

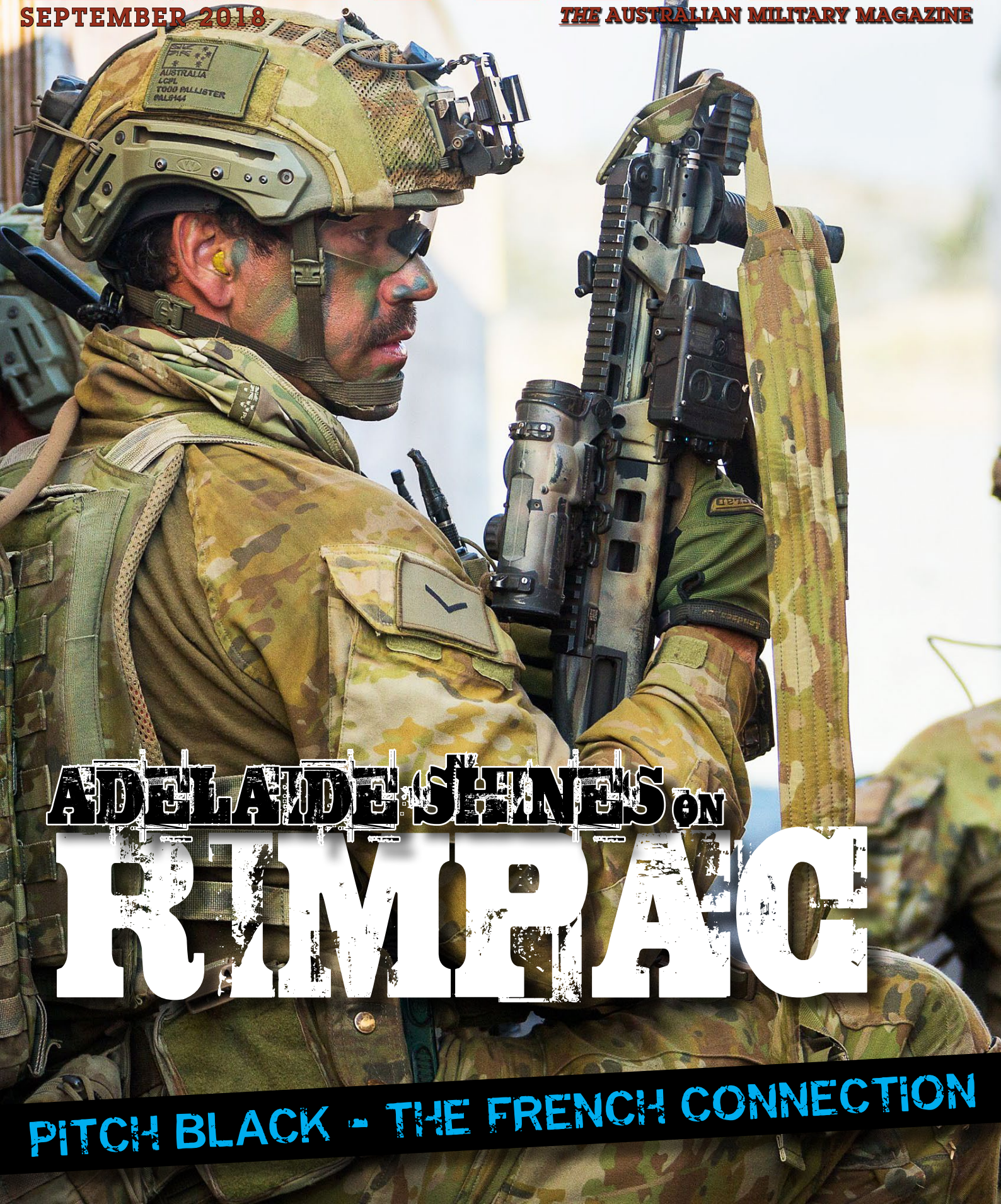
ISSUE 59

# CONTACT

AIR LAND & SEA

SEPTEMBER 2018

THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE



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## CONTENTS

ISSUE 59 – SEPTEMBER 2018



- 10** The Big Picture  
Starry starry night
- 12** Heads Up
- 18** RAF 100  
Worth shouting about
- 24** Australian Warrior Expo
- 26** Pitch Black  
The French Connection
- 40** Daks over Normandy  
D-Day paratroops
- 42** 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Regt  
Big bang theory
- 48** RIMPAC  
Adelaide shines
- 60** DoG Cup  
Infantry's best
- 66** MRTT milestone
- 70** CONTACT Patron Army
- 72** Just Soldiers  
Heroism knows no age
- 76** Q Store
- 82** Cadet Corner

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Issue 59 – September 2018

# CONTACT

AIR, LAND & SEA



RIMPAC

Photo by Corporal Kyle Genner

Story page 48

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### I have a new plan – don't tell my wife!!!!

(actually, if you're reading this, she has already proof-read this page, so she knows – and still let me get on with it)(on the other hand, if she reads this and doesn't like it, you'll never know about it (except through some timewarp shennannigans or something)).

Anyway, here's the thing. I really, really, really want to start printing CONTACT magazine again. I think the time is right. I think the audience is big enough and engaged enough to support it and make it work.

And, I would really like to start printing again as early as issue number 61 on 1 March next year (exactly five years after we stopped printing).

But here's the catch – I cannot afford to gamble on this – I can only do this if the audience support is already behind me. And I don't mean emails or messages of support. I mean cold hard cash. I need 'subscribers' to sign up.

Let me back up a bit. [Patreon](https://www.patreon.com) is a go-fund-me-type platform for creators, where I launched the **CONTACT Patron Army** about nine months ago, promising to start printing CONTACT magazine again if I reached my ultimate goal of a basic wage for me plus printing costs.

However, at current 'recruitment levels' and projections, we'll be lucky to get to that point somewhere around issue number 116 in 2032!

One of the key problems with **CONTACT Patron Army** recruiting up to now was, I felt very awkward about promoting it – because it was designed in the first instance to secure that basic wage for me.

So I had an epiphany this month along the lines – why don't I drop the basic-wage-first BS and just aim for printing costs. That way the target would be much smaller – AND, I won't feel so awkward about promoting the shit out of this new idea.

So, the new target is \$4000/month – less than half what it was initially. That's enough to cover printing etc. And, if it works, potential profit from extra shop sales will pay me the wage I need – just like a real business!

I have also slightly re-adjusted some of the 'ranks' in the **CONTACT Patron Army** – e.g. 'private' is now US\$2.50 per month – and all CONTACT Patrons will be considered subscribers, receiving a 'free' copy of the magazine, in print, delivered by mail four times per year.

This is the essence of my new plan. *I WILL DO IT* when Patreon pledges reach \$4000/month. And, if that happens before 10 January (decision deadline, because I need four weeks extra production time for a printed magazine), then I WILL PRINT issue 61 for distribution on 1 March next year.

If it takes longer to reach this new half-sized target, then getting back to printing will take longer too – and so be it.

So, if you really, truly want to see issue 61 printed on paper as much as I do and you are not already a member of the **CONTACT Patron Army**, then please show your support by signing up as a patron/subscriber before 10 January and help me to make this happen.

It will cost you as little as US\$2.50/month (unless you volunteer for a higher rank, with extra benefits). That's just \$3.40 Aussie at recent exchange rates, which could see Australia's best boots-on-the-ground military magazine printed and delivered into your sweaty little palms as early as 1 March next year!!!!

**MY MISSION IS TO GET  
CONTACT MAGAZINE BACK INTO PRINT**

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to help me reach that target by 10 January, so that the next printed issue of CONTACT will be 1 March next year.

Sincerely,

Brian Hartigan, Managing Editor

[P.S. if we don't reach target by 10 January, you can cancel your pledge and all you will have lost is less than \$4/month between now and then (sorry, no refunds – just too complicated). Or stick with it and help us get this dream over the line, in June, or September, or whatever it takes. When we hit \$4000/month, I hit the PRINT button]



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# NIGHT FIRE

Australian and New Zealand soldiers and United States Marine Corps marines watch fall of shot as ordnance is fired at Pohakuloa Training Area, Hawaii, during Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2018. See more great photos and extensive report, starting on page 48.







## 2RAR ADD HELOCASTING TO SKILL SETS

Australia took a leap forward in amphibious capability recently as 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Amphibious), Royal Australian Regiment soldiers released small boats into the ocean from a moving US Marine Corps CH-53 helicopter during Exercise Rim of the Pacific – RIMPAC – off the coast of Oahu, Hawaii.

It was an accomplishment for the Australian soldiers as they proved themselves capable of helocasting – a water insertion method for reconnaissance and surveillance missions.

CO 2RAR (Amphib) Lieutenant Colonel Doug Pashley said his unit had been on a journey to deliver a world-class pre-landing force since the start of the year and had come a long way in just six months.

"On this exercise we have demonstrated an amphibious capability that did not exist in the conventional army until today," he said.

As part of the Force Integration Training (FIT) phase of RIMPAC, Aussie soldiers spent two days honing their skills alongside US Marines.

Training involved loading fully inflated FC470 Zodiacs into the heavy-lift helicopter, pushing the boats out the back and leaping into the water after them, from a height of 5 to 10 feet and an airspeed of 8 to 10 knots.

Drop-zone master, US Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant Dante Collins was impressed by 2RAR's effort.

"Out of six runs, every single one of them got progressively better – they've been knocking it out of the park," Gunnery Sergeant Collins said.

While 2RAR (Amphib) took every opportunity to learn from the experienced Marines, Gunnery Sergeant Collins said the learning experience had definitely been a two-way exchange.



## WARRAMUNGA'S RECORD-BREAKING MIDDLE EAST MISSION

HMAS Warramunga returned home to a hero's welcome from family and friends in July after spending almost nine months deployed to the Middle East.

The ship sailed with a company of 190 in last October and spent Christmas at sea patrolling the waters of the Middle East.

She maintained a high tempo during the deployment, travelling 43,995.9 nautical miles, conducted 31 flag verification boardings, operated with 27 international ships, conducted 19 escort taskings and 15 replenishments at sea, and made 12 port visits.

Her Seahawk MH-60R 'Romeo' helicopter flew 182 sorties and spent almost 520 hours in the air.

The ship also seized a record-breaking \$2.17 billion\* worth of illegal narcotics.

Minister for Defence Marise Payne joined Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Mike Noonan, on the wharf to congratulate the crew on their record-breaking deployment.

"Warramunga made a significant impact on terrorist and criminal organisations by denying them approximately \$2.17 billion\* in funding from illegal narcotics," she said.

"The Anzac-class frigate seized a total of 31.8 tonnes of hashish and 2 tonnes of heroin from 16 smuggling vessels while assigned to Operation Manitou.

"By removing these illicit narcotics from circulation, Warramunga has made an important contribution to global security.

"I congratulate the professional men and women in Warramunga who have worked so hard to achieve this unprecedented outcome.

"Your commitment and focus has made a substantial and lasting difference."

This was Warramunga's third deployment to the Middle East Region and the 66<sup>th</sup> rotation of a Royal Australian Navy fleet unit to the region since 1990.

\* The value of the drugs seized by HMAS Warramunga is based on the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Illicit Drug Data Report 2015–16 figures for cannabis resin (hashish) at AUD\$50,000 per kilogram (p215) and heroin at AUD\$300,000 per kilogram (p216).

## BOXER BUY SIGNED

The contract to deliver 211 Boxer CRV armoured combat reconnaissance vehicles to the Australian Army was formally signed on Friday 17 August.

Total acquisition cost of the vehicles is \$5.2 billion.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said Boxer CRV would ensure Australian soldiers had the best possible chance of completing their missions successfully and returning home safe to their families.

Rheinmetall Boxer will replace the current fleet of ASLAVs (Australian Light Armoured Vehicle), which are now more than 20 years old.

Fitted with modern sensors and communications equipment, Boxer's role is to locate, monitor and engage with enemy forces and provide security to our forces.

The vehicles will fill seven different roles on the battlefield including reconnaissance, command and control, joint fires, surveillance, ambulance, battlefield repair and recovery.

Mr Turnbull said Australian-industry content of the project was raised significantly through the tender process



to more than 50 per cent, and more than 75 per cent for sustainment of the vehicles.

"Boxer will be built by Australian workers, using Australian steel, creating up to 1450 high-tech, highly skilled jobs across Australia," Mr Turnbull said.

"This nation-building project highlights the benefits to our services, Australian industry and workers stemming from the Turnbull Government's commitment to developing and supporting Australia's

defence industry while investing in our military capability.

"The workforce that will deliver Boxer will be used to support sustainment, progressive development and upgrades as well as potential export opportunities.

"With the contract now signed, the largest acquisition project in the history of the Australian Army can progress with the first vehicles expected to be available for training in 2020."

## 6RAR TOP DOG

The winner of the 2018 Duke of Gloucester Cup is the section from 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment.

Taking on a series of stands including urban combat, vehicle checkpoints, attacks and withdrawals, and an obstacle course, the competition demonstrated the dedication, effort, teamwork and leadership within the Infantry Corps.

Seven sections from the Royal Australian Regiment competed.

## MRTT MILESTONE

RAAF's KC-30A Multi Role Tanker Transport recently delivered its 100,000,000th – yes, that's 100millionth – pound of fuel during air-to-air refuel missions on Operation Okra in the Middle East.

The epic milestone was reached on 6 August 2018, during a routine air-to-air refuelling mission.

Chief of Joint Operations Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld said the

reliability and large air-to-air refuelling capability of the KC-30A has added tangible value to the Australian and coalition forces.

## SECOND AWD DELIVERED

Navy's second Air Warfare Destroyer, NUSHIP Brisbane, has officially been handed over to Defence on 27 July.

Director General Naval Construction Branch Commodore Steve Tiffen said the complexity of this project was reflected in the sophistication of the Air Warfare Destroyers, which were providing a step-change in capability for the Australian Defence Force.

"As the most lethal warships Australia has ever possessed, all three destroyers feature an advanced anti-submarine warfare capability, state-of-the-art radar technology and an air defence system capable of engaging enemy aircraft and missiles at an extended range," he said.

## 1000 NEW TRUCKS

The Australian Defence Force's land capabilities will be further enhanced with the purchase of 1044 additional new-generation Rheinmetall MAN medium and heavy trucks, 872 modules and 812 trailers – at a cost of \$1.4 billion.

This latest order is in addition to the first batch of 2700 trucks, 3800 modules and 1700 trailers under Project LAND 121 Phase 3B that began rolling out in April 2016.

## THAI CAVE RESCUE MEDALS

Chief Petty Officer Troy Eather was one of nine Australians recognised for their involvement in the Thai cave rescue by Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove.

The bravery medals and Order of Australia awards for nine Australians involved in the cave rescue were officially gazetted on 24 July.



## INVICTUS \$2 COIN

An image of a wheelchair competitor adorns Australia's newest circulating coin, unveiled today by the Royal Australian Mint ahead of Invictus Games Sydney 2018.

Produced in partnership with Invictus Games Sydney 2018, the new \$2 coin will celebrate the unconquered spirit of wounded, injured and ill service personnel and veterans across Australia.

The Invictus Games will showcase the healing power of sport as 500 competitors from 18 nations contest 11 sports across eight days from 20 to 27 October.



## HEADS UP



### P-8A SIMS

Two P-8A Poseidon pilot simulators and other training systems have been formally handed over to the Royal Australian Air Force at RAAF Edinburgh.

Minister for Defence Marise Payne said the advanced P-8A trainers would better prepare RAAF pilots and crews for their demanding roles.

"This \$470 million facility marks the beginning of a transformation of our training that will support Air Force's ability to meet emerging threats and future challenges," Minister Payne said.

RAAF P-8A Poseidon armament-systems students prepare to load a simulated weapon onto a Poseidon fuselage simulator at RAAF Base Edinburgh, South Australia. Photo by Corporal Craig Barrett.

"This facility will deliver around 39 separate training courses, which will minimise training demands on the P-8A Poseidon aircraft, reducing aircraft fatigue, increasing safety and improving availability for higher priority tasking.

"The facility is part of a \$5.2 billion investment in our new P-8A Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft.

"These cutting-edge aircraft conduct a range of tasks including anti-submarine warfare; maritime and overland intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; electronic support; as well as supporting search and rescue missions.

Minister for Defence Industry Christopher Pyne said the simulator project was part of a broader intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance hub being developed at RAAF Base Edinburgh.

MQ-4C Triton. Courtesy Northrop Grumman.



## AUSTRALIA COMMITS TO TRITON

Australia has announced a \$1.4 billion spend on acquiring "the first of six MQ-4C Triton remotely piloted aircraft" through a cooperative program with the United States Navy.

Triton will complement the surveillance role of the P-8A Poseidon aircraft through sustained operations at long ranges as well as being able to undertake a range of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance tasks.

This acquisition is Project AIR 7000 Phase 1B.

Minister for Defence Marise Payne said that as part of this investment, Australia would also enter into a \$200 million cooperative program with the United States Navy for the development, production and sustainment of the MQ-4C Triton.

"This cooperative program will strengthen our ability to develop advanced capability and conduct joint military operations," Minister Payne said.

"As part of the initial \$1.4 billion investment in the Triton system, the government will invest \$364 million on new facilities at RAAF Base Edinburgh and RAAF Base Tindal, as well as the necessary ground-control systems, support and training required to implement a project of this nature."

John Hunter – first fleet Captain and second Governor of NSW; and *Tasman* (state and sea named for explorer Abel Tasman – first known European explorer to reach Tasmania, New Zealand and Fiji).

Hunter-class will conduct a variety of missions, and have sufficient range and endurance to operate effectively throughout our region and will be equipped with a range of offensive and self-protection systems and incorporate the Australian-developed CEA Phased-Array Radar.

Australia has chosen BAE Systems Hunter-class frigate as the winning contender in Project SEA 5000 Phase 1 – 'Future Frigate'.

The project, estimated at more than \$35 billion, will replace Australia's existing fleet of eight Anzac-class frigates with nine anti-submarine-warfare frigates.

The first batch of three will be named HMA Ships *Flinders* (II) (SA region named for explorer Captain Matthew Flinders – first circumnavigation of Australia and identified it as a continent); *Hunter* (NSW region named for Vice-Admiral

NEW IRAN FRIGATE



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Four iconic Australian machine guns recreated in intricate detail. The collection features the Lewis Light Machine Gun, the Bren Light Machine Gun, the M60 GPMG and the F89 Minimi.

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## BIG PICTURE 2



*A Royal Thai Army jungle-survival expert demonstrates the bite of a non-venomous snake to members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, during Exercise Chapel Gold 2018 in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand.*

*Exercise Chapel Gold is an annual activity designed to build military relationships between the Australian Army and the Royal Thai Army.*

*Chapel Gold 2018 was held between 9 and 20 July 2018.*

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# RAF 100

On 1 April 2018, the Royal Air Force launched 'RAF100' – a national program to mark its 100th year – featuring events, activities and other initiatives running nationwide from April to the end of September 2018. Reflecting on its proud record of serving the UK, events and activities were designed to commemorate the service and sacrifice of those who have gone before; thank RAF servicemen and women for their dedication; and, inspire the next generation to continue to help protect the nation for the next 100 years and beyond.



One hundred days after the UK's Royal Air Force's official 100th birthday on 1 April, the RAF marked 100 years of operations with a series of spectacular events in London.

More than 1000 RAF servicemen and women performed a ceremonial parade, along with almost 300 personnel lining the route representing the diverse roles played within the RAF through the generations.

There was also a spectacular flypast of 100 aircraft over Buckingham Palace at 1pm, representing the RAF's history, its continued operational role in securing the UK's skies, and the future of air power.

The parade was commanded by Group Captain Anne-Marie Houghton, a Sentry navigator from Headquarters Air Command.

Group Captain Houghton has the distinction of being the first female navigator in the Royal Air Force after she graduated from training in 1991.

As part of this grand event, 55 Squadron Standards were paraded, including the standard of 617 Squadron, famous for its role in the 'Dambusters' raids – and re-formed in 2018 to fly the UK's new F-35B Lightning II fighter jets.

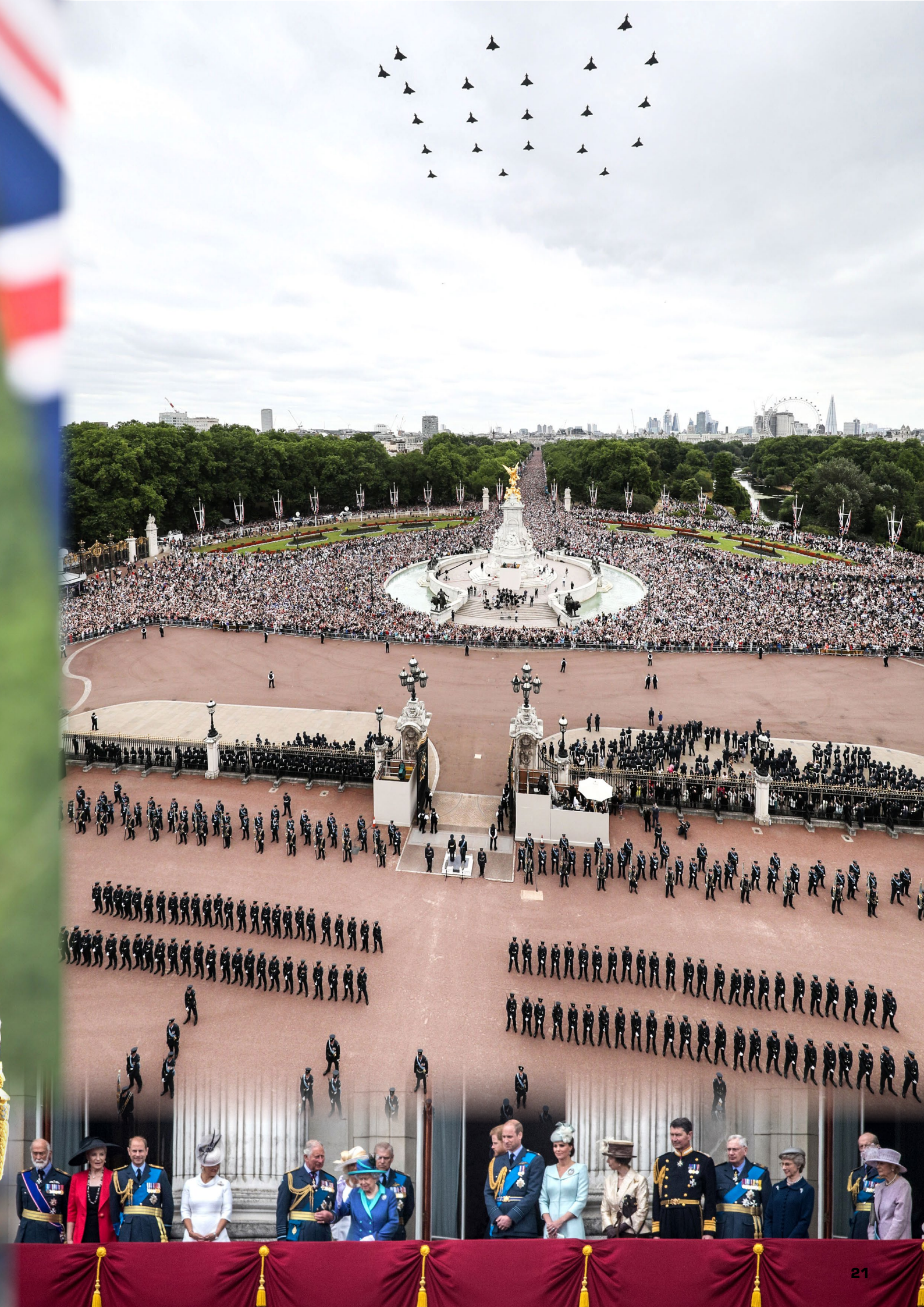
Her Majesty the Queen also presented a new Queen's Colour to the Royal Air Force at a consecration ceremony. The original Colour was presented in 1951.

The flypast consisted of 100 aircraft with nearly 200 aircrew from 25 different RAF squadrons, operating to and from 14 military stations and two civilian airfields.

The day's spectacular events were only made possible thanks to the hard work of aircrew, support teams and air traffic controllers.



# RAF 100





# RAF 100

**100 aircraft, consisting of the following aircraft types, flew over the Palace at 30-second intervals:**

1. Atlas A400M – RAF's new strategic air transport aircraft
2. BAe 146 – RAF's short-range personnel transport and logistical support aircraft
3. C-17 – Britain's global strategic air transport aircraft
4. Chinook – twin-rotor heavy lift helicopter
5. Dakota – WWII transporter, which helped to move nearly 9000 tons of essentials every day into Berlin after the war
6. E-3D Sentry – battle-proven airborne early warning and command and control platform
7. Hawk T1 – RAF's advanced fast-jet pilot training aircraft
8. Hawk T2 – latest version of the RAF's long-serving Hawk fast-jet trainer
9. Hercules – workhorse of Britain's tactical military air transport for more than 50 years
10. Hurricane – battle-hardened workhorse of WWII Fighter Command
11. Juno – new training helicopter that replaced Squirrel
12. Jupiter – new advanced training helicopter that replaced Griffin
13. Lancaster – iconic Bomber Command veteran – one of only two airworthy left in the world
14. Lightning – RAF's next generation fast jet
15. Prefect – the new elementary flying trainer that replaced Tutor
16. Puma – RAF's advanced medium-sized, medium-lift transport helicopter
17. Red Arrows – the RAF's elite aerobatic team
18. Rivet Joint – aerial electronic signals intelligence gathering aircraft
19. Sentinel – battlefield surveillance and intelligence gathering aircraft
20. Shadow – intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance aircraft
21. Spitfire – iconic Battle of Britain fighter
22. Tornado GR4 – RAF's longest-serving strike and reconnaissance fast jet
23. Tucano – RAF's long-serving basic fast-jet training aircraft
24. Typhoon – backbone of Britain's air attack and quick reaction capabilities
25. Voyager – air-to-air refuelling and passenger transport aircraft

CONTACT Air Land & Sea – Issue 59 – September 2018





# AWE2018

## AUSTRALIAN WARRIOR EXPO

Where: **Brisbane Showgrounds**  
When: **15 - 17 November 2018**

**CONTACT** Air Land & Sea  
OFFICIAL AWE MEDIA PARTNER

**When you have a great idea and get stuck into bringing it together, a lot of evolving and development, mixing and changing happens – and usually for the better.**

CONTACT, for example, started out as a protest against Army HQ for shutting down the very popular *ARMY Magazine* – but today is bigger, better, more popular, longer lived and trying to get back into print real soon (see editorial on page 7).

Australian Warrior Expo is another good example – an idea to bring a little bit of Las Vegas to BrisVegas! – channeling the essence, if not quite the scale of America's world-famous Shot Show.

When we (CONTACT is official Media Partner) set out on this journey, we said AWE2018 would not be just another conference – no death by PowerPoint – no boring 'lectures'. That's still true in the main, but there will now be some 'speaker opportunities' and other traditional things – because demand was there.

We also said the trade booths would be *all* about bringing buyers and sellers of the military, emergency-services and security-industry together to buy, sell and talk about gear. While that too is still true, a recent expansion of floor-space has opened other opportunities too – such as a dedicated 'fitness zone'.

Marketing and Event Manager for Australian Warrior Expo Ash North says the passion and enthusiasm she encounters almost daily when talking potential exhibitors has really encouraged and spawned an evolution in the AWE2018 concept.

"AWE2018 really has evolved from where we were eight or nine months ago," Ash says.

"What started as an incredible opportunity to bring the best tactical brands in the market under one roof for three days has become so much more.

"Yes we have incredible gear from top brands, but we also have services, equipment, ATVs, gyms and fitness – and a range of presentations on subjects that genuinely matter to these peoples' lives.

"It has also evolved from an event 'for operators' to now also include anyone looking to join the military or police or emergency services, plus those who currently serve – plus it is an event for those who are looking towards the end of their service careers and thinking 'what next'."

Several weeks ago on the CONTACT web site, we even hinted there was space for something that would have shooting enthusiasts licking drool off their chins. We believe that's still coming, but permission from big brother is taking a little longer than anticipated.

The fact is, Australian Warrior Expo is getting bigger than Ben Hur – and while that may be an exaggeration or even a cliché, at least it's a good solid 'warrior' cliché.

Initially, just one (dauntingly large) section of exhibition space at the Brisbane Showgrounds was reserved – setting Ash North what looked like a daunting task. But, less than a year later and with less than three months until doors open, Ash was forced to bite the bullet (another good warrior cliché) and expand the floor space to cope with demand.

Two other aspects of the Australian Warrior Expo that I'm particularly looking forward to are a 'The AWE Party' – where we all hope to raise oodles of money for our Charity Partners, [Blue Hope](#) and [Mates4Mates](#) – and a very special VIP night.

Ash North says everyone behind Australian Warrior Expo is passionate about using the platform they're building, not just as a business opportunity, but also as a medium to support and serve the men and women who serve their country – and having the two Charity Partners on board feels very very 'right'.

"Building this platform, this forum, gives us a unique opportunity to serve and support our service men and women," Ash says.

"And, by partnering with and supporting [Blue Hope](#) and [Mates4Mates](#) – passionate people who really know what they are doing – we are adding another important facet to what we want to achieve."

CONTACT is very pleased to report that the passion and genuine-ness we have heard in numerous phone calls thus far, has convinced us that AWE's heart is most definitely in the right place.

Australian Warrior Expo will be held at the impressive and recently modernised Brisbane Showgrounds, almost in the centre of BrisVegas, on 15, 16 and 17 November, and everyone is welcome to attend – if they have a ticket, which most people will buy here... [www.australianwarriorexpo.com.au](http://www.australianwarriorexpo.com.au)

But, CONTACT actually has several tickets to give away – in fact five Gold Tickets (worth every penny of \$49 each) and 10 Standard Tickets (\$29 each).

To win one of these, tell me in 25 words or less – what would be the number one question you'd like to ask me when we meet face-to-face at AWE2018, and why?

Send entries to [editor@militarycontact.com](mailto:editor@militarycontact.com) by 7 September and I'll announce the winners in my newsletter on 9 September, with the best 15 answers winning one ticket each.



# AWE2018

AUSTRALIAN WARRIOR EXPO

Where: Brisbane Showgrounds  
When: 15 - 17 November 2018

Products, Technology, Equipment and Services for Law Enforcement, Military, Emergency Services and Security.

## Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> November

Expo Hours: 10:00am - 5:30pm  
VIP Event: 6:00pm - 8:00pm

## Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November

Expo Hours: 10:00am - 5:30pm  
AWE Party: 6:00pm - 8:00pm

## Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November

Expo Hours: 10:00am - 3:00pm

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# PITCH BLACK

**Exercise Pitch Black is a biennial three-week multi-national large-force-employment exercise conducted from RAAF Base Darwin and RAAF Base Tindal, which this year ran from 27 July to 17 August 2018.**

Defence says activities such as Pitch Black are pivotal to ensuring the Royal Australian Air Force remains ready to respond whenever the Australian government requires. The training and integration of forces that occurs during this exercise directly supports the air force's ability to conduct operations.

Exercise Pitch Black featured a range of realistic simulated threats typical of those found in a modern battle-space and is an opportunity to test and improve force integration, using one of the largest training airspace areas in the world – Bradshaw Field Training Area and Delamere Air Weapons Range.

Up to 4000 personnel and 140 aircraft from around the world participated, including from Europe, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, India, Malaysia, New Zealand and the United States, and included day and night flying.

The Indian Air Force have visited Exercise Pitch Black as part of the International Observer Group since 1998 but this year participated for the first time, bringing four Sukhoi Su-30MKI fighters and one C-130J Hercules.

In a basic fighter-manoeuvre mission planned and executed as a dual-nation effort, Australian and Indian fighter crews put their aircraft to the test in a series of simulated dogfights.

No. 77 Squadron pilot Flight Lieutenant Vincent was among the first in the RAAF to take on the highly manoeuvrable Sukhoi Su-30.

"It's the first time I've ever flown against a Sukhoi and I've got to say it's a pretty impressive aircraft," he said.

"It was an incredibly valuable learning experience and it's certainly a great memory

I'll take away from this exercise."

Testament to the intensity of Exercise Pitch Black was on the opening Monday when more than 60 aircraft from eight nations took off from Darwin Airport in just under 90 minutes.

The first week of mainly familiarisation flying, participating nations conducted a range of missions including dogfighting, air-to-air refuelling, beyond-visual-range engagements, and even high-explosive missions using the Delamere Weapons Range where aircrew had the chance to practice coordinating live-fires with a multinational Combat Controller force on the ground.

And all that was just to prepare aircrew for the 'real thing' in the last two weeks of the exercise, where some missions saw packages of up to 50 and 60 aircraft flying together in the same mission.

Keeping all this mayhem sane and sensible – and safe – were air-battle managers from India, Germany, Canada and Australia, busily working to target, track and direct friendly, as well as 'enemy' aircraft.

The air-battle managers sit together among a wall of screens in shipping-container-sized cabins at RAAF Base Darwin, carefully watch aircraft tracks on monitors, with dozens of aircraft speeding across the area of operations.

They direct dozens of friendly aircraft from multiple nations at the same time.

Teams help the aircrews find, track and target multiple incoming 'enemy' aircraft across the Northern Territory during long and intense hours of simulated combat.

Sergeant Ryan McKee from No. 1 Remote Sensor Unit was one of those people glued to multiple screens.

He said his job was about coordinating to put 'Blue' aircraft in the right place at the right time – looking at where 'Red' are and where they're coming from to ensure we dominate the skies and maintain a safe air picture.



**One of the many pilots flashing about the skies of the Northern Territory during Exercise Pitch Black 2018 was French Rafale pilot 'Pedro'.**

**The following is his story...**





# EXERCISE

# PITCH BLACK

# THE FRENCH CONNECTION

**W**hen I first heard about Exercise Pitch Black, I only noticed that it would take place in Australia.

Having flown in a lot of countries (or at least above them), the opportunity to fly our jets to such a far destination was really exciting.

But it was still only a rumour – nobody wanted to talk too much about that exercise – kind of like it was a secret. The fewer people who knew about this, maybe the fewer fingers might rise when candidates were asked for.

In the beginning of 2018, when we had to plan for the summer holidays, the planning board remained oddly empty. Everyone wanted to appear as 'available' for July and August.

Finally, as per 'the-right-time-right-place' law, I was designated as a member of the trip – and I can remember my happiness.

That said, it was still only a plan at that stage, and everything could change many times in a short period. So, I kept my fingers crossed and waited for the landing gear to go up and locked.

The ferry flight from France to Australia promised to be an adventure in itself. We had to fly three Rafale from France with 24-hour stops in Abu Dhabi and Singapore before reaching Darwin.

We know Abu Dhabi very well thanks to the French missions in the Middle East and we regularly ferry some Rafale there. But the rest of the trip appeared interesting due to the eastward orientation, the range and of course the equator crossing to the Southern Hemisphere.

I flew the first leg inside a French C135 tanker from Istres, near Marseille, southern France, to UAE. There we met with the RAAF KC-30A crew to brief for the next leg.

As a matter of fact, French Air Force is only able to take part in Exercise Pitch Black thanks to a proposal by the RAAF to drag us from UAE to Darwin with a RAAF KC-30A. The shorter range of our C135 and the high operational tempo of the French Air Force in Africa and the Middle East prevent us from organising such a tour just for an exercise.

Thus we prepared for the second leg of the ferry with the Australian crew.

The range covered during this flight was huge – around 3200 miles, with 40 pax and freight – plus fuel for three fighter jets.

Everyone worried about the fuel calculations, the headwind we would have during the flight and the temperature upon take off, which would affect the KC-30A's max take-off weight and performances.

WORDS AND PHOTOS  
BY PEDRO



we were avoiding and flying near a big storm which often generates turbulence

At first, no extra fuel was available, and a max of 30 knots headwind was decided. But, above all, the temperature for takeoff had to be less than 30°C, otherwise we would have to cancel the flight.

Then the problem was to make sure everyone was onboard on time for a very early departure before the temperature rose too high – and that could be a challenge when you have to pass through UAE customs.

But finally, we took off right on time and joined the tanker after its take off, during his turn towards the south-east.

A new flight is often like that – a good preparation during which some choices are made – phases of

plan a bit to lighten the KC-30A to help him reduce his own fuel burn.

When we arrived above the east coast of India, we moved in for our third mid-air refueling. The diversion airfield was just below us, so we were not worried about the options in case of issues.

The number three and I refueled without encountering any problems. But when my number two pulled up behind the hose, we flew into turbulence, which made the wingtip of the KC-30A flex up and down. The problem with the wingtip drogue is that when the wing moves like that, the hose starts to oscillate and the contact is difficult to establish. So my number two had some difficulties

learning the flight parameters and options – stress at the beginning – but then, once you are airborne, everything is calming down and you do what you are trained for.

The flight lasts for seven-and-a-half hours. During this time we monitored fuel consumption, fuel burnt and fuel available. We also compared the headwind with the one forecast by the weather office. It appeared that we would have barely enough fuel to reach Singapore, and we started to request of the RAAF KC-30A if he would be able to give us extra fuel. The answer was yes, but not much. Even then, we had to adapt our tanking

trying to put his probe inside the drogue. I can't remember how many tries he had but every one made us worry about the options.

There is nothing you can do when you are not inside the same aircraft, and it is frustrating to see that situation from your own cockpit as the time passes. So I did the only thing I really could to help him – I called him over the radio, giving him some advice like, "Don't look at the drogue too early – maintain your staging until the last moment".

Finally, he managed to connect and take the fuel. We were all relieved. We talked to the tanker crew later, and they told us that they were as nervous as

us. Yes, definitely a team effort.

The last tanking was over Indonesia. It was far more smooth and calm, and this time I decided to be the last to refuel, so I could take some pictures – and also because we were avoiding and flying near a big storm, which often generates turbulence.

Finally we separated from the tanker and landed in Singapore. We had to wait a lot of time on the taxiway to let Singapore airport find us our stand, but eventually we shut down the engines

a little bit less than nine hours after we started them.

On the apron, we saw the arrival of our guardian angel – a RAAF C130J Hercules that was tasked as a search-and-rescue asset in case we had to bail out during the ferry. I really want to thank those guys working in the shadow for us. It was so comforting to hear them on the radio when we flew above the Bay of Bengal.

They had to fix some engine issue on arrival in





Singapore, which prevented them from sharing a beer with us downtown. But we met up with the KC-30 crew in a beautiful place in Singapore for food and 'refreshments' – and loud conversations, as military pilots do.

They were proud about this mission. They told us it was a record for them to drag three fighters on such a long distance. And when we discussed the fuel remaining in their aircraft and in our fighters upon arrival, it appears that we did not have a big margin! Anyway, the late hour made this look more funny than scary.

The last flight, from Singapore to Darwin lasted 'only' four-and-a-half hours. It was during this flight that we crossed the equator. Surely not a big event for a transport pilot, but the opportunity to cross this mythic line in your own fighter jet – especially when you live

around 45° of latitude – is rare enough to be noticed.

We wanted to do something special while crossing this invisible line – so guess what fighter pilots do?

Roll. So we rolled and rolled again. I can't remember how many rolls we did, but looking at those three Rafale rolling (far enough for flight safety) around the KC-30 made me think of dolphins playing and jumping in the wake of a big boat.

We landed at Darwin airport in poor visibility – poor enough to prevent us doing the tactical pitch we had briefed. I could feel the disappointment of the leader on the radio while splitting the formation to set up the three aircraft for a 10 nautical miles straight-in approach.

The exercise started with a week of familiarisation flights. Mainly dogfighting (called BFM or basics fighting manoeuvres), low-level navigation and

close air support. Some night flights were also scheduled.

We had a really good time doing BFMs. The Rafale, with its single small fuel tank under the belly, is highly manoeuvrable. I will not give here any statistics or results, but the Rafale is a killer in a dogfight. That's really one of its advantages, and the one that makes this aircraft so pleasant to fly. Thrust is good – but when you get used to it, you always want more – like a kid in a supercar.

All in all, we were happy that we did not fly our machines down so far without being able to show the high performance of the Rafale.

The low-level navigation was also quite fun, because we could descend down to 150 feet. The Australian bush is almost empty in the exercise area so we were pretty sure that we

were disturbing nobody, except the crocs and the kangaroos.

The night flights gave us a nice sight of the starry sky. The Milky Way is so contrasted, thanks to the lack of artificial light. We spotted the Southern Cross, symbol of the Australian flag. The show with and without night-vision goggles was worth the late landing.

We were eager to start the live exercise with all the other participants. BFMs were great, but the promise of missions with so many players as Blue and Red Air was in all our minds.

The Exercise Pitch Black area is approximately 150 by 130 nautical miles – plenty of space to perform offensive counter air flows.

The missions are prepared the day before the flight on a day- or night-shift basis. Preparation





This photo by Corporal David Gibbs

phases are pretty long and sometimes tedious, but this is the only way to have so many different nations working together to produce a solid plan.

Cultural differences between the participants disappear when we all work together on a common goal. The job is the same for every single one of us. We are all fighter pilots and we want to succeed in the mission, with good safety management – especially with so many assets in the area. Sometimes, the deconfliction plan between all the fighters is longer than the tactics brainstorm!

From our arrival in Australia – well actually, from our very first meeting with the KC-30A crew – the Aussies always showed a warm and friendly welcome. They were always keen on helping us. That is a big part that makes this exercise and our general feeling so good.

I hope that we will have the opportunity to welcome them in France in our turn.

Some words about the missions of the exercise now.

The Apron first. Darwin is not an airbase with permanent fighters based on it. So, seeing so many F-18s, F-16s, F-15s, Gripens, Sukhoi 30s and Rafale all together was very exciting. Add to those aircraft the impressive MV-22s, the indispensable tankers and the airlifts, you will have an idea of the business of the airport during the exercise.

Air traffic controllers did a great job managing this hive – even if sometimes we'd appreciate a little less 'Aussie' in spoken aeronautical English. Not a big issue, We request "say again" and they repeat as needed. But, it was very nice and then we felt such pride when we heard all the pilots coming up on the radio requesting for start up.

Then the plan materialised into a queue of roaring metal moving slowly on the taxiways.

While taxiing, I can see on one side the apron filled with some of the most fantastic man-made machines, and on the other side, the launch of the fighters ahead of me in the queue, pushed away by a 5-metre flame. All this technology will soon meet up in the Australian sky for an hour-and-a-half of high intensity fight.

Then it's my turn to set the afterburner. You never get tired of this powerful feeling.

Upon gear retraction as the ground is receding, to finally appear as a colorful carpet, I concentrate on the trajectory, to avoid making a mess in the Darwin airspace. The next step is the join up with the tanker. This fuel will give us the autonomy required for the mission. The more fuel you have,

the better your playtime – and so the chances to reach your objectives. But not only the mission objectives, the fuel is also a guarantee for us to be able to set the reheat or afterburner when needed. This increase of thrust gives energy for high G sustained turns, to maintain a high speed and thus maximise the range of our missiles.

The plan is now rolling out on my radar screen and on the radio. I can see sometimes a fighter crossing above or below.

The radio can become a real mess. Radio is a part of the mission that requires discipline. Misunderstanding what happens on the radio can isolate you and your wingmen from the rest of the fight.

During the fight, time means nothing. Time is now divided into events, code words and fuel





## EXERCISE PITCH BLACK

checks. Time is no more a continuous sand flow in an hourglass. It is a succession of planned steps that gives the mission its spine. It is as important for deconfliction as for fuel and weapons management. Between two events, time can really shrink.

Those same few minutes can also seem an eternity when you have to quit the fight and your fellow pilots for mid-air refuel.

After one hour, I finally joined up the formation for RTB (return to base). It's difficult to be sure that the task is achieved. At least, if my threat reactions were good, I managed to avoid the enemy missiles.

We will learn all that comfortably seated in room 66 of RAAF Base Darwin, when the whole mission will be replayed two hours after our landing.

Two hours is the time necessary to undress, and to gather all the data from the fight, then send it to Excon (exercise headquarters). Thus, we will compare what we understood during the mission with the global and relentless reality!

We will also use this debrief to learn and learn again from our mistakes and those of the other crews.

There is always a point in a mission to be dissatisfied, and this is one of the most interesting aspects of this job. Whatever your age, your nationality or your aircraft, you never stop learning and moving forward, improving your skills and the way you manage those fantastic and powerful weapon systems.

I will leave Australia for France with the feeling of one of the most interesting aeronautic, human and cultural adventures of my career.

I am happy to share this story because I know I am a lucky man to do this job. I have never forgotten the boy I was before joining the Air Force – Pedro.

Armée de l'Air Française (French Air Force) Detachment Commander Colonel Arnaud Brunetta said that although it was a long journey for his team to come to Australia, they were excited to have the opportunity to train in a new environment with so many different nationalities.

"Pitch Black gives our personnel the opportunity to participate in work exchanges with the ADF which is important for professional and personal growth," Colonel Brunetta said.

"We are also proud of our aircraft.

"The Rafale's have travelled a long distance with more than 20 hours of flying to arrive in Australia – with no technical issues."



# A2 Leather Flight Jackets



These functional and stylish jackets, based on the United States WW2 A2 jacket, are made from quality soft goatskin leather. Superior metal fittings and heavy duty stitching ensure long wear while the elastic knit waistband and cuffs guarantee comfort. Our flight jackets are available with or without hook-and-loop panels for affixing patches and have been inspected by RAAF and **approved for uniform wear by Air Force personnel. \$249.75 each**

### Features

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- Metal hook closure at neck.
- Heavy duty metal zipper.
- Double stitched epaulettes.
- 2 front pockets.
- **2 inner pockets, one open, one zippered.**
- Inner pen pocket.

### Size Chart (all dimensions in CM)

Size	XXXS	XXS	XS	S	M	L	XL	2XL
Chest	102	106	110	114	116	120	126	132
Back Length	65	67	69	71	73	75	77	79
Back Width	42	44	46	48	50	52	54	56
Sleeve Length	61	63	65	67	69	71	73	75
Width of Bottom	96	100	104	108	112	116	120	124

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# DAKS OVER NORMANDY



**T**wo years ago, a small team of friends in Europe began preparing for a World War II commemoration with no equal – attempting to bring together up to 40 ‘unsung heroes’ of WWII from all over the world to participate in “Daks over Normandy” in commemoration of D-Day.

The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of D-Day in June 2019 will provide the team with possibly the last opportunity to honour those who paid so much to liberate Europe.

During ‘Daks over Normandy’ the skies over the UK and France will witness large formations of Douglas DC-3/C-47 Dakotas and hundreds of paratroopers.

For the first time in 75 years will this many of those magnificent aircraft be assembled in the very place where they saw their finest hour.

From 2 to 9 June 2019 up to 40 DC-3/C-47s will get together, their owners flying them in from all over the world – including from Scandinavia, Hungary and the rest of Europe, from Canada and the United States and even, hopefully, from as far away as Australia.

All this for what may well be the very last time.

And all this effort is so everyone can watch paratroopers jump over Normandy one more time and admire these magnificent aircraft on the ground – and in the air, where they belong.

Daks over Normandy, as an event, will happen in two locations: from 2 to 5 June 2019 at Duxford Airfield, UK, and from 5 to 9 June at Caen Carpiquet Airport in Normandy, France.

Both locations were carefully chosen because of their facilities, their infrastructure and their World War II heritage.

After two days open to the public at Duxford Airfield on 3 and 4 June, with flying demonstrations, scenic flights and – weather permitting – practise parachute jumps, the event will follow in the footsteps of ‘the greatest generation’ when, on 5 June 2019 about 300 men and women will board the aircraft to fly across the English Channel and jump into an actual D-Day drop zone.

All jumpers will be equipped with ‘old-style’ round parachutes and all will be dressed in WWII-style airborne uniforms.

On 7 and 8 June, more flying demonstrations, scenic flights and parachute jumps, this time at Caen Carpiquet Airport in Normandy, France.

Preparations for this truly epic event are in full swing with 35 DC-3/C-47s already confirmed.

However, the biggest challenge the team is facing is – as always – funding.

Daks over Normandy as a not-for-profit organisation is offering attractive corporate sponsorship packages and accepting small, medium and large personal, much-needed and much-appreciated donations.

Daks over Normandy will indeed be an epic and once-in-a-lifetime event – history in the making – again.



Be part of that history via:  
[www.daksovernormandy.com](http://www.daksovernormandy.com)





# 1st Armoured Regiment

In June, the soldiers of B Squadron deployed to Cultana Training Area to conduct live fire field training as part of their training continuum for operations.

The first phase of training consisted of an ATL/S 2 practice, which involves individual gunnery practice as well as troop fire-control practice.

B Squadron tanks engaged both static and moving targets from static battle positions as well as on the move.

A 1 Armoured Regiment spokesman said this training validated long hours spent by the troops in barracks maintaining skills, and provided them with an opportunity to hone gunnery skills and the application of lethal firepower previously learnt through simulation.

"M1A1 AIM SA main battle tank is a ruthlessly accurate platform when combined with the skills and experience of our soldiers," he said.

"Further B Squadron battle runs to follow. Wait out."

1 Armoured Regiment celebrated its 69th birthday on 5 July.



ABRAMS

M1A1

AIM  
Abrams Integrated Management

SA  
Situational Awareness

MBT  
Main Battle Tank





# THE AURAKI

The remains of 27 New Zealand Defence Force personnel and one child were repatriated from Malaysia and Singapore and returned to their families in New Zealand on 21 August, as part of the ongoing Project Te Auraki (The Return).



The New Zealand Army soldiers were serving in Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam when they died. The child was a soldier's son.

The remains were returned by Air New Zealand and received with a traditional Maori welcome and Defence honour guard before being handed over to their families for a short private service, followed by an NZDF haka as the hearses left the airport.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern joined official guests and veterans' organisations from New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore at the ramp ceremony.

RNZAF Group Captain Carl Nixon said the service honoured the memory of a child and the sacrifice of 27 soldiers who died serving their country overseas.

"We're bringing them home to their families, who have waited more than 60 years for this moment," he said.

An expert NZDF disinterment team carried out this repatriation and identification process, with Malaysian Armed Forces logistic and forensic support.

Between 1955 and 1971 New Zealand government policy was that NZDF personnel who died serving overseas were buried overseas unless families paid repatriation costs. Project Te Auraki is reversing that.

Three service personnel were repatriated from Fiji and American Samoa on 7 May 2018. Two more will be brought home from England and two from the Republic of Korea later this year.



**Wandering Warriors** is a charity dedicated to providing care, support and opportunities to veterans and their families through mentoring, education, employment, events and other services.

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**wanderingwarriors**  
saluting their sacrifice



[www.wanderingwarriors.org](http://www.wanderingwarriors.org)





# KOREA MIAs



United Nations and US Forces in Korea took possession of 55 cases believed to contain the remains of fallen US service members from North Korea on 27 July.

The remains were processed in South Korea before being given a full honors ceremony on 1 August – then flown to Hawaii for further processing by the US Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

A White House statement said the United States owed a profound debt of gratitude to those American service members who gave their lives in service to their country and the United States continued to work diligently to bring them home.

"It is a solemn obligation of the United States government to ensure that the remains are handled with dignity and properly accounted for so their families receive them in an honorable manner.

"Today's actions represent a significant first step to recommence the repatriation of remains from North Korea and to resume field operations in North Korea to search for the estimated 5300 Americans who have not yet returned home," the statement added.

Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency chief scientist John Byrd said the process of identifying the remains could take years.

DNA samples exist for 92 per cent of US Korean War service members, and in some cases, dental records are also available and will be used [along with a range of other techniques] to analyse the remains," Dr Byrd said.

He said several boxes of material evidence were also handed over with the human remains, containing such items as boots, buttons, canteens and uniform parts.

One set of ID 'dog tags' was also included, and the family of that member will be spared the long wait.

Dr Byrd said the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency felt pretty good about identifying the remains over time.



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WOUNDED  
WARRIORS



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ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY'S HMAS ADELAIDE  
PLAYED SOMEWHAT OF A STARRING ROLE  
AT RIMPAC IN 2018 AFTER TWO KEY USMC  
AMPHIBIOUS SHIPS SUFFERED MECHANICAL  
ISSUES AND WERE EFFECTIVELY WITHDRAWN  
FROM THE EXERCISE, LEAVING ADELAIDE AS THE  
CENTREPIECE OF TWO KEY AMPHIBIOUS BEACH-  
LANDING EXERCISE SCENARIOS



RIMPAC



The Royal Australian Navy's HMAS Adelaide played somewhat of a starring role at RIMPAC in 2018 after two key USMC amphibious ships suffered mechanical issues and were effectively withdrawn from the exercise, leaving Adelaide as the centrepiece of two amphibious beach-landing exercise scenarios.

Neither the US nor Australian navies were keen to highlight this, however, as the withdrawal of the US Navy assets – USS Bonhomme Richard and USS Boxer – was a politically sensitive issue for the host country.

But, aside from the extra amphibious workouts during RIMPAC, HMAS Adelaide also evolved from a ship certified to operate just two helicopter landing spots at a time, to operating all six simultaneously, by day and by night, with several giant United States helicopters seen operating on her decks alongside her own embarked MRH-90s.

Exercise RIMPAC 2018 culminated in early August with a major multi-national amphibious landing activity, following four weeks of gunnery, missile, anti-submarine and air-defence exercises, as well as maritime interdiction and vessel boardings, explosive ordnance disposal, diving and salvage operations, and mine-clearance operations.

More than 1600 members of the Australian Defence Force participated in Exercise Rim of the Pacific – RIMPAC – 2018, the world's largest multinational maritime exercise.

Twenty-five nations, 46 ships, five submarines, about 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel honed their skills in complex and near-real scenarios during RIMPAC from 27 June to 2 August in and around the Hawaiian Islands and southern California.

Units from Australia, Japan and the US participated in a sinking exercise (SINKEX) where a real but decommissioned US Navy ship was the unfortunate target.

The SINKEX provided participants with an opportunity to gain proficiency in tactics, targeting and live firing against a surface target at sea, and featured live firing of surface-to-ship missiles by the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force and a Naval Strike Missile (NSM) from a launcher on the back of a palletised load system (PLS) by the US Army.

This year was also the first time a Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon aircraft participated in a SINKEX, firing one Harpoon anti-ship missile at the former USS Racine.

However, the Aussie missile was carrying an 'air telemetry' payload rather than an explosive warhead – less spectacular for the official video, but very important to Poseidon's progress towards 'final operational capability' status in the Royal Australian Air Force. The use of a telemetric weapon in this instance allowed a detailed analysis of the weapon firing, from pre-launch on the aircraft until its eventual destruction on impact with the target.

Another Harpoon fired that day came from USS Olympia – the first submarine-launched Harpoon in two decades.

Harpoon was mothballed as a US submarine-fired anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM) system more than 20 years ago but is now being reintroduced to improve lethality and expand the capabilities of US submarines in the face of increasing capabilities in potential-enemy navies such as China's and Russia's.

Commander Submarine Force US Pacific Fleet, and theatre anti-submarine-warfare commander for RIMPAC 2018, Rear Admiral Daryl Caudle said, "Today's highly capable navies and adversary countries – the competitive countries that we are in power competition with – have



A UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT VEHICLE HITS THE BEACH AFTER DISEMBARKING FROM HMAS ADELAIDE DURING AN AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT ON EXERCISE RIMPAC 2018.

25 NATIONS,  
46 SHIPS, FIVE  
SUBMARINES,  
ABOUT 200  
AIRCRAFT AND  
25,000 PEOPLE

extremely good surface ships with very capable missile systems".

"With the potential threat from great-power states or rogue nations, there is again a need for a submarine-launched ASCM capability," he said.

"This multinational platform of exercises provided a convenient venue to safely demonstrate the Harpoon ASCM system.

"This has been at least a year in the making, with the folks doing the software coding working hard to get that system and the coding built.

"The crew onboard the submarine also practiced tactics, techniques and procedures to shoot the Harpoon missile, which worked perfectly, went into cruise, and hit the decommissioned ex-USS Racine dead centre.

"We were thrilled. We met all the test objectives."

Rear Admiral Caudle said that after a thorough evaluation of the shot to make sure it met all criteria, a decision would soon be made on how to bring the Harpoon back as a submarine-arsenal asset.

Deputy commander RIMPAC Combined Task Force Royal Canadian Navy Rear Admiral Bob Auchterlonie said that with numerous warships, allied submarines, multiple strike aircraft and multi-domain land forces participating, the SINKEX was an extremely valuable part of RIMPAC generally.

"SINKEXs are an important way for us to test our weapons and weapon systems in a way that provides our ships' companies, our submariners, our aircrews, and our land forces with the most realistic training possible," Rear Admiral Auchterlonie said.





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: RAAF PERSONNEL LOAD A HARPOON MISSILE ONTO AN AUSTRALIAN P8-A POSEIDON; POSEIDON FIRES THE HARPOON; US NAVY SAILORS LOAD A HARPOON ANTI-SHIP MISSILE ON TO LOS ANGELES-CLASS FAST-ATTACK SUBMARINE USS OLYMPIA; HMAS MELBOURNE FIRES AN SM2 MISSILE; AND, A JAPAN GROUND SELF-DEFENSE FORCE UNIT FIRES A LAND-BASED SURFACE-TO-SHIP MISSILE AT EX-USS RACINE DURING A SINKING EXERCISE ON RIMPAC.

Ex USS Racine took a significant pounding and was eventually sunk in more than 6000 feet of water, 50 nautical miles from land.

HMAS Rankin, one of Australia's six Collins-class submarines, also deployed on RIMPAC and her crew stayed submerged for long periods, playing both hunter and hunted.

The role of a submarine is to navigate anywhere around the world to be on scene, unseen.

During this year's exercise, multifunctional surface ships played a sort of cat-and-mouse game with submarines, which in turn were attempting to locate the surface ships while also evading detection.

Commanding officer of the Peruvian frigate BAP Ferre Captain Jorge Vásquez said that during RIMPAC, his ship conducted anti-submarine exercises from the detection phase all the way to the advanced engagement stages.

Navigating officer aboard Collins-class submarine HMAS Rankin Lieutenant Kristy-Ann Youd said, "We were hunting ships and we were also being hunted by ships".

"We've been working hard all year to achieve this success.

"RIMPAC has always been the highlight of our program.

"The exercise has grown so much over the years that it now allows us to work with a large variety of units we normally wouldn't be able to work with."

Back on the surface, Australia took a leap forward in Army's amphibious capability as members of 2nd Battalion (Amphibious), Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR (Amphib)) released small boats into the ocean from a moving US Marine Corps CH-53 helicopter.

It was an accomplishment for the Australian soldiers as they proved themselves capable of helocasting – a water insertion method for reconnaissance and surveillance missions.

Commanding Officer 2RAR (Amphib) Lieutenant Colonel Doug Pashley said that in the Australian Army, helocasting was, until now, only employed by special-operations units.

"We have been on the journey of delivering a world-class pre-landing force since the start of the

year and, in just six months, we have come a long way," Lieutenant Colonel Pashley said.

"On this exercise we have demonstrated an amphibious capability that did not exist in the conventional army until today.

"It would not have been possible without tremendous support from our US counterparts."

As part of the Force Integration Training (FIT) phase, the soldiers spent two days honing their skills alongside US Marines from the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF).

Training involved loading fully inflated FC470 Zodiacs into the heavy-lift helicopter, pushing the boats out the back and following them into the water, from a height of 5 to 10 feet and an airspeed of 8 to 10 knots.

2RAR (Amphib) snipers also worked with US Marines Corps counterparts on integrated sniper reconnaissance training during RIMPAC.

Corporal Isaac Morgan, a sniper-team leader with 2RAR (Amphib), said what he loved about being a sniper was the challenges of the shot and the challenges of the job itself.

"It's normally a pretty long haul to get into the job, and then once you do get there, it sorta doesn't end until you've taken the shot," Corporal Morgan said.

"It's a pretty good challenge."

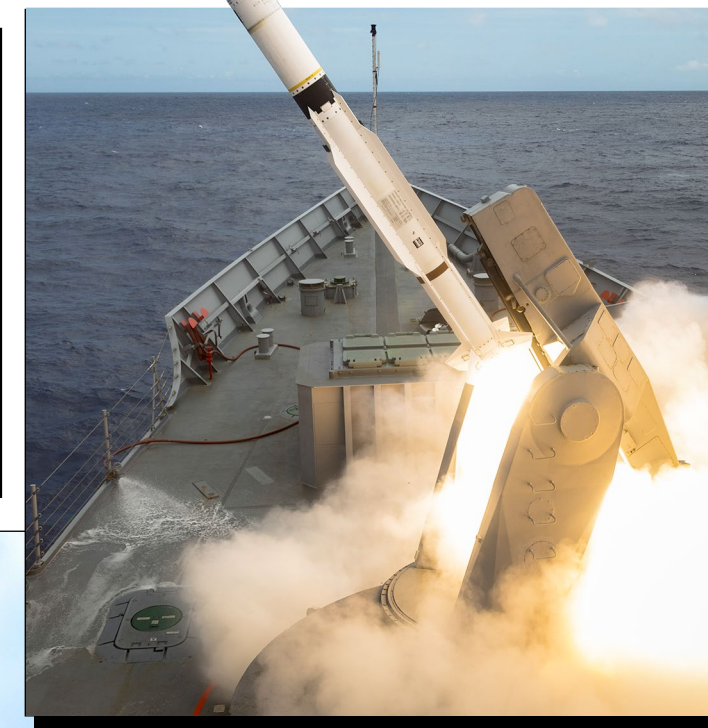
US Marine Corps Sergeant Herley, a scout-sniper-team leader attached to 2RAR (Amphib), said his favourite part about being a sniper was the personal camouflage aspect.

"I love being able to sneak up on people, and them not knowing I'm there, and their life is in my hands," Sergeant Herley said.

"The big eye-opening thing in the past three months (while attached to 2RAR) has been confirmation that Australian Forces and American Forces can operate on the battlefield side-by-side without any issues."

Australian Army Joint Fires Team (JFT) soldiers were busy in Hawaii conducting long-range missions in support of an international artillery gun line.

Up front, nine JFT soldiers called fall of shot while, in the rear, Australian soldiers and Indonesian marines worked with US Marines from Bravo







Battery, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 12<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment – The Black Sheep – to fire their M777A2 155mm howitzers during live-fire training at Pohakuloa Training Area, Hawaii.

Captain David Vereen, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 12<sup>th</sup> Marines, said the focus of the exercise was to stress his unit's ability to provide fire support in a combined, joint, allied and partnered environment.

"We are working with Indonesian artillery, Australian, New Zealand, American, and Canadian fire supporters, to find ways to integrate our different SOPs and TTPs so that if crisis calls, and we have to work together, everybody's walking away with great ideas, ways to improve things," he said.

"Seeing the way that somebody else does something, and saying 'we can adapt that' will make us better.

"It's great for every nation involved in RIMPAC."

On the gun line with the Black Sheep, Australian Bombardier Tyler Wolfenden, said working with the artillery battery in Hawaii had been a great integration.

"To work with our doctrine and their doctrine and see how we correspond and how we can make ourselves better and we can make the American artillery better, was an excellent experience" he said.

The Kiwis also showed they could take on the world in long-range shooting too, with HMNZS Te Mana crowned Naval Surface Fire Support Rodeo champion – the trophy going to the ship that could land five shells the closest to a sea target more than 3.5 miles away.

Te Mana, using its 5-inch main gun, won against stiff competition from warships from the US, Australia, Chile, South Korea, Peru, Malaysia, Indonesia, India and Singapore, achieving a mean accuracy of 35 yards.

It was the first time since RIMPAC began in 1971 that a New Zealand ship had won this competition.

Te Mana's Operations Officer Lieutenant Commander Robert Nesbitt said the trophy was sought-after and there was a lot of pride on the line.

"The aim of the competition is to prove which ship has the most effective main gun,"

Lieutenant Commander Nesbitt said.

"The competition is 15 rounds in total. The first five salvos were to conduct a pre-action calibration – effectively 'barrel warmers' – and to check the system was working.

"The next five were ranging salvos, so the spotters could adjust our fire on to the target.

"The last five were scored salvos, which counted for the competition."

MAIN: PRIVATE TAUTAU PELESEUMA FROM THE 2<sup>ND</sup> BATTALION (AMPHIBIOUS), ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT, ASSAULTS AN ENEMY PIT DURING A PLATOON ATTACK.  
BELOW: HMNZS TE MANA FIRES HER MAIN GUN DURING A NAVAL-GUNNERY ACCURACY COMPETITION.







Te Mana was the first ship on the gun line to open the competition.

Lieutenant Commander Nesbitt said his crew had drilled and drilled their procedures in the days leading up to the competition, and the weapon technicians had carefully selected, monitored and prepared the ammunition days in advance to ensure that the ship had the best chance of success, with the most accurate ballistics they could generate.

"Shells and cartridges had to be from the same lot and batch to ensure the grain of powder, weight of shell and performance of fuse was uniform.

"The temperature where the ammunition was stored was checked regularly and, on competition day, all cartridge temperatures were within 1 degree of each other, ensuring the shells would perform as consistently as possible when fired."

Te Mana's crew even asked if they could launch a balloon to determine differences in wind speed and direction at different altitudes, but that was disallowed.

"Guns up, ready for call to fire," came the call.

"Five salvos fire for effect," the acknowledgement came back.

At 10 seconds apart, the five shots from Te Mana were measured as landing between 16 yards and 50 yards from the target – a mean of 35 yards – thanks to a series of buoys that measured the distance acoustically.

Commander Third Fleet Vice Admiral John D Alexander presented Commanding Officer of Te Mana Commander Lisa Hunn with the trophy at RIMPAC's closing conference.

Commander Hunn said she was proud of what her ship's company had achieved in representing New Zealand at RIMPAC.

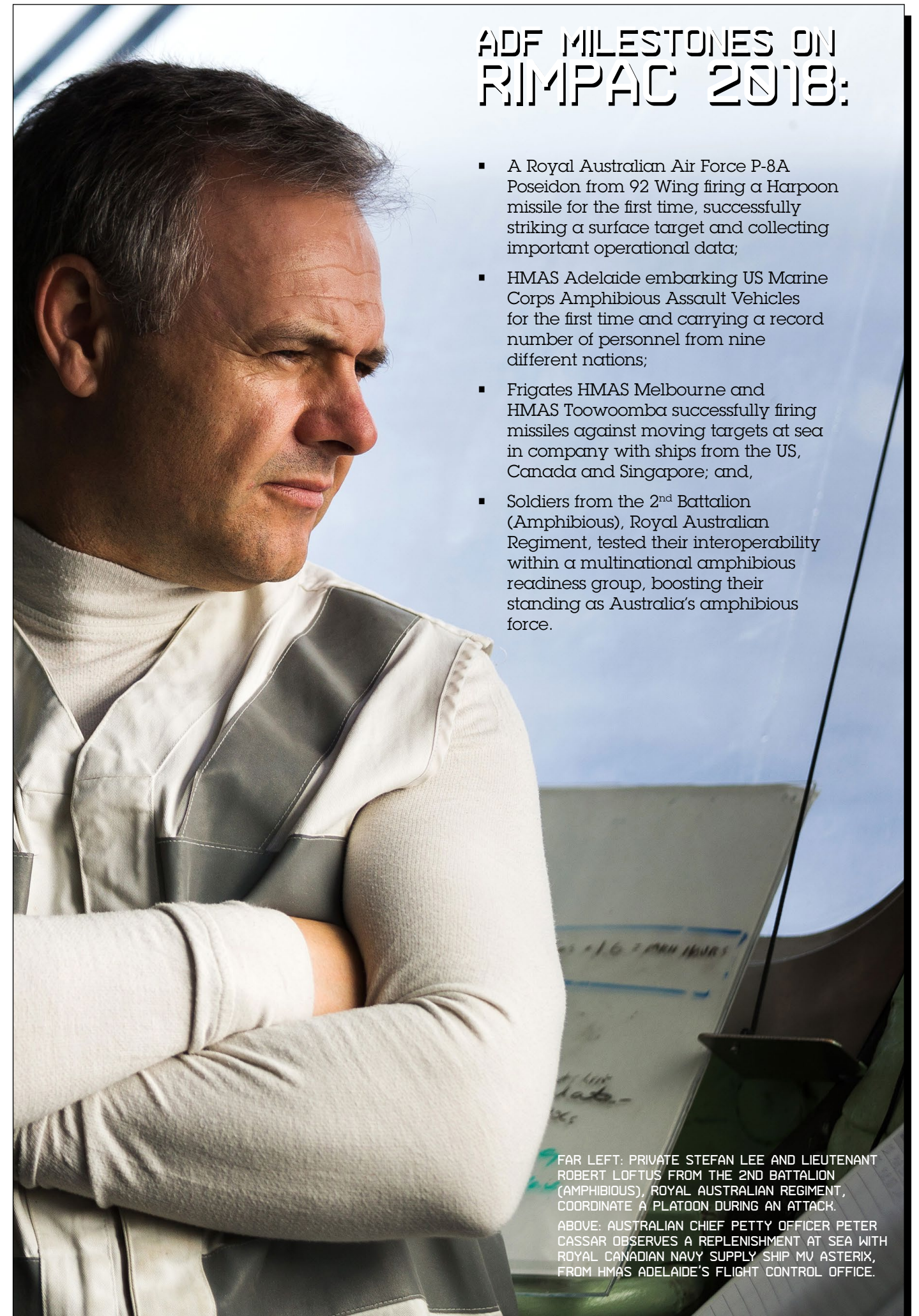
Another Kiwi making a name for himself was Lieutenant Lewis 'Lamb' Chaloner, a United States Navy helicopter commander with the 'Blue Hawks' of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 78, who looked as at home among the jets and noise on an American supercarrier as on Australia's largest ship.

But this little 'Lamb' is actually a long way from his home town of Waiuku south of Auckland on New Zealand's North Island – the population of which is about half the crew size of his current home.

After marrying an American he met in college, Lewis Chaloner joined the US Navy as a medic

## ADF MILESTONES ON RIMPAC 2018:

- A Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon from 92 Wing firing a Harpoon missile for the first time, successfully striking a surface target and collecting important operational data;
- HMAS Adelaide embarking US Marine Corps Amphibious Assault Vehicles for the first time and carrying a record number of personnel from nine different nations;
- Frigates HMAS Melbourne and HMAS Toowoomba successfully firing missiles against moving targets at sea in company with ships from the US, Canada and Singapore; and,
- Soldiers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Amphibious), Royal Australian Regiment, tested their interoperability within a multinational amphibious readiness group, boosting their standing as Australia's amphibious force.



FAR LEFT: PRIVATE STEFAN LEE AND LIEUTENANT ROBERT LOFTUS FROM THE 2ND BATTALION (AMPHIBIOUS), ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT, COORDINATE A PLATOON DURING AN ATTACK.

ABOVE: AUSTRALIAN CHIEF PETTY OFFICER PETER CASSAR OBSERVES A REPLENISHMENT AT SEA WITH ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY SUPPLY SHIP MV ASTERIX, FROM HMAS ADELAIDE'S FLIGHT CONTROL OFFICE.





MAIN: MRH-90 DECK-LANDING PRACTICE ON HMAS ADELAIDE.  
BELOW: KIWI EXPAT AND US NAVY PILOT LIEUTENANT LEWIS CHALONER  
ON HMAS ADELAIDE'S FLIGHT DECK.

before being accepted into officer training in 2012 and flight school in 2013.

Now he flies MH60-R Seahawks with Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 78, based in San Diego.

"Being a helicopter pilot is great," Lieutenant Chaloner said.

"We're working in an always-changing and challenging environment.

"The flight deck of a carrier is one of the most exciting and dangerous places in the world to work and you'll never forget your first day on the flight deck with jets shaking your chest as they land and take off."

During RIMPAC, Lieutenant 'Lamb' Chaloner worked onboard HMAS Adelaide as the helicopter-element coordinator attached to Royal New Zealand Navy Captain Blair Gerritsen and his Sea Combat Command team.

"It was great being able to work alongside Kiwis and Aussies again," he said.

"There is a strong contrast in cultures and it was great to operate within a new framework, and it was an eye-opener to see a different side, while working for a Kiwi and alongside Aussies, Canadians, Singaporeans and Americans inside an Australian ship.



"It is a part of my career I will likely remember and cherish for years to come."

But the burning question everyone wanted answered was – where did his callsign come from?

"That depends who you ask," he said.

"It either stands for 'Legally Arranged Marriage Bloke', with my mates saying I only married for the Green Card – or maybe it's a New Zealand sheep joke.

"I really should come up with a better story."

THE RIMPAC STORY WILL CONTINUE IN HAWAII IN 2020 - THE 27<sup>TH</sup> ITERATION OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST MARITIME EXERCISE, FIRST RUN IN 1971.



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# Duke of Gloucester Cup

**An infantry section from 6RAR have proven themselves the best in the Infantry Corps at the 2018 Duke of Gloucester Cup.**

Sections from each of the Royal Australian Regiment's battalions competed for the prestigious cup at the School of Infantry from 5 to 8 August.

And the prestigious Duke of Gloucester Cup now has pride of place at 6RAR's Corporal Dan Keighran VC Club, with its section taking the top award, as well as the Ghurkha Trophy for best overall shooting.

6RAR's Corporal Josh Conaty led his section through patrols and long stomps to victory.

Although the team prepared from early this year, a few last-minute adjustments were needed.

"One of our team members finished a course on the day we left for DoG Cup, we briefed him on the strategies we were going to employ and he took that on board, just like we would do in any combat situation," Corporal Conaty said.

"It's been a busy year already. I'm sure the section was considered as the underdog this year, but I think our guys were quietly confident in their abilities.

"Looking up and seeing the trophies we took away from the DoG Cup in

**Words Corporal Carla Armenti  
Photos Corporal Nunu Campos**





the cabinet of the Dan Keighran Club, it's a great feeling to have earned that bragging right."

6RAR spent two months in Shoalwater Bay earlier this year and the majority of its fighting force are currently deployed to the Middle East.

"The message has gotten to our deployed members and they were so happy. We really wanted to boost their morale," Corporal Conaty said.

"I am so proud of all of the section members for volunteering and really putting in so much effort, especially on the day."

Senior Instructor, Tactics Wing at the School of Infantry, Major Alastair Robinson, said the competition changed this year.

"Last year fatigue was a big factor," Major Robinson said.

"This year the focus was on basic soldiering skills – marksmanship, navigation and communication.

"Soldiers were tested on things like command ability, care of the battle casualty, soldier welfare, navigation, resupply and communications.

"Each regiment was extremely competitive this year and the soldiers displayed a high level of marksmanship."

Over five days, each soldier covered close to 150km, including a 20km extraction, a 3km jerry can carry and 4km stretcher carry.

Before the competition finished, each section was also put through the obstacle course.

The winning DoG Cup section will travel to the UK to participate in the Cambrian Patrol, a gruelling two-day section-skills competition in Wales.



# RESULTS

## DUKE OF GLOUCESTER CUP 2018

best infantry section

1 <sup>st</sup>	6RAR	4 <sup>th</sup>	1RAR
2 <sup>nd</sup>	2RAR	5 <sup>th</sup>	7RAR
3 <sup>rd</sup>	3RAR	6 <sup>th</sup>	5RAR
		7 <sup>th</sup>	8/9RAR

## DSM ROCHE CSC MEMORIAL CUP

best individual soldier

1 <sup>st</sup>	Private RB Marro, 1RAR
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Corporal S Jacobs, 7RAR
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Lance Corporal SC Evans, 6RAR
4 <sup>th</sup>	Private FS Victor, 2RAR

## SIR ARTHUR MACDONALD TROPHY

best section, foundation warfighting

1 <sup>st</sup>	3RAR
2 <sup>nd</sup>	6RAR
3 <sup>rd</sup>	2RAR

## GHURKHA TROPHY

best overall shooting

1 <sup>st</sup>	6RAR
2 <sup>nd</sup>	7RAR
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1RAR

## ROYAL ULSTER RIFLES TROPHY

best falling plate shoot

1 <sup>st</sup>	7RAR
2 <sup>nd</sup>	6RAR
3 <sup>rd</sup>	2RAR

## OSCMAR TROPHY

best endurance

1 <sup>st</sup>	1RAR
2 <sup>nd</sup>	8/9RAR
3 <sup>rd</sup>	2RAR

6RAR winning section





# Second time a winner

During his second crack at Duke of Gloucester Cup, 1RAR's Private Ryan Marro (right, during last-year's competition) emerged as the competition's best overall individual soldier, winning the DSM Roche CSC Memorial Cup.

Private Marro said the competition kept him guessing what was next.

"I've been in the Army for three years now and, after competing in the Duke of Gloucester Cup last year, I knew we would have to push ourselves physically and mentally to meet the challenge," he said.

"You just have no idea how you are going throughout the competition [relative to the other teams].

"Even though we had trained well and were pretty confident, we really just had to push ourselves the whole time.

"It was relentless."

1RAR identified their key performers earlier this year and their Duke of Gloucester Cup section developed a training program to make themselves competitive.

This paid off with 1RAR's section taking the OSCMAR Trophy for the section with the best endurance.



CONTACT Air, Land & Sea – Issue 59 – September 2018

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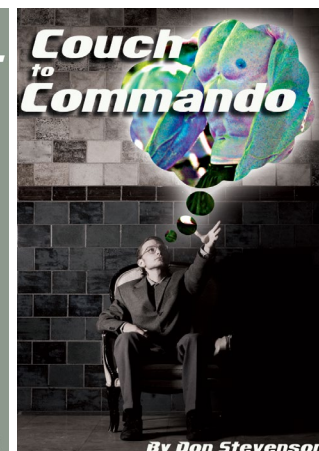
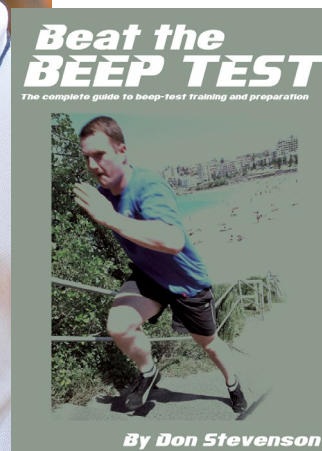
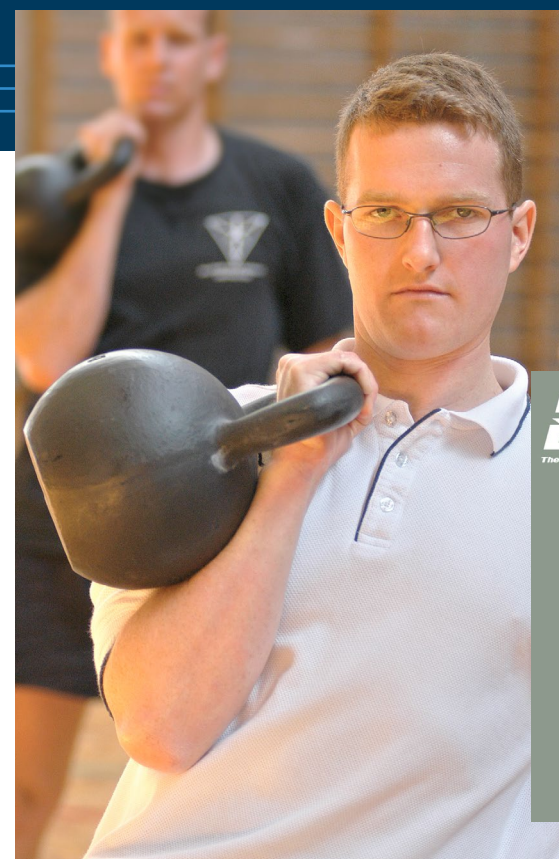


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# MRTT MEGA MILLIONS

RAAF's KC-30A Multi Role Tanker Transport recently delivered its 100,000,000<sup>th</sup> – yes, that's 100millionth – pound of fuel during air-to-air refuel missions on Operation Okra in the Middle East.

The epic milestone was reached on 6 August 2018, during a routine air-to-air refuelling mission.

KC-30A is an asset of the Australian Air Task Group (ATG) and provides the air-to-air refuelling

capability for Australian as well as coalition assets on operations across the Middle East, especially over Iraq and Syria.

Australia's Chief of Joint Operations Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld said the reliability and large air-to-air refuelling capability of the KC-30A had added tangible value to the Australian and coalition forces.

"The KC-30A has been a significant force multiplier for the Air Force and has proven itself over Iraq as part of Operation Okra," Air Marshal Hupfeld said.

"Just one KC-30A can support the deployment of four fighter aircraft over 5000km and has the versatility to refuel a range of different aircraft types.

"From Australian C-17A Globemaster III's to US Marine Corps AV-8B Harriers, British Eurofighters and

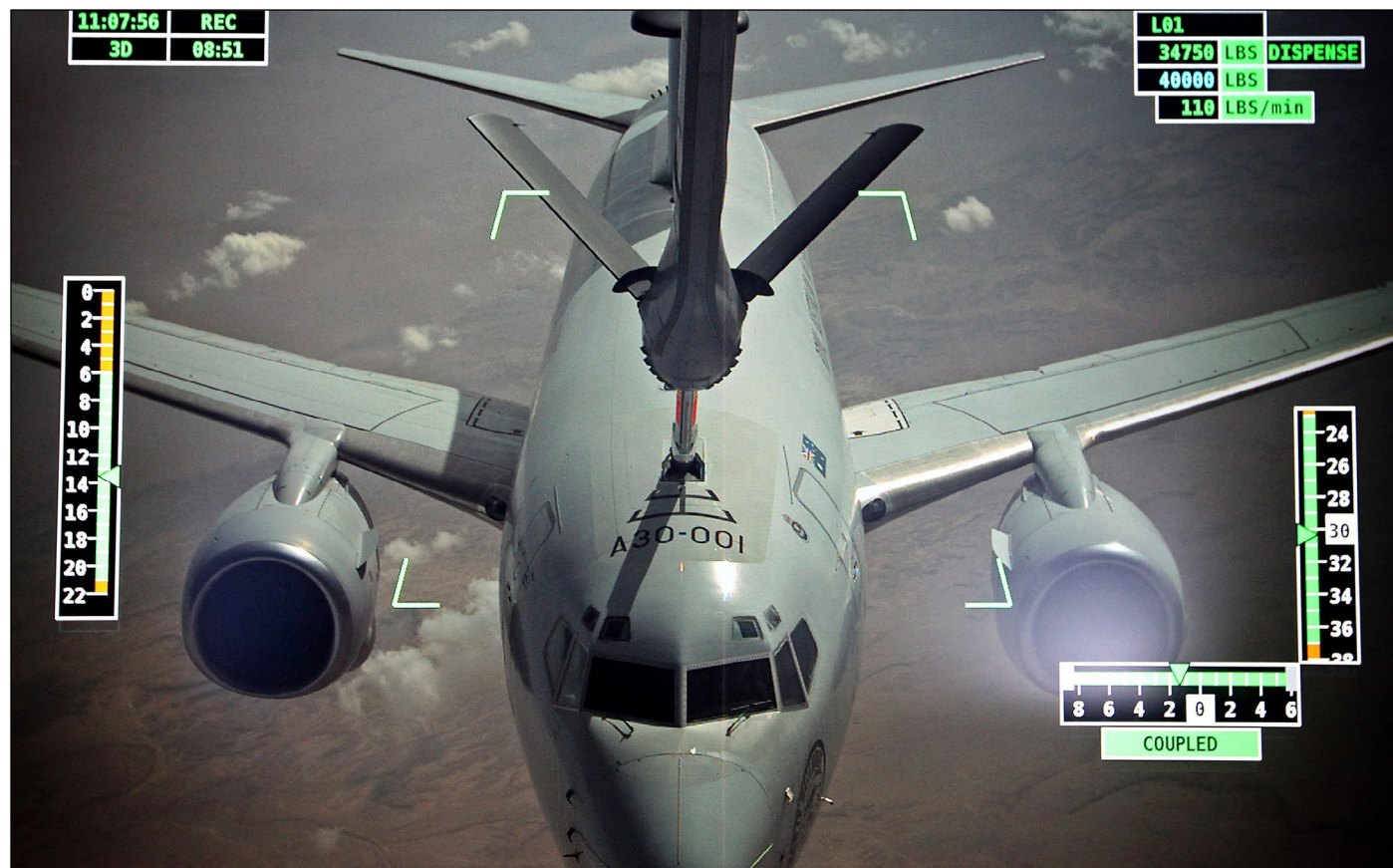
French Dassault Rafales, the KC-30A can keep these planes in the air efficiently and effectively.

"With the professionalism and operational effects we bring to the global coalition, the Australian KC-30A contribution is very well regarded among the coalition partners."

KC-30A is equipped with two forms of air-to-air refuelling systems – an Advanced Refuelling Boom







System mounted under the fuselage of the aircraft and a hose-and-drogue refuelling pod underneath each wing.

These systems are controlled by an air-refuelling operator on the flight deck, who views refuelling operations remotely, using 2D and 3D screens.

Advanced mission systems are also fitted to the aircraft. They include the Link 16 real-time data-link, military communications and navigation suites, and an electronic warfare self-protection system for protection against surface-to-air missiles.

MRTT can also carry cargo and passengers, but not usually at the same time as refuelling operations (though it can be done – for example, see the 'Pitch Black: French Connection' story on page 30).

In its transport role, the KC-30A is capable of carrying 270 passengers, and comes with under-floor cargo compartments that can accommodate 34 tonnes of military and civilian cargo pallets and containers.

The KC-30A MRTT can remain 1800km from base, with 50 tonnes of fuel available to offload, for up to four hours.

RAAF has six KC-30A MRTTs in service operated by No. 33 Squadron from RAAF Amberley in south-east Queensland.

The aircraft was first flown by the Royal Australian Air Force in September 2011.

Operation Okra is the Australian Defence Force's contribution to the international effort to defeat the Daesh terrorist threat in Iraq and Syria.



TOP: An Australian A-7A Wedgetail takes on fuel from an Australian KC-30A over Iraq, as seen from the air-refuelling operator's station (above).

BELOW: The cockpit on the RAAF's KC-30A MRTT.

PREVIOUS PAGE: A RAAF KC-30A on the ground in the Middle East – plus a range of views from passengers' perspectives.



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# CONTACT

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**David Read** is the fan who got us started on [Patreon](#) and the first CONTACT Sergeant, joined in the Sergeants Mess by...

**Dennis Mitchell**, since 1 December 2017

**Rod Charman**, since 6 December 2017

**Amba Beedie**, since 9 December 2017

**Peter Thomas**, since 2 February 2018

**Noel Wright**, since 9 April 2018

**Ian Cavanough**, since 6 May 2018

**Joshua Elmer**, since 7 May 2018

**Mike Ryan**, (Cpl 10 mts) promoted himself 23 Aug 2018

**Greg Holmes**, (Cpl 6 mts) promoted himself 28 Aug 2018

**Ted Black**, (Cpl 4 mts) promoted himself 30 Aug 2018

**Brian Hartigan**, enrolled to keep eye on how system works

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Warrant Officers will receive CONTACT magazine paper version when we start printing again + CONTACT pen on enlistment + four free CONTACT magazine back issues per year + a CONTACT Yearbook every anniversary of your enlistment+ your name listed here.

**Peter Leed** is our first Warrant Officer, since 6 May 2018

**Warren Hunt** became a Warrant Officer on 7 May 2018

**Nicholas Mazzarol** is a Warrant Officer since 9 May 2018

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**Aaron Bonnett** became our first Lt on 1 March 2018

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**David Tatler** is our first CONTACT Captain and, incredibly, is not looking for advertiser rewards. "I'm doing this as an interested citizen. Both my brothers were Nasho's (John, my eldest brother, did Vietnam) and my dad served in the Royal Navy during WW2. Keep up the great work."

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See the editorial on page 9 of this magazine for more details re printing – and find more details about ranks and rewards at [www.patreon.com/contactmagazine](http://www.patreon.com/contactmagazine)

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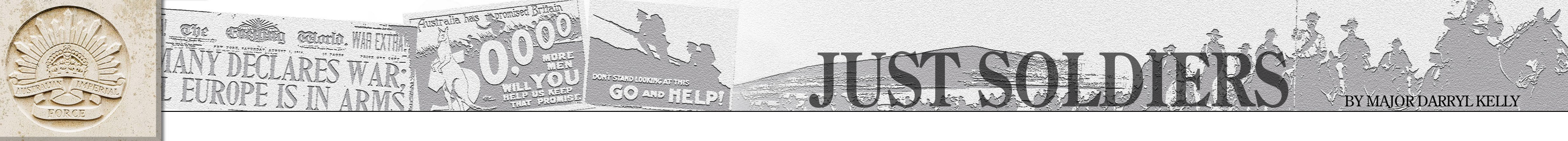
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# Heroism Knows No Age

The two Diggers huddled in the shell-hole. Every time one stuck his head up to see what was happening, the Germans retaliated with a ruthless barrage of rifle and machine gun fire. He looked at his mate, who was lapsing in and out of consciousness – “Hang on ‘till nightfall mate, then I’ll get you out. Just hang on”

Ernie Pinches was born in suburban Brisbane, to parents Thomas and Julia. They lived in a modest family home in Kennedy Terrace. Ernie was a typical knock-a-bout kid. Cricket, footy and fishing in the local creeks and rivers filled his afternoons and weekends. He loved life and lived it to the fullest. He was no slouch in the classroom either. He had a natural gift for learning and relished the new and interesting subjects that were delivered by his teachers. He undertook compulsory military cadet training as a drummer, serving his full term of four years. He loved the training. It was a great chance to get among his mates and learn new skills that would benefit him in later life.

On leaving school, Ernie planned to take up teaching. He studied hard and did well in his exams and was in his intermediate year of schooling when the war in Europe broke out.

Brisbane had gone mad with war fever. Recruiting rallies, bands and soul-stirring speeches on every corner seemed to dominate the city. Soldiers in their new ill-fitting uniforms strolled around the shops with a girl on each arm, and the local dances were full of young blokes, all dressed in khaki.

Ernie passed initial training period as a teacher and was working in the nearby suburb of Ithaca.

He’d visited a few of his older mates in the training camp at Enoggera and was thrilled by the close mateship of the soldiers, as they went about their training. He longed to join but he knew he had a

few hurdles to get over, not least of which were his parents.

Ernie went down to the wharf and watched the departure of the first draft of Queensland units, bound for Europe. Later he read that they were in fact bound for Egypt. He also read of Gallipoli, Lone Pine, Courtney’s Post, the Nek – and the mounting casualties, the maimed and the missing. He was also able to see at first hand, the situation at home. Children in his class would be missing one day and on their return he’d learn of the loss of their father, their brother, their cousin or uncle. All this did was increase his desire to get over there and do his bit. Ernie presented himself at the recruiting office in Brisbane on 3 January 1916, and was accepted.<sup>1</sup>

When his headmaster learned of Ernie’s enlistment he went to great lengths to make the military authorities aware of the lad’s true age. The army had no choice but to discharge him a mere six weeks later.<sup>2</sup>

Ernie was intent on serving and his parents finally relented. He felt his chances of enlistment would be better in Sydney and he had his mother convinced that this was what he needed to do.

As he stood on the platform, he looked into his mothers eyes. “Don’t worry Mum, I’ll write every week. Just give me a bit of time to get set up – alright?”

The train whistle sounded and he gave his mum a kiss on the cheek and a quick hug. He shook hands with his dad and grinned as he looked down at the

## Private Ernest Wilson Pinches DCM 5th Machine Gun Company AIF

folded five pound note that had been placed in his hand – “Just to help you to get settled, mate,” his father said.

The journey to Sydney took three days. He obtained a room in a boarding house in the suburb of Campsie and set about planning his enlistment into the AIF, this time using the name Eric.

The Recruiting Sergeant looked Ernie up and down. “How old did you say you were, son?” the sergeant asked.

“Twenty one, Sergeant!” Ernie replied  
“Got your birth certificate with you?”

“Didn’t know I had to bring one. I can get a copy from Queensland, but it will take a while to get here though. I was a station hand on a property up there,” Ernie answered.

The sergeant pondered for a second or two and then nodded his head. “Right – through you go son,” he said.

The medical exam was a breeze and, as Ernie stood and looked at the flag, he swore his allegiance to King and country. It was 13 April 1916.<sup>1</sup>

Ernie was posted as a machine gun reinforcement and sailed for England. The training was hard but he loved it. He was the equal of any around him and, in a lot of cases, he was better.

England was everything he expected. He got out when he could and saw the sights. He bought a few trinkets for the family but kept them until the time was right to send them home.

On 30 September 1916, Ernie boarded the troopship that would take him to France. It was here he was taken onto the strength of the 5<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Company.<sup>1</sup>

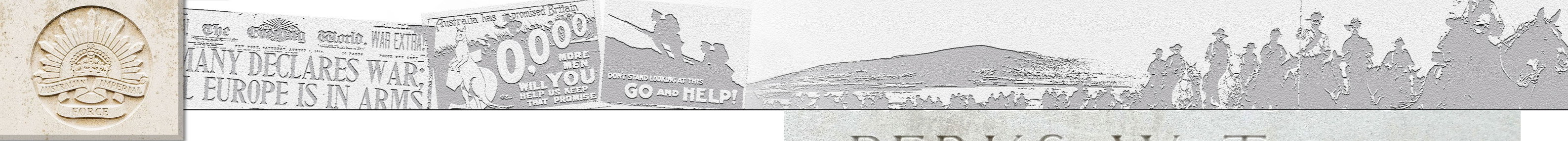
In April 1917, Ernie was manning his Vickers machine gun on top of a slight rise near Lagnicourt. The Germans had swarmed across the unsuspecting Diggers in the neighbouring Noreuil Valley. The attack was so sudden, that the infantry battalions were overwhelmed and a number of the Australian gun batteries had been over-run and forced to temporarily abandon their prized guns. Then, there they were, a mass of grey/green-clad figures swarming forward.

Ernie felt the sweat forming on the palms of his hands, making the handles of the gun slippery. “Wait for it – Wait for it!” – then the order came through – “Fire”. Ernie let rip with a burst, “You’re a bit short Ern, elevate a bit” the corporal yelled. The young machine-gunner turned the small elevation wheel about three quarters of a turn and fired again.

“Spot on mate, give it to the bastards” the corporal cheered.

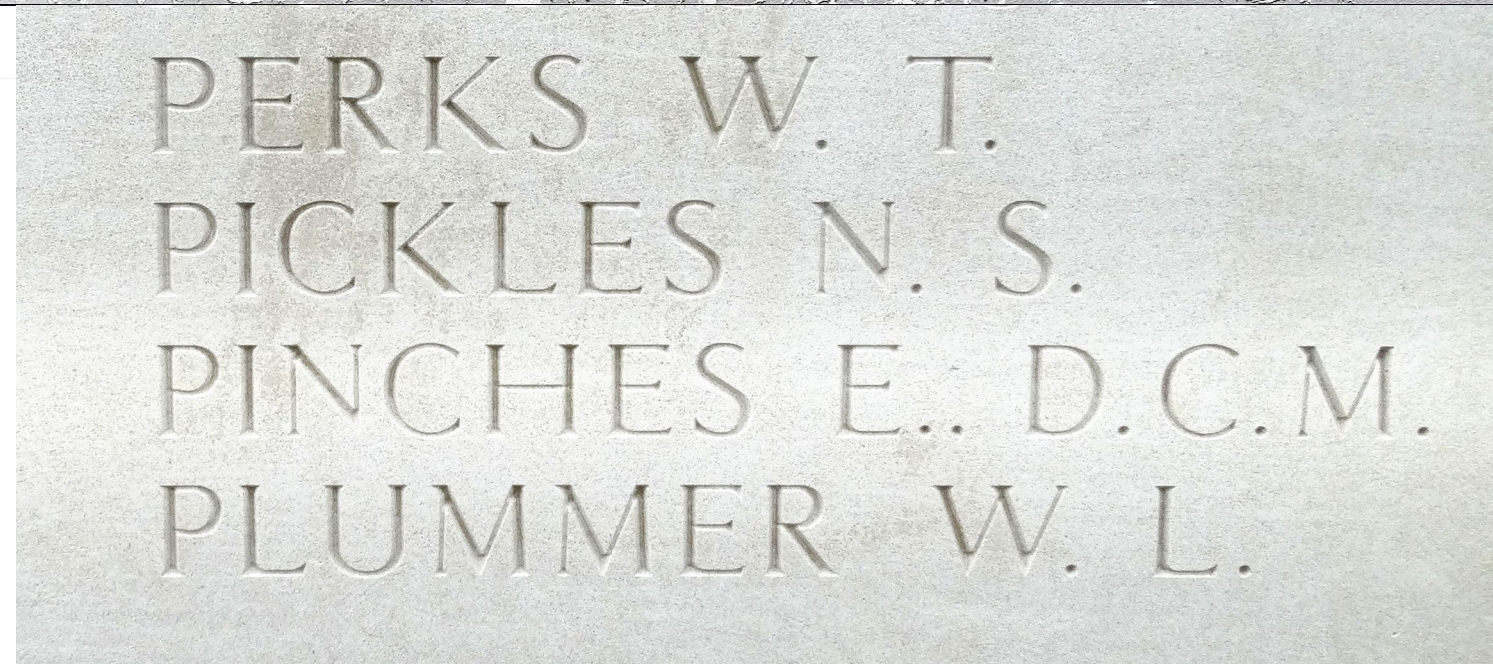
The fire was true and accurate and the guns started to cut the Germans to pieces. Suddenly a German machinegun opened up on the Aussie flank. Their fire was just as accurate and it was taking a heavy toll on the 15th’s crews. The enemy gunners had chosen their position well and the Australian guns couldn’t be brought to bear.





#### NOTES:

1. National Archives of Australia: B2445, WWI Service Records, 296 E. Pinches DCM 5th Machine Gun Company, AIF.
2. Biography, 296 Ernest Pinches, 5th Machine Gun Company, AIF. RSL Virtual Memorial
3. Bean CEW, The Official History of Australia in the War 1914-1918, Volume IV, Australian War Memorial, 1939, Page 393
4. AWM 28, Recommendation Files for Honours and Awards, AIF, 1914-1918 War, 296 Ernest Pinches AIF
5. National Archives of Australia: B2445, WWI Service Records, 2703 George Henry Lamond, 5th Machine Gun Company, AIF.
6. National Archives of Australia: B2445, WWI Service Records, 2530 Frederick Leslie Snowdon, 5th Machine Gun Company, AIF.
7. AWM 145, Roll of Honour cards, 1914-1918, Army
8. Photo - 296 Ernest Pinches, RSL Virtual Memorial



The name of Private Ernest Wilson Pinches DCM is forever etched at Villers-Bretonneux – lest we forget.

Ernie swung around to his corporal – “Take over the gun”. He grabbed a handful of grenades and scampered over the sandbags. He darted along the reverse slope of the ridge, pausing every now and again to stick his head up and check his bearings.

He was now in an ideal position to take out the gun. After catching his breath, he carefully pulled the pins of his grenades, leaving just enough to keep them safe. Then he readied himself – “Go” and he was off.

Launching himself over the ridge he took the Germans completely by surprise. He threw the first of his grenades, then, zig-zagging forward, he threw the next, each landing close to the German position. He had the last grenade in his hand and pulled the pin even further out, then drew his pistol in one fluid motion. The dazed Germans were feeling around on the ground in a vain search for their weapons as he reached the edge of the pit. Ernie jumped in and brandished his pistol. One German made a half-hearted attempt to raise his rifle, but thought better of it when Ernie raised the grenade, showing how closed the pin was to falling out. As the German dropped his rifle, Ernie gave him a wink – “smart move mate,” Ernie said to himself.<sup>3</sup>

Ernie was still covering his prisoners when they carried their gun back to the Aussie lines. “Well done, young Pinches,” the major said, “Drop that lot there and get back to your gun, we’ll keep them covered”.

The Australian units were now on the counter-attack and the 5<sup>th</sup>’s guns continued to engage the

retreating Germans as they withdrew up the far ridge.

A few days later, after the front had been re-established, Ernie and his mates were able to take a well-earned rest.

Ernie learnt he had been recommended for the Distinguished Conduct Medal<sup>4</sup> – but he knew all too well, that being recommended and getting one was another matter. His mates kidded him about the impending decoration and even presented him with a ribbon in anticipation. “Come on you blokes – give a man a go!” the embarrassed Digger said, shoving the ribbon into his pocket.

It was the early hours of 3 May 1917 and the young machine-gunners were preparing for the hop-over against the fortified German line at Bullecourt. The NCO in charge of the gun, Corporal Lamond<sup>5</sup> gave his brief to his crew. Ernie was to carry his gun forward into the attack, his mate ‘Snow’ Snowdon was to carry the tripod, and the others, Privates Dixon and Page the ammunition. Zero hour was scheduled for 0400 and it was to be a surprise attack, hence there would be no preceding artillery barrage.

They could hear their own heartbeats as they waited for the word that would send them on their way. Then it came and over they went. The only problem was the Germans knew that the attack was coming. The Hun waited until they had their prey in the open, then opened up.

The 5<sup>th</sup> kept moving forward but the German machine-guns seemed to be everywhere. The crew started to spread out in the early-morning darkness.

Then a gun opened up right in front of them, the burst catching Ernie in the leg and shattering the bone. Snow saw his mate go down and rushed to his aid. Dragging Ernie into a nearby shell hole, Snow too was hit.<sup>2</sup> He worked hard to stem the flow of blood and, after bandaging Ernie’s leg, Snow said “Right Ernie, I’m going to carry you out”.

They waited for a lull in the firing and then they were off. No sooner were they up and running when a burst took out Snow as well. The pair crawled back to the relative safety of the shell-hole.

As the sun rose, Snow was able to take full stock of the situation. Ernie’s leg was bad – really bad – and he knew that if he didn’t get his mate to the medics he’d be done for.

“Ernie, you’ve got to hold on mate, I’ll get you out of this, just hold on,” Snow said. Ernie was still conscious and nodded with gritted teeth as he fought against the pain.

As the day wore on, they could hear the battle rage all around them. Every so often, Snow would raise his head to see what was happening. Every time it brought a burst of enemy fire.

It was now mid afternoon and Ernie was delirious with the pain. Snow tried to help by giving water to his mate but it was no good, the young Digger would only cough it back up.

It was about 5pm when Snow whispered to Ernie, “The suns nearly down mate. As soon as it’s dark enough, I’ll carry you out.” Suddenly, Ernie grasped his mates hand and squeezed, then he went limp.

“Ernie, Ernie,” Snow called as he shook him, but he knew his mate was gone. Snow went through his

mate’s pockets and retrieved his personal effects, including his ‘DCM ribbon’. Then, as darkness set in, Snow looked down at the body of his young mate – “Be seeing you Ern”, and with that, crawled out of the shell-hole and back to the safety of his own lines.

Ernie’s award of Distinguished Conduct Medal did come through<sup>5</sup>, though his mother was not officially notified for some time. She made a claim for Ernie’s pension but was refused as she had not been dependent on his income for the 12 months before his enlistment.<sup>1</sup>

On 20 June 1917, Snow wrote a heartfelt letter to Ernie’s mother, detailing the loss of her beloved son .

*“Dear Mrs. Pinches, Just a few lines in deepest sympathy concerning Ernie’s death. I think that you would like the facts. We charged at 4 a.m. on the morning of May 3<sup>rd</sup>, for a place called the Hindenburg Line, when Ernie, who was carrying the gun and the corporal were both hit badly in the thigh. I got Ern on my back and was carrying him out when I also got hit badly in the leg. We lay in a shell hole for 14 hours. Nobody could get near us as the Germans shot at everybody they saw. Ernie died from his wounds about 3 o’clock that day. I think that if I had not got shot getting him out there would have been a chance of saving Ernie’s life. Yours truly, PTE. F. L. Snowdon 5<sup>th</sup> M.G. Coy.”<sup>2</sup>*

The reason Ernie Pinches was so special and why his story needs to be told is that Ernie was born on 16 April 1900, so he was only 15 when he first enlisted, not 21 as he stated. The action which earned him the DCM, occurred the day before his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday and he died just a couple of weeks later.





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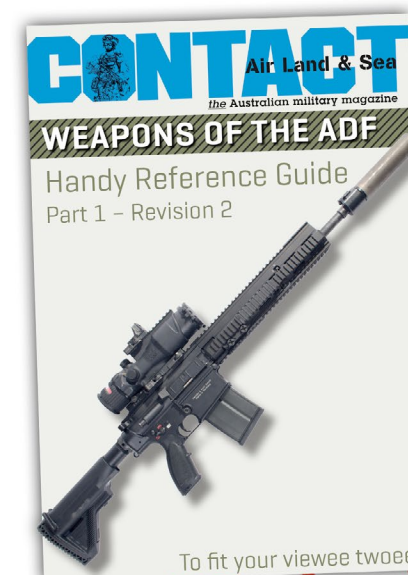


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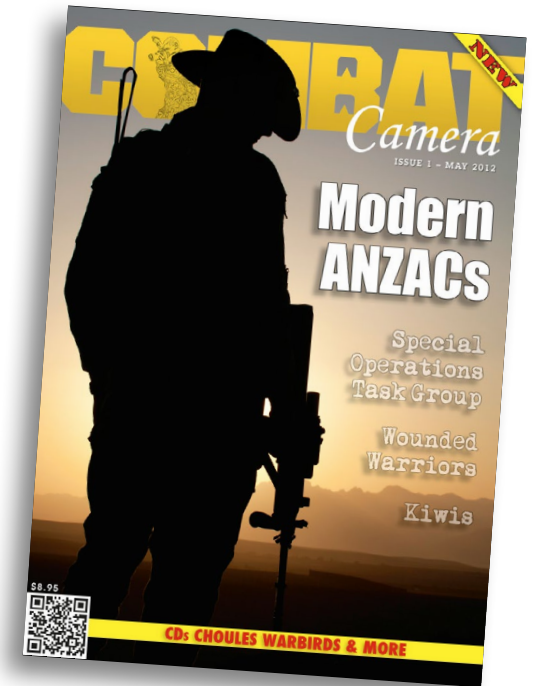
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The 609 Squadron winning team with the Catalina Cup and F-88 (WTSS) Team Shooting Competition trophies (left to right): Cdt Declen Love, LCdt Jesvi John, CCpl Jeremy Swain, CSgt Ben Whiting, Cdt Lucy Beck, LCdt Fabian D'Mello and CCpl Joshua Dsa. Photo by Flying Officer (AAFC) Paul Rosenzweig.

Cadets from the various squadrons of 6 Wing (South Australia) lived on base at RAAF Edinburgh over the Queen's Birthday long weekend in June to compete in the annual Catalina Cup competition.

Catalina Cup is awarded to the champion squadron within No 6 Wing, with the highest aggregate score from all competitions held over the weekend.

On 'Green Day' (Saturday) the squadron teams competed in the shooting, fieldcraft and leadership activities, including individual shelter construction; judging distance; field movement, signals and formations; and, navigation.

Shooting competitions were held with the .22" Long Rifle, as well as F-88 serials on the Weapons Training Simulation System (WTSS).

Then on 'Blue Day' (Sunday), the squadron teams took to the parade ground in their service dress uniform for drill performances, as well as competing in various examinations.

Flying Officer (AAFC) Paul Rosenzweig, 6 Wing Public Affairs & Communication Officer, said, "As well as measuring academic performance, 'Blue Day' included ongoing assessments of dress and behaviour, giving squadrons the opportunity to showcase their talents".

Officer Commanding No 6 Wing, Wing Commander (AAFC) Peter Gill, complimented all teams on their performance.

## Green Day Results:

### Fieldcraft and Teamwork Competition

No 601 Squadron (Keswick Barracks)

### F-88 (WTSS) Team Shooting Competition

No 609 Squadron (Warradale Barracks)

### F-88 (WTSS) Champion Shot

LCdt Caitlyn Edmunds, 601 Squadron (Keswick Bks)

### .22" Long Rifle Team Shooting Competition

No 622 Squadron (Murray Bridge)

### .22" LR Champion Shot

LCdt Jacob Lavery, 622 Squadron (Murray Bridge)

## Blue Day results:

### Inter-Squadron Drill Competition

No 601 Squadron (Keswick Barracks)

### Freestyle Drill Competition

No 608 (Town of Gawler) Squadron

### Aviation Competition

No 609 Squadron (Warradale Barracks)

### Aircraft Recognition Competition

No 609 Squadron (Warradale Barracks)

### Service Knowledge Competition

No 609 Squadron (Warradale Barracks)

### 6 Wing top squadron for 2018

Congratulations to the competition team from

**No 609 Squadron (Warradale Barracks)**

led by Cadet Sergeant Ben Whiting.



Leading Cadet Ana from 613 Squadron prepares to board a Diamond DA-40 during a Pilot Experience Flight (PEX) at Parafield Airport. Photo by Flying Officer (AAFC) Paul Rosenzweig.

Ana from No 613 Squadron, AAFC at RAAF Edinburgh has been a cadet for just a year and half, but in that time she has already passed a swim test, qualified in firearms safety, flown a light aircraft (supervised) and completed the Bronze level of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award.

Many AAFC activities are challenging and competitive, but participants in the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award only ever compete with one person – themselves.

From being in the air, Ana recently went 'on air' to tell 'Service Voices' how the AAFC challenges her.

In Adelaide on Anzac Day, she carried the banner at the head of the RAAF contingent of veterans.

Earlier this year, she was among a small group of Air Force Cadets from No 6 Wing who formed a Royal Guard for Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, who recently assumed many public duties from his father, one of which is Patron of the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards.

No 6 Wing Public Affairs and Communication Officer, Flying Officer (AAFC) Paul Rosenzweig said, "In her interview with Service Voices, Ana explained how her cadet service was a perfect fit with the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award".

Producer of 'Service Voices' radio program Helen Meyer said, "It's refreshing to hear a 15 year old being able to tell us where she wants to go with her life – what she wants to do with it".

## X Box detox

A specially selected group of 2 Wing Australian Air Force Cadets will fly out of Brisbane on Saturday 22 September to walk in the steps of Australian soldiers on the Kokoda Trail, finding out for themselves how tough it was for the soldiers who fought in iconic WWII battles along the way.

The group will be led by Officer Commanding 2 Wing SEQ Wing Commander (AAFC) Tony Lee who, in 1985, walked the trail as an 18 year old Cadet Under Officer.

One support staff member is ACW(AAFC) Juanita Anable who will walk the track with her 17 year old son, Cadet Sergeant Lewis Bell, whose grandfather Sergeant Thomas Crawley, a member of the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion, was shot in the hip on the trail.

Another cadet walking the trail will be 17 year old Leading Cadet Breana Humes from 210 Squadron Toowoomba, whose great uncle was the first



indigenous officer in the Australian Imperial Forces, and who died on the trail.

Wing Commander (AAFC) Lee said the trek should be a memorable 10 days living with people in difficult, uncomfortable circumstances – without their devices.

"I refer to it as detox from the X Box."





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