hrs a day. We needed to teach guys how to make opportunities and exploit those opportunities.

One thing we had noticed during operations overseas was that our guys were not bold enough, they were indoctrinated into very static positions that gave limited results. The guys were not showing a willingness to take measured risks that, when carried out correctly, meant very little chance of compromise but offered high-level returns. I don't mean reckless activities either, bold but deliberate and controlled using concealment techniques and good communication within the team.

One of the senior snipers in my team (formerly from Special Operations Group) was an experienced surveillance operative who had pushed the boundaries in that area for many years. He assisted greatly in this area of evolution.

The live-fire stalk assessment stayed in my program with no change. The guys met that benchmark and we immediately moved away

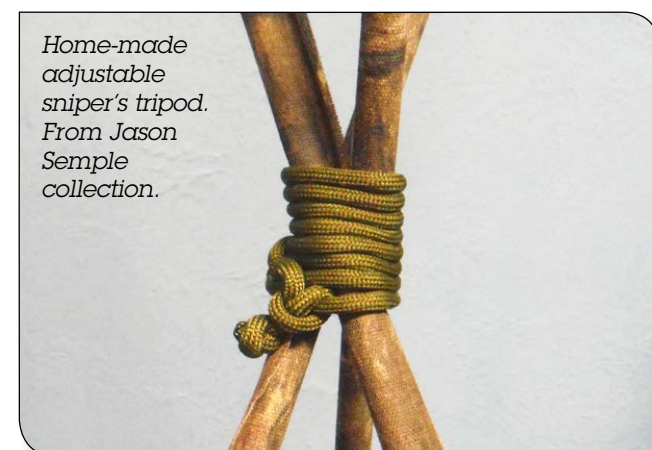
from it to a more aggressive and dynamic process that would give them the tools they needed to operate better in the real world.

The snipers on a stalk assessment now faced realistic task-oriented assessments. They would be briefed on the nature of the task and then given a time period to conduct the task. They were to work in pairs with allowance to communicate between other pairs to facilitate target coverage and also speedy movement into target locations.

Guys would move covertly into target locations and either be met with a scenario that was already in motion or, on many occasions, be expected to lay in wait for targets to arrive via vehicle.

I'll use the latter as the example now. Once the vehicle arrived they would be expected to setup on that vehicle so as to provide observation and a lethal intervention ability. Our instructor would then carry out certain activities like removing weapons from the vehicle, or explosives, radios or other items with intelligence significance. The teams would be required to observe and get all of this information including vehicle details and target descriptions and relay the intel to command. We would assess the observation skills of our guys this way, like an ob-ex during the stalk. Many times this requirement for complete information packets would entail the sniper team stalking around and using more than one position.

If the stalk was a live-fire stalk we would send in another role-play instructor as part of the scenario. In this case the role player may take the role of an intelligence/covert operative who was going to purchase weapons etc as part of a counter-terrorism sting. This person was now protected by us. At a point in time the target would make the



Home-made adjustable sniper's tripod. From Jason Semple collection.



Jungle patrol. From Jason Semple collection.



Jason Semple's leaf-pattern ghillie suit. From Jason Semple collection.

covert operative assume an assassination pose on his knees and the target would raise a pistol to the back of his head.

This would then see sniper teams take action – or it should anyway. Teams would be questioned later as to why they took the shot, or why they didn't. It forced the teams to make decisions, and communicate these decisions and act on them.

Once a shot was taken by any team, the target position and the kneeling operative position would be changed out by three dimensional foam mannequin targetry. The range would then be run like previously explained until all teams had the opportunity to shoot and have shots assessed. We would then debrief the scenario and the conduct of each team. Many good points passed through for later use.

We ran numerous scenarios with real-world relevance, replication of many previous operations over the years. We taught our guys how to think, how to be bold and when to be bold. We taught them flexibility and the application of sniper skills that were relevant to our areas of operations. Guys were encouraged to push scenarios, especially if they had encountered a difficult scenario on a recent operation. We

ran scenarios where guys were expecting 120 minutes to complete a task and were only given 20. We ran scenarios where we simulated all communications were down with command. Anything to push the guys and have them exposed to problems they would encounter without doubt in operations.

As many readers are aware, real-world operations don't always run on a timeline that suits us. Many times things change at the last minute and require guys to think very quickly and make good decisions.

You need to train these skills and hone them relative to the realistic expectations of the operations you are engaged in.

Reality-based training has been around for a while now, but you'd be surprised at how some training providers are still doing the same old training, resistant to change.

Change is the only constant in life, so embrace it! Create the combative and real-world experience in our guys before going in the field. That's the main intent of our training. Best to make the realistic mistakes during training rather than when things matter and lives are in the balance.



# AFGHANISTAN

## Are we going back?

By Brian Hartigan and ADF

WITH MAINSTREAM MEDIA REPORTING AND SPECULATING FOR MONTHS THAT THE US GOVERNMENT WOULD ASK AUSTRALIA TO SEND MORE TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN...

AND IN THE WAKE OF NUMEROUS REPORTS OF AFGHAN LEADERS – AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL – PLEADING FOR AUSSIES TO COME BACK TO THE NOW ALMOST COMPLETELY TALIBAN-RETAKEN URUZGAN PROVINCE (SEE NEXT STORY)...

AND WITH MANY AUSSIES (ON CIVVIE STREET) ASKING, “DO WE EVEN HAVE TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN?” ...

AND WITH MINDEF MARISE PAYNE EVENTUALLY CONFIRMING ON 29 MAY THAT 30 EXTRA ADF WOULD BE DEPLOYED...

WE THOUGHT IT WAS ABOUT TIME WE HAD A LITTLE RECAP OF WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE’S CURRENT PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN LOOKS LIKE...



Sergeant Mark Adcock –  
Protected Mobility Vehicle Commander  
for ADF personnel at Camp Qargha.  
Photo by Sergeant Ricky Fuller.



# Force Protection Element

Completing a successful seven-month deployment to Kabul, Force Protection Element (FPE) 6 transitioned its operational role to FPE-7 on 25 January 2017.

The Force Protection Element provides critical protection for Australian mentors working throughout Kabul, including at Headquarters Resolute Support, the Afghan National Army Officer Academy, Kabul Garrison General Command and the Afghan Air Force.

FPE consists of more than 115 members mainly infantry soldiers.

FPE-6 Operations Officer Captain Luke Murphy said force protection played a critical role in achieving the ADF's mission in Afghanistan.

"As part of our role we were able to securely transport and protect the mentors travelling and working at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA), west of Kabul," he said.

"This meant they were able to conduct their training with the host nation mentees, who in turn pass the lessons learnt to the Afghan officer cadets."

FPE-6 included a number of female guardian angels, which was essential for mentoring Afghan females.

Sergeant Jo Rootham said mentoring required a mentor's full attention, so knowing the force protection members were there, providing security and quick reaction if an incident occurred, set her mind at ease.

Field exercises provide an opportunity for the Afghan officer cadets to conduct both section and platoon level patrolling and ambushes – but they are also a high-threat risk for the Aussies.

Lance Corporal Albert Graham said the work of the Force Protection Element required constant threat assessment, especially during these field-exercise phases.

"We had to make quick assessments on both external and internal threats as well as take into account movement, vehicle positioning and all other threats prevalent in the Afghan environment," Lance Corporal Graham said.

"Throughout the exercise the guardian angels were highly professional – offering advice on infantry operations, providing protection and maintaining a high level of morale throughout."

Bushmaster PMV driver Private Adrian Baena said he enjoyed his first deployment to the Middle East as a member of FPE-6.

"It was a great experience – working with the coalition forces was fantastic," Private Baena said.

"We worked alongside several nations. The Irish detachment were really good blokes."

FPE-7 Section Commander Corporal Chad Whitehead said he was looking forward to his tour.

"We've been training hard for this deployment, so it's exciting to finally be here doing the job," Corporal Whitehead said.



Sergeant Mark Adcock –  
Protected Mobility Vehicle Commander  
for ADF personnel at Camp Qargha.  
Photo by Sergeant Ricky Fuller.

## Force Composition

The ADF's commitment to Afghanistan is known as Operation Highroad and is fulfilled by personnel serving with the ADF's Task Group Afghanistan.  
Australia's Task Group Afghanistan is situated in and around the Afghan capital, Kabul – nearly 400km north-west of Tarin Kot in Uruzgan, which is no longer of mission concern to Australia.

In total, around 270 ADF members – soon to be increased to 300 – from the Royal Australian Navy, the Australian Army, the Royal Australian Air Force and Defence civilians are deployed in Afghanistan as part of Operation Highroad.

This total group is split into sub elements with varying roles...

### Task Group Afghanistan (TG Afghanistan)

Task Group Afghanistan's headquarters at Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport comprises a command element of about 45 ADF personnel, who coordinate administration, communications and logistics support for all ADF members deployed in Afghanistan.

### Force Communications Element (FCE)

Personnel from the Force Communications Element (FCE) in Kabul support Task Group Afghanistan by providing communication and information systems. The systems are coordinated and compatible with the coalition's systems, enabling ADF interoperability with other-country forces.

### Force Support Element (FSE)

Force Support Element (FSE) personnel in Kabul provide logistics and administration support to Task Group Afghanistan – everything from mail and food to fuel and ammunition.

### Headquarters Resolute Support, Train Advise Assist Command South and Train Advise Assist Command-Air embeds

ADF personnel perform a variety of specialist and advisory roles as embeds within Headquarters Resolute Support (HQ RS) in Kabul; the Train Advise Assist Command – South (TAAC-S) in Kandahar (450km south-west of Kabul) and Train Advise Assist Command-Air (TAAC-Air) in Kabul. ADF embeds work with members of the coalition, Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) and Afghan security ministries to assist in institutional capacity building within the Afghan security institutions.

### Afghan National Army Officer Training Academy

ADF trainers and mentors are developing the next generation of Afghan National Army leaders at the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) in Qargha near Kabul.

This institution is building a reputation as the premier military training establishment in Afghanistan. The UK-led ANAOA mission is supported by Australia, New Zealand, Denmark and others.

A Force Protection Element of Australian soldiers provide security and protected mobility support for Resolute Support forces at ANAOA.

### Kabul Garrison Command

A force protection element and advisors support the Kabul Garrison Command in Kabul.

### Special Operations Advisory Group

A small contingent of Australian special-forces personnel provide support to NATO Special Operations Component Command – Afghanistan and the Afghan General Command of Police Special Units Special Forces.



# SNCOs critical to success

A key figure in any military force is the senior non-commissioned officer (SNCO) – mentoring, advocating for and leading soldiers. SNCOs also guide and mentor junior officers, providing valuable advice and guidance based on their more extensive experience. They are the critical connector between officers and the troops.

Sergeant Justin Cowan plays this critical role at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA), mentoring Afghan SNCOs and junior-officer platoon commanders to become more effective leaders.

Sergeant Cowan said developing the relationship between the Afghan SNCOs (bridmals) and junior officers (blook commanders) was very important.

"As mentors, we work alongside the instructors passing on our experience and expertise to improve their fieldcraft skills, patrolling techniques and weapon-handling drills," Sergeant Cowan said.

"This ensures that the level of training being delivered to the Afghan officer cadets is of the highest standard.

"More importantly, it allows us to promote the importance of the link between bridmals and blook commanders.

"As mentors, we demonstrate instructional techniques and work together with junior officers to show how the relationship should be."

Within ANAOA there are four Australian SNCO mentors and up to 11 coalition mentors from the UK, New Zealand and Denmark.

The Senior Australian Officer at ANAOA, Lieutenant Colonel Steve Jenkins said SNCO mentors were essential to the success of mentoring for the Afghan National Army.

"The SNCOs at ANAOA lead by example, showing the value of their experience and knowledge, particularly for junior officers," Lieutenant Colonel Jenkins said.

"SNCOs lead in the mentoring of Afghan National Army instructors in field exercises.

"In barracks they reinforce the importance of the SNCO in the delivery of training, and setting and maintaining the standards expected of a professional military academy.

"For Australian Army SNCOs, a deployment as a mentor at ANAOA provides the opportunity to reinforce their strong instructional skills.

"It's an opportunity to work with many coalition forces and to gain a strong sense of achievement in the development of the future leaders of the Afghan National Army."

At ANAOA, to the west of Kabul, 80 Australian Defence Force (ADF) trainers and mentors are developing the next generation of Afghanistan National Army leaders, along with partners from the UK, New Zealand and Denmark.

Right: Private Jason Acheson and (far right) Private Aaron Holden provide security – while (below) Captain Lachlan Joseph observes an Afghan army officer cadet delivering orders during a field training exercise at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy. Photos by Sergeant Ricky Fuller.



# Tested by Thunder

Afghan Army officer cadets have been tested by thunder under the watchful eyes of Australian and coalition mentors.

Over 22-27 April 2017, about 350 senior officer cadets from the academy's 3rd Kandak (battalion) were put through their paces testing counterinsurgency tactics on Exercise Thunder at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) in Kabul.

Australian Army Captain Lachlan Joseph, a mentor embedded with the 3rd Kandak, said the training was particularly relevant given Afghanistan's current insurgent threat.

"We are focusing on providing advice and guidance on basic soldier skills for the tactical missions the cadets will likely perform when they graduate and deploy to the provinces," Captain Joseph said.

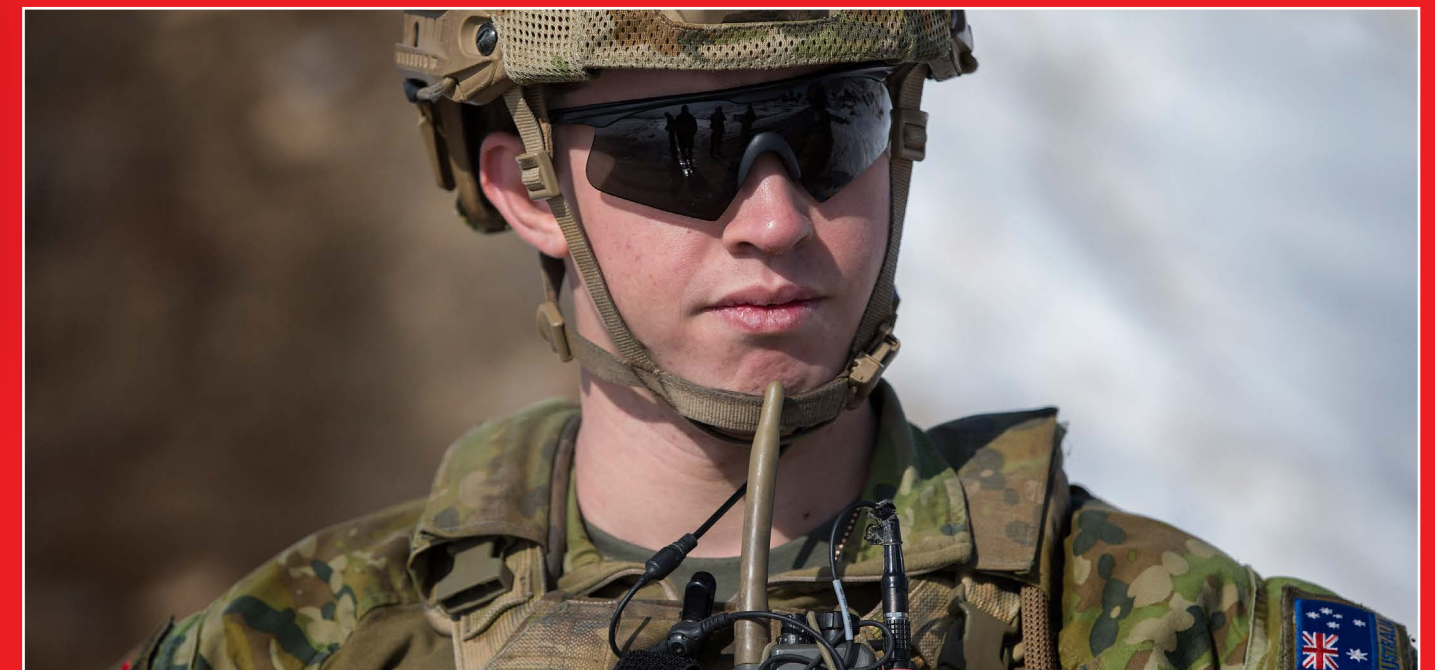
counterinsurgency principles before deploying to the field for the seven-day exercise.

Captain Joseph mentors several Afghan blook (platoon) commanders, supported by a British Army mentor, Sergeant John Baker, who advises his today's senior non-commissioned officers, known as 'bridmal'.

Together, Captain Joseph and Sergeant Baker assist in exercise planning, training execution and providing feedback to their mentees to enhance the standard of instruction and training for the officer cadets.

Sergeant Baker, an engineer by trade, said his previous operational experience in Helmand Province was highly valued among the Afghan instructors.

"The Afghan mentees are positive towards our mentoring, they respect our knowledge and our



The 3rd Kandak's three company-sized training groups, known as 'tolays', rotated through various training tasks including the defence of a forward operating base, providing a quick-reaction force and conducting counterinsurgency operations.

The counterinsurgency operations included simulated cordon and search operations as well as cordon and strike activities.

Scenarios were enhanced by the support of role-players who provided the necessary civilian population and enemy forces.

Officer cadets also received a theoretical training package, introducing them to basic

previous operational experience," Sergeant Baker said.

"They are taking on our advice and are adapting their lessons accordingly – seeing them do this is extremely rewarding."

ANAOA is widely renowned as the country's premier training establishment, largely due to the work being done by the coalition advisory team.

With capable and confident officer cadets graduating and being deployed to the provinces, it is hoped the Afghan National Army will be better prepared to defeat insurgent threats gripping the country.



On Hunter range, 36km south of Kabul, three Afghan Air Force (AAF) officers prepare their calculations to call in an MD-530 attack helicopter in their final test before becoming qualified Afghan Tactical Air Coordinators (ATACs), or known in Dari as 'Hamahangee Tacticy Harwayee'.

Observing is Royal Australian Air Force officer Flight Lieutenant David Jobson, who has helped over the past three weeks to develop their skills through his role as the air-to-ground integration (AGI) adviser to NATO's 438<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing, Train Advise Assist – Air (TAAC-Air) team.

The TAAC-Air ATAC course was established in 2016, largely enabled by the work of Flight Lieutenant Jobson's predecessors, Flight Lieutenants Michael Keene and Thomas Murdock.

"My predecessors played a key role in setting up the course and putting the policy in place to conduct live-fire training at Hunter Range," Flight Lieutenant Jobson said.

"Before then, the Afghan ATACs did not have a proper training curriculum and, at some units, the role of an ATAC was largely considered a secondary duty."

The AAF previously did not have enough dedicated qualified ATACs to integrate aerial fires with ground forces, now referred to as Air-Ground Integration, in support of ground troops fighting the enemy.

"The course itself is challenging and the Afghan students are already at a disadvantage due to their lack of education," Flight Lieutenant Jobson said.

"Currently the ATAC course has approximately a 60 per cent pass rate.

"The students are often senior officers who have been in the forces for a long time but have had no prior ATAC training."

In just three weeks, they learn how to calculate enemy position coordinates and how to pass that information by radio to strike aircraft.

With a strong background in training and development, Flight Lieutenant Jobson will be looking at ways to graduate more ATACs.

"Here I'm using my instructional and training-development background to enhance their training program and to develop an appropriate training curriculum for the ATAC course," he said.

"From my observations and talking with students – through an interpreter – they would like to see more visual aids, either pictures or demonstrations, to overcome language barriers."

Even with improvements made to the training material, the quality of the material is only as good as the quality of the instructor.

For this reason, Flight Lieutenant Jobson said that 'teach the teacher' was a key part of his role.

"At TAAC-Air we also conduct the instructors' course to teach ATACs instructional techniques.

# Teaching Tactical Air Coordinators

Right: Flight Lieutenant David Jobson watches as an Afghan National Army officer calls in MD-530 attack helicopters (below) for an air strike during a range practice in Kabul. Photos by Sergeant Ricky Fuller.



Now the coalition TAAC-Air team has graduated six courses including 26 AAF officers and 28 Afghan National Army officers.

The growth in the Afghan ATAC capability comes at a time when new Afghan counter-insurgency aircraft are entering service, and Flight Lieutenant Jobson said the five newly graduated ATACs will be deployed to conduct close air strikes in support of Afghan National Defense and Security Forces operations – ultimately strengthening the overall AAF offensive capability.

However, more ATACs are needed and Flight Lieutenant Jobson must now focus on improving the ATAC and instructor curriculum.

"This is important and advantageous as the course material can be instructed in Dari language without losing intent through an interpreter."

Flight Lieutenant Jobson said that the course has had some fantastic results, recently graduating an AAF instructor who has just finished instructing his first ATAC course as primary instructor.

"This AAF instructor is a positive and encouraging success story of the TAAC-Air AGI ATAC program having graduated from both the ATAC and instructors' courses.

"He is one of the most effective and competent ATAC operators and instructors in the AAF and is soon to be promoted to major, due to his abilities."





# Sharpening Kabul's security spear

Australian Army officer Major John Spencer points out details of an Afghan National Army Officer Academy cordon and search exercise to New Zealand colleagues, guarded by a British soldier.  
Photo by Sergeant Ricky Fuller.



Formed in 2015, Kabul Garrison Command (KGC) has been tasked by the President of Afghanistan to improve the security of the Kabul province – and the ADF is helping make it happen.

Supported by an Australian Defence Force advisory team (KGC-AT), KGC is the only joint command in Afghanistan, comprising about 14,000 Afghan National Police, 8000 Afghan National Army and 3000 National Directorate of Security intelligence personnel.

The Australians provide critical mentoring support to the Afghan commander, Lieutenant General Gul Nabi Ahmadzai, and KGC principal staff officers at the senior-leadership level.

Commander of KGC-AT, Australian Army officer Colonel Michael Murdoch, said that despite an extremely complex operating environment, he had been continually impressed by the advisory team's achievements.

"Our team has helped KGC to conduct its first multi-Corps joint operation in insurgent safe havens, and enhanced joint search and clearance operations," Colonel Murdoch said.

"We have also helped create an intelligence-led operational culture and improved their ability to communicate with the residents of Kabul through information operations."

Under the unified command of Lieutenant General Ahmadzai, KGC provides security for more than six million residents of Kabul province.

Lieutenant General Ahmadzai said the support of the Australian mentors had been essential to their success as a joint unit within Afghanistan.

"The Australian advisers are really making a difference for us and our government – our mission is united as one," Lieutenant General Ahmadzai said.

"The mentors work with us every day to help improve security in Kabul, which in turn improves the security of Afghanistan."

Success of the KGC has led to the planned creation of six new regional joint commands based on a similar model and, in future, a national joint command as part of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) roadmap.

Colonel Murdoch said that the lessons learned by KGC and the advisory team would be pivotal in ensuring the successful establishment of the new regional joint commands across Afghanistan.

"KGC has overcome numerous obstacles to establish itself as the country's first joint command," Colonel Murdoch said.

"They have done so in little over 18 months, despite no previous joint culture within the ANDSF, and in almost constant contact with insurgents and criminals."

"Without a doubt, the achievements of KGC and the advisory team together have had a positive impact on security across Kabul province."

Lieutenant General Ahmadzai said KGC had had a good effect on Kabul security through daily patrols, checkpoints and clearing operations.

"We continue to build the trust of Kabul residents through coordinated security and quick responses to incidents so that we can bring peace to Kabul, and ultimately, Afghanistan," he said.



Commander Kabul Garrison Lieutenant General Gul Nabi Ahmadzai in his office.  
Photo by Sergeant Ricky Fuller.



# AFGHANISTAN — WAS IT WORTH IT?



BY FORMER AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER CHRIS TAYLOR  
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY THE MONSOON PROJECT

Six years ago I was a soldier in the volatile province of Uruzgan, where Australia sent the bulk of its forces during its commitment to the Afghanistan War.

Australia has since withdrawn from Uruzgan, closing another ostensibly successful chapter in its military history and begun celebrating its actions.

Yet despite the deaths of 41 soldiers, hundreds badly wounded and \$7.5 billion spent on the war, remarkably little was achieved. Uruzgan is now the single most Taliban-controlled province in Afghanistan.

My home was a remote outpost in a farming valley where a handful of Australian and Afghan soldiers lived, worked and fought the Taliban together. Despite the hardships and numerous casualties, we achieved some modest successes.

Taliban insurgents remained, but the loss of fighters, commanders and equipment weakened them. Security was gradually improving and there was hope that one day government services could be introduced to the area.

But any sense of accomplishment was tempered by the knowledge that Australia would soon be withdrawing from the base, leaving the Afghans to provide security on their own. I was not optimistic about their chances.

These concerns are now justified.

Taliban fighters overran the outpost last October and dozens of Afghan soldiers defending it reportedly defected.

A video published on the Taliban's news website, Al Emarah, shows soldiers surrendering the base and handing over weapons and armoured vehicles. Nearby bases fell in a similar manner and the Taliban now control the valley.

Despite years of commitment and the loss of at least eight soldiers, Australian forces left little lasting impact.

What happened there is just one example of a broad collapse of security across Uruzgan.

After Australian troops withdrew in 2013, the Taliban made sweeping gains and now claim to control the entire province except for district centres.

Uruzgan Governor Mohammed Nazir Kharoti has called for Australia to return to the province and says the Taliban are threatening the capital, Tarin Kot, and are "coming very close to the city... a kilometre, to two kilometres in some sites."



*Patrol Base Wahab pictured above under control of the Afghan National Army in 2011 and, inset, after falling to the Taliban. Main photo taken by the author – inset image from Al Emarah, web site of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.*

Reinforcements have prevented the city from falling, but the countryside remains out of the government's reach.

So, what of Australia's legacy in Afghanistan?

Attempts to bring Uruzgan under enduring government control certainly failed.

Yet Australia's Chief of Army Lieutenant General Angus Campbell defends Australia's achievements as part of a bigger picture, citing "education, communication and thousands of kilometres of road infrastructure" that have improved quality of life for Afghans and liberated them from the desperate conditions they once endured.

Australia's commitment may have indirectly supported social and economic development elsewhere in Afghanistan, in the larger cities and safer provinces. But in Uruzgan, quality of life remains dire.

Even before the Taliban seized much of the province, government services and infrastructure began to crumble.

According to tribal elder Haji Mohammad Qasim, two years after Australia's departure only 20 per cent of Uruzgan's schools remained functional. Those that were open were run by elderly teachers with no understanding of modern education.

Health care was non-existent in most places while the central hospital relied on unqualified staff with inadequate supplies.

Some infrastructure projects were successful, but many were never completed and much of Uruzgan received no development.

The province remains a leading producer of opium.

Despite this grim picture, can Australians take comfort in the idea that they did their best against insurmountable obstacles? It is debatable.



A controversial strategy facilitated the spectacular collapse of governance and security in Uruzgan. Leaders neglected the requirement to build government institutions that follow the rule of law. Instead, they used a tribal warlord named Matiullah Khan to assert control through his personal power. His assassination in 2015 left behind a province with no successor and no viable institutions. Uruzgan descended deeper into lawlessness and the Taliban capitalised on the chaos.

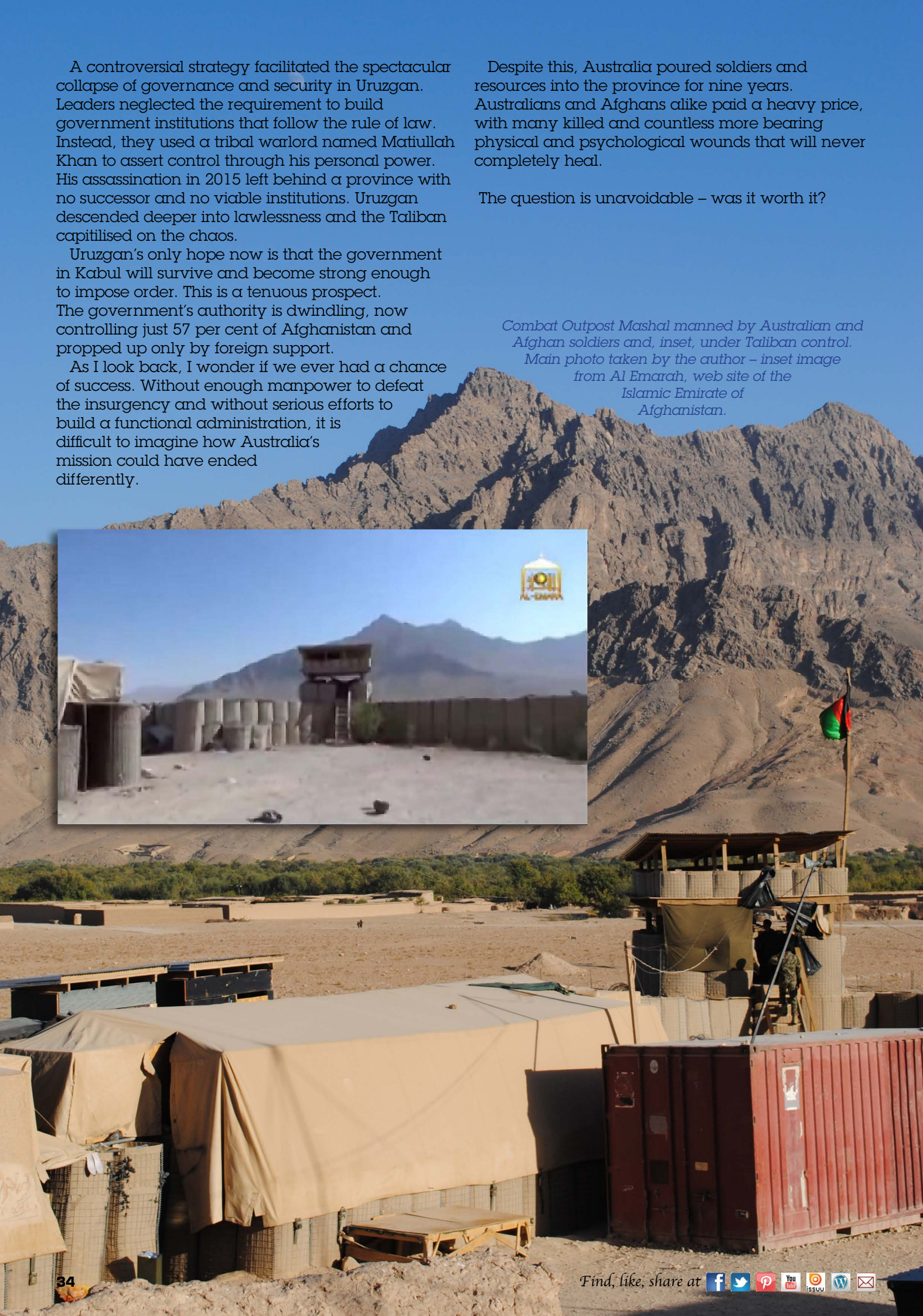
Uruzgan's only hope now is that the government in Kabul will survive and become strong enough to impose order. This is a tenuous prospect. The government's authority is dwindling, now controlling just 57 per cent of Afghanistan and propped up only by foreign support.

As I look back, I wonder if we ever had a chance of success. Without enough manpower to defeat the insurgency and without serious efforts to build a functional administration, it is difficult to imagine how Australia's mission could have ended differently.

Despite this, Australia poured soldiers and resources into the province for nine years. Australians and Afghans alike paid a heavy price, with many killed and countless more bearing physical and psychological wounds that will never completely heal.

The question is unavoidable – was it worth it?

*Combat Outpost Mashai manned by Australian and Afghan soldiers and, inset, under Taliban control. Main photo taken by the author – inset image from Al Emarah, web site of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.*



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# Aussie Special Forces on the ground in Africa

# Flintlock



**M**ore than 20 nations participated in Exercise Flintlock 17 in Niger, Africa, earlier this year – including operators from Australia's Special Operations community.

The annual training get-together is a Special Operations exercise with more than 2000 participants from across Africa, Europe, North America and Australia.

The three-week exercise began in 2005 and has grown to include police, border protection services and academia, and is aimed at increasing safety and security in Africa while strengthening government institutions, promoting multilateral sharing of information and developing interoperability among partner nations of the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP).

With approximately 2000 military and support staff in attendance, Chadian Brigadier General Zakaria Ngobongue, the Flintlock exercise director, welcomed the guests from the various countries.

Other countries also hosting training events included Niger, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Tunisia, Cameroon and Mauritania.

This was the second time Chad has hosted the Flintlock series of exercises, this year focusing on skills such as small-unit tactics, medical evacuations, and desert survival.

The exercise helps build the capabilities of the key African partners as well as promote regional cooperation and interoperability.

US Army Brigadier General Donald C Bolduc, commander of Special Operations Command Africa, said the challenge in front of every

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nation represented on Flintlock was the spread of violent extremism and how they would work together to stop illicit organisations.

"Flintlock isn't the beginning of our cooperation – this training is how we solidify our cooperation and ensure we are ready for the future," Brigadier General Bolduc said.

"Confronting the volatile, uncertain future is not a task we take on alone – we are all in this together."

Brigadier General Ngobongue said the environment was plagued with insecurity and this exercise was an added value and a great opportunity for his special forces to benefit from the shared training of participating nations.

"Terrorism, one of the major dangers of the third millennium, threatens the stability of states and security of citizens while fueling violence and hatred," he said.

Colonel Mukala Altini, Zone 5 Commander, Forces Armées Nigeriennes, said Flintlock called for training together to exchange knowledge and reinforce operational capabilities.

"The concept of Flintlock is a result of a common willingness expressed to fight against extremism and terrorism," Colonel Altini said.

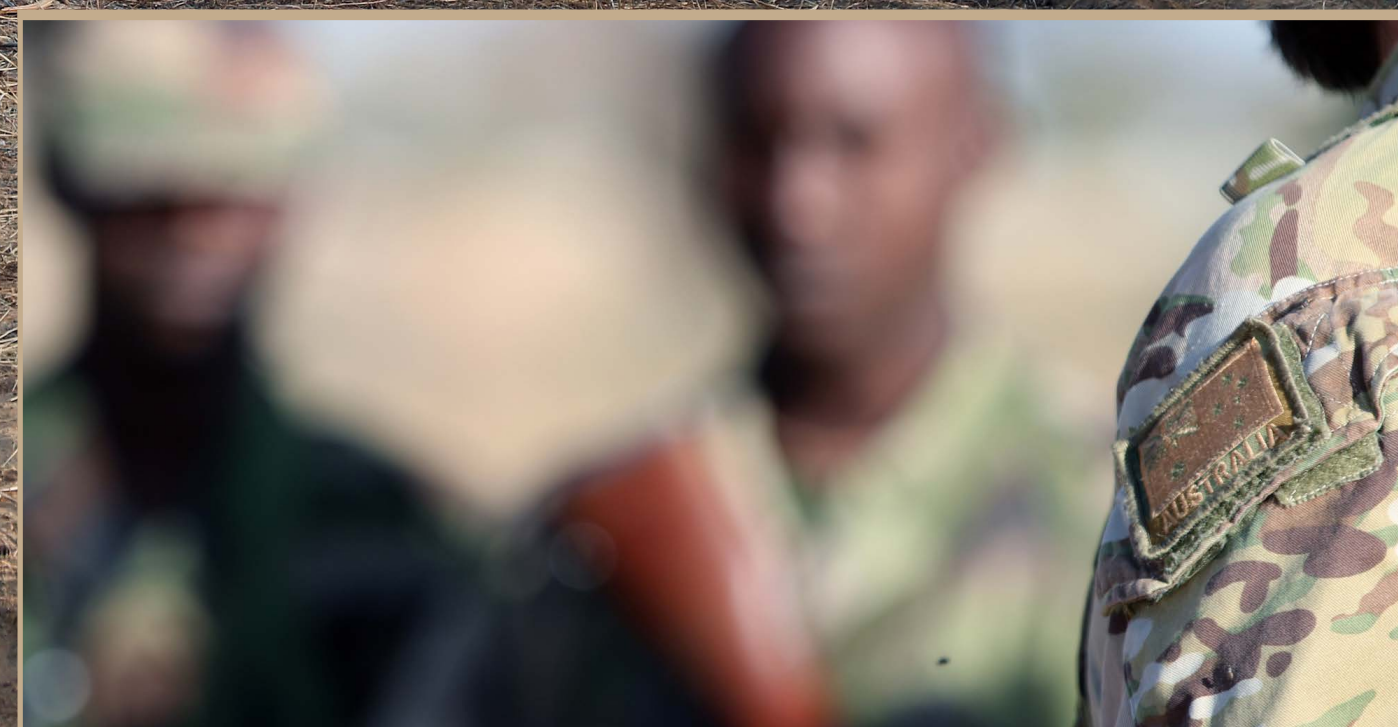
"Shared tactics and regional cooperation learned at Flintlock 17 can be effectively put into use in the multi-national fight against violent extremist organisations such as Boko Haram, ISIS and Al Qaeda.

A US Army Special Forces team commander in 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) said these shared goals were not without their own obstacles.

"Violent extremist organisations do not care about laws, borders, or order," he said.

"Because of that, they present a security threat not just to our nations participating in Niger, but to the entire region and even the world."

# Aussie Special Forces in Africa





One US Special Forces medical sergeant engaged in training Forces Armees Nigerinnes – also known as FAN – said one of the biggest differences he observed between the Afghan National Army and FAN was the clear lines between who they wanted to defend and who they identified themselves as.

"FAN soldiers come from across Niger, which has many tribal groups. Some soldiers know French and some speak other languages, such as Hausa.

"But, by training as a unit, these soldiers bond and find common ground.

"It's a complete contrast from Afghanistan – FAN soldiers are motivated because they have good leadership that sets good examples and they know that they can succeed in an organisation that gives them a better option than they might otherwise have had."

A US Special Forces weapons sergeant said that comparing his experience training Afghan soldiers and now on Exercise Flintlock, the FAN seemed to value their mentors' time much more.

"They show up willing and ready to train," the sergeant said.

"Officers and noncommissioned officers in the FAN play an active role during training by pulling soldiers aside to work with them when their platoon is learning a new skill.

"When a FAN soldier makes a mistake, leaders professionally tell him what he did wrong and show him the right way to do things.

"We gave the FAN fundamentals and concepts of implementing different types of techniques and tactics, and the fact that they absorbed a good amount of the training is because they are so motivated and they have a defined enemy.

"Ultimately, it's about trusting the soldiers to your left and right. The first day of training they seemed skeptical about each

## Aussie Special Forces in Africa





other, but after training together for a while they built common ground and now have great working relationships."

Another sergeant said that from the FAN cooks to the gate guards, every soldier knew their purpose and executed their individual tasks with pride.

"You will never catch a FAN soldier sleeping on guard or a mechanic quitting before a vehicle is fixed," he said.

"The officers and non-commissioned officers take pride in their work too. They train their men on their own without us having to get on to them, whereas, in Afghanistan, you had to tell the leaders what to do.

"Here they do their jobs to the best of their ability because of the looming Boko Haram threat."

Brigadier General Bolduc said Exercise Flintlock helped to achieve US Africa Command (USAFRICOM) objectives for military-capacity development, training and multinational regional cooperation.

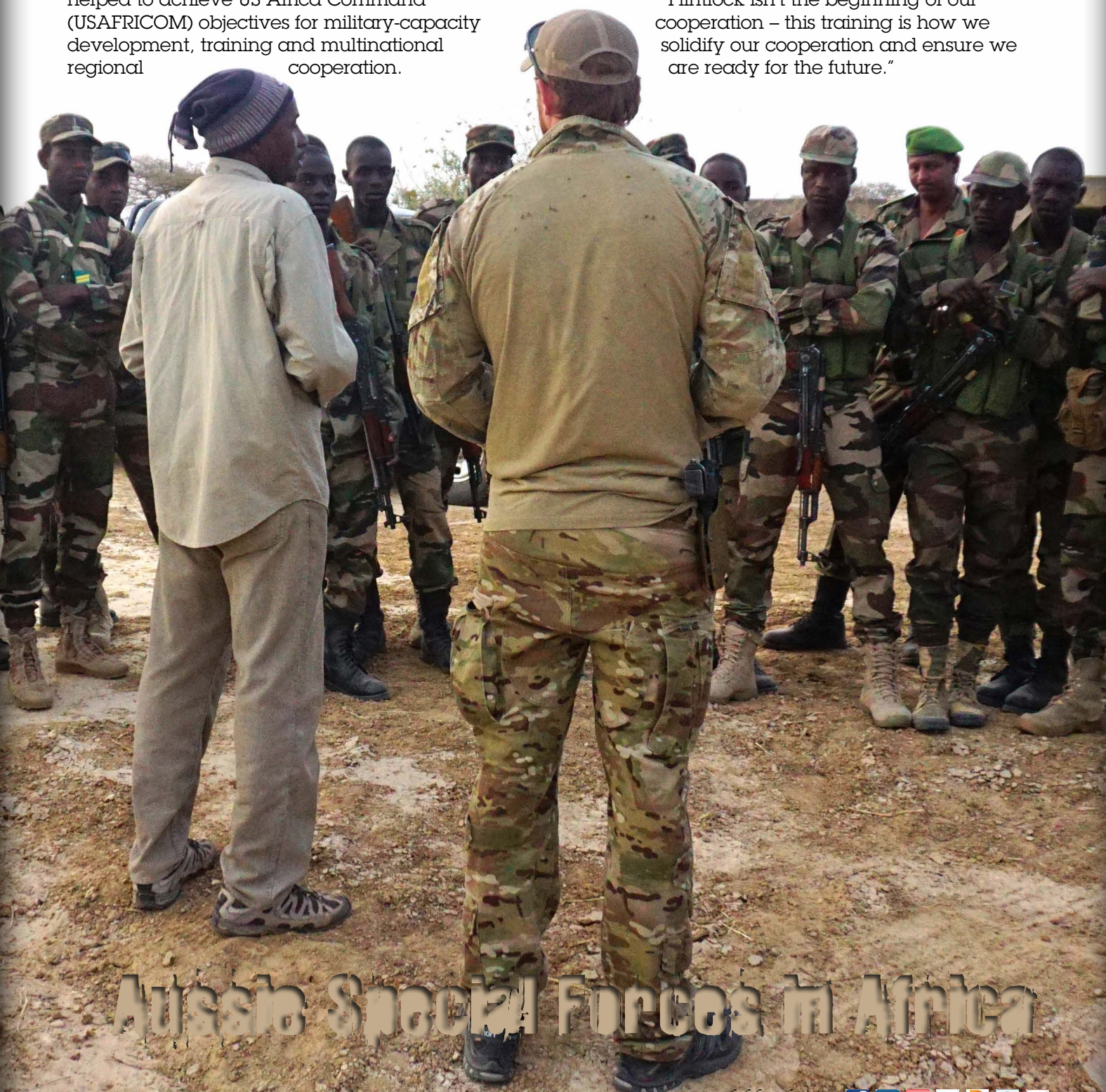
"Participating nations are members in the TSCTP and are planned by African partner nation Special Operations Forces and SOCAFRICA to develop capacity and collaboration among African security forces to protect civilian populations.

"The flag on your uniform is irrelevant at Flintlock as you bring your own expertise and share it with someone wearing a different uniform or speaking a different language," Brigadier General Bolduc told participants at an opening ceremony.

"And it's our goal, after Flintlock, to make the flag on your uniform irrelevant to the enemy.

"Through exercises such as Flintlock, [we] provide military training opportunities to foster relationships of peace, security and cooperation among all trans-Saharan nations through the TSCTP program.

"Flintlock isn't the beginning of our cooperation – this training is how we solidify our cooperation and ensure we are ready for the future."



Aussie Special Forces in Africa



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**T**rooper Stuart Reddan, 21, a member of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry) was killed when struck by a tree branch while driving an M113 armoured personnel carrier at Shoalwater Bay Training Area about 8:20am on 4 May 2017.

Trooper Reddan was participating in 7 Brigade's combined-unit Exercise Diamond Walk.

He received first aid from his comrades at the scene. Queensland Ambulance Service also attended the scene, but the soldier was subsequently pronounced deceased.

No other occupants of the vehicle were injured.

Queensland Police were asked to investigate the accident and are expected to prepare a report for the coroner.

Trooper Reddan's family published a statement shortly after receiving news of his death, saying they were unbelievably saddened by the loss of their son and brother.

"We will always remember Stuart as a charming, happy, fun-loving young man," the family said.

"He died doing what he loved.



"Stuart was very, very passionate about being a soldier and he loved every moment in the Army and [with] his mates.

"Stuart joined the Army cadets when he was 14 and was proud to serve his country.

"We would like to thank everyone for their loving words, their happy memories of Stuart and their support.

"We would also like to thank the soldiers who provided first aid to Stuart and were with him at the time. We send our heartfelt thanks out to these soldiers. We know you did your best to save him.

Trooper Reddan was farewelled with full military honours at Buderim on Queensland's Sunshine coast on 16 May.

Commander 2/14 LHR (QMI) Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Moss described Trooper Reddan as having a bias for action and always being prepared to support his mates.

"Good at his trade, always striving to improve, having a laugh with his mates, but always there lending a hand – I have no doubt he was one of our best," Lieutenant Colonel Moss said during his eulogy.



KILLED IN  
TRAINING

**P**rivate Jason Walter Challis, 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR), was killed during a live-fire training activity at Mount Bunday Training Area near Darwin in the Northern Territory, on 10 May.

Private Challis, received first aid at the scene before being transported to the Royal Darwin Hospital where he was formally pronounced dead.

The following day, Defence released a statement on behalf of Jason's family.

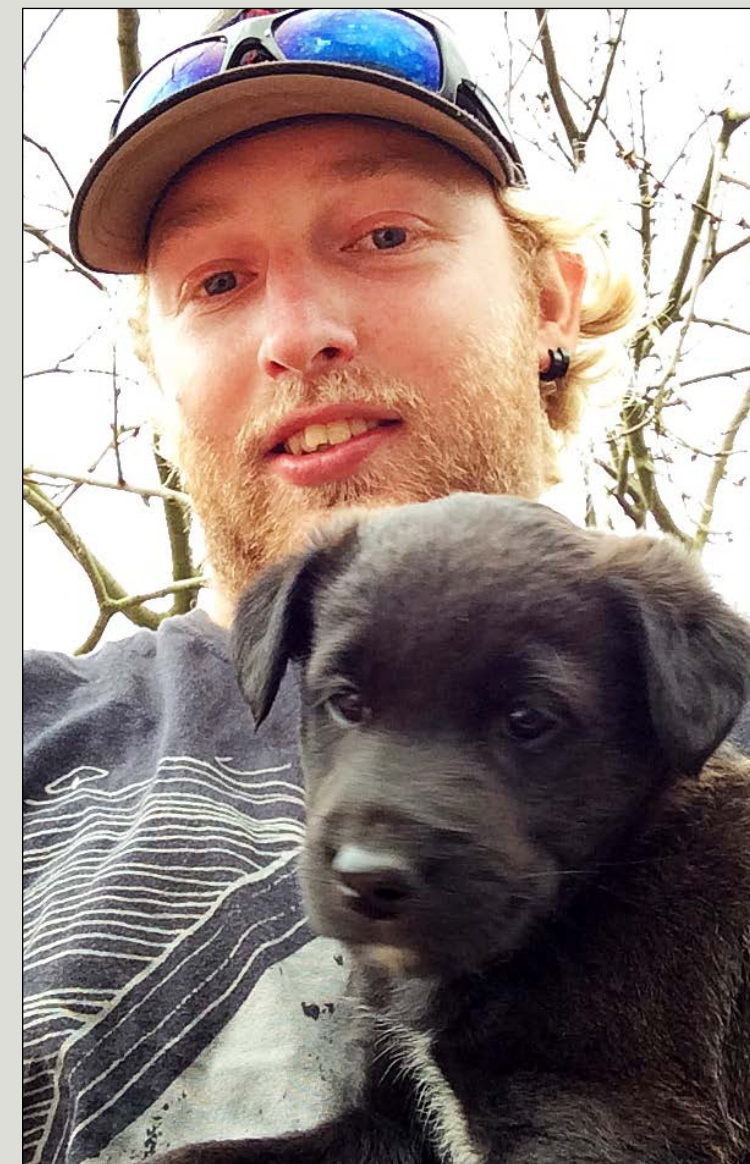
"Our beautiful boy has gone. His cheekiness and loving ways will stay with us forever.

"His personality pleased and brought so many people together. Everyone he met loved him and fell in love with him.

"Jason was the best son, step-son, brother and mate you could ever ask for."

Rest in peace, our darling Jason, we love you forever. Until we meet again.

Private Challis was buried with full military honours in Highton, Victoria, on 26 May.



## COMBAT TRAINING SUSPENDED

Following the second tragic death in less than a week, the Australian Army took the unprecedented step of suspending all combat training until a review into safety protocols was conducted.

Chief of Army Lieutenant General Angus Campbell said that while it was essential the Army trained for the rigours of operational service, it was very clear to Army's leaders at every level – from corporal to general – that its training must build and develop its people and capability, but that the injury or death of soldiers in training was fundamentally at odds with that purpose and the

responsibility commanders held to those they lead.

"Brigades will progressively return to duty over the next few days as the Forces Commander Major General Fergus McLachlan is satisfied that the appropriate processes are in place to manage risk and the safety of our people," Lieutenant General Campbell said.

"I have great confidence in our leaders, and our men and women, to work together to reinforce our training standards and return to the level of performance we all expect of ourselves and our nation requires of us."

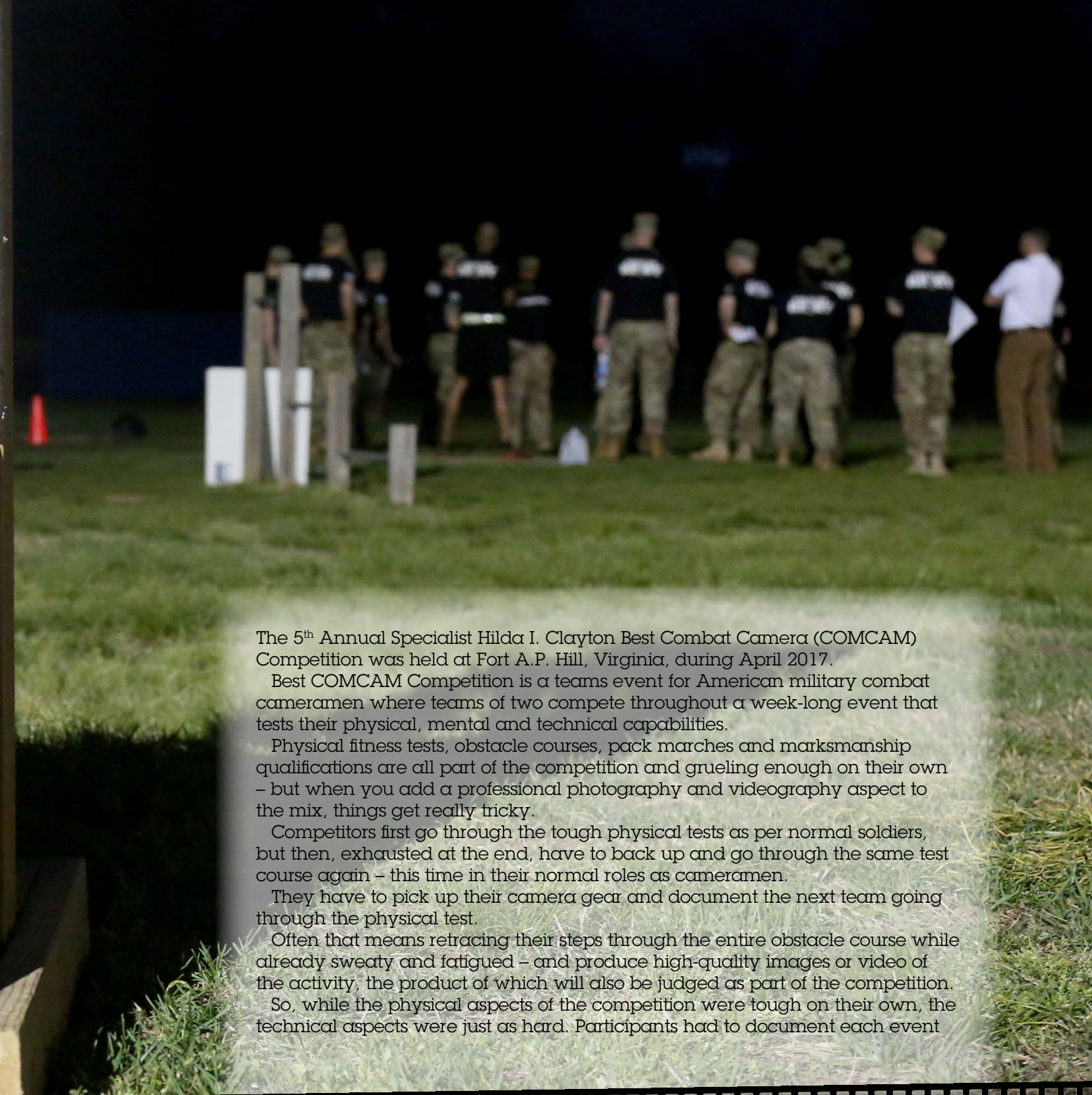
Lieutenant General Campbell said he was deeply appreciative of the immediate response to the latest tragedy by all those personnel on the ground, and he was confident his soldiers would continue to support each other as they confront the loss of their mates.

"Our thoughts remain with the families and friends of Trooper Stuart Reddan and Private Jason Challis during this difficult time.

"We will work very closely to support Defence, Comcare, State and territory police, and coronial authorities as these incidents are thoroughly investigated."



# 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Specialist Hilda I. Clayton BEST MILITARY SHOOTER COMP



The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Specialist Hilda I. Clayton Best Combat Camera (COMCAM) Competition was held at Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia, during April 2017.

Best COMCAM Competition is a teams event for American military combat cameramen where teams of two compete throughout a week-long event that tests their physical, mental and technical capabilities.

Physical fitness tests, obstacle courses, pack marches and marksmanship qualifications are all part of the competition and grueling enough on their own – but when you add a professional photography and videography aspect to the mix, things get really tricky.

Competitors first go through the tough physical tests as per normal soldiers, but then, exhausted at the end, have to back up and go through the same test course again – this time in their normal roles as cameramen.

They have to pick up their camera gear and document the next team going through the physical test.

Often that means retracing their steps through the entire obstacle course while already sweaty and fatigued – and produce high-quality images or video of the activity, the product of which will also be judged as part of the competition.

So, while the physical aspects of the competition were tough on their own, the technical aspects were just as hard. Participants had to document each event





during the competition and then go back to their accommodation and submit daily imagery, which would culminate in a final photo story and video project that was judged at the end of the week.

The fourth day of the competition also included a 'capabilities brief' that was designed to test teams' abilities to brief a commander in the field on what COMCAM is, what it does, and how to best use combat camera assets in the field.

"We are not a hindrance on the battlefield, we're a force multiplier," one participant said during his briefing to a stand-in commander.

"We are essentially another trained and competent rifle on the ground, but we also have a camera.

"We are able to seamlessly switch back and forth between holding our own as soldiers on the battlefield, as well as offering you the important tactical and strategic advantages that a good combat photographer can deliver on and off the field."

An officer engaged in running the event said COMCAM had a unique mission that provided a lot of technical knowledge of the visual imagery specialists and their craft, and also a lot of tactical knowledge of their ability to go out in combat situations, under stress, and still capture quality imagery to support any kind of unit or formation in the field.

The competition allows the US Army – and, in recent years as the competition has grown, the Navy, Marines and Air Force too – to test all of those

abilities and all of that skill to determine which is the best overall combat camera unit across the services.

This officer's favorite part of the competition was watching the service members work together. He noted that while one team was going through the obstacle course, and another team was documenting, even though they were actually competing against each other, they still exchanged tips on how to overcome an obstacle as well as how to get a better shot with the camera.

The annual Best COMCAM Competition is named in honor of fallen combat camera soldier Specialist Hilda I. Clayton of Augusta, Georgia, who was killed doing the job she loved on 2 July 2013 in Afghanistan while deployed on Operation Enduring Freedom.

Specialist Clayton was killed during an Afghan National Army live-fire training exercise in Jalalabad when a faulty mortar tube she was photographing in action exploded.

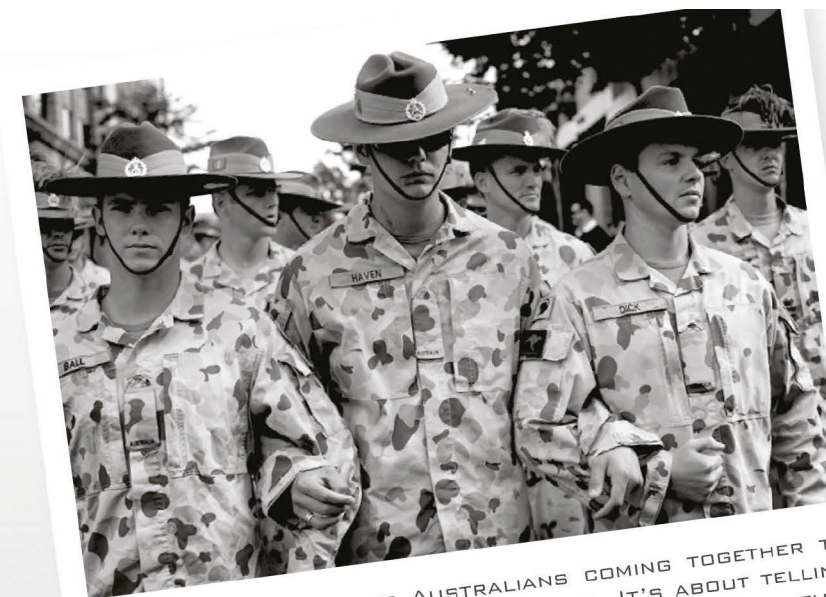
Specialist Clayton was also mentoring an Afghan Army photographer at the time. He was also killed in the explosion, along with three other Afghan Army soldiers.

"She was a very competitive individual who loved soldiering, team sports, and pushing herself to the limits," a friend said of Specialist Clayton.

"She excelled in everything she attempted, and now that professionalism and drive pushes others to do the same."



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# Specialist Clayton captures her own final moments



Specialist Hilda Clayton, a combat documentation/production specialist assigned to the 55<sup>th</sup> Signal Company (Combat Camera), based out of Fort Meade, Maryland, USA, was killed in Afghanistan on 2 July while photographing Afghan National Army soldiers on a live-fire mortar range.

Specialist Clayton, aged 22, and four ANA soldiers, were killed when a mortar tube on the range exploded.

While we reported Specialist Clayton's death in **COMBAT Camera** issue #5, it was only recently that the US Army and her family released the last photo Specialist Clayton ever took – of the explosion that killed her.

Colleagues said Specialist Clayton was a consummate professional and they had no doubt she would have wanted her final image published.



This second image of the same fatal incident was taken by an unnamed Afghan Army photographer who was being mentored by Specialist Clayton. This photographer, as well as the two men in the photograph were also killed.





US Air Force photos by Staff Sergeant Alexander Martinez

# F-22 Raptors in Australia

BY STAFF SERGEANT ALEXANDER MARTINEZ, STAFF SERGEANT SHEILA DEVERA AND BRIAN HARTIGAN

**The last wave of F-22 Raptors from the 90<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, arrived at RAAF Base Tindal in the Northern Territory, Australia, on 14 February 2017 for bilateral exercises and training missions with the Royal Australian Air Force.**

Lieutenant Colonel Dave Skalicky, 90<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron commander said the unit – also known as the Dicemen – were thrilled to be in Australia and working with their Australian counterparts.

"The Aussies have been phenomenal hosts, and their level of support allows us to increase our combined capabilities," Lieutenant Colonel Skalicky said.

"One of the unique aspects of this exercise was the ability for the 90<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron pilots, No 75 Squadron pilots, and RAAF's No 2 Squadron controllers to manage individual training scenarios that challenged each platform."

The F-22s, 12 in total, came to RAAF Base Tindal at the invitation of the Royal Australian Air Force and

at the direction of Admiral Harry B. Harris, US Pacific Command commander, as part of the Enhanced Air Cooperation (EAC) initiative under the Force Posture Agreement between the US and Australia.

This combined training activity marked the most extensive F-22 joint training with Australia in duration and scale, providing the Raptors the opportunity to conduct integrated air operations training with the RAAF's 75 Squadron F/A-18A/B Hornets and No 2 Squadron's E-7A Wedgetail.

Wing Commander Mick Grant, 75 Squadron commander, said his unit constantly looked forward to training and operating with its US counterparts, in particular, with fifth-generation squadrons such as the 90<sup>th</sup>.

"Usually we only integrate with the F-22s at major exercises in the US, such as Red Flag, or during coalition operations, so we appreciate the efforts of the 90<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron having travelled a significant distance to Australia to join us in our own backyard this year," Wing Commander Grant said.

# DICEMEN

# COMETH





"Northern Australia's extreme climate and distinctive training areas provide our ally unique opportunities to train with their fifth-generation aircraft in a range of environmental conditions."

The F-22s and F/A-18A/Bs conducted offensive and defensive training missions at various locations in the Northern Territory and Queensland in February and March.

US Air Force Captain Joshua Gunderson, 90<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, C Flight commander, said working with the Australians was seamless.

"The Australian tactics and our tactics are very similar," Captain Gunderson said.

"We were able to work and operate together to provide realistic and robust scenarios for our pilots.

"This opportunity in particular allowed us to get down to the tactical pieces of each scenario, work together and see what capabilities they have.

"We know them now on a personal level, and it makes it much easier to break down the barriers to get things done.

"We were able to crosstalk every single day, and fly on their E-7A Wedgetail to see how the crew works, to enhance the Raptors' and the Hornets' capabilities.

"During the visit, the Dicemen were able to create tactical problems no individual aircraft type could solve on its own.

"That forced the squadrons to work together more closely than they ever have before," Lieutenant Colonel Skalicky said.







US Air Force photos by Staff Sergeant Alexander Martinez

"Mission success or failure in our scenarios relied on an individual RAAF F/A-18 pilot supporting an F-22 pilot or vice versa.

"Over the course of the exercise, that made us stop looking at our aircraft in terms of their differences and start looking at how well they complement one another."

Lieutenant Colonel Skalicky said the 90<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron could trace its lineage back to WWII when the then US Army Air Forces 90<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron conducted missions from Northern Australia against the Japanese in various battles throughout the Pacific.

"Our squadron was here 75 years ago, and to be back carrying on the tradition is an honor," he said.

"We are back to operate where we operated during World War II and it's neat to have this opportunity to return to Australia to achieve some common goals, but under much better circumstances."

Accompanying the 12 F-22s to Australia were approximately 230 airmen providing operational, maintenance, logistical and security support.

Captain Paul Ward, the 90<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron's doctor and duty medical technician Technical Sergeant Layla Dispense, underwent helicopter familiarisation and safety training during the visit.

Captain Ward said RAAF Base Tindal personnel were very welcoming hosts.

"They have embraced us and, right away, were eager to show us around and show us their techniques and skills," he said.

"I've been to four or five locations around the world now with the 90<sup>th</sup> Fighter squadron and the helicopter unit and the RAAF medical personnel have been the most hospitable people I've worked with."

The contingent spent more than 45 days based out of RAAF Base Tindal, with some also delighting crowds at the Australian International Airshow at Avalon, Victoria (see next page).

In August this year, the Dicemen will celebrate their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary – pleased that for 75 out of those 100 years, they have had a relationship with the Royal Australian Air Force.

Long may it last.



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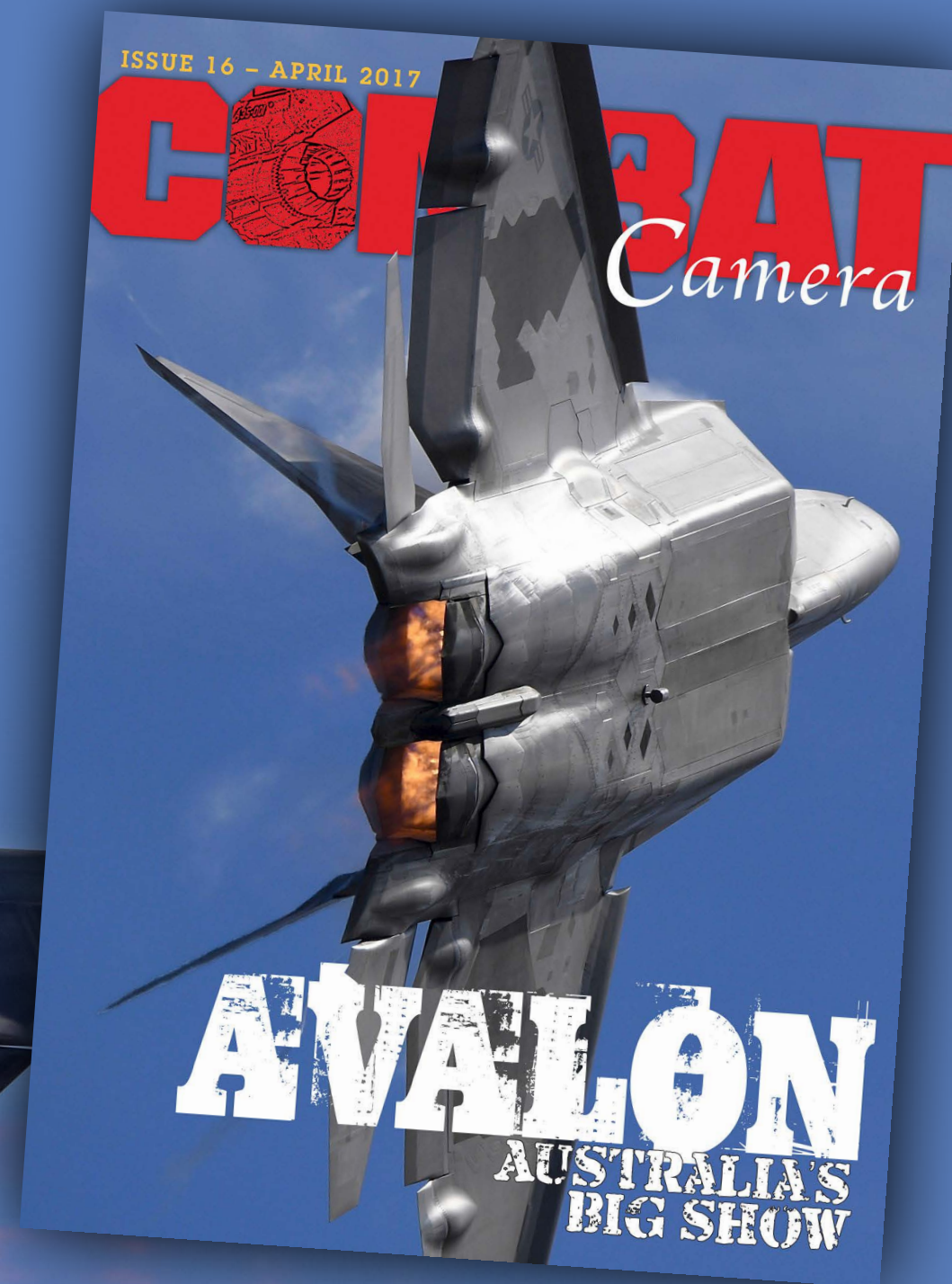
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Photos by  
Daniel McIntosh  
and Bradley Richardson



# AOTEAROA

## BIG NAME FOR NEW ZEALAND'S BIGGEST SHIP

**The Royal New Zealand Navy will christen its newest and biggest ship HMNZS Aotearoa.**

Chief of Navy Rear Admiral John Martin said it was a big name for a big ship that would represent New Zealand and its Navy on the international stage whether conducting operational support, maritime sustainment or providing humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

"Aotearoa will be recognisable within the Pacific region and identifiable with all New Zealanders," Rear Admiral Martin said.

Construction of the new 24,000-tonne vessel, the largest ship ever operated by the RNZN, will start next year, for delivery in January 2020.

Hyundai Heavy Industries, the world's biggest shipbuilder, will construct Aotearoa in South Korea.

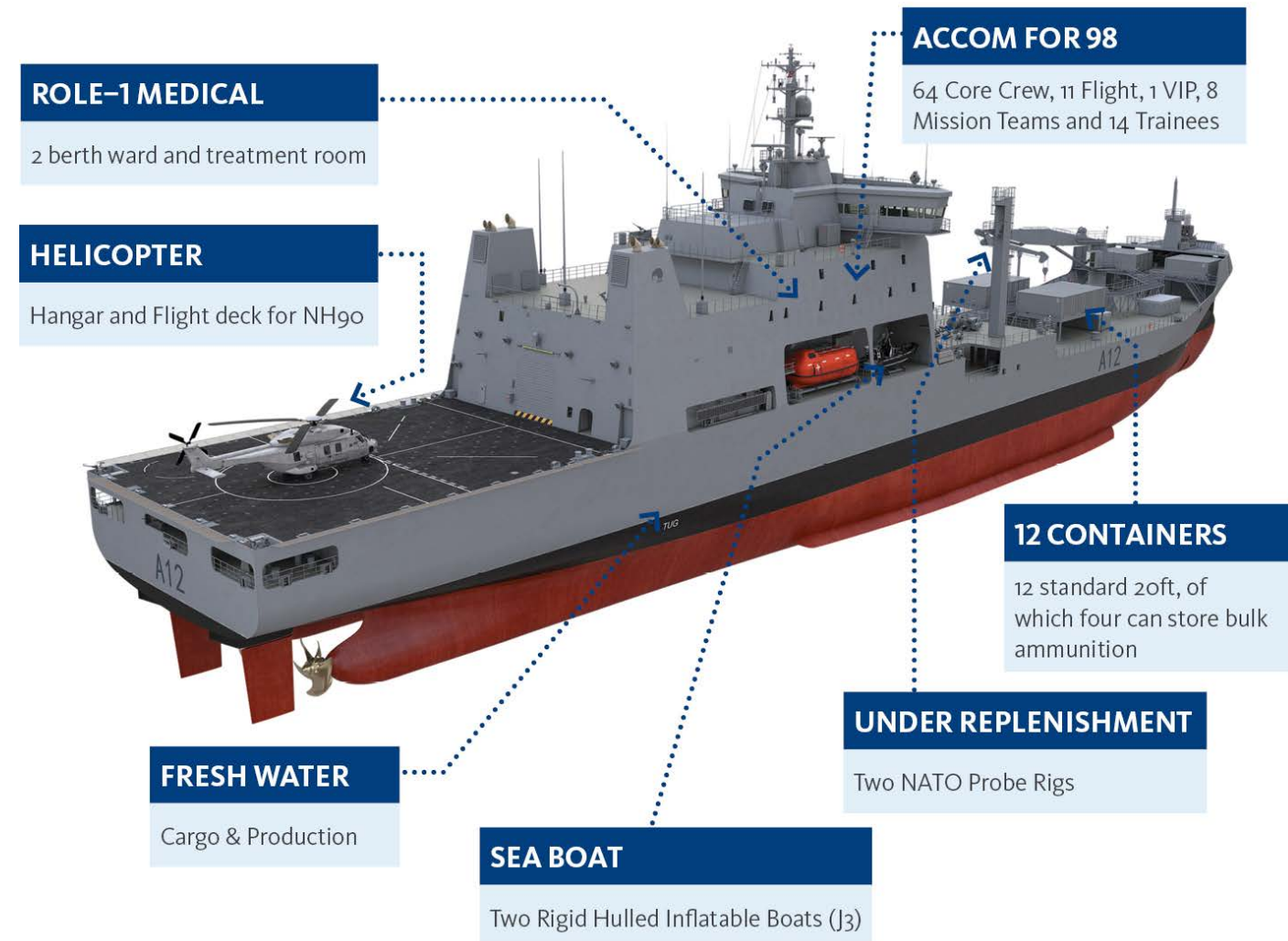
HMNZS Aotearoa has twice the displacement of HMNZS Endeavour, which is scheduled for decommissioning next year, and will carry 30 per cent more fuel.

Rear Admiral Martin said Aotearoa, while replacing Endeavour, offered more than just a replenishment role.

"Aotearoa will have the ability to deploy anywhere in the world to support maritime operations and enhance our combat force," he said.

"It has the ability to conduct embarked helicopter operations and will be capable of carrying a significant tonnage of operational supplies.

"And, it will provide an important Antarctic-support capability to assist with our Southern Ocean monitoring."



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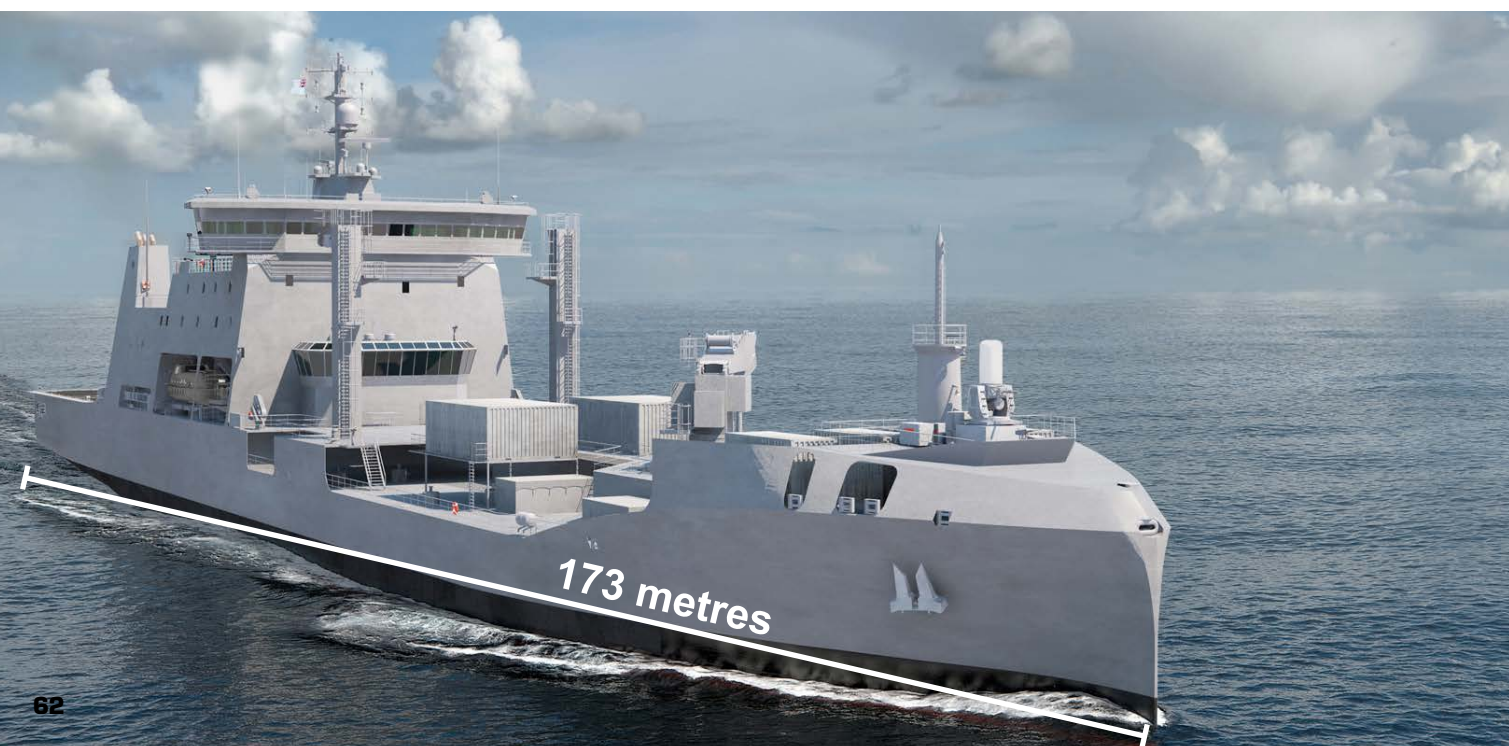
become the home port for Aotearoa, continuing a longstanding relationship between the RNZN and the Taranaki region and the connection between the area's oil and gas industry and the role of Aotearoa in providing fuel services.

HMNZS Aotearoa will be a world-first naval "Enviroship", with Hyundai using the Rolls-Royce Enviroship concept, which incorporates a new wave-piercing hull to reduce resistance and lower fuel use, while its combined diesel electric and diesel propulsion plant has lower fuel emissions than older vessels.

The design and capabilities of HMNZS Aotearoa include enhanced 'winterisation' capabilities such as ice-strengthening for operations in Antarctica, including resupplying McMurdo Station and Scott Base. HMNZS Endeavour is not Antarctic-capable.

New Zealand's Defence White Paper 2016 identified Antarctica as a "focus of increasing international interest" and NZDF's "critical role" in supporting personnel in the Ross Dependency and monitoring activity in the Southern Ocean.

New Plymouth, Endeavour's home port, will also





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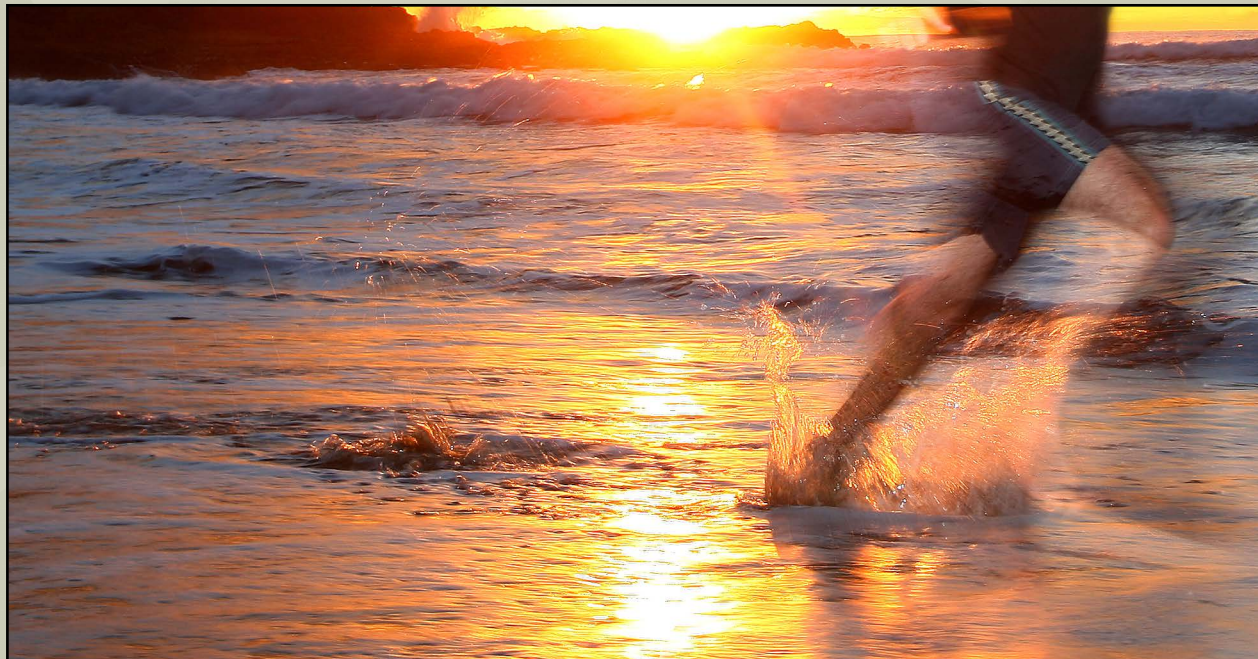
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# RUNNING FOR NON RUNNERS

## DON'T LAUGH – I'VE TAKEN UP RUNNING!



I'm back! And just to prove that the world has indeed gone mad I am writing about how I have voluntarily embarked on a program of *running*.

Long time readers of CONTACT and anyone who has read any of my blogs or books will know that running ranks up there with my least favourite activities of all time. I'd literally rather do my taxes or go to the dentist than voluntarily go for a run and it's been that way for the last 20 years. If you are reading this on a defence establishment and the officer next to you has fallen off their seat laughing, don't worry, it's just a member of the ADFA class of 2000 imagining *me* running.

So why do I hate running and why have I decided to do it again?

Like many people I am not a natural endurance athlete. This will come as a shock to those of you who find running easy and who enjoy gliding over the pavement like a gazelle, but there is a large proportion of the population who find running painful, boring and demoralising. In my particular case, years of focusing on strength sports have left me about 40kg heavier than an elite distance runner of the same height and I run with all the grace of a shot elephant.

Being heavy drastically increases the amount of energy required to move at a

certain pace. Also, the bigger you are the less surface area you have relative to that mass, so heat build up becomes a problem. Heavier individuals also put a lot more stress on their joints when they run, which can lead to injuries.

Now, I'm not saying this as an excuse, I've chosen to focus on strength sports and accept that I will be a lot worse at running. For many people who are starting out running, or who have to balance a level of muscularity with endurance, such as special forces soldiers, they don't have a choice. To get into the ADF or pass selection they need to achieve certain benchmarks.

So to assist all of my fellow wounded elephants and SF hopefuls I thought I'd share some tips on how to build running capacity without destroying yourself in the process. In a following article I'll share my thoughts on long term endurance development and balance with strength training as my own running journey progresses.

### STARTING OUT

If you are just starting out and need to build your running capacity there are several things you should keep in mind.

1 **Buy good shoes** – While there has been a trend toward minimalist and

barefoot running in the past 10 years, heavy individuals need to buy well-cushioned shoes and seek out soft surfaces such as grass to run on. Taking the time to go to a proper running store and getting some expert advice could save you a lot of grief in the long term.

- 2 **Build up slowly** – The biggest mistake most people new to exercise of any kind make is to go too hard, too fast and to add too much volume in the first couple of months. On my first run this year I ran the grand total of 3km and each week I only add about 10% to my total distance for the following week.
- 3 **If it hurts, rest** – If you start to get pain in your knees, shins, ankles or feet it is always best to take an extra 1-3 days of rest in between runs. Running through even moderate pain will tend to inflame things and you will end up in a downward spiral.
- 4 **Do alternate cardio** – especially in the beginning you may only want to run 2-3 days per week and add volume by using a rower, bike or kettlebell for non-impact cardio.
- 5 **Measure your progress** – These days we are spoilt for choice when it comes to apps and gadgets to monitor training and record every

workout. While I caution against becoming a slave to the numbers, it is undeniable from a coach's perspective that having a few key numbers like pace, heart rate and distance data makes it easier to program training and follow progress. In the next article I will outline some ways of using GPS watches and phone apps to track your training.

- 6 **Train at three different levels** – Your training should generally include three components – intervals from 400-1600m at a fast pace with rests in between; "race pace" training over distances similar to those you are going to be tested on, such as the 2.4km BFA; and, long slow distance runs that are longer than your goal but carried out at a much lower pace.

If you can follow those tips you will be well on your way to building your running capacity for whatever goal or test you have in the future.

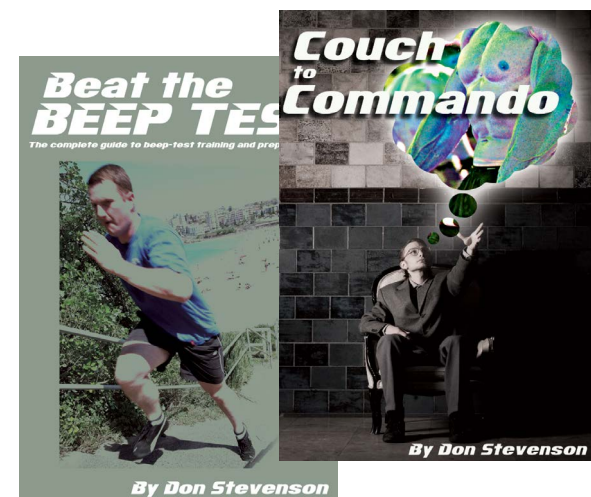
In the next issue I'll outline a sample training plan, show how to use technology to motivate and track your training and share some insights from my own training.

Follow Don's running career in the next issue of **CONTACT** on 1 September – or find Don's other fitness articles on our web site, [here](#).



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# GARMIN FENIX® 5X

In April this year I was sent Garmin's latest, top of the line, GPS sports smart watch, the Fenix 5X to review.

Over the past few years the Fenix series of watches have evolved and have been well regarded. But in the 5 series they have taken a huge leap forward.

The big news this year is the introduction of the big dog of the pack, the 5X, having not just GPS capability for tracking routes on your computer or the smart phone app but inbuilt mapping, routing and navigation features.

This means that no matter where you are (providing you have the country maps loaded) you can press a couple of buttons and use the 5X to navigate on bush walks, plot a round-trip course for a run or even navigate on parachute descents.

The amount of data collected and the customisations available are absolutely staggering and include heart rate, running



speed, aerobic and anaerobic training effect and literally dozens of other measurements for all sorts of sports.

The 5X also functions as an activity tracker for daily steps and as a smart watch for linking to your phone.

I've been using the watch now for a variety of workouts over the past six weeks and am only just starting to get to grips with it so this review will be followed with a more comprehensive look once I accumulate some more hours using it.

So far I'm very impressed with the sheer amount of technology that Garmin have managed to pack into a watch (albeit a pretty chunky one).

So far the only downsides I can see for military personnel are the limited battery life (about a week in watch mode and 24 hours if using the GPS full time) and the fact that it is not cheap, at just under \$1000.

More to follow – next issue.

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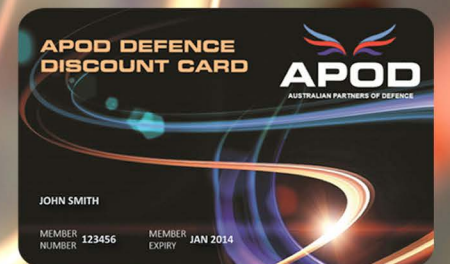
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*TRITON is available for technical and evaluation trials direct from 360 Defence – [www.360defence.com.au](http://www.360defence.com.au)*



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# CLOSE BUT NOT CLOSE ENOUGH

## Australians recommended for the VC but not awarded

BY MAJOR DARRYL KELLY

### Sergeant Daniel Poole DCM and Bar 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion, AIF

# THE HARD NUT

Sergeant Daniel Poole was a hard man but a fair man. He asked for and gave no quarter. He was respected by his men because he had respect for them.

**Daniel Poole was a man with an adventurous spirit. Born in Birkenhead, England, in April 1882, and, from a young age, yearned for a life at sea. Leaving home at the tender age of 11, he secured work as an apprentice seaman on a German sailing clipper and set off to see the world<sup>1</sup>. Sixteen years later he arrived in Sydney where he met his future wife Mary O'Donnell and decided to settle. The couple had one son, Richard.**

Daniel maintained his love of the sea by joining the Royal Naval Reserve, where he served for the next five years.

With the onset of war in August 1914, Daniel enlisted in the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF), which was raised rapidly for offensive operations against German forces in German New Guinea. Allocated to Number 3 Company of the Royal Naval Reserve he had his first taste of action during the attack and capture of an enemy radio station near Kabakual<sup>3</sup>.

On return to Australia Daniel Poole was discharged from the ANMEF on 5 March 1915. Eager for further service, he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 13 May 1915 and was allocated to D Company of the recently formed 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion, which was preparing to embark for overseas. The 20<sup>th</sup> was part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Holmes, who had also commanded the ANMEF<sup>6</sup>.

On 26 June, Daniel boarded the transport 'Berrima'<sup>4</sup> – the same ship that had taken him to German New Guinea – bound first for Egypt and then to Gallipoli.

Daniel Poole, now a lance corporal<sup>5</sup>, landed at Gallipoli on 22 August 1915. The 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion occupied the front line at Russell's Top where it was engaged in dangerous scouting work in order to keep the enemy off-guard following the failures of the August offensive.

At Russell's Top, Daniel honed his skills as an infantryman – his very life depended on it. Likewise, he did not tolerate fools lightly and was prone to speaking his mind. This was evident in September when he was charged with 'direct disobedience

of orders'. He did not contest the charge and was awarded a reprimand<sup>5</sup>.

Rumours of evacuation started to sweep through the ranks, with deception plans and 'silent stunts' occurring on a regular basis. What was actually happening was that large drafts of troops were being taken off the peninsula under cover of darkness, while stores and equipment continued to come ashore by day.

Now back in Egypt, the hard-fought battalions had time to rearm, replenish and retrain before being redeployed to the battlefields of France and Belgium and a crack at what was thought to be the real enemy. But first, the AIF needed to be restructured and expanded. The Battalions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division were split to form the elements of two new divisions, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, while other new arms and services were manned by replacements and eager volunteers.

Daniel Poole was pleased that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, and especially the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion, was to be left intact<sup>8</sup> and thus would be one of the first to head to France. But first, the 20<sup>th</sup> was one of the units entrusted with the defence of the vital Suez Canal against a Turkish incursion across the desert.

Daniel enjoyed a little too much local leave in Cairo in January 1916, charged with two days AWOL<sup>5</sup>. But, his staunchness, moral and physical courage was again recognised and rewarded the following month when he was promoted to temporary corporal<sup>5</sup>.

War on the Western Front was a totally different affair to that experienced at Gallipoli. The Turk, whilst a formidable enemy, was not the German Army – masters of both defence and attack, with the benefit of science. What our Diggers faced was a near-impenetrable wall of interlocking arcs of machine-gun fire stretching over 700 miles from the English Channel to the Swiss Border. Daniel Poole realised he was in for a real stoush.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion took its turn in the trenches around Bois Greinier – dubbed the Nursery Sector. It was here that all battalions entering the front received its initiation to the



The medals of Sergeant Daniel Poole DCM and Bar

challenges of front-line warfare. Facing them were German units undergoing exactly the same initiation. Thus, life in the front line was sprightly to say the least.

Daniel Poole's time in the Nursery was cut short when he was hospitalised. But his mates in the 20<sup>th</sup> felt the full effects of their opposite numbers on the night of 5/6 May 1916 when as the first Australian battalion to suffer the effects of an enemy trench raid.

Following a savage barrage, the enemy swarmed across no-man's land and were in the trenches before our Diggers could react. The Germans used every weapon they had at their disposal on the Australians – pistols, rifles, bayonets, bombs and even knobkerrys<sup>8</sup>. Within minutes the 20<sup>th</sup> had lost four officers and 91 men killed or wounded, with a further 11 captured. Adjacent units also suffered significant losses. They also lost two of the new and still-secret Stokes Mortars, to the enemy.

The raid changed the demeanour of the 20<sup>th</sup>. They were now a determined and ruthless adversary and, almost to a man, they vowed this would never happen again.

On his return to the battalion, Daniel Poole sensed the change in his mates and was pleased with their new sense of rugged determination.

In July 1916 the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion's next clash was to occur in the meat grinder that was Pozieres – a name that for decades afterwards would strike fear and anguish in the hearts of the most hardened veteran.

Poole was a section commander by now and he led his men with a cool, calm efficiency. He was comfortable in command and his word and judgement were never questioned by his men.

The Australians were pulverised around the clock with the most intense artillery bombardment of the war thus far. As casualties mounted the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade was withdrawn to rest and reinforce.

In August, they returned again to the hell of Pozieres. Daniel was now a temporary sergeant and set out to back his young platoon commander as well as ensuring that his men had the best chance of survival.

Following its withdrawal from Pozieres, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division was moved to a quieter sector in Belgium for further rest. In the October, the entire division was returned south where it launched an attack on the fortified village of Flers in November. Autumn rains set in with a vengeance and the muddy conditions were described by the historian Charles Bean, as 'the worst ever encountered by the AIF'.

But the heavy rains and thick, stinking mud were just a prelude of things to come with the onset of the worst winter to hit the region for 40 years.

Early 1917 found the German forces undertaking a tactical withdrawal to prepared positions, dubbed the Hindenburg Line. A line of fortified villages, supported by deep reinforced blockhouses and belt upon belt of thick barbed wire, all covered by machine guns, made the line all-but impregnable. The allies centred the bulk of their attack to breach the Hindenburg Line on the fortified village of Bullecourt.

On the night of 14/15 April 1917, the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion, coupled with other units of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisions were stretched out along the line near the adjacent village of Lagnicourt. The enemy probed the Australian lines, looking for a weakness. They found one in the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion's defensive position and attacked in force. With the line broken elements of the 12<sup>th</sup> were in danger of being surrounded. The 20<sup>th</sup> was deployed in depth and, sensing that the situation was in doubt, sent a number of patrols forward to attempt to plug the gaps.

Sergeant Daniel Poole was in command on one of those patrols. As they approached an area near the headquarters of the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Poole found a number of 12<sup>th</sup> men falling back in the face of the enemy attack. Poole gathered the men and reformed them into a fighting force and, together with his own patrol, began to advance. As Poole's combined force made contact with the enemy he quickly assessed the situation, held the bulk of his force in the centre in order to pin the enemy down, then sent part of his enlarged force in a flanking





# CLOSE BUT NOT CLOSE ENOUGH

## Australians recommended for the VC but not awarded

The only  
known  
photo of  
Daniel Poole  
DCM and Bar



manoeuvre to attack the enemy from the side. Despite dogged defence, Poole's men inflicted heavy losses on the enemy, killing nine and capturing 15. For his cool, calm and effective leadership, Daniel Poole was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM)<sup>10</sup>.

Poole suffered a gunshot wound to the left foot on 19 April. The wound was serious enough to warrant evacuation to London for specialist treatment and it would be September before he was fit enough to return to duty<sup>2</sup>.

On his return, the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion were locked in battle along the Menin Road, Belgium. On 20 September 1917, the battalion was advancing on the left flank of the attacking troops as they assaulted a key feature known as ANZAC Ridge en route to their main objective – Hanabeek Wood. The 20<sup>th</sup> was moving through the remnants of a hedge when the Germans opened up on the lead elements of the battalion from a series of old concrete artillery positions. Rushing forward, the 20<sup>th</sup> hit the Germans with a ferocious onslaught.

At one point during this advance, a German soldier emerged from a pillbox with his hands up, while a second fired between his legs, wounding an Australian sergeant. A nearby Lewis<sup>11</sup> Gunner shouted 'Get out of the way, sergeant' – 'I'll see to the bastards' and fired three to four bursts of fire into the entrance, killing the most of the occupants.

As the battalion pushed forward, pillboxes continued to fall into Australian hands, with 16 machine guns captured by the 20<sup>th</sup> alone. Suddenly a bypassed pillbox, thought to be secured, opened up from the rear. In what was deemed to be 'reckless leadership,' Daniel Poole grabbed two men and rushed the pillbox, killing the crew, capturing five machine-guns and taking 40 prisoners.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary for 20 September records – 'many stirring deeds were the order of the moment, but the berserk spirit of Sergt. D. Poole, D.C.M. appears to have stood out alone, no less than 5 machine guns in Hanabeek Wood falling to him'.

For his actions Daniel Poole was recommended for the Victoria Cross, but this was eventually downgraded to a Bar to his Distinguished Conduct Medal.

He was the leading spirit in the clearing of the wood and it was unfortunate that, shortly afterwards, a shrapnel wound – to the same foot – saw him evacuated<sup>12</sup> again to England, where other, hidden injuries came to light. He was diagnosed with a depressed fracture of the skull – an injury serious enough to see him returned to Australia and subsequently discharge from the AIF, on 10 August 1918.

Following his return to Australia and his family, Daniel returned to the sea, working firstly as a seaman at McIlwraith, McEacharn and Co. then, from 1937, for the Adelaide Steamship Company.

With the onset of the Second World War both Daniel and his son Richard answered the call to serve, both joining the Royal Australian Navy within days of each other in October 1939<sup>13</sup> and both serving on the armed merchant cruiser HMAS

Manoora. Daniel was discharged in November 1941. He lost his beloved Mary the following year<sup>15</sup>. Richard served throughout the war and was finally discharged in March 1946<sup>14</sup>.

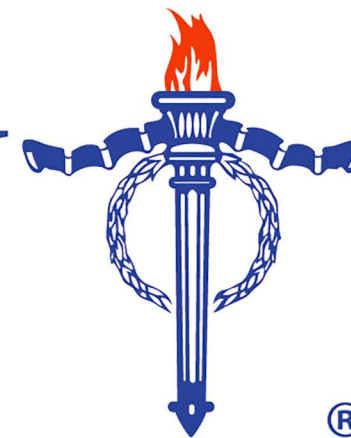
Daniel Poole DCM and Bar passed away on 13 August 1959. As per his wishes, his ashes were scattered.

*The author thanks Daniel Poole's grandson Richard for his assistance with this article.*

#### Notes:

1. Australian Dictionary of Biography, Poole, Daniel (1882-1959), N.S. Foldi.
2. National Archives of Australia: B2445, WWI Service Records, 1422 SGT D. Poole.
3. Article Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force-First to Fight, 1914, John Perryman.
4. AWM8, Unit embarkation rolls, 1914-18 War, 20th Battalion AIF.
5. National Archives of Australia: B2445, WWI Service Records, 1422 SGT D. Poole.
6. Bean, CEW, Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Volume II, Australian War Memorial, 1939.
7. 'Silent stunts' were used to fool the Turks into a false sense of security. In the lead up to the evacuation, the allied forces at Gallipoli would not return fire and maintained complete silence, thus lulling the Turks into believing that this type of new practice was commonplace.
8. A small stout club designed to beat the enemy unconscious. One example left behind in the trench comprised a stiff spring for its handle and a 2 pound (1kg) iron bolt for its head.
9. Bean, CEW, Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Volume III, Australian War Memorial, 1939.
10. 'Commonwealth Gazette' No 169, 4 October 1917.
11. Light machinegun used by allied infantry units.
12. AWM4, Australian Imperial Force, Unit War Diaries, Infantry, 1914-1918 War, 20th Battalion, September 1917.
13. S/3715 Daniel Poole and S3722 Richard Daniel Poole.

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## TS Koopa looking to improve

Cadets at TS Koopa learn maritime 'rules of the road'.



On Saturday 13 May 2017 TS Koopa hosted Flotilla Commander Lieutenant Commander Joyce Kennedy to conduct her Annual Inspection.

TS Koopa has been awarded Most Improved Unit for the past two years and Commanding Officer Lieutenant Jane Reptik, staff and cadets have their fingers crossed that this year will be the year they bring the Best in Flotilla Award home.

Lieutenant Reptik said the unit continued to grow and be recognised in the community.

"For the fourth year running, we have been recognised in the Longman Awards for our contribution to youth and this year we were a nominee in the Volunteering Queensland Impact Award," she said.

"The Cadets will also be competing this year in the annual Cadet Games run by PCYC Sandgate, which they won last year.

"We believe the training ship has one of the best training and activities programs in the country.

"Our cadets will be undergoing adventure training at Tree Tops challenge next month and will be training in advanced leadership skills at a camp later in the year."

Lieutenant Reptik said the Annual Inspection went well with some 80 guests attending to watch the cadets go through ceremonial drills and a number of practical training exercises.

"Adherence to safety is a major issue on all our activities, so we weren't surprised when the Flotilla Commander threw a couple of emergency situations at us.

"The cadets enjoyed the experience, but we actually had to explain to parents that it was only an exercise and a part of what we do training their cadets.

"The ceremonial component saw the unit supported by the Queensland National Serviceman's Pipe Band, which is always a great pleasure.

"They also donated some drums to the unit, which were very well received by the cadets."

During the ceremony, several promotions were recognised – TS Koopa is pleased to announce our two newest Cadet Petty Officers are Petty Officer Deon Rayon and Petty Officer Ty McDonald – our newest Cadet Seaman Allana Jorgensen – and High Achievement of Personal Efficiency badge was awarded to Seaman Ella Adams.



About 140 Australian Army Cadets from around Australia competed for the Adventure Training Award badge, considered to be one of the toughest awards a cadet can achieve.

To earn the badge, selected cadets participated in a week of vigorous activities at Majura Training Range, near Canberra.

This year's activity ran from 8-15 April.

Throughout the week the cadets trekked around 100km across the ranges, using their navigation skills at every opportunity.

They were tested in various 'initiative incidents' and underwent a range of complex tasks.

## Adventure Training Award

By Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Holcroft

The training provided opportunities for cadets to work in a team environment and to develop individual skills including leadership, initiative and problem-solving in a safe, challenging and rewarding environment.

Australian Army Cadets is a leading national youth development organisation, with the character and values of the Australian Army, and is founded on a strong community partnership, fostering and supporting an ongoing interest in the Australian Army.

## Anything for recruitment

At this year's Mount Barker Show in the Adelaide Hills, Australian Air Force Cadets from No 602 Squadron ran an information and recruiting stand – and, in the spirit of 'participating in community events', one young cadet found himself well outside the bounds of 'normal' cadet duties.

6 Wing Public Affairs and Communication Officer Pilot Officer (AAFC) Paul Rosenzweig said, "Participating in community activities helps Air Force Cadets learn self-discipline and teamwork, and gives them a sense of pride and belonging".

"It also gives them opportunities they might never have considered," he said.

"One young cadet was asked by organisers to help out because they couldn't fill the numbers for the Goat Milking contest.

Leading Cadet Aiden Carling, 602 Squadron, AAFC, shows skill beyond the aviation field.



One observer said, "He did not walk away, he stood up in front of a welcoming crowd, and did himself and fellow Cadets proud".

In case Leading Cadet Aiden Carling's milking wasn't enough, the Cadets' recruiting effort was also supported by an ASK-21 Mi two-seater glider display by No 600 (Aviation Training) Squadron from RAAF Edinburgh.



## Ghost of Parafield Past

Story and photos by  
Pilot Officer (AAFC) Paul Rosenzweig

Australian Air Force Cadets from Adelaide's northern squadrons were recently given the opportunity to fly a Trial Instructional Flight – what the AAFC calls a Pilot Experience Flight.

A total of 30 future pilots took this free opportunity to fly a Tobago TB10 from Parafield Airport, and were awarded certificates by the service provider, Flight Training Adelaide.

However, for one of those cadets, it was an special extra opportunity to honour her great-grandfather, just as she had done three weeks earlier during the Anzac Eve Youth Vigil in Gawler, South Australia, and also as a member of the Catafalque Party for the Gawler Anzac Day Dawn Service.

Cadet Corporal Courtney Semmler's maternal great-grandfather Laurence Vivian Wotzko (1911-1942) also flew out of Parafield Airfield and received his clearances and instructions from the very same control tower that his great-granddaughter received her clearance to take off 75 years later.

*Cadet Corporal Courtney Semmler's great-grandfather Laurence Vivian Wotzko (circled).*



*Cadet Corporal Anthony Sanchez from No 604 Squadron AAFC undertakes a PEX flight in a Tobago TB10 with pilot Derek Alvarez from Flight Training Adelaide.*

Laurence Wotzko was an Aircraftman (Flight Rigger) with No 2 Squadron RAAF on the outbreak of World War 2, but re-mustered as an Airman Pilot and was ultimately commissioned.

Most notably, Flying Officer Wotzko was a Flying Instructor at No 1 Elementary Flying Training School (1EFTS) at Parafield Airfield between 1 December 1940 and 16 May 1942 – where his great-granddaughter Courtney took her first flight.

Parafield control tower was built in 1940 and is a fine example of art deco architecture from the era.

This same control tower, now run by Airservices Australia, still provides air traffic control functions for Parafield Airport (YPPF) today.

From this same tower 75 years later, Laurie Wotzko's great-granddaughter, a Cadet Corporal in the Australian Air Force Cadets and a Gold



*Cadet Corporal Courtney Semmler stands before the control tower her great-grandfather received instructions from 75 years earlier, before receiving her own clearances from the same tower, before taking off for her first flight.*

Award participant with The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, received her clearance to depart on her first ever Pilot Experience Flight.

Quite appropriately, it was Mother's Day – and she flew in tribute to both her great-grandfather and also her Nanna, Laurie Wotzko's only daughter, who had been born on 3 April 1942 and was aged just 4 months when her father died in a flying accident.

From 1EFTS, Laurie Wotzko briefly served at Tamworth, and then returned to South Australia on 8 June 1942 as a Flying Instructor with No 6 Service Flying Training School at Mallala.

Tragically, he and seven other airmen died in a training accident south-east of Murray Bridge on 4 August 1942 when two Avro Anson aircrew trainers collided during a daytime training exercise and crashed into the Murray River near Monteith.

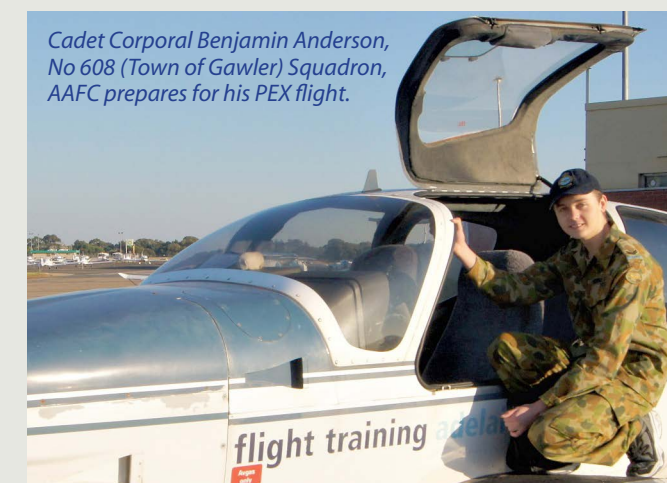
The deaths were classed as operational, and so the names of the eight men are honoured in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial under the title 'Air Training Schools' (panels 115, 116 and 117).

Flying Officer Wotzko's name is also included on the Sydney Memorial and on the Adelaide WWII Roll of Honour beside the South Australian National War Memorial on North Terrace.

Flying Officer Wotzko's war service in Australia was recognised by the award of the War Medal 1939-1945 and Australia Service Medal 1939-1945.

His widow, Marvis Wotzko received the silver Mothers' and Widows' Badge from the Commonwealth Government, with a bronze star to denote the death of her husband whilst on service.

His only daughter – Courtney's Nanna – is today very proud of the newest aviator in the family.



*Cadet Corporal Benjamin Anderson, No 608 (Town of Gawler) Squadron, AAFC prepares for his PEX flight.*



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