

ISSUE 61

# CONTACT

AIR LAND & SEA

MARCH 2019

THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

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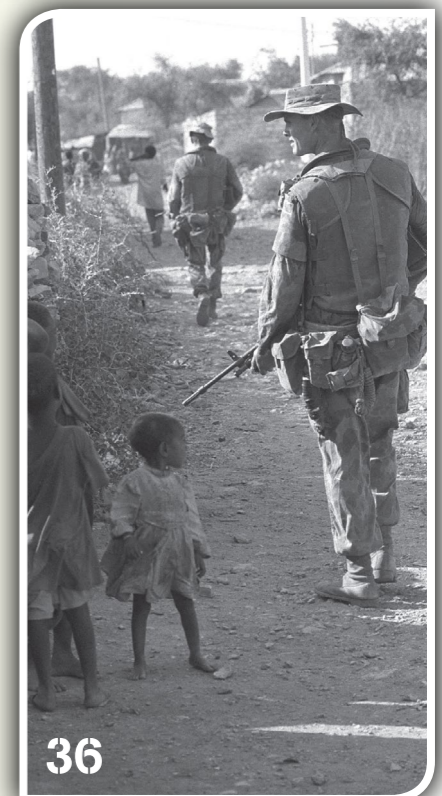
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# MINIATURE MACHINE GUNS

EDITORIAL



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Issue 61 – March 2019

**CONTACT**  
AIR, LAND & SEA



FIBUA

Photo by Sergeant  
Karl Byrne, Irish  
Defence Force.

Story page 60

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**CONTACT Air Land & Sea** magazine is Published by Contact Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 3091, Minnamurra, NSW 2533, AUST

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**CONTACT Air Land & Sea** is published on 1 March, June, September and December. It is only published electronically on the Internet and is available by FREE subscription via [www.aussiecombat.com](http://www.aussiecombat.com)

All editorial, advertising and general enquiries should be addressed to the editor.

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I have to be honest with you – this issue of CONTACT has been the most difficult issue I've ever had to pull together – for three key reasons.

The March issue is always harder than the others, simply because November through to February are pretty quiet on the military front, what with Defence all-but closing down for at least six weeks over Christmas. It's also the peak posting cycle too, so while a lot of people in Defence are actually very busy, it's mostly admin stuff that occupies them.

Were it not for the devastating floods in Queensland, I would have really struggled for new Aussie stories in this issue.

As it is, I did have to dust off some oldies-but-goodies for a second run. The Infantry Corps and Royal Australian Regiment celebrated their 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in November last year, which, I think, made a little reflection a worthwhile exercise. The collection of stories starting on page 36 were actually first published by us 10 years ago to mark Infantry's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday (and I still can't believe that this [Infantry-only Special Issue](#) we published was 10 years ago!!!)

Anyway, the main stories I chose to re-publish (with permission from the authors) were those authors' recollections from Somalia and East Timor. And, having re-read them now, they struck me as very powerful pieces well worth a second airing. I hope you agree.

The second reason I struggled with issue 61 was that I'm a man of milestones. I like significant milestones. I put a lot of store in them. Significant milestones are a good time for me to make significant decisions. For example, we stopped printing CONTACT after issue 40.

Issue number 60 in December was therefore a significant milestone, so, if there was a significant decision to be made, issue 60 was the time to make it. Which leads me to my third reason...

My heart was broken by the [failure to get CONTACT back into print](#) this year – and I actually decided to pull the pin on this whole business.

But, picking myself up, and getting over that tantie, I formulated a new plan over beverages (coffee, not whiskey – so it must be a good one ;-).

I still haven't announced what the new plan is. I need to get professional advice to make sure it's feasible, advisable and sane.

Unfortunately, the first professional I asked basically said "It can't be done" (i.e. it's not legal) – though I am 99% confident that that advice is 100% wrong, especially since I found a very simple form on the appropriate government web site that allows me to do what she said can't be done – with two lines of info, a signature and no fee.

Now I need to find a more professional professional advisor (which = more delays).

In a sad 'catch 22' type dilemma, I'm sure that if I had already told you, my keen and committed audience, what the plan was, some of you would have the expertise I need and would be willing to tell me what I want/need to hear – but, I can't tell you what the plan is until I get the advice I need, because the plan is a bit radical, a bit involved and a bit finite – so I need to be sure before I commit, and need to commit before I make it public – lest I look like an idiot if it doesn't work out.

And that right there is another very big reason why my head and my heart have not been 'in the game' recently.

All that said, though, I am still happy with and proud of this issue. It's still a very good read and I think you'll like it.

It is, after all, the first issue in the next batch of significant **CONTACT** milestones. I suppose issue 75 will be my next opportunity to chuck a wobbly – then issue 100!?!?!?

Sincerely,

Brian Hartigan, Managing Editor

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# THE ANGEL HERCULES

A Royal Australian Air Force C-130J Hercules creates a 'flare angel' by dispensing its self-protection decoy flares during Australia Day celebrations on Sydney Harbour. Flares are an infrared countermeasure deployed by military planes and helicopters to confuse heat-seeking surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles. Pilots and crew hope that the missile will be attracted to the heat from the flare instead of the aircraft's engine exhaust. Unfortunately, several modern missiles are smart enough not to fall for the trick.





## FRENCH SUBS AGREEMENT

After much publicised delays, the government eventually signed an Attack-class Submarine Strategic Partnering Agreement with French company Naval Group on 11 February – though this is not yet a formal contract for the project.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said formalisation of this current agreement with Naval Group represented the contractual basis for the program.

The \$50billion Attack-class program will see 12 submarines designed and built in Australia for the Royal Australian Navy.

The first Attack-class submarine – to be named HMAS Attack – is scheduled to be delivered in the early 2030s.

Prime Minister Morrison said that other activities required to deliver this major program, including the development of the submarine construction yard at Osborne in South Australia, were continuing.

"Attack-class submarines are a major pillar of our \$90billion National Shipbuilding Plan, to meet the strategic requirements set out in our 2016 Defence White Paper and will give our Navy the edge it needs in an uncertain world."

"These submarines will help protect Australia's security and prosperity for decades to come," he said.

"Work on the submarines has already taken place under the Design and Mobilisation Contract and this will continue uninterrupted."

"[We are] committed to maximising local industry involvement in the program to ensure Australians get the most out of this important national investment."

## NEW UNMARKED GRAVES OF WWI PROGRAM

A number of unmarked graves of First World War veterans who died after returning from the war will be commemorated under a two-year pilot program announced by the government in February.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester said the Unmarked Graves of the First World War Program would provide funding to help ex-service organisations, community groups and individuals properly acknowledge veterans' service at their place of rest.

"Australians owe all WWI veterans an enormous debt of gratitude, and acknowledging their final resting place with a marker recognising their service is a demonstration of that respect," he said.

"While the number of unmarked graves of First World War veterans is unknown, there are many individuals and special interest groups who are passionately committed to ensuring they are identified and commemorated."

"This program is an important step in ensuring every veteran who died after the WWI Armistice is remembered for their service and I would like to encourage communities right across Australia who are aware of unmarked graves to consider making an application."

An estimated 331,800 personnel deployed during WWI, of which over 60,000 were killed or are listed as missing in action.

This means approximately 271,800 service men and women returned to Australia after the war, of which about 137,000 were wounded.

"Sadly some of those who returned from the Great War ended up estranged from their families and many struggled with day-to-day living," Mr Chester said.

"We know that many were buried in unmarked graves across the nation."

"This program will be administered by the Office of Australian War Graves, which has responsibility for commemorating eligible veterans who died during, or because of war."

OAWG can be contacted via email [wargraves@dva.gov.au](mailto:wargraves@dva.gov.au) or on 1800 555 254. Further information can be accessed on the Department of Veterans' Affairs website.

## PROGRESS ON HUNTER-CLASS

Australia's naval shipbuilding endeavours notched up a significant achievement with the signing of the head contract for the Navy's Hunter-class frigates on 13 December 2018.

ASC Shipbuilding, a subsidiary of BAE Systems Australia, was signed up to the job at a formal ceremony at Osborne Naval Shipyard in Adelaide.

Minister for Defence Christopher Pyne and Minister for Finance Mathias Cormann congratulated everyone involved in the occasion.

"This is a fantastic day because we have delivered on our promise to sign this contract before the end of the year," Minister Pyne said.

"The \$35 billion program will provide the Navy with a world-class anti-submarine warfare

capability, create thousands of jobs and contribute billions of dollars to the national economy."

Minister Cormann said the Australian steel industry would benefit with approximately 48,000 tonnes of steel required.

Lockheed Martin, Saab and Raytheon have all been subcontracted to deliver and

integrate various elements of the complex ships' combat suite, based on the US Aegis system – which is already fitted to the three Hobart-class air warfare destroyers.

The first Hunter-class frigate will enter service in about 10 years, replacing the Anzac-class frigates.



## NO DAWN SERVICE AT VB

There will be no Anzac Day Dawn Service at Villers-Bretonneux this year – in favour of a 10am service.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs notified battlefield tour operators of this significant change on 24 January 2019 – just three months out from the event – and, while the information is now promulgated on the DVA web site, we have no idea when it was put there and saw no communiqués on this important public information.

## COVENANT, PIN

The Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant encourages Australians to recognise and acknowledge military service, and support veterans and their families.

New veteran cards and lapel pins will identify eligible veterans – those who served at least one day's service and are willing to register as

a DVA client – and will be issued automatically.

Veterans who are unwilling to register with DVA will not be sent a card or lapel pin.

## CONTRACTS

ManPowerGroup was awarded a two-year extension to their ADF recruiting contract in January, which they have serviced since 2003.

Around the same time, MediBank Health Services lost its \$billion contract for garrison health services delivery to Bupa, who subcontracted it to Serco.

The initial six-year term of the contract, which begins on 1 July 2019, is worth \$1.01bn.

## NEW GG

Queen Elizabeth has approved the appointment of General David Hurley as Australia's 27th Governor-General, replacing General Sir Peter Cosgrove.

The handover will take place on 28 June 2019.

## RAAF EASES BACK ON OKRA

The RAAF's E-7A Wedgetail Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft completed its final rotation in support of Operation Okra in February.

The Australian Defence Force says it will work alongside Coalition and NATO partners with future deployments of the KC-30 Multi-Role Tanker Transport aircraft, but only on a non-continuous basis.

The KC-30 tanker will recommence air-to-air refuelling operations over Iraq and Syria later this year.

RAAF's fighter jets were withdrawn from theatre in January last year.

## FIRST PACIFIC PB

Papua New Guinea Defence Force celebrated the commissioning of the first Guardian-class Pacific patrol boat, HMPNGS Ted Diro, on 1 February, with Chief of the Australian Defence Force

Last E-7A Wedgetail on Op Okra



and the Ship's Company of HMAS Wollongong in attendance at the ceremony.

Ted Diro is the first of 21 Guardian-class patrol boats to be gifted to 12 Pacific-island countries and Timor-Leste under the Pacific Maritime Security Program, the successor to the original Pacific Patrol Boat Program in which Australia gifted vessels to Pacific-island nations between 1987 and 1997.

The patrol-boat program is part of a \$2billion Australian security plan to help Pacific-island nations safeguard their maritime sovereignty over the next 30 years.

## HEADS UP



### C-RAM WAVES

In late December, Saab received an order from the Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group (CASG) on behalf of the Australian Army to update the Wireless Audio Visual Emergency System (WAVES) equipment for the Counter Rocket, Artillery and Mortar (C-RAM) System.

WAVES provides early warning audible and visual alerts when C-RAM sensors detect and identify an incoming threat within an exclusion zone.

C-RAM (comprised of multiple

An Australian C-RAM system in action in Tarin Kot, Afghanistan, 2012.  
Photo by Corporal Mark Doran.

sensors, C2 nodes and warning systems) is an essential capability to protect friendly forces from hostile fire by detecting and warning against small, mobile and hard-to-find threats such as rockets, artillery and mortar fire.

The Commonwealth's C-RAM solution is built around the Saab Giraffe Agile Multi-Beam (AMB) radar.

Saab Australia provides in-service support for the Australian Defence Force C-RAM system.

Head of Saab surveillance Anders Carp said the WAVES upgrade order was further proof of Saab's strong position as a C-RAM world-wide supplier with the Giraffe AMB as the surface-radar system of choice for a number of customers world wide, including Australia, United Kingdom, Sweden and France.

Managing Director of Saab Australia Andy Keough said the contract also demonstrated Saab's strong commitment to build and maintain in-country support capabilities.



### 81MM MORTARS

NIOA has been awarded a three-year contract to supply the ADF with 81mm practice and high-explosive mortar ammunition. The contract is worth \$81.6million.

NIOA Managing Director Robert Nioa said this acquisition would allow Army to sustain its current mortar capability as they move towards modernisation of the 81mm mortar fleet with a lighter-weight system under project LAND 136 Phase 1, complimented by new munitions under LAND 8115.

"The 81mm supply program expands NIOA's capability to support the ADF's current and future indirect fires goals," Mr Nioa said.

"We have teamed with Day and Zimmermann in the United States to deliver the 81mm ammunition contract with the acknowledged support of the US Army Joint Program Executive Office - Armaments and Ammunition."

Day and Zimmermann are a major provider of mortar munitions to the US government, delivering more than 250,000 mortar rounds per year for the US military and foreign allies.

Routine servicing of the colossal C-17A Globemasters at Amberley's No. 36 Squadron is now getting a little help from a Phantom.

The drone's value is evident during the Home Station Check - a routine servicing on every C-17A every 180 days - that includes looking for paint or other surface damage on the aircraft, including on its tail, nearly 17m above ground.

Previously, maintenance teams had to use elevated platforms, or climb through a small tunnel inside the vertical stabiliser to check the tail section, in an inspection that took hours of preparation and involved serious risk of falls.

Now inspections are done in 30 minutes with all feet planted firmly on the ground.

As a bonus, high-res photo records are built up over time.



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# SUN BEGINS TO SET ON RAAF 'CLASSIC' HORNETS



RAAF F/A-18A A21-053 enjoys one of her last sunsets in Australian ownership during Exercise Red Flag 19-1 in Nevada, USA. After the exercise concluded, A21-053 and A21-055 were ferried to Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake, in Alberta – the first two of 25 Australian F/A-18 (plus spares and ground equipment) sold to the Royal Canadian Air Force to bolster their fighter fleet while they decide which future fighter to purchase. The pair of Aussies landed in Cold Lake on Saturday 16 February and were formally accepted during an indoor ceremony the following day. They will shortly go through an upgrade/modification program before joining the active Canadian fleet. Of the 'up to 25' aircraft sold to Canada, 18 will be made flight ready while the balance will be used for training and for spare parts. Australia got \$90million dollars from the sale.

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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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# F-35A

# Lightning II

“Replaces nothing –  
but changes everything”



WORDS AND PHOTOS BRIAN HARTIGAN



**The first two of 72 Australian F-35A Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters to be based in Australia landed at RAAF Base Williamtown on 10 December 2018.**

It was a truly historic occasion as A35-009 and A35-010, the first of a new fighter fleet took residence in brand new and very impressive facilities at the RAAF base north of Newcastle, New South Wales.

Thousands turned out to see the arrival – with so many spectators outside the fence that the RAAF organised port-a-loos and traffic control to keep things running smoothly.

Inside the wire, a large and enthusiastic media contingent – including CONTACT – got excellent air-side vantage pozzies for the touchdown.

Before the grand entrance, a single F/A-18 put on a cool and close aerobatic display.

Then the stars of the show appeared on the horizon, escorted by four F/A-18As in very close formation.

As the four Hornets landed and taxied out of the way, the two Lightnings did two more passes, showing off their beautiful lines (yes, I am a fan ;-).

The waft of burnt jet fuel along the airfield was another delight.

As Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove, Governor of New South Wales David Hurley (since designated to replace General Cosgrove in the top job), Minister for Defence Christopher Pyne, Minister for Defence Industry Steve Ciobo, Chief of Defence Force General Angus Campbell and a very-happy Chief of Air Force Air Marshall Leo Davies – led their VIP entourage, the size of which has probably never been witnessed in Williamtown (nor many other places), to their seats, the media scrum were bussed to 3 Squadron's heavily fenced aircraft compound for an excellently close view of the two new jets roosting in their flash new 'car ports'.

Much of the speechifying was predictable – until Chief of Air Force got up.



"Ladies and gentlemen, how do you make an air chief happy," Air Marshall Davies said, indicating the two jets over his shoulder.

"The F-35 is not just a 5<sup>th</sup> generation fighter, with speed and agility and advanced information systems, it is a catalyst for transforming us into a 5<sup>th</sup> generation fighting force.

"An integrated Australian Defence Force is greater than the sum of its parts and the F-35 has been a driver for this change.

"The F-35 replaces nothing – it changes everything."

He said that while it was a modest beginning with just two jets, a dozen pilots and 40 maintainers, the arrival of the first two aircraft in Australia represented the transformation of the Royal Australian Air Force.

"Today, ladies and gentlemen, the naysayers can take a seat – this is our day."

Vice Admiral Mat Winter, F-35 Program Executive Officer, was my favourite speaker on the day – his classic US Marine Corps drawl and persona only excentuating the power of his oration.

"This delivery and the start of formal operational testing is a milestone more than 18 years in the making.

"It is the culmination of years of hard work and dedication from the joint government and industry team who completed the most comprehensive, rigorous and safest developmental flight test program in aviation history."

Those are just a few highlights of his speech I managed to pinch from another source. I'm sorry I didn't record the lot and can't find a transcript or remember the specifics of it – but I do remember feeling just a little bit goose-bumped by his delivery.

The two aircraft delivered on this day – A35-009 and A35-010 – were actually handed over to the

RAAF in August and September 2018 and were the first to be accepted directly into an Australian operational unit under RAAF airworthiness authority.

The previous eight were delivered into the US/ international pilot-training program at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

Ten nations are currently flying F-35s and, with the RAAF's first two arrivals, Australia becomes the

7<sup>th</sup> nation with F-35 aircraft based on home soil, joining the US, UK, Italy, Norway, Israel and Japan – and with the formal commencement of flying operations out of RAAF Base Williamtown, F-35s are now operating from 16 bases worldwide.

The RAAF expects to receive another eight F-35s at Williamtown this year and that 3 Squadron will reach Initial Operating Capability (capable of going to war) by next year.





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**LIGHTNING II**

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# F-35 SCORECARD AT RED FLAG 19-1

Words USAF 388<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing  
Photos RAAF Corporal David Cotton



AIRMEN FROM THE 388<sup>TH</sup> FIGHTER WING'S 4<sup>TH</sup> FIGHTER SQUADRON WRAPPED UP FLYING OPERATIONS WITH THE F-35A LIGHTNING II IN AN "EXPONENTIALLY MORE CHALLENGING" RED FLAG 19-1 IN FEBRUARY – INTEGRATING THE F-35A INTO A LARGE, CAPABLE 'BLUE FORCE' IN DIVERSE MISSIONS AGAINST AN EQUALLY CAPABLE 'RED FORCE'.



Nearly 3000 personnel from 39 units participated in the exercise, including the US Navy, US Air Force, Royal Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force.

The Red Force was made up of hybrid threats, combinations of the "most advanced weapons systems out there," meant to replicate "near-peer" enemies in a large-scale conflict, in a shift closely aligning with the US National Defense Strategy.

388<sup>th</sup> Operations Group commander Colonel Joshua Wood said the first time he attended Red Flag, in 2004, tactics were the same as they had been since the early 1980s.

"Now, the threat and complexity are at a whole different level," Colonel Wood said.

"It's no longer assumed that we will gain and maintain air superiority – that's a big shift."

Red Flag aggressors encompass the whole spectrum of an adversary force – advanced integrated air-defense systems, an adversary air force, cyber-warfare and information operations.

Because of these diverse capabilities, many Red Flag missions are flown in "contested or denied" environments with active electronic-attack, communications-jamming, and GPS denial.

"Those situations highlight the fifth-generation capabilities of the F-35," Colonel Wood said.

4<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron commander Lieutenant Colonel Yosef Morris said they were still able to operate and be successful in such environments.

"In a lot of cases we have a large role as an integrated quarterback," he said.

"Our ability to continue to fuse and pass information to the entire package makes every aircraft more survivable."

During the first week of Red Flag, F-35 pilots flew in a larger force of Blue Air in a counter-air mission, with more than 60 aggressor aircraft flying against them, blinding many of the fourth-generation aircraft with "robust" electronic-attack capabilities – but not the F-35.

"I've never seen anything like it before," Colonel Wood said.

"This is not a mission you'd normally want a young pilot flying in, but my wingman was a brand new F-35A pilot, seven or eight flights out of training."

"He gets on the radio and tells an experienced, 3000-hour pilot in a very capable fourth-generation aircraft – "Hey bud, you need to turn around, you're about to die –there's a threat off your nose"."

The young pilot then 'killed' the enemy aircraft and had three more kills in the hour-long mission.

"Even in this extremely challenging environment, the F-35 didn't have many difficulties doing its job," Colonel Wood said.

"That's a testament to the pilot's training and the capabilities of the jet."

One of the most valuable things about this exercise for the 4<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron was the experience it provided younger pilots flying combat missions as part of an integrated force. Thirteen pilots in the squadron had never flown the F-35 in Red Flag, and four of them just graduated pilot training.

New F-35A pilot 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Landon Moores said he was told Red Flag was the most realistic thing short of actual combat.

"It's been pretty intense," he said.

Missions aren't just 90-minute flights. They require 12-hours of intense planning the day before, a two-hour pre-brief, and then several hours of debriefing after the mission – dissecting the outcome and looking for ways to improve.

"It's not like we just come back and high-five if we're successful," Lieutenant Colonel Morris said.

"Could we have done better? Did we have all the resources we needed? Often the brief and debrief are the most valuable parts of Red Flag, especially for younger pilots."

Red Flag is not a 'rolling campaign'. It's made up of different scenarios that increase in difficulty as the weeks go on. This allows the integrated force to learn how best to capitalise on the strengths and protect the weaknesses of each platform in very specific mission sets.

"With stealth, the F-35 can get closer to threats than many other aircraft can. Combined with the performance of the fused sensors on the F-35, we can significantly contribute to the majority of the missions," Lieutenant Colonel Morris said.

4<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron brought 12 aircraft and more than 200 airmen to the three-week exercise – pilots, maintainers, intelligence officers, weapons crews and support personnel, including reservists from the 419<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing. Maintainers didn't lose a single sortie to a maintenance ground-abort and had spare aircraft available for every mission.

"As this aircraft matures, we continue to see it be a significant force-multiplier in a threat-dense environment," Lieutenant Colonel Morris said.

"Red Flag was a success for us and has made our younger pilots more lethal and more confident."



# MILITARY

# LIFELINE

For days, a monsoonal trough soaked north Queensland and, by January 31, the situation in Townsville and the broader region was dire. The deluge was predicted to continue at record levels and the Ross River Dam was already full.

That's when 3 Brigade clicked into high gear.



WORDS FLYING OFFICER CLARICE HURREN AND CAPTAIN DEAN BENSON

MAIN: 5<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment soldiers load bottled water on to an MRH-90 for delivery to Cungulla, Queensland, isolated by flood water. Photo by Private Brodie Cross.

RIGHT: A convoy of APCs negotiate flood-damaged areas of Townsville. Photo by Major Al Green.

**Led by the Townsville Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG), Townsville's emergency services, including the Army (with further support from Air Force later on), began planning for what was about to happen.**

The men and women of 3rd Brigade started filling sandbags in earnest, loading them onto trucks ready to take them where directed.

Brigade HQ assembled and set up its Joint Operations Room. Notice to move was decreased across the brigade.

On the morning of February 1, the official request from the LDMG came.

Within 30 minutes, reconnaissance parties were out the door, surveying the areas where water was rapidly rising. Work parties accompanied by trucks loaded with sand bags were dispatched and platoons of personnel began sandbagging threatened homes.

As the waters continued to rise and modelling of the impact and potential flooding threat became clear, it was evident that sandbagging operations alone would not be enough. On the morning of February 2, the Brigade supported evacuation efforts through door knocking and providing information.

That evening, Air Force flew in more sandbags. These were filled and stacked and distributed to the community.

Defence continued to aid police and other civil authorities in their evacuation efforts.

On February 3, an official request for significant support was received by the government and Joint Task Force 658 was formed.

With its unique capabilities right on the doorstep, Townsville City Council and the emergency services called on the JTF to assist with evacuations of those caught by the rapidly rising floodwaters.

Using a range of vehicles, including Bushmasters and ASLAVs and new-to-service Land 121 vehicles, the JTF assisted civil authorities ensuring the safety of the Townsville community.

But the rain just kept coming. The dam was now overflowing, so its gates were opened to prevent disaster.

Being in the right place at the right time became imperative. From noon on 3 February to 5am on the 4<sup>th</sup>, the JTF evacuated more than 600 residents stranded in their homes.

When the floodwaters became too deep and the current too dangerous, small boats replaced the military vehicles.

In absolute darkness and driving rain, the task force ferried members of the community to the safety of the Lavarack Barracks Gym, converted into a short-term evacuation centre.

The next morning, a new team of boats were out on the water retrieving those who had spent the night in sodden homes, with no electricity and no way of getting out.

The speed at which the task force was able to react showed the readiness which all its elements are able to maintain, albeit in a 'reset year'.

The courage of members and their bias for action was clear at every turn. Most encouraging was the teamwork displayed – not just throughout the JTF, but importantly with emergency services too.

As the waters began to recede, a harsh reality came to light. The very troops who were instrumental in saving the lives of so many in Townsville faced the daunting realisation that they too had lost their homes.

Regardless, the JTF immediately began planning the recovery effort. The initial focus would be on immediate assistance to the civil authorities in gaining access to critical infrastructure...



Photo by Private Brodie Cross.



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These efforts were rapidly followed by a systematic approach to getting schools, child-care centres and community facilities back up and running.

The next phase saw the JTF assist the council with kerb-side rubbish removal. But, with two out of three homes in Townsville affected, this task was bigger than most could imagine.

More than 2800 ADF personnel from Army and Air Force were actively engaged in supporting the disaster response.

## FURTHER AFIELD

While Joint Task Force 658 was busy cleaning up Townsville, a sister task force, JTF 646 was established to help the flood-ravaged central and north-west of the State.

With thick mud underneath and the stench of dead cattle all around, the thumping hum of approaching MRH90 helicopters brought a vital lifeline to those most in need.

"If it doesn't come by air, then we've got nothing," grazier Holly Stevens said amidst starving cattle on her remote Cremona property in north-west Queensland.

Holly and her husband David were just two of the scores of farmers who lost hundreds if not thousands of livestock as floodwaters destroyed vast areas of fodder across Queensland – particularly the shires of McKinlay, Cloncurry, Richmond and Winton.

With vast stretches of road still completely cut-off and submerged, the only way to help was by air.

On hand to assist in some of the hardest hit and most remote areas was a massive ADF effort, aided by a staunchly resilient local population determined not to let one of the worst disasters in recent history knock them down.

"We had 30 inches of rainfall in 10 days and more than 12 inches in just one day. It was phenomenal and we just couldn't do anything," Holly said.

"The cattle here would've been dead by now if

the Defence Force didn't bring some feed in. We really appreciate it, but we're not out of the woods yet."

5<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment was at the forefront of the ADF's operations in the west, delivering 30 tonnes of life-saving feed to stranded livestock on three MRH90s.

"The situation here in central Queensland is dire," Officer Commanding B Squadron, 5 Aviation Regiment, Major Richard Ward said.

"There are a lot of dead cattle out there but there are also a lot of isolated cattle, and without that food they don't really stand a chance.

"Our personnel here know how important the cattle are to the survival of these communities.

"A lot of them have friends and family back in Townsville affected by the floods, so for them to come out on a very quick deployment and provide such an amazing effort has made me very proud."

Teams from 9 and 10 Force Support Battalions set up refuelling points in the towns of Richmond and Julia Creek, allowing farmers and civilian contractors to get their own helicopters in the air to deliver feed to starving cattle cut off by the floodwater.

Brigadier Stephen Jobson, Commander JTF646 praised the efforts of local community members in helping his people to be as targeted and efficient with their assistance as possible.

"This is a massive operation from members of all three services that has been conducted shoulder-to-shoulder with members of the affected communities," he said.

"These people have helped us be efficient and effective with our resources. The spirit they've shown out here has been incredible and all of the local councils have really pulled together.

"They've come up with the plan and priorities of where the fodder is going and so we've really managed to develop an excellent relationship with them in this tough time."

Defence experts in environmental health, logistics, engineering, veterinary science and planning deployed to Julia Creek to help local councils develop and implement a robust long-term recovery plan.

## HUB AND SPOKE

RAAF's 35 Squadron's C-27J aircraft and personnel from RAAF Base Amberley responded swiftly to deliver personnel and urgent fuel stocks to Mt Isa and western Queensland in support of the flood emergency.

The first two flights to western Queensland on February 9 were the first of the year for the squadron, marking the start of flying operations from their new base at Amberley two days earlier than scheduled.

Loadmaster Sergeant Jay Goggin said two



ABOVE: An unnamed soldier from 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, assists Townsville residents sandbag their home. Photo by Lance Corporal Allan Firth.

TOP LEFT: Bombardier Sam Stewart, Sergeant Jacob Garlick, Lieutenant Jack Cailles and Bombardier Christopher Broderick from 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, assess houses in immediate risk of flooding. Photo by Private Brodie Cross.

BOTTOM LEFT: Members of JTF 568 prepare to launch F470 Zodiacs to search flooded suburbs of Townsville for stranded residents and to assess damage. Photo by Private Brodie Cross.



View from a C-27J Spartan on approach to Normanton. Photo by Sergeant Andrew Eddie.

C-27J Spartans and crew worked with Army personnel from 9th Force Support Battalion to load collapsible bladders containing 1895 litres of much-needed fuel.

"The fuel bladders were delivered to the isolated areas of Richmond and Julia Creek for local civilian helicopters dropping fodder and hay to farmers and livestock devastated by the extreme weather conditions," Sergeant Goggin said.

Squadron Leader Mark Seery, XO 35 Squadron, said the deployed team consisted of pilots, loadmasters, technicians and engineers who flew the supplies more than 1500km to western Queensland.

"The C-27J Spartan is an agile aircraft that can land in austere airfields and along dirt strips enabling the quick insertion of supplies to areas that need it most, and would have otherwise been inaccessible for larger aircraft or via road transport," Squadron Leader Seery said.

35 Squadron will continue to provide assistance in support of the north Queensland flood relief efforts over the coming weeks.

CO 35 Squadron Wing Commander Ben Poxon said the ongoing flood relief response was a "hub and spoke" operation that highlighted the strength and flexibility of the air-mobility fleet.

The squadron worked closely with C-17A Globemasters to move more supplies to those affected by the floods.

"The C-17A flew multiple fuel bladders into larger,

more established airfields such as Mt Isa airport – the hub – from where the C-27J transported to smaller, remote airfields – the spokes – where Army personnel are waiting to unload," he said.

## AIR BRIDGE

In one 24-hour period, No 36 Squadron and No 23 Squadron air movements delivered much-needed groceries following an urgent request for support from flood-ravaged Townsville.

Extreme weather conditions and unprecedented flooding cut off the movement of essential supplies and fresh food into the flooded areas of north Queensland via road and rail.

Air Movements Support Flight Commander Squadron Leader Ben Barber said a 40-strong team of movements, supply and loadmaster personnel came together on February 5 at RAAF Base Amberley to unload and pack 72 tonnes of stores trucked onto base by Woolworths and Coles.

"The first C-17A Globemaster was loaded with 90,000 pounds of supplies and the second had 53,000 pounds," Squadron Leader Barber said.

"This included fresh fruit and vegetables as well as essentials such as bottled water."

Flight Lieutenant Tim Smith, captain of the second C-17A, said helping the community in emergency situations like this was a rewarding experience for the crew and not a task they took lightly.

Echoing the sentiment, CO 36 Squadron Wing

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MAIN: Essential supplies loading onto a C-17A Globemaster at Amberley, west of Brisbane. Photo by Corporal Nicci Freeman.

BELOW: Bombardier Tyler Wolfenden and Gunner William Wakefield rescue a local from floodwaters. Photo from unit Facebook page.

Commander Steve Ferguson said the squadron was committed to being the asset of choice for ADF responses to humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

"We have a unique capability to respond quickly and on a large scale to disaster relief efforts both at home in Australia and in our region," he said.

"36 Squadron takes pride in being among the first responders.

"I also commend those in Townsville who were on the ground assisting, and continue to, despite their own homes being affected by floodwaters."

## LIFE SAVERS

Bombardier Tyler Wolfenden and Gunner William Wakefield describe themselves as 'just your average soldiers', but the pair proved themselves a fair bit above average when they sprang into action as a life-threatening situation unfolded near the Townsville RSL.

During the start of the inundation, a small team of soldiers were placing sandbags at ingress points around the Townsville RSL Club when a member of public got into difficulty passing a flooded culvert on Charters Towers Road.

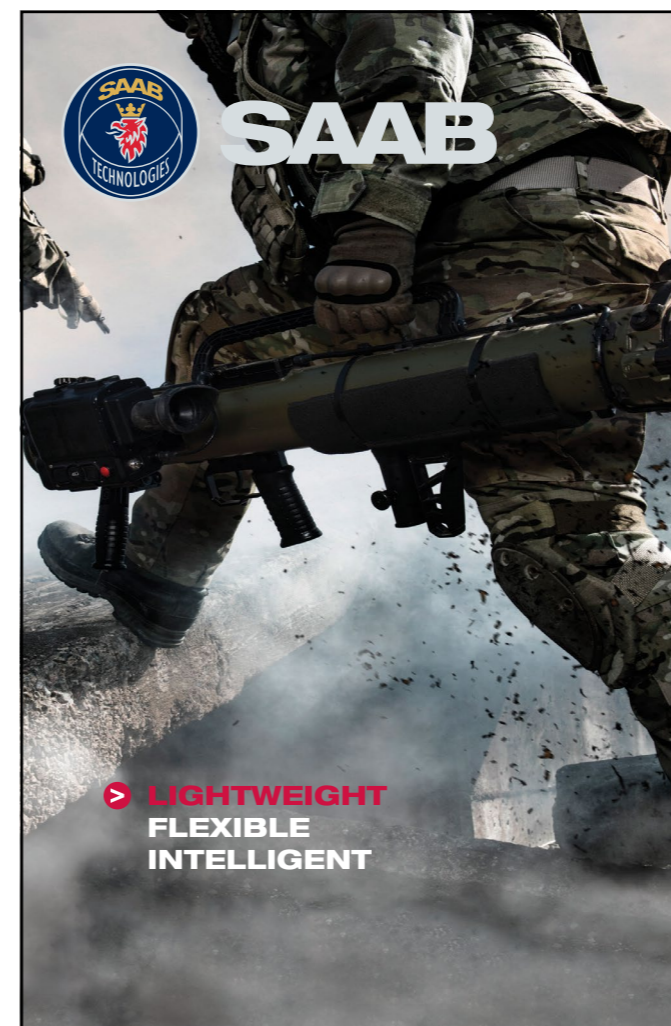
The man had underestimated the strength of the current and was clinging precariously to a guardrail.

Alerted to the situation, Gunner Wakefield and



Bombardier Wolfenden immediately ran through the swift water and secured the man, preventing him from losing his grip and being swept down the flood-swollen creek.

Other Defence members quickly arrived and assisted in removing the man from the hazardous area, which later saw three vehicles, including a police car, swept away by the fierce current.



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The Royal Australian Infantry Corps and the Royal Australian Regiment officially celebrated their 70<sup>th</sup> birthdays in November last year. We take this opportunity to re-publish key elements of a collection of stories from an **Infantry-only Special Issue** we published to mark the occasion of their 60<sup>th</sup> birthdays. We think these stories are as powerful and relevant today as they were 10 years ago – and many of you may have missed them first time around anyway.

# As it was in the beginning

Until 1950 the Defence Act precluded the raising of full-time or 'standing' infantry, armour or cavalry units in Australia. In fact, when the Darwin Mobile Force was raised in 1939, 'infantry' soldiers were actually enlisted as artillerymen – even using the ranks of gunner and bombardier. Legislation also prevented any soldier from serving overseas unless he specifically volunteered to do so. For this reason, after the outbreak of each of the World Wars, an Australian Imperial Force was raised on a volunteer basis for overseas service.

The perceived threat of Japanese invasion in 1942 did see Australian militia used overseas, but these were sent to carefully defined areas that were mostly Australian territories in Papua and New Guinea.

Australia fought the Second World War with three armies – the Permanent Military Forces (PMF), the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and the militia – each with its own conditions of service.

While most soldiers who had fought during the war simply wished to be sent home as soon as the fighting stopped, there was still a clear need for full-time soldiers to carry on with the occupation of Japan, supervision of surrendered Japanese forces, holding of Borneo and the Dutch East Indies until British and Dutch forces could take over, and returning military equipment to Australia from various theatres around the world.

Planning for a post-war army had actually begun as early as 1944 and, at least within Army ranks, there was a clear assumption that a regular field-force of all arms would be required.

Three regular infantry battalions – the 65<sup>th</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup> and 67<sup>th</sup> Battalions – were drawn together from the ranks of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Divisions and sent, with other arms and services, to Japan, as the 34<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which arrived in February 1946.

Because they were to serve overseas, all members of the 34<sup>th</sup> Brigade had to be members of the AIF, or willing to transfer to the AIF. Interestingly, this deployment was still covered under provisions of war-time legislation that effectively remained in force until 1952.

Back in Australia, however, the wartime system of administering the Army had reverted to the peacetime system, with a military board exercising control. High on the priorities list for this board was the raising of a regular army with a field-force element.

Although the brigade in Japan was legally part of the AIF and covered under war-time legislation, authorities in Australia began talking of it in terms of it already being the new regular force. The 'Interim Army' was a term bandied about as a convenient descriptor when discussing administrative matters in relation to the boys in Japan.

In February 1946 recruiting for the 'interim forces' began, with an initial two-year voluntary enlistment period. The Interim Army was officially created in May 1946 but the legislation was officially back-dated to October 1945.

By February 1947, all volunteers wishing to continue their service had been transferred to the Interim Army, and the AIF was officially disbanded in June 1947.



*Soldiers of D Coy 2RAR demolish defences following the Korean ceasefire, at Majon'ni, Korea, 29 July 1953.*

In August 1947 the Military Board suggested the Defence Act should be amended so that the PMF became the Regular Army with an initial enlistment period of six years. The minister agreed in September 1947, although the changes were not legislated for several years. In November 1947 the Board directed that the term Australian Regular Army should be used from then on, except for certain legal purposes.

By 1948, most other contributing countries had withdrawn their forces from Japan, leaving 34<sup>th</sup> Brigade to represent the armies of the Commonwealth. In November 1948 the Australian battalions were redesignated 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions of the Australian Regiment.

In December all but 3AR (which was destined for Korea) were withdrawn from Japan. On arrival in Australia, 34<sup>th</sup> Brigade was redesignated 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade and its units dispersed around New South Wales and Victoria.

For the first time in its short history, Australia had a full-time infantry brigade during peacetime.

In March 1949 the Australian Regiment was granted the prefix Royal – the Royal Australian Regiment was born – thus making it harder for a

subsequent government to disband the regular infantry force.

On 1 January 1950 the Defence Act was finally amended to permit regular armoured and infantry units to be raised and maintained in peacetime.

On 25 June, the government announced that an Australian military contingent would join the UN forces in Korea and 3RAR was warned for active service on 2 August. Under existing regulations however, all members of the battalion had to formally re-volunteer for service in Korea even though they had volunteered to serve overseas in Japan. This point was not lost on the government and, in September 1950, it announced that all future enlistees could be required to serve anywhere and currently serving members would be invited to sign an undertaking for such service.

On 14 August 1952 the Interim Army was formally disbanded and all its personnel transferred to the Australian Regular Army or the Regular Army Special Reserve.

So, although it hasn't always been so, Australia today has an all-corps army – including full-time infantry – standing ready to commit to unrestricted service anywhere in the world, at short notice.

As with most customs and traditions in the Army today, Colours have no real value in themselves – yet they are a battalion's most treasured asset.

As a symbol they are beyond intrinsic value – they are the very embodiment of a battalion's spirit.

As such, a battalion's Colours are sacred. They are in fact consecrated and must be accorded dignity and protection as a sacred treasure.

Like most of our customs and traditions, the origins of the Colours can be traced back through the ages. As early as 5000 years ago, Egyptian armies rallied around a flag. Through medieval times, a commander's colours marked his place on the battlefield and served to keep his regiment together as a cohesive unit.

In times when noblemen had their own professional armies to protect their lands, it was in the individual soldier's best interest to know where his Colours and therefore his commander were, for it was there he got paid.

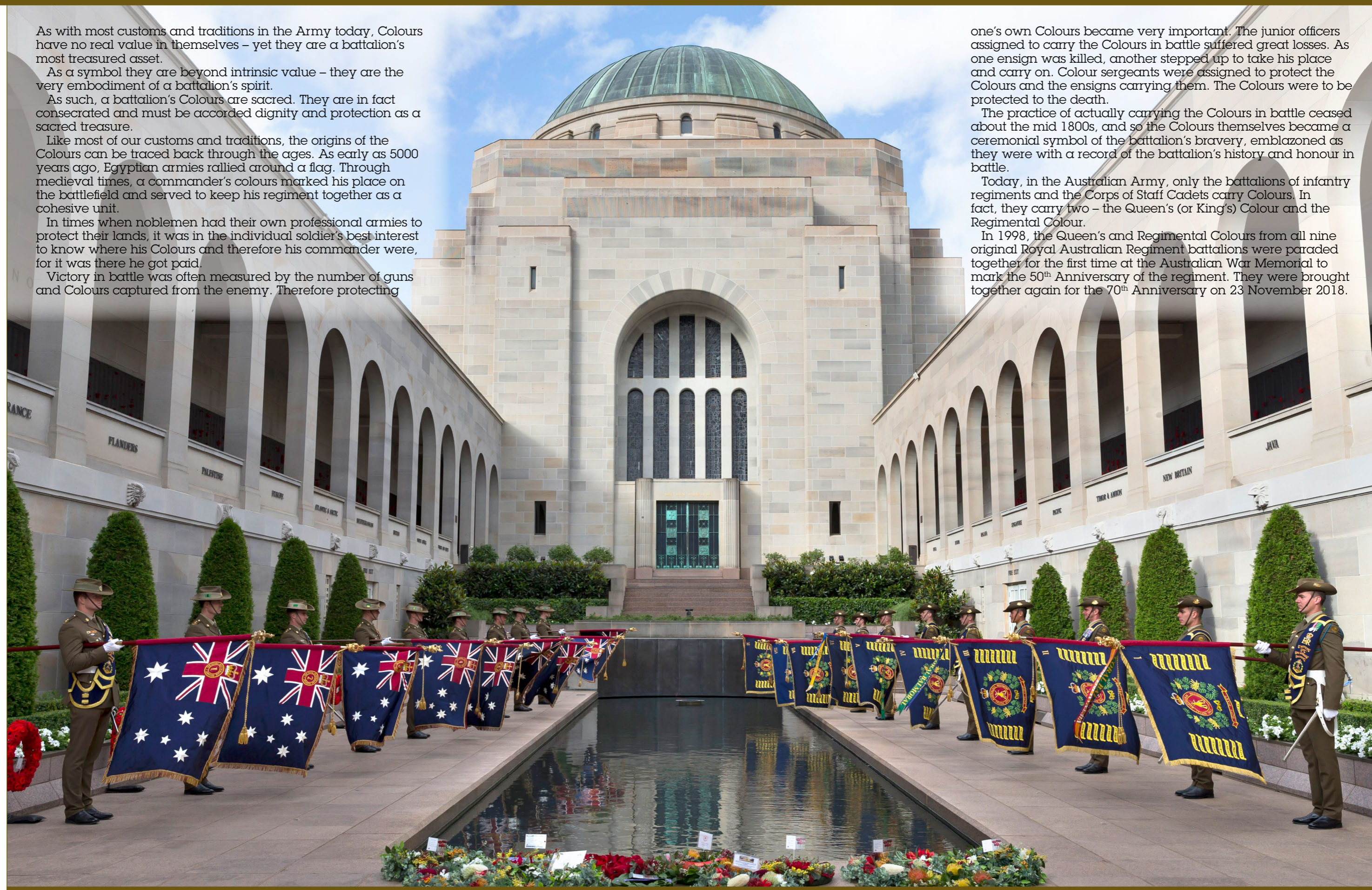
Victory in battle was often measured by the number of guns and Colours captured from the enemy. Therefore protecting

one's own Colours became very important. The junior officers assigned to carry the Colours in battle suffered great losses. As one ensign was killed, another stepped up to take his place and carry on. Colour sergeants were assigned to protect the Colours and the ensigns carrying them. The Colours were to be protected to the death.

The practice of actually carrying the Colours in battle ceased about the mid 1800s, and so the Colours themselves became a ceremonial symbol of the battalion's bravery, emblazoned as they were with a record of the battalion's history and honour in battle.

Today, in the Australian Army, only the battalions of infantry regiments and the Corps of Staff Cadets carry Colours. In fact, they carry two – the Queen's (or King's) Colour and the Regimental Colour.

In 1998, the Queen's and Regimental Colours from all nine original Royal Australian Regiment battalions were paraded together for the first time at the Australian War Memorial to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the regiment. They were brought together again for the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on 23 November 2018.



# BREAD <sup>and</sup> BUTTER

WORDS AJ SHINNER PICS ADF AND SHINNER COLLECTION

It's been said that you can sail past it, fly or drive over it, but the ground will never belong to you until an infantryman stands firm and digs a hole in it.

*The author on guard during an aid task.*

While respecting the other services and supporting corps, I must say I believe this statement is true and that even in the most non-conventional situations this is still and will probably always be the case.

But I'm also a firm believer in Mr Murphy, whose holy laws of combat don't always shine down in favour of the lowly infantryman.

After two solid years of close-country and jungle-warfare training with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, I probably should have expected that we were going to be deployed to the desert in northern Africa – thanks Murphy.

From day one in country we did it all – humanitarian missions, defended water points, protected convoys, manned vehicle

check points, kicked in some doors and yes, even dug a few holes.

Somalia in 1993 could never be considered a conventional old-school infantry operation, but like so many times before, the adaptable Aussie Digger put on his boots and learnt on the run.

While no strangers to low-level ops and humanitarian training, the only thing that we were truly prepared for and masters of was patrolling.

I personally felt we were never more in control of the ground than when we were on the streets of Baidoa getting our GP boots dirty.

Even more so while 'down town' lurking in the shadows and darkness at 3am and, quite frankly, we wouldn't have wanted it any other way.



The author geared up for patrol.



Cay support.



Flatley, Billy and Meehan outside a house they assaulted.

Although we took to the urban patrolling tasks in Baidoa – or, more correctly, in AO Falcon – like fish to water, the first few night patrols were a tad surreal.

While patrolling on the main streets and market places before 1am or so, we were surprised to find throngs of people still moving about, conducting business and socialising, most of them relatively unconcerned by our presence or passing.

It's easy to appreciate, after spending even the shortest time in Somalia, that many people living in hot arid countries prefer to move about on the streets later in the day and at night to avoid the oppressive heat.

One of the compromises we were forced to make while moving through these crowded areas came after the realisation that certain section weapons were instantly limited to the point of being virtually unusable.



Axel takes 5 during a cordon and search.

As gunner, I voiced my concerns to our section commander, Mac, about not being able to deploy my Minimi effectively while being boxed in by civilians.

It was made very clear to us before deploying that regardless of red or yellow cards, all contacts resulting in casualties or fatalities would be investigated fully and charges would be made if negligence or wrong-doings were discovered.

Letting rip a three-round burst in a crowded market place was never going to be justifiable and was definitely not going to win anybody's hearts or minds.

Opting for personal protection during these parts of the patrols, I ended up slinging the Minimi across my chest while carrying the Browning pistol and a torch in my off hand.

With Polly and his night-vision scope out in front of the section, followed by Gus and his goggles, we'd sift through the crowds and weed out any likely candidates for a random search.

On queue, I would then move to one side and illuminate the suspect with the torch as the rest of the section went into all-around defence and covered us as the boys carried out a quick search.

Of course, we were warned pre-deployment, that we were going to see a lot of weapons on the streets and it was stressed that not all of the people carrying weapons would be bad guys. We were told to be prepared for it, not to freak out and instinctively fire when seeing a weapon, to stick to the rules of engagement and not to fire unless fired upon and blah blah blah blah.

The fact is that nothing can prepare you for that first time – or second time for that matter – that you see the barrel of an AK47 being raised towards you at close range.

As a 17-year-old tourist in Sri Lanka I had taken a photo of a Naval Commando on a street corner in Colombo, which unfortunately resulted in me looking cross

eyed at an AK foresight no more than half a metre from my face as he screamed, "No pictures please, thank you sir!" Suffice to say, the undies I was wearing that day ended up in the bin.

Six years later, on one of our first night patrols in Baidoa, this time thankfully armed to the teeth, we were moving out of the crowded market area heading east on the main road.

I was about to re-holster my pistol and start patrolling with the Minimi again when Gus stopped in front of me and looked into the blackness of an open compound doorway.

In a very animated comical way, he proceeded to bob his head from side to side like a pigeon, as you do when you're wearing the crappy earlier generation night-vision goggles and can't see shit through the fuzzy green snow storm.

He then turned to me and whispered, "There's two guys sitting against the wall in there, zap them with the torch and check them out mate."

Gus moved to the other side of the opening, I moved up to the doorway, aimed the torch with my left hand and my pistol with the other and hit the switch.

For a split second the two locals seated not more than 5 metres away on a bench looked like Roos in a headlight, eyes as big as dinner plates with jaws open.

The next second the AK47 and SKS assault rifles they had resting on their laps were being raised towards me.

"WEAPON!" I dropped the torch which turned off as I released the button and, in a practised motion, brought both hands together, swiped the pistol's safety and pulled the trigger as I dove painfully onto the ground on top of the Minimi still slung across my chest.

As Murphy's Law of Combat dictates, the safety stuck and the Browning 9mm pistol sat quietly in my hands and, for what seemed like an eternity, I lay totally exposed in the doorway.

## THE NEXT SECOND THE AK47 AND SKS ASSAULT RIFLES THEY HAD RESTING ON THEIR LAPS WERE BEING RAISED TOWARDS ME

My brain was screaming as I tried to carry out the immediate-action drill on the pistol while digging in with my eyelids.

Cocking my head to one side I tried to use my peripheral vision to scan the darkness, suddenly aware that the next thing I should be seeing was the twin muzzle flashes of the assault rifles being fired at me from point-blank range.

In reality, only a few seconds passed as Smurf scrambled onto some rubbish to cover over the 6-foot wall as the section trampled over me in the doorway and burst into the compound.

As the last pair of boots passed over my back I tried to mentally stop the flow of adrenaline which was flooding my system and I joined the section in securing the two men and the warehouse compound.

Now shaking and full to the brim with adrenaline, I let rip a string of obscenities and abuse at the two males as Rock and Abs patted them down.

I was furious that the pistol's safety had stuck, totally pissed off that the incident had been a near fatal fuck up, ecstatic to still be alive, but completely embarrassed that I had ended up rolling around on the ground while the section did the deed.

In retrospect, if the pistol had worked and by some miracle I had actually hit my intended targets – which is highly unlikely – would it have been seen by the green machine as a lawful act of self-defence?

Bugged if I know, but thankfully there were no muzzle flashes or cracks of automatic fire. In their wisdom, the two locals, who turned out to be legitimate security guards, had thrown their rifles down as soon as they heard me scream in English.

For the second time after a close encounter with an AK, I changed my jocks, chalked it all up as a learning experience and never again, while deployed, used the safety on the pistol.

While night patrolling in AO Falcon, which was the eastern end of town, the three sections of Call Sign 3-2 were housed in walled NGO compounds close to each other and each in turn rotated through patrolling, gun pickets and sleeping.

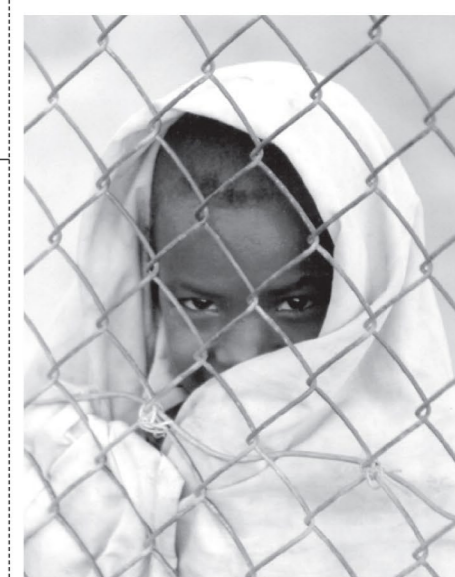
A section would finish each patrol by dropping their night-vision goggles, radios or any other shared items off to the next section, pass on any relevant intelligence and then head back off down the road to find their farter sacks. With the wisdom of hindsight, it's absurd to think that we were forced to juggle the most basic pieces of kit used by well-equipped modern armies.

Randomly, Mac, our section commander, would pick a guy to stay in the compound to man a radio and ensure our gear didn't get knocked off while the rest of the section kitted up and headed out into the darkness.

Although not as tactically productive as the earlier or last patrols of the night, the graveyard shift around 0300hrs was my favourite.

During these times, when the streets were clear of people, we could not only move around quickly and quietly, but we could also pop in and out of the labyrinth of alleyways without being easily monitored by the clansmen and their lookouts – a nice way to earn our bread and butter.

One very dark, moonless night, we were near to completing one of these tension-



filled graveyard-shift patrols when a torch popped on about 20 or 30 metres ahead, on the side of the road, about 3 or 4 metres off the ground.

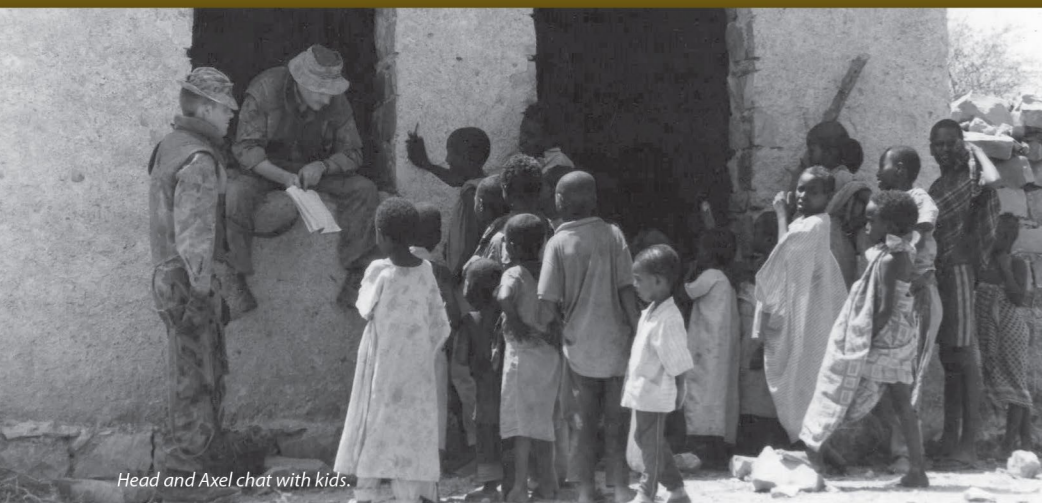
Gus and Polly instinctively trained their weapons onto the torch and slowly went down onto their knees.

Expecting the worst, I moved a metre to my left to clear Gus and lowered the Minimi slightly, clicked off the safety and adopted the textbook standing position for night firing.

Although we must have been at the maximum range of illumination of what appeared to be a hand-held torch, it never wavered and stayed firmly fixed on Gus and myself.

Then I became aware of a strange noise from the direction of the torch and it suddenly hit me that something was incredibly wrong.

As stealthy as the patrol had been, the fact that there had been no moon meant that, as a group, we were dependent on Mac and his map to pin-point our exact location and steer us home.



Head and Axel chat with kids.



Day-patrol through a marketplace.



3-2 Bravo patrol a back alley.

Although we had regularly passed known landmarks at various times during the patrol, at the point of encountering the torch I didn't have a clue where we were, how far we were from home, or how close we were to friendly forces.

After hearing a louder click from up ahead and knowing Polly to my left in the dark and Gus at my feet to my right would be taking up trigger pressures, I took a massive punt and called out "Australia".

A muffled "Shit" could be heard and the torch went out.

We moved up and practically bumped into the familiar shape of an APC that was parked outside the compound housing our Company HQ.

With the light of a dodgy, issued torch and no moonlight to adequately use the night-vision goggles, the APC commander had only just been able to make out that we were armed men and taking up hostile firing positions.

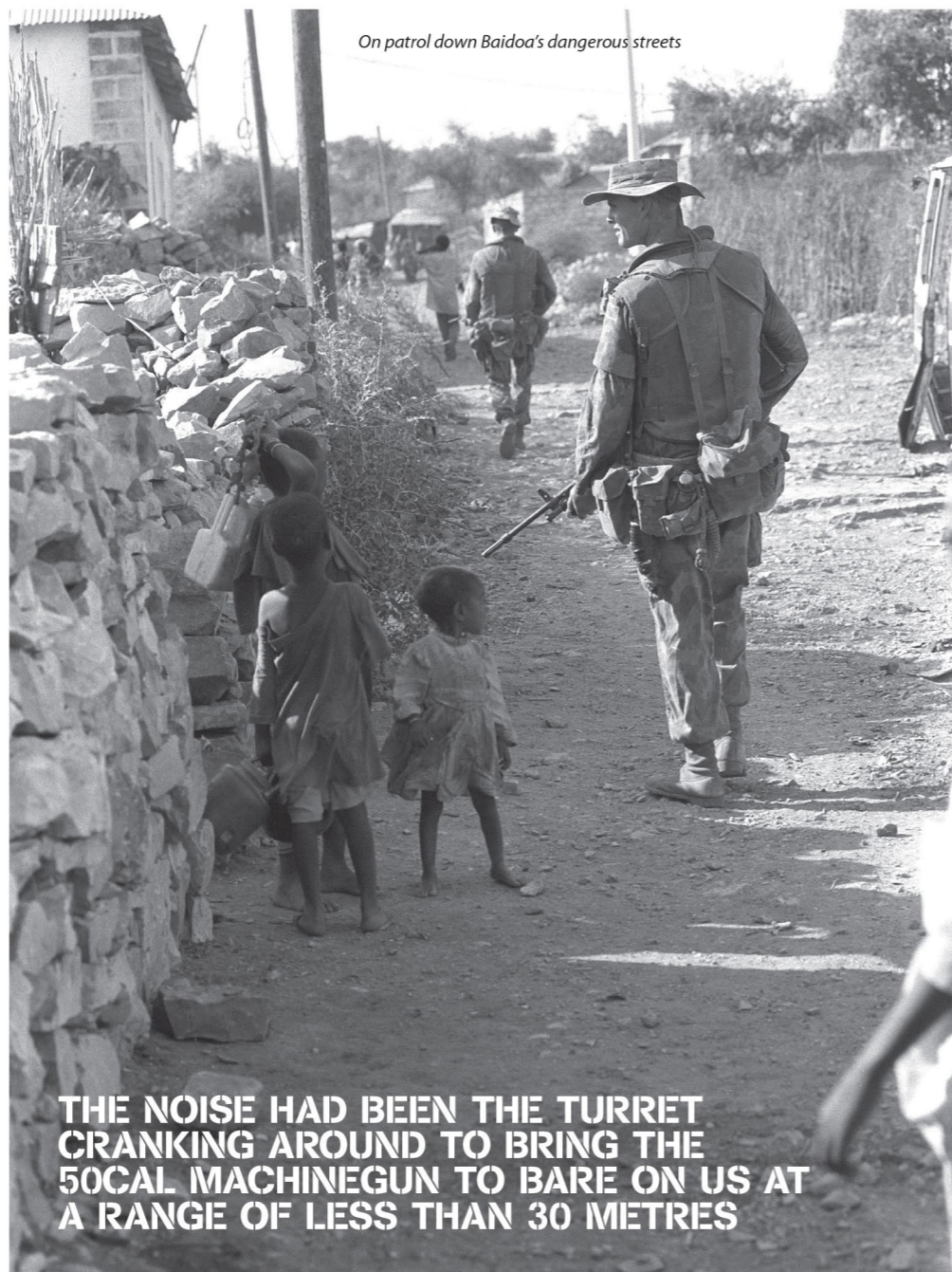
The noise had been the turret cranking around to bring the 50cal machinegun to bare on us at a range of less than 30 metres.

In our defence, on many occasions we were forced to operate without a GPS and, armed with only the crudest of maps, night navigation generally sucked and needed your full attention – even more so on a moonless night in the maze that was Baidoa's back streets.

I guess Mac had misjudged our position short by a few hundred metres and had not yet radioed ahead warning Coy HQ we were passing by.

I will be honest and say I had been rattled by the incident and made the effort the next day to find the person who had been in the APC turret.

Disturbingly, the Cav guy confirmed that we had scared the shit out of him and he was indeed bringing the 50cal to bear on what he thought was a group of bandits.



On patrol down Baidoa's dangerous streets

**THE NOISE HAD BEEN THE TURRET CRANKING AROUND TO BRING THE 50CAL MACHINEGUN TO BARE ON US AT A RANGE OF LESS THAN 30 METRES**

After a short conversation and a forced laugh, he looked me square in the eyes and confessed he had been very close to pulling the trigger.

The most memorable incidents from 3-2's night patrolling, and indeed the more interesting of all our contacts in Somalia, were undoubtedly the two involving 3-2 Charlie and what we all christened 'Billy's Contacts'.

Named after 3-2 Charlie's section commander, the two contacts in question occurred in 'Murder Alley' near the main marketplace, and both in the early hours of the morning.

The first of the two patrols was conducted from our tent at the airfield and was intended to cover the western end of town.

3-2 Charlie would leave via the front gate, head up towards the centre of town and pass down through the main market area, then pass along some of the southern back streets and back across the south bridge over the dry river bed and home.

Unknown to me because I was sound asleep and snoring my head off, Steve, 3-2 Charlie's lead scout had started to throw his guts up only hours before they were supposed to depart on task.

After finally convincing Steve that he wasn't well enough to go on patrol, Billy and Lively, 3-2 Charlie's 2IC, had a quick powwow and put Flatley in the lead-scout's position, and headed off into the night.

About 45 minutes later I was semi-conscious, laying on my cot, when the night was shattered by an intense fire-fight off in the distance.

Along with several other guys, I sat bolt upright. Knowing it must have been Billy's patrol, we quickly started gearing up and listened as the firing increased.

After the initial contact, where it was virtually impossible to pick out individual

weapons firing, there was a short silence then several long bursts from a Minimi followed by the louder thumps from what we guessed was an APC's 50cal, before there was finally silence.

It wasn't until I was pretty much ready to run out the door that it dawned on me that 3-2 wasn't the designated QRF and we were forced to stand and listen helplessly at the open end of the 11 x 11 tent.

It wasn't until Billy's section started filtering back into the tent after being dropped at the Coy HQ by APC that we understood what had transpired.

While patrolling along the infamous Murder Alley, Flatley had heard a weapon being cocked in a doorway in front of him and called out a warning.

The unseen gunman replied by firing a burst which hit Flatley's rifle, hand and night-vision goggles.

The section then put in covering fire so the scouts could move back to safety.

Day, the section radioman, was moving across the road to a new firing position and was hit in the shoulder. With his left arm starting to stiffen, Day called in a contact report along with his own casevac request.

As Billy got sorted and started withdrawing the section to the main road, Liveley and Blakey, with the section Minimi, laid down several bursts towards a few of the more bolder Somalis who were attempting to continue the fight.

During the fighting withdrawal, Day was continually on the radio vectoring in the APCs, which had started their race to the contact location as soon as the first rounds had been fired.

Hearing the APCs approach, Day guided them in the last few hundred metres and 3-2 Charlie loaded up.

After the section hit the ramp, the lead APC commander fired a few rounds from the 50cal to discourage several armed Somalis who had pursued 3-2 Charlie to the

extraction point. Unwilling to take on the heavier-calibre weapon, the bandits melted away into the darkness.

After a record-breaking run back to the airfield, it was confirmed at the RAP that Day had a clean entry and exit wound in the soft tissue of his left shoulder and Flatley, by some miracle, only had a chip out of his right hand.

The next morning we all inspected Flatley's rifle and goggles and were gobsmacked at how lucky he had been. Along with the three rounds that had destroyed his rifle and goggles, another round had passed through the blousing of his trousers above his left boot!

Call it Karma or whatever, but Steve was definitely not destined to go on that patrol and I'm convinced he would not still be walking this Earth if he did.

A day or two later the rest of 3-2 were moved into town to an NGO compound while 3-2 Charlie, Billy's section, stayed at the airfield to do a night patrol from there.

Later in our deployment this compound would become infamous for the 'Toga Party' that was held by several NGO groups. The hype built for several days about this party and we were disgusted to see vast amounts of money spent shipping in lobsters, steaks, beer and spirits from Kenya.

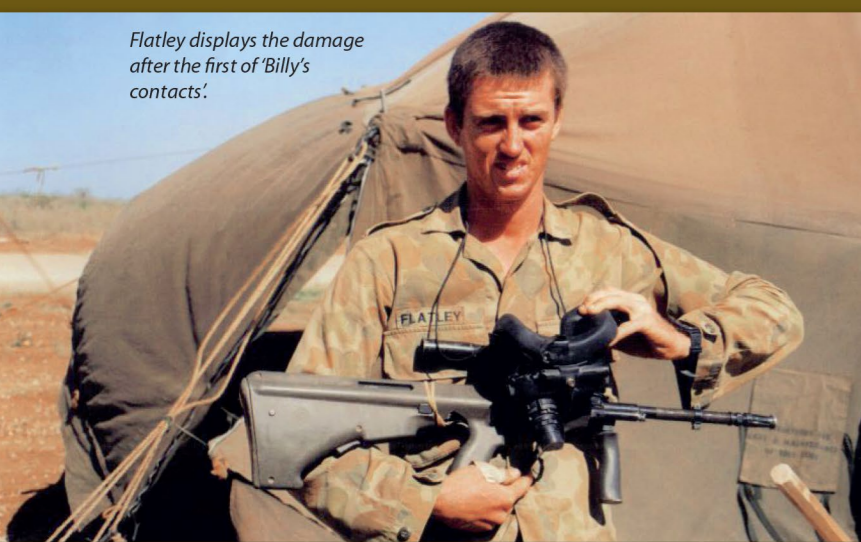
Actually, they probably deserved the distraction but, I think at the time, we were simply pissed that we weren't invited, although, at the very least, it was rather entertaining.

I can't help but smile remembering a group of us hearing a couple becoming very amorous and loud, enticing us to a side window where we watched the proceedings which ended in a female participant being left tied to a bed!

Anyway..... that's another story.

So, just a few days after the platoon's first major contact, Billy's section again geared up, left the tent, and headed out the front

Flatley displays the damage after the first of 'Billy's contacts'.



LAAW damage on a roof after missing the door.



gate at the same time of night, on the same patrol route.

I vividly remember lying out in the open, on my cot, stunned to see the sky light up seconds before the thunder of the initial contact reached us.

As the first exchange of gunfire started to die, only about a kilometre away there was another flash in the sky and an ominous boom.

I heard someone in the darkness yell RPG as we all scrambled for gear and weapons while Sarge screamed his tits off about mates dying due to our lack of professionalism and speed.

This time we were the QRF and it somehow felt very right to be running towards the APCs to go help our mates who were deeply involved in another major shitfight.

The drive took only minutes, but in that time a million pictures flashed through our heads about what we'd see when the ramps came down.

We had definitely heard one anti-armour weapon detonate, or at least a grenade, which we knew no one in Charlie Coy carried. We were expecting the worst.

When the ramps did come down we all carried out our drills and found cover, only to find the party very much over.

Steve would explain later that as they had cautiously come up to the same spot as the first contact, several locals had started shouting at them from doorways.

After a shouted warning back from Steve that they were Australians, the yelling increased, and an automatic burst from an AK erupted from a building at an intersection to their front.

After going to ground in the same spot for a second time in the space of only a few days, 3-2 Charlie was not keen to do the Harold Holt.

This time, the section laid down heavy fire and Billy directed Meehan to fire his 66mm

LAAW [light anti-armour weapon] at the door of the building.

The crack-boom of the LAAW's rocket had abruptly ended the firefight but, from only 30 or so metres away, Meehan had missed the door. For some reason the rocket had veered off and hit the edge of the corrugated-tin roof, sending sparks and debris out across the street.

After missing the door with the LAAW, and the opportunity for a quick, dynamic building entry was lost, Billy took stock of the situation, opted for safety and waited for us to arrive.

While waiting for the familiar noise of our approaching APCs in the ensuing silence that followed the 66 blast, an eerie light started emanating from the building's windows. It turns out that the contact had happened at such close range that our tracer rounds were only igniting and whizzing around the floor after the rounds had been spent, bouncing off internal walls, passing through the door, walls and windows.

After we were all on the ground and Billy brought the boss up to speed, he ordered 3-2 Alpha up.

From my vantage point, covering down the road, I watched as Tom and his boys kicked the door in. There was a pregnant pause and then a loud, "Check this shit out!"

The rest of 3-2 Alpha filed in, followed by the boss and Sarge.

J Conway would comment later on how surreal it was finding four wounded locals laying on the floor inside.

Comically, the four were all lying on the floor in a row, rigidly at attention, their eyes wide open, covered in a fine white dust that had fallen from the ceiling when the 66's rocket had impacted.

As they lay there, weapons neatly stacked off to one side, each man held his ID up, ready for inspection.

Only in Somalia.

*This was the fourth instalment in a series of 16 Somalia stories by AJ Shinner, then a private in 1RAR. Former 3/4 Cav Regt APC crew commander Lance Corporal Wayne Cooper also wrote 16 instalments on his Op Solace recollections. Perhaps one day we'll pull them all together in book form. What do you think? [editor@militarycontact.com](mailto:editor@militarycontact.com)*

Abs outside a clan meeting place.



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Private James Keys and Corporal Mal Grey, D Company 2RAR, 'hold the line' on exercise in Tully. Pic Sergeant Al Green 1998

# High Standards

Shane Van Duren saw service as part of the International Force East Timor as a rifleman in 3RAR, and later joined the French Foreign Legion.

During a lengthy interview for another story in this special issue, I felt some of Shane's insights on infantry life were too good to cull, yet didn't quite fit into the flow of that other story – 'More arse than class; Timor and beyond'.

Here, therefore, is what Shane Van Duren sees as the essence of service and the high standards maintained by the Royal Australian Infantry Corps.

WORDS SHANE VAN DUREN AND BRIAN HARTIGAN PICS ADF

When you went to East Timor, was there a sense of 'this is the real thing' as opposed to just training?

"I don't think anyone ever treats soldiering as anything other than the real thing. It's always the real thing – we are not doing it on a chess board or in an office.

When you jump out of a plane in Shoalwater Bay, the ground is just as hard as it is in Timor or anywhere else. When you fall over, you fall over. Breaking a leg is never not a painful experience – no matter where you do it.

There's a very fine line between pleasure and pain. You work this hard and you get the job done and everyone looks good. But, you work just a little bit harder and you go down with heat stroke and you have a bag shoved in your arm. Flirting with that line is the level we always work to, regardless of whether you are in Australia or overseas.

Going down with heat was probably the biggest threat in Timor. Wearing body armour and carrying all that gear in 30 degrees and high humidity, we were more concerned with hydrating than we were with getting shot.

When it happens, you eventually get back up – it's not good for your brain of course – but you do recover and get on with it.

That's the standard we work to, and I don't think we'll ever go below that. From the day I joined – well, actually, Kapooka wasn't that hard – but Singleton certainly was. I had mates go down in Singleton, cerebral fluid coming out their eyes, their ears, their noses – but, after they recovered, they just got on with soldiering again.

They went down with heat stroke because that is how hard a man can work before he dies – and that's the standard we maintain – that's the standard that wins.

So to say that Timor was the 'real thing' and training isn't, is just way off track. That's how we train.

The Vietnam vets who trained us worked to that standard and maintained it all through peacetime – because that's the standard. Anything less is not acceptable. It's certainly not the standard in most government offices or civilian workplaces – but it's the standard in the infantry.

That's why the Veterans' Entitlement Act used to cover service both in Australia and overseas, in training or on operations. But now, all those soldiers who maintain that standard all through peacetime are not being looked after.

A good friend of mine went down with heat. When he was a young lad, he used to be under-12 chess champion of England – represented his country in chess. So there's no denying he had aptitude. But after he went down with heat that day, he was medically discharged from the Army with ADHD, and has never settled down since. I get emails from him from the jungles of Africa where he's training rebels, or from other parts of the world where he just bounces around, not able to settle down.

If he discharged before 1994 he would have been covered by the Veterans' Entitlement Act and got a medical gold card and be looked after. But because he discharged in 1997, he's not entitled to anything.

**I HAD MATES GO DOWN IN SINGLETON, CEREBRAL FLUID COMING OUT THEIR EYES, THEIR EARS, THEIR NOSES – BUT, AFTER THEY RECOVERED, THEY JUST GOT ON WITH SOLDIERING**

God knows what will happen to him. I might find him in the gutter one day – but hopefully not.

One thing I can say about him, though, is that he knows the standard and still works to it. He works hard.

I could not say I worked any harder in Timor than I ever did in Australia just because Timor was 'the real thing' – it is always the real thing, especially for infantry.

You know, I nearly died at Singleton. We were set up for an ambush at night and the temperature suddenly dropped to minus 7.

You lie there and you get to that point where it's so cold you feel like your fingers and your toes and then your whole body is being crushed in a vice. Then you get to that point where you're shivering uncontrollably. Then that goes away and you drift off to sleep.

I woke up, with the rest of my section, wrapped in space blankets being worked on by medics around a fire.

We were screwed that night – the whole section – until someone decided to come and get us.

But, during the ambush, no one got up and said 'Oh, this is too cold for an ambush'. That's the standard.

The standard is – you work to the point where either you die or the system steps in and doesn't let you die. It happens quite regularly. That's the standard."



Privates Mick Holecek and Craig Mercer, D Company 2RAR, take the lead under load in Tully. Pic Corporal Darren Hilder 1998

**Having worked that hard for however many years, did 'the system' look after you?**

"I think 'the system' in Australia could do more to repatriate people after they do this kind of work.

After 1945, legislation came into parliament that basically said, if two people are going for a civil-service job, and one is a veteran and all else is equal, you must give the job to the veteran. I think they realised that if you put people to work and used their skills it would be better all 'round. And let's face it, that was an era when a lot of stuff got done in Australia. Remember, these were motivated and skilled people with very high standards. They knew what hard work was and they worked damn hard.

The main regret I have is that I haven't been utilised after my military career.

Being here at uni keeps my mind active and gives my life a sense of purpose. It's important that I feel I have a use, or a future use, to society other than being a 'grunt'.

'Grunt' is an American term that I don't like and gets associated with my generation of infantry and, frankly, I think it underestimates our ability.

A lot of good blokes I know are working in tyre shops and the like. With their skills, I can't fathom why. And it's not their fault – society just doesn't recognise these people for who they are or what they can do. I think there's very little respect in Australia generally for soldiers – and less so for former soldiers.



Privates Corde Wilkes and Matt Thorpe, D Company 2RAR, dig deep in Tully. Pic Corporal Darren Hilder 1998

## THE MAIN REGRET I HAVE IS THAT I HAVEN'T BEEN UTILISED AFTER MY MILITARY CAREER

Many of us can prove that we are capable and intelligent. NSW University just offered a mate of mine an honours degree, for example. If he tells anyone he has an honours degree from Uni NSW, they'll automatically respect him. But if he says he used to be a rifleman in an infantry battalion, they're not going to respect him as being intelligent. But he's got the same mind now as he had then."

### Why did you join the army in the first place?

"My initial motivation in joining the Army was to serve – it certainly wasn't to make money. My family runs a business that probably paid more in tax last year than I made in my whole career in the Army. I could have stayed in that line of work and done quite well.

I think any young man with red blood in his veins likes adventure, and the Army certainly advertises itself as adventurous. I think that that adventure appealed to me, and the fact that that adventure could be beneficial and have a strong sense of purpose for my nation and for other countries was a bonus.

I could have become a policeman if all I wanted was to carry a gun, have adventure and serve my nation. But the Army offered a little more. I wanted to do things for people in countries that didn't have the stability and security that we take for granted. That's where you can really make a difference to humanity. I think that's why Brad Pitt and others go to Africa and build houses for people. Little things like that make a big difference to the global community. And if everybody did just a little bit in the course of their lives, then the world would be a better place."

### So, you joined the Army to serve your country?

"To serve? I'm not really the serving type. I don't like being told what to do generally. I don't think anyone does. It's not a natural thing. I didn't want to be told what to do at every minute of the day and be micromanaged like a sardine. I wanted to be a professional and do my job to the best of my ability. I didn't want to be treated like a lemming, as the Army can sometimes do – in fact, the Air Force calls the Army a bunch of lemmings, and it's probably true sometimes.

It wasn't about serving or being subordinate. It was about doing and achieving things that I could be proud of in old age.

Young people today have great opportunities to join the Army, go to Iraq or Afghanistan or somewhere else and make a difference that will be put down in history and remembered. You can choose to be a part of it or not.

The war in Iraq will never be forgotten. Afghanistan will never be forgotten. As individuals we will all be forgotten, but the things we do in life will not. That is history, and you can either participate in it or read about it.

I chose to participate.

You can call that 'service' if you like, but that might indicate that I was subordinate. A few of my commanders might not agree with that. I was a little shit!

But I did my bit, I think I did a good job and I'm proud of what I achieved, even if it did cost me a lot."



## SOLDIER ON HELPING OUR WOUNDED WARRIORS



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Corporal Gaunt and Private Shane Van Duren on Exercise Trisetia in Indonesia – just six months before 3RAR faced off against Indonesian soldiers in East Timor.

# MORE ARSE THAN CLASS

## TIMOR AND BEYOND

**When things went bad in East Timor in 1999, Australia was ready to react. Given the scale of the operation, the reaction was relatively swift – though, listening to the media, who wanted everything done ‘yesterday’, one might be forgiven for thinking otherwise.**

**One has to remember that nothing on this scale had been attempted by the Australian Defence Force since Vietnam. We also went in as an Australian-led multinational force – although we had UN sanction, it was not a UN mission – which was also a unique experience for what was essentially a peacetime defence force depleted by ever-tightening annual budgets. The Army in particular was the poor cousin at the budget table at that time. None of this big-picture stuff meant much to the guys on the ground, however. They, as usual, were the mushrooms – kept in the dark and fed bullshit.**

**As a rifleman with 3RAR, Shane Van Duren was one of the soldiers on the bottom rung of the ladder, expected to hit the ground running, but with little solid info on what was actually going on. But then, for he and his colleagues, that was nothing new.**

WORDS SHANE VAN DUREN AND BRIAN HARTIGAN  
PICS VAN DUREN COLLECTION



Map of East Timor signed by Private Shane Van Duren and his section comrades.

**WE COULDN'T SAY WHERE WE WERE OR WHAT WE WERE DOING OR WHERE WE THOUGHT WE MIGHT BE GOING**

**B**efore INTERFET – International Force East Timor – came Operation Spitfire, the prepositioning of forces in Australia's north, ready for the push across the Timor Sea to who-knew-what.

Shane Van Duren takes up the story...

We hadn't deployed for a very long time. No one knew what the fuck was going on.

About half way through Op Spitfire, anyone who was married was told they could have one, monitored conversation with their wives while our lieutenant sat beside us and listened. We couldn't say where we were or what we were doing or where we thought we might be going.

Our wives had a better idea than we did anyway, just from watching the news.

We had other ways of letting the girls know where we were, of course – you only had to use your bankcard at the post office and they knew exactly where you were.

We weren't allowed to wear our uniforms around the place, or anything that could

identify who we were or what unit we were from. It was all pretty hush hush – but, of course, we didn't give a shit.

We trained during the day and went to the movies or something at night. Someone organised stuff to keep us occupied, but we really had no idea what was going on.

It seemed to us that the commanders were so far out of their depth – one minute we were going, then we weren't, then we were going with batons and shields, next minute we were going to leave our weapons on the C130 and only pull them out if shots were exchanged because, technically, we weren't allowed to have them.

There were all kinds of changes to the situation, and various ways to try and get around every change. I don't know where the changes were coming from – politicians or military command or where. I don't know who was making the decisions – or [after a laugh] who was trying to counter those decisions, but our situation changed so often there was no point trying to worry about it anymore. 'We'll just go when we go' was the attitude.

It went on for about a month – actually just short of earning the Australian Service Medal by about a day, I think.

Anyway, we eventually landed in Dili. It wasn't until we actually got there that we started working with other services – even other corps. The first time I ever rode on an ASLAV was in Timor.

'Nice body armour you guys have', I said to them. 'It'd be nice if we had it outside the carrier too!'

We had the old Vietnam-era stuff. Before we ended Operation Spitfire, the Chief of Defence came to visit us and asked how we felt and what we thought about operations.

'Sir, when are we going to see some of the modern equipment coming into the system – particularly the new ballistic body armour and boots?' I asked him. He actually had no idea we didn't have it already, but, he said, 'I'll make sure we get that to you before you land' – which gave us the first real indication we were actually going!

They did get us the American stuff – about two weeks after we had landed – just after we were sure we weren't going to get shot!

Before we went in, we were told we could be engaged by up to two battalions of Indonesians – in fact, we were told a lot of things before we went in, little of which proved correct.

There were a lot of Indonesians in the area who, I think, were prepared to go toe-to-toe with us – at least that was the impression I got when they were pointing guns at me. But I think they also had it in the back of their minds that there was an American Marines' ship off the coast. The Marines never got involved because it didn't escalate, but I think it probably didn't escalate because they were there.

I am aware now that Marines were there, but I wasn't at the time. We were walking around like we were king shit. We even walked into an Indonesian battalion position like we owned the place. We were like, 'yeah, shoot us and see what happens'.

It was all bluff, of course. We weren't really that confident, and we probably would have been slaughtered. We didn't even have a grenade between us and, with only 120 rounds each, hell, that wasn't even enough for every Indonesian if we got them first time every shot. It's kinda funny looking back on it – but I still get this stress rash.

When we took out the first night patrol, we went to an Indonesian position.

We had night vision – in fact that was a great advantage that saved our asses time and time again. The fact that we could see at night and aim at night, and that they were scared of the night, really gave us an ability to actively patrol and own the night.

We did most of our work at night and we were lucky to get four hours sleep because of it. We rotated from ready-reaction, to guard, to patrolling and back to ready reaction. It was during ready reaction when we slept – unless we got reacted, which happened a lot.

Anyway, when we landed in Dili we patrolled up to the UNAMET compound and secured that. We went through that Indonesian position. And then we came back through the same position just to be cocky! And, as we walked past the sentry, we said 'selamat malam' – good evening. He didn't know who the fuck it was – it was pitch black for him. But he had all these little red laser dots on the back of his head.

As we were coming back through their position, there were a whole lot of them coming out of a building at the top of the position, wearing a combination of Indonesian uniforms and civilian clothes, and they were carrying SSD1s – standard-issue Indonesian rifles – but not all of them were in full uniform.

Our section commander put us out into extended line in case there was a contact. We were within 100m when they started yelling and fanning out and pointing their weapons and went to 'instant'.

I was number one scout. I jumped into a drainage ditch – not the smartest place to be, looking back on it, being a perfect fire-lane and all – and my plan was to take out the street light that we were passing under at that particular moment, to give us the Ninox advantage.

But, our platoon commander decided to run, which was probably a good idea, and we all followed. We were flat out running

like a bunch of scaredie cats, but it worked – none of us got shot.

We probably had a responsibility to challenge them, though. They were either a bunch of Indonesians dressed as militia or militia coming out of an Indonesian barracks – either way, they were suss.

I heard about a lot of other standoffs with other sections, too.

On one patrol, they had a bunch of Indonesians pointing weapons at them over a wall. There was a LAV with the Aussies, but it backed off when it had a rocket pointed at it. The infantry had an interpreter with them, but that wasn't working out very well either. The Indonesians went to instant. It was quite tense until the Aussies gave the Indonesian commander a look through a Ninox, and he could see that each of his men had a laser dot on his forehead. That was enough to diffuse the situation!

And that's how close we came to war with Indonesia.

A lot of shit like that happened. We were lucky – very lucky. But it was definitely more arse than class.

A few weeks later, I had a couple of rounds pass close to me at a vehicle check point – I think it was in Maliana. We weren't even wearing helmets or anything by this stage.

There was a porno magazine in the gun pit, so I was 'reading'. Then this guy on top of a hill – way outside the effective range of his weapon – fired in our general direction, within a couple of metres of us. I thought, 'fucking arsehole' – the first time I'm alone, there's a porno in the pit, and he couldn't even wait a couple of minutes!

I just lay down and called in a compass bearing on him. I heard on the radio that a couple of other guys called in bearings too, so we got a pretty good triangulation on him, and they also had a heading on which way he was leaving.

I heard a single shot, probably from one of our snipers, and I thought, 'Yeah! Interrupt me, would you?'

Our snipers didn't get too many opportunities, but they did get a few – and a few that weren't authorised. One of our snipers certainly told me he took out a couple of militia, but he never got cleared.

We eventually moved to Oecussi. We landed by chopper at Passabe and secured the airfield and then patrolled out to our respective areas.



Private Michael Walton

Our section went to a small little village about as far away from headquarters as anybody could get.

There was no one there.

We took it seriously at first, but then we started sleeping in the huts and stuff. It was great. We made our own mango wine and walked around in sarongs. It really was Lord of the Flies up there.

Eventually a few people came back – mostly kids – orphans.

They were good people. We'd come back from patrol and there'd be mangoes and coconuts and other fruit left outside our huts for us.

The school had been run down but we ran maths classes in it anyway. We also had one guy who could speak Bahasa – so he ran English classes. That wasn't so much initiative as boredom, but that was the Australian way. We were there and we did our best for those kids.

There was one kid kept hanging around me. I think his dad fell on him – that's how he didn't get shot. I felt sorry for the kid.

A few houses got burned down when we were there and we'd go patrol and secure the area, but the militia generally left us alone. We had the guns and carried ourselves well. Big ugly guys with guns usually get left alone. We deliberately tried to look angry anyway, which wasn't hard for us infantry. Treat people like shit for long enough and angry comes naturally.

But Timor generally was a nice place and the people were lovely, peace-loving people. It was an easy place to police.

Actually, my grandfather was over in that area in the '40s. He was a funny old coot – in one mail delivery he sent me a big tub of Bundaberg sugar! I thought he must be going crazy or something. Then he sent me a big tub of dried apricots! What the hell? But then, in a letter delivered a few days later, he sent me the recipe for jungle juice using sugar and apricots!

He was about the only person I could talk to when I came home. He understood. He told me not to stress – he said he copped a hard time when he got home, from the WWI vets, who probably copped a hard time from the Boer War vets. He gave a hard time to the Vietnam vets – everyone forgot the Korean vets – and, he said, you'll probably cop a hard time too. But, he said, in time they'll find a thing common for your generation and in the end you'll get looked after, so just persevere.

**WE DID MOST OF OUR WORK AT NIGHT AND WE WERE LUCKY TO GET FOUR HOURS SLEEP BECAUSE OF IT**



B Company 3RAR 10 August 1998 – Private Shane Van Duren far right, rear rank

**OUR SNIPERS DIDN'T GET TOO MANY OPPORTUNITIES, BUT THEY DID GET A FEW – AND A FEW THAT WEREN'T AUTHORISED**

That advice has got me through to where I am today.

There have been times where I've found it hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Timor was not a war that was thought of as being hard combat, but people forget that a couple of guys did get shot in Timor and a couple died. And others killed themselves when they got home.

I've been asked do I ever regret joining the Army in the first place? That's a complex question with no easy answer.

Would my life be better if I stayed a civilian and got civilian qualifications – yes, I'd probably be working in a much more comfortable position earning a lot more money. But here I am, 34 and studying my first year at university – something I probably should have done when I was in my 20s. But when I was in my 20s I was at the School of Infantry learning to be an assault pioneer.

'What the fuck is that?' people ask me.

On the other hand, it would be very hard for me to look some of those little kids in Timor in the eyes and say 'you weren't worth it'. I couldn't do that. Even though my own wife and son left me when I was over there – they had everything they needed – a nice little house in the suburbs, looked after, school. That little kid in Timor, the one whose dead father lying on top of him

saved his life – I couldn't say it wasn't worth my own sacrifice for that little kid.

You know, all people are good people if they're treated well and they have the things they need to survive. Desperation is the cause of most evil. People are generally happy just to live, farm, eat with their family, enjoy their children. Timor was no different – they just never had the opportunity.

Coming home, after seeing what we saw over there, was probably the hardest part. A lot of veterans say that when they get back to shopping malls and that kind of thing, they don't feel comfortable – they've lost a sense of belonging. Being in a shopping mall, which is basically the essence of capitalism, really takes veterans aback. But when you've been in a war zone, where the people have nothing and live a very basic existence, the fundamentals of human life are really put in perspective.

When the chips are down, that's when human nature is at its most powerful, so, coming back to a capitalist society is very confronting. Some people never get used to that.

I spoke to a guy the other day who said he never felt comfortable in Australia since Timor. Now he's in Iraq as a mercenary and he feels at home there.

The psyche is a very complex thing. It could be that that guy is only comfortable

in an insecure situation. In fact, many of us infantry types feel like our purpose in life is to bring security to places that are insecure.

Here, in Australia, in today's society, I'm a swinging dick with nothing to do. I don't serve a purpose. I don't feel comfortable here because I'm not doing what I'm supposed to be doing.

I can't really change jobs that easily. Nor can I change my mindset that easily.

I've been trained by very powerful training establishments that have been developed over hundred of years – over the course of human history.

Military training is a very refined art, and they teach us to think a certain way and behave a certain way, to look a certain way and to do certain things – instinctively. Commanders need troops who are predictable.

We are also conditioned not to shoot unless we or someone we are meant to protect is in immediate danger. We are conditioned to use minimum force – something many police would do well to learn, because I think Australian's deserve the same kind of treatment we, as soldiers, afford foreigners.

Yes, I think we are conditioned – or brainwashed – but we are conditioned to be good and to treat people well – things that don't come naturally to many people.

We are conditioned to treat injured people in priority of how badly they are injured, regardless of whether they are your own soldiers or they are enemy. We are brainwashed to be solid professionals.

I think a lot of people have a perception that I have been 'brainwashed' and that I can't think for myself, that I'm just a dumb grunt. Unfortunately, that runs right through the society I live in – and it's not fair.

The irony of it is, when I was in the French Foreign Legion, if I walked into a room, an old person would give up his chair out of respect for a Legionnaire. That would never happen to an Australian soldier.

In fact, walking home on Anzac Day one year, a bunch of young guys wanted to bash me just because I was wearing a uniform.

Yes, I joined the French Foreign Legion and worked with Russian, German, Belgian, English and others from a lot of different backgrounds – even Mujahidin. But, I'm proud to say that, in Australia, I worked with probably the most professional military in the world.

The whole time I was in the Legion they told us we had to obey the customs de la gere – the rules of war – and the conventions international, but they never once trained us in what those customs or conventions were. Australia, on the other hand, taught us what they were and

regularly exercised us in how to apply them.

In the Royal Australian Infantry Corps, I worked with good men whose hearts were generally in the right place. Sure, there were some thugs – there will always be some thugs – but, in Australia, we have a majority of good men, conditioned to act that way.

The Legion, on the other hand, was full of thugs with very few good men.

In Timor, the people cried when we left. They begged us to stay. They didn't want another army to police their country.

Who would you rather maintain security in your country? Would you rather American soldiers come to your country to enforce peace or would you rather Australian soldiers? It sure as hell wouldn't be the French Foreign Legion, though – I can assure you of that.

As a soldier, I feel you get very little respect here in Australia, except maybe on Anzac Day.

There's very little 'Oh, you are an

Australian soldier – you are a professional – we'd like to have you in our organisation'.

Many of us can prove that we are capable and intelligent. For example, I'm doing a degree in political science here at the Australian National University and got a credit on my last essay. I'm studying – I'm learning – I'm capable.

If I tell people I'm doing a degree at ANU, I get respect, automatically. But if I tell them I was a rifleman in an infantry battalion, a lot of people just shut off or walk away.

At the end of the day, though, there's no denying we generally do a good job and, yes, sometimes it's more arse than class – but until we lose, you can't say we fucked up.

Sure, we've had our arses kicked a few times, but we're still speaking English, aren't we?

Sorry, what was the question again? he says with a laugh.

**IN TIMOR, THE PEOPLE CRIED WHEN WE LEFT. THEY BEGGED US TO STAY. THEY DIDN'T WANT ANOTHER ARMY TO POLICE THEIR COUNTRY**



Privates Gantt, Sepulveda and Van Duren on R&R in Dili

**PEOPLE FORGET THAT A COUPLE OF GUYS DID GET SHOT IN TIMOR AND A COUPLE DIED. AND OTHERS KILLED THEMSELVES WHEN THEY GOT HOME**

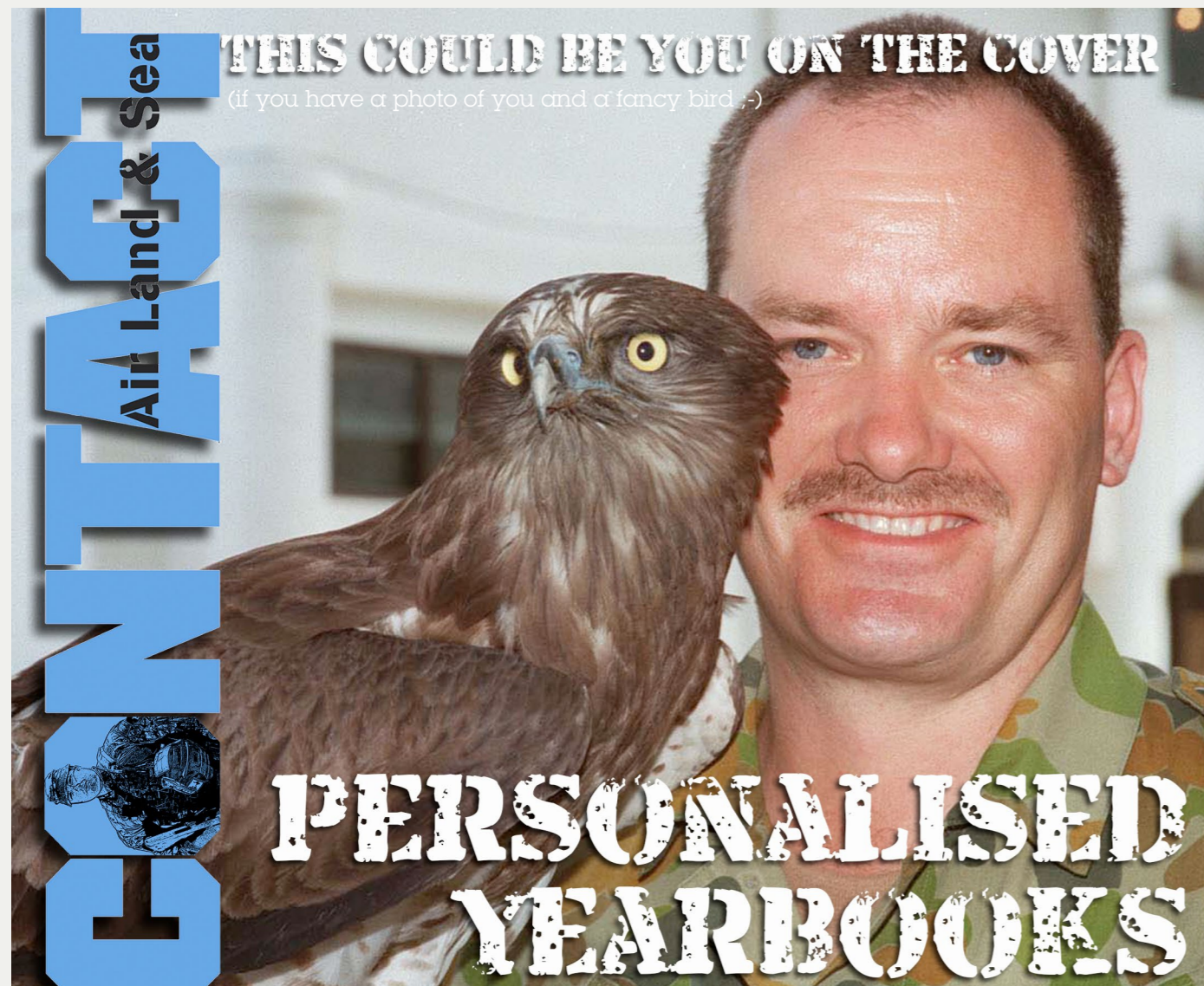


5 of 1997/98 Basic Parachute Course  
– Private Shane Van Duren standing 12 from left.

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Before Ireland's 94<sup>th</sup> [Officer] Cadet Class graduated on 4 February 2019, they launched an assault on an historic former British fortification in Cork harbour – exercising their skills, knowledge and military discipline in...

# FIBUA

Fighting In Built Up Areas

Words Cadet Jack Setright,  
Cadet Sean Greene  
Photos Sergeant Karl Byrne

Fighting In Built Up Areas (FIBUA) exercises enhance a soldier's ability to operate and succeed in close-quarter combat and challenging environments, by gaining intelligence on the enemy's location, plus their tactics techniques and procedures, while also developing a soldier's decision-making abilities, with the ultimate objective of destroying the enemy and clearing the area.

The 94<sup>th</sup> Cadet Class recently conducted a FIBUA exercise in Fort Davis [previously Fort Carlisle, built by the British in the 1860s as one element of a three-fort network to defend Cork harbour], County Cork in November 2018. This is our story.



## ORDERS

Beginning in the early hours of the morning Cadet Platoon commanders delivered orders under the watchful eye of Sergeant Major Fitzsimons who, for the exercise, was our acting company commander – and Sergeant Sargent as acting company sergeant.

The question pondered during pre-orders was “What exactly is our mission?” It was a simple yet effective one: “Seize Vital Installation Points (VIPs), close with and destroy the enemy”. The stage was set!

The anticipation was further enhanced by information received that we would be inserted by sea using two Naval Service vessels, the LÉ Niamh and LÉ William Butler Yeats. We were to anchor off the Cork coast and be quickly transferred as assault teams onto RHIBs (rigid hulled inflatable boats), and then make a covert fast approach to our objective, Fort Davis.

## EMBARKING ONTO SHIPS

Arriving at Dublin Port on a brisk morning only to be greeted by the sight of two mammoth naval ships was an eye-opening experience.

After being split into our platoons we boarded our own designated ships.

Having grown up in the Curragh, I had little experience in the workings of a ship and those who operated it, but I cannot emphasise enough the professionalism of the crew while working alongside them.

A full tour was given, explaining the functions and capabilities of the ships along with information about the tours both ships have made to the Mediterranean mission and shores further afield.

The crew were incredibly competent, exceptionally friendly and passionate about their duty as Naval personnel. Their expertise contributed to the overall enjoyment of the exercise by making us feel as if this was a ‘live situation’ rather than an exercise.

More importantly, they also aided us in combatting the dreaded seasickness, which many of us suffered from.

After a 13-hour trip from Dublin Port to roughly 5km from the Fort Davis shore, we were ready for the next phase of our mission, which began at 5am the following morning.

T minus 30 minutes before we were launched onto the RHIBs and towards our AOI (area of interest).

All the Cadets with acting company commander Sergeant Major Fitzsimons leading us and acting company sergeant Sergeant Sargent were fully camouflaged, magazines were loaded, weapons cocked and made safe, we were ready to say farewell to the naval crew, launch onto the RHIBs and speed towards our objective, Fort Davis.

The excitement was intense, only to be amplified by Captain Barry’s (Artillery School, DFTC) real-time intel updates via the use of drones, giving us our first ‘eyes on’ our target area.

We waited for the signal flares to shoot up out of the ships and we were off. I can assure you that this was one of the best experiences during our Cadetship, not only being transported by RHIBs to our objective but primarily by understanding how vital and necessary it is to train and operate with all services of the Defence Forces in combined, joint operations.



## RHIBS TO THE SHORE

The journey took approximately three minutes, thanks to the sheer power of the RHIBs' engines.

After detaching our life-saving equipment, we landed on the pier at Fort Davis only to be greeted by concentrated enemy fire.

Having acquired and developed our skills and drills in the Cadet School, we responded by reacting competently to effective enemy fire.

Our GPMGs were tactically deployed to maximise their enfilade-fire capabilities on either side of the pier with our riflemen spread along the line, while platoon commanders issued clear and precise fire-control orders, enabling our assault team to suppress the enemy, which then gave the remaining elements of the company the chance to reach land and make their way safely into pre-assigned rally points to later successfully seize the first two positions of Fort Davis.

## SEIZING FORT DAVIS

The Company had seized the first two positions in front of the gatehouse, which were lightly fortified using barriers and razor wire.

We advanced, clearing and securing our first objective (the gatehouse) of Fort Davis on the north side of the peninsula. Once the lead section raised the green flag on the entrance, it was the signal for the following section to roll through and push on.

They were then tasked with clearing the track from the rear of the gatehouse up to the tunnel, which led down to the lower level's main road.

However, this task was exceptionally challenging as the enemy had placed IEDs (improvised explosive devices) along our route. Several initiated, resulting in friendly-force casualties and further secondary small-arms enemy contact.

The CUF drill (care under fire drill, which essentially is trying to stop haemorrhaging after an initial injury) was initiated while the reserve sections suppressed the enemy.

The casualties were sent back towards the casualty collection point under the control of our company sergeant. Because of the small numbers of students involved, and to try and fill the company and keep the exercise running realistically, all casualties received new names, ranks and army numbers and were ready to be tasked as replacements on request of platoon commanders. 1 Platoon had reached their LOE (limit of exploitation) allowing 2 Platoon to roll through, clearing all rooms left and right of the main road.

We were exceptionally alert to the possibility of further IEDs and ambushes from enemy positions at every stage of the operation. Many entrances were locked and thus required cadets to use previously taught breaching techniques.

Locked doors were 'unlocked' by use of the tools in the MOE (method of entry bag).

The knock-knock – which is like a handheld battering ram – and an explosive-entry system were used with speed and aggression.

Once 2 Platoon reached their LOE, 3 Platoon rolled straight through with un-surmountable momentum and cleared the final few buildings before reaching the company LOE.

At this point the company commander ordered a consolidation and reorganisation, which would lead to a change of appointments for us, the students, and preparation began for DIBUA (defence in built up areas).

## DIBUA

We fortified the entrance of the tunnel and set up sentry positions securing our position.

Throughout this period, Cadets were conducting preparation and planning drills as well as administrating to their equipment for the final push of the exercise.

Playing to our advantage, the deteriorating weather allowed our reconnaissance team to move swiftly towards their AOI without engaging in enemy contact.

Upon returning to the company HQ, their intelligence-gathering was processed with maps and models constantly updated, allowing the Cadets to develop a concise battle-picture for future actions of the mission.

## STAND-TO

Stand-to was initiated at 4.30am the following morning and the new platoon commanders formulated their plans.

Our mission was to patrol as a company along a zigzag route to the upper level of Fort Davis.

1 Platoon and 2 Platoon cleared the cluster of buildings with 3 Platoon taking the gunnery positions of the area.

Ladders were introduced with the breaching of high-level-entry buildings thus allowing the Cadets to secure VIPs.

1 Platoon and 2 Platoon pushed on towards their LOE but were faced with constant enemy contact in multiple blind spots, primarily by the nature of the infrastructure of Fort Davis.

Having destroyed the enemy and seized key areas of Fort Davis, our mission was achieved, concluding FIBUA and one of the most realistic and enjoyable exercises the Cadets have experienced to date.

## JUST THE BEGINNING

The 94<sup>th</sup> Cadet class were commissioned on 4 February 2019 after 15 months training in the Military College, DFTC, covering many basic and practical soldier skills and military fields of study before taking up operational appointments in Óglaigh na hÉireann – Defence Forces Ireland.

## Infantry Platoon Sergeants role in

# FIBUA

According to the Manual of the Infantry Battalion, the purpose of FIBUA (fighting in built-up areas) is to gain dominance on a critical objective, rupture the defence of the enemy, facilitate future operations of friendly forces and/or deal the enemy a decisive psychological blow.

FIBUA is an infantry task, supported by the combat-support arms such as engineers, artillery, and cavalry and success is determined by decisive battles at platoon and company level within a wider battalion or brigade operation.

In order for platoon actions to be successful, it is critical that the platoon commander and his or her section commanders know the special characteristics of this type of fighting, such as urbanisation (knowing the layout of the buildings), restricted fields of fire and observation, cover and concealment, obstacles, avenues of approach, the difficulty of locating the enemy and the presence of non-combatants, to mention a few.

In support of these actions a comprehensive combat service support (CSS) plan is required, and the unique aforementioned characteristics of the urban battlespace pose significant challenges in this too.

The platoon sergeant must be cognisant of these characteristics when devising his or her CSS plan and how it interfaces with the company and battalion CSS plans.

There are five stages of a battalion FIBUA operation – investment, break-in, securing objectives, clearance, and reorganisation.

For the platoon sergeant, it is critical to know what stage or stages the platoon will play a role in, as the CSS considerations vary for each and become increasingly difficult the deeper into the built-up area the platoon will operate.

For example, if the platoon is to form part of the investment force or break-in, then CSS is largely similar in nature to typical infantry assaults in open terrain.

However, once moving beyond the initial foothold gained in breaking-in to the periphery of the built-up area, the characteristics of FIBUA begin to shape and challenge even the most experienced CSS planners.

Therefore, thorough knowledge of battalion-level FIBUA TTPs is critical for the platoon sergeant's estimate process in support of his or her platoon commander.

As the administrative and logistics head of the platoon and its 2IC, the platoon sergeant must be fully versed, not just in the platoon commander's battle plan, but also in the company and battalion CSS plans. This is because the platoon sergeant is responsible for ensuring the soldiers doing the fighting are fully equipped, fed, armed and ready for each stage of the battle – and that requires 'plugging-in' to higher level CSS systems.

During FIBUA, the terrain and nature of operations create unique demands on units and formations. Increased ammunition consumption, increased water consumption, likely higher casualty rates, restricted access for transport, all place extra demands on CSS to ensure resupply can move forward and casualties and prisoners of war can move rearward.

The very nature of urbanised terrain and the associated devastation that follows intense artillery and aerial bombardment can thwart existing CSS plans, requiring quick-thinking platoon sergeants and company sergeants to improvise as the battle develops.

## PLATOON-LEVEL BATTLE PREP

An experienced and competent platoon sergeant is essential in the preparation for and execution of the FIBUA battle.

As outlined, the battalion- and company-level CSS plan will be challenged the deeper the unit progresses into the built-up area. Therefore, as early as possible, ammunition (including grenades) and water must be pushed forward to the assaulting soldiers, shortening the resupply time.

Company sergeants can adopt a pro-active or 'push' system in this case, where resupply demands are anticipated and executed before being requested.

Similarly, the company sergeants and platoon sergeants must constantly liaise and move casualty collection points forward to keep up with the battle and minimise confusion associated with navigation in a devastated, rubble-strewn urban environment.

The platoon sergeant delivers the CSS paragraph of the platoon-commander's orders, as with other operations – but in FIBUA, the following nuances should be given consideration.

In terms of dress, TM 201 states that the minimum kit should be worn to allow unrestricted movement through mouseholes or trapdoors and the like. Therefore, combat equipment should be stripped to the minimum with an emphasis on ammunition, water, medical kit, and any special breaching kit. Casualty evacuation drills should be well-rehearsed and thoroughly discussed, with an emphasis on locations of casualty collection points and routes to them. Designated stretcher bearers

should be identified to all as well as any specially trained medical personnel attached to the platoon, company or battalion.

## SUMMARY

Overall, the role of the platoon sergeant in the FIBUA environment is to aid the platoon commander by ensuring that all troops have the necessary kit and equipment to complete their mission and tasks. They must ensure to give comprehensive and detailed CSS orders so that all troops are properly equipped and prepared crossing the line of departure.

The soldiers must be assured that an effective and detailed casualty-evacuation plan is in place. This will instil confidence in the soldiers when carrying out the close-quarter battles asked of them and help to maintain their morale as the battle progresses.

The platoon sergeant should endeavour to push ammunition and all necessary equipment forward to assaulting sections in order to maintain the momentum of the battle, which is an important aspect in FIBUA.

Finally, the platoon sergeant should maintain a clear picture of the battle as it progresses. This means knowing the status of every soldier in the platoon and their condition at all times. This information will aid the platoon-commander's decision making when the platoon transitions through the various stages of the FIBUA operation or on to future operations elsewhere.

# Sharing Knowledge on UK Instructor Exchange

Ireland's Military College Infantry School has a long-standing association with the British Army's Infantry Battle School (IBS). In 2018, the NCO Training Wing (NCOTW) and the IBS deepened this relationship with a number of exchanges and visits.

Early in the year, the British Army's then most senior enlisted leader, Warrant Officer Class One Glenn Haughton, addressed NCOTW's 35<sup>th</sup> Senior NCO Course.

This was followed in June by a visit by an IBS colour sergeant, who joined the NCOTW for a week as a guest instructor. That particular week was chosen because the students of the 10<sup>th</sup> All Arms Standard NCO Course were deployed on week-long field training exercise with the students of the 5<sup>th</sup> Potential NCO Course, allowing their guest to see two career courses in training.

The guest instructor's inputs added value to the week's activities, particularly for the NCOTW instructors who gained a lot from the exchanging of views and opinions on NCO training.

To reciprocate, I was selected to spend two weeks with the IBS in October, as a guest instructor.

Based in Brecon, Wales, the IBS comprises the Platoon Commanders' Division, which conducts the Platoon Commanders' Battle Course (PCBC); Senior Division, which conducts the Platoon Sergeants' Battle Course (PSBC); Junior Division, which conducts the Section Commanders' Battle Course; and the Infantry Weapons Division.

Exercises take place in the Sennybridge Training Area (SENTA) approximately 16km from the school.

For the first week, I was attached to Senior Division, which was running an Urban Operations Instructors' Course (UOIC), attending lectures as an observer and also getting to work with the instructor staff during their co-ordination and planning meetings. During this week I also got to engage with the instructors and gain valuable insight into the conduct of their PSBC, which is equivalent to our Infantry Platoon Sergeants' Course (IPSC). This was particularly relevant as the NCOTW were at that time updating the IPSC syllabus.

The rest of the week was spent on the ranges in SENTA, where the students were taught close-quarter battle (CQB) shooting. The CQB shoot I observed was quite realistic and the students were

By Sergeant Rory Behan  
Ireland's NCO Training Wing

exercised in engaging targets at very short range and in crowded locations where precision firing is vital. The use of simunitions and unarmed combat during this course was a surprise to me and perhaps could be added to our toolbox to enhance our own FIBUA training.

In my second week I spent time with the Platoon Commanders' Division, who were running a Platoon Commanders' Battle Course, the equivalent of our Infantry YOs Course. During this I was attached to a platoon for a defence exercise in SENTA, accompanying the instructors and students on a long insertion march that led to a company attack against a well-entrenched enemy. From there, three platoons set up hasty defensive positions until first light, followed by a number of independent platoon actions, including advance-to-contact and fighting in woods and forests (FIWAF). Late on the second evening the platoons reached their limits of exploitation and began to dig full defensive positions. This carried on through the night and for the next two days, throughout which the platoons also carried out offensive patrol actions, such as ambushes and raids.

As I left the training area on Thursday night the students were only four days into a ten-day exercise, with many more tasks ahead.

At all times during my visit I was treated as a peer rather than a guest, and my opinions were not just welcomed but sought after.

My trip to the IBS was very beneficial, not only in boosting relations between the two schools but also in seeing how our counterparts work. The IBS is world-renowned for its leadership and tactical training and I was exposed to the inner workings of the machine that produces strong NCO and young officer commanders and I left with an overall impression of professionalism and diligence.

I also left with the satisfying feeling of knowing that the professionalism and ability within the Defence Forces is at a similar level to that which I had observed in the IBS.



TOP: Sergeant Rory Behan, CO Infantry Battle School Lieutenant Colonel Chandler, IBS Regimental Sergeant Major WO1 Muldoon and Senior Division Sergeant Major WO2 Bennison. ABOVE RIGHT: Sergeant Behan and Platoon Commanders Division Sergeant Major WO2 Stephen Mulhearn. ABOVE LEFT and BELOW: Training at Sennybridge Training Area, Wales.





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What started out as the "CONTACT Patron Army", has been renamed the DFSW Club. We felt the 'Army' name and construct was a bit short sighted and unfair to our Navy and RAAF fans. And, while DFSW is an Army acronym, it is now moulded to our needs too – DFSW means **D**irect **F**unding **S**upporters of our **W**ork.

The plan to print CONTACT again

We tried hard to convince our audience that printing **CONTACT** again was a good idea. We believed we could make money out of it – enough to secure **CONTACT**'s long-term future. But the support simply wasn't there in enough depth. We needed to recruit about 1000 subscriber – but, in the end, attracted fewer than 100.

Also, verbal, email and survey feedback was pretty clear – more than half the people we heard from said "don't bother – we are so used to digital these days..." or words to that effect.

So, while we are very dissapointed that the grand print plan didn't work, we must pick ourselves up and think of a new plan to secure **CONTACT**'s long-term future.

Patreon v PayPal

We are so grateful to the amazing supporters who joined our DFSW Club in the hope that we would print **CONTACT** again – and gobsmacked that so few of them left after we announced the decision not to proceed.

Membership of the DFSW Club is completely voluntary and, while it does have its perks, **CONTACT** would definitely seem to be getting way more out of this relationship than members are – and we hope to redress that imbalance as time goes by.

Joining the DFSW Club can only be done via [Patreon](https://patreon.com), an American platform designed to help fans support 'creatives'.

We tried running a 'subscription' model via [PayPal](https://paypal.com) too – but this didn't work for us for purely technical/software reasons.

Anyone who 'subscribed' via [PayPal](https://paypal.com) will still receive all the DFSW Club membership benefits we initially promised – except, of course, the printed **CONTACT**.

Anyway, welcome anew to the **CONTACT** DFSW Club – and thank you so much for your ongoing support.

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But wait, there's more!

You also get a free listing on this page and in "DFSW Club" on our web site!

Contact Brian Hartigan on 0408 496 664 or [editor@militarycontact.com](mailto:editor@militarycontact.com) today



# JUST SOLDIERS

BY MAJOR DARRYL KELLY

## The Bubba

### PRIVATE SYDNEY GEORGE WASHINGTON DREW 20<sup>TH</sup> BATTALION AIF

**As Minnie Drew recovered from the strain of the birth, she smiled as she gazed at her tiny newborn son. She wanted him to have all the best qualities of life and with that she decided to name him after her childhood hero, so Sydney George Washington Drew, came into the world.**

The lad was born on 11 January 1899 at Graff Reinett, South Africa. At that time, the Drew family found their homeland locked in the desperate battles of the Boer War. Wallace Drew, the head of the family, decided that this was no place to raise a family and, shortly after Syd's third birthday, the Drew family set sail for Australia.<sup>1</sup>

From a young age the boy preferred the name George over his given name and attended school in the Sydney suburb of Balmain. On leaving, he gained an apprenticeship as an electrical mechanic, as a stepping stone to becoming a fully qualified electrical engineer. He was also part of the government's compulsory cadet scheme, which he loved and rose to the cadet rank of Company Quartermaster Sergeant.<sup>2</sup>

In the autumn of 1914, the German Army was rampaging across France and Belgium. Great Britain was now at war and, from the far reaches of the empire, her dominions decided to send troops to put the Hun back in his place, so to speak.

George, who was now going on 16, watched as the troops marched towards the ships that would carry them to war.

"Mum, I've got to get into this somehow," he said.

"Oh I wouldn't worry George, it will be over by Christmas," his mother replied.

George read and re-read the headlines telling of the Anzac landings at Gallipoli. The tales of 'derring-do' made the front lines sound like the adventure

of a lifetime. He pleaded with his parents to let him join, but they were adamant their only son was not going to war at 15. These arguments were to continue on a regular basis, with no thought of swaying on his parents' behalf.

On 8 November 1915, George Drew decided to take matters into his own hands. He boldly walked into the recruiting depot and sauntered up to the sergeant.

"Is this where you join up mate?" George asked.

"Well that depends young fella. How old are you," the sergeant replied.

"Eighteen last month," the young man said with a wink. He passed the medical examination with flying colours and placed his name and signature on the enlistment documents as George Drew as opposed to traditional S.G.W. Drew.<sup>1</sup>

That night, George packed a bag and hid it under his bed. The next morning he dropped the bag outside his bedroom window and silently climbed out after it.

His mother thought he had left for work early, as he had done so many times before. She started to worry when he didn't return home that night. The next morning she called to his work place, but the boss had not seen Syd for a couple of days. She checked with George's mates but they too were at a loss as to his whereabouts. Now Minnie started to panic. What could have happened to her only son?

Private George Drew entered the training camp at Liverpool. Allocated as a reinforcement to 20<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion.<sup>2</sup> Young George thrived on the mateship that the army offered. Irrespective of his youthful appearance, he was accepted as one thing and one thing only – a soldier. He wanted so desperately to write to his mother, to let her know



Studio portrait of 4395  
Private Sydney George  
Washington Drew  
20<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF  
AWM – P11880.001

that he was all right, but to do so would certainly tip off the authorities as to his true age. He had to remain silent, although he realised the pain his parents must be enduring.

On 9 April 1916, George Drew climbed the gangplank of the troopship Nestor that would carry him on his first leg to war.<sup>3</sup> As the ship cleared the heads, he knew he'd made it – "First England, then France, you bloody beauty!" he thought to himself.

On 5 September 1916, George Drew with his training now complete, marched out of the 5<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion and proceeded to the Dover docks bound for France.<sup>2</sup>

As he made his way up to the front line with the other reinforcements, the sounds and sights of war struck home. As he saw his first dead body, he muttered to himself "What have I got myself into?"

On reaching the platoon headquarters, the platoon sergeant of 6 Platoon, B Company, greeted him with a warm welcome. Formalities complete, the sergeant hung a number of heavy canvas

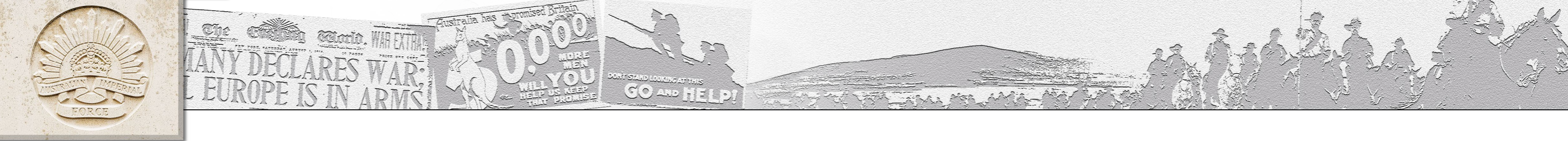
pouches, full of drum magazines, around the young Digger's neck.

"Well done mate, you're our new number two on the Lewis Gun."

George now thought it was safe to write home to his elder sister Marion and let her know that he was alive and well.

The 20<sup>th</sup> was locked in the stalemate of trench warfare in Belgium. Anzac troops had been blasting away at their German counterparts, making little headway. The allies were keen to break the deadlock before the onset of the winter rains. But the Germans held out and their staunchest ally – the worst winter for 40 years – came to their aid. As the Hun enjoyed green fields and dry warm dugouts, the allied forces had to contend with a mud bog 10 miles wide and trenches waist deep in places with freezing putrid water.

Like others in the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion, George had no choice but to make the best of the conditions. They dug their bivvies<sup>4</sup> into the side of the trench to at



#### Notes

- 1 AWM 131, Roll of Honour Circular, 1914-1918 War
- 2 National Archives of Australia, B2455, WWI Service Records, 4395 Pte S.G.W. Drew
- 3 AWM 8, Unit Embarkation Nominal Rolls, 20th Battalion AIF, 1914-1918 War
- 4 Bivvy is a term for a dry sleeping shelter dug into the side of the trench.
- 5 ANZAC Soup – was a term used to describe a shell hole polluted by an Australian corpse.
- 6 'Blighty' was a slang term used to describe Great Britain. It could be used as a leave or casualty term
- 7 AWM 1DRL/0428, Australian Red Cross Society, Missing and Wounded Enquiry Bureau
- 8 Chaplain Robert James Wentworth Glasgow Crawford – 20th Battalion AIF

least escape the mud and sleep in relative dryness.

The constant daily saturation of the feet quickly took its toll. Although the diggers did their best to ward of the cold and wet, it was in vain for most part as they waded through the sodden trenches. Even a daily application of whale oil to their feet, did little to ward off the onset of dreaded trench foot.

In mid November, George Drew sat on some sand bags trying to rub some feeling back into his numb feet. A blue tinge reflected the end of each of his toes. When the platoon commander passed the young soldier, he said, "Looks like sick parade for you, mate."

The journey to the rear was just as hazardous as life in the front line. German artillery preyed on the rear areas and had the main supply routes zeroed in to within a yard. Many diggers sought the safety of water-filled shell holes at the sound of approaching shells, only to drown in the murky waters when weighed down by their heavy equipment. As George and a mate hobbled past one such shell hole they looked at the body of the digger floating face down. "Anzac Soup"<sup>4</sup> they sarcastically remarked to each other.

On reaching the aid post, the medics looked at George's feet closely.

"They look pretty bad, mate," one said. "Looks like you got yourself a 'Blighty'<sup>6</sup>," the other said.

The ambulance came to a halt at the Southern General Hospital and young Drew was carried up the stairs, to clean sheets and nurses. One day as he dozed on his bed, an officer approached.

"Private Drew, it's been brought to our attention that you are actually under-age for military service," he said.

"Yes sir, but I'm 18 in a couple of weeks," the young digger said.

"Well you won't be returning to your unit until we can sort this mess out – do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," the young soldier sarcastically replied. A thousand thoughts now clouded George's mind. "They wouldn't send me home, would they?" he thought.

His secret was now out, he was what the diggers commonly called a 'Bubba' – the slang term for an under-age enlistment.

Drew was sent on furlough, while the authorities decided what to do with him. In April 1917 he was again hospitalised, this time with severe influenza. AIF headquarters classified and re-classified his position time and time again. To keep him busy he was attached to the 8<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion, odd jobbing.<sup>2</sup>

In July 1917 he was attached to the local dental unit, for temporary duty.

"A bloody good job this is for a Lewis Gunner," he thought to himself as he threw the dental instruments into a sterilizer.

On 29 September 1917, Drew read the duty roster – "Piquet duty again – stuff this lot – I'm off to town," he said.

For the crime of "allowing his duty to fall on another person" he forfeited one day's pay.<sup>2</sup>

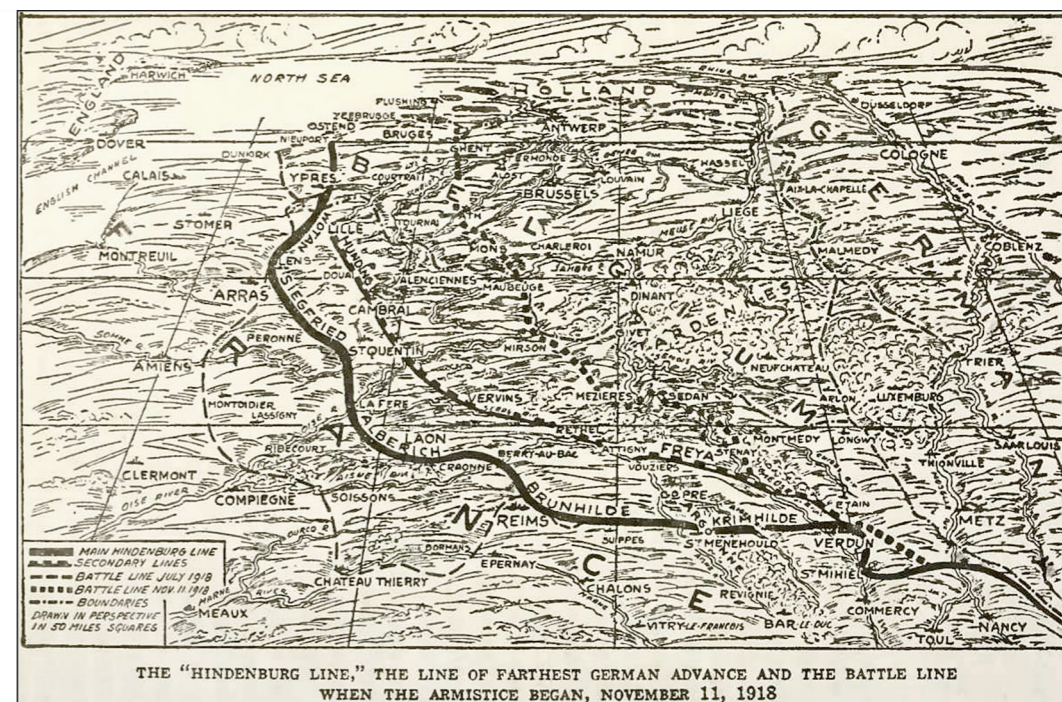
All George wanted was to return to the front. He was a soldier and, as he thought, a damn good one.

Christmas 1917 came and went and George continued to demand to be returned to France, but his pleas fell on deaf ears. But, eventually, in April 1918, he got his wish.

The Russian Army had collapsed and Russia was now out of the war. The Germans were poised to throw an additional 70 divisions against the Allied line in the west. As the allied line began to crumble, the German's were on the verge of the unthinkable – winning the war.

The depleted Aussie divisions were rushed forward to fill the gaps and hopefully be able to

#### The Hindenburg Line 11 November 1918



turn the tide. But they needed every man they could get.

His old platoon commander now in command of the company, greeted him.

"Welcome back, George," he said.

"Thanks skipper, it's good to be back!" young Drew replied.

As he placed his pack and rifle down, he filled his boss in on the occurrences since his departure from the unit.

"Not to worry mate, you're back amongst friends again – and none too soon!"

In the hard-fought actions around Villers Bretonneux, the Aussie's not only held the German's but started to push them back. The tide of battle had changed and now it was time to go on the offensive.

The Diggers were in open fields and spoiling for the fight. As they rampaged over one stronghold, they ran headlong into another. Enemy machine-gunners tried to delay the Diggers in a series of savage rear-guard actions. George and his fellow Lewis Gun team would engage them in ruthless machine gun duels. The enemy's aim was to bog the Diggers down, to allow the German artillery to zero in on the Anzac lines.

But, the Diggers were still hammering the German forces back towards their homeland and 8 August 1918 found the Germans on the back foot when the allied forces breeched the supposedly impregnable Hindenburg Line.

German General Ludendorff was to call this "Der Schwarze Tag" the 'Black Day' of the German Army – the day they lost the war.

The 20<sup>th</sup> were poised to launch an attack on a German strongpoint. The 20<sup>th</sup>'s line consisted of a number of scattered shell holes and captured German trenches. George was in his element, he was at the forefront of the advance and sharing the same mixed level of danger, adventure and excitement with his fellow soldiers. There was no place on earth he'd rather be.

The allied artillery were laying down an extensive preparatory barrage just in front of the allied lines. As George and his team readied themselves to go over the top, an artillery round fell short and scored a direct hit on the shellhole where they were sheltering.<sup>7</sup> As their mates ran to their aid, nothing could be done for the trio.

Later, when time allowed, the bodies of the fallen were retrieved and carried to the rear for burial. As the body of Private George Drew was lowered into the grave, Chaplain Crawford<sup>8</sup> provided a reading befitting the brave young soldier.

Minnie Drew answered the knock at the door. As she opened it, her heart turned to stone as the telegram boy handed her the envelope. Trembling, she tore it open and read of the death of her only son.

The grieving mother was intent on one thing now that her son was gone forever – that his correct name should be recorded on his records and, more importantly, on his headstone.

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**Retropilot creates unique and attractive images of your favourite aircraft in a nostalgic feel.**

Retropilot is a Brisbane-based design studio run by aviation enthusiast and full-time RAAF pilot, James, who 'accidentally' started the business in 2014 while seeking something unique to commemorate the end of his initial military pilot training.

James now combines old-school design styles with precision modern software to create eye-catching feature art pieces.

"We all love aircraft (even helicopters ;-)) and our portfolio of more than 170 designs includes artworks for both military and civilian aviation enthusiasts," James says.

## RETRO-PILOT RETRO ART



RETRO-PILOT.COM

**CONTACT** is proud to now be associated with Retropilot as an affiliate marketer – i.e. we get a commission when you purchase a Retropilot piece through the ads/links in this magazine or on our web site.

We love Retropilot because we love airplanes – and helicopters – and we love the style and quality of these art pieces.

"Good ain't cheap and cheap ain't good" – but these prints are 'feature pieces' that won't simply be added to a collection.

You can even customise an existing design, by adding text, logos, ranks etc – ideal for unique and treasured gifts/presents.

**CONTACT** supplied the original F-35A photo from which Retropilot designed the above piece. We're even hopeful that Retropilot will one day branch out and design Army and Navy artworks based on other **CONTACT** photos.

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MAIL INCLUDED

LCDT Connor Bonham (608 Squadron, Gawler), LCDT Adomas Neocleous (609 Squadron, Warradale), Sergeant (AAFC) Shayne O'Hara (608 Squadron and 906 Aviation Training Squadron), LCDT Tristan Hahn (605 Squadron, Seaford) and CCPL Timothy Cox (608 Squadron).

## FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL



## Where young eagles soar

**A small group of South Australian Air Force Cadets started on their pathway to earning their 'wings' in February.**

A preparatory weekend was held at the Gawler AAFC depot, which will lead to a formal Radio-Controlled Aircraft Course, a flying camp for those interested in learning about and flying radio-controlled fixed-wing aircraft.

This training is being offered by No 906 Aviation Training Squadron in conjunction with No 608 (Town of Gawler) Squadron.

Flying Officer (AAFC) Paul Rosenzweig, 6 Wing Public Affairs and Communication Officer, said: "A pilot course (pun intended) was run in 2017 to assess the course structure and content, in order to make any necessary adjustments for future courses. This is now the start of formal radio-controlled flying training in South Australia".

On completion of the course, comprising theoretical instruction and practical flying experience, Cadets who achieve the necessary standards will be eligible to receive the Bronze Wings awarded by the Model Aeronautical Association of Australia (MAAA) for modellers flying models under 2kg.

This preparation activity was run by Sergeant (AAFC) Shayne O'Hara. Shayne served as a cadet in the Air Training Corps in the 1970s and attained the rank of Cadet Flight Sergeant, and has now completed some 17 years' service as an Instructor of Cadets.

He has a background in performance vehicles, and motor sport and classic cars, and through his active role in go-cart racing earned three medals in the Australian Masters. He also maintains an active interest in aircraft modelling.

Sergeant O'Hara said: "We've put a lot of work into developing this course, and it'll be great to see it get off the ground".

As an air-minded youth organisation, the Australian Air Force Cadets has the mission of developing young Australians in a military and aviation environment.

No 906 Aviation Training Squadron is always looking for qualified and motivated instructors with excellent people skills and a passion for youth training, aviation and an appreciation of the military lifestyle, to join the team. Part-time volunteer positions are available now. Experience as a military officer or NCO is preferred but not essential.



CCPL Sean Fry, 605 Squadron, Seaford, honouring the service of his Bomber Command grandfather Mark Fry.

Australian Air Force Cadets from Adelaide have started this year with a Pilot Experience Flight (PEX) from Aldinga airfield (YADG).

Not only was this a rare chance to fly over South Australia's Fleurieu Peninsula, and capture clear views of the stunning coastline and rolling vine-covered hills of the famed McLaren Vale wine region – but some had the luck to do this in a classic Great Lakes 2T1A-2 biplane, made available by Adelaide Biplanes.

Among the participants was Cadet Corporal Sean Fry from No 605 (City of Onkaparinga) Squadron, who recently graduated from the 2019 Senior NCO promotion course and is due to be promoted to Cadet Sergeant.

Sean is the grandson of Bomber Command veteran Flying Officer Mark Fry, an Australian who served as an air gunner with No 149 (East India) Squadron RAF.

Sean's grandfather flew in several aircraft, including over Europe in Stirling and Lancaster bombers.

This heritage prompted Sean to join AAFC: "I chose to join the Australian Air Force Cadets because I had a passion for aviation and I saw cadets as a good pathway into that", he said.

"I did a couple of PEX flights through cadets at Aldinga, and that really got me interested. I did some training privately in powered aircraft, and then I got an AAFC scholarship for gliding and started learning to fly that way".

## Future leaders

Cadets from South Australia and Mildura – No 6 Wing, AAFC – completed a range of residential promotion courses early this year, and are set to take on increased leadership responsibilities within their parent squadrons.

No 6 Wing conducted the 2019 Promotion Courses at RAAF Edinburgh from the end of December into January, with two staff and 14 cadets joining them from No 5 Wing (Tasmania).

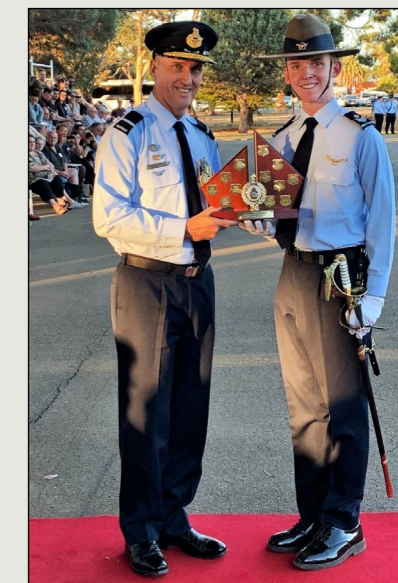
Of those seeking to be promoted to Cadet Under Officer, the Dux of the course was Cadet Flight-Sergeant Benjamin Dunk (photo) from 613 Squadron (RAAF Edinburgh). CFSGT Dunk is a solo glider pilot, 'C' Certificate qualified,

and provides instructional support to No 906 Aviation Training Squadron. Last year he was Dux of the Senior NCO Course.

Cadet Flight Sergeant Artyom Keddie from No 507 Squadron, Devonport, Tasmania, Dux of this year's Cadet Warrant Officer Course.

Cadet Corporal Kimberly Wyatt-Read, No 602 Squadron (Adelaide Hills) was Dux of the Senior NCO Course.

Leading Cadet Elijah Barrott-Walsh from 619 Squadron at Noarlunga and Leading Cadet Darcy Needle from 605 Squadron at Seaford (both 'City of Onkaparinga' squadrons) tied for Dux of the Junior NCO Course.



Cadet Flight-Sergeant Benjamin Dunk and Air Commodore Gary Martin. Photo by Aircraftman (AAFC) Josh Watson.



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