

ISSUE 68



CONTACT

AIR LAND & SEA

DEC 2020

THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE



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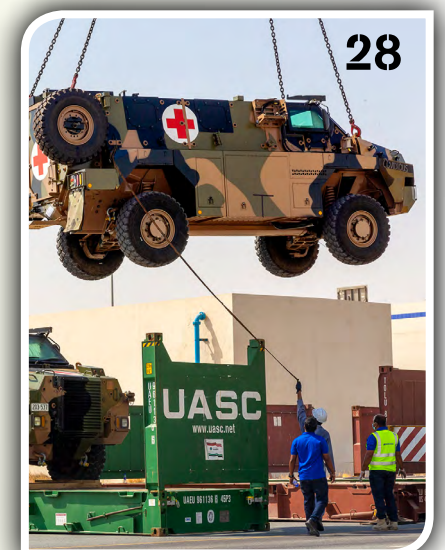
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EDITORIAL

Issue 68 – December 2020

CONTACT

AIR, LAND & SEA



MIDDLE EAST DOWNSIZE

Photo by Corporal
Tristan Kennedy

Starts page 28

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appropriate.

In the last issue, I introduced an awesome new departure for me and for
CONTACT – the new [Veteran H.E.L.P. Centre in Kiama](#), NSW, slap bang in the
middle of the main street, in the old Ambulance Station. It was an amazing
concept. I was very, very proud and excited about the prospect, the location
and the opportunity.

I [picked up the keys](#) to the council-owned building on 10 September – did
a comprehensive march-in inspection and report – put the sign I had spent
[weeks making](#), in concrete, in the front garden in the most in-er-face location
on the Kiama tourist strip – then went home and ...

... found an email on my computer that effectively terminated my partnership
with my charity backer.

And that was just about that, save for one 'robust discussion' that only served to
demonstrate there was no compromise to be made. My venture into the charity
space effectively [ended the same day](#) I picked up the keys for the building.

That was 11 weeks ago as I write this. I'm nearly recovered from the shock
and disappointment and PTSD trigger – though writing this brings it all back
into focus again, so I hope this will be the end of it.

My ex partners in this venture said they would push ahead with the centre
without me – but, to date, my beautiful sign in the garden is still looking
beautiful and the note I put on the door is still hanging there, albeit with fresh
cobwebs to keep it company.

This editorial will likely be the last I speak of this episode in my life (except
maybe to my psychiatrist) but the [videos and stories](#) I published on the
CONTACT web site will always be there to remind me.

If this is to be my last word, I will use the opportunity to get a couple of
things off my chest.

First, I will admit that I'm not blameless in this failure. I have my issues. I
am one-eyed and determined and I prefer to 'just do it' and get permission
afterwards.

From their side, I was told numerous times, by the same person "I love how
you operate. Keep doing what you're doing" but on the other hand "the team
feels you want to push ahead and do your own thing, especially when we're not
responding in a timely fashion. This is core to the friction".

For me, there was too much confusion, not enough action in a timely fashion
and, as the waters got muddier and muddier, too much friction.

While I was not 'sacked' or 'kicked out', our agreed 'partnership' was effectively
terminated by *that email* on 10 September. Even with offers of conciliation and
negotiation on the table, I formally resigned a few days later.

When people ask, I say "It was a marriage made in heaven, but after 16 weeks,
we were divorced, never to speak again". Or, if I'm in a good mood, I say "It was
like living an episode of Utopia" :-)

I've been on a rollercoaster of emotions since we split – anger, despair, futility,
regret, sadness – and, I think I'm slowly creeping up on acceptance. But I think
I will always feel a sense of loss. The Veteran HELP Centre in Kiama could have,
should have been something great. It was a great idea. It was my idea. And now
I feel chewed up, spat out and my idea taken away from me.

What irks me the most, however, is the 'never to speak again' bit. My ex-
partners – whose job it is to look out for the welfare of veterans – never once
checked in to see how *this* veteran was coping after our split!

So now, I'm done talking about it. Hopefully, one day soon I'll be done thinking
about it too.

I'll actually let a staunch CONTACT fan have the last word on this sorry saga –
"Mate, I know you're hurting at present and I am ever ready to assist and chat. But
let me say in no uncertain words – hold your head up high and be proud of yourself
because you focused on the true Australian and ANZAC trait – you had the guts to
give it a go! Take care and please call me if you need a chat or a vent!"

Thank you DK and the many others who sent love and support.

Sincerely,

Brian Hartigan, Managing Editor

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IN PRINT

COURAGE

PROMOTED

Major General Roger Noble returns a salute from 2nd Cavalry Regiment's Lance Corporal Courage after promoting the mascot during the unit's 50th Anniversary Parade on 14 November 2020 at Lavarack Barracks, Townsville.

The 2nd Cavalry Regiment celebrated its 50th birthday with a number of activities, including a live-fire demonstration, social sporting matches and a formal mounted parade, on 13 and 14 November.

The regiment was also awarded its first-ever theatre honours during the mounted parade.

The East Timor and Iraq honours were presented and fixed to their guidon by Major General Noble.

2nd Cavalry Regiment was formed in 1970, however, has ties to the 2nd/6th Cavalry Commando Regiment, which was formed in 1939.

The regiment generates armoured cavalry capability for the 3rd Brigade and plays an integral role in the brigade's combined-arms combat team capabilities.

Unit mascot Lance Corporal Courage is a 15-year-old female wedge-tailed eagle, recruited into the Regiment following the death of her predecessor WO2 Courage in October 2017.



HEADS UP



An Army Hawkei reverses onto a HMAS Adelaide landing craft from Cowley Beach, Queensland, during Exercise Sea Wader, 2 November 2020. Photo by Able Seaman Sittichai Sakonpoonpol.

HAWKEI PRODUCTION

Army's new Australian-designed and built Hawkei protected mobility vehicle is ready for full-rate production at Thales' Protected Vehicles facility in Bendigo, Victoria.

WO1 Mick Briggs, technical adviser – vehicle systems for the Land-121 Ph 4 PMV-L (Hawkei) project, said soldiers would like the Hawkei's ease of operation and survivability.

"I think diggers will like the overall package," WO1 Briggs said.

"Once you have the training and you understand the vehicle, it's quite easy to operate.

"Even driving around Canberra roads in the dark, negotiating roundabouts, it was pretty easy."

WO1 Briggs said diggers should have the same faith in Hawkei that they do with the Bushmaster.

"You get that same confidence when you get into this vehicle, regarding its survivability, operability and manoeuvrability, that you would in the Bushmaster.

"It just feels the same and you get that air of confidence that it will do what it says on the box."

Chief of Army Lieutenant General Rick Burr said a rigorous acceptance-testing program was now complete.

"Hawkei's networked systems will allow Army teams to connect with new

technologies, each other and other components of the ADF," Lieutenant General Burr said.

"Its protection assures the resilience of the network and gives Australian soldiers confidence in demanding and dangerous environments."

Minister for Defence Linda Reynolds said the vehicle had performed exceptionally well throughout the comprehensive ballistic and blast testing, meeting Defence's stringent requirements for protection and survivability.

"This is a highly effective capability being delivered in partnership between Defence and industry that builds on Thales's iconic Bushmaster, which has been highly successful on operations overseas and exported around the world," Minister Reynolds said.

"Hawkei is a significant enhancement to existing land capabilities.

"It will provide superior mobility, survivability and communications, while protecting the lives of our soldiers when operating in increasingly lethal and complex environments."

Under project LAND 121 Phase 4, 1100 Hawkei protected mobility vehicles and 1058 trailers will be delivered to the ADF, with the full-rate production vehicles expected to commence delivery from mid next year.

'WAR CRIMES' REPORT

A redacted version of the Inspector General of the ADF's Afghanistan Inquiry Report was publicly released on 19 November.

Among its findings were that there was enough credible information to recommend prosecutions of 25 current or former ADF members in respect of 39 unlawful killings in Afghanistan.

The report said none of the killings were made in the heat of battle – it was or should have been plain that the person killed was a non-combatant or out of the fight.

While some victims were encountered during an operation, but were "on no reasonable view" participating in hostilities, the vast majority of the killings were cases where the persons were killed when 'hors-de-combat' – that is, out-of-the fight because they had been seriously wounded, or had surrendered, or had been captured and were prisoners or 'persons under control' – and as such should have been protected under international law.

Almost all of the incidents occurred between 2009 and 2013 and involved a single force element on multiple rotations.

The 2nd SAS Squadron will be disbanded and have its Meritorious Unit citation revoked.

The report said commanders at troop, squadron and task-group level must bear some responsibility for not knowing what was happening 'on their watch', but, the criminal behaviour of the perpetrators was commenced, committed, continued and concealed at the patrol-commander level.

"Their motivation cannot be known with certainty, but it appears to include elements of an intention to 'clear' the battlefield of people believed to be insurgents, regardless of the Law of Armed Conflict – to 'blood' new members of the patrol and troop – and, to outscore other patrols in the number of enemy killed," the inquiry said.

The Inquiry and the Chief of Defence said – the consequences of not addressing these allegations would measure in decades.

You can find the redacted IGADF Afghanistan Inquiry Report on our [web site, here](#).

NAVY VETS EXPAND WHISKEY PROJECT

The Whiskey Project Group has announced it acquired boat manufacturer Yamba Welding & Engineering (YWE) and maritime design company Naiad.

A spokesman said it was a strategic move that would herald a new era of sovereign design and industrial capability for military and specialist watercraft.

Whiskey Project Group's founders launched their Next Generation Tactical Watercraft to industry acclaim at Pacific 2019 with Minister for Defence Industry Melissa Price's support.

Over the past 10 years, YWE have built more than 200 vessels for Australian Federal- and State-government agencies, including ADF and Border Force – while Naiad designs are built under license around the

world and are popular for a wide range of government military, law-enforcement and rescue-agency vessels, as well as commercial, tourism, recreational and superyacht tender applications.

As The Whiskey Project Group, this expanded family

of watercraft hope to offer their Federal- and State-government customers the industrial assurance and efficiencies of dealing with one sovereign-industry provider, one supply chain – of more than 50 Australian SMEs – and 100% design authority.



A Whiskey Alpha 85 (right) with two Marine NSW boats designed by Naiads and built by YWE. Photo copyright Salty Dingo.

CANARY SENSOR

An Army staff cadet at RMC-Duntroon developed a prototype sensor that came to the attention of a RAAF innovation program.

Staff Cadet Oscar Fowler spent the next five months in Plan Jericho's Canberra lab, at The Creative Element, where he received one-on-one support from industry and academic experts.

The prototype detects harmful gases and vapours and could, when developed, alert soldiers to toxic threats via wearable technology.

DFDA RULING

The High Court ruled in September that ADF personnel can be prosecuted under the Defence Force Discipline Act for civilian offences committed off-duty, out of uniform or off-base.

The case was brought by a soldier accused of assaulting a RAAFie in a Brisbane hotel.

Neither was on duty, in uniform or on Defence land.

The accused launched a High Court challenge to the ADF Magistrate's jurisdiction, but lost, with costs awarded against him.

NEW TANK

Tankies can look forward to greater protection and lethality as Army upgrades from the M1A1 to the M1A2 main battle tank under Project LAND 907 Phase 2.

Army is currently trying to decide between M1A2 System Enhancement Package (SEP) V3 or an M1A2 Australian-specific custom variant.

More details [here](#).

FIRST EXPORT

Veteran-owned GaardTech is preparing to export advanced training systems as part of a trial with the British Army.

Specialising in land targets to resemble enemy armoured vehicles, the Brisbane-based company has a range of products, including thermally activated, 3D and 2D-mobile targets.

AWM TATTOOS

A new exhibition relating personal stories and experiences of Australian veterans through the use of tattoos – Ink in the Lines – is now on display at the Australian War Memorial.

Ink in the Lines features more than 70 portraits and details the experiences of 21 ADF men and women and is thought to be the first exhibition in Australia to examine the use of tattoos in the military.

Runs until 27 January 2021.

BOARDING SOON

A new Maritime Security Training Centre in Darwin will facilitate training of Royal Australian Navy and other ADF members for maritime-security operations.

The new facility will cater for an expected increase in training requirements associated with the new Arafura-class offshore patrol vessels.



A GaardTech target. Photo by Sergeant Glen McCarthy.

TINDAL UPGRADE

A \$1.1billion RAAF Base Tindal redevelopment project kicked off in September.

As part of Australia's commitments under United States Force Posture Initiatives, \$737million will be spent upgrading the airfield, increasing aviation fuel storage, re-investing in ageing base engineering services and providing additional living-in accommodation.

\$437 million will also be spent on power, water, sewerage and other infrastructure.



File photo of a RAAF P-8A Poseidon by Corporal Bill Solomou.

NORTH KOREA SANCTIONS

A Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft deployed on Operation Argos for the second time this year, in September, followed by warship HMAS Arunta.

Op Argos is Australia's contribution to monitor United Nations Security Council sanctions compliance on North Korea.

Operating out of Kadena Air Base in Japan, the RAAF Poseidon conducted airborne surveillance to monitor and deter illegal shipments of sanctioned goods to or from North Korea.

This was the seventh deployment of a maritime patrol aircraft by the RAAF since the commencement of Operation Argos in 2018.

HMAS Arunta and her embarked MH-60R Seahawk helicopter aided in the same mission, putting out from Sasebo Naval Base, Japan.

Canada, France, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States also contribute assets to the sanction's monitoring mission.

K9 THUNDER DOWNUNDER

Hanwha has been chosen to build and maintain 30 self-propelled howitzers and 15 armoured ammunition resupply vehicles and their supporting systems for the Australian Army.

Minister for Defence Linda Reynolds said issuing the Request for Tender under the LAND 8116 Phase 2 Protected Mobile Fires project marked a key step in the plan to build the vehicles in Geelong, Victoria.

"The acquisition of this capability will provide the ADF with mobility, lethality and protection required to support joint force operations in the land domain," Minister Reynolds said.

LAND 8116 Phase 2 is expected to commence in the late 2020s, with LAND 8116 Phase 3 in the mid-2030s delivering a mid-life upgrade and an opportunity to incorporate emerging technologies.



Hanwha K9 Thunder. Photo courtesy Hanwha

30 F-35s

Exercise Lightning Ferry conducted in November saw the arrival of nine F-35A Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter aircraft at RAAF Base Williamtown, near Newcastle, NSW.

The aircraft travelled from Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, United States, to their new home base supported by Royal Australian Air Force KC-30A multi-role tanker transport aircraft.

Australia has now received 30 of the planned 72-strong F-35 fleet.

RAAF's No 2 Operational Conversion Unit (2OCU) recently concluded their first F-35A Lightning II Pilot Transition Course held in Australia, in the purpose-built Joint Strike Fighter precinct at RAAF Base Williamtown.

Previously, Aussie pilots were trained in Arizona.

MORE ACCURATE DFSW



Australian soldiers at the School of Infantry prepare to fire an 84mm M3 Karl Gustav fitted with an Aimpoint Fire Control System. Story by Sergeant Sebastian Beurich

Heavy-weapon operators may soon be more accurate at longer distances after a new DFSW optic was trialled by Project Land 159 in Singleton earlier this year.

AHQ SO1 Lethality Lieutenant Colonel Cameron Fraser said the evaluation sought to demonstrate options for a common sighting system, across multiple weapon systems, while improving probability of hit for crew-served weapons.

"Results from such activities are critical to inform us as we seek to enhance lethality and simplify our future weapon systems under Land 159," he said.

The activity looked to verify manufacturer claims, evaluate the optic's performance and suitability for service, including probability of hit, and time-to-engage a target.

As well as the 84mm, the sight can also be fitted to Mk-47 automatic grenade launcher and .50 cal and Mag-58 machine guns.

Results from the activity indicated a significant improvement in probability of hit and an overall increase in rounds on target.

Longer-engagement and other-weapon tests are planned.

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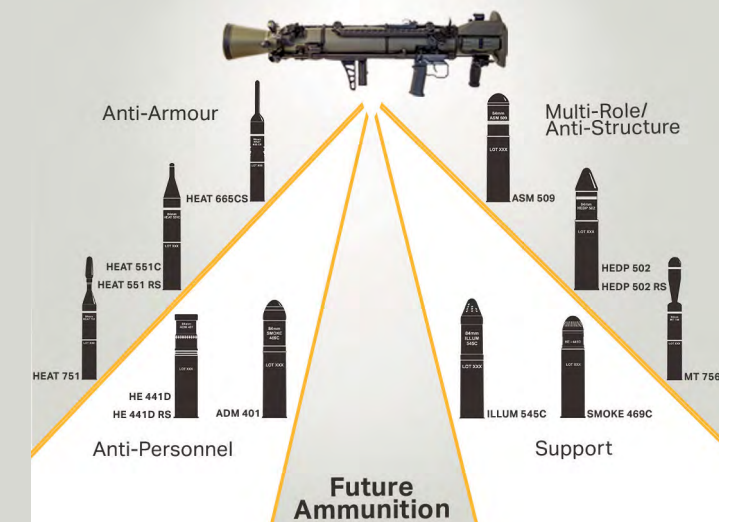
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The flight, in mid November, was the first of the 2020/21 season of Operation Southern Discovery, ADF's support to the Australian Antarctic Division. Such flights provide the Antarctic mission with a quick and flexible means of transporting priority and urgent supplies from Australia. The round trip is approximately 7000km.



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CLASSIC FAIRF HORNET WALL



CLASSIC HORNET FAREWELL

On 29 October 2020 the Royal Australian Air Force's No. 77 Squadron conducted a formation flying activity with F/A-18A Hornets off the coast of Newcastle, NSW.

RAAF imagery specialists from No.28 Squadron took the opportunity to capture some final aerial imagery of the aircraft before their official retirement from service in 2021.

The F/A-18A (single seat) and F/A-18B (twin seat) Hornets are multi-role fighter aircraft that have been in RAAF service since 1984.

Australia ordered a total of 75 A and B model F/A-18s in 1981 to replace RAAF's Mirage fighters (114 of which were built in Australia in the 1960s [another sovereign Australian industry sadly since lost]).

The Hornets started entering service from 1984 with the fleet complete by 1990.

Over the years, four Hornets were destroyed in flying accidents.

The fleet is currently in wind-down, with two airframes already flown to Canada and one more carried by a Royal Canadian Air Force C-17 on its return flight after delivering fire retardant to Australia during the most recent bushfire crisis.

Canada is buying 'up to 25 aircraft', 18 of which will be flown by the Royal Canadian Air Force and the rest used for spares and training.

Defence also said it had sold "up to 46" RAAF F/A-18 'classic' Hornets to a commercial air combat training company in America.

However, since 25 and 46 equals the total remaining RAAF fleet, one or both foreign customers will be disappointed to learn that at least two

airframes were transferred to the Australian War Memorial in late October, with at least 10 others 'promised' [by politicians!] to other Australian heritage collections.

RAAF recently stopped 'classic' Hornet pilot conversion training, with the last course graduating from 2 Operational Conversion Unit in December last year.

Commanding officer 2OCU Wing Commander Scott Woodland said 2 Operational Conversion Unit's final Classic Hornet mission was a fitting tribute to a significant milestone in RAAF history.

"2OCU's role in preparing generations of 'classic' Hornet fighter aircrew with the skills and competency to engage in fighter combat has laid the very foundations of RAAF air power capability since the introduction of the platform," Wing Commander Woodland said.

"Operational conversion has been at the cornerstone of the strength of the 'classic' Hornet platforms' contribution – taking graduate Hawk 127 pilots, then testing and challenging them under the most gruelling conditions and toughest air-combat scenarios.

"The result has been the delivery of highly trained, focused pilots to frontline squadrons, performing with excellence at home and abroad on operations in defence of our national interests."

The RAAF F/A-18A/B 'Classic' Hornet will be formally – and, we imagine, ceremonially – withdrawn from service in December 2021.



PHOTOS BY SERGEANT DAVID GIBBS
AND CORPORAL DAVID SAID



CLASSIC HORNET FAREWELL

The 'classic' Hornets are being gradually replaced by F-35A Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters, with the first two of 72 of that type delivered to RAAF Base Williamtown in December 2018.

Almost half the F-35 fleet has now been delivered to RAAF Base Williamtown, near Newcastle, NSW – the most recent being a nine-aircraft trans-Pacific delivery flight in November 2020, aided by RAAF KC-30A multi-role tanker transport aircraft.

A 'temporary' fleet of 24 F/A-18F Super Hornets were purchased by RAAF about 10 years ago to fill a perceived capability gap between the 'classic' Hornet retirement and full operational capability of the F-35.

They were later joined by 12 EA-18G Growler electronic attack aircraft (one since destroyed by fire and not replaced).

However, all those aircraft proved to be so capable, the RAAF now intends to keep them long term.

What's currently left (less than half the fleet, according to the RAAF web site) of the F/A-18A (single-seat) and F/A-18B (two-seat) Hornets have one last year to serve – which, coinciding with the Royal Australian Air Force's Centenary and the COVID-deferred Avalon Airshow, means the Australian public will likely see them flying a time or two more before they finally say goodbye.



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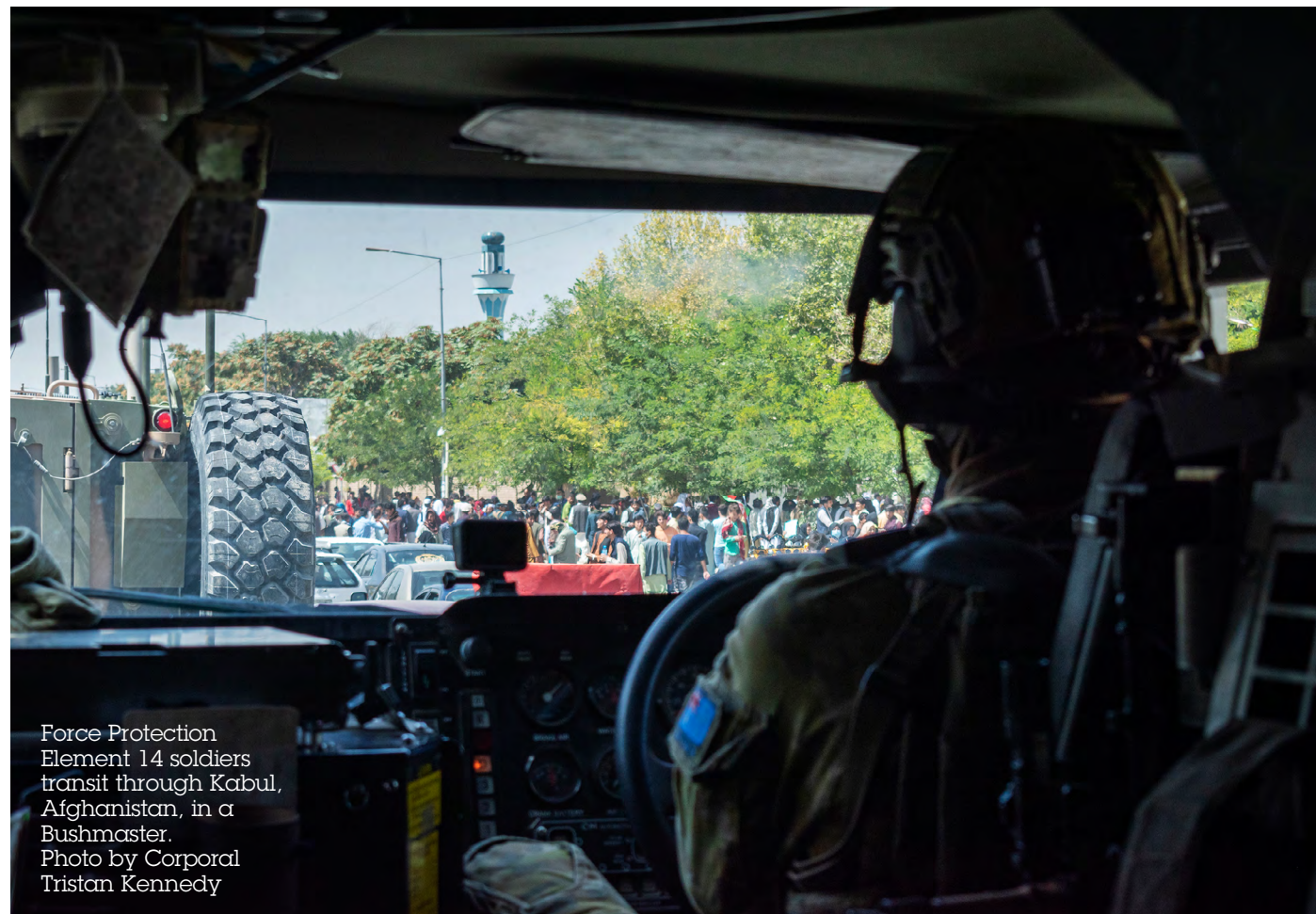


MIDDLE EAST DOWN SIZING



Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicles are loaded onto pallets for their return to Australia from Camp Baird, Australia's main operating base in the Middle East. Photo by Corporal Tristan Kennedy





Force Protection Element 14 soldiers transit through Kabul, Afghanistan, in a Bushmaster.
Photo by Corporal Tristan Kennedy



A Unimog and Bushmaster await loading onto a Royal Australian Air Force C-17 Globemaster in Kabul, Afghanistan.
Photo by Corporal Tristan Kennedy

Australia is winding down its military commitments across the middle East region, pulling back many of its Royal Australian Navy, Australian Army and Royal Australian Air Force assets and personnel.

Our contribution to the Afghan National Army Officer Academy in Qargha near Kabul has ended – so too soldier training at Taji in Iraq – our major air-operations base has been cleaned out and handed over – and no more Navy ships will be sent to patrol the gulf.

Minister for Defence Linda Reynolds said Australian advisors at Afghan training establishments had made a valuable contribution to the future security of Afghanistan.

“Our personnel have been vital to the establishment of national institutions such as the Afghan National Army Officer Academy in October 2013,” Minister Reynolds said.

“The work that the Australian Defence Force has done in training thousands of officers for the Afghan National Army will have a lasting impact on the security of Afghanistan.”

She said the decision to conclude the ADF’s work at Qargha was made in consultation with the NATO Resolute Support mission and was in accordance with wider adjustments across the Coalition and across the Middle East.

On the ground, Australian soldiers held their final parade at Camp Qargha, Afghanistan, in September.

An Australian flag was presented to the British commanding officer as the Australian soldiers’ part in Force Protection Element-13 ended.

Private Arlen Treston, FPE-13, said that was their way of signing off.

“It was a strange feeling knowing we were the last Australians at the camp after 13 rotations,” Private Treston said.

Over the years, Australian soldiers’ mission changed from mostly combat operations, as experienced by earlier rotations, to force protection, with soldiers in a more passive role.

Some weeks, Private Treston and his mates would watch Kabul from guard towers, or man the camp’s gate, searching vehicles and people.

But Private Treston most enjoyed being a ‘guardian angel’ watching over coalition personnel mentoring Afghans at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy.

“They mentored the Afghans to a good standard,” Private Treston said.

“We would walk everywhere with them. If it was an outside task we’d form a perimeter and let them get on with their training.”

FPE-14 is now deployed to Kabul, headquartered at Hamid Karzai International Airport.

But, the Australian flag will not fly again at Qargha.

The arrival of Force Protection Element 14 in Kabul in September coincided with an interesting juncture in Afghanistan’s more recent war-torn history. After delays because of COVID-19 restrictions, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo opened Intra-Afghan Peace Negotiations in Doha, Qatar, on 12 September.

Officer Commanding FPE-14 Major Christopher Hall said the negotiations brought Afghans together in an effort to chart a new course of enduring peace for their country.

“The negotiations will hopefully change the environment we work in and the soldiers of 1RAR are adaptable and ready for that,” Major Hall said.

Of course, a notorious precondition of those negotiations was the release of Hekmatullah – the man responsible for the killing of Australian Sapper James Martin, Lance Corporal Stjepan ‘Rick’ Milosevic and Private Robert Poate in an insider attack at Patrol Base Wahab on 29 August 2012.

Hekmatullah was captured in Pakistan and deported back to Afghanistan in October 2013, where Australians believed he would be held for the rest of his natural days. His release upset more than a few people.

FPE-14 is made up of soldiers from the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), which took over from the 5RAR-based FPE-13.

Their mission is to protect Australian and Coalition forces as they train, advise and assist Afghan security forces and travel about the Afghan capital.

“Major James Byers and his FPE-13 team gave us an excellent handover,” Major Hall said.

Members of FPE-14 were eager to start their deployment after their mandatory two-week COVID-19 quarantine period – which they will likely have to repeat on the homeward journey early next year.

More than 2000km away, Task Group Taji finished a similar training mission of Iraqi security forces in June, after more than five years and 10 Australian and New Zealand troop rotations.

Since 2015, Australia and New Zealand trained more than 47,000 members of the Iraqi Security Forces through the joint Australia-New Zealand Building Partner Capacity Program.

Australia’s support at Taji enabled the Iraqi Security Forces to increase its capacity to deliver its own training and conduct independent operations.

New Zealand withdrew its troops from Taji in March this year, followed by the Aussies in June – all of whom had to quarantine for 14 days on home soil before being reunited with family and friends.

Minister for Defence Linda Reynolds commended the Australian Defence Force for its contribution to Task Group Taji.

“The ADF has been at the very forefront of the work at Taji,” Minister Reynold’s said.

“Last year, I saw first hand the incredible contribution our personnel made at Taji, and had the opportunity to thank them for their significant efforts.

“The substantial progress made against Daesh and the increased capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces means that our training mission at Taji has reached its logical and natural conclusion.”

Commander Joint Forces New Zealand Rear Admiral Jim Gilmour said New Zealand’s forces had also done an extremely good job since 2015 helping build the capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces to confront and defeat the threat posed by ISIS.

“New Zealand can be proud of all that our forces have accomplished.”

The Royal Australian Navy is also winding down its presence in the Middle East.

After almost 30 years of near-continuous naval patrols, the Australian government said it would not deploy another ship to the Middle East, and was not extending Australia’s commitment to the International Maritime Security Construct beyond December 2020.

Minister Reynolds said the Royal Australian Navy was currently more active in the Indo-Pacific Region



Private Sean Clinton-Morgan from the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, is currently deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan, on Operation Highroad with Force Protection Element 14. Photo by Corporal Tristan Kennedy



Private Mason Allam from the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, is currently deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan, on Operation Highroad with Force Protection Element 14. Photo by Corporal Tristan Kennedy

than it has been in decades and would now focus its assets in our own neighbourhood.

"This year alone has seen Navy respond to the bushfire and COVID-19 crises, a five-ship deployment throughout South East Asia and the Pacific, a continued commitment to initiatives under the Pacific Step Up, and several highly successful activities with our regional partners," Minister Reynolds said.

"We remain committed to implementing sanctions against North Korea until it takes clear steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation.

"Ongoing sanctions-enforcement operations, in close cooperation with our partners, are a significant contribution to international efforts to achieve permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula."

She said we now faced an increasingly challenging strategic environment which was placing greater demand on ADF resources closer to home.

"As a result, the Australian Defence Force will reduce its naval presence in the Middle East to enable more resources to be deployed in our own region."

Chief of Joint Operations Lieutenant General Greg Bilton said these were historic changes for the Australian Defence Force.

"The outstanding contribution of Royal Australian Navy ships has been highly valued by our partners in the Middle East," Lieutenant General Bilton said.

"We should all be proud of what the Royal Australian Navy has achieved over such a long period of sustained operations."

Minister Reynolds said Australia was proud of its longstanding commitment to maritime security in the Middle East.

"For more than 30 years we have supported freedom of navigation, maritime security and the free flow of commerce in the Middle East," she said.

"In cooperation with our partners, our commitments have been invaluable in disrupting the global drugs trade, supporting the reduction of funding lines to terrorism activity and building the capacity of regional forces."

HMAS Toowoomba was the last Australian ship to deploy to the Middle East under Operation Manitou, but returned to Australia in June this year.

Toowoomba's was the Royal Australian Navy's 68th deployment to the Middle East Region since 1990 and the sixth mission for that ship.

The Royal Australian Air Force was also making significant moves out of the Middle East with the former home of its air operations in the region handed over to the United States Air Force in October.

The transfer of Camp McNamara VC, which was established six years ago as a critical launch point in the fight against Da'esh, scratched a significant line in the sand for the RAAF, following what it said was the final rotation of E-7A Wedgetail and KC-30A multi-role tanker transport aircraft out of theatre a month earlier.

The aircraft had been operating in the Middle East Region as part of Australia's Air Task Group 630, performing airborne command and control and air-to-air refuelling support tasks for the international coalition in combat operations.



Australian Army soldier Corporal Fadi Jabbari photographed at the Taji Military Complex near Baghdad, Iraq, last year. Corporal Jabbari was deployed to Iraq with Task Group Taji 9 in July 2019. Fadi was born in Baghdad and this deployment was a return to his birthplace for the first time in almost 25 years. His family fled war-torn Iraq in 1995. Fadi joined the Australian Army in 2004 and this was his fifth operational deployment. Photo by Corporal Nunu Campos



FAR LEFT: HMAS Toowoomba ends a 30 year stretch of Australian naval patrols in the Middle East. Photo by Leading Seaman Richard Cordell

MAIN: Corporal Nicholas Russo, an RAAF airfield defence guard, at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul. Photo by Corporal Tristan Kennedy

Minister Reynolds said Australia was a strong and consistent contributor to the Coalition, and had been engaged since 2014 as part of our global responsibility to support peace and security operations.

"I am extremely proud of the contribution made by the Australian Defence Force as part of the Coalition to defeat Da'esh in Iraq," she said.

"Since the start of the threat posed by Da'esh to peace and stability in Iraq, the Coalition has liberated nearly 110,000 square kilometres and around 7.7 million Iraqis are free from Da'esh oppression.

"As this recent year-long deployment of RAAF aircraft comes to an end, I commend the crews, personnel and supporting Defence staff for their dedication, resilience and ongoing professionalism."

Squadron Leader Kevin Lee was the last commander of Camp McNamara VC and the detachment commander in charge of the operation to return the base to its original condition.

He said dismantling the well-established facility required detailed planning.

A 29-person team prepared about 73 tonnes of stores and equipment – from tow-motors and water trucks, to ground power units and generators – and about 20 tonnes of aircraft spare parts for return to Australia.

Squadron Leader Lee said the task was not simple.

"The dynamic nature of supporting concurrent operations while setting the condition for a retrograde operation was challenging in the initial phases," he said.

"Added to this were the intricacies of coordinating elements from across different forces coupled with limited capabilities in Camp McNamara.

"It was challenging, but my team – affectionately known as 'The A Team' – was highly motivated and took it all in their stride."

Squadron Leader Lee said the Camp McNamara site would always be a small part of Australia.

"We have built an awesome reputation as professional air power, not only with our coalition partners, but across the Middle East," he said.

"The close working relationships we fostered with our coalition allies, in particular with the United States Air Force, reinforced our reputation as a professional and trusted partner.

"As the last commander of Camp McNamara VC, I am immensely proud of what we have achieved here."

Commander of all Australian forces in the Middle East Major General Susan Coyle said the deployment of the aircraft had provided key capabilities to Coalition forces in the region.

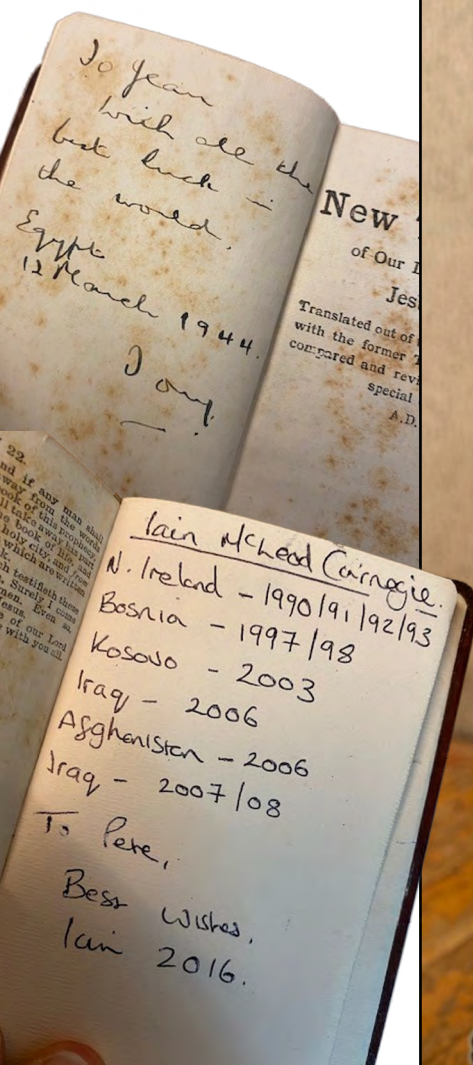
"Through the deployment of F/A-18 Hornets and F/A-18F Super Hornets to the final rotation of the E-7A Wedgetail and KC-30A tanker, Camp McNamara provided a critical hub for airborne operations," Major General Coyle said.

"We have been able to provide increased situational awareness across the battlespace and provide air-to-air refuelling to enable Coalition aircraft to continue the fight against Daesh."

But, of course, all that has ended now, with Australia's new focus on our own back yard.

The number of Australian military personnel currently stationed in the Middle East has been reduced to around 1000, with around 110 in Iraq, 80 in Afghanistan, 20 supporting the maritime mission ashore and around 600 providing support to Australian operations in the region.

Australian Army Chaplain Peter Price and a wood-covered bible that's served soldiers since WWII.



WORLD WAR WOOD

Padres keep it going

Armed with a wood-covered bible that has brought comfort to others in conflict since WWII, Chaplain Peter Price served on Operation Highroad in Kabul in 2019/20, his first operational deployment.

Chaplain Price said he was privileged to carry the bible, a gift from a fellow Padre.

"When I was back at 3 Brigade's 4 Regiment in Queensland in 2014-16, I developed a good friendship with Major Iain McLeod Carnegie, a Scotsman who had transferred from the British Army to the Australian after 28 years' service with them," Chaplain Price said.

"While in the British Army, Major Carnegie carried this bible with him on operations across the world.

"On each deployment he inscribed the location of his service, from Northern Ireland in the early '90s to Afghanistan in 2006 and Iraq 2007/08."

Major Carnegie said the pair met in 2015 when he posted to 4 Regiment, where he worked

alongside a superb Padre who was to become a good friend, Chaplain Pete Price.

"Having been hugely impressed with Pete's empathy and dedication to the regiment, I decided that my time as custodian of the bible had come to an end and that I would present it to him, so it could continue its journey around the globe."

Chaplain Price said he was blessed to be on deployment in Afghanistan so he could help those who were serving their country overseas.

"Chaplaincy is more than drinking coffee with people. Matters of the soul 'matter' and play an integral part when people are pressed with thoughts of mortality, hopelessness and despair," Chaplain Price said.

"Those who choose to serve sacrifice a lot. To be even a small part of that - to be able to assist them - is something I will always be grateful for."

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DISRUPTIVE PARTNERSHIP

PROXIMITY INITIATION

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL SCOTT HOLMES

The Australian Army is in an exciting period of change and development. New strategic guidance and a generously funded force structure plan, coupled with the demand of senior leaders for change, presents opportunities for substantial enhancements to Army's structure and capabilities. Seizing the opportunity requires innovative employment of emerging technologies grounded in real-world experience.

This article will use the example of a Semi-Autonomous Combat Team concept to illustrate how disruptive innovation is being explored and explain the important role of proximity and partnerships. These notions describe organisational and human relationships between the Army's modernisation enterprise, industry and the end users – our soldiers. They are important ideas that have a vital role in moving from discerning possible threats and opportunities to identifying, selecting and delivering novel capabilities.

Changes in military effectiveness are described in many ways. Slow changes are considered evolutionary and in general, are a normal function of efficient business practices. The ADF describes incremental improvement more generally as modernisation.

Rapid changes can be more disruptive, often prompted by the immediacy of an unforeseen crisis. Some crises will have modest long-term influences on the organisation, such as recent experiences with COVID-19 and national bushfires. Some crises will be more organisationally profound, as was the case of the East Timor intervention in 1999 or the fall of Singapore in 1942, leading to changes in the outlook, structure, equipment and tactics of the Army.

Additionally, militaries can seize opportunities to engineer discontinuous changes in military effectiveness as a deliberate process.

The most common description of such change is the Revolution in Military Affairs or 'RMA', in which new technologies are often the catalyst for subsequent developments in tactics, organisational structures and operating concepts which boost military capacity.

The Australian government's present investment in military capabilities, coupled with the willingness of senior leaders to drive change, presents a golden opportunity for the Army to increase its long-term operational effectiveness. The real challenge is converting the potential into effective military



A Ghost Robotics legged robot stands ready with Australian Army soldiers during an autonomous systems showcase at the Majura Training Area, Canberra.
Photo by Corporal Tristan Kennedy

capabilities. In this sense, capability is the sum of people, organisational processes, tactics, training and leadership – never simply the underlying technology.

Currently, there is a structural disconnect between the desire to seize opportunities offered by new technology and the processes of capability development. This is largely because management practices reflect and reinforce a mindset of modernisation through incremental (but often minor) increases in performance – rather than the pursuit of more revolutionary increases in military effectiveness.

This conservative approach has, in part, been shaped by government's reform of the Defence Materiel Organisation after a series of mismanaged high-profile procurements. While the updates to the capability lifecycle (CLC), embedded through the 2016 First Principles Review, improved oversight and management of defence materiel, it has not enabled fast and disruptive change opportunities to enter military practice. Present capability management practices are more closely aligned to modernisation than RMA forms of change, reinforcing a mindset of change through incremental increases in performance – rather than the pursuit of more revolutionary increases in military effectiveness.

This critique does not imply any unwillingness to change or a lack of leadership to do so. Quite the opposite. What is largely missing are processes and structures to empower change. While the Army's robotic and autonomous systems (RAS) strategy highlights a more radical change in direction, it does not have the organisational processes to enable change beyond incremental updates to current capability pathways.

There are however, two practical steps, or principles, we can adopt to improve the speed and scope of exploratory development and accelerate new capabilities:

- Create proximity between problem owners and potential problem solvers.
- Develop partnerships that enable multi-functional teams with diverse skills to tackle problems together.

These steps are useful because there is a gap between soldiers – the problem owners – and the potential of industry, academia and technologists to be problem solvers.

The technologies driving societal change now, and certainly into the future, include computational technologies, artificial intelligence, advanced robotics, nanotechnologies and biotechnologies. Few military practitioners have any experience or expertise in these.

In reverse, experts in these technology fields are generally not military practitioners, creating a gap between the needs of military users, and the potential of new technologies.

Proximity between the two groups is a first step towards exposing both parties to the needs of the other and enabling better understanding of opportunities to act upon. Currently, the Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG) provides

*Trooper Sam Menzies deploys a PD-100 Black Hornet nano unmanned aerial vehicle at Shoalwater Bay Training Area, Queensland.
Photo by Corporal Nunu Campos*

Army's awareness of leading-edge technologies, while the defence Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group (CASG) engages with industry to acquire such technology. Capability managers have the responsibility of sitting astride both these functions across the four phases of the CLC, however, this oversight is largely theoretical because much of the development work remains divided into specialised organisations.

The staff officers who represent the practitioner perspective necessarily struggle to maintain both a wide and deep perspective, especially when proposed technologies are new and different. Consequently, their capacity to recognise, comprehend and assess novel technologies, or novel use of technologies, is constrained. This leads to user requirements that reinforce continuity over change.

Proximity between the problem owners and the potential problem solvers can assist the development and realisation of more innovative military capabilities.

An important change that could improve capability exploration and innovation is to better connect and involve academia, industry and military practitioners in the concept- and requirements-setting phases of the CLC. Involving a more diverse group of experts allows new eyes to observe the challenges and opportunities for disruptive capability development.

Exploring military problems needs habitual not ad hoc relationships – requiring partnerships over the more common interaction of transactional exchange.

Partnerships require practitioners to be physically brought together to understand problems and identify opportunities. This is achieved through proximity. Identifying the challenges to be solved provides the structuring logic for partnerships to solve tough challenges.

As technological change accelerates, options and opportunities to apply new technologies in novel ways will similarly expand. Yet recognising and choosing between these myriad possibilities in the context of changing defence tasks and changing geopolitical circumstances will be challenging.

Enabling proximity and developing habitual partnerships is one means for supporting the rate of capability innovation demanded of the Army in Motion.

Work is presently underway to harness the potential of proximity and partnerships. The Trusted Autonomous System Defence Cooperative Research Centre (TASDCRC), the Defence Innovation Hub (DIH), DSTG and the Dismounted Combat Program (DCP) at AHQ have teamed up with the Combat Training Centre (CTC) Townsville, to create the Combat Applications Lab (CAL). CAL is a physical space where practitioners, industry, academia, DSTG and CASG engineers can collaborate. This partnership is enabled by the DCP team who manage the funding and provide broad direction for development efforts.

An example of how proximity and partnerships contribute to new capabilities in demonstrated through the case of Human-Machine Teaming



exploration – a construct that employs RAS to improve the close-combat effectiveness of a dismounted infantry platoon.

Several novel capabilities, including remotely piloted and autonomous ground and air robotic platforms, are being linked into high-capacity data networks with data analytic capabilities. This will deliver better understanding, first of the utility of these systems in close combat, and then of the opportunities that may exist to develop the concept further.

The current exploration is being driven by a tactical concept titled Semi-Autonomous Combat Team (SACT). SACT has been developed by DSTG's Joint Operational Analysis Division (JOAD) in conjunction with DCP and CTC. SACT applies machines and data as forms of mass to improve the lethality, situational awareness and tempo of close-combat land forces. In doing so, the concept requires human-machine teams to cooperate in combat.

A key change articulated in the SACT is a move away from a mindset of resource scarcity, towards a mindset of machine and data abundance.

The process of exploration is occurring in four parts;

- The conceptual framework of SACT was developed to provide sufficient guidance and analytical rigour for field and desktop simulations and experiments. The concept development phase is iterative and not static, providing an 'actionable concept' for Army to design against throughout the exploration.
- A consortium of industry partners was engaged through the DIH and TASDCRC to build prototype

materiel for CAL to employ. The materiel closely matches the SACT concepts materiel requirements to validate assumptions and introduce industry to defence practitioners and the environments under which mature technologies would be employed.

- Regular engagements (5 days per month) between industry, academic researchers and the end-users creates an iterative cycle of development and feedback to improve the effectiveness of new technologies and generate new military capabilities.
- CTC employs the SACT concept with the new equipment in live force-on-force exercises to validate findings, amend the concept and provide guidance on the utility and potential of new technologies to DCP and CASG. The findings form the basis of more disruptive military practices and the requirements for such capabilities to enter the capability-acquisition cycle.

The exploration of SACT is embryonic and will continue through to the end of 2022. Important changes in capability direction have already been identified, including new digital networking needs, the desire to limit changes in robotic hardware through common platforms with interchangeable payloads, and the use of artificial-intelligence-enabled decision-support software for tactical combatants.

These findings are a step towards the integration of RAS for close combat, but more importantly, it shows an alternate pathway to disruptive capability development built around the principles of proximity and partnership.

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HOSPITALS IN BOXES

ADF will strengthen its medical self-reliance through a \$370 million contract with Saab Australia to deliver cutting-edge, deployable, life-saving health equipment.

The first five-years of the contract will see Saab Australia enhance the ADF's clinical health-care-response capability by delivering more than 500 deployable functions enabling clinical treatment and care, up to hospitalisation, and incorporate critical support infrastructure such as shelters, internal power reticulation and waste management.

Minister for Defence Linda Reynolds said this project would deliver the most comprehensive deployable health transformation in ADF history, and would align ADF deployable health capabilities with cutting-edge international military health capabilities," she said.

"Each of the modules will provide a different health function, such as pathology, intensive care, treatment and holding, resuscitation, surgery, primary dental care, imaging and environmental health.

"The performance-based support contract with Saab will increase efficiency, reduce overheads and, most importantly, provide the ADF with flexibility to refresh health technology to meet evolving operational needs."

Minister for Defence Industry Melissa Price said Saab Australia would establish a Deployable Health Capability Support Centre in south-east Queensland, creating 50 new full-time positions throughout its supply chain.

"Saab will also grow its presence in Australia by relocating its global Deployable Health System Design and Development Centre from Europe to Australia.

"This presents new opportunities for Australian businesses to benefit from international technology transfer and improve our access to global marketplaces.



A Saab mobile medical centre setup in England.
Photos supplied by Saab Australia



BOXER First BUSH BASIS

Photo by Trooper Jonathan Goedhart

With about six new Boxer 8x8 combat reconnaissance vehicles (CRV) now delivered to the Army – from a fleet of 211 rolling out over the next six years – driver and crew training has begun.

The first Boxer conversion course was run in conjunction with the vehicle manufacturer Rheinmetall Defence Australia and the Army, modified to meet COVID-19 restrictions.

Soldiers from the 2nd/14th Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry) conducted a two-week driver conversion course and live-fire weapons shoots with the Boxer at Wide Bay and Greenbank training areas near Brisbane.

Course participant Lance Corporal Thomas Ovey said the Boxer's maneuverability had surprised him.

"We thought we'd have some trouble with the trees on bush tracks but it was just a matter of adjusting and getting used to the size," Lance Corporal Ovey said.

"Once you get a feel for the car and it all starts rolling, it's really good."

"But the best part of the training, for me, was definitely the live fire."

"The remote weapon station on top of theses Boxers is very accurate."





Up hill, down hill and even on a banked track, Boxer looks impressive.
Obstacle-course photos by Corporal Nicole Dorrett
PM photo by Corporal Nicci Freeman

Boxer 8x8 CRV – under Project LAND 400 Phase 2, Mounted Combat Reconnaissance Capability – will see 211 CRVs replace the current fleet of Australian Light Armoured Vehicles.

The first 25 vehicles will be assembled in Germany and delivered to Australia as part of the technology transfer required to familiarise Australian workers and suppliers on the specific manufacturing techniques of these vehicles – and so that crew training can commence.

The remaining vehicles will be assembled at the newly opened Rheinmetall Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence campus in Redbank, Queensland.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison inspected and officially opened the new Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence on 11 October.

The 11 hectare site is both Rheinmetall's regional headquarters and manufacturing and support site for the Land 400's Boxer Combat Reconnaissance Vehicle and Land 121's truck fleet.

Prime Minister Morrison said at the opening that the Rheinmetall facility was the "best of its class anywhere in the world".

Some of the facilities in the precinct include a vehicle test track, indoor range and a systems-integration laboratory, used to optimise the performance of in-service systems in Rheinmetall vehicles.

With six vehicles already in service, Chief of Army Lieutenant General Rick Burr said the platform, and the Australian soldiers who employ them, were the building blocks of the Army's future potent and credible land power.

"This centre will increase Defence's ability to change the size, scale and type of land forces over time, allowing us to anticipate and respond to a dynamic strategic environment," he said.

Head Armoured Vehicle Division Major General David Coghlan said Army personnel worked in the Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence during the acceptance process for the first Boxers.

"Working closely improved understanding by Rheinmetall and Army and contributed to the timely and effective acceptance of the first vehicles," Major General Coghlan said.

"Army wasn't directly involved in its setup, however, it includes allocated space for us to facilitate collaboration on the vehicles produced and supported here."

The first Boxer 8x8 CRV was formally delivered to the Commonwealth at a ceremony at Enoggera Barracks, Brisbane, on 24 September 2019, with final vehicle deliveries expected in 2026.

Rheinmetall Defence Australia will support the fleet for at least the next 30 years after that at its Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence.





Above: First driver's course. Photo by Corporal Nicole Dorrett
Below: Cowley Beach, Queensland. Photo by Lieutenant Commander Ian Stubbs

The LAND 400 Phase 2 Mounted Combat Reconnaissance Capability delivery program is valued at about \$5 billion, with through-life support over the next 30 years costing even more.

Early troop-transport versions of Boxer CRV will be equipped with a Kongsberg remote weapon system (RWS), while later vehicles will sport Australian-made EOS RWS systems.

Turreted versions will pack a 30mm cannon as well as an anti-tank guided missile system – the Rafael Spike LR.

They will also be equipped with an active protection system, but the specific system has yet to be chosen, with a feasibility study currently underway.

The vehicles will also be equipped with highly capable sensors and communications suites for the connected battlefield.

Defence Minister Linda Reynolds said Boxer would be able to undertake a range of missions from regional stability and peacekeeping through to high-threat operations, and would provide improved safety to Australian soldiers on deployment around the world.

Testing its deployability in November, a Boxer CRV was loaded aboard HMAS Adelaide and transported ashore by light landing craft to test its manoeuvrability on beach sand.

The vehicle passed the beach trials with flying colours, during Exercise Sea Wader.







TOP: A 2nd/14th Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry) crew load their Boxer CRV onto a Royal Australian Navy light landing craft.
ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT: Trying but failing to bog the Boxer on loose sand. Photos by Trooper Jonathan Goedhart.

A newly-trained vehicle crew from 2/14LHR(QMI) deployed to Cowley Beach Training Area, joining the Amphibious Task Group to put the vehicles to the test, with the Boxer CRV said to have out-performed expectations.

Officer Commanding 2/14LHR(QMI)'s A Squadron Major Ed Keating said he was excited to see the Boxer perform so well on the coastline.

"The vehicle provides a real fighting capability that's not only going to be the most capable cavalry vehicle in the world, but set the conditions for further modernisation projects," he said.

"From what we've seen, I'm confident the Boxer CRV can be deployed just about anywhere in the world.

"The way it was able to manoeuvre on the beach was impressive."

In the trials, the crew actually tried their hardest to get the vehicle bogged in loose sand, but the Boxer was able to be driven out of trouble every time without needing aids.

"It's got a lot of power and made short work of the beach, and it wasn't even being used to its maximum capability," Major Keating said.

"It's an extremely impressive and capable vehicle."

He said his unit was training enthusiastically and really liked the vehicle.

"Boxer is far more advanced and a totally different beast to its ASLAV predecessor, and our



Two photos that demonstrate Boxer's impressive size. Top, at a firepower demo in Puckapunyal and, bottom, compared to the ASLAV it replaces.
Top photo by Corporal Nunu Campos – bottom unknown.

vehicle crews are learning how to adapt their existing knowledge to it.

"It's certainly not an ASLAV. It's a completely different vehicle with different capabilities, and the crews need to learn how to use the Boxer CRV to firstly achieve what they could with the ASLAV, but then go beyond that.

"So far, the crews are extremely impressed with the Boxer multi-purpose variant, and they're quickly learning how to use it as a deployable capability."

Major Keating said he was confident in the Boxer's ability to deploy anywhere and for any reason, be it humanitarian and disaster relief as the high-risk weather season approaches, or combat operations as required by the government.

"It can lend assistance in most conditions, and it will be able to fight anywhere we are required to fight," he said.

Boxer was joined by two Hawkei protected mobility vehicle-light and two high-mobility tactical Extenda vehicles, as well as combat support and logistic elements from across the 1st Division and Forces Command at Cowley Beach for Exercise Sea Wader.

The joint Army/Navy training during Sea Wader was designed to ensure the vehicles could get ashore by day and night and in adverse weather conditions.

Operational test director for the vehicle embarkation trials Commander Tim Watson said



HMAS Adelaide crew watch the first Army Boxer come aboard their ship.
Photo by Trooper Jonathan Goedhart

the aim of the exercise was to test and evaluate the vehicles in a real-world environment.

"We are aiming to validate that the vehicles can operate in their intended conditions," Commander Watson said.

"This also provides an opportunity for Navy and Army personnel to work together and test our interoperability in a variety of conditions."

Exercise Director and Commander Landing Forces Colonel Kim Gilfillan said the land and sea trials provided the Australian Amphibious Force (AAF) with world-class projection capabilities.

"The integration of new ADF land vehicles with the Landing Helicopter Dock Adelaide provides

a step-up in our amphibious force projection capabilities and our capacity to meet the challenges of increased strategic competition," Colonel Gilfillan said.

"In addition to the integration of new capabilities, this joint training will ensure the AAF is well positioned to respond to a range of contingencies, and in particular to provide support to Australia and our regional partners ahead of the 2020-21 high-risk weather season."

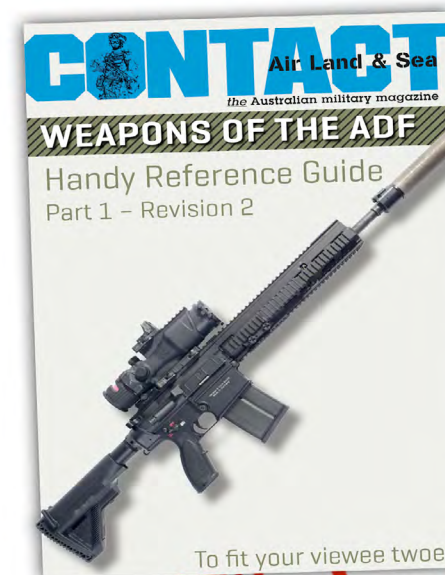
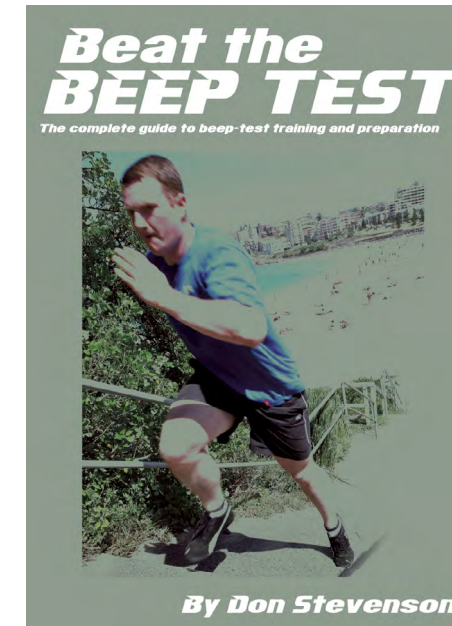
He said the relationship Army had with Navy was excellent and working with HMAS Adelaide was essential to the ADF's ability to provide safe and effective joint capabilities to the government.

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MALABAR

INDIA'S NAVAL EXERCISE

Naval ships, aircraft and personnel from Australia, India, Japan, and the United States began exercise Malabar 2020 in the Bay of Bengal on 3 November.

Hosted by the Indian Navy, this year marks the 24th iteration of Exercise Malabar, which began in 1992.

HMAS Ballarat represented the Royal Australian Navy, participating for the first time in 13 years.

The annual exercise advances the planning, integration and employment of advanced warfare tactics between participating nations.

Commanding Officer of HMAS Ballarat Commander Antony Pisani said the multinational maritime exercise was an opportunity for Ballarat to participate in a high-end maritime exercise that increased mutual understanding and enhanced combined air- and maritime-domain awareness.

"HMAS Ballarat is the first Royal Australian Navy ship to participate in Exercise Malabar since 2007," Commander Pisani said.

"It's an excellent opportunity to exercise with our partners and contribute to the security, stability and prosperity of the region."

"Going to sea and exercising together allows each navy to become accustomed with each other's procedures and capabilities, leading to greater trust and interoperability."

Commander Pisani said it had been a busy few months for the 192 men and women of HMAS Ballarat.

"We have spent the past couple of months training and preparing the ship materially so that it is ready, prepared and postured to respond to any contingency and undertake this deployment."

"Our ship has many of the best young officers and sailors in the Royal Australian Navy."

"They proved during our unit readiness work-up and evaluation that they are a highly dedicated and capable team."

"I have the utmost confidence in them."

BIG BAD JOHN

Commander Ryan T. Easterday, commanding officer of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain waves to the Royal Australian Navy Anzac-class frigate HMAS Ballarat. US Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Markus Castaneda

On her way to Exercise Malabar, HMAS Ballarat and USS John S. McCain united on the high seas and remained in company through the Malacca Strait.

Commander Pisani welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer.

"This cooperative deployment allows HMAS Ballarat to hone our warfare and mariner skills and develop our ability to operate and communicate," Commander Pisani said.

"The shared trust both navies have for each other ensures such activities are mutually beneficial, enhancing the readiness and preparedness of the ships that undertake them."

Commanding Officer USS John S. McCain Commander Ryan T. Easterday said the activity reinforced the strong bond with Australia.

"We find tremendous value in sailing with our close ally Australia, as well as our other allies and partners in support of a free, open, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region," Commander Easterday said.

"The training we are conducting while we operate together helps both ships' crews improve their mariner skills and warfighting proficiency, in

addition to the interoperability benefits we accrue by working together as a team."

Ballarat's Officer of the Watch, Lieutenant Matthew Newman, was on duty during the exercise between the two warships.

"The opportunity to exercise close manoeuvring at high speeds was a unique experience that solidified a number of core mariner skills in a real-time context," Lieutenant Newman said.

"Ballarat and John S. McCain conducted a number of turns, wheels and formations that demonstrated the capability of both vessels."

Ballarat is the sixth of eight Anzac-class frigates capable of air defence, surface and undersea warfare, surveillance, reconnaissance and interdiction.

Exercise Malabar was conducted in two phases, the second phase in the north of the Arabian Sea stepped things up several notches with the arrival of the USS Nimitz Carrier Strike Group.

Phase two included a photo exercise, night operations, air-defence exercises, helicopter cross-deck evolutions, underway replenishment approaches, gunnery exercises, antisubmarine exercises – and, of course, plenty of aircraft-carrier flight operations.



ABOVE: Lieutenant Michael Carpenter plots a course for HMAS Ballarat.

BELOW: HMAS Ballarat, Indian Navy Ship Shakti and Japanese Ship Onami conduct a Replenishment at Sea.

Photos by Leading Seaman Shane Cameron





TOP: HMAS Ballarat's ship's company watch USS Sterett, USS Princeton and USS Nimitz as the ships sail in formation on the final day of Exercise Malabar 2020. Photo by Leading Seaman Shane Cameron

ABOVE: The whole fleet. US Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jose Madrigal

Commander Pisani said phase two of the exercise provided an opportunity for Ballarat to operate with modern, leading-edge maritime capabilities.

Commodore of the US Navy's Destroyer Squadron Fifteen Captain Steven DeMoss said India, Japan, and Australia formed the core of America's strategic partners across the Indo-Pacific.

"It is fitting to see our navies operate in a high-end, tactically relevant exercise such as Malabar," Captain DeMoss said.

"It is another opportunity to further strengthen our combined capabilities and enhance our partnerships."

Minister for Defence Linda Reynolds said the imperative to cooperate closely with regional

partners on shared challenges was stronger than ever.

"Participation in sophisticated exercises such as Malabar not only highlights the strategic trust between the members, but also strengthens our collective ability to contribute to regional security," Minister Reynolds said.

"Exercise Malabar is an important opportunity to work in concert with like-minded nations to support a secure, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region."

"India and Australia are natural partners in the Indo-Pacific, and Exercise Malabar is a clear demonstration of the depth of trust and cooperation between our defence organisations."



Able Seaman Maritime Logistics - Chef Alana Yeates, Leading Seaman Combat Systems Operator, Tactical Aircraft Controller Julia Upton and Able Seaman Combat Systems Operator Chloe Freebairn on the flight deck of HMAS Ballarat. Photo by Leading Seaman Shane Cameron

The chances of three young female sailors from the same town serving on the same Navy frigate at the same time are almost as remote as the town they originate from.

Leading Seaman Julia Upton, Able Seaman Chloe Freebairn and Able Seaman Alana Yeates come from Northam, a picturesque inland town of just 6500 residents, in the Avon Valley, Western Australia.

The Northam trio were deployed on HMAS Ballarat during Exercise Malabar.

Leading Seaman Upton said sibling rivalry was the main reason she joined the navy.

"My mother threatened to send my brother to the army if he didn't pick up his grades," Leading Seaman Upton said.

"The competitive sibling spirit led my brother and I to consider navy as a career choice and our timing was spot-on because we both went through the enlistment process and recruit school together."

Her role on Ballarat is to implement the tactical employment of fixed-wing aircraft flown by the Royal Australian Air Force or our coalition partners and the ship's embarked MH-60R helicopter.

"I relay tactical information to and from the aircraft which provides navigational and emergency assistance to aircraft, and also informs

aircraft movement to other aircraft," Leading Seaman Upton said.

Able Seaman Freebairn's passion for travel resulted in her enlisting as a Royal Australian Navy gap year sailor in 2017, where she worked across all departments while posted to HMAS Stirling before completing sea time on HMA Ships Choules and Gascoyne.

"My job in Ballarat is to maintain the surface picture and use sonar to find and track submarines," Able Seaman Freebairn said.

"I enjoy participating in joint exercises and look forward to working with other nations."

Able Seaman Yeates attended Northam Senior High School, where she met the other two Ballarat sailors.

"I was interested in a navy career after looking for a job that would allow me to travel, keep active, gain qualifications and a job that was interesting," Able Seaman Yeates said.

She completed a Certificate 3 in commercial cookery and works in a dynamic team environment, planning, providing and preparing meals on the ship.

Able Seaman Yeates' father served in the Australian Army and her grandfather served in the British Army.

HMAS Ballarat. US Navy photo by
Mass Communication Specialist
2nd Class Markus Castaneda



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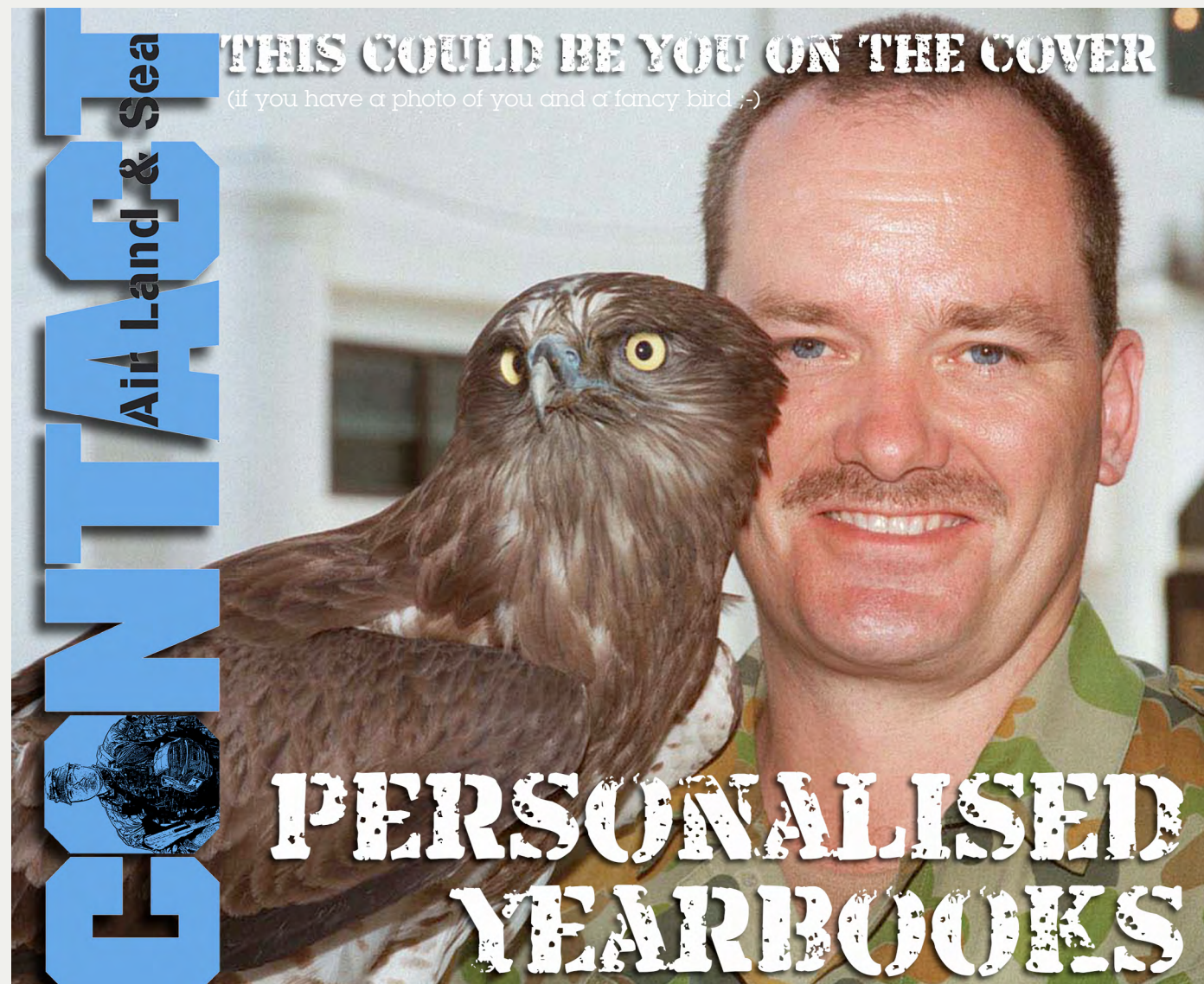
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Security brings Peace

**An extract from a speech by Minister for Defence
Linda Reynolds to a business forum in Perth, WA,
20 November 2020**

Peace brings Prosperity

“ I start with this truism – security brings peace, and peace brings prosperity. You cannot have one without the other. There is no prosperity without security – for any of us.

I came into this role, pretty well prepared, with a long career in both politics and also in the military. I came with expectations. And I came with a very clear plan.

As Defence Minister, I must have a very clear-eyed view of the world today. To see things as they are. Not as we would wish them to be.

It is very clear to me that the world I – and many of you in this room – grew up in is no more. And it is not coming back.

While we have not changed as a people, the behaviours of others in our region has.

For decades, Australia's location at the junction of the Indian and Pacific Oceans has been a strategic blessing – providing a long run of stability, of peace and also of national prosperity.

However, the stark reality for all of us is that we are now facing the most consequential strategic realignment since the end of World War Two. And our region, the Indo-Pacific, is at the epicentre of this change.

These developments in our region will not only shape Australia's future – but they will be pivotal to the course of the 21st century. We have entered a critical phase in our nation's economic and strategic history. And I say this as – not a cause for alarm – but for clear-eyed and deliberate whole-of-government and whole-of-nation action.

Here are the key regional challenges from my perspective.

Major regional powers have become more assertive. Strategic competition – primarily between the United States and China – is driving dynamics in our region. Across the Indo-Pacific, nations are modernising their militaries and accelerating their preparedness for conflict. And regional military forces are developing and adopting disruptive technologies at a faster pace than ever before.

The traditional decade-long warning period for a major conventional attack no longer applies.

Further to that, some nations are increasingly employing what we call grey-zone tactics such as cyber-attacks, foreign interference, supply chain disruption and economic coercion. These are the new ways of interfering with national sovereignty.

In this grey zone, when the screws are tightened, influence becomes interference, co-operation becomes coercion, and investment becomes entrapment.

COVID-19 also remains an active and unpredictable threat, and it has dramatically altered the global economic and strategic landscape.

As our Prime Minister recently observed: We must prepare for a post-COVID world. One that is poorer, one that is more dangerous and one that is more disorderly.

This is the reality we now face together as a nation.

My role as Defence Minister is to ensure that our defence forces are prepared for these 21st century challenges. To that end, in my second month as minister, I set Defence leadership three priorities – strategy, capability and also reform.

In July, I delivered on the strategy objective when the Prime Minister and I released Australia's 2020 Defence Strategic Update. This is a plan for Australia

to shift our defence posture in our region. Our new military objectives are far more focused. They are to shape, to deter and to respond. Firstly, to shape our strategic environment for peace and also prosperity. Secondly, to deter actions against Australia's interests. And thirdly, to be able to respond with credible military force when required.

Australia is not alone. We do this with our partners, in pursuing these three objectives to maintain a safe, a secure and also a prosperous region.

Along with the Strategic Update, the Prime Minister and I released the Force Structure Plan, which includes a record \$270 billion investment in Defence capability over the next decade. This is a nationally significant, forward-looking investment in our defence capability. Quite frankly, we are doing it because we need the defence capability. We simply must have this capability for our nation. In addition to the traditional Navy, Air Force and Army capabilities, we added the new military domains of Space and Cyber information warfare. And we underscored the need for Australian industry to be a fundamental input to defence capability.

Defence cannot do this alone. Having set the strategy and capability priorities for Defence, I will shortly be releasing the plan for my third priority – that is the reform of the Defence enterprise. It's critical that we have a strategically agile organisation to allow us to respond to our security environment and also to fulfil our ambitious military objectives. And of course, as any leader knows, as you push ahead with these big-picture changes, the work of the ADF went on.

It went on even as two 'black swan' events hit our nation. When Bushfires swept across the eastern states

last summer, the Australian Defence Force undertook the largest domestic disaster-relief operation in our nation's history. And before the last embers were extinguished, an even bigger ADF effort began to help State and territory authorities deal with the eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since becoming minister I have visited 21 countries, held more than 70 bilateral meetings and welcomed six overseas counterparts to Australia. And even as the pandemic changed the way we all live, the essential work of defence diplomacy continued, albeit virtually.

But nothing can replace face-to-face diplomatic meetings. In July, Foreign Minister Marise Payne and I were the first government ministers to embark on an official overseas trip since the pandemic began. We headed to Washington DC for the annual AUSMIN talks with our counterparts for critically important discussions and new agreements.

And last month, I visited close regional partners, Japan, Brunei and the Philippines, continuing our important regional defence cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us now turn to the strategic importance of our home state. Australia is a three-ocean nation. We all sing about our home being girt-by-sea. But this has significant implications for Australia's strategic prospects, for our planning, and for our priorities.

We are a trade-dependent island continent, and our imports and exports are almost entirely transported by sea. Think of those bulk-ore carriers from Port Hedland, or the LNG ships from the North West Shelf. They carry this nation's economic lifeblood, ferrying Western Australian commodities to the trading ports of the world.

We are in challenging and very unfamiliar times

Like most of you in this room, I grew up looking north and west – out to the Indian Ocean – not east to the Pacific – to a region which today has great significance to Australia's national security and future prosperity.

Increasingly, our focus and our partners' strategic focus is pivoting to the Indian Ocean. The US recognised the importance of the connectivity between these Indo and Pacific regions when in 2018 it changed the name of the US Pacific Command to the US Indo-Pacific Command.

We have had a very busy year this year working with our partners in the Indo-Pacific despite the threats of COVID. We conducted seven maritime activities with Japan – and activities with 11 regional partners as part of our Regional Presence Deployment. Most recently, we conducted quadrilateral engagement in Exercise Malabar. This maritime exercise – with India, Japan and the United States – highlights and reinforces our interoperability, our strategic trust and our common interest in an open, secure and prosperous region.

And India and Australia are natural partners in the Indo-Pacific. This year, as part of the Australia-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, we signed two landmark Defence arrangements. Both of these will enhance military interoperability and cooperation between our defence science and technology organisations.

Given that strategic context, let's look at what this means for WA industry and also for our State's prosperity.

Starting with the maritime domain – this government is resolutely committed to protecting Australia's maritime interests, through a sovereign naval shipbuilding program that is securing thousands of multi-generational jobs for Australian workers, predominantly in South Australia and right here in Western Australia. I am so proud of the role WA is playing in this naval shipbuilding endeavour.

But let's start with some context. When we came into government in 2013, there was no national naval shipbuilding plan – no decisions had been made on

our future submarine fleet. And so, faced with Labor's inaction on shipbuilding and sustainment, we made – and we will continue to make – nationally significant decisions to protect our nation's sovereign interests.

This government has committed to a \$183 billion dollar national naval shipbuilding enterprise. An entire industry of multi-generational, high-tech jobs created to build and sustain more than 70 naval vessels here in Australia.

In this year's Force Structure Plan, we doubled down and committed to building more than 45 navy vessels right here in WA. That alone is an investment of up to \$16 billion dollars right here in WA.

Here's a snapshot of WA shipbuilding underway at the moment – 21 Guardian-class patrol boats, built by Austal and employing more than 200 workers, with nearly 70% local content – 10 Arafura-class offshore patrol vessels, built by CIVMEC and employing more than 400 workers, with 60% local content – and six evolved Cape-class patrol boats, also built by Austal with 67% local content – and the sustainment and upgrades to our ANZAC-class frigates by BAE continues, supporting more than 200 WA jobs.

And there's more to be built here – up to eight minehunter and hydrographic vessels and possible builds for two multi-role sealift and replenishment ships and a Pacific support vessel.

This government's commitment to continuous shipbuilding and sustainment in Australia is unprecedented in its scale and in its ambition.

I have absolutely no doubt that in this room there are a few boat owners here today – maybe dreaming of an early mark and heading off to Rotto for the weekend. What all of you know is that buying a boat is one thing – but maintaining it is something completely different. It's a little more complicated when it comes to warships and submarines, but let me say this – Naval sustainment and upgrades are already big business here in WA. And it will continue to be so for many decades. Around half of Australia's surface combatant fleet and all six Collins-class submarines are homeported right here in WA.

This is good for Western Australia and it's also great for Australian shipbuilding.

Today, I am delighted to announce some new expenditure in Defence here in Western Australia. The Federal government will build a significant new defence facility right here in WA – a new \$300 million dollar defence investment. WA, I'm very proud to say, will be the home to Australia's new sovereign Maritime Underwater Tracking Range. This will allow our Navy and also our allies and partners to fine-tune our submarine and anti-submarine warfare tactics. Think of it as a giant three-dimensional underwater laboratory that helps us maintain our technical advantage over potential adversaries. The range will track vessels as they exercise and as they manoeuvre. It will create new opportunities for local research and innovation sectors to participate in the installation and also the sustainment of this new facility.

This is yet another opportunity for WA businesses and WA's brightest minds to make sovereign contributions to our nation's defence.

The increasing strategic importance of WA is also bringing economic benefits to our State. Under the Force Structure Plan, the Morrison Government has committed \$2.5 billion to upgrade Defence facilities right across our State. These include Irwin Barracks in Karrakatta, RAAF Base Curtin near Derby, RAAF Base Pearce in Bullsbrook, Yampi Sound Training Area in the Kimberley, HMAS Stirling at Garden Island, Campbell Barracks in Swanbourne, and Defence Establishment Harold E Holt and RAAF Base Learmonth in Exmouth.

The C-band radar and the space surveillance telescope in Exmouth are both central to our space-domain awareness with the United States.

While in Exmouth in July, I announced a further \$87 million boost to our vital Defence space facilities.

And of course, nobody in Western Australia should ever overlook or forget that we have 7800 Defence personnel – and their families – who are based right here in WA and contribute to the local economies right around our State.

But shipbuilding and space are not the only areas where WA makes a significant contribution to our national security. As a Senator for WA, I have long advocated for the critical minerals industry, so important for devices that drive our lives today.

And now as Minister for Defence, my advocacy has a new impetus because of the many uses of critical minerals and rare elements in high-end technologies, including in defence technology. For example each F-35 Joint Strike Fighter contains 417 kilograms of rare earths. And, as many in this room know, many of these critical minerals have very, very vulnerable supply chains globally. So I am working hard with international partners to build this industry here in Australia, and bolster the security of those assets we need both for our daily lives, but also for our defence capabilities.

Ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion. We are in challenging and very unfamiliar times. Conventions and norms are being tested, our strategic environment is changing rapidly, the COVID-19 pandemic has called on all of us to be creative, agile and practical – all at once – while navigating the unknown and moving quickly. Opportunities have arisen in the midst of massive disruption and difficulty.

This is the message I want to leave you with today. To equip our Defence Force with the capability needed to protect Australia's security interests into what is an increasingly uncertain future, the Morrison Government is investing billions of dollars in defence across the nation and here in Western Australia.

You have an unprecedented opportunity in your own enterprises and your own pursuits to seize this moment and benefit from this investment, not just in WA, but in projects right across our nation.

And if you do, you will be contributing to Australia's strategic, economic and sovereign interests. West Australians have a long, proud history of success through innovation and entrepreneurship. Our time has come once again – because the business of Defence is very good for WA businesses, and it's great for the State of Western Australia.



Back For More

PRIVATE AMBROSE MONTANA 14TH BATTALION AIF

Nineteen-year-old Ambrose Montana enlisted in the AIF on 1 October 1914 and given the regimental number 99¹. A Victorian, he was allocated to the 14th Battalion of the 4th Brigade. A surveyor by trade¹, he was apt at fending for himself in inhospitable Victorian terrain as he surveyed the land for roads and railways.

The battalion joined its sister units in the AIF training camp at Broadmeadows² and the men soon settled down to the rigours of military life.

Training was hard but with purpose – the soldiers bonding in a common goal, to get overseas and to get into action before it was all over.

To a man, their chests swelled as the battalion marched through the streets of the seaside suburb of St Kilda. Citizens of the city had contributed to a fund to present the battalion with its own King's and Regimental Colours² and turned out to admire the silk fluttering proudly in salute as the men marched by.

On 22 December 1914, 14 Battalion entrained for Port Melbourne. With bands playing stirring renditions of 'Australia Will Be There' and the 14th's regimental march 'Suwannee River', the diggers boarded the troopship Ulysses². Ambrose Montana waved goodbye to his mother, Jean, noticing the lower part of her face shrouded in lace hankie, as she did her best to hide her tears. 'Don't forget to write,' he yelled as the ship pulled away from the quay. As the Ulysses made its way down Port Phillip Bay, Ambrose thought of distant lands and the adventure that lay ahead.

As he disembarked in Alexandria, Ambrose encountered the strange, fascinating mysteries of Egypt. "Wacko, this will do me!" he thought to himself as the battalion was shunted to Aerodrome Camp at Heliopolis, on the outskirts of Cairo.

They quickly settled down to a rigid training schedule. Weapons, first aid, and long route marches into the desert soon honed the men into a tight, efficient and somewhat cocky unit.

In off duty hours, it was a different story. The streets and watering holes of Cairo offered temptations not normally experienced at home. Montana and his mates would sortie from bar to bar, their arms laden with souvenirs for home. Arab girls with promiscuous virtues would ply their business, from the balconies of the Wazzir's "for a few bob a go".

On 11 April 1915, the battalion received orders to break camp and entrain for Alexandria, where the battalion boarded the S.S. Seang Choon², a filthy 5000-ton Rangoon trader, which was home to every type of vermin known to man. 'Get out of it you bastard!' Ambrose yelled as he threw his boot at a bilge rat trying to gnaw its way into his pack.

On 15 April, the ship pulled into Lemnos Harbour where it was surrounded by vessels of every size and shape – from the largest battleships to tiny pilot boats. The battalion sorted itself out for battle, and an amphibious action. Ambrose looked over the side of the ship as he waited his turn on the suspended cargo net that would lead to the landing boat, 40 feet below. He was glad this was still only a practice run.

Religious services were held as the Seang Choon slipped out of harbour and, for young Montana, the thought of what may lay ahead now took on a stark, frightening reality.

It was pre-dawn of Sunday 25 April when the engines of the Seang Choon slowed to a stop. The ship lay two miles from a blackened shore line, the name of which, would forever be etched in the annals of Australian history – Gallipoli. The 14th was due to go ashore once a beachhead was secured. As the diggers lined the rail, they watched as their mates in the assault force climbed down the nets of their ships to the waiting whale boats.

Suddenly, the rattle of rifle fire and the rumble of gunfire could be heard from the distant shore. Soldiers clambered high into the rigging, straining to catch a glimpse of what was happening ashore.

JUST SOLDIERS

BY MAJOR DARRYL KELLY



Private Ambrose Montana. AWM HO1614

The diggers held their ground as the German troops slowly encircled them. "I need ammo," one cried. "I'm out too." "So am I," "Me too." Came the chorus of despair. "Right, fix bayonets!" the corporal ordered.

Later that day, it was found that the issue ashore was in doubt. The CO of the 14th received orders to send two platoons ashore to prepare for the battalion's arrival the next morning. "Numbers 2 and 3 Platoons, grab your kit and move to your disembarkation points now!", the major ordered.

As Ambrose Montana took his place on the lighter³, he glanced down and noticed the deck awash with blood. "God this is it", he thought.

When the men landed on the beach, it was like a scene gone mad. Dead and wounded lay everywhere, stretcher-bearers struggling to provide aid to the injured as the dressing stations filled to overflowing. The platoons were sent north along the beach, with orders to plug the gap at the base of the gully, dig-in and hold. Retirement was not an option as there was nothing between themselves and the makeshift Divisional HQ on the beach.

Ambrose Montana spent a nerve-wracked night staring into the darkness, challenging every movement, shadow and sound. Sometimes he would hear the familiar sound of an Aussie voice, at others his challenge was answered by a shout from a Turkish Mauser. It would be 48 hours before the men would marry up with the remainder of the battalion.

The 14th took its place in the line. Names such as Steele's, Quinn's and Courtney's Post were soon etched in the battalions history of blood and fire.

On 8 August 1915 the battalion was locked in battle near Kaiajik Dere. As the Turks swarmed towards the post, Ambrose Montana jammed clip after clip of ammunition into his rifle. Suddenly a

burning pain, like nothing he'd ever experienced before, emanated from his shoulder as he was thrust against the rear of the trench.

The call went out – "stretcher-bearer, stretcher-bearer" As the attendant reached the scene he ripped open a shell dressing and tied it round Montana's shoulder. "Take it easy mate. Can you make to the beach?" the soldier asked. "Yeah course I can, just help me up", the young digger replied.

The doctor looked at the wound. The bullet had penetrated Montana's left shoulder and stopped just short of emerging through his back. "We're going to have to evacuate you private", the doctor said as he bound the wound with a fresh dressing. "Make your way to the pier".

Montana was evacuated firstly to Lemnos and then to the base hospital at Heliopolis¹, where he underwent surgery to remove the bullet. As he slowly came out of the anaesthetic, he felt for his left side and sighed with relief when he found he still had his arm. As the doctor made his rounds, Ambrose asked the fatalful question, "When will I be fit enough to get back to ANZAC Doc?" "Sorry, Private Montana, you're not returning to the front. We're sending you back to Australia."

As he stood at the railing of the hospital ship and watched the endless sea rush past the bow, he thought of his mates still locked in combat against the Turks. "I feel like a bloody dingo, skulking away like this," he thought to himself.

As 1915 spluttered to a close, Ambrose Montana read of the withdrawal from Gallipoli and his mind drifted back to mates forever to remain at ANZAC.



Page 132 from "The War of the Nations : Portfolio in Rotogravure Etchings: Compiled from the Mid-Week Pictorial" (New York: New York Times, Co., 1919).
Library of Congress, Serials and Government Publications Division, Washington, D.C. 20540
– via Wikimedia



Through 1916, he followed the actions of his old battalion and its pup battalion, the 46th 4. Battles such as Pozieres and Mouquet Farm, in France and those around the strategic Belgian town of Ypres, were hard fought and the casualty lists were lengthy, contained the names of so many good mates now lost forever.

As Ambrose sat in the medical officer's rooms, the doctor examined the young private's damaged shoulder. Moving it in a circular motion he asked, "How does that feel?" "It's good sir, no real pain at all", Montana lied through clenched teeth.

As he re-buttoned his tunic, Ambrose summoned the courage to ask the fateful question. "Can I go back over sir?" The doctor paused and, grinning, looked over his spectacles and said, "Yes Private Montana you're fit to go. But God knows why you're so bloody eager!"

On 7 September 1916, Ambrose Montana embarked with the 20th reinforcement draft bound for his old battalion. Following a period of induction training in England, he was able to marry up with the battalion just before Christmas and enjoyed a spot of local leave in the nearby village. The only problem was that it might have been a little too good, as 10 days later, he was admitted to hospital with a dose of gonorrhoea¹.

April 1917 and the Australians found the front line shrouded in a deathly silence. As patrols edged closer and closer to the German trenches, they encountered no resistance. Ever so cautiously one digger peered over the parapet and found the enemy trenches empty.

The diggers moved forward and occupied the vacant positions. Aerial observation found that the Germans had withdrawn to deep, pre-constructed fortifications dubbed – The Hindenburg Line.

Allied probes were made along the line in a vain

attempt to find a weak spot – but found none. What faced the Aussies was belt upon belt of barbed wire – some more than 100m deep and each belt a maze of dead ends, with the deadly strands supported by large pine logs. Covering the wire were thick concrete pillboxes, each bristling with machine guns. To top it off, the Germans had a massive amount of artillery in support – the icing on the cake.

Allied top brass decided to attack. Not a normal attack though, it was to be a surprise. This time there would be no pre-emptive artillery barrage. The attacking force would be infantry and tanks, focusing on the fortified village of Bullecourt.

At 0300hrs on 11 April, the men of the 14th Battalion crawled across no-man's land, towards the jumping-off tape⁶. As they lay there waiting for word to go, snow began to fall, laying a soft white blanket over the shivering men. A slow rumble could be heard from behind them as the tanks edged toward the front line. As the tanks moved through the troops, the soldiers were given the signal to move forward. Suddenly the deathly whistle of incoming German artillery could be heard.

"Move forward, at the double," the officers called. "But we'll be in front of the tanks," Montana replied. "Better than being dead, mate," the nearby sergeant said.

The soldiers began to hit the wire and started to head up passage ways and gaps. Many ended in dead ends or additional passageways, leading off in alternate directions. Troops following added to the confusion, as they created bottlenecks with troops trying to turn back from blocked avenues. Then the sound of incoming enemy artillery, signalled an airborne shrapnel attack, with deadly pellets raining down on the confused troops.

The diggers began hacking at the wire with cutters and bayonets in a vain attempt to get through.

Suddenly, they were on the first enemy trench and jumped in to take on the Germans face to face. As the bayonet men pushed the defenders back, other diggers commenced fumigating the dugouts with grenades. As one trench was cleared, it was on to the next.

"Sarge, I'm getting low on ammo", Montana yelled. "So am I another called". "Get what you can from our dead and wounded and keep at it. The bastards are moving up on our flanks," replied the sergeant.

As the second wave of the 14th swept through, the initial wave ran headlong into the first of the pillboxes. "Pull back, pull back" came the cry. But now they were cut off and needed to throw up a hasty defence, hopeful that the tanks would be able to break through and relieve the situation. The only problem was that the tanks were either bogged, broken or burning. The diggers were on their own.

The beleaguered troops held out for as long as they could, but now their ammunition was all but expended and the enemy were closing in on both sides. "Right you blokes, fix bayonets," the corporal ordered. "We're going to try and hold out till dark,

then make a run for it back to our own lines." "Easier said than done," Montana whispered to himself.

A shower of grenades smothered the diggers, followed by a torrent of machine-gun fire. "Right we've got no choice. Bury your rifle bolts, Blue, smash up the Lewis gun as best you can. It looks like we're done for," the lance corporal said.

The Germans moved forward, keeping the diggers covered with their rifles. "Up, up," the Hun syelled in broken English, as the diggers struggled to their feet. The Germans now swarmed in, stripping webbing and equipment from their prisoners. One German grabbed Montana and started to rat through his pockets, taking his small wad of French Francs. Another digger showed some defiance to being searched, but a rifle butt to the back of the head dropped him to his knees.

"Raus, Raus," the German sergeant yelled. The diggers were shunted towards the rear to join hundreds of other Aussies who had fallen into German hands. Long lines of prisoners were marched through the villages and, if they slowed or stumbled, received a rifle butt or a prod with a bayonet to get them moving again⁷.

Montana and the others were taken to Fort McDonald near the town of Lille, where about 120 of them were thrown into a dingy, damp room with



a tiled floor. Toilet facilities were non-existent and the food was not fit for pigs, but the diggers were confined to the room for the next seven days.

Once released from the cell, they were forced to work on enemy gun pits and ammunition dumps, all the time with their own artillery shells bursting around them. The troops knew they should not be retained so close to the front lines but learnt it was in reprisal for German prisoners being forced to work under similar conditions behind allied lines.

On one occasion the scream of incoming shells sent Montana and his mates diving for cover. As the smoke cleared, they noticed that two German guns had been put out of action. Giving a cheer, resulted in Montana getting a rifle butt between the shoulder blades from a nearby guard.

In late June, both sides came to their senses and the prisoners were moved 30kms to the rear⁷.

Ambrose Montana was sent to work on a farm for a couple of months in the St Amand region. Here he enjoyed the first decent treatment in months. Via the Red Cross, he was able to send a cable to his cousin Juan, serving in 2nd Battalion. It read – "Would you kindly cable to mum and let her know that I am alright and getting on quite well"⁸.

But all good things come to an end and he was moved to the Bouchain area, where his treatment deteriorated under the brutal regime of German guards. Continued poor rations saw the men's health plummet to an all-time low. Many broke out in sores and painful boils that had no way of healing because of the lack of vitamins. For Ambrose, the situation was even more serious, as he developed a huge abscess in his stomach, which, if it burst, would likely prove fatal. He was precluded from the strenuous work details but this meant he was subject to 'special treatment' from the worst of the guards. In October 1917, he was moved to a hospital in Mons where he remained for the next 12 months.

In the first week of November 1918, the patients were rousted from their beds and told to get ready to leave. The guards were extremely agitated as they forced the prisoners into ranks. "We go the Germany!" the head guard ordered.

The prisoners were driven relentlessly east. Those who collapsed or fell out of rank were carried by stronger mates intent on leaving no man behind.

During a brief overnight stop in a village, the guards, obviously distressed, argued. A digger leaned over to Montana and said – "I can't pick up everything their saying, but I think the war is over!" It was 11 November 1918⁹.

In later confusion, Ambrose wanted to take every opportunity to secure his freedom. First, he made his way to Brussels, arriving just in time to see the allied army enter the city. He was then able to secure a billet with a kindly Belgian family, who slowly nursed him back to moderate health.

On 26 November he was transported to Calais, then across the channel to Dover. Here Montana entered No1 Rest Camp (Dover), where he had a special visitor – his cousin Juan, who had just returned from front-line duty in France⁹. Following the normal greetings, Juan said, "Well mate, you certainly had your mum worried!"

Ambrose Montana returned to Australia on 21 March 21 1919 and was discharged on 29 June. The proud digger, like so many others, drifted into obscurity – no fanfare, no fame, just one unshakeable belief – their duty done.

NOTES:

1. National Archives of Australia: B2445, WWI Service Records, 99, Montana, Ambrose
2. The History of the Fourteenth Battalion AIF, Newton Wanliss, The Arrow Printery, Melbourne, 1929
3. A lighter is a type of flat-bottomed barge used to transfer goods and passengers to and from moored ships
4. In March 1916, the 16 original battalions of the 1st Division were split (augmented by reinforcements from Australia) to form 16 additional battalions to round out new 4th and 5th Divisions
5. AWM 8 23/31/4 - 14 Infantry Battalion - 13 to 23 Reinforcements (December 1915 - November 1916)
6. A marshalling aid between opposing trenches
7. AWM30 - Prisoner of War Statements 1914-1918 War - 99 PTE Ambrose Montana, 14th Battalion AIF
8. 1 DRL/0428 Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau Files 1914-18 War - 99 PTE Ambrose Montana, 14th Battalion
9. National Archives of Australia: B2445, WWI Service Records, 2077, Montana, Juan

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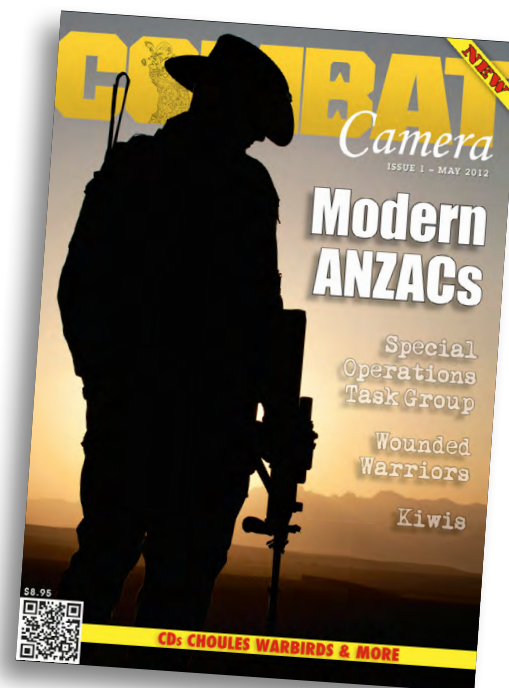
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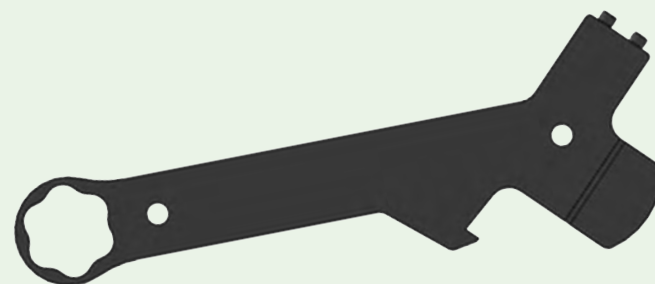
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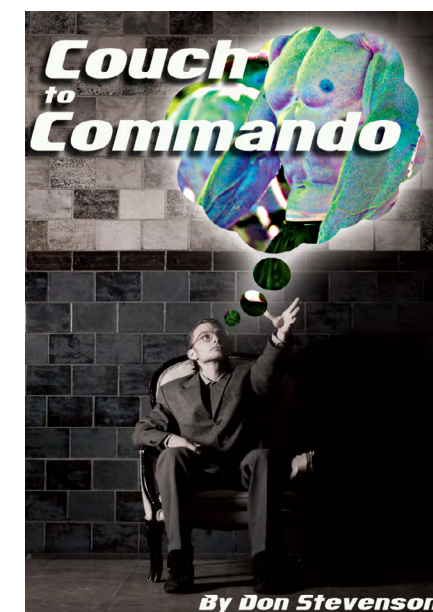
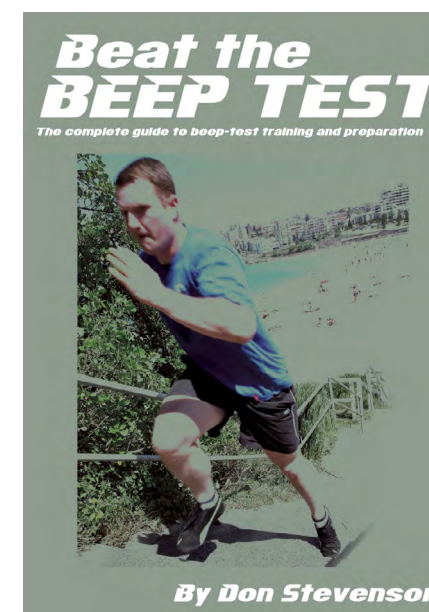
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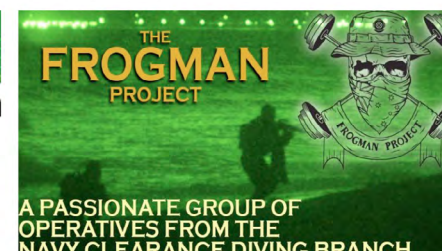
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