

ISSUE 73

CONTACT

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MARCH 2022

the Australian military magazine



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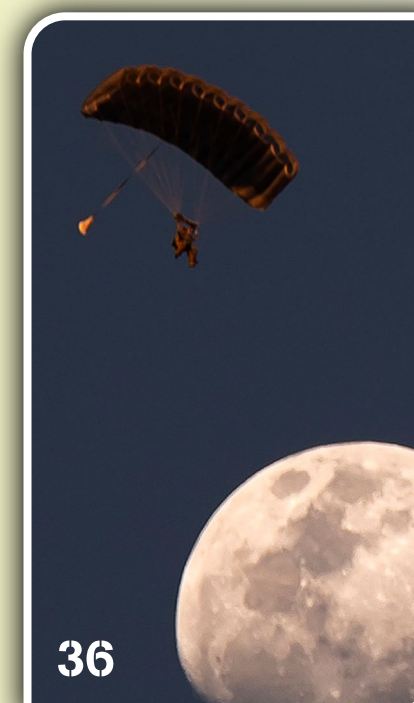


CONTENTS

ISSUE 73 – MARCH 2022



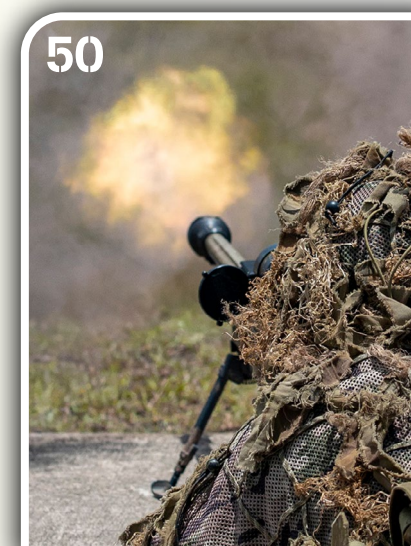
20



36



64



50



56

- 10** The Big Picture
F-35A top shot
- 12** Heads Up
- 16** Big Picture 2
New Blood
- 20** **Op Tonga Assist 2022**
Neighbour in distress
- 36** BEST OF
ADF Imagery 2021
- 48** Fully Delivered
Pilot Training System
- 50** **HONED**
Lethal Accuracy
- 52** Tropical Ice
Kiwi globe trotter
- 56** Déjà vu
Streets of Honiara
- 64** Aged-Care Callout
- 72** Just Soldiers
- 80** Out with a bang
Pacific Defender

Find, like, share at [f](#) [t](#) [p](#) [y](#) [i](#) [w](#) and [e](#)



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Issue 73 – March 2022

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**GRAR
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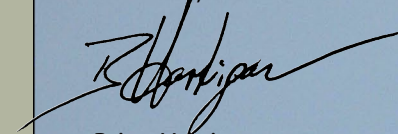
Photo by Corporal
Nicole Dorrett

Starts page 50

In a classic case of "be careful what you wish for," a bunch of people asked why there wasn't a photo of yours truly participating in the [Veteran Surf Project story](#) in the last issue. Well, here it is. You're welcome ;-)

Photo by Billy Miller

Sincerely,



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TOP SHOT



US Air Force Major Kristin Wolfe, F-35A Lightning II Demonstration Team pilot and commander, performs a high-speed pass at the California International Air Show, Salinas, California in October last year. The F-35A Demo Team performed alongside the U.S. Navy's F-35C Demonstration Team, showcasing two different variants of the 5th-generation fighter aircraft. This US Air Force photo by Captain Kip Sumner won the 2021 F-35 Lightning II Joint Program Office's best F-35 photo of the year, with nearly 50 per cent of all the social-media votes cast by the public.

M1A2 SEPv3



A US Army 1st Cavalry Division Abrams M1A2 SEPv3 sends its first round down range at Fort Hood, Texas.
US DoD photo by Sergeant Calab Franklin.

Defence Minister Peter Dutton has announced \$3.5 billion for the Main Battle Tank Upgrade (LAND 907 Phase 2) and Combat Engineering Vehicle (LAND 8160 Phase 1) projects.

Army will receive up to 75 M1A2 SEPv3 Abrams tanks, 29 M1150 assault breacher vehicles, 17 M1074 joint assault bridge vehicles and an additional six M88A2 armoured recovery vehicles.

Minister Dutton said the M1A2 SEPv3 Abrams would provide critical protection and firepower in land ops.

"Teamed with the infantry fighting vehicles, combat engineering vehicles and self-propelled howitzers, the new Abrams will give our soldiers the best possibility of success and protection," Minister Dutton said.

"The M1A2 Abrams will incorporate the latest developments in Australian sovereign defence capabilities, including command, control, communications, computers and intelligence systems, and benefit from the intended manufacture of tank ammunition in Australia.

"Introduction of the new M1A2 vehicles will take advantage of existing support infrastructure."

Chief of Army Lieutenant General Rick Burr said tanks and combat engineering vehicles were essential to Australia's ability to credibly contribute to a land-combat capability integrated with joint and coalition forces.

"The main battle tank is at the core of the ADF's combined-arms fighting system, which includes infantry, artillery, communications, engineers, attack helicopters and logistics," Lieutenant General Burr said.

"This system is the only part of the ADF that can successfully operate in medium to high-threat land environments.

"The M1A2 SEPv3 Abrams protection, accurate and lethal fire, mobility and situational awareness cannot be delivered by any other platform.

"There are no other current or emerging technologies – or combination of technologies – that can yet deliver the capability currently provided by a main battle tank."

The first vehicles will be delivered to Australia in 2024, with both projects expected to achieve Initial Operating Capability in 2025.

C-130 MILESTONE



File photo by Brian Hartigan

The Royal Australian Air Force has surpassed 850,000 flying hours with all models of C-130 Hercules transport aircraft.

The milestone was achieved on January 21 by a No. 37 Squadron crew flying a C-130J from RAAF Base Richmond to Amberley.

Since 1958, generations of RAAF aviators flying four different variants of the Hercules have provided airlift support to Defence.

The aircraft that flew the 850,000th hour – serial A97-467 – is one of 12 C-130J Hercules currently operated by RAAF from its base at Richmond since 1999.

Throughout those 850,000 hours – the equivalent of more than 97 years airborne – RAAF aviators have flown Hercules missions to every continent, including Antarctica.

Fleet-type flying hours:

- 12 C-130A (1958 to 1978) – 148,063.6
- 12 C-130E (1966 to 2000) – 307,007.9
- 12 C-130H (1978 to 2012) – 244,618.4
- 12 C-130J (1999 to 21/1/22) – 150,310.1

PRIVATE PILOTS

Soldiers from across the British Army can now apply to become a helicopter pilot.

The minimum rank to become a British Army pilot was recently lowered to allow privates with a recommendation for promotion to lance corporal to begin their transition to a flying career.

The previous minimum was lance corporal with a recommendation for promotion to corporal.

If they qualify, they will be promoted to sergeant and deployed to front-line units, usually flying either Apache or Hellcat helicopters in places like Oman for desert flying, Norway for Arctic conditions or off HMS Queen Elizabeth or HMS Prince of Wales aircraft carriers.

In Australia, all pilots are officers.

HUNTSMAN

A \$1 billion contract has formally been signed with Hanwha Defense Australia for new self-propelled Howitzers and armoured ammunition resupply vehicles for the Australian Army under Project LAND 8116 Phase 1.

Minister for Defence Peter Dutton said initial contract covered 30 self-propelled Howitzers, 15 armoured ammunition resupply vehicles, and weapon-locating radars that would help find enemy artillery – collectively referred to as the Huntsman family of vehicles.

"The prime ability of the new vehicles is to fire and move quickly, avoiding enemy counter-attack," Minister Dutton said.

"This project will mean a significant increase in the level of firepower and security for Australian artillery capability.

Hanwha has since committed to building a new state-of-the-art armoured vehicle centre of excellence to be established at Avalon Airport near Geelong, Victoria.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the partnership with Hanwha to create the armoured vehicle centre of excellence would establish a further strategic defence industry hub and future export opportunities for Australian businesses.

Design work on the \$170 million facility – which will be built on 20

Image courtesy of Hanwha



acres leased from Linfox – is in final stages with a builder expected to be contracted later this year.

The new facility will include multiple assembly lines in 32,000sqm of buildings, plus a 1500m test track, a deep-water test facility and a vehicle obstacle course.

SIRIUS GONE

The Royal Australian Navy support ship that holds the record for Navy's biggest fuel replenishment at sea has been decommissioned at Fleet Base West in Western Australia.

Since commissioning in 2006, HMAS Sirius conducted more than 770 replenishments at sea and sailed almost 900,000km.

She was farewelled mid December at a traditional ceremony in Perth, and will be broken up for scrap.

NEW B/HAWKS

The day before the Australian Army held a gala ball to formally farewell its last six Black Hawk helicopters, Defence Minister Peter Dutton flew in to Victoria Barracks Sydney – on a Black Hawk helicopter – to announce that Australia was dumping the Black Hawk replacement in favour of new Black Hawks.

Minister Dutton told gathered media that Australia's fleet of Eurocopter MRH-90 Taipan helicopters would be retired about 10 years earlier than planned and would be replaced by

about 40 new-model MH-60 Black Hawks.

MRH-90 has been on the projects of concern list for nearly 10 years.

KABUL EVAC MEDAL

Her Majesty The Queen had given permission for a special medal to be awarded to all members of the British Armed Forces who deployed in August 2021 to support the evacuation from Kabul.

Qualifying Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force personnel will receive the Operational Service Medal (OSM) Afghanistan, with distinctive clasp, for their involvement in Operation Pitting – an evacuation effort to airlift thousands of Afghans and British nationals from Afghanistan as the Taliban seized control of the country.

FEMALE ADMIRAL

A centuries-old 'glass ceiling' in the UK was shattered recently as Jude Terry became the first female admiral in the history of the Royal Navy.

After nearly 25 years' service at home in the UK

and around the globe, the 48-year-old from Jersey took the helm as Director of People and Training and Naval Secretary – making her responsible for more than 40,000 regular and reserve sailors and Royal Marines, as well as the Royal Fleet Auxiliary – who operate the Navy's support ships – plus civil servants and contractors.

WA COLOURS

As the Pilbara Regiment approached its 40th birthday, members came together from all across its more than 1.3 million square kilometre area of operations – driving, in some cases more than six hours, or flying for two – for a parade to receive its Queen's and Regimental Colours.

The Pilbara Regiment was raised on 26 January 1982 and is one of three regiments that make up the Regional Force Surveillance Group, with Norforce and 51st Far North Queensland Regiment.

Governor of Western Australia Kim Beazley was among many distinguished guests to witness the historic event.

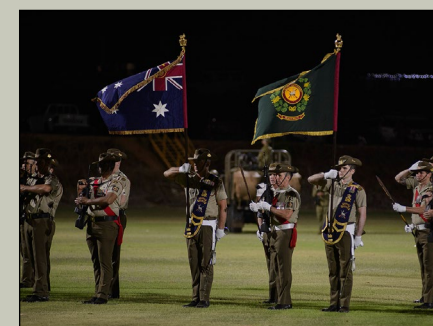


Photo by Sergeant Gary Dixon

INVICTUS AUSTRALIA

Australia has achieved a world first with the launch of Invictus Australia, to deliver sports-recovery programs and services to improve the health and wellbeing of military veterans and their families, through sport.

Launched on the third anniversary of Invictus Games Sydney – Invictus Australia is a legacy of those games.

Previously known as Veteran Sport Australia, Invictus Australia has secured an agreement to continue using the Invictus brand.

HEADS UP



ARAFURA LAUNCHED

In a major milestone for the Royal Australian Navy, the first of 12 new Arafura-class offshore patrol vessels was officially launched in South Australia on 16 December 2021.

Ship's sponsor Nova Peris smashed a bottle of water from the Arafura Sea on the bow instead of champagne and named the vessel Arafura.

Traditionally, ships sponsors bestow good luck and protection over the vessel and all who sail on her, and maintain an ongoing relationship with the vessel.

Nova Peris – the first Aboriginal Australian to win an Olympic gold medal and first Aboriginal woman elected to Federal Parliament – is descendant from West Arnhem Land and a very proud representative of northern Australia, where the ship will largely operate.

NUSHIP Arafura is the first of 12 Arafura-class offshore patrol vessels to be built for the Royal Australian Navy and, when accepted into service, will replace the Armidale class of boats.

HOMEMADE BOMBS

Sovereign sustainability has taken a leap forward, with No. 81 Wing accepting and successfully expending the first Australian-manufactured BLU-111(AUS)B/B.

The 500lb high-explosive warhead was configured by No. 3 Squadron armament technicians at RAAF Base Williamtown as a Paveway II laser-guided bomb before being loaded onto an F-35A Lightning II for a training sortie.

The BLU-111(AUS)B/B is designed as a direct replacement for the older-generation Mk82 500lb warheads, delivering comparable performance while improving safety characteristics.

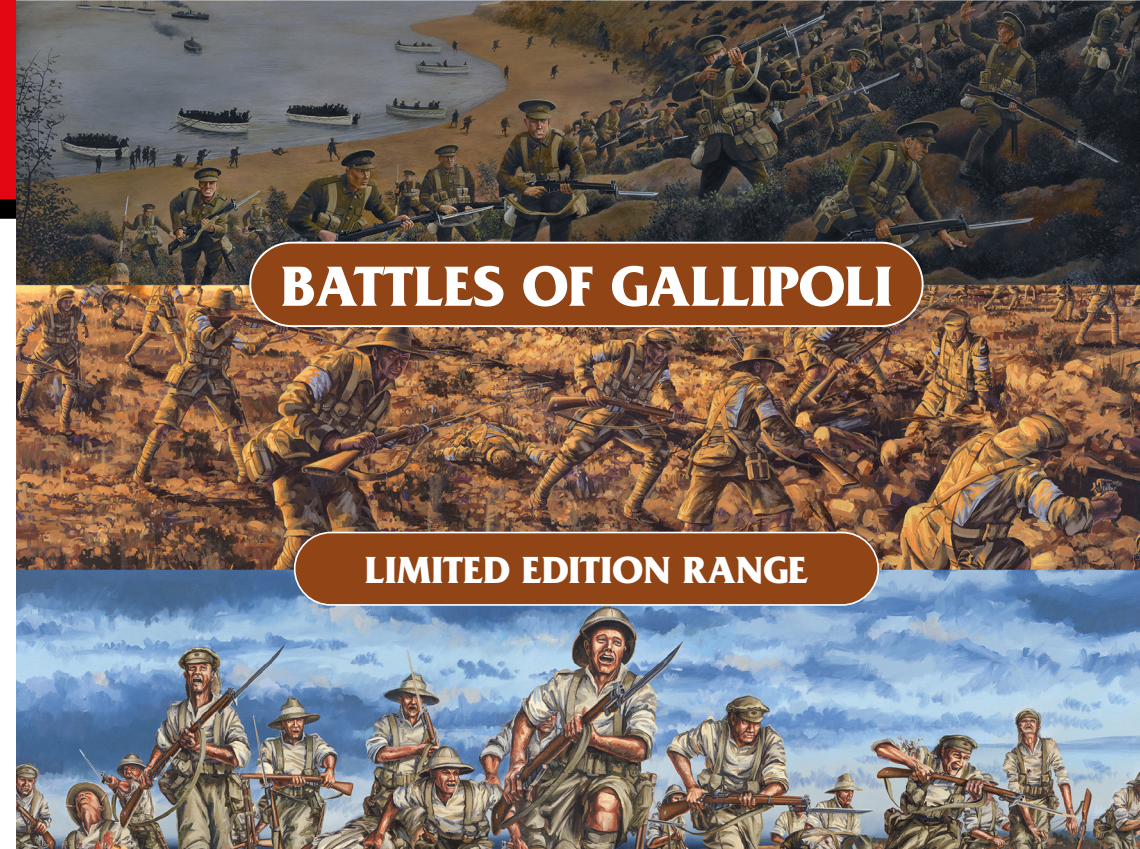
AIR6000 Weapons Project engineering manager Squadron Leader Ryan Kell said once fully introduced into service, the BLU-111(AUS)B/B would be used as the go-to 500lb high-explosive warhead for the RAAF during operations and training exercises.

"The BLU-111(AUS)B/B is intended for use in both Paveway II laser-guided bombs and the Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) family of guided bombs," he said.

"Development and production of the BLU-111(AUS)B/B is an ongoing collaboration between the United States government, Australia's Department of Defence and Australian industry, specifically the manufacturer, Australian Munitions."



Photo by Corporal Craig Barrett



BATTLES OF GALLIPOLI

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NEARLY DECISION TIME



Hanwha Redback, left, and Rheinmetall KF-41 Lynx. Photo by Able Seaman Benjamin Ricketts.

The risk mitigation activity for Project LAND 400 Phase 3 Infantry Fighting Vehicles has concluded and is scheduled to be considered by government for final selection this year.

The final tick in the box for the gruelling trials saw the two vehicles under consideration undergo sea transportability trials on Sydney Harbour in December.

These trials for the Hanwha Defense Australia's Redback and Rheinmetall Defence Australia's KF-41 Lynx marked the end of the extensive test and evaluation program undertaken as part of the two-year risk mitigation activity

under the LAND 400 Phase 3 project, which will ultimately cost up to \$27 billion.

The vehicles were tested on their interoperability with a wide range of naval assets at HMAS Penguin and Garden Island naval bases, including various Navy landing craft and major ships including HMAS Choules and HMAS Adelaide.

Defence tested the ability of the vehicles to operate on and off the landing craft and ships, including transfers between ships.

LAND 400 Phase 3 is the largest acquisition in the history of the Australian Army.

NEW BLOOD



Australian Defence Force Academy midshipmen and officer cadets during the 2022 Chief of Defence Force parade in Canberra on 19 February 2022. The parade is an official welcome to the academy for this year's intake, who recently completed their initial military training.



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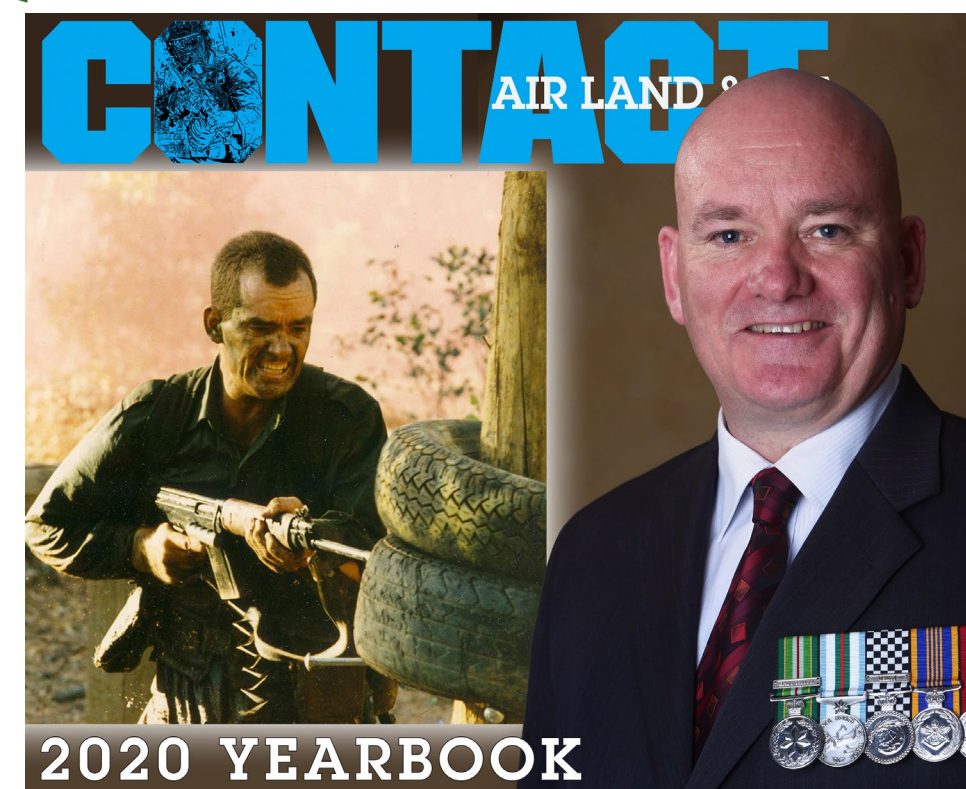




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This example shows CONTACT Editor Brian Hartigan at Kapooka in 1990, and on ANZAC Day 30 years later

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TONGA ASSIST

On 15 January Tonga's undersea volcano Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai erupted in a massive explosion, sending ash plumes 30 kilometres into the sky and triggering a series of tsunamis across the archipelago.

The eruption, thought to be one of the world's largest in recent decades, occurred about 65 kilometres north of Tonga's capital, Nuku'alofa, and cut communications to the country for several days.

Wave impacts were felt in Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the entire western seaboard of the American continents, from Alaska to Chile.

Tonga's low-lying Ha'apai islands were among the worst affected parts of the country.

Despite the severity of the disaster, the official death toll was just three — two Tongan nationals and a British woman.

Authorities declared a state of emergency and, after reconnaissance and surveys, estimated that 84% of Tonga's total population of 106,000 was affected to some degree.

By the end of January 2022, authorities had identified 293 houses damaged with 1525 people displaced.

As Operation Tonga Assist 2022 ramped up, Australian sailors, soldiers and aviators — and counterparts from around the world — were quick and eager to respond.



An Australian Army CH-47F Chinook returns to HMAS Adelaide after air-lifting disaster relief stores to Atata island during Operation Tonga Assist 2022, with HMNZS Canterbury in the background. Photo by Corporal Robert Whitmore.

Among the first to deploy was a Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon and crew from RAAF Base Amberly – 3300 kilometres from Tonga’s capital – to conduct an assessment of damage to critical infrastructure such as roads, ports and power lines, to help determine the next phases of the response effort.

A C-130J Hercules equipped with live-stream video capabilities flew the 3500 kilometres from RAAF Base Richmond to also survey and record damage caused by the underwater volcano.

Commanding Officer of No. 37 Squadron Wing Commander Anthony Kay said the C-130J crew remained over Tonga for two hours, live-streaming vision to Headquarters Joint Operations Command in Australia, before flying to Auckland for fuel and rest, then retracing their flightpath two days later.

“In this role, the C-130J supplemented the imagery brought back by RAAF’s P-8A Poseidon and Royal New Zealand Air Force P-3K Orion surveillance aircraft,” Wing Commander Kay said.

“These reconnaissance missions built a clearer picture of what follow-on response was required and where it was most needed.”

The Hercules mission was made possible because this Hercules was fitted with external fuel tanks, increasing its fuel capacity from 19 to 27 tonnes, extending its flying range and loiter time on long missions – in this case, two-by 12-hour flights.

These missions were also possible thanks to a Ka-Band satellite communications antenna providing high-speed global data connectivity – and an AN/

AAQ-28(V) Litening targeting pod (previously fitted to F/A-18s) that recorded high-definition video.

Wing Commander Kay said this Hercules had been progressively modified since 2018, with the full system recently tested for the first time over flood-affected communities in regional NSW.

The Government of Tonga requested the flights to help determine the extent of the damage, particularly in more remote locations, and inform their future disaster-support requests.

While all this reconnaissance and subsequent planning was progressing, HMAS Adelaide departed her home at Fleet Base East in Sydney to pre-position in Brisbane to take on supplies, equipment and personnel, just in case she was called on.

In the event of her anticipated callout, HMAS Adelaide was uniquely capable of providing a huge boost in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) support.

Before then, however, an air bridge would carry the initial supplies. But, before that could start, airport authorities in Tonga had to clear at least some of the volcanic ash.

The first Royal Australian Air Force C-17A Globemaster III heavy-lift aircraft touched down in Tonga on 20 January with much-needed supplies including shelter materials, hygiene items, water containers and communication equipment.

This flight also included a skid-steer loader with sweeper to aid the further removal of volcanic ash from the airport’s runway and hardstands, as well



ABOVE: A Royal Australian Air Force C-130J from No. 37 Squadron approaches Fua'amotu International Airport, Tonga. Photo by Sergeant Ben Dempster.

BELOW LEFT: Details of a reconnaissance photo of Nuku Port, Tongatapu island, Tonga, taken by crew on a Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft.



as personal protective equipment for the people clearing the ash.

Wing Commander Dean Bolton, Commanding Officer of No. 36 Squadron, said the relief missions to Tonga were unique for the Royal Australian Air Force.

“While our crews are well accustomed to delivering aid where it’s needed, the presence of volcanic ash complicated this response,” Wing Commander Bolton said.

“We’re grateful for the effort and labour of work crews in Tonga who cleared the runway at Fua amotu International Airport, with much of that effort being done by hand initially.”

Australia wasn’t the only country rushing to aid the small Pacific nation. Commander Joint Task Force 637 Major General Scott Winter said Australia’s contribution via Operation Tonga Assist 2022 was part of a wider relief effort that included regional and global partners.

“We are proud to work alongside His Majesty’s

Tonga Armed Forces as well as other Pacific-family partners including Fiji, New Zealand, Japan, United States, India, France and the UK as we start to coordinate this effort in support of a very important member of our Pacific family,” Major General Winter said.

Even China sent a couple of ships with aid and manpower – though these obviously didn’t fall within Australian coordination efforts.

Headquarters Joint Operations Command – HQJOC, outside Canberra – established a new cell to coordinate ‘western’ effort.

The Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) International Coordination Cell brought together defence personnel from Tonga, Fiji, Japan, France, New Zealand, Australia, the UK and the United States, drawing on their combined HADR knowledge to coordinate arrival schedules, acquisition and delivery of specialist assistance equipment and supplies, and the integration of recovery work, all coordinated to ensure



LEFT: RAAF air movements operators from No. 23 Squadron load humanitarian-aid supplies for Tonga onto a C-130J Hercules at RAAF Base Amberley (C-17 in the background). Photo by Sergeant Ben Dempster.
BELOW LEFT: Australian Army vehicles, including Mercedes-Benz G-Wagons and Bushmasters, await loading onto HMAS Adelaide at the Port of Brisbane. Photo by Corporal Robert Whitmore.
BELOW: A loadmaster from No. 36 Squadron, helps to unload humanitarian supplies from a C-17A Globemaster at Fua'amotu International Airport, Tonga. Photo by Leading Aircraftwoman Emma Schwenke.

Tonga's international airport and ports were not overwhelmed.

HQJOC's Director-General of Operations and Plans Commodore James Lybrand said the new coordination cell was an essential mechanism to provide the necessary supplies and capabilities in a logical, prioritised and staged manner.

"The success of these international partnerships owes much to the decades of shared HADR training and operational experience," Commodore Lybrand said.

"This existing familiarity and trust, combined with our unity of mission, ensures the coordination cell was rapidly established in order to provide immediate effect.

"Overall, it delivers HADR synergy, to maximise each nation's individual contribution and allow us to collectively meet the needs of the Tongan people."

Wing Commander Bolton agreed that one of the big challenges of a mission such as Operation Tonga Assist 2022 was coordinating aircraft arrivals so that they weren't all trying to land and unload at the same time.

"Coordinating our arrivals allows us to manage several important factors, including ensuring there is no COVID transmission risk between flight crews, the capacity to receive and distribute cargo, and available aircraft parking spaces.

"All crew and passengers on board were required to have a negative result on a COVID test before



boarding and we made sure all engagement between C-17A crew and staff at the airport was contactless to avoid any chance of COVID transmission."

He said the RAAF had a strong working relationship with many defence forces, and sharing information about the situation on the ground in Tonga allowed them to expedite the delivery of relief.

Meanwhile, back in Brisbane, HMAS Adelaide was fully loaded with supplies, equipment,

vehicles, helicopters and people, and was indeed called forward, setting sail for Tonga on 21 January.

Major General Winter said the ship would provide a flexible capability to support the relief effort.

"The forces on board Adelaide are tailored to the requests of the Government of Tonga and include provision of clean water, the movement of stores and reconnaissance," he said.

"Adelaide's desalination capability can produce a significant amount of clean water, which is one of the first priorities.



"Adelaide provides the most suitable heavy-lift platform to transport substantial quantities of personnel, equipment and provisions and can accommodate the ADF elements for the duration of the deployment without impacting on local resources."

The introduction of COVID-19 to Tonga, which had thus far been disease free, was a major concern and planning consideration for all involved in the operation.

Major General Winter said a rigorous testing regime was part of the pre-deployment for HMAS Adelaide and all embarked troops were fully vaccinated and had returned a negative PCR test before departure.

Despite all the precautions, though, COVID managed to sneak onto the ship, with at least 23 personnel on board returning positive tests during the transit to Tonga – and as much as a fifth of all on board contracting COVID before mission's end.

A Defence spokesperson said affected personnel were asymptomatic or displayed mild symptoms and were isolated from the rest of the crew.

Despite this setback, and with the agreement of the Government of Tonga, it was decided that HMAS Adelaide's vital mission would continue.

"Defence recognises the COVID-free status of Tonga, and will ensure the humanitarian supplies and equipment on board Adelaide are delivered in a COVID-safe manner," an ADF spokesperson said.

HMAS Adelaide arrived off the coast of Tonga on Wednesday 26 January – Australia Day – and began unloading cargo with no person-to-person contact between the ship and wharf personnel.

Among the 630 Australians embarked on HMAS Adelaide were three Navy sailors and an Army soldier of Tongan heritage, who were very proud to be helping out.

For HMAS Adelaide's chaplain, returning to his birthplace as part of Operation Tonga Assist 2022 held special significance.

"This is an unimaginable opportunity for me," Chaplain Simote Finau, who also participated in Operation Fiji Assist a year ago, said.

"I never expected to have the opportunity to help the people of Tonga, who are part of my heritage."

When he met his Tongan compatriots on board HMAS Adelaide, he said they all formed an instant bond.

"It seems to others who see us together that we met long ago, but that's just the spirit of Tongans," he said.

ABOVE: An MRH-90 Taipan delivers stores to assist in the cleanup on Atata island. Photo Leading Seaman David Cox.

TOP RIGHT: Australian Army and Royal Australian Navy personnel arrive on Atata island in Tonga to begin recovery operations as part of Operation Tonga Assist 2022. Photo by Petty Officer Jake Badior.



LEFT: Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, and the 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment arrive on Atata island to begin clean-up operations. Photo by Petty Officer Jake Badior.
BELOW: An Australian Army CH-47F Chinook carries an excavator to Atata island from HMAS Adelaide. Photo by Corporal Robert Whitmore.

Leading Seaman Christine Fine, whose Tongan parents immigrated to Australia in the 1980s, felt privileged to be an Australian giving something back to her homeland.

"I just feel super blessed and lucky to be part of a dynamic and larger nation that can offer support to my island home," she said.

Australian Army Sergeant Alefosio Kakala was born in Tonga, but attended primary school in Australia before returning to Tonga to attend high school. His extended family continue to live on the eastern part of the main island.

"I have a lot of aunts, uncles and cousins still in Tonga, as you can imagine," Sergeant Kakala said.

"So, being part of the Australian Defence Force on this unique opportunity to help Tonga is very emotional.

"My family, back at home and around the globe, all know I'm on this mission helping Tonga and they're all very proud of me.

"Hopefully, I can represent them well."

For Able Seaman Jimmy Hokafonu being able to go 'home' was a great experience.

"My parents were born in Tonga before coming to Australia and I still have family there," Able Seaman Hokafonu said.

"To be able to help my people, my homeland, especially in a Navy uniform, is amazing – it's a great feeling."

The ADF aviation capability on board HMAS Adelaide included three Australian Army CH-47F Chinook helicopters.

Chinook detachment officer in command Major Richard Bremner said helicopter flights provided an opportunity for the task group's reconnaissance elements to gain greater understanding of the islands and the devastation caused.

"We have discovered more people on the islands than expected," Major Bremner said.

"That's of interest to both the Government of Tonga and to us, particularly when applying COVID-safe measures to relief operations.

"We may need to determine how we can work with the Government of Tonga to support the movement of those people if we are requested to conduct tasks on those islands."

HMAS Adelaide's embarked helicopters were also used to observe the extent of airborne volcanic ash which has long been known to cause havoc with civil and military aviation engines and airframes.

"It is nice to see the air is relatively clear," Major Bremner said.

Not so much the water, apparently.

On 29 January, HMAS Adelaide suffered a major power failure, which, according to Rear Admiral Wendy Malcolm, Head of Maritime Systems, may have been caused by polluted seawater blocking the ship's diesel generators, causing them to overheat and shut down.





FAR LEFT: An Australian Army soldier conducts cleanup operations on Atata island as part of Operation Tonga Assist 2022. Photo by Leading Seaman David Cox.

LEFT: Royal Australian Navy Chaplain Simote Finau and Australian Army Lieutenant Joshua Ellems inspect damage on Atata island in Tonga during Operation Tonga Assist 2022. Photo by Corporal Robert Whitmore.

BELOW: HMAS Adelaide at anchor – and possibly ‘dead in the water’ with power-generation issues. Unlike most other ships in the Royal Australian Navy fleet, which have direct-drive propeller shafts from engine to propeller via a gearbox, HMAS Adelaide’s propellers are electrically driven. Also unlike most other ships in the Royal Australian Navy fleet, HMAS Adelaide doesn’t have a rudder either – her steering is done by swivelling her two Navantia Siemens 11-megawatt (15,000hp) azimuth thrusters. HMAS Adelaide has four 4.5metre-diameter (15ft) propellers, two on each end of her two azimuth ‘pods’. She also has two through-hull electric bow thrusters, making her very manoeuvrable – when electricity-generation is on line. Photo by Petty Officer Christopher Szumlanski.

“We have never sailed into an environment that’s been subject to a volcanic eruption like this, and we believe, and we think, it’s quite possible that it’s a key factor in the generators going down,” Rear Admiral Malcolm told a Senate committee hearing.

“The seawater cooling became blocked because of the ash and the rock in the water and that has caused the seawater cooling system to overheat, which has caused the diesel generators to go into shutdown.”

The diesel generator failure was followed a day later by a gas-turbine shutdown – all very serious for a ship that is propelled by electric azimuth pods.

Australian personnel from HMAS Adelaide stepped ashore for the first time on 4 February to survey damage on Atata island, which had been temporarily abandoned by residents.

Around 30 Australians landed on Atata in eight Zodiac inflatable boats.

Chaplain Finau accompanied the Australian Army soldiers and a Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade liaison officer on the island to assess the damage.

“My heart and prayers go out to the people of Atata,” Chaplain Finau, who last visited Tonga about 11 years ago, said.

“There was debris everywhere. Most of the low-lying part of the island had been wiped out.

“You can see where the seawater reached, from the trail of debris, so the wave must have been huge.”

The team walked the length of the island to survey the damage.

Army officer Lieutenant Jordan Chee said it was pretty surprising to see the amount of destruction.

The impact of the tsunami and volcanic eruption on Atata and surrounding islands was even more stark from the air.

Army CH-47F Chinook helicopters from 5th Aviation Regiment surveyed the damage while deploying engineering equipment ashore.

Commanding Officer of 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment Lieutenant Colonel Craig Bury said the island would remain uninhabited during clean-up operations to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

To make a greater impact on the cleanup, Army’s Chinook helicopters transported plant equipment from HMAS Adelaide onto the island.

2nd Combat Engineer Regiment squadron commander Major David Ferwerda said the Australian effort was coordinated with Atata residents before it got underway.

“The town officer gave us his key recovery priorities,” Major Ferwerda said.

“Our main focus was on communal areas such as churches, schools and beaches where the locals gather.

“The community was concerned that further erosion would eventually cut the island in two.

“So, we used the plant equipment, including an excavator and medium bulldozer, to protect the





LEFT: An Australian soldier from 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment clears debris on Atata island. Photo by Corporal Robert Whitmore.
ABOVE: Republic of Fiji soldiers arrive on Atata island to help Australian clean-up crews. Photo by Leading Seaman David Cox.
BELOW: Australian soldiers conduct clean-up operations on Atata island during Operation Tonga Assist 2022. Photo by Corporal Robert Whitmore.

beaches and ensure tides couldn't start washing the island away."

Combat engineer Lance Corporal Tara Arnett said the regiment had unique capabilities to support humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.

"We're jacks of all trades, which makes our role exciting and diverse," Lance Corporal Arnett said.

"Our main tasks on the island are felling dangerous trees and clearing schools, churches and public spaces from debris."

The 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment has a long history of supporting high-risk weather operations, most recently on Operations Flood Assist 2021, Bushfire Assist 2019-20 and Flood Assist 2011.

Major Ferwerda said he was proud of the regiment's short-notice readiness response.

"The soldiers' rapid embarkation into HMAS Adelaide to support Tonga was impressive."

Lance Corporal Arnett said her team was always ready.

"When we're recalled from leave it's good to know we will be helping others," she said.

Army combat engineer Lieutenant Lauren Barclay, fresh out of training, was hours into her first day as a troop commander at 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment in Brisbane when the order to deploy was issued.

"We didn't expect to deploy so early in the year, but the squadron's preparedness meant we were ready to board HMAS Adelaide with only three days' notice," Lieutenant Barclay said.

"Starting the year working together on something so meaningful has been a great way to understand my troop's strengths and weaknesses.

"The challenges we experience here will set us up for success throughout the year."

More manpower arrived to help 2CER in Tonga on 9 February in the form of soldiers from the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF), their arrival delayed by a need to isolate in Australia before flying to Tonga aboard a RAAF C-130J.

Republic of Fiji High Commissioner to Australia Luke Daunivalu, alongside Major General Scott Winter farewelled the 32 enthusiastic RFMF members from RAAF Base Amberly.

RFMF Officer in Charge Captain Viliame 'Bill' Kubunavolivoli said he was looking forward to joining the Australian Defence Force personnel in Tonga.

"Our team will be working with the Australian engineers of the 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment to assist with the clean-up and make an assessment for the rebuild," he said.

"We are very proud to be part of this task force to help our brothers and sisters in our Pacific family."





Royal Australian Navy sailor Able Seaman Boatswain's Mate Makayla Bowden controls the replenishment-at-sea rig onboard HMAS Supply as conducts the ship's first ever international replenishment at sea with Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force ship Osumi during Operation Tonga Assist 2022. Photo by Leading Seaman Rye Huckel.

RFMF soldier Staff Sergeant Lora Joy L Soidroka said she became emotional arriving on Atata and saw the devastation.

"I thought about what it would have been like for the residents during the tsunami," Staff Sergeant Soidroka said.

"We are proud to work with the Australians to support Tonga.

"We have a good relationship with the ADF personnel on the island.

"After work we light a fire and sing and joke and socialise."

The Fijian forces also introduced their Australian friends to breadfruit roasted on hot coals, after an Atata town official passed word on that the breadfruit on a local tree was ripe for the picking and that guests should help themselves.

"It's amazing our Pacific friends can share their produce with us," Staff Sergeant Soidroka said.

Lance Corporal Jake Bailey from 2 CER said the Aussies and Fijians chopped up lots of wood for the island inhabitants so they would have firewood when they get back.

Back on the water, the Royal Australian Navy's new auxiliary oiler replenishment ship HMAS Supply arrived in Tongan on February 12, getting down to work straight away, conducting its first replenishment at sea with HMAS Adelaide the same day.

More than 600,000 litres of fuel was transferred during the under-way replenishment – which obviously meant HMAS Adelaide's propulsion problems were fixed.

The RAS also included 16 vertical replenishment loads of humanitarian and disaster relief stores via MRH-90 Taipan helicopter and a further 30 pallets of fresh food and supplies winched onto Adelaide's landing craft.

Adelaide's navigator Lieutenant Commander John Miller said Supply's arrival on Operation Tonga Assist 2022 was much anticipated.

"Supply is a critical Navy capability that allows Australian and allied ships to extend their time at sea without the need to visit a port," he said.

"This replenishment ensured Adelaide could stay on station for as long as required to support the Government of Tonga."

At time of writing, 26 Feb, we believe both ships are still deployed in Tonga.

CONTACT notes (with professional/personal interest) photo credits from eight different ADF photographers apparently assigned to Op Tonga Assist, yet none of the six military reporters currently posted to the Defence News Bureau seems to be deployed. We also note, with surprise, photo credits from four different photographers on the one tiny island of Atata.



**GEAR UP &
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BEST OF ADP IMAGERY 2021

HMAS Ballarat (left) conducts Replenishment at Sea with USS America during the US-led Large Scale Global Exercise 2021 in the Western Pacific. Photo by Leading Seaman Ernesto Sanchez.

BEST OF ADE IMAGERY 2021



An M1A1 Abrams tank from 2nd/14th Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry) conducts a live fire during Exercise Diamond Walk at Shoalwater Bay, Queensland. Photo by Private Jacob Hilton.



An M1A1 Abrams tank from the 1st Armoured Regiment fires its main armament during training for Exercise Paratus Run 2021 at Cultana, South Australia. Photo by Corporal Rodrigo Villablanca.



A 2nd Commando Regiment soldier conducts a free-fall parachute jump at RAAF Base Tindal in the Northern Territory, in preparation for Exercise Talisman Sabre 2021. Photo by Sergeant Jake Sims.



Soldiers from 2nd/14th Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry) conduct trials on e-bikes alongside a Boxer combat reconnaissance vehicle at Townsville Field Training Area, Queensland. Photo by Corporal Nicole Dorrett.



An 8th/9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment soldier participates in the 7th Combat Brigade Commander's Cup obstacle course at Gallipoli Barracks, Brisbane. Photo by Corporal Nicole Dorrett.



C-27J Spartans, RAAF Base Amberley, Qld. Photo by Corporal Jesse Kane.



C-27J Spartan, Mount Bundy, NT. Leading Aircraftman Stewart Gould.



F-35A, Tindal, NT. Leading Aircraftman Brandon Murray.



F-35A, Delamere, NT. Leading Aircraftman Brandon Murray.



C-17A Brisbane, Qld. Corporal Jesse Kane.



C-17A Honiara, Solomon Islands. Corporal Brandon Grey.



A No. 37 Squadron C130J Hercules approaches Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait. Photo by Sergeant Ben Dempster.



An F-35A Lightning II from No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit, over the Northern Territory during Exercise Rogue Ambush. Photo by Leading Aircraftman Adam Abela.

BEST OF
ADF IMAGERY 2021

BEST OF ADF IMAGERY 2021



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Able Seaman Ruby Ash secures a hose on HMAS Warramunga. Photo by Petty Officer Yuri Ramsey; Able Seaman Matthew Giles prepares to fire a 12.7mm Browning machine gun on HMAS Anzac. Photo by Leading Seaman Leo Baumgartner; Leading Seaman Ashleigh Humphrys conducts a sunset ceremony on HMAS Sirius. Photo by Leading Seaman Sittichai Sakonpoonpol; HMAS Parramatta's Medical Department and members of the Ship's Medical Emergency Team conduct a simulated medical evacuation using an embarked MH-60R. Photo by Leading Seaman Jarrod Mulvihill; Able Seaman Declan Macaulay oxy-cutting on HMAS Canberra. Photo by Leading Seaman Sittichai Sakonpoonpol; Lieutenant Commander Jeff Topping at the controls of HMAS Brisbane's embarked MH-60R. Photo by Leading Seaman Daniel Goodman; Seaman Tanner Williams updates data on HMAS Supply. Photo by Leading Seaman Sittichai Sakonpoonpol.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE (all physical training instructors): Leading Seaman Zoe Davenport on the netball court at HMAS Stirling, WA. Photo by Leading Seaman Ronnie Baltoft; Petty Officer James Walker in the pool at HMAS Albatross, NSW. Photo by Leading Seaman Kayla Jackson; Petty Officer Jake Garrick on his BMX bike, Gunghalin, ACT. Photo by Petty Officer Lee-Anne Cooper; ADF Judoka Major Derek Morris throws Staff Cadet Callum Webb at ADFA, ACT. Photo by Petty Officer Lee-Anne Cooper; Leading Seaman Benjamin Williams boxing at HMAS Albatross, NSW. Photo by Leading Seaman Kayla Jackson; Chief Petty Officer Physical Training Instructor Roger Roy surfing at Cronulla Beach, NSW. Photo by Leading Seaman Ryan Tascas.



BEST OF
ADF IMAGERY 2021





Able Seaman Roschana Harper looks out from the bridge of HMAS Supply. Photo by Leading Seaman Daniel Goodman.

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Lockheed Martin Australia has fully delivered the AIR5428 Pilot Training System, combining simulators and aircraft, to prepare Navy, Army, and Air Force pilots for today's complex aircraft.

Lockheed Martin Australia, in collaboration with its Team 21 industry partners Pilatus and Jet Aviation, and the Royal Australian Air Force, developed a training system that encompasses PC-21 aircraft, flight simulators, cockpit trainers, as well as mission planning and maintenance support.

To date, the Pilot Training System has graduated 35 RAAF, 27 Army and 11 Navy pilots.

"Lockheed Martin Australia proudly welcomes the Commonwealth's acceptance of the AIR5428 Pilot Training System," Lockheed Martin Australia and New Zealand Chief Executive Warren McDonald said.

"This is a significant program milestone for Lockheed Martin, our industry partners and the Commonwealth, as it signifies that this innovative system has been successfully delivered and offers enduring training capability to meet the ADF's requirements.

"We look forward to advancing and sustaining the AIR5428 pilot training system with excellence and in conjunction with our Team 21 partners and the RAAF."

To complete the AIR5428 acquisition phase, Lockheed Martin Australia and its project partners undertook an intensive six-month assessment that involved:

- performing more than 3500 flight simulator and 10,000 aircraft-flying events;
- achieving a greater than 97 per cent mission-success scorecard for all events against the contract's program performance metrics; and,
- achieving 100 per cent success for ground-school-contracted performance measures.

Lockheed Martin Australia Vice President of Rotary and Mission Systems Operations Steve Froelich said the company was immensely proud of the program outcome.

"This is a testament of Lockheed Martin Australia's sustained focus, strong collaboration with our Team 21 partners, and a mission-first mindset to deliver an innovative and tailored system to meet the future needs of ADF pilots."

Project AIR5428 was a \$1.5 billion investment that will ensure young pilots looking to serve in the Australian Defence Force have access to the latest facilities and training methods.

The ADF will now have an intake of up to 165 trainee pilots each year at RAAF Base East Sale.



LETHAL ACCURACY HONED

Snipers from the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR), started 2022 with a week in the Wide Bay training area, near Gympie in Queensland, to true their weapons, bond in their small teams, and maintain the lethal accuracy they are known for.

Lance Corporal Reece Tomlinson said sniper teams had a unique small-team dynamic.

"While there's a separation between the number one and number two in terms of leadership, the majority of the time we are discussing the mission on the same level," Lance Corporal Tomlinson said.

"It's a very intimate team – we work closely with one another, so it's essential we establish an effective working relationship."

Sniper teams are required to undertake a variety of tasks operationally and on training exercises.

"We generally step off at night, working our way to different rendezvous points before pushing on to an observation point.

"From there we observe the objective and relay information back to the headquarters, provide battlefield commentary for up to 72 hours and, if required, fire upon the objective."

Snipers have a lot of trust placed on them as one of the battalion's forward observers.

"The responsibility we are afforded is what I love most about this role – we all work to a high

standard and expect a high level of competence," Lance Corporal Tomlinson said.

"While we're soldiers at a lower rank, we've received enough training allowing us to report to an officer in the headquarters – often the commanding officer – who will use that information to inform decisions on the battlefield.

"We work hard to learn this skill set and it's rewarding to be given this responsibility."

Private Jack Sendall, who passed the sniper course in late 2021, said he was enjoying honing his marksmanship skills at Wide Bay.

"As a sniper you're trained to a high level in the basic marksmanship principles," Private Sendall said.

"Your breathing techniques, correctly positioning yourself behind the rifle, calming yourself down, firing accurately, maintaining a perfect sight picture – they all come together."

Private Sendall said he relished the experience he gained as a new addition to 6RAR's sniper cell.

"The number ones have a good amount of experience and are happy to share that knowledge and, often, as a number two, you understudy your number one," he said.

"It'll only take a couple of years and I'll have enough knowledge to be able to step up to become a number one myself.

"Working within the sniper cell, you work with some really professional guys."



Sniper team Private Jack Sendall (front) and Lance Corporal Reece Tomlinson, 6RAR, prepare to fire a .50 calibre anti-materiel rifle.
Photo by Corporal Nicole Dorrett. Story by Captain Taylor Lynch.

TROPICAL — ICE ICE BABY

STORY AND PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY NZDF

The capability of the Royal New Zealand Navy's HMNZS Aotearoa was superbly proven this year with the successful completion of its first resupply mission to Antarctica.

The \$500-million maritime sustainment vessel was designed for the types of operations it has recently conducted, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations in tropical Tonga, followed by a very quick turnaround back home and sailing for one of the coldest places on Earth.

Commissioned in July last year, HMNZS Aotearoa has so far completed more than 25 refuellings with both RNZN ships and vessels of other navies.

However, it is Aotearoa's water generation and cargo-carrying capacity that allows her to do so much more than its predecessor, HMNZS Endeavour.

Being polar-rated also means Aotearoa can sail to Antarctica and berth at McMurdo Station – the first time in 50 years a RNZN ship has been able to do so.

Since the 1970s, the New Zealand Defence Force has flown personnel and supplies in support of Antarctica New Zealand programmes using RNZAF C-130 Hercules and Boeing 757s.

For Antarctica New Zealand, Aotearoa has significantly enhanced the support that can be provided to the continent.

Antarctica New Zealand Chief Executive Sarah Williamson said HMNZS Aotearoa was a fantastic addition to New Zealand's Antarctic capabilities.

"The timing couldn't be better, with our scientific research programme and Scott Base Redevelopment both requiring significant logistical support over the next several years," she said.

"We congratulate the Navy on a successful maiden voyage – it's a complex, collaborative effort and it went smoothly.

"The team gets a ng mihi nui from us – we really appreciate the mahi they've done."

For Captain Simon Griffiths, commanding officer of HMNZS Aotearoa, the preceeding month was testing for ship and crew.

"Aotearoa is an amazing ship, but it's the people on board that make it work," he said.

"They have got us from the tropics, helping Tonga, to the freezing cold of Antarctica.

"It is a team effort and we are incredibly proud of what we do on the ship, and proud of what we do for our Navy.

"But, most of all, we are proud of what we do and what we represent for New Zealand."

On the way home to New Zealand from Antarctica, Aotearoa's crew conducted a series of maritime safety trials and experiments for the Defence Technology Agency.

These involved assisting the MetService with sea ice and wave forecasting in the Southern Ocean and Ross Sea by deploying 30 wave buoys.

They conducted work with Maritime New Zealand on the application of emergency beacons.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: HMNZS Aotearoa unloads fresh water in Tonga; and, BELOW: HMNZS Aotearoa in Antarctic waters a couple of weeks later. NZDF photos.





ABOVE: HMNZS Aotearoa eases through an ice field in Antarctica. NZDF photo.
BELOW: HMNZS Aotearoa unloads supplies at McMurdo Station. Photo by Anthony Powell, Antarctica New Zealand.



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Déjà vu

STREETS OF HONIARA

Solomon Islands has had its share of 'troubles' and unrest for 20 years and more – and tensions flared into deadly violence again late last year.
On 24 November, what started as a peaceful protest against the government's decision to recognise China over Taiwan quickly turned violent as protesters attempted to storm the parliament and demanded the resignation of their prime minister.
Businesses in Honiara – mainly in the 'Chinatown district' – were burnt and looted, and a police station was set on fire.
Police and tear gas were deployed, but the violence was escalating and spreading out of control – so the Solomon Islands government called on its neighbours for assistance.





Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Fiji were quick to answer the call.

On 25 November, A Royal Australian Air Force aircraft departed Canberra carrying members of the Australian Federal Police and officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

On 26 November, approximately 100 Australian Defence Force personnel from Army's 3rd Brigade, 6th Brigade and 17th Brigade departed Townsville.

By 27 November, with more than 100 people arrested, the riots were quelled and a strong showing of local and foreign police officers and troops patrolling the streets saw the capital settle.

However, three charred bodies were found among the destruction in Chinatown as the cleanup began.

More AFP and DfAT personnel flowed into the country over the following days and follow-up

teams from the Republic of Fiji Military Forces and Papua New Guinean Constabulary and Defence Force, and New Zealand Defence Force and Police joined the Aussies on the ground, with reinforcements on standby in case they were needed.

Royal Australian Navy's HMAS Armidale patrol boat also joined the mission on 30 November to support the RSIPF with maritime security.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the deployment of Australian troops, police and officials was not designed to fix the domestic problems of the Solomon Islands.

"What we want to see happen in the Solomon Islands is for the people of the Solomon Islands, under their constitution, under their normal processes, resolve any issues they have themselves," Mr Morrison said.



"It is not for us to be interfering in their democracy, it's not for us to be interfering in how they resolve those issues.

"We are simply there as a good family member to try and provide a stable and safe environment for the issues in the Solomon Islands to be peacefully worked through."

Commander of Australia's Joint Task Group 637.3 Lieutenant Colonel Steve Frankel said the ADF was proud to support its Pacific Island family.

"The situation in Honiara remains calm following the initial unrest, and the RSIPF has done a great job to restore order," Lieutenant Colonel Frankel said.

The Australian government was responding to a request for assistance from the Solomon Islands government under a bilateral security treaty, signed in 2017, to support the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force.

The Australian response, dubbed Operation Lilia, is still running months later, though, at time of writing, while around 60 Australian Federal Police remain to support the RSIPF to manage the situation in Honiara, DFAT's and the ADF's mission has drastically taken on a new focus.

A subsequent COVID-19 outbreak in the island nation has landed Operation Lilia with a serious and significant humanitarian mission.

While continuing to assist police security operations, the task group is now also required to assume responsibility for a difficult supply chain of humanitarian stores.

Royal Australian Air Force C-17s are conducting regular supply flights to Honiara, and two RAAF C-27J battlefield transports and RAAF Contingency Response Squadron, recently sent to the country, are distributing urgent medical and food supplies to remote areas of the Solomon Islands after COVID impacted the country's inter-island distribution networks.

Army officer Captain Tahnee Farleigh-Hall said it was quite a large task, getting the humanitarian

food and medical stores out to where they were needed.

"We've been working with a lot of different agencies to distribute the stores across the Solomon Islands," Captain Farleigh-Hall said.

"There's been quite a few challenges with some of the isolated provinces.

"We can't always reach them by traditional methods, so we're using a combination of sea freight, air freight and road distribution."

Lieutenant Colonel Frankel said the new focus was testament to the Australian Defence Force's ability to remain flexible and adapt to extreme circumstances.

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AGED-CARE CALLOUT

Just two days after Minister for Aged Care Richard Colbeck assured a Senate hearing there was no crisis in aged care, Emergency Management Australia – the Australian government’s disaster- and crisis-management response agency – had taken charge, and called out up to 1700 Defence personnel to bolster the aged-care sector across the country.

Military planners and ADF-only quick reaction teams as well as augmentation of other efforts was provided by the ADF to support aged care facilities in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia.

Those support teams were made up of team leaders, registered and enrolled nurses, supporting personnel and others.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the ADF would assist logistics and general-duties tasks such as screening of entrants to facilities, providing companionship to residents, supporting with meals and other non-direct-care functions, to take the pressure off qualified aged-care workers and medical staff.

“The ADF is not a shadow workforce and can not replace skilled aged-care workers,” Mr Morrison said.

Coincidentally, an ADF veteran started a petition on change.org the same day the ADF began deploying, calling on Mr Morrison to immediately deploy ADF personnel into aged care.

Petition instigator Jeremy Davie said his 97-year-old grandmother – a WWII war widow – suffered from dementia and was confined to a wheelchair.

“She single handedly raised two children, operated a trucking business, contributed to her community and to the economy,” Mr Davie said.

“But now she suffers the indignity of being confined to her room, eating sub-standard meals, regularly being locked away from visitors and can’t even get her personal hygiene needs met at acceptable intervals.”

Commander COVID Task Force Rear Admiral Robert Plath lead the planning and coordination team at the Department of Health to support the aged-care sector as part of Operation COVID-19 Assist.

“A 17-person planning and coordination team is now integrated with the Department of Health team in Canberra,” Rear Admiral Plath said.

“We will work with the Department of Health to understand how Defence can best support the aged-care sector.

“Defence is committing up to 1700 personnel to augment existing health-response teams.

“We will also create our own 10-person standing-force teams, and the bulk of ADF personnel will support high-priority facilities around the country.”





The 10-person ADF standing-force teams were quickly readied to support aged-care facilities in Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and NSW, with other states and territories to follow, if needed.

The Department of Health decided where to place the teams. Lieutenant Colonel Anne Oliver was part of the planning and coordination team at the Department of Health in Canberra.

"Coming from Army Headquarters enables me to understand what Defence support is available in a given region to further support our on-the-ground teams and to support the broader effort," Lieutenant Colonel Oliver said.

Private Jessica Fitzsimon, supporting Joint Task Group 629.3 in Queensland, said she was looking forward to helping, having previously deployed twice on Operation COVID-19 Assist with swab testing in Melbourne in 2020 and assisting the vaccination rollout in NSW last year.

"To help in aged care homes is going to be very rewarding," she said.



EDITOR'S FOOTNOTE:

This official Defence photo by Private Michael Currie, taken on 5 February 2022, at an aged-care facility in Frankston, Victoria, has since been deleted from the Defence Image Library. Why? Probably for the same reason CONTACT chose to use it on our web site – it's dark, stark and impactful – a picture that tells a thousand words. So, is it acceptable for Defence to publish such a photo, appropriately cleared by the chain of command, then delete it from existence? On whose orders we wonder?



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MORE FLOODS



PHOTOS BY BRADLEY RICHARDSON

Parts of south-east Queensland and north-east New South Wales were hit by what Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk called a 'rain bomb' at the end of February.

As this magazine was in its final stages of design before publication, only a few Defence photos are so far available.

Photographer Bradley Richardson joined aircrew from the School of Army Aviation, Oakey, Queensland, as they pitched in to help rescue flood-affected families in the region.

We also couldn't resist the meme at right, circulating on social media – which, according to BoM information is probably pretty accurate – with some areas copping staggering amounts of rain in the last few days of the month.

Mount Glorious for example, in the hills just 60km from Brisbane CBD, copped a whopping 1639mm (65inches) of rain in the four days to 9am on 28 February.

Even in the city, in the suburb of Bracken Ridge, 1094mm (44inches) fell in the same four days. BTW – Brisbane's average rainfall is just 1200mm PER YEAR!



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LT BASIL WOOD BOURNE AUSTRALIAN FIELD ARTILLERY

Born in Guilford, Surrey, England¹, on 12 September 1883, Basil Bourne had an adventurous soul. He did well at school and, when growing up, he enjoyed his sport. But it was adventure that he craved. While he was dynamic in nature, he was also a learned gentleman, who projected outward thinking and philosophical views.

With the Boer War still raging in South Africa, Basil was keen to try his luck and set sail aboard the steamer 'Raglan Castle' on 11 January 1902. Unfortunately, the war ended² before Basil could secure enlistment. However, he liked South Africa and decided to stay and was able to gain employment with the Public Works Department in Kimberley³.

Still trying to 'scratch that adventurous itch' Basil enlisted in local militia unit the Diamond Field Artillery on 5 May 1903. A good soldier, he was promoted to bombardier in 1904 and to sergeant in June the same year.

Craving more, he travelled to Cape Town in August 1904 and enlisted as a constable in District Two of the Cape Police. Given his local knowledge, he was posted back to the Kimberly area. With his police work taking a priority, Basil was reluctantly forced to take discharge from the militia on Christmas Day 1904. In December 1905 Basil was able to purchase his discharge from the police and decided to move on.

His travels next took him to Tasmania where, as an orchardist⁴, he took up land at Premaydena on the Tasman Peninsula, which he dubbed – 'Stalmme'.

With war clouds gathering over Europe, Basil started to take the news more seriously. Riding into the local village one morning, small groups were gathered on nearly every corner. Edging closer, he secured a morning-edition newspaper, and the headline said it all – War Declared!

Basil was one of the first to report to the recruiting depot where his experience in South Africa came to the fore at

the interview and, on 27 August 1914, he was sworn into the 1st Australian Imperial Force (AIF), and allocated to 9 Battery of the rapidly forming 3rd Field Artillery Brigade (3FAB).

9 Battery was a mixture of trained militiamen, all Tasmanian⁴ and keen local recruits. Command of the battery went to Major William Sinclair-Burgess, a regular-army officer on exchange from New Zealand⁵.

As the 1st Australian Division was forming so quickly around the country, technical training, especially gunnery, would need to wait. The emphasis needed to be the issuing of uniforms, personal equipment, guns, horses, harnessing, limbers and other transport, so as to make the brigade and especially the batteries, self-sufficient to undertake effective training in due course.

In mid-to-late October 1914, the battery massed its stores and equipment on the main Hobart dock and awaited arrival of the transport ship that would take on the cargo of men, animals and equipment. With final leave completed and the transport 'Geelong' fully loaded, the men were marched through the streets to the cheers and applause of family, friends and well-wishers. That night, the ship was in the open sea and, for those keeping a diary, the date was noted – 20 October 1914⁶.

Two significant facets came into being as the first Australian and New Zealand convoy headed across the Indian Ocean bound for Europe. First was on 31 October with Turkey's entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers⁷ and second was the decision to disembark the Australians and New Zealanders in Egypt rather than England, as milder weather and conditions were far more conducive to training, rather than the stark, dismal, mud-drenched plains of Salisbury.

Fate then played a hand. When the allied naval action to force the Dardanelles failed, the disposition of our troops

JUST SOLDIERS

BY MAJOR DARRYL KELLY

He was lost in the memories he'd harboured for half a century. With his wife beside him, he glanced at the brilliantly coloured sea as the bus travelled alongside the rugged, yet peaceful coastline. His body was present but his mind was elsewhere, and his excitement started to build...

in Egypt made them ideally placed for land-based actions to seize the Gallipoli Peninsula and the forts protecting the all-important 'Narrows' and, thus, open the way for the allied navies to sail forth, to attack and capture the Turkish capital of Constantinople, and knock Turkey out of the war.

5 April 1915 and, as per their movement orders, the men of 9 Battery broke camp and prepared to move at 2000 hours by foot to the Abou El Ala Railway Station on the outskirts of Cairo. The train arrived on time and, once the troops were fully loaded, departed at 0140 hours. It arrived at the sea port of Alexandria at 0715 hours on the morning of 6 April⁸. The journey lacked the usual banter and joviality made famous by the Australian's. Instead, it was sombre, with an element of subdued excitement, as many realised that the games were now over and they were finally off to war.

24 April 1915 and the transport 'Atlantean', with her holds full of assault troops – including the members and equipment of 9 Battery – nestled in the calm waters of Lemnos Harbour. At 0700 she weighed anchor and headed out to open sea. At 0945 she stopped engines and maintained position until 1900 hours. Throughout the day, destroyers and gunboats zigzagged around the massing ships like maddened hornets so as to keep any prowling U-boats well at bay.

For Basil and his mates, the efforts of the Royal Navy to keep them safe was most welcome and very much appreciated⁸.

Then, the men finally learnt their destination – the name meaningless to them at that point but, in time, it would be uttered and revered for ever more – Gallipoli!

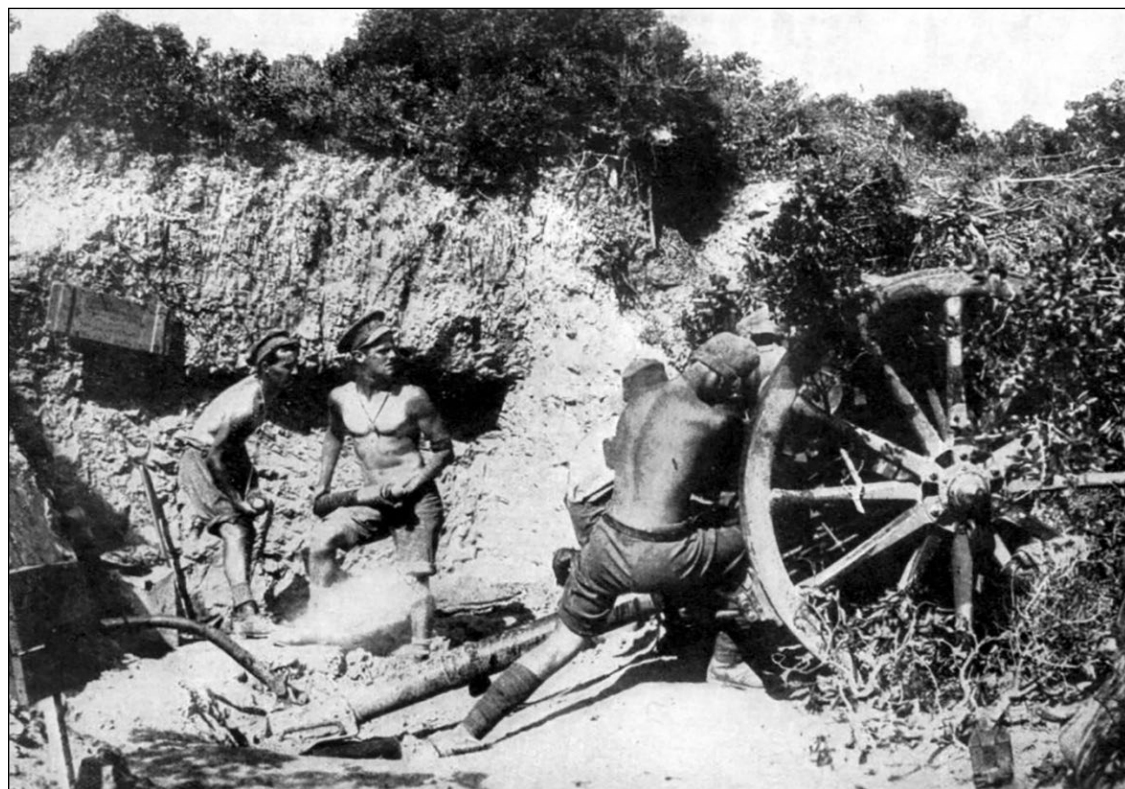
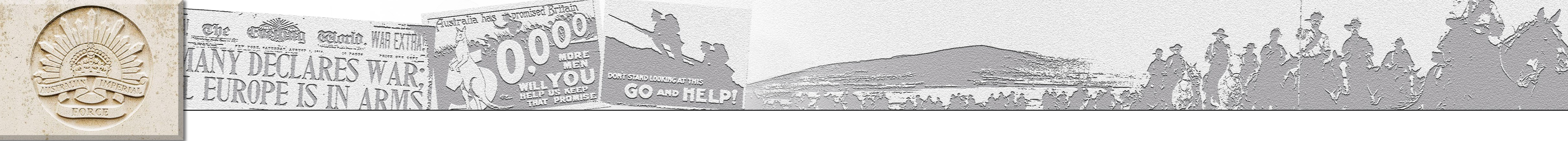
At 1900 hours troops were ushered below decks and all lights doused, as the ships began to move northwards at half speed. Later, under cover of darkness and in

complete silence, the ships slowed down behind the faint outline of a sizeable island. This was part of the overall plan to be in close proximity to the intended landing site but then wait until the moon set at 0257 hours, before slowly heading to their assigned disembarkation points.

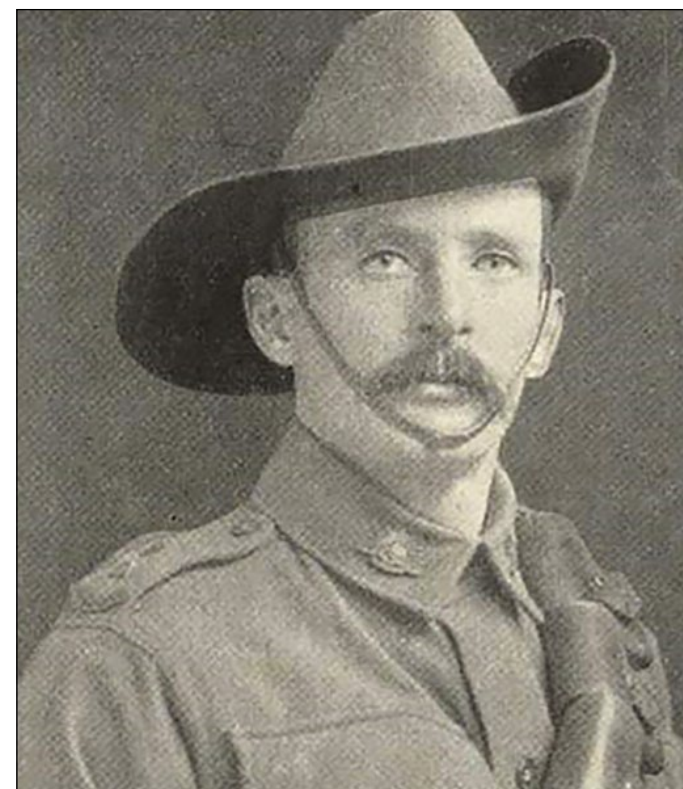
In the ensuing days, the confused nature of the landing came to the fore, especially for the artillery. Little consultation had occurred from the command chain and the key artillery officers regards type of ammunition and, more importantly, the type of the actual artillery – whether it should be guns or howitzers?⁹ In addition, suitable gun positions were difficult to find within the ANZAC Beachhead and, thus, when frequently used by Australian and New Zealand artillery, the counter battery fire by the Turkish gunners was that much more effective as the co-ordinates of the allied gun positions were already known to the enemy. Continual reconnaissance for new and more secure gun positions was all important.

The guns of the 9th Battery started to trickle ashore¹⁰, while others were retained aboard ship, only to be landed further down the coast in the British sector at Cape Helles, to support their bid to advance inland. Some elements, including drivers, horses and equipment, were still afloat as late as 5 May.

It is safe to assume that Basil Bourne was ashore and fighting at this time, but it's clear that the frustrations, either ashore or afloat, would be just as challenging. Those 9 Battery guns ashore were doing their mates proud, as they engaged in-range targets right across the ANZAC front. If land-based fire support was unavailable, the observation officers reverted to calling in naval gunfire to do the job. Given the lay of the land within the beachhead, guns were either deployed singularly or, at best, in pairs, so the full effects of a battery concentration of fire was difficult, if not impossible. For the gunners of



Australian gunners of the 9th Field Battery operate the Number 4 18-pounder field gun at M'Cay's Hill, Shrapnel Gully Area, on 19 May 1915. Australian War Memorial photo number A00830, taken by Alexander Arthur Evans.



Then Bombardier Basil Bourne. Photo from the author's collection

the 3rd Artillery Brigade, their tactics against the enemy would have been as simple as they were effective – if it was seen, engage it – if it moved, engage it – if it was stationary, destroy it!

With the remnants of winter remaining, coupled with bland diet, choking dust, putrefying corpses and tainted water starting to take its toll, Basil Bourne was forced to report sick in late May. His illness was serious enough to warrant evacuation back to Alexandria, where he was diagnosed with chronic bronchitis¹. It would take until 19 July before he would return to the unit¹. On his return, little had changed except for the number of mates who were now gone and fresh-faced lads whom he fought alongside in April and May were now aged, ragged and old before their time.

Basil's distinctive upper-crust dialect, was a nice change from the familiar profanities going around the gun pits and rest areas. But, to the front-line soldier, Gallipoli was Gallipoli and you lived for today, because there may not be a tomorrow. What did go on unabated was the death, wounding, illness, lice and mundane diet.

With summer giving way to autumn and the first hints of the impending onset of winter sending the ill-equipped 'diggers' searching for long-discarded coats, scarves and gloves, rumours started to run rife. One rumour seemed to be constant – withdrawal – not running away but instead, living to fight another day.

With the mounting casualties among the allied ranks, room for rapid yet temporary promotions were coming through. Basil had shown his steadiness and commitment on numerous occasions during the past months and, in November, he was made a temporary sergeant¹.

Early December was when things changed. By day, silent ruse would occur along the lines, with the odd shot, bomb or artillery rounds being exchanged. By night, specially trained scouts moved to the forward trenches to guide drafts of soldiers silently down to the beach and onto the awaiting lighters, taking the men to darkened ships waiting off shore, or straight to Mudros Island. Key equipment such as guns, limbers and the like were also taken off, as part of the evacuation plan.

At 1400 hours on 11 December, No 1 Gun of 9 Battery received a unique fire mission – ordered to engage a supposed enemy submarine at a range of 5800 yards, operating off Gaba Tepe. The mission generated after something resembling a torpedo was supposedly seen moving through the water⁸. Unfortunately, nothing came from the engagement, but if it had, it would have definitely been a plus for the history of the Australian Field Artillery.

1915 hours, 19 December and the remaining two officers and eight other ranks of 9 Battery¹¹ embarked safely for Mudros Island⁸. Basil Bourne, now a confirmed sergeant, alighted in Alexandria on 22 December and was curious as to what fate had in store for him and his mates. But he was proud of the battery and what it had achieved, especially when he learnt that between 1 May and 19 December inclusive, the battery had fired a total of 12,164⁸ rounds against the enemy.

Unfortunately, Basil was hospitalised from 21 January to 19 February 1916, when he suffered a bad bout of rheumatism.

Moves were afoot to expand the AIF to meet the demands of the Western Front in Europe. This included

the formation of the 4th and 5th Divisions, complete with support units¹², and the integration of the 3rd Division, which was already formed and undergoing initial training in Australia, before it was to head to England for further training before deploying to the front.

One of the new artillery brigades of the 4th Division was the 11th Field Artillery Brigade (11FAB), and one of those specially selected to be part of the nucleus of the 42nd Battery was Sergeant Basil Bourne¹. Battery manning was to come from volunteers across the divisions, including veterans from the infantry, light horse and eager reinforcements recently arrived from Australia¹³.

On 31 May, 11FAB broke camp and entrained for Alexandria where they boarded ship the next day, bound for Marseilles, and preparation training to take its place on the Western Front. This included in June, where the officers, warrant officers and senior non-commissioned officers of 11FAB, were embedded with other Aussie artillery brigades already in action – to learn how to fight on this new front.

Now ready for limited operations, 11FAB took its place in the line. It staged through the area around Armentieres, dubbed the 'nursery sector', which provided a level of battle indoctrination. With each passing day, the drills in the command post and on the guns got better and better and, the most vital component for the artilleryman – accuracy – remained the first and foremost priority.

Basil Bourne had honed his gun detachment into a sound, tight-knit group. As any commander worth his salt would do, he also trained them to be able to take over any task on the gun, including command, if and when required.

In October 1916, 11FAB redeployed to Belgium, where, if it was at all possible, conditions on the battlefield got worse! Thanks to the high watertable in Belgium, a complex series of drainage ducts were developed over centuries, but two years of fighting and the unbelievable amount of artillery rounds used thus far, destroyed the drainage system and turned the battlefields around Ypres into one massive bog. With the onset of expected winter rains, conditions were expected to get worse still.

In late October, Basil was called upon to step up and take over as temporary battery sergeant major (T/WO2) attached to the Australian General Base Depot, charged with training of the artillery detachments being allocated to the 4th Division artillery units¹. This type of role was for our best and brightest gunners. The task kept him away from his brigade until February 1917 and, on his return, he was required to revert to the rank of sergeant¹.

Basil's stay at the front was only temporary, as he was specially selected to attend the Royal Artillery Cadet School, based at St John's Wood, London. Although the course was demanding, it was also prestigious, especially for a member of the AIF, and thus Basil was committed to do his best.

His demeanour and gentlemanly nature stood him well with his fellow cadets and staff alike. In late July, he graduated with a pass. His course report indicated 'good useful cadet, who should turn out well!' His successful completion of the course saw him commissioned as a second lieutenant in the AIF¹.

Crossing back to France, he secured transport back to Belgium where he was attached to a number of units including the 4th Divisional Ammunition Column for a



With the onset of WWII, Basil offered his services in a voluntary capacity as an air-raid warden in Salisbury, in his native England

couple of months. Finally, in October, he re-joined 11FAB and allocated to the 111th Howitzer Battery¹.

Only a month later, Basil was struck down with debility, illness sapping his strength and stamina¹⁴. His condition was so severe he was returned to England and, in December, the doctors recommended three months base duty, basically on sedentary duties.

This gave him the opportunity to visit his family, but his health was on the decline.

In February 1918, he was confirmed as a lieutenant but his condition simply did not improve. Following a number of Medical Boards, he was earmarked to be returned to Australia on the steamship 'Niagara' but, for some reason, his records show that he was invalided at his own expense¹. Basil Bourne's appointment with the AIF was terminated on 18 March 1919.

Like so many returning from the war, Basil drifted into obscurity but, in 1921, he was allocated to the Reserve of Officers¹⁵. He was also placed on the Retired List retaining his rank as a lieutenant¹⁶.

At some time during the inter-war years, Basil returned to England to live and, with the onset of the Second World War, he offered his services in a voluntary capacity as an air-raid warden in Salisbury¹⁷. Ever the gentleman, this was Basil's way of doing his bit against Mr Hitler.

In 1965, the world was commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Gallipoli Campaign. Basil, now 82, and his wife Isabella, joined a British tour group on a visit to the battlefields. Basil was excited with the prospect of visiting the old positions within the ANZAC beachhead and, hopefully, the graves of old comrades.

17 May 1965 and, for the distinguished old soldier, memories stored for a half century were flooding back as the bus edged closer to familiar territory. As the doors opened, the group began to disembark. As Basil went to alight, he fell forward and, sadly, was dead before he hit the ground.

Today, Basil Wood Bourne is interred in the British Consular Cemetery at Canakkale, which seems to me to be a most fitting place for a Gallipoli veteran to lay at rest.

Notes:

1. National Archives of Australia: B2445, WWI Service Records, 1934- Bourne, Basil Wood
2. Boer War waged from 11 October 1899 to 31 May 1902
3. 1903-1904
4. This initially included the whole of the Hobart Battery who volunteered to a man the day after war was declared. The other batteries were raised from Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia
5. The Gunners, David Horner, Allen and Unwin 1995
6. AWM 8 Embarkation Roll 3FAB (Field Artillery Brigade) October 1914
7. The Central Powers consisted of Germany, Austria/Hungary, The Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria – sometimes referred to as the Quadruple Alliance.
8. AWM 4 War Diary of the 9th Battery, Australian Field Artillery, April 1915
9. Guns being mostly a low-angle weapon, while howitzers are both low and high angle, thus being able to engage targets nestled behind natural crests such as hills.
10. Four 9 Battery guns and detachments were landed on 30 April and were immediately committed to action.
11. The 9 Battery party, under command of Captain Gee and Lieutenant Randall, comprised one worn-out 18 pounder gun and eight other ranks, who stayed until the last. They were told they would probably never get off the peninsula alive – and didn't expect to. When Gee called for volunteers to leave, there was nearly a fight, as they all wanted to stay.
12. Official History of Australia at War 1914 – 1918, Vol III, C.E.W. Bean
13. AWM 4 War Diary of the 11th Field Artillery Brigade, Australian Field Artillery, April 1916
14. Extremely feeble
15. Trove – Launceston Examiner, Friday 21 June 1921
16. Trove – Hobart Mercury 4 February 1921
17. These volunteers were established as part of the Air Raid Precautions Act of 1937 and provided a tremendous service throughout the war.
18. Gallipoli – A Battlefield Guide. Phil Taylor and Pam Cupper, Kangaroo Press 1989. This book is a must for those visiting the area of the greater Gallipoli Campaign.



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