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JUNE 2020

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ISSUE 66 – JUNE 2020



10 The Big Picture

Romeo Firefly

12 Heads Up

18 Joint Strike Fighter

Low-level training

20 Medics under fire

Aussies under attack

24 MH-60 ROMEO

At sea with HMAS Adelaide

32 Future Operations

Opinion piece

38 HMAS Sydney

Commissioned at sea

43 Sovereign strategy

Opinion piece

50 ANZAC Day 2020

A day to remember

60 Knighthood

Captain Tom

66 DFSW Club

68 Just Soldiers

78 Q Store

78 Gear Insider

Bang for your buck(s)

80 Out with a bang

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EDITORIAL

Issue 66 – June 2020

CONTACT
AIR, LAND & SEA



**AT SEA
WITH HMAS
ADELAIDE**

Photo by
Able Seaman
Jarrod Mulvihill

Starts page 24

Editor **Brian Hartigan**
editor@militarycontact.com
ph: 0408 496 664

Art/Design **Brian Hartigan**

Advertising **Brian Hartigan**
advertising@militarycontact.com
ph: 0408 496 664

Business Manager **Rosie Hartigan**
accounts@militarycontact.com
ph: (02) 4293 1010

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

www.militarycontact.com (all info)
www.aussiecombat.com (free subs)
www.issuu.com/contactpublishing (archives)
www.facebook.com/CONTACTmagazine
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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

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be addressed to the editor.

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appropriate.

Many of you are aware (if not, find that story [here](#)) why CONTACT was 'invented'
– in which case you might remember I was a reporter, then senior reporter and
even acting editor of ARMY Newspaper, 20-odd years ago.

Back in my day, ARMY Newspaper Unit was an actual military unit with military
hierarchy – three corporals, plus one each of sergeant, WO2, captain and major.

Back in my day, the editor was a major, but also 'a newspaper man', recruited
to ARMY Newspaper Unit to run the unit as a newspaper unit should be run,
albeit within the boundaries of its military/political publishers' constraints.

Being 'a newspaper man' in military uniform, our major/editor, who was a
big man with a big voice and a big ego, fought many commendable battles in
order to get stories that should be told, told.

Ultimately, orders had to be followed, but 99 times out of 100, the story got
told in some shape or form. Sometimes stories got so watered down as to
become tripe – but other times, stories initially banned were eventually told, by
reporters who were as passionate as our editor flying top cover.

So imagine, if you can, how gobsmacked this proud ex-ARMY Newspaper
reporter was to find that ARMY Newspaper did not report on the biggest
soldier-centric story of this year so far.

I'm not talking about Operation Bushfire Assist, which had massive and
commendable coverage – and I'm not talking about Operation COVID-19
Assist, which, by comparison, is pretty dismal.

I'm talking about the most unusual, most memorable and, at least for me, the
most meaningful ANZAC Day commemoration in living memory.

Yes, ANZAC Day 2020 rated zero reporting in ARMY – "The soldiers' newspaper".

The first edition of ARMY Newspaper after ANZAC Day, in which there was
a lovely pre-prepared ANZAC centre-spread, was actually printed the week
before, so that's OK.

But the second edition after the event had more-than-adequate lead-up time
to report on this year's events.

But, instead of reporting on ANZAC Day 2020, two pages were dedicated to
three ARMY Newspaper sergeants reminiscing about their favourite ANZAC
Day past – 2017, 2017 and 2013 respectively – with not even a passing
acknowledgement that ANZAC Day 2020 even existed!

It's not like there was nothing to report on. Restricted official events still went
ahead, with military and AWM photographers and videographers attending,
their work published on official web sites. There were plenty of photos from
across the country and from overseas available to the newspaper too.

And, all eight uniformed reporters at the Directorate of Defence Newspapers
must surely have participated in some form of ANZAC Day activity – even if it
was 'only' standing on their own driveway at dawn.

But still, ANZAC Day 2020 did not exist as far as ARMY Newspaper was
concerned.

Were they ordered not to cover it? If so, by whom – and why? And was
their editor's voice heard bellowing through the halls of power in valiant but
ultimately futile protest? I know not.

It's really none of my business anymore anyway – but, like many veterans, I
look back on 'the good old days' of my service, and weep for what has become
of the unit and the ethos I proudly stood tall for.

But, at least in my case, I am proud to have invented *this* platform where I can
continue to fight my own little battles, and be judged against yardsticks old
and new, fair and biased.

And so, I present issue 66 of **CONTACT Air Land & Sea** – including my
version of ANZAC Day 2020 coverage (starting p50) – and look forward to your
bouquets and brickbats, sent to editor@militarycontact.com

Sincerely,

Brian Hartigan, Managing Editor

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An MH-60R 'Romeo' Seahawk helicopter on HMAS Parramatta deploys missile-countermeasure flares while on deployment off South East Asia. The flares are designed to distract heat-seeking missiles.

ROMEO FIREFLY



A CH-47F Chinook arrives to pick up a Hawkei PMV-L during trials (2017). Photo by Glen McCarthy.

1RAR GETS FIRST HAWKEI PMV-Ls

The 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, received its first shipment of 13 Hawkei protected mobility vehicles – light (PMV-L) in March.

The vehicles arrived for training in preparation for operational test and evaluation later this year or when circumstances allow.

Regimental Technical Adjutant 1RAR Captain Aidan McCarthy said the two- and four-door Hawkeis would be used for command, liaison, reconnaissance or logistics where protection was required.

"PMV-L provides protection similar to the Bushmaster," Captain McCarthy said.

"With its smaller size, good mobility, self-defence weapons and protection, we can now have command elements move more closely with their fighting elements.

"It's got a similar protected capability of a PMV-M, which is that blast and ballistic resistance factor, but it's also about half the weight, which is the big selling point."

Hawkei command variant has communications equipment and other systems providing digital situational awareness to commanders on the move.

"With the arrival of the vehicles and in preparation for the testing at the end of the year we will start to experience the tactical utility of those vehicles as both individual vehicles and as a tactical packet," Captain McCarthy said.

1RAR already has about 40 qualified Hawkei drivers, while other Townsville units should receive vehicles and be able to participate in operational tests.

1 and 7 Bdes are expected to receive vehicles later this year.

Once testing is complete, the roll-out plan has final versions of the vehicle for Army and Air Force with 1100 Hawkeis on order – enough to replace about one-third of the G-Wagon fleet.



A 'Thunderbird' formation to mark the last Operational Conversion Course for RAAF F/A-18A Hornets. Photo by Sergeant David Gibbs.

F/A-18S SOLD TO 'WORLD'S LARGEST PRIVATE AIR FORCE'

RAAF has sold "up to 46" soon-to-be retired RAAF F/A-18 'classic' Hornets to an American military contractor.

The announcement in March followed an earlier announcement that the Royal Canadian Air Force had purchased "up to 25" aircraft from the RAAF's fleet of 71.

In case readers didn't notice the math, 46 plus 25 equals 71 – potentially leaving no RAAF F/A-18s to fulfil earlier promises of "up to 12" aircraft for museums and heritage preservation.

Adding to many people's confusion/concern, the Australian War Memorial published an image featuring a former US Navy F/A-18 on display in its new \$500million expansion plans.

The sale of "up to 46" Hornets to Air USA, who intend to fly the planes as 'enemy' on exercises such as Red Flag, Cope North etc, could see RAAF Super Hornets and F-35 Lightnings eventually 'shooting them down'.

Ron Kirlin, owner of Air USA, gave details of his Australian purchase to "The Warzone" in an article aptly titled "This man owns the world's most advanced private air force", boasting he had acquired "all remaining" RAAF F/A-18s, including all recent upgrades to radars, electronics etc, all spare parts, all test equipment, bolt-on EW and targeting pods – and even with their 20mm Vulcan cannons still fitted.

Also among Mr Kirlin's impressive private air force are four Mig-29 Fulcrums, 10 Hawks – and five ex-RAAF PC-9s.

ARMY'S 119TH BIRTHDAY PRESENT

The Australian Army was presented the Theatre Honour East Timor 1999-2003 during a parade in Canberra, as part of its 119th birthday celebration.

Presented by Governor-General, General (Retd) David Hurley, the Theatre Honour recognises the performance of Army's personnel and units during warlike service in Timor-Leste.

Chief of Army Lieutenant General Rick Burr said the presentation of the Theatre Honour East Timor 1999-2003 on Army's birthday was an opportunity to reflect on Army's proud 119 year history and to remember those who have served, and continue to serve.

"This is a special day, this 119th birthday, as we celebrate the great story of our Army," Lieutenant General Burr said.



Governor-General David Hurley attaches a streamer to the Army Banner. Photo by Sergeant Hamish Paterson.

"Today I pass on my sincere thanks to everyone who has worn our uniform, who has served and who has sacrificed.

"I thank those who support us, to do what we do."

The Governor-General attached a streamer bearing the Theatre Honour East Timor

1999-2003 to the Army Banner during the parade.

The honour will eventually be embroidered onto the Army Banner and the Colours and Guidons of units that served in Timor-Leste during the period 1999 to 2003.

NAVY'S LARGEST GRADUATION

The Royal Australian Naval College at HMAS Creswell graduated the largest officer cohort in its 107-year history, with 168 members of New Entry Officers' Course (NEOC) 62 completing their initial training in May.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions, families and friends were not able to attend the milestone events.

[Read full story here...](#)

AVALON AIRSHOW

The Australian International Air Show at Avalon has been pushed back to the second half of next year.

'Avalon Airshow' is now scheduled to run from 23 to 28 November 2021.

The dates for the southern hemisphere's largest airshow (and a range of other expos) were changed because of COVID-19 restrictions on international travel.

[Read full story here...](#)

NEW ARMOUR

An initial \$1 million contract with Craig International Ballistics will see the ADF receive 750 soft armour inserts to replace in-service armour.

The Australian Army will be the first military in the world to be issued body armour made with this new Kevlar material.

[Read full story here...](#)

PSYCH DOGS

The first two dogs provided to veterans under the Department of Veterans' Affairs Psychiatric Assistance Dogs program are now at home with their new owners.

Both the owners and dogs have begun the next phase of training together, as part of the veterans' PTSD management plan.

[Read full story here...](#)

WWI OFFICER ID

The Australian Army has identified the final resting place of a WWI Australian officer at Souchez, France.

Captain Arthur Harold Appleby's grave, previously unmarked, was identified through extensive research by his family, private researchers, Army's Unrecovered War Casualties team and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

[Read full story here...](#)

GALLIPOLI KIWIS DOUBLED

The official number of New Zealand soldiers who served at Gallipoli in 1915 has been almost doubled.

Two historians published the new number in a book, based on findings in leaders' notebooks and from financial records.

[Read full story here...](#)

DOHAS CHANGES

Changes to the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme (DHOAS) and Australian Defence Force Super eligibility criteria were passed through parliament in May.

[Read full story here...](#)



Former infantryman Andrew Glebow gets a kiss from his new assistance dog Leon.

SHIP NAMES

During a ceremonial keel laying for the second Arafura-class offshore patrol vessel at the Osborne Naval Shipyard in Adelaide, Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Michael Noonan announced the names of vessels two to six.

The ships will be named after significant coastal land and sea regions of Australia and will be the first Navy ships to carry the names.

[Read full story here...](#)

HEADS UP



LOYAL WINGMAN

A Boeing-led Australian industry team has rolled out the first unmanned Loyal Wingman aircraft to the Royal Australian Air Force – an historic milestone for the company and the Commonwealth.

Using artificial intelligence to extend the capabilities of manned and unmanned platforms, Loyal Wingman is the first military aircraft to be designed, engineered and manufactured in Australia in more than 50 years.

Boeing's Loyal Wingman

It is Boeing's largest investment in an unmanned aircraft outside of the United States.

As the first of three prototypes for Australia's Loyal Wingman Advanced Development Program, the aircraft also serves as the foundation for the Boeing Airpower Teaming System being developed for the global market.

Chief of the Royal Australian Air Force Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld said the rollout of the first aircraft was a significant milestone in the Boeing Loyal Wingman project.

"This project is an excellent example of innovation through collaboration and what can be achieved working together with defence industry," he said.

"This demonstrates the importance of the relationship RAAF has with Boeing Australia and defence industry broadly.

"I look forward to exploring the capabilities this aircraft may bring to our existing fleet."

AUSSIE MADE F-35 AMMO

BULLETS: Rheinmetall NIOA Munitions is set to produce and export ammunition for the US F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program.

RNM said that, subject to Defence approval, it would begin production of 25mm frangible armour piercing projectiles at the federal-government owned Benalla plant in Victoria.

The proposed load/assemble/pack line at Benalla will be capable of producing 20mm to 35mm ammunition and marks the first expansion of the Rheinmetall-NIOA joint venture beyond its \$60m artillery shell forging plant in Maryborough, Queensland.

BOMBS: Thales Australia has completed the first production lot of a new Australian-made bomb for RAAF's F-35s.

The new BLU-111s 500lb bombs, also made at Benalla, are said to have the same performance metrics as current general-purpose bombs, but are significantly safer to store, transport and operate.

FLARES: Chemring Australia, based in Lara, near Geelong, has secured a US\$107.5 million contract for the production and delivery of countermeasure flares for Australian, US and international F-35 operators.



Photo by Sergeant David Gibbs

F-35 DAMAGED

An F-35A Joint Strike Fighter suffered 'minor damage' at RAAF Base Williamtown in March.

The incident occurred at RAAF Base Williamtown whereby an F-35A was hit by a security gate that was closing as the aircraft taxied from its parking bay.

Defence said it was conducting an investigation to identify the causes of the incident and any corrective actions and mitigation measures required to prevent re-occurrence.

No one was injured.

This contract was heavily criticised because it was apparently signed without a tender process at or shortly after the PACIFIC 2019 maritime expo, where the Defence Industry Minister had publicly unveiled a new locally designed tactical watercraft – "Whiskey Alpha".

The local boat is a radical design from a veteran-owned business – building the boat they wished they had had in the Navy.

Defence has issued a request for information to Australian industry "to gain an appreciation of Australian industry capabilities to design, manufacture and sustain military sea boats".

This RFI comes just six months after a Finnish boat company announced they had signed a contract to supply 41 sea boats for the Royal Australian Navy's new Arafura-class off-shore patrol vessels over 10 years.

OZ RHIBs?

Whiskey Alpha. Photo courtesy The Whiskey Project



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HMAS Toowoomba conducts small-boat training at night during a patrol in the Gulf of Oman as part of the International Maritime Security Construct.

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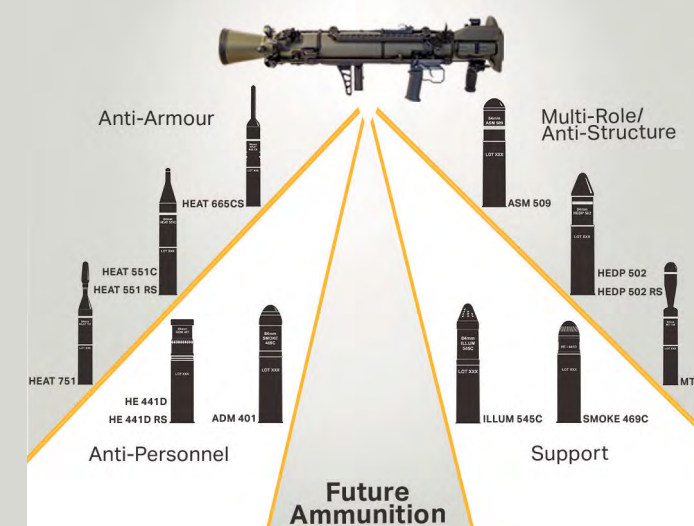
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LOW- LEVEL TRAINING

Residents in the Forster and Bulahdelah areas of New South Wales were advised to expect up to five F-35A Lightning aircraft from RAAF Base Williamtown conducting low-flying training activities in April.

Seventeen F-35A Lightning II aircraft are now based at RAAF Base Williamtown, and are gradually replacing the ageing F/A-18A/B Hornet aircraft.

Commander of Air Combat Group, Air Commodore Tim Alsop said local residents might be surprised by the new fighter jets conducting low flying activities in the area as pilots hone and develop air-to-surface tactics.

"Number 3 Squadron aircrew are all experienced pilots who have been flying the F-35A aircraft in the United States since 2015, and in Australia since their introduction in December 2018," Air Commodore Alsop said.

"Developing skills in low-level attacks is an important part of Defence training, and we need to test the F-35A capability as part of the verification and validation process for its initial operating capability."

Fighter jets operate over the ocean well off the Hunter and Great Lakes coasts for 70 per cent of their training, but up to 30 per cent of operations are conducted to the west and north of RAAF Base Williamtown and other parts of Australia.

**17 F-35s Joint
Strike Fighters
now in Australia**



MEDICS UNDER FIRE

By Captain Roger Brennan

On March 11 and again on March 14 2020, Australian and New Zealand personnel operating as part of Task Group Taji 10, along with their coalition partners, were exposed to terrifying attacks by multiple rockets fired at their camp.

On 11 March 2020, 15 rockets landed on Camp Taji, killing two Americans and one British soldier from the Royal Army Medical Corps.

The attack left 14 other US soldiers, contractors and coalition personnel wounded, five of them critically, plus one coalition wounded identified as a Polish soldier.

On 14 March 2020, just before 11am, another rocket attack hit Camp Taji with more than 25 107mm rockets striking the coalition compound and an Iraqi air-defences installation, this time wounding five coalition and two Iraqi soldiers.

Iraqi forces subsequently found seven Katyushka rocket launchers containing 24 unlaunched rockets, outside the base.

US Army Specialist Juan Miguel Mendez Covarrubias, aged 27, US Air Force Staff Sergeant Marshal D. Roberts, 28, and Lance Corporal Brodie

Gillon, a 26-year-old reservist with the Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry were killed in the first attack.

Australian Army medics Corporal Sarah Nixon and Corporal Ashlee Liversedge recalled the rocket attacks.

"We heard a round hit close. It felt like it was just 50m away – it was loud, the building shook, we hit the ground and put on our body armour," Corporal Nixon said.

"Other Camp Taji medical staff ran in and said to expect casualties."

Corporals Nixon and Liversedge had to quickly run to a nearby tent to grab medical stores and prepare the resuscitation room while rockets continued to hit the camp.

Over the next few hours, casualties came through the tent, with both corporals providing critical medical support to several of the wounded.

"Sarah and I were part of a team that treated the significant injuries of patients as they came through the tent," Corporal Liversedge said.

"The whole team played an integral role providing medical assistance to casualties."



ABOVE: Corporals Ashlee Liversedge and Sarah Nixon. Photo by Leading Seaman Craig Walton.

RIGHT: Australian and US soldiers train for a mass-casualty incident at Camp Taji. Photo by Specialist Caroline Schofer.





LEFT: A memorial service for Specialist Juan Mendez Covarrubias, killed in the 11 March rocket attack on Camp Taji. Photo by Sergeant Sydney Mariette.

BELOW: Corporal Sarah Nixon looks at photos of her daughter who she missed dearly on Mothers' Day 2020 because she was serving in the Middle East as an Army medic. Photo by Petty Officer Yuri Ramsey



"The gravity of the situation was felt when our first patient arrived and it was one of our coalition medics."

For almost two hours, the casualty numbers grew and medical staff prioritised treatment based on those with major injuries, minor shrapnel wounds and concussions.

Task Group Taji 10 (TGT-X) medical staff worked through the night to treat the wounded coalition personnel, a few of whom had to be evacuated by helicopter for further treatment in Baghdad.

TGT-X Commander Colonel Nick Foxall praised the heroism of Corporal Nixon and Corporal Liversedge following the attacks.

"Corporal Nixon and Corporal Liversedge showed exceptional care and courage during both attacks," Colonel Foxall said.

"The actions of these two soldiers almost certainly saved the lives of the injured coalition members."

"They had only been in-country for a short time when they were called upon to do their jobs under fire, and in doing so displayed nothing but the highest of values representing the Australian and New Zealand Task Group."

In May, Corporal Nixon was back at the main Australian base in the Middle East, away from the dangers of the action in Iraq, yet a world away from her daughter too, on Mother's Day.

Corporal Nixon said while her four-year-old daughter Isabella tried to understand where her mum was, it was still confusing for her, staying with her grandparents.

"Isabella knows that when I was in Iraq, I was fixing people," Corporal Nixon said.

"She says she wants to be a nurse when she grows up or she wants to be in the Army, but I don't think she knows what that really means just yet."

"Although I am missing my family and friends I still have a job to do and I am deployed here with many other mothers in the same situation."

Corporal Nixon said her family was really proud of her service, and of everyone currently deployed.

"They are especially grateful that we can help Australian and other coalition forces."

Minister for Defence Linda Reynolds said happy Mothers' Day to all Defence mums, who serve with professionalism and distinction so that all Aussie kids can grow up in a country that knows peace.

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LIEUTENANT COMMANDER CHRISTOPHER THORNTON

HMAS Adelaide left her home port in Sydney at the end of March, with her main mission to conduct first-of-class flight trials for the MH-60R 'Romeo' helicopter, off the coast of Queensland.

While the trials were number one priority, it was also an opportunity for other ship's departments to trial and train in their own specialties on the seven-week voyage.

But, for the helicopters – even though they had operated from the ship before – this was a specific mission to determine the safe operating limits of the Romeo helicopter on the landing helicopter dock (LHD) ship in a range of sea states and wind speeds, by day and night.

Adelaide's Commanding Officer Captain Jonathan Ley said the helicopter testing and other training on this trip were essential to ensure Navy maintained its readiness.

"The results [of the flight trials] will provide a new standard of operational capability, informing how Navy can employ the MH-60R and LHD together in the future to increase both lethality in combat, and responsiveness during humanitarian assistance and disaster relief tasks," Captain Ley said.

And, all this activity and operational preparedness was to be conducted in light of the Australian Defence Force's support of and compliance with Australian government COVID-19 efforts and restrictions.

Captain Ley said Navy had put in place strict measures on its ships to ensure the continuation of essential training while preserving the health and welfare of its people.

All crew on Adelaide were screened for COVID-19 symptoms before departure.



At sea, all health threats, including communicable diseases such as COVID-19, were carefully and deliberately considered as part of force health protection.

Major fleet units deploy with a medical officer or an appropriately trained medical team who are capable of screening and providing care to any personnel with symptoms – and Adelaide was no exception, equipped as she is with her own ‘small hospital’.

“Adelaide is currently the Navy’s high readiness vessel and may be tasked by the Australian government to respond to emergencies across the region, including support to civil authorities in Australia, or overseas, in their efforts against COVID-19 [or any other contingency],” Captain Ley said.

“It is imperative that we maintain that high readiness capability, and provide reassurance to government that ADF can respond immediately, even in times of crisis.”

The MH-60R ‘Romeo’ helicopter, based at 816 Squadron in Nowra, New South Wales, is the Navy’s next-generation submarine and ship hunter.

The first-of-type flight trials were a crucial testing process to establish the true extent of how the MH-60R would operate in the maritime environment on Navy’s various platforms, including on LHDs.

Lieutenant Commander Chris Broadbent of the Aircraft Maintenance and Flight Trials Unit said the trials included aviation-facilities assessments, equipment calibration, and evaluation of the interface between a particular helicopter type and class of ship.

“While MH-60R aircraft have been used on HMA Ships Adelaide and Canberra for some time, new tests are required to determine what new safe operating limits they can achieve when working together,” Lieutenant Commander Broadbent said.

The flight trials were to be conducted in Queensland waters in April and include actively chasing the right weather conditions to adequately prove capability.

Lieutenant Commander Broadbent said they had a three-week program where they could fly the helicopters day and night, in different sea states and approaching different locations on the flight deck under varying environmental conditions and aircraft configurations.

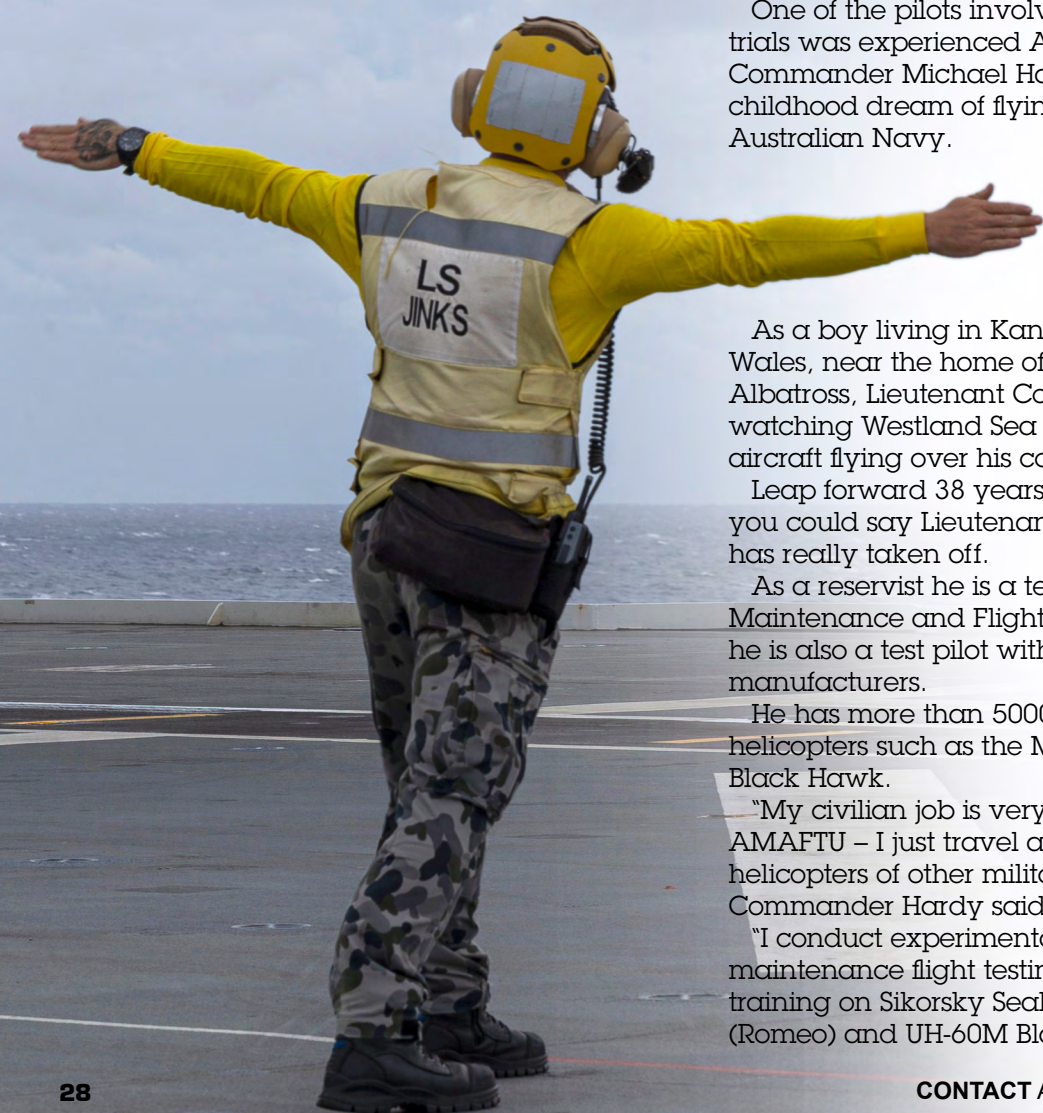
“Even the aircraft’s behaviour in different ambient air temperature will provide us with important information,” Lieutenant Commander Broadbent said.

AMAFU is not the only organisation to benefit from the flight trials onboard Adelaide, with the ship’s own aviation support team also conducting deck handling and crash-on-deck exercises to improve their familiarity with the Romeo helicopter.

Chief Petty Officer Aviation Justin Penrose said the flight trials provided vital training to the ship’s aviation support sailors.

“This has been a great opportunity for them to develop their understanding of the roles and responsibilities required of an aviation-support sailor at sea,” Chief Petty Officer Penrose said.

Aviation-support sailors manage the movements and deck systems of all types of Navy and Army – even foreign visitor – helicopters both on shore and at sea.



One of the pilots involved in the 'Romeo' flight trials was experienced AMAFTU test pilot Lieutenant Commander Michael Hardy, who is still following his childhood dream of flying helicopters for the Royal Australian Navy.

As a boy living in Kangaroo Valley, New South Wales, near the home of Navy's Fleet Air Arm at HMAS Albatross, Lieutenant Commander Hardy grew up watching Westland Sea King and Douglas A4 Skyhawk aircraft flying over his community.

Leap forward 38 years after joining the Navy and you could say Lieutenant Commander Hardy's career has really taken off.

As a reservist he is a test pilot with Navy's Aircraft Maintenance and Flight Test Unit and as a civilian he is also a test pilot with one of the major helicopter manufacturers.

He has more than 5000 flying hours in military helicopters such as the MH-60R Romeo and the UH-60 Black Hawk.

"My civilian job is very similar to what I do at AMAFTU – I just travel a lot more and test-fly helicopters of other military forces," Lieutenant Commander Hardy said.

"I conduct experimental, production and maintenance flight testing, as well as providing pilot training on Sikorsky Seahawks, including the MH-60R (Romeo) and UH-60M Black Hawks."



Lieutenant Commander Hardy said his career had taken him all around the world.

"There are a lot of highlights, including deploying to Somalia in 1993 and flying a Sea King in Mogadishu for four months," Lieutenant Commander Hardy said.

But it wasn't just Romeo's that Adelaide got to 'play' with on this trip, with embarked MRH-90 Taipans and especially Queensland-based CH-47F Chinook helicopters taking advantage of the visiting LHD in their waters.

The CH-47s conducted night and day deck landings that would also qualify them to support future operations requiring their heavier-lift capability.

Commander Leon Volz, HMAS Adelaide's Commander Air, said the the visitors were from the Army's 5th Aviation Regiment from RAAF Base Townsville.

"Adelaide provided the CH-47 element the opportunity for Army aircrew to gain Deck Landing Qualifications as well as providing training and journal progression for new members of the ship's aviation team," Commander Volz said.

"Once the CH-47 aircrew have completed their qualification it will allow 5 Aviation's CH-47 force to be ready to provide heavy-lift capability from the LHDs in support of humanitarian-aid and disaster-relief (HADR) missions as well as amphibious operations."

But, some helicopters didn't even land on the ship during some sorties, honing skills in vertical stores lift and even personnel hoisting.

HMAS Adelaide pulled in to Townsville for supplies and fuel shortly after dawn on 23 April.

She was still there at dawn on ANZAC Day – and, while Australia's ANZAC Day commemorations were



very different this year, no reports were published as to how HMAS Adelaide's ships company spent their ANZAC Day.

As far as CONTACT can glean from photographic evidence, a lone crewmember stood silent vigil at the foot of the gangway on ANZAC Day to greet the dawn.

HMAS Adelaide spent a further nine days in port, with strict border controls preventing crew going in to Townsville.

HMAS Adelaide Executive Officer Commander Jace Hutchison said the ship had put in place strict protocols for the resupply visit and followed whole-of-government guidance in relation to COVID-19.

"It is important that we maintain humanitarian-assistance and disaster-relief (HADR) capability and readiness, but the health and well-being of our people and mitigating the spread of COVID-19 was our highest priority," Commander Hutchison said.

On 4 May, she was back at sea.

As well as helicopter operations, Adelaide also supported a variety of other exercises to maintain a range of capabilities, including landing craft training, damage-control routines, assault-guide training, diver training and shooting.

The Queensland coast provided a picture perfect training ground for the ship's dive team to keep their diving qualifications current.

The 10-strong ship's dive team participated in exercises off Townsville that helped satisfy training commitments for diving emergency drills, which need to be regularly certified.

Other dive training included buddy-diver techniques and work-diver signaling.

Sailors and officers who make up a ship's dive team can come from any department and the team in HMAS Adelaide comprises a cross-section of the ship's company, including marine technicians, boatswains mates, maritime warfare officers and combat systems operators.

Maritime warfare officer and ship's dive team member Midshipman Alastair Wyatt said having a broad selection of skillsets brought useful capability to the ship.

"The dive team can be called upon at any time to rectify defects or support the ship from the underwater environment," Midshipman Wyatt said.

"Scheduled dives to inspect the ship's hull and propulsion system are conducted several times a

month and this, coupled with training dives, means that the ship's dive team remains very active."

More urgent tasking such as the removal of fishing nets from the propellers or stabilisers may also be required.

Able Seaman Boatswains Mate Malik El-Leissy said all of the Adelaide dive team shared a passion for diving and were keen to sharpen their skills.

"The Queensland coast is an ideal setting for dive exercises and allows us to practise emergency drills and other essential training," he said.

Members of the team undergo specific training to become ship's divers, covering safety in the underwater environment, diving medical emergency procedures and Navy-specific diving techniques that focus on the unique environment that a ship's diver could encounter when part of a dive team.

Midshipman Wyatt said the training had been one of the most rewarding aspects of his career.

"I have not been disappointed with my choice to become a Navy diver and would recommend it to anyone looking for a similarly positive experience," he said.

As HMAS Adelaide began to move south again for home, her 130-strong engineering team had reason to look proudly back at their achievements of the year to date, especially during the challenging maintenance period that kicked the year off, all the while maintaining and operating her complex power, aviation and combat system.

However, it was Adelaide's scheduled external maintenance period (EMP) earlier in the year that

set the team up for success, according to refit liaison officer Lieutenant Mark Lawley.

"With 299 planned maintenance jobs completed, 275 defects rectified and 10 engineering changes implemented, the external maintenance period was an enriching and engaging experience," Lieutenant Lawley said.

"During this time there were no significant safety incidents, which is a significant achievement considering the complexity and scale of the work that was done."

Major engineering tasks included maintenance of the gas-turbine exhaust, an upgrade of the advanced stabilised glide-slope indicator (ASGSI), recovery of flight deck lighting, progression of Nulka defensive system upgrade preparatory work, surveillance radar maintenance, and a new 'set-top box' upgrade."

But, even with some of these tasks incomplete, and with five Defence-industry civilians staying on board to conclude activities as she sailed, HMAS Adelaide was tasked to Operation Bushfire Assist on 4 January.

And now, after another busy and challenging block of sea time, HMAS Adelaide left the warmer waters of the north behind her and was back near homeport Sydney, conducting manoeuvres with NUSHIP Sydney on the day of that ship's historic commissioning at sea as HMAS Sydney (V).

HMAS Adelaide, highly capable and freshly exercised, remains on standby as the Navy's high-readiness vessel, prepared for any task ordered by the Australian government.

FUTURE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

AUSTRALIA'S AMPHIBIOUS CAPABILITY

'AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE IS THE MOST COMPLEX PROPOSITION FOR THE FUTURE OF ADF COMBAT POWER DEVELOPMENT TO 2025.'

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

- CHIEF OF NAVY - 2005

WORDS - ZACHARIE WRIGHT-HANSEN
REPRODUCED FROM THE COVE

With growing instability across the world, focus must be put into refinement of Defence acquisition of reliable equipment, sustainment of our ready force and accurate training scenarios, to ensure Defence's ability to protect Australia but also project force as the government deems necessary.

Babones (2019) explains the United States may no longer be in a position to come to Australia's defence, yet Australia still only spends 1.8% of its gross domestic product on defence (in 2019).

Is this enough? Are all of Australia's latest projects purely capability driven or also political in nature?

The Fleet's Way Forward

The Royal Australian Navy has experienced significant changes in the past decade in light of growing responsibility and tasking.

Navy's tempo is increasing, which is in part due to the operational focus being shifted closer to home and the growing requirement for humanitarian response.

All of its vessels and aircraft are either being replaced or a replacement is being planned within a 10-year timeframe.

But, with the climate moving from counter-insurgency and piracy to the potential of more significant hostilities, balanced with supplementing disaster response, thought must be given to the effective capacity of current and future platforms.

The first government-listed purpose of the 2016 White Paper outlines priority on '[investment in] more capable, agile and potent future force that has greater capacity to respond to strategic risk'.

Does the current capability match the White Paper's purpose or intent?





CURRENT AMPHIBIOUS CAPABILITY

Recent incidents in the Indo-Pacific and South West Pacific have shown the critical importance of an amphibious capability.

If tensions escalate, the ability for Australia to project power is crucial for the defence of itself as well as our pacific partners.

If the ability – or willingness – of the United States to project force is coming into question, who will take their place?

The RAN defines its amphibious warfare force as having ‘mobility in mass; a unique cross-domain mobility; and, being useful across the full spectrum of military operations’.

One could argue that the concentration of Australia’s amphibious force in two large, costly and slow moving vessels, i.e. the landing helicopter dock (LHD) ships, could be counter to a ‘mobile force’ and be at risk of exploitation by potential adversaries.

United States Marine Corps Commandant, General David H. Berger (2019), highlights ‘it would be illogical to concentrate our forces on a few large ships’.

Therefore is it worth Australia taking the advantage by forward planning new approaches to traditional ‘amphibious platforms’ through developing a new type of amphibious deployability

tailored to our operational theatres as an island nation?

NEXT STEPS FOR CAPABILITY TROOP DEPLOYMENT

If past RIMPAC and Talisman Sabre exercises have shown Australia anything, it is that speed is key. Getting boots on the ground as soon as possible is a key requirement, especially in contested territory.

Fleet concentrations can only protect an asset for so long when a requirement to ‘dock down’ for many hours exists while performing an amphibious landing from one concentrated asset.

Investigating smaller and modular vessels to transport troops and/or equipment will enable more agile and flexible force concentration throughout a task group and the ability to react to situations.

The loss of a single ship does not end the ability to project force when you have multiple landing ships with the same mission.

Sun Tzu says, ‘whether to concentrate or to divide your troops, must be decided by circumstances’.

You do not have this option when your landing forces are all concentrated on one or two assets.

POTENTIAL POINTS OF INVESTIGATION

‘Crossover’ frigate platforms are smaller, modular ships that are the size of a frigate but can serve as an amphibious assault ship if fitted that way.

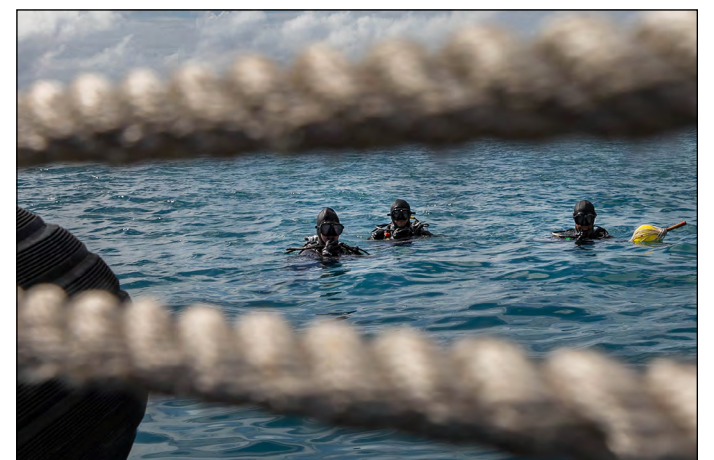


Vavasser (2019) reports that the ‘Crossover’ is a new design introduced as the next step in what frigates can bring in capabilities at sea.

Tilt-rotor aircraft enable troops and supplies to be flown ashore at the speed of a fixed wing but can land in more remote locations, including on current amphibious vessels.

This capability could heavily complement the current mission-support helicopters operated from RAN vessels in taking up a specific amphibious landing role, ensuring troops get to shore faster to achieve their mission.

Modular logistics solutions enable users to transport stores and equipment by air, land or sea just as they are operated ashore.



The benefit of a modular transportable stores solution is it reduces man-hours of packing and preparation and increased accountability as each unit is adjustable and lockable.

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIC POLICY

Refining the ADF’s ability to be agile during current and future operations is vital.

This is reiterated by Graham (2019) saying that ‘ADF needs risk-worthy platforms – the ADF concentrates too much capability in too few platforms’.

When you include factors such as growing regional instability and environmental or humanitarian events, a combination of relatively few events may be enough of a cataclysm to overstretch and saturate the ADF’s ability to react.



How can the ADF adapt to changing theatres?
Can the ADF maintain a strong capable force to protect freedom of navigation, trade and strategic assets at the request of the Australian government, with the current asset and fleet structure?

Could the ADF react to both a force projection and humanitarian tasking simultaneously or with short reconstitution times?

While the current amphibious capability may suffice for now, we need to explore these questions if we are to be ready for the challenges of the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Able Seaman Zacharie Wright-Hansen joined the Navy in 2014 as an avionics technician. His first posting was to 808 Squadron working on the MRH-90 helicopters, followed by two years on a sea-going flight working on replenishment and amphibious vessels, then back to 808 Squadron to run the tool store section.

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HISTORIC HMAS SYDNEY V



Above by Petty Officer Tom Gibson
Main by Able Seaman Jarrod Mulvihill
Bottom by Able Seaman Benjamin Ricketts

COMMISSIONED AT SEA

On 18 May 2020, the Royal Australian Navy welcomed its newest and most potent warship into the fleet, commissioning HMAS Sydney at sea.

HMAS Sydney's commissioning was a truly historic event – the first and only time an Australian 'warship' was commissioned underway at sea.

One other similar event occurred during World War II when a small 186-ton stores carrier called HMAS Matafele was commissioned on 1 January 1943 in Papuan waters.

But, HMAS Sydney is a world-class warship, the finest ever commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy, with improvements built in that her predecessor sisters Hobart and Brisbane will have to have retrofitted.

HMAS Sydney's commissioning off the coast of New South Wales necessitated by COVID-19 restrictions and the Chief of Navy's desire that her entry into service not be delayed.

During her commissioning ceremony, Sydney's first Commanding Officer Commander Edward Seymour read the ship's commissioning order before the Australian white ensign was hoisted, signifying

the exact moment the 147-metre-long AWD became one of Her Majesty's Australian Ships.

Commander Seymour said he was proud to lead the ship's company and carry forward the legacy of previous Australian warships that carried the name.

"It isn't often in a naval career that you are part of commissioning a brand-new warship, but to do so at sea and carrying the significant legacy behind the name Sydney, is a special feeling for the entire ship's company," Commander Seymour said.

"A lot of hard teamwork has led us to this moment of bringing a world-class warship into the fleet and we're eager to now prove what Sydney can do.

"She brings an outstanding, Australian-built air-warfare capability over an exceptional range and gives Navy a surface combat capability like never before."

Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Michael Noonan said that as the fifth warship to bear the name, HMAS Sydney (V) inherited an important legacy.

"She is designed to protect task groups by providing air defence to accompanying ships, in addition to land forces and infrastructure in coastal





HMAS Sydney's first Commanding Officer Commander Edward Seymour salutes his crew.
Photo by Petty Officer Tom Gibson

areas, and self-protection against missiles and aircraft," Vice Admiral Noonan said.

Sydney is the last of the three Hobart-class vessels built for Navy at Osborne in South Australia, based on the Navantia F100 frigate design.

She is equipped with advanced combat systems, providing the ship with layered offensive and defensive capabilities to counter conventional and asymmetric threats.

On top of the impressive array of offensive and defensive weapons and systems common to the Hobart-class air warfare destroyers, however,

Sydney was technically upgraded during her build to fully integrate the MH-60R 'Romeo' Seahawk submarine-hunting helicopter and carry the Phalnx close-in weapons systems, making her Australia's most lethal warship.

HMAS Sydney is now undertaking her test and evaluation period where she will fully integrate into the fleet and Navy personnel will develop their proficiencies with her cutting-edge Aegis combat system.

Sydney and her sister ships, Hobart and Brisbane, are all based at Garden Island in Sydney.



Photo by Able Seaman Jarrod Mulvihill



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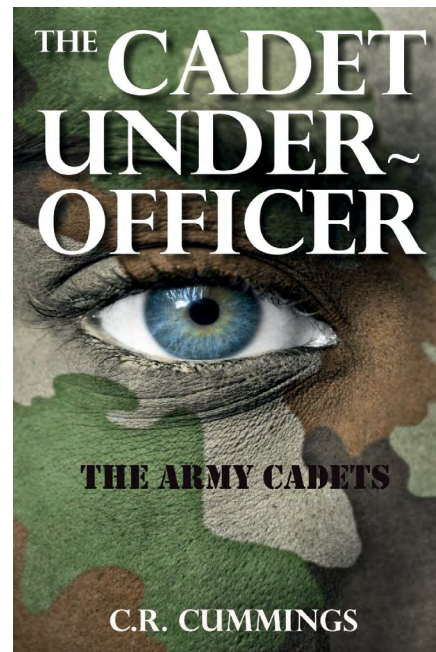
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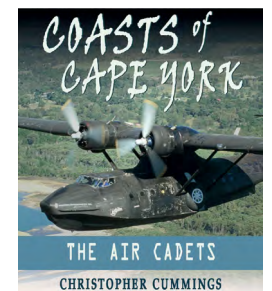
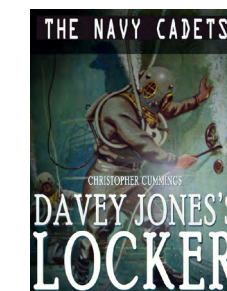


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THE IMPORTANCE OF A National Sovereignty Strategy

OPINION PIECE BY
GENERAL (RETD) JIM MOLAN

Five months ago, as Australia was emerging from a nightmarish summer of bushfires, the first reports of a mysterious new virus began to trickle out of China.

Few anticipated the enormity of the impact that COVID-19 would have on the world. Economically, socially, and politically, it is proving to be one of the greatest shocks of my lifetime – greater than the oil crisis of the 1970s, the 'recession we had to have', the Iraq and Afghan wars, or the Asian Financial Crisis. In its long-term impact, the true extent of which may not be apparent for years, it has every likelihood of surpassing the Global Financial Crisis, 9/11, or even the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The question we are now facing is what must we prepare for next?

If Australia is to maintain its sovereignty in an even more demanding world, it must embrace widespread reform as it comes out of the COVID-19 crisis. Medium- to longer-term reforms must be shaped by an overall strategy. Because I address medium to longer term reforms, nothing in this paper should be taken as criticism of the government's performance during COVID-19.

The current moment is a crisis for our globalised and integrated world. It has sharply demonstrated the limitations and vulnerabilities of this global model, which we have vigorously promoted since the 1990s and which has delivered Australia enormous prosperity.

But, before this crisis, stress fractures were already showing. Brexit and the election of Donald Trump revealed a simmering popular discontent with globalisation, and not only among those derided as 'populists'.

Among policymakers in the United States, talk of 'decoupling' from the Chinese economy has grown in recent years, in order to avoid vulnerabilities associated with China securing strangleholds over key global industries through such means as state subsidies and intellectual property theft.

The arrival of COVID-19 has turned these stress fractures into enormous rifts. Concerns about how nations would act in a global crisis are no longer abstract, they are real.

What they demonstrate is that, in a crisis, nations will act in accordance with their own interests. Thus, in Europe last month, we saw France and Germany denying Italy vital medical supplies and the closure of borders within the Schengen area. Decades of effort to promote European unity could not withstand the arrival of COVID-19.

China's behaviour has proven to be even starker: covering up the virus when it first appeared; directing its state-owned enterprises overseas (including in Australia) to harvest crucial medical supplies and ship them back to China; using the cover provided by the global crisis to escalate its aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea and towards Taiwan, Vietnam and Malaysia;



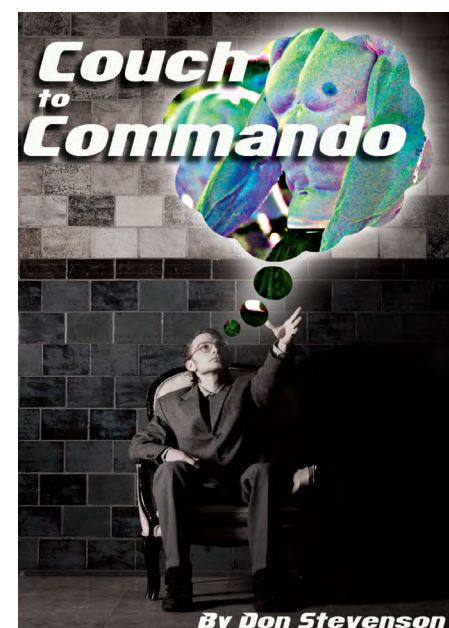
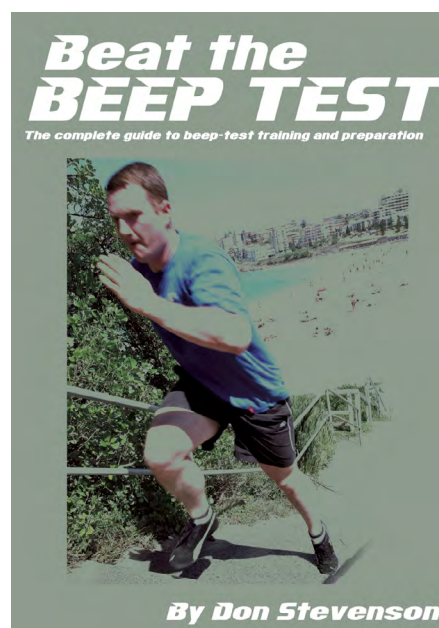
Australian Army Sergeant Steven Davidson and Bob Neighbour repair a medical-mask-manufacturing machine at Victorian company Med-Con. The sovereign manufacturer found its products in high demand as international supplies became hard to get. Photo by Corporal Sagi Biderman.

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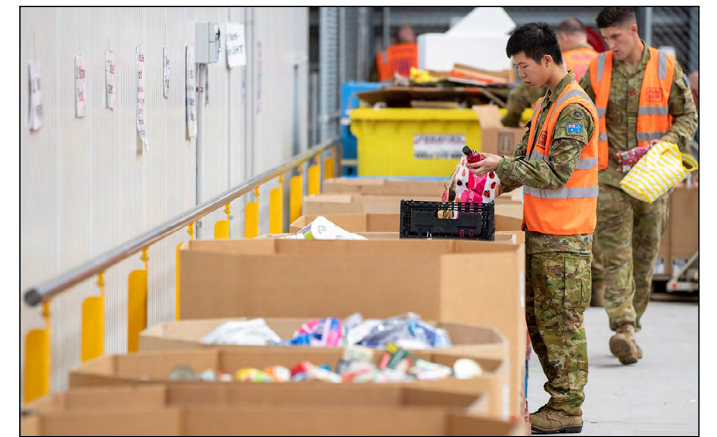
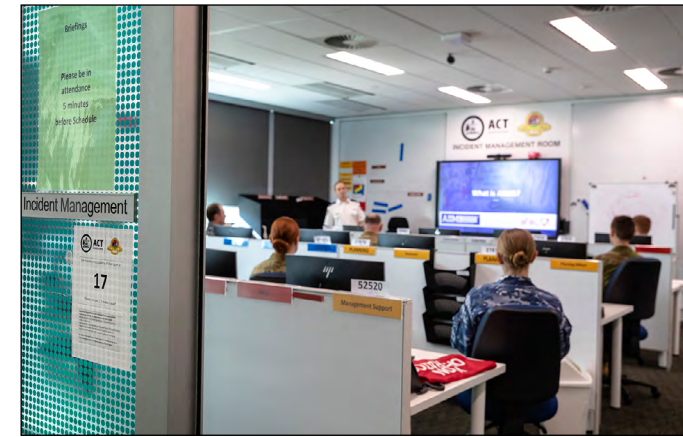
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Private Rovere-Bray and Corporal Smith, 9th Battalion, Royal Queensland Regiment, supporting mandatory COVID-19 quarantine arrangements at a Brisbane hotel as new overseas arrivals check in for their mandatory 14 days of isolation after arriving at Brisbane Airport from overseas. Photos by CONTACT stringer Christabel Miglionini.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Incident-management training in the ACT. Private Jac Harman, 13th Combat Service Support Battalion, assists WA Police at a traffic stop. Private Doug Lau helps at a Foodbank overwhelmed by increased demand. ADF medical personnel depart Burnie, Tasmania, after running a hospital while its staff were isolated. Photos by Corporal Sagi Biderman, Leading Seaman Ronnie Baltoff, Corporal Chris Beerens and Sergeant Mark Doran.

dispatching medical supplies and professionals to more than a hundred afflicted nations in order to increase its geostrategic influence; and even threatening economic coercion to deny transparency.

Amazingly, the US even refused to send PPE to Canada. What value does any so-called 'special relationship' have in this environment?

History has proven, and the COVID-19 crisis confirmed, the naivety of the argument that economic interdependence makes conflict between nations less likely. The free exchange of goods across national borders may have made many richer, but in a crisis, when your nation urgently needs a particular product, and the usual supplier refuses to supply it and instead stockpiles for its own purposes, then you have a problem.

The market is wonderful at providing goods and achieving efficiency under peaceful and predictable circumstances. But in the world we are entering, the peaceful and predictable international circumstances upon which globalisation depends are going to become rarer. We therefore need to strike a new balance between market efficiency and national security.

Our pursuit of market efficiency in recent decades has made Australia richer, but it has failed to deliver security. We relied, often without realising it, on the national power of the US for security while the market delivered unprecedented prosperity. The price we paid was the commitment of small

military forces to wars far away. This was a brilliant strategy under the circumstances at the time, but it now must be seriously reviewed.

COVID-19 has heralded the end of a particular phase of globalisation, and the question becomes how Australia should recalibrate its policy settings to secure sovereignty based on security in the years to come.

We are now acutely aware of the vulnerabilities associated with untrusted globalised supply chains and 'just-in-time' logistics.

We must become a resilient nation that is better able to withstand shocks and disruption to the global system.

In the event of a future crisis bigger than COVID-19, we need to ensure that Australia can take care of its own needs in vital areas including food, medicine, energy, IT, fuels, industry, transportation and defence.

As a nation we need to grow and develop our domestic capacity in these vital areas. Through doing this, we can ensure that Australia has the resilience it will need to navigate the turbulent waters of the 21st century.

No one advocates turning ourselves into 'Fortress Australia', isolating ourselves from the rest of the world and seeking self-sufficiency in every conceivable area – becoming the North Korea of the southern hemisphere. To do so would inevitably cause a new set of problems.

Australia will remain, to a very large extent, integrated economically with the rest of the world and will benefit from being so. In the economic sector, private businesses will remain central.

But it is urgent, and overdue for us to correct the excesses of globalisation from recent decades. COVID-19 has been a big wake-up call. We need to heed its lessons, to ensure that Australia is prepared in the years to come.

It seems self-evident to most Australians that we need to be more self-reliant without trying to be completely self-sufficient.

Self-reliance reflects how resilient as a nation we must be against internal or external shocks, which allows us to retain a higher degree of sovereignty. Self-reliance improves resilience, which itself improves sovereignty.

The recent bushfires demonstrate the principle. Last summer showed that fire-prone areas need much more self-reliance than they currently have. For example, petrol stations in fire-prone areas need to have backup generators to pump fuel when power fails.

The same principle applies to nations. The market alone, through its single-minded pursuit of efficiency, will not do it.

The difference between the fires and COVID-19 was that during the fires, only small parts of Australia were shut down and the rest of Australia and the world was available to provide assistance.

For weeks we thought it could get no worse than Black Summer. Yet because of COVID-19 much of the world has closed down, and for periods we could not draw on external resources at all. At the moment, many may think it could not get any worse than COVID-19.

If we were told in the middle of last year that a virus would close down the world economy and cost our government \$200 to \$400 billion in support payments with 10% unemployed, we might have said that the likelihood of that occurring approached zero, so there was no need to prepare.

But it did occur.

I argue that things could be far worse than local fires followed by a world-wide pandemic that shuts down world economies for a few months, and that we should be as prepared for at least equally probable or improbable events in the future.

If we put ourselves back in the middle of last year looking to predict the future, I submit that the probability of a wide financial crisis or military conflict was far more likely than we ever thought a massive fire followed by a pandemic would be. Larger, more damaging scenarios involving financial strife or conflict are now even more likely as a result of COVID-19 – not less likely.

It is not my job to provide detailed predictions on what might happen in the medium to longer term in our region or across the world in terms of wider crises, but many others are. Yet every



An Australian Army soldier from the 25th/49th Battalion, Royal Queensland Regiment, check vehicle movements near Coolangatta, Queensland. Photo by Trooper Jonathan Goedhart.

indicator that I can see is showing an increased probability that a bigger crisis will occur. We tend to hide these indicators by using polite terms such as cyber attacks, posturing, economic decoupling, rhetoric, stockpiling, weapons procurement, military deployments, espionage, cooperation between allies, harassment, warnings to antagonists, and economic coercion from behind a lack of transparency.

If we had such indicators of the pandemic towards the end of last year (as one particular nation did), we would certainly have reacted and increased our medical self-reliance and resilience (as one particular nation did).

My argument is that we should be planning and preparing now for threats beyond the pandemic.

Before COVID-19 the rise of four nations (Russia, China, Iran and North Korea) as well as Islamic extremism, and the real demise of US military power since the end of the Cold War, has changed the balance of power in our region and brings uncertainty that we have not experienced for 75 years. The reliance on the US that we have enjoyed since 1945 remains critically important and we must maintain our alliance. But an overdependence on the US is as dangerous for our future as an over reliance on globalisation was for a pandemic.

Because the US has a mandated National Security Strategy which cascades down into most areas of American society – economic, military, industrial, technological – the US at least knows when it is succeeding or failing. And it is failing now in relation to the strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific.

Because the US has a National Defence Strategy flowing from the overarching National Security

Strategy, they can say, as the US military commander in the Indo Pacific is publicly saying, that he cannot achieve his National Defence Strategy. He makes it plain that he does not have the resources to deter Chinese aggression in all its varied forms in our region – the most important challenge of the 21st Century.

Last July, before COVID, the head of the US military called China “the main challenge to US national security over the next 50-100 years”, and their Defense Secretary described the Indo-Pacific as America’s “priority theater”.

For Australia, it is not only a “priority theater”, it is our home.

Because the US has a national security strategy, and because the US understands that security is far wider than just the military and is actually the basis of national sovereignty, they know what they want to achieve, when they are or are not achieving it, and they have a Congress with real oversight of these issues.

Australia does not have such a mechanism. We have no overarching national security strategy, or as some people prefer to call it, a national sovereignty strategy. We have no medium- or longer-term strategy to position all elements of our nation for an uncertain future.

We are brilliant at handling crises, as our government is currently handling COVID-19. But we cannot tell if we are achieving or failing on the bigger issues, because we are a strategy-free nation.

Given the uncertainty of the new era, we must increase our self-reliance or we will lose our sovereignty.

The mechanism to do this must start with a national security or a national sovereignty strategy.

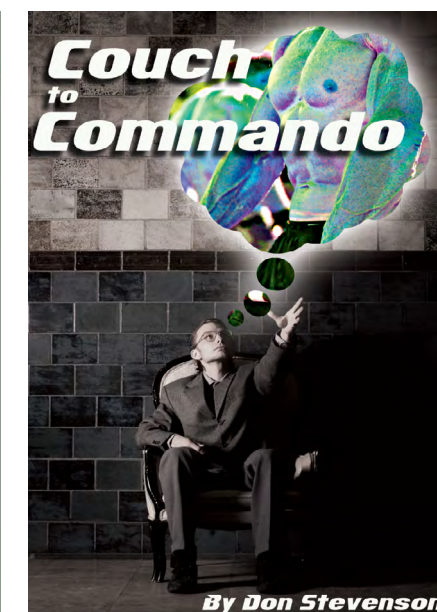
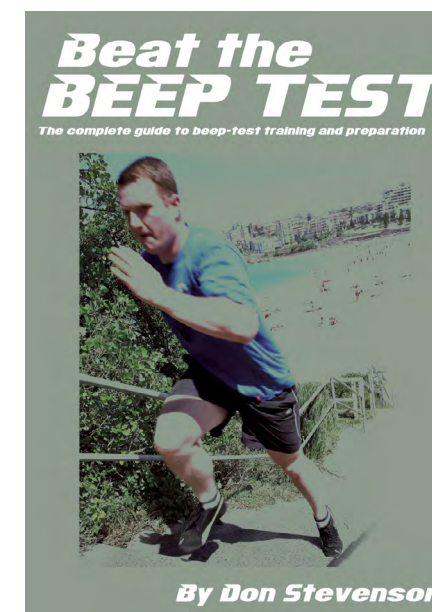
MILITARY FITNESS



“Modern military athletes cannot expect to get combat fit on a diet of pushups and running”

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GETTING BACK TO BASICS

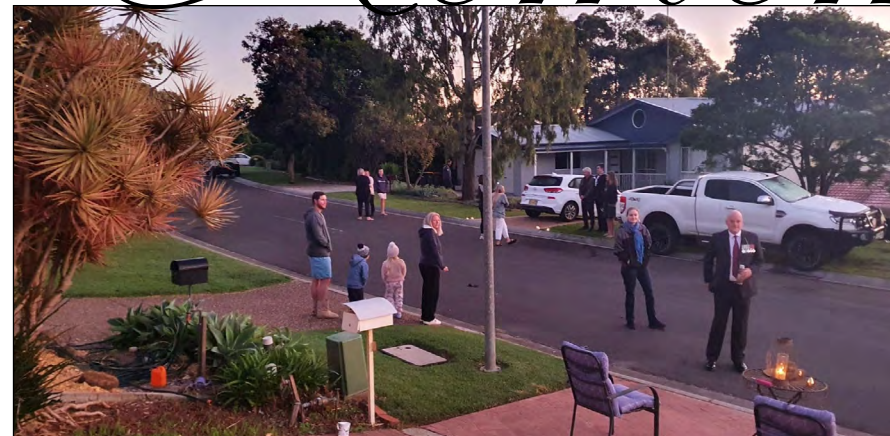
Soldiers from the 2nd/14th Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry) were getting back into field training as the government began to ease COVID-19 restrictions.

With the regiment priding itself on its ability to be “brilliant at the basics” and to “adapt and overcome”, soldiers focused their training on maintaining a combat mindset in a dismounted role.

The dry-fire training saw the soldiers developing the core soldier skills of finding suitable firing positions, conducting combat reloads and admin top ups – and proving that when working as part of a team it is vital to be able to shoot, move and communicate effectively.



A Day to Remember



ANZAC Day in Kiama, NSW, with CONTACT editor Brian Hartigan, wife Rosie, daughter Ashling and our wonderful neighbours.
A special shout out to all the front-line health-care workers protecting us during the current crisis – especially to my wife who is a very caring, very professional nurse in her 41st year of service. She is also a thorny-veteran's rock for her sins. I love you Rosie.

I expected my ANZAC Day to be quiet. With traditional services and marches cancelled because of the pandemic, I had been thinking what to do for weeks. My first thought went to defiance – rounding up olds-and-bolds for a self-led vigil. Then, as the virus lockdown became more serious, I thought quiet and lonely contemplation by the sea might be best. But then, some bright-spark warrant officer hit on a real contender – stand at dawn on your own driveways. If Aussies cottoned on to this, it could be special indeed. Then some other bright spark proposed an additional element, which I also liked – Exercise Stone Pillow, where the old [army swag was rolled out on the lawn](#) and yours truly – after paying \$20

to the cause – settled in for a nostalgic night under the stars. A neighbour secretly left fresh, homemade ANZAC biscuits on my swag for my nightcap. Having been prepared to do my own thing solo, I hadn't prepared much else other than the suit, tie and medals in advance – but was delighted to see 'the war office' organising candles and accoutrements. I was also thrilled (nay, emotional) to hear that neighbours' kids had distributed fliers and sprigs of rosemary on the 24th. All seemed set for a great day. Even the weather was going to play nice. On the 25th, I woke in plenty of time, rolled out of the swag onto dewy grass and rolled inside for a gunfire heart-starter.

About then, things started to slip slightly. A sturdy belt was required for the trousers, not to keep them up, but to help the buttons hold on. Then, as the senior rank in my street, wearing medals conspicuously, it occurred to me that maybe it would be appropriate to rehearse the ode at a minimum. Panic! But, my memory surprised me. As it tuned out, however, a neighbour thought to relay the service broadcast from the Australian War Memorial, and I was spared. Few of our neighbours normally get up for a traditional Dawn Service, but they were out in force this year – young and old – and recently recruited (welcome to the fraternity Seaman Jack Nelson). The sound system in our part of the neighbourhood proved to be a tad dodgy, cutting

in and out as the service from Canberra was broadcast across the nation. The technical glitch only added to the moment, though, because as ours dropped out, we could still hear the bugles reverberate through the suburb, competing with the kookaburras and crows. The 5.50am start was much better too, I thought. I've long said 5.30 is too early, with services finished before the dawn actually breaks. So special was this ANZAC Day in my neck of the woods, my neighbours deserved (and got) a round of applause. So special was this ANZAC Day, I for one will campaign to do it this way next year too. Borrowing from our Defence Minister, 'may the nation's ANZAC soul be honoured and nourished by this day. Lest we forget.'

Anzac Day 2020



Brisbane suburbs photos by Christabel Migliorini

ANZAC Day is a significant commemoration in the Australian national calendar, and a time to remember and honour the efforts of our service men and women in war and peace.

While the traditional public commemorative ceremonies and ANZAC Day marches have been cancelled this year due to the global pandemic, today we pause in respectful yet more private ways to honour those who have served Australia on military and peacekeeping operations for more than a century.

As we stay home and close by on this ANZAC Day, I ask those in service, those who have served, and those whose memory is preserved by a new generation, to proudly wear your medals and service decorations.

Today, we also acknowledge and thank our service men and women who are deployed overseas in critical roles, as well as those serving at home, supporting the whole-of-government response to COVID-19.

A global pandemic may change the way we celebrate ANZAC Day, but it does not diminish our tribute to Australians – past and present – who have served and died in wars and operational service.

May the nation's ANZAC soul be honoured and nourished today.

Lest we forget.

*Minister for Defence
Linda Reynolds*



Brisbane suburbs photos by Christabel Migliorini

On ANZAC Day we remember and honour the service and sacrifice of those who have served our nation.

We do this for a number of reasons – to acknowledge those who have died in service to our nation – to reflect on how that service and sacrifice has contributed to what and who we are as a nation today; that is, to understand its impact – and, to understand what our response should be to that legacy.

Today, on an ANZAC Day that is so different to what we are used to, this last point is particularly important.

We are proud of the ANZAC legacy. We celebrate it and we identify with it.

Now, as our generation faces its greatest test, is the time to demonstrate that that legacy is a true representation of who we are.

On 25 April 1915 the world changed. As young men and women of that generation joined the Services in increasingly large numbers, our nation experienced loss at a disproportionately larger rate than other countries. Australia suffered the highest death and wounding rate per capita.

This loss devastated our cities and towns. It disrupted the social fabric of Australia.

But from that devastation grew an Australian identity that has guided and, in many respects, defined our national character.

We are reminded today as we commemorate our losses in World War II – a war that ended 75 years ago – that that national character was evident again when Australia responded to the threat of totalitarianism and fascism.

And in more recent decades our service and sacrifice has continued in operations around the



This year, Gallipoli will not be a place of pilgrimage. The Last Post will not echo across ANZAC Cove, nor at Lone Pine nor Chunuk Bair. There will be no visitors to the memorials and cemeteries on Gallipoli, no expeditions up the steep ravines and ridge-lines where our forebears fought and died. There will be no public gatherings in our towns and cities, and no opportunities for our citizens to stand side by side to honour our veterans and pay homage to those who lost their lives in times of war. Along with our friends in Australia, we too will commemorate our day of remembrance in a unique way, knowing that on either side of the Tasman we can draw strength and resolve from the courage and comradeship of our forebears. We can be guided by their sense of common purpose, and the understanding that we all have a part to play in keeping each other safe and well in our current adversity. That includes reaching out to support the vulnerable, fearful and anxious among us. We can choose to do good, to ensure that adversity brings out the best in us. In this way we can best honour the memory of the many people who live on in our memories, and the sacrifices that they made for our nations. Ka maumahara tonu tātou ki a rātou.

Governor General of New Zealand Dame Patsy Reddy



globe. Each has had its impact on our returned servicemen and servicewomen and reminds us that our duty to our veterans never ceases.

We now talk of the ANZAC legacy as having four characteristics that define Australia – mateship – endurance – courage, and – sacrifice

In essence, these characteristics say that we are a people who, in adverse situations, are strong, look out for each other, and are prepared to put others before self.

A fine example of this was the action of the crew of HMAS Encounter during the Royal Australian Navy's first overseas humanitarian mission to Tonga and Samoa in 1919.

The response to the captain's request for volunteers to provide assistance ashore to treat those suffering with the Spanish flu was overwhelmingly positive. It would be difficult to find

a more telling example of the Australian Navy's tradition of 'service before self'.

Today, the ANZAC legacy should serve three purposes – to call on us to thank those earlier generations for their sacrifice – to energise us in looking after our more recent veterans, and – to inform us of what those earlier generations would expect of us today as we face our own generational test.

We remember on ANZAC Day for a reason. We are proud of our ANZAC forebears. Let us make them proud of us.

Lest We Forget.

*Governor General of Australia
General David Hurley*



Anzac Day 2020



Canberra photos courtesy AWM





Sydney photo by Sergeant Ray Vance
Middle East photos by Petty Officer
Yuri Ramsey



Lest we forget

Captain Tom



Captain Tom Moore proudly displays one of the many gifts he received on his 100th birthday – the Yorkshire Regiment Medal, awarded for his “outstanding contribution to our military effectiveness and military reputation”. On his chest is 1935-1945 Star, Burma Star and War Medal 1935-1945. Mission is the Defence Medal, which was formally reissued on his birthday. Photo below by Corporal Rober Weideman. Copyright UK MoD.

Just six weeks after starting ‘a little bit of family fun’ to raise £1000 for the UK National Health Service, 100-year-old Captain Tom Moore got news he was to be knighted for his service to his county.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson formally nominated the old soldier for a knighthood and confirmed in mid May that it had been approved by the Queen.

Tom Moore, who served with the 8th Battalion, The Duke of Wellington’s Regiment, during the Second World War, set out to walk 100 lengths of his garden before his 100th birthday.

And it didn’t take long for the media to cop on to a great British story in the making – and boost it along. By the time he turned 100 years old on 30 April the widower was a world-famous media darling, giving more than 150 interviews since 6 April.

For his birthday, Tom got an appointment as the first Honorary Colonel of the Army Foundation College, Harrogate, where 16 and 17 year olds are trained and educated to be future leaders in the British Army – two new medals for his chest, because people who know about these things saw that his proper entitlement was not complete – a Hurricane and Spitfire flyover (about which he said it was great to see and hear them flying in peace, because he well remembered them flying in anger) by the Royal Air Force’s Battle of Britain Memorial Flight in the morning, followed by British Army Apache and Wildcat helicopters in the afternoon – more than 150,000 birthday cards (that nearly broke the local post office) – and, of course, as a centenarian, a birthday card from the Queen, hand delivered by the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Captain Tom Moore receives a salute on his birthday (photo digitally altered); talks to an Army visitor in his garden; inspects his birthday cards; and, talks to more visitors. Copyright UK MoD.

Captain Tom initially set out to raise just £1000 for charity but ended his campaign on a Guinness Book of World Records record £32,794,701, from more than 1.5 million supporters, including CONTACT (because we got so much joy following his story, we couldn’t not help him too).

But his direct walk-a-thon campaign figure isn’t the end of it. A tax-rebate scheme will add another £6,173,663; the proceeds from his chart-topping single are also being donated; plus cash included in his birthday cards; and, hundreds of thousands of pounds raised by other walkers inspired by Captain Tom have pushed the total raised well past £40million – or just about AU\$75million.

Prime Minister Johnson said Colonel Tom’s fantastic fundraising broke records, inspired the

whole country and provided us all with a beacon of light through the fog of coronavirus.

“On behalf of everyone who has been moved by his incredible story, I want to say a huge thank you,” Mr Johnson said.

“He’s a true national treasure.”

Did we mention a number-1 hit single on the UK pop charts? That’s right – another Guinness Book of World Records record as the oldest ‘performer’ to top the British charts, knocking Sir Tom Jones off the pedestal he climbed upon at age 69, in 2009 with another fundraiser, Islands in the Stream.

He was also officially made a member of the English Cricket Team, had at least two busses, two trains, two horses, a fire-department rescue boat and a police dog named after him (so far) and was given Freedom of the City of London.



WWII-veteran Hurricane and Spitfire the Royal Air Force's Battle of Britain Memorial Flight fly over Captain Tom Moore's home to help him celebrate his 100th birthday. Photo above by Leading Aircraftman Iwan Lewis. Photo below by Corporal Rober Weideman. Copyright UK MoD.



And then came the knighthood. After receiving formal notice from the Queen, Tom was back on the media merry-go-round, from the comfort of his back yard, dressed as always in his regiment blazer (a spiffy new one made by a local tailor), telling millions on live TV that he was absolutely overwhelmed by the news.

But, of all the accolades he seemed to take in his stride thus far, news of the knighthood almost flummoxed him.

Asked how it felt to be a knight of the realm, he said it actually did feel rather different.

"I'm absolutely thrilled that Her Majesty has decided, or chosen, that poor little me should be knighted.

"It really is a great honour and something I never ever could have anticipated.

"I'm totally thrilled by it.

"I'd like to thank Her Majesty The Queen, the Prime Minister and the Great British public.

"I will remain at your service."

And, serve on he shall, having now started the Tom Moore Foundation with his family to combat loneliness, support hospices and help with bereavement.

Because of COVID-19 lockdowns, it is not known how or when the knighthood will be ceremonially conferred, but given the 'maturity' of both the Queen and the prospective knight, Tom quipped, "I hope the Queen isn't too heavy-handed with the sword". Because colonel is an honorary appointment, his new official title is

Captain Sir Thomas Moore



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

To keep our programs running we need your help! To assist us you can donate, purchase our merchandise, volunteer or become a corporate sponsor.

To find out more, please go to:

wanderingwarriors

saluting their sacrifice



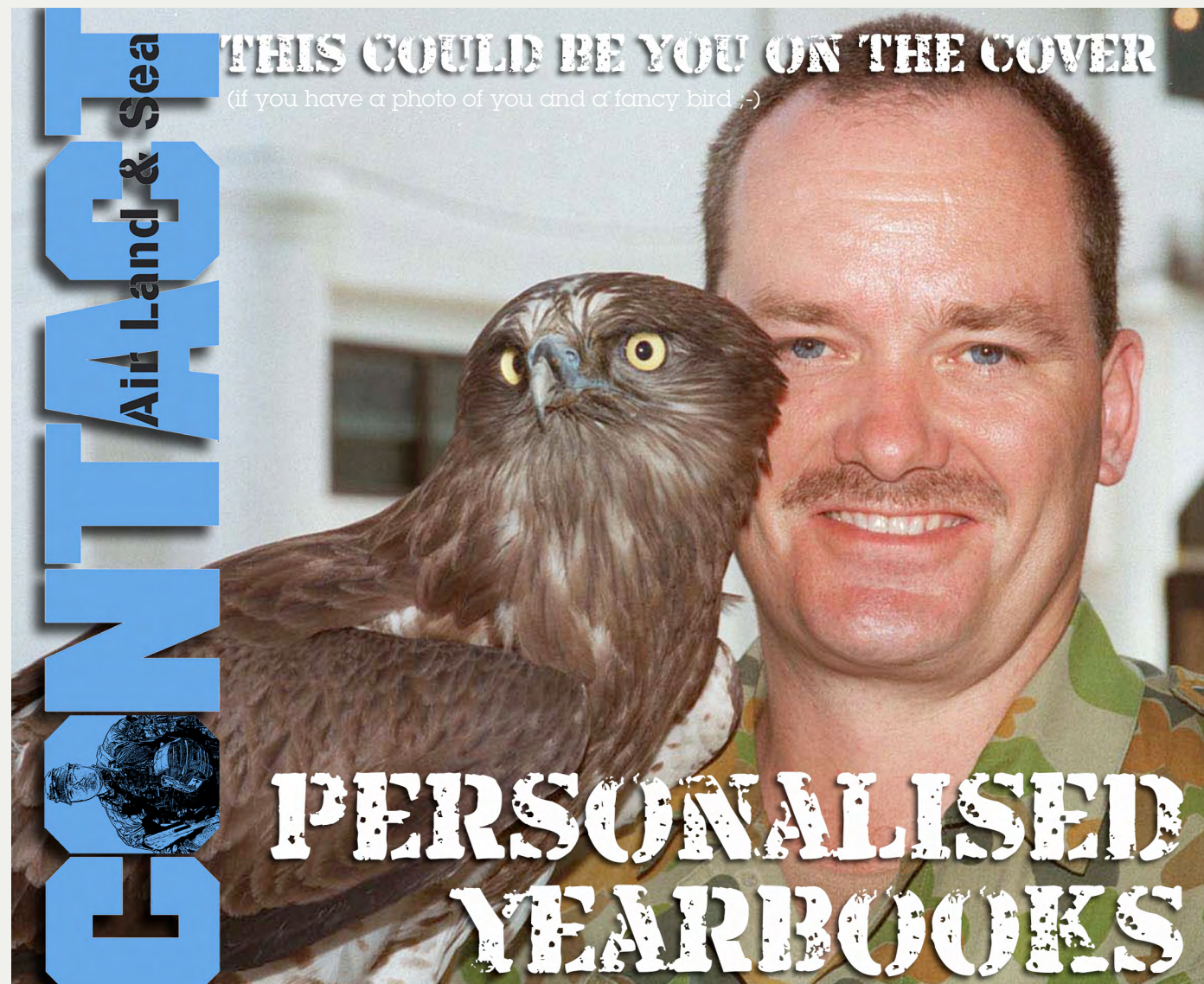
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CONTACT

DFSW Club

DIRECT FUNDING SUPPORTERS OF OUR WORK

NEWSFLASH

CONTACT DFSW Club temporarily suspended

Aaron Bonnett	Waroonna	WA
Raymond Yeow	Sydney	NSW
David Tatler	Ermington	NSW
Eric Taylor	Craigmore	SA
Mark James	Leongatha	VIC
Peter Leed	Wy Yung	VIC
George Hulse	St Lucia	QLD
Owen Glover	Little River	VIC
Len Thompson	Cotton Tree	QLD
Mike Gillen	Seaford Meadows	SA
Joshua Elmer	Cranbourne	VIC
Noel Wright	Helensvale	VIC
Rod Charman	Mildura	VIC
Dennis Mitchell	Greenleigh	NSW
David Read	Regents Park	QLD

There were 15 other Patreon members at time of suspension, whose support was also very much appreciated – plus these members who initially joined us via PayPal...

Christopher Kennedy	Brookvale	NSW
Robert Rowland	Yarra Glen	VIC
Ann Hallam	Toowoomba	QLD
Elena Gray	Prahran	VIC
Colleen Crabb	Urangan	VIC
John Winter	Springwood	QLD
Stephen Dale	Blaxland	NSW
Patrick Kavanagh	Stanwell	QLD
Mark Johnson	St Marys	NSW
William McIver	Sellicks Beach	SA
Luke Norman	Kuraby	QLD
Adrianus Voormeulen	Charlestown	NSW
John van der Pol	Shaller Park	QLD
Neil Hammett	Diamond Creek	VIC
Terry Irons	Unanderra	NSW

The amazing **CONTACT** fans listed on this page were **Direct Funding Supporters** of our **Work**, financially supporting what we do – not because they had to, but simply because they wanted to.

Unfortunately, the one big reward we wanted to deliver – printing **CONTACT** again – [did not happen](#), and that began a cascade of imbalances in the DFSW Club membership v reward that recently came to a head.

So, we decided to shut down our Patreon account and move to a new platform – designing a new, more balanced relationship from the outset.

Please bear with us while we make this transition, alongside all our other work and admin.

In the mean time, thank you all so very very much for your support to date.

We hope to welcome you back to a new-look DFSW Club soon – though, to be honest, I'm actually not in any great hurry to take your money while the world is turned upside down.

Sincerely,



What was/will be the DFSW Club?

While DFSW is an Army acronym, we hoped our Navy and RAAF fans would forgive us for moulding it to our needs – **Direct Funding Supporters** of our **Work**.

Membership of the DFSW Club was completely voluntary and, while it did have some perks, **CONTACT** definitely got way more out of the relationship than members did.

For that and a range of other reasons, we decided to temporarily suspend the DFSW Club via Patreon, but we do anticipate re-starting it soon-ish via another platform.

In this changeover, we hope to rebalance the relationship and make more sense of our 'why' – i.e 'why' would someone join – and 'what' do we both get out of it?

We also hope the new platform will suit our needs more closely – especially, billing in Aussie dollars.

We are so grateful to our amazing supporters who joined our DFSW Club in the past and hope that they and many others will (re)join when we sort out something new.

We thank all our past and most recent members most sincerely for the awesome support they have shown us, and look forward to bigger and better things – soon.

ANOTHER HARD LESSON LEARNT

If you have a copy of issue number four of **CONTACT** Air Land & Sea magazine, which was published in December 2004 – our first full year in the publishing game – you may notice it is slightly taller than the first three issues. This was our first full-sized A4 magazine.

The first three were 20mm shorter because, not knowing as much about the magazine industry as we thought we did, we took advice from someone who was supposed to be an expert. He said the smaller magazine was trendy.

In the real world, however, we noticed several instances where our magazine got hidden or physically 'lost' behind full-sized mags on newsagents' shelves.

Of course, that was a very bad thing when a very high percentage of our sales were probably 'impulse buys' – as evidenced by the

fluctuation in sales figures, which were significantly affected by the photo we used on the cover.

That was another hard lesson learnt the hard way in the publishing game.

I think we also learnt quickly to not listen to trendy city types who thought they knew better than a couple of AJs apparently floundering in a city-boy's game.

But, we stuck to our guns (pun intended), because we were confident we knew a lot more about our audience than they did.

Consequently, it was about this time we we gave the city types the flick and found a new layout designer who, as it turned out, stayed loyal to **CONTACT** for the rest of its printing life.



This issue of **CONTACT** magazine, plus more than 60 others, are available to read, free, in our archives.



JUST SOLDIERS

BY MAJOR DARRYL KELLY

Unwavering

PRIVATE LESLIE OSCAR ROLLINS, 52ND BATTALION, AIF

With sweat beading down his forehead, the young lad strained every muscle, forcing his chest to expand even further. The attending doctor watched intently, then shook his head – ‘Sorry mate, still not enough...’

For Leslie Rollins life was a constant challenge from birth. He was a feeble infant and, sadly, by the time he was 20 months old, he lost his 19-year-old mother Emma to a terrible accident.¹ A mere four months later his 24-year-old father Oscar² succumbed to a long and painful illness.

Leslie, an only child, was taken in and cared for by his grandparents Thom and Mary Ann Roberts.

Leslie was a good lad, but a slight frame was his defining physical character through his early childhood and into adolescence. Like many slight lads he was the last to be picked for team sports. His schoolmates started to tower above him in height and weight but his staunch values and dogged determination never wavered. He was thankful that he had such loving grandparents who were raising him as one of their own.³

With compulsory cadet training well underway within the Tasmanian school system, Leslie joined the uniformed ranks⁵. Although he found the training hard, it was interesting, with many new skills to be learnt and maturity gained.

After leaving school, Leslie took up work as an ironmonger's counterman⁴ with the Hobart-based firm of Charles Davis Pty Ltd. He was a good worker and quickly earned the admiration of his employers. His wages were certainly welcomed in the household, as it was at times a struggle for his

grandparents to make ends meet. They settled on a weekly board payment of 10 shillings, which left Leslie with five shillings spending money.⁵

While he enjoyed his current position – and it certainly paid well for his age – he wanted to have a new and more challenging role, and so decided to train himself as an ironmonger's assistant. He tackled this with the same zest and enthusiasm as previous challenges, further increasing the respect and admiration of his employer.

With the onset of war in August 1914, the cream of Australian youth flocked to the recruiting centres. The standards required of this new Army were high and the quality of the potential recruits more than met the mark. The initial recruiting requirements were set as 19-38 years of age with a height requirement of 5 foot, six inches (168cms) and a chest expansion of 34 inches (864mm).^{6,7}

Leslie was eager to enlist but knew his age and stature would limit his chances – no matter how erect he stood, he was still a mere five feet four inches tall. The chest expansion was also a worry – thanks to his slight frame, he just couldn't expand it enough to meet the requirements.

As time dragged on, he read of the landings at Gallipoli, the terrible fights with the stubborn Turkish defenders and the sadly mounting allied casualties. As he read through the casualty lists in the local

Spirit

Portrait of Private
Leslie Oscar Rollins, 1916.

Australian War Memorial, DA1 3644



paper he saw all-too-familiar names and was saddened walking along the city streets and saw ever-growing numbers of women dressed in black with blank stares and puffed, reddened eyes.

In June 1915, Leslie was thrown a lifeline. With the mounting casualty figures and the raising of a second infantry division, recruiting requirements had been expanded. Age limits were now 18-45, and the height requirements reduced to five feet two. Frustratingly, there was no reduction in chest measurements and it remained at 34 inches.⁶

Leslie spoke to his grandparents and, although he was thankful for all they had done for him, he felt he had to go do his bit. Reluctantly, they agreed.

Presenting himself at the enlistment desk, the recruiting sergeant looked the lad up and down carefully, but kept his thoughts to himself. After filling out the required documents, Leslie moved through to the medical section. Now stripped to the waist, he held his file to his chest attempting to hide his meagre frame.

The doctor looked at his patient with careful consideration. Leslie had passed every other requirement but, try as he might, he just couldn't expand his chest to the required size. Although devastated with the result, Leslie left the recruiting centre with renewed and inspired determination – ‘I'll show them!’ he said to himself.

Intent on building up his physique, Leslie started to exercise hard. His passion drove him harder and harder, but only time would tell if it was enough.

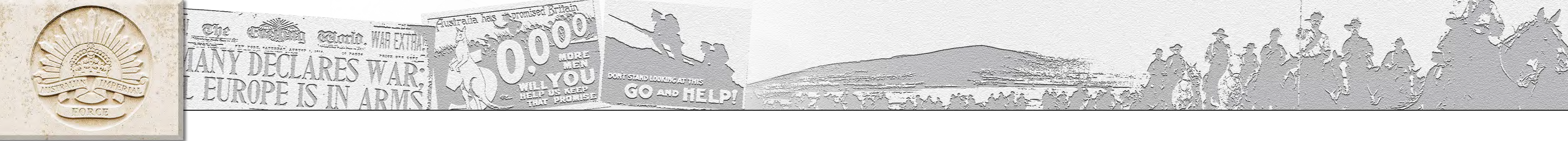
Leslie presented at the recruiting centre a second time, but again he left disappointed. Again, he worked hard to build himself up and again fell short. Try and try again, he presented to recruiting, only to be rejected for chest measurement.

Presenting for a fifth time, the doctors went through the same processes. Height and weight – still light but acceptable. Although he wore glasses, eyesight too was acceptable. Chest – the doctor looked at the tape measure, then into Leslie's eyes and back to the tape. He noted the final entry on the sheet – 31-33 inches. Turning to Leslie and extending his hand, the doctor said, ‘Well done mate. As far as I'm concerned, you're in!’

Leslie was bursting with pride when he informed his grandparents of the news, both were pleased for the lad, but were also fearful for what may lay ahead. With hesitation, the couple signed the permission slip for their grandson's enlistment.³

His employers were equally pleased for him but, after nearly three and a half years, were reluctant to lose their hardest, most willing worker.

Following his enlistment on 20 September 1915, Leslie was allocated to the 14th Reinforcement Draft for the 12th Battalion.



After a significant period of training and enjoying a joyful Christmas at home, the troops were ready for movement, first to Melbourne where they would marry up with reinforcement drafts for other units, then to join the troopship Warilda, scheduled to depart on 8 February.

It was a tearful farewell for Leslie and his beloved grandparents as they said their final goodbyes.

As the weeks went by, a surprise arrived in the grandparent's mailbox – a splendid portrait photograph of Leslie, taken before his departure from Australia.⁸ After having it framed, the photograph took pride of place on the mantelpiece.

The trip across the Indian Ocean was long but uneventful, but the troops relished having hard ground under their feet again when they disembarked in Suez, Egypt, on 8 March 1916.³

The reinforcement draft cycled through the normal regime of training, acclimatisation, quarantine and kitting via the Brigade Training Battalion. Meanwhile plans were afoot to expand the AIF,⁹ to include a 4th and a 5th Division, including support arms and services and specialist units such as machine gun and pioneer battalions. To achieve this the infantry battalions of the 1st Division, battle-hardened at Gallipoli, would be split to form the nucleus of the new battalions, which would then be rounded out with returning healed-wounded men and reinforcements from Australia. For Leslie's 12th Battalion, they would split to form the new 52nd Battalion, 13th Brigade, 4th Division.¹⁰ Once clear of a brief stint in hospital and the reinforcement training cycle, Leslie would catch up and eventually become part of the 52nd.³

In early June 1916, the 52nd boarded trains in Cairo, to take them to the nearby port facilities in Alexandria. Awaiting them was the transport ship Ivernia, which would set sail on 6 June, bound for the French port of Marseilles.¹¹

Leslie, who was still undergoing reinforcement training, was also on the move and on 7 June sailed from Alexandria on the transport Huntspill, also bound for France.³ His spirits were still high despite a minor charge of 'absence from parade'³ under his belt. To him, it was simply part of soldiering and he would learn from the experience, strengthen his staunch Christian values and personal resolve. In short, he was developing into a competent soldier and a fine, upstanding man.

The added time spent in training may have been a godsend, as Leslie missed the carnage of the battle to take the fortified strongpoint of Mouquet Farm, near Pozieres, which cost the 52nd Battalion

nine officers and 170 other ranks killed in action.¹¹

On 11 September, and with his training complete, Leslie and 29 other reinforcements marched into the 52nd as fully trained and battle-ready soldiers.¹²

Leslie and his mates arrived in a period of reorganisation for the battalion, following the extended actions at Mouquet Farm.

Rumours were rife among the troops as to where they may be headed and when? Within days the battalion was indeed on the move, marching from camp to camp on a pre-arranged route. At one staging point near Steenvoorde, the battalion attended a combined church service, after which General Birdwood, Commanding General of the AIF, addressed the troops and then went on to present medals and decorations. But, the high spirits of the men were soon cut short when the names of 11 men who had succumbed to their wounds in hospital were read out.¹¹

Leslie's first real taste of combat came on 18 September, when the 52nd was tasked as the duty battalion for their sector.¹² Fatigue and carrying parties were allocated from the ranks, whose task was to carry forward the rations and defensive equipment to maintain fortifications and the troops manning the forward trenches. It was a tense week, as the fatigue parties were often in the open and a prime target for enemy gunners with shells, mortars and machine gun fire ever searching for victims.

Again the 52nd were on the march and at various destinations undertook further training in preparation for what may lie ahead. Gas and Lewis Gun training, bayonet fighting and honing of particular skills for the specialist components within battalion was increased. Also of vital importance was training in the prevention of the soldier's worst enemy, the dreaded trench foot.¹³

In early October, they knew they had reached their destination – the Belgian sector of St Eloi, near the vital town of Ypres. The companies of the 52nd Battalion moved forward independently to meet their guides who would lead them into their respective areas of the front line, with two companies up front and two allocated in the reserve trenches.

The 52nd men were a welcome sight to the men of the 16th Battalion, eagerly awaiting relief following their stint in the water-logged and rat-infested forward trenches. For Leslie it was a rude awakening to the horrors of war. In the ensuing days and nights he learnt that front-line soldiering was a brutal calling. Like his mates around him, he took his turn on patrols through no-man's land,¹⁴ endured enemy mortar and artillery barrages and,

with eyes and ears straining, stood sentry duty both day and night – all the time knowing that, at any second, he could be taken out by a sniper's bullet or blown apart by an incoming shell.

Over the ensuing weeks and months, the 52nd undertook their cycle of operations in all conditions; fatigue work, front lines, support, move, relief, training, rest, refit, reinforcements, loss, remorse, bitter cold, terror, drenching wet and evil stinking rotten mud. What they weren't aware of was that they were on the verge of the most severe winter to savage Europe in 40 years. But, no matter the hardships, every soldier was determined not to show a crack in their personal strength and convictions and not be seen as one to let their mates down.

In the lead up to Christmas, the 52nd and its sister battalions of the 13th Brigade were billeted in and around the French village of Vignacourt. The weather was bitterly cold, accompanied by light snow, but the billets were dry and, with the aid of braziers, warm.

The battalion officers were tasked to source the makings of a Christmas meal for the troops and even contributed a day's pay each to boost the coffers. Training and musketry courses were conducted, but the program was relatively light. A good range of sporting activities were also conducted, to relieve the tension of the men and allow them to relax.

Following religious services, the men enjoyed their Christmas fare and, in keeping with tradition, were served by the officers, warrant officers and senior non-commissioned officers. For Leslie, it was a great time to practice his faith in company with his mates, catch up on mail and letter writing and take a well-earned break, for he knew that a return to the front lines could be imminent.

1917 was ushered in by continued bad weather and sodden knee-deep mud and water in the trenches. January gave way to February and the Germans seemed just as loathe for a frontal assault as the allies.

But the Germans were discretely changing their tactics from offence to a more elaborate method of defence in depth, built along an extended line, tens of miles in length. Well-constructed and hardened pillboxes armed with machine guns with arcs of fire interlocked, would make a frontal assault all but impossible. Just to throw in some extra challenges, belt after belt of concertina barbed wire – in some areas hundreds of metres deep – were covered by artillery of various calibres behind the lines, ready to engage on pre-adjusted targets. The Hun's

principle was simple – let the allies come to them to be annihilated shell by shell, round by round, man by man.

While the German's had their own name for their devilish handy work, British High Command dubbed it The Hindenburg Line.

March and early April saw a significant part of the Australian forces converging on The Hindenburg Line near the fortified French village of Bullecourt. The 52nd along with the other battalions of the 13th Brigade staged their way forward, relieving other battalions of the other brigades and taking their place in the line, before being relieved themselves and again moving ever closer to their intended point of battle.

Even after only serving six months in the 52nd Battalion, Leslie would have been seen as an old hand among the troops – still being alive was testimony to that!

The 52nd Battalion and the remainder of the 13th Brigade were destined to attack and take a series of outpost villages running parallel the axis of The Hindenburg Line. The main objective for the brigade was the heavily fortified village of Noreuil.

As the battalions jockeyed into position, sinister undertones of fate started to emerge. Units that were supposed to deploy to support the flanks of others mistakenly formed up in the wrong areas and misinformation was already starting to run rife. Even the jumping-off tapes¹⁵ were orientated towards the wrong villages in the distance.

With the launch of the attack on 2 April, the issue was in doubt from the outset, but the battalions remained committed to the task. The Germans were equally determined to repulse the Allied attack or at least make them pay dearly for every inch of ground. The pendulum of battle swung in a wide arc. Ground was won and lost and pockets of Australian troops stuck to orders and took their objectives only to be cut off, surrounded and captured. Limited and constrictive attack, withdrawal and counterattack by both sides was common with every battalion of the 13th Brigade committed to battle.

At morning orders on 3 April, the headquarters staff of the 52nd Battalion took stock of the current situation. Snow had fallen overnight, a large shell had hit near the battalion headquarters and the battalion had captured a German officer and his orderly. Overnight they had suffered 19 wounded – and then the adjutant read off the names of those who were killed.

Among those mentioned was one Private Leslie Oscar Rollins.

Mary heard a knock at the door and, as she opened it, her eyes widened in terror and her chest tightened, as she saw the local clergyman standing there with a buff-coloured envelope in hand.

"I'm sorry Mrs Roberts, but, its Leslie!"

Mary was completely numb as the minister read the details of the telegram to her and Thom. All she could think of was her beloved grandson, a mere and gentle lad, now gone forever.

Leslie Rollins was initially buried in the Australian Cemetery at Vaulx Vraucourt, France, 6km north-east of the strategic village of Bapaume.

Leslie was hopefully now at peace, but for the Rollins family, the trauma of foul luck would continue. Leslie's grandmother never got over the loss of her boy and she passed away a scant five months later, on 4 September 1917 – many simply attributing her death to the grief of losing Leslie.

Following his wife's death, Thom made a request to the Army for Leslie's War Gratuity pension. The application, originally rejected, deemed that Thom and Mary Ann were not dependant on Leslie before his death. Thom began a protracted argument against the decision and, finally, after a long and hard journey through the maze of military bureaucracy, the matter was settled with Thom receiving an ongoing pension of four shillings per fortnight and, as the sole beneficiary, received Leslie's back pay and bonds, totalling in excess of 90 pounds.

Following war's end and well into the 1920s, the task of concentrating temporary cemeteries and graves across the vast battlefields, became a priority for allies and enemy alike. It was decided that the cemetery at Vaux Vraucourt where Leslie was buried, would have the bodies exhumed and reinterred at nearby Vaux Hill, which was being

developed by the Imperial War Graves Commission as an official war cemetery.

Of the Australian bodies exhumed to be moved from Vaux Vraucourt, three unintentionally went missing – among them, Private Leslie Rollins.^{3,16}

It took until 1928 for the Imperial War Graves Commission¹⁷ to confirm that the three bodies had in fact been officially exhumed and were now lying at rest somewhere within the confines of Vaux Hill Cemetery but, unfortunately, the exact location could not be firmly fixed. As a result, each of the three gravestones bore the inscription 'Buried Near This Spot'.³

For 84-year-old Thomas Roberts, it had come all too late. His age, a long and demanding life, coupled with so much turmoil, had finally taken its toll. On 19 January 1928, he was deemed of unsound mind and admitted to New Norfolk Hospital, where he was a somewhat troublesome patient, preaching strong religious convictions to patients, staff and visitors alike. On one occasion, he escaped the hospital and shocked the congregation at the local church, walking into their service wearing only his pyjama shirt and underpants.

Thom passed away on 26 March 1929. He left a will bequeathing for safe keeping Leslie's portrait, war medals, memorial plaque and the King's letter of condolence and accompanying scroll, to his eldest son.

In filling out the Roll of Honour Circular to have Leslie's name added to the list to be commemorated once the Australian War Memorial was built, Thom Roberts summed up his grandson perfectly – He was a smart, earnest, Christian young man. Rejected four times, he put himself onto training, made himself fit and passed on the fifth examination.¹⁸

NOTES:

¹ On 10 March 1897, 19-year-old Emma Rollins was driving their horse-drawn milk wagon delivering milk for her seriously ill husband. The horse went into fright and galloped away with Emma and the wagon in tow. Emma panicked and went to jump from the out-of-control wagon and lost her balance, falling from the wagon and striking her head. She was carried to a local store and a doctor was summoned, but the situation was hopeless. She left behind her husband Oscar and baby Leslie. Details from The Hobart Mercury.

² 20 August 1897, 24-year-old Oscar Rollins passed away in Hobart Hospital after a long and painful illness.

³ National Archives of Australia: B2455, WWI Service Records, 4596 Private L.O. Rollins, 52nd Battalion, AIF.

⁴ Definitions: Ironmonger – a dealer in iron and hardware. Counterman – a person who waits on customers from behind a counter.

⁵ National Archives of Australia: P1868, Rollins, Leslie Oscar, Private, Regimental Number 4596, 52nd Battalion (Application for War Gratuity).

⁶ www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/enlistment

⁷ The doctors also paid particular attention to distinguishing tattoos from the British Army, especially those depicting BC for Bad Conduct and D, which signified Deserter.

⁸ AWM DA13644.

⁹ Australian Imperial Force (AIF).

¹⁰ Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18, Vol III, p42.

¹¹ The 52nd Battalion, Neville Browning 2009.

¹² Australian Imperial Force Unit War Diaries AWM 4, Subclass 23/69/6, 52nd Battalion, September 1916.

¹³ Trench foot was a medical condition caused by prolonged exposure of the feet to damp, unsanitary and cold conditions referenced to trench warfare and mainly associated with WWI. In order to stem the increasing casualty rate, it was at one point deemed a self-inflicted wound, encouraging soldiers and their chain of command to implement a proactive self-care programs.

¹⁴ The area between opposing trenches not dominated by either side.

¹⁵ White tapes laid out in no-man's land by reconnaissance teams, usually under the cover of darkness. Assaulting troops would move out and assemble along these tapes, hopefully avoiding any counter bombardment from enemy artillery.

¹⁶ The other two Australians were 1638 Private Frederick Henry Granger, 49th Battalion AIF and Gallipoli veteran 759 Private Ernest Kilpatrick, 23rd Battalion AIF.

¹⁷ Forerunner to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

¹⁸ AWM145 Roll of Honour cards, 1914-1918 War, Army – 4596 Private Leslie Oscar Rollins, 52nd Battalion, AIF.

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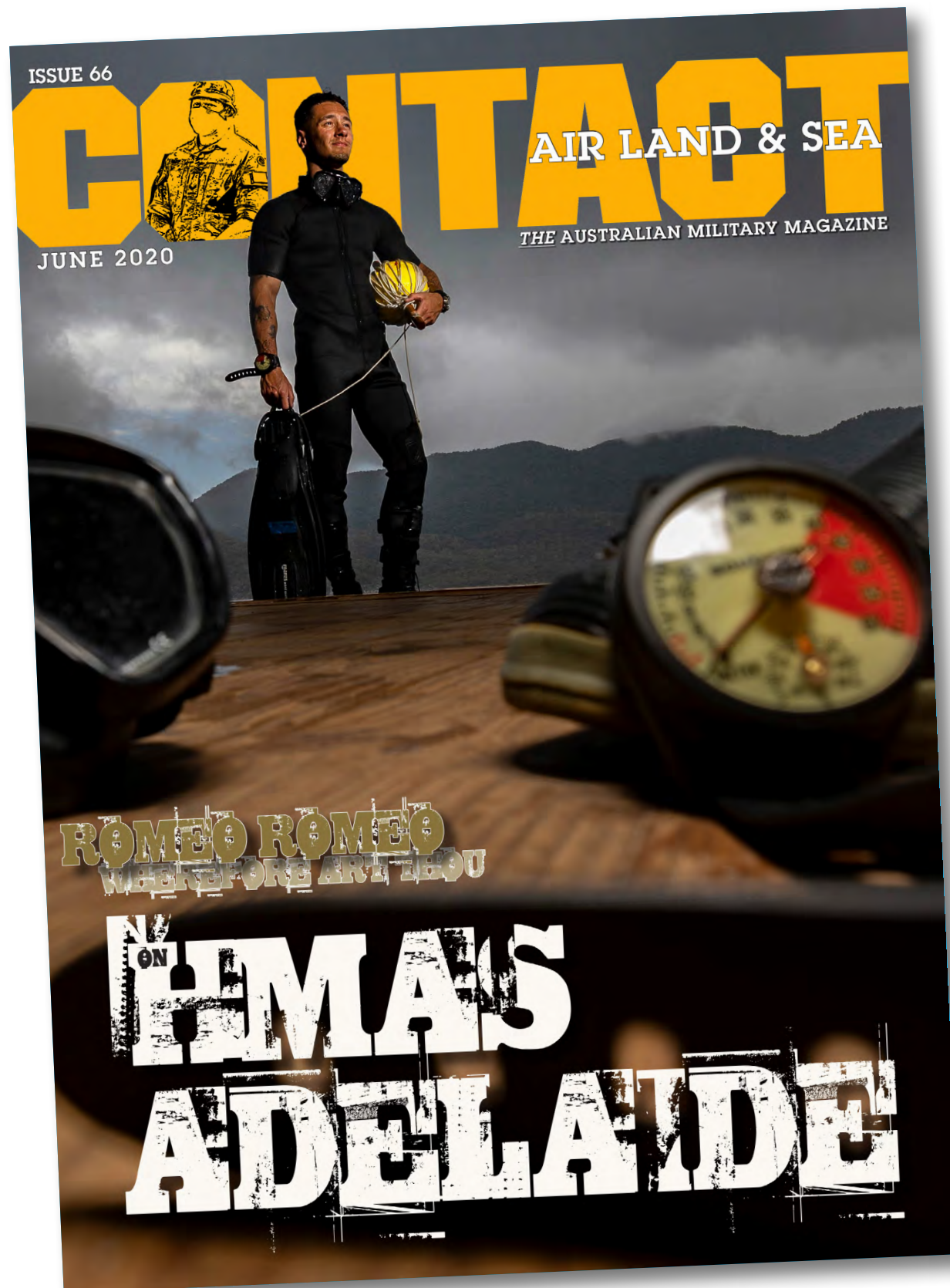
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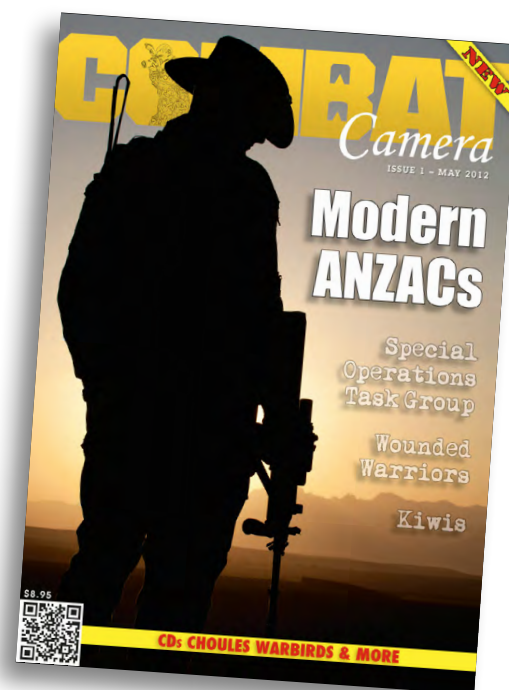
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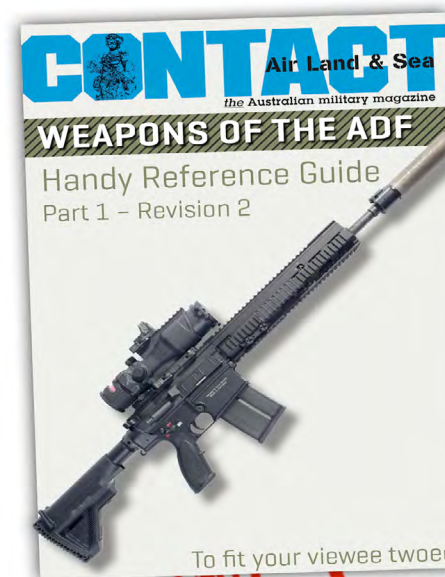
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Stuck at home, getting bored – so what else could we do? Write a GI article – and write the one that may generate the most discussion yet...

What will the new Australian service rifle be?

Last article, we were non-committal – and we still are – even though we're pretty sure about what is wanted. And that's the rub. What we want and what we get could be vastly different.

Now, we all know about the M16/M4 and every variant and manufacturer of those there is, so I'm going to leave that out of the discussion with the exception of the Steyr STM 556. While that is an AR style rifle, it basically sports the AUG/F88 removable barrel and I mention that because we make the same type of barrel here, so they could claim 'ease of manufacturing-plant conversion'. But I'm not so sure that's an issue these days.

That's it for AR platforms and I'm also going to leave out bullpup designs, even though the FN 2000 ejects forwards and can be used left or right-handed. I guess we're over the bullpup design, and for good reason.

So, here's what we have for realistic options...

FN SCAR: Nice, well made for the SF community and oh-so expensive. Fully ambidextrous and with the ability to change barrels, it's also a bit over-engineered for your grass-roots digger, which is why it has not been adopted by anyone as a service rifle. In fact, the only SCAR to see some form of regular service is the 7.62 version in the DMR role. Oh, and internally, it's another version of the AR-18.

H&K G-36: Is still a popular rifle with some but not with the Bundeswehr who are moving to H&K's M4 clone, along with France. The G-36 has had some publicity issues with deteriorating accuracy when hot, despite meeting all the required performance specs set out for it (hint to tender writers – get your specs right, the public are merciless). But that negativity will keep it out of contention here. And, it too is another AR-18 in disguise.

H&K 433: G-36 in new clothes and another hybrid with an AR lower. Basically, a re-design of the G-36 to remedy its problems and offer a solution to the German Army. Still an AR-18.

Beretta ARX-160: Now this is an interesting rifle that looks like a huge chunk of plastic but has some very interesting features. In service with the Italian Army since 2008, this is a rifle that can be changed from right to left-handed use, in the field, in seconds.

That includes swapping the side it ejects to and the cocking handle to make a truly left-handed weapon! It has plenty of rail space, fits a 40mm GLA and is properly modular. It also has combat cred from Afghanistan and is used by Romania and Argentina (7.62x51 AR200 variant). I must say that the ejection port is large and open on both sides and this worries me because, well 'Straya, mate! Just looks like it will attract dirt, but you can definitely see in to clear it! With so much polymer, I wonder if it will suffer the heat issues of the G-36. Biggest surprise, it's not an AR-18 in disguise.

CZ 805 Bren: The Czech Republic has been an arms manufacturing powerhouse for more than a century, despite the dark years under Nazi and Communist rule, and has made a resurgence in the past 20 years or so. This rifle is very similar looking to the FN SCAR with a massive one-piece upper receiver, plenty of rail space and most common locations and function of the controls including ambidextrous. Polymer is used in the lower receiver and once again, we're looking at an AR-18 style operating system, although closer to the G-36 version. It is now the Czech service rifle and issued to Egyptian Para's in 7.62x39.

Radom MSBS-5.56 Grot C: Poland's new service rifle and a move away from AK-style actions to... an AR-18 style action! This is showing as a reliable weapon that breaks down to a handful of components easily maintained in the field, as do some of the other rifles here, although some of those can be a little more complex. There are two versions of this rifle and the 'C' is the version to look at as the 'B' is a bullpup configuration.

Robinson Arms XCR: I'm giving this an honourable mention as it was designed to compete for a US Army program and its action is very close to that of the AK. Here you have a rifle that features all the controls and functionality of an AR, with a solid one-piece upper and the strength and reliability of an AK. It's a bit on the heavy side but has that simple, solid construction that works well in Australian conditions.

What I've mentioned here are potential offerings that are not full AR/M16/M4 clones. They all have the modular design that is wanted and are all proven rifles, currently in production.

This doesn't mean they will be offered or considered when the tender comes up, though, as I fear Defence

will only have eyes for the big manufacturers, which is unfortunate, in my opinion.

Thales' recent press release about its super Steyr with built in electronics is to me a bit of a last gasp, if not a way to hold onto a contract and the SAF Lithgow for a few more years. The Americans and French have all tried these high-tech weapon styles and each time the program has floundered. Why would Australia, with its limited funds, be able to make the breakthrough those guys couldn't?

One other reason I haven't gone into detail on each potential rifle is that they all have the required modularity and, to some degree, the ambidextrous features for lefties. They also accept a grenade-launcher attachment (the XCR would need a little development, but not much) and only the H&K rifles don't have a 7.62x51 NATO version available as a DMR.

Those with the 7.62mm capability also lend themselves to working with new cartridges based on the 7.62, such as the 6.8 from SIG Arms. All the rifles will accept new polymer-case ammunition, but none have been developed for telescoping-case ammunition, and all are chambered as standard in 5.56x45 NATO.

I know some people will say we should adopt a reliable modernised AK or variant like a Galil or South African R4, but you have to remember there are some limitations to those designs. There's also a cultural 'cringe' factor to them that Defence will not overcome and, given how far design has progressed from these AK-style rifles, it doesn't really need to consider them.

So here's your homework – off with you to the internet to look up these rifles and their features – and all the AR clones too – and send us your thoughts on this prickly subject to gearinsider@militarycontact.com



Soldiers from 2RAR on exercise at the Tully Jungle Training Area, north Queensland, with the Australian Army's EF88 service rifle. Photo by Corporal Tristan Kennedy.

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE ON AN

INTEGRATED BATTLEFIELD

It's a cold winter morning at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico, USA, and two surrogate cruise missiles have just been launched, one after the other. They are flying separate courses among the jagged San Andres and Sacramento mountains toward soldiers in a US Army Air and Missile Defense unit at a test site called TAC-2 – Tactical Command Post 2.

These sophisticated targets precisely mimic real cruise-missile threats and can take advantage of this terrain to hide from the radars and sensors commanders have positioned in the area. This can create gaps in tracking that make the job of interceptor missiles or other defensive weapons more difficult – you can't hit what you can't see.

Today, though, their manoeuvres won't enable them to evade detection. This is Flight Test 5 (FT-5), the most sophisticated and difficult development test yet for the Army's Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) Battle Command System (IBCS), developed by Northrop Grumman.

High above the range, sensors aboard US Air Force F-35 fighters see and acquire the two surrogate missiles. IBCS integrates the aircraft sensor data with that of available ground sensors, including Sentinel, Patriot weapon system and US Marine Corps TPS-59 radars. All share information via the IBCS Integrated Fire Control Network (IFCN). As one sensor loses sight of the threats – and each will at some point – the targets are acquired by other sensors on the IFCN, enabling IBCS to create a precise, uninterrupted composite track of each missile's movements.

With data from every sensor, IBCS produces a single integrated air picture on the screens of the air-defense soldiers at TAC-2. They see every change in altitude and direction as the two missiles point tracks across their screens.

Because IBCS enables joint weapons as well as joint sensors, the defenders at the controls can select the best effector to use against these targets. Today, the soldiers are about to launch two Patriot Advanced Capability 2 (PAC-2) interceptors.

"Without IBCS, all those different sensors operate independently, creating opportunities for threats to avoid detection as they fly to a target," Northrop Grumman IBCS Program Director Mark Rist said.

"Without being integrated onto a network, these sensors produce a more ambiguous, less-clear air picture, making engagements more challenging."

He is monitoring FT-5 from miles away, in the test's mission control room. The soldiers at TAC-2 can be

heard on the radio – calm but urgent voices reporting "target acquired" and talking of the IP (intercept point) and "kill box".

It's only been moments since the threats were launched, but now comes "Free to engage ... Missile away ... Missile away ..."

One, then another PAC-2 interceptor is launched by the soldiers. IBCS is not only able to launch the missiles, but also plays a critical role in the engagement by actively closing the fire control loop and providing in-flight updates as the PAC-2s converge on their targets.

The cruise-missile targets are closing in and can now be seen on video in the control room – and then suddenly they can't.

Cheers erupt in the control room, with Rist and his team loudest among the many generals, colonels and visiting officials.

After years of effort, working closely and constantly with soldiers, FT-5 fully demonstrated IBCS's unprecedented capability to integrate sensors and effectors to detect, track and simultaneously engage multiple targets in flight.

"Information is ammunition, and IBCS is providing soldiers with more," Rist said.

"We brought a lot of things together in this development test. It was the first including joint operations with the Air Force F-35 and Marine Corps radar systems and the first with air-defense artillery soldiers at the controls."

FT-5 was the latest in a series of test successes, and further evidence of the program's maturity as soldiers train on IBCS equipment in preparation for a 'limited user test' (LUT).

Colonel Phil Rottenborn, Army IAMD project manager, said he was very proud of the soldiers and of the system's performance.

"This was the first time soldiers conducted a live engagement using IBCS in a developmental test, and they showed we are ready to go into the operational test phase."

Colonel Tony Behrens, US Army Capability Manager for the Air and Missile Defense Command said it proved that an Army operator – not an engineer or software developer – could sit at that console and do the job.

"I am very comfortable and confident about the path we're on," Colonel Behrens said.

When operational, soldiers will be able to use any available sensor with any available weapon system at any command post connected to the self-connecting, self-healing IFCN.





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