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THE MAGAZINE OF THE AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

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Edition 5 ~ 2021





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The Australian Commando Association's membership consists of Servicemen & women who have served with WW2 Independent Companies, Commando Squadrons & Regiments, 'M' and 'Z' Special units, 1st & 2nd Commando Company's, 1st Commando Regiment, 4 RAR Commando & the 2nd Commando Regiment. The Association also consists of Associate Members who have served in units who directly supported Commando units in time of war and peace and Social members who's direct family member was either Killed In Action, Died In Service or Killed in Training or a member of the ACA who has passed.

DISCLAIMER: Opinions expressed within this publication are those of the authors, and are not necessarily those of the Editor, Publisher, Committee Members or Members of our Association. We welcome any input as long as it is not offensive or abusive but if any member has a problem with a printed article we would like to be informed in order that the author may be

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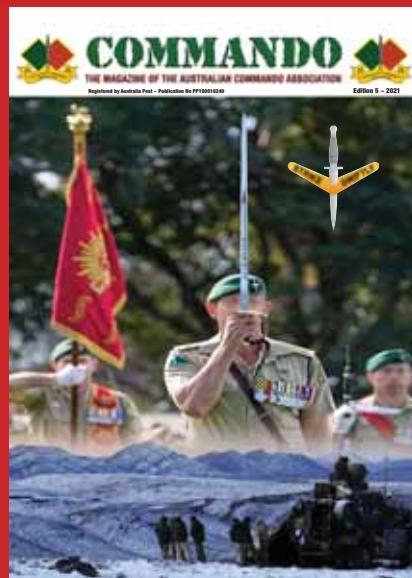
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Deadline for next edition (Edition 6, 2021):

SUNDAY, 28 MARCH 2021

All news on members and interesting articles accepted.
(Subject to editors' approval.)

Nick Hill



FRONT COVER: Top Image: Then CO 1 Cdo Regt, LTCOL M. CSC gives a salute during the 1 Coy's 60th Birthday Parade at Vic Barracks Sydney in 2016. Bottom Image: 2 Coy, 1st Cdo Regt members gather around their Bushmaster PMV in January 2011, during SOTG Rotation XI in Urazghan Province, Afghanistan. 1 Feb is officially the 1 Cdo Regt's Birthday and this year the Regiment is celebrating their 40th. Images Courtesy: Department of Defence.

MILITARY HISTORY BROUGHT TO LIFE

Military history fans were thrilled to see one of only three of the world's operational Panther Ausf A World War II German battle tanks on display at the Australian Armour and Artillery Museum's AusArmourfest in Cairns 29th 30th August.

The fifth annual event, which also celebrated the museum's sixth birthday, marked the first viewing in Australia of the Panther Aus A.

"Our Panther Ausf A tank is only one of four held in private hands in the world, and it's only one of three in running condition," said Australian Armour and Artillery Museum owner Rob Lowden. The tank, which took five years to restore, arrived in Cairns days before the event.

The 10,000sq m museum is home to the largest private collection of tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery in the southern hemisphere (and possibly the world). It houses hundreds of collection pieces from the 1800s onwards including large tanks, armoured cars, engines, combat equipment, howitzers and artillery from all over the world including Great Britain, Russia, United States, Czechoslovakia and Japan, to name a few.

All were on display at the AusArmourfest, and visitors were also treated to 30 vehicles rumbling into action on the museum's grounds over the two days.

"To see the tanks and vehicles in the museum is one thing, but to see them outside driving around and feeling the ground shake while listening to them is a completely different experience," Rob said. "It's one thing to see a lion or tiger in a cage, but it's another thing to see them bounding around in their natural habitat. We say the same for tanks."



The annual festival was also the only place in the world where visitors were able to ride in certain tanks, but organisers weren't able to offer the rides this year due to Covid-19. They were also expecting the numbers of guests would be less this year due to travel restrictions (many previous visitors were from overseas as well as from throughout Australia), but were pleasantly surprised.

"In the Covid environment with the Queensland border closed, we weren't expecting as many people, but we were

really pleased to see such a good turnout," Rob said. "We had over 500 on Saturday and 800 on Sunday."

It was also the first time the festival was livestreamed on Facebook, held in conjunction with the global online video game World of Tanks.

"We had 30,000 views, which was excellent," Rob said. "We will definitely be doing that again next year even if Covid restrictions are lifted by then."

The museum holds one of the most important military collections in Australia where guests are able to see these historic machines and tanks, such as a German Jagdpanzer 38(T) and the Australian Cruiser Mark 1 (AC1) Sentinel, up close and personal. They are also able to learn about their applications during the world wars with plaques providing the history of each item.

The museum also has an underground 50m shooting gallery which offers a selection of military and related bolt action rifles to use including a WW2 British 303 and German Mauser. It also features a café, kids' corner, repair/restoration workshop and a retail shop which offers a diverse collection of speciality items.

Learn more about the museum at www.ausarmour.com



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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

G'day all and welcome to Edition #005 January – March 2021 of **COMMANDO – The Magazine of the Australian Commando Association.**

We all hope you had a wonderful and festive Christmas and New Year, and we hope that 2021 is a much better one for you all, I know I'm hoping it will be.

I'd like to personally congratulate Major General Paul 'PK' Kenny, DSC, DSM for his appointment as Commander Special Operations Command. PK was originally at 1st Commando Regiment in his early career as a young Captain and was at 4 RAR Commando when the unit stood up in 1997-98. PK returned to Bravo Commando Company as the Officer Commanding in 2000, Commandant SFTC in 2006-07 and he had the Honour to be the last CO of 4 RAR Commando and the first CO of the 2nd Commando Regiment.

Congratulation also goes to Brigadier Brett 'BC' Chaloner, CSC. for his appointment as Commander 13th Brigade in WA. I first met BC at the same time as PK in 1998 when I completed my Reo Cycle and posted to 4 RAR Commando. He was then in CHQ Bravo Commando Company and we again saw BC in East Timor in 2001 when he was Troop Commander in Perth. BC came back to the unit in 2004 as the OC TAG-E, 4 RAR Commando and in 2006 he was the Plans Officer during SOTG Rotation III under command of CO 4 RAR Commando then LTCOL Mark Smethurst. In 2011-12 BC came back as the CO 2nd Commando Regiment. Again, congrats mate, well deserved.

There is and has been a lot of talk and social media input into the 'Brereton Report' that was released by the CDF back in November 2020. The ACA National President and CWT Chairman has made a joint statement which is located in this edition.

We again have some great articles in this edition including our normal reports from Nationals and the States. We have an interesting article on a Rhodesian Airforce Pilot during the 'Bush War' and a great book review on 'Mosul' the fight against ISIL in Iraq. An article on a Deliberate Assault conducted in Iraq by Bravo Company, 2nd Ranger Battalion in 2003, an in site to the UK's Special Reconnaissance Regiment, another great article by The Last Coastwatcher Mr Jim Burrows,



OAM, the RAAFs Special Forces and the RAF Servicing Commandos of WW2, Part 2 of A Commandos Contracting Experience and the final instalment from Doug Knight, Part 4 of 8 Men Dropped From The Sky. Our DVA Rep Mr Paul Copeland OAM, JP has submitted an ESORT paper from the DVA Secretary of the Repatriation Commission. This was also emailed to your state reps, if you did not receive an E-Copy of this please speak top your State Presidents or Reps. Any submissions need to be in by 22 January 2021.

Unfortunately, January to March has also seen the loss of one Commando Killed In Action in Afghanistan, five Killed in Training and two who had Died in Service. May they forever Rest In Peace and have fair winds and blue skies. C4L.

Please feel free to submit an article for the magazine regardless of how small or big they are as we will always try to fit them in but this does come down to the number of pages allocated per Magazine.

Edition 004 Typos & Corrections

Like all of us and certainly that includes for making mistakes, apologies for the typo on Page 5 - National President's Last Name and Post Nominal, which should read MAJGEN Greg Melick, AO, RFD, SC (Retd), missed them every time on the review.

For those fighting the good fight, remember to 'Keep Your Powder Dry and Your Sights Straight' and those back home in Australia or around the world, please keep safe and have a prosperous 2021.

Commando 4 Life

Nick Hill

Editor - Commando Magazine

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FROM THE ACA NATIONAL PRESIDENT & CWT CHAIRMAN



To Members, Families and Friends of the Australian Commando Community,

The Inspector General - Australian Defence Force Inquiry into alleged breaches of the Laws of Armed Conflict by members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in Afghanistan, between 2005 and 2016 has been tabled and we know by now that there are no Commando members directly involved in ongoing investigations.

However, the Commando family reaches right across Australia and it is now as important that we work together to look after our own and by our own, we mean all of our Brothers in Arms in the Australian SF community.

We should not for one minute believe that just because a former Commando member is not directly involved in ongoing investigations, that all of the recent negative publicity will not be the cause of the opening of old wounds in anyone who served overseas in the last couple of decades. Be alert to the welfare of your Mates.

For some time too into the future, you are going to be asked questions by people who know of your SF service so here are some facts that may be pertinent in answering any of these queries.

- Everyone has the initial right to a presumption of innocence.
- Less than 20% of all current serving Commando & Support members served in Afghanistan.
- Overall, 5,745 members however did serve on 3,000 missions over 20 rotations with significant success.
- The Commando Ex-Service Organisations are working closely with our SAS colleagues and a national response will be issued directly.

As the effects of the unusual year of 2020 hopefully recede, there will still be work to do as the ramifications of the recommendations of the Brereton Report will echo for many years to come. Some of it may be confronting to our colleagues in the future and we will need to remain vigilant

The wider Commando family can continue, as "*Commandos for Life*" doing whatever we can to ensure the wellbeing of our brothers in arms – all of them!

With our collective best wishes for 2021.

MAJGEN Greg Melick AO RFD SC (Retd)
National President
Australian Commando Association

BRIG Mark Smethurst DSC AM (Retd)
Chairman
Commando Welfare Trust





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PRESIDENT'S WORD

January 2021

Welcome members, once again, I am writing to you hoping that you're all travelling well and are as fit and healthy as can be. There has been quite a bit of activity since I last wrote.

Memorial Services

Myself and our Immediate Past President, Nick H, attended the Remembrance Day Service at the Cenotaph on Ann St in Brisbane on 11 November. The official party for the service was small due to COVID-19 restrictions; however, the crowd in attendance was rather large, with a few old faces from the Regiment and mates from other units turning up and joining us as we ended up kicking it on at the Grand Central Hotel opposite the Cenotaph. It was a great day had by all.

Social Events

Mark S, our Social Member, ramped up a short notice shooting event, in the absence of our regular competition shoot against ASASA-Q, that was well attended with approx. 24 people including spouses and children all having a shot at the indoor range at Rothwell north of Brisbane. The range had been specially opened for our members and a great time was had by those attending.

The ASASA-Q also issued an invitation to join them in their regular "Red Claw" gathering and monthly get together at the Central hotel opposite the Cenotaph in Brisbane. Peter Mac flew the banner for the ACAQ and several us attended the Central Hotel. Both events are now an open invitation to the ACAQ members to come along whenever they are held. (We must have behaved ourselves). The Central Hotel get together has become a bit of a SF get together with the Special Operations Engineer Regiment Association coming along as well. I'd like to thank their President Alan "Hypo" Bowen and Social member Mick O'Mallon for getting us along to join in the fun with them. Further to this, invites we've passed along to us for the ASASA-Q end of year



President ACA QLD
Mr Graham Gough

drinks at the Ship Inn Hotel beside the Maritime Museum. Appox 50 members and their partners joined in for a great time in the upstairs area with balcony views of the surrounding city. Over \$1000 was raised during the auction at the end of the night.

I'd also like to thank Rory Mac for the beautifully crafted and personalised timber and brass "Rifle Bullet" pen which he presented to me at the Function.

Other News

I also attended the Veterans Care Association (VCA) AGM and Christmas party. I spoke with Michael Stone in regards to getting back on track

with the Timor Awakening program for our members in 2021. The VCA have a great series lined up and I can tell you from personal experience that it is a worthwhile project to be a part of. Michael was also offered, and later accepted, the role of Honorary Consul to the Government of Timor Leste. We congratulate him on this wonderful position.

I asked Luke OB, our Memberships secretary, to send out the latest edition of Harim Tok Tok! A week before I commenced the move to my new home in Ipswich, my computer went down and I was unable to open any emails or check in my other way except by phone. Luke also reports that memberships have been increasing steadily with about six new members coming on board recently and that we remain in a very healthy position going into the new year.

The New Commando Assn polo shirts are proving popular with a number being purchased in the last months. Details and prices remain the same since the last publication for those interested the Cost is \$45 plus \$10 postage. This is actual cost as we don't make any profit on the shirts. Contact me at acaqld_president@commando.org.au if you would like a shirt.

I don't have an interest piece from my personal collection ready for this issue as it's all packed away in boxes at this time. I'll make sure I have an extra in the next issue.





ACA QLD AGM

Last of all, I am looking at the last week in February to hold the AGM at a venue to be advised, however at this stage it is looking to be Saturday the 27th of February to be precise. I will float this date to the committee and "test and adjust" if needed to allow maximum attendance. I will also look at subsidising meals for those members attending as was the case this year.

Thank you for your continued support throughout the year that was 2020.
Regards,

Commando 4 Life

ACA Polo Shirts, \$55 including postage.

----- COMMANDO FOR LIFE -----

Graham Gough
President

E: acaqld_president@commando.org.au

ADDITIONAL COMMANDO NEWS

Australian Operational Service Medal – CT/SR

From www1.defence.gov.au/aosm-ctsr

Description

The Australian Operational Service Medal (AOSM) – CT/SR recognises the service of Australian Defence Force members on counter terrorism and special recovery activities from 1 November 2020.

Eligibility

The AOSM – CT/SR recognises the service of Australian Defence Force members on counter terrorism and special recovery activities as declared by the Chief of the Defence Force from 1 November 2020. Members must meet both of the following conditions:

1. The member is assigned for duty to a position on a counter terrorism activity or special recovery activity that is a declared operation.
2. The member is in support of the Tactical Assault Group or Special Recovery Force for 30 continuous days or for periods that total 30 days.

Members who do not meet the specified period due to death, injury or illness may still be eligible for the award.

Medal

The medal is a cupro-nickel medal finished in antique silver. The obverse bears an old-world stylised world globe signifying global operations, interlinked with a Federation Star. The globe is surrounded by the words 'AUSTRALIAN OPERATIONAL SERVICE MEDAL'.

The reverse bears a central horizontal stylised scroll with the words 'Defending Australia and its national interests', overlaying a wreath of mimosa, above which sits an hour glass motif signifying the ongoing vigilance and timely response of Defence.



The Australian Operational Service Medal - CT/SR

Ribbon

The ribbon has black edges, symbolising counter terrorism operations, which then fade to grey, symbolising the urban nature of operations. The blue stripes, which flank the central white stripe, represent the broader contribution of the Special Operation command staff. The white symbolises the peaceful outcome as a final action.



Reverse side of the AOSM - CT/SR

Applications

Applications are not accepted for the AOSM – CT/SR.

When a special operation is declared as eligible for the AOSM – (CT/SR) by the Chief of the Defence Force, a nominal roll containing the names of eligible ADF members will be provided to the Directorate of Honours and Awards. This list will then be utilised to issue the award directly to members without the need for an application to be submitted.

Source Documents

<https://www1.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/202010/Australian%20Operational%20Service%20Medal%20%28Counter%20TerrorismSpecial%20Recovery%29%20Determination%202020.pdf>

<https://www1.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/202010/Australian%20Operational%20Service%20Medal%20%28Counter%20TerrorismSpecial%20Recovery%29%20Instrument%202020.pdf>

Editors Note: At the time of writing the Australian Service Medal (ASM) with Clasp CT/SR is not able to be replaced by the AOSM – CT/SR unlike previous ASMs with Clasps CAMBODIA & RAWANDA which were replaced with the Australian Active Service Medal (AASM) with same clasps.





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Articles supplied by Mr Barry Higgins - ACA VIC

WW2 75th ANNIVERSARY CERTIFICATE

2 Commando Company Original Receives the WW2 Anniversary Certificate

2 Commando Company 'Original' CAPT Don Bergman, ED. (Rtd) was presented with the Second World War 75th anniversary medallion and certificate at the Noble Park RSL last December. Don's certificate was signed by the Governor General and the Prime Minister. Acknowledging the significance of the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War the medallion and certificate was made available to every living veteran of the Second World War.

During WW2 Don served in the Australian Defence Force as a young member of the Air Training Corp within the RAAF reserve, part of the RAAF. Don was one of the "Originals" in 2 Commando Company when he and George 'Taffy' Drakopoulos transferred in from the Victorian Scottish Regiment in October 1955. Don served for 20 years, until 1975, retiring with the rank of Captain after a long and distinguished career.



Don's wife Audrey (L) looks on as Don proudly displays his Certificate and Medallion after the Presentation at the Noble Park RSL. Photo provided.

----- COMMANDO FOR LIFE -----

FORMER COMMANDO'S TOP JOB

The Highest-Placed Worker in The Macedon Ranges

By Bryan Power – Gisborne Gazette

Graeme Wilson, at the age of 82, is about to resume his role as the top man in the Macedon Ranges. After a long winter break, Graeme is keen to move into his newly installed office with windows that give him magnificent 360-degree views over the shire. Yes, you've probably guessed by now that Graeme is the fire watcher who keeps a vigilant eye from atop the 32-metre tower at the summit of Mount Macedon. His workplace was upgraded last month with the cabin and access ladders replaced to improve the safety and comfort of the fire lookout observer.

Thanks to the wider, staged ladder way, Graeme will no longer need to wear a harness to climb the tower and the ascent will be much more pleasant during high winds that can exceed 100 kph at the summit. He will now enter



His view from the tower. Graeme has the ultimate corner office.
Photo Courtesy - Bendigo office of DELWP Fb page.

the cabin via a door off a walkway instead of through the hatch in the floor of its predecessor and be more comfortable on hot summer days as it is fully insulated and airconditioned. Graeme, who lives at Wallan, Vic (just North of Melbourne) with his wife Barbara, is on standby throughout the fire season to be called in whenever even the smallest likelihood of fire is expected. On Total Fire Ban days or when lightning is forecast, his shift may last as long as 12 hours. He is an

experienced fire watcher having spent 10 years in the job on the Mount Buck Tower near Orbost before starting on Mount Macedon in 2014. Prior to that, alongside nine years in 2 Commando Company, Graeme worked as a professional photographer with Kodak, followed by 17 years teaching photography courses at TAFE.



With his Steiner binoculars Graeme can spot smoke 100 kilometres away so he has the shire well covered. He is able to distinguish smoke from dust and can tell the nature of the fire from the colour of the smoke it produces. On a table in the cabin, he has a large map with the position of the tower as its central point and he is able to quickly establish a compass bearing by using one of the 360 degrees of the circumference that have been marked by a surveyor above the windows all around the cabin. He contacts neighbouring towers and working together they can accurately triangulate the position of the fire.

Graeme experienced two lightning strikes on the Mount Buck tower but none on Mount Macedon. There is a tremendous flash and bang but the towers are very well earthed to handle the charge. He once saw a tree "blown to matchsticks" by a lightning strike.

Graeme has also been privy to some interesting non-fire activity. From his Mount Buck tower, he once followed the police pursuit of a stolen truck on his radio scanner. A thief had stolen a sand truck with an attached low loader carrying a bobcat from a Melbourne building site but did not realise that there was a GPS in the truck.

Some people would find the job of a fire watcher a very lonely one, but Graeme always finds something to do to keep his mind occupied. He looks forward each year to seeing the local pair of wedge-tailed eagles soar above the tower with their latest fledgling.

The Mount Macedon Tower is part of a network of 72 strategically located fire towers that ensure maximum coverage of Victoria's parks and forests. The fire watchers protect the community by providing early detection of bushfires, communication links and intelligence gathering on fire behaviour. Replacement of the cabin cost \$250,000



Dodgy Company. Graeme on an Escape and Evasion exercise in Western Australia in his 2 Commando Company days. From left, Graeme Wilson, Ross Goddard, Norm Govett and Bruno Saulle. Photo supplied.

and was funded by the Victorian Government's Reducing Bushfire Risk (RBR) initiative.

Among other highlights during his time in 2 Cdo Coy Graeme took part in the iconic Exercise Noon Nap, alongside 1 Cdo Coy, pitted against the SAS across two locations in Western Australia, under OC Major Bill Billet. Sergeant Graeme Wilson discharged in October 1976 after nine years of dedicated service and much specialist training.

Note: This article reproduced with the kind permission of the Gisborne Gazette, December 2020 – January 2021 issue.

COMMANDO FOR LIFE

ADVENTURE BOUND

The 1 Company Intrepid Traveller

Originally printed in the December 16 issue of The Mansfield Courier & kindly reproduced with permission from the Editor Jarrah Loh, & with much appreciated support from Jeff Zeuschner.

Former 1 Commando Company member Richard Godden has completed more than 75 crossings of the Kokoda Track, but his spirit of adventure began early in life.

Until very recently, Richard Godden had walked the Kokoda Track more than any other white man in history. So, when he finally retired from guiding on the trail, he wanted to help the people that had been helping him all those years. Richard has completed more than 75 crossings of the track in Papua New Guinea and taken almost 2000 people along it. During those journeys, he became very close friends with his prized porter Rueben Baba-ga, but when finally visiting his friend's home village for the first time he was shocked to see how little the people had.



"The village has nothing - no electricity, no running water, no sewerage and they are completely cut off in the wet season," he said. There was an old rubber plantation near the village that had long been abandoned, with seemingly nothing of value left behind, but Richard realised that a small dam and piped tank left there might prove invaluable to the village down the hill. "The people had to walk a long way to get fresh water, so I thought I could work at piping this tank water from the old plantation down to the village," he said.

Once back home in Barjarg, in Victoria's Mansfield Shire, Richard went to work raising the funds needed to give these people fresh running water. With the local villagers willing to provide the labour, he calculated he



could get the project done for less than \$6000, at the same time creating what would be a hard-earned but vital asset. "If it is just given to them it won't be looked after, but if they construct it themselves, it will be theirs," Richard said. Richard approached the Mansfield Courier at the time with his new idea, wondering if we could get the word out, and thanks to his dedicated planning and the generosity of the people of Mansfield just eight months later the village had running water.

Only two months after coming up with his initial plan, he already had 35 local donors and raised just under \$10,000. "That got us well and truly where I could purchase all the plumbing equipment to get a tap every 50 metres in the village, so no one house was more than 30 metres from a tap," he said. A plumber friend of his, Brian McKenna, and Brian's partner Alison Ford followed Richard to PNG to get the work done, and by the time they arrived, the village had already 1.5km of trench dug and ready to go. The community spirit and generosity of people have overwhelmed him. "The whole village got involved from the youngest to the oldest," said Richard. "Half the work was already done, so it was just a matter of the village people dragging all the pipes out. "About 30 little kids hauled a 10,000 litre tank up a hill." It was an absolute stunning success and we achieved what I wanted fast. "It really restored my faith in people - there are amazingly generous people out there."

Richard's life hasn't been all PNG and trail walking though. Born in Sydney, he and his wife Karla Goodberry have been residents of Barjarg for more than 20 years. Though they now live in the quiet and calm sleepy hollow part of the shire, for a long time Richard's life was all abuzz with excitement and fanfare. In a world years before, a small marionette show developed by Richard eventually transitioned into a period of long service in theatre and opera production that took him from the local stages to the Melbourne Theatre Company and to the Victorian Opera Company, even including a scholarship to study overseas. He then took this experience and created his own event production company called Chang-ing

Scenes, which is how he met Karla - he was putting together a launch show for General Motors where his future wife happened to be working at the time. The couple made the tree change to their 60-acre block in 1996, and inspired by the beauty of a nearby farm, contacted Trust for Nature and arranged to have a covenant placed over it. It is where they have lived ever since. Karla said when they were first married, they were living in a unit in St Kilda, where they could literally hear the people trotting around upstairs. "We could not wait to find some solitude," she said. "And when we moved here, some neighbours suggested we got a couple of 'eaters' (meaning cattle), but we both knew we would be hopeless at farming and we wanted it to stay the way it is. I pull the St John's Wort out every time I see it and there are virtually no blackberries on the place, but I don't think we will ever get rid of the Quaking Grass, there is just too much of it."

The couple knew it was love at first sight as soon as they saw the property. To read about the rest of Richard's journey, pick up a copy of the new issue of North East Living magazine, available online.

See www.nemedia.pressreader.com/north-east-living-magazine/20201106

Note: Richard was an early serving member of 1 Commando Company in Sydney and is a respected current member and committee member of the Australian Commando Association Victoria.

COMMANDO FOR LIFE

COMMANDO SKYDIVERS 60th ANNIVERSARY

The Commando Skydivers Club Celebrate A Milestone in February 2021

The 2 Commando Company pay parade one evening in February 1961, at the Ripponlea Army Depot, was an historic occasion. Strangely, not because of the amount of beer that was consumed in the Mess afterwards - rather, the 2 Commando Company Skydivers Club began its existence!

Corporal Warren Hutchings led the initiative and was the club's first Chief Instructor. Former 2 Commando Coy soldier and SAS Officer Ian Wischusen was the inaugural secretary of the club and recalls, "It was formed at the suggestion of Warren Hutchings and with the support of



Major Phillip Bennett who was then OC, but about to leave us on a posting to the Staff College at Queenscliff". The Unit presented the club with eight old X-type parachutes which had been written off as training aids and we recruited a RAAF packer to modify them for use as freefall training chutes - they had a double blank gore with steering toggles. He also packed our 'chutes on jump weekends. The club operated out of Laverton in the group of buildings that were near the railway line and the Geelong Road", Ian said.

The first newsletters that the club produced, 'The Commando Skydiver', were edited by an Army friend of



Richard and Karla take a breather when walking the Kokoda Track together in an earlier year.



Ian's, Bill Sherriff and he was the honorary editor for about the first year's operations. Issue Number One was dated November 1961. Current ACA Victoria member Peter Lynch and others recall jumping at the RAAF base at Laverton. "We were then classified as the official Army (Skydiving) Club", Peter said. Peter was also an original member and an early club treasurer. Like many of the other members he gained his A and B licences, taking part in record attempts, displays and demonstrations and jumping from a variety of aircraft, including a Tiger Moth, Cessna, helicopter and of course the ubiquitous DC3 Dakota. There is also a story of him jumping from the Laverton RAAF base and landing on the nearby Melbourne to Geelong railway line!

The 2 Commando Company Skydivers Club was a pioneer back then, alongside the Southern Cross Skydivers and the Victoria Parachute School, both based at Pakenham. Within the first four months, the Commandos made 240 jumps, and their membership grew to more than 80 people. They also initiated or quickly followed new ideas such as baton passes and formation jumping. When the military withdrew their support the name of the club was changed to Commando Skydivers with an office in Prahran and it jumped from Pakenham, sharing the drop zone with the other two clubs. Later, with increased development at Pakenham the club moved to Tooradin. In another move it recently established itself at the Latrobe Valley Airport, located across from the Latrobe Valley Hospital, between Morwell and Traralgon.



Old skydivers. Early 2 Commando Company members and skydivers attended the 40th anniversary celebrations in 2001. From left: Peter Beasley, former SAS soldier Garry Lobb MM (rear), Lyn Gardiner, Peter Lynch, Barry Higgins (author) and Warren Hutchings, the founding father of 2 Commando Company Skydivers.

The Commandos 60th Birthday celebrations will be held across Friday 12th to Sunday 14th of February inclusive.

- **Friday 12 February** - Jumping starts at 8.30am. There will be a welcome ceremony and flag jump at 5.00pm followed by drinks at the Latrobe Regional Airport.
- **Saturday 13 February** - Jumping is from 8.30am to 6.30pm. The Commandos celebration birthday dinner on Saturday evening is from 7pm – 12am at the Century Inn, 5 Airfield Road, Traralgon. Dress is semi-formal. Dinner bookings are necessary.
- **Sunday 14 February** - Jumping begins at 9.30am.

For all details, including dinner bookings, see: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/commando-skydivers-60th-birthday-boogie-tickets-131799480795>.

If you have questions on the weekend please contact info@commandoskydivers.com.au

Accommodation options for the area within walking distance of the airport include Tandara Caravan Park, 9 Village Avenue Traralgon, 5133 6206, www.tandaracaravanpark.com and also Big 4 Park Lane Holiday Parks, 5353 Princes Highway, Traralgon 3844, 03 5174 6749.

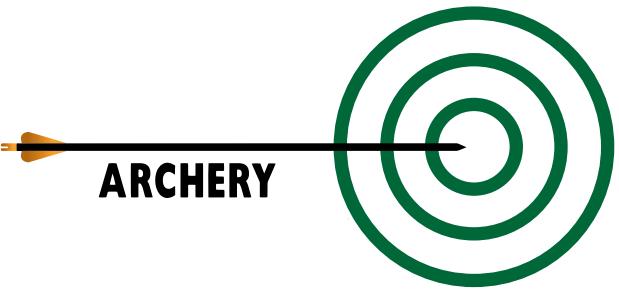
Note: If you have further questions about accommodation please contact the Latrobe Visitor Information Centre on 1800 621 409 or see www.visitlatrobecity.com



When the Military withdrew its support, the Club renamed itself Commando Skydivers and had an office and meeting room in Prahran in Melbourne.



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| 2020 Australian Commando Association Wall Plaque | | \$50.00 | | \$15.00 | |
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| 40th Anniversary 2 Commando Company | | \$ 5.00 | | \$ 15.00 | |
| Humour in SAS Signs Uniform | | \$ 5.00 | | \$ 5.00 | |
| Australia's Special Operations 1940 - 2003 | | \$ 20.00 | | \$ 5.00 | |
| RIP Incident 50th Anniversary | | \$ 5.00 | | \$ 10.00 | |

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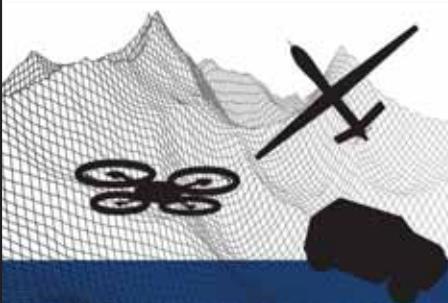
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ACA VETERANS ADVOCACY UPDATE

Mr Paul Copeland, OAM, JP. - ACA Veteran Entitlements Advisor



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
PRESIDENT REPATRIATION COMMISSION

Dear ESORT member

At the Ex Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT) meeting on 26 November 2020 departmental officers briefed members on some of the considerations in the Government's development of a final response to the Productivity Commission's report, *A Better Way to Support Veterans*.

The Productivity Commission report is comprehensive and substantial, making 69 recommendations and 26 findings across all aspects of the veteran support system. The Government's interim response to the report was tabled in the Parliament on 8 October 2020, following the Government's delivery of the 2020–21 Budget. This interim response addressed 25 of the recommendations, with a particular focus on mental health, wellbeing, employment support and transition. The full detail of the Government's 2020–21 Budget package in response to the report can be found on the DVA website.

The Government has committed to addressing the remaining recommendations in its final response to be provided as part of the 2021–22 Budget. To assist in the development of this final response, the Department continues to engage with the ex-service community.

As agreed at the 26 November 2020 meeting, the Department undertook to facilitate feedback from ESORT members. I am therefore enclosing an issues paper that has been developed for the purpose of consultation, and to seek stakeholder feedback specifically on compensation entitlements, DVA's administrative processes and the regulatory framework. There are six themes covered in the paper, and they are:

- A possible Administration Act
- Two schemes for veteran support
- Simplify and harmonise the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA)
- Simplify and harmonise legislation across different Acts
- Interactions of DVA compensation and military superannuation
- Governance and structure

Please note that the Productivity Commission received more than 300 public submissions to its inquiry into Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans. Submissions already received will continue to be recognised as part of this feedback process and will be available to DVA. Individuals and groups who have already provided submissions are not required to re-submit.

Consultation will remain open until 22 January 2021.

Feedback from the veteran community will inform the assessment of the Productivity Commission's recommendations. The Department will take stock of the responses and formulate advice to Government on an approach and an implementable timetable towards the goal of delivering a support system that is responsive to the current and future needs of veterans and their families.

I encourage your organisations to avail themselves of this opportunity to contribute meaningfully to this important Government consideration. Further, I strongly encourage each individual organisation to 'speak with one voice' and provide us with a consolidated view on each subject.

Yours sincerely

Liz Cosson AM CSC
Secretary

22 December 2020

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Saluting Their Service



Consultation on Productivity Commission Recommendations relating to Compensation Reform

To help guide your feedback, the relevant recommendations are grouped and summarised under the following themes:

- A possible Administration Act
- Two schemes for veteran support
- Governance and structure
- Simplify and harmonise the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA)
- Simplify and harmonise legislation across different Acts
- Interactions of Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) compensation and military superannuation

It should be noted that these themes cover only recommendations dealing with compensation entitlements, DVA's administrative processes and the regulatory framework.

Feedback from the veteran community will inform the assessment of the Productivity Commission's (PC) recommendations.

The consultation period is now open, and will close on 22 January 2021.

Please provide your comments in the format as suggested at the end of the Issues paper, and submit your feedback to the PC Taskforce:

by email to PC.COORD@dva.gov.au, or

by mail to GPO Box 9998 Brisbane QLD 4001

The Department will take stock of the responses and formulate advice to Government on an approach and an implementable timetable towards the goal of delivering a support system that is responsive to the current and future needs of veterans and their families.

- Protection of the information of veterans and their dependants, and the circumstances in which it may be disclosed, including information-sharing with other Government departments and agencies.
- Commencement and processing of payments, including debt recovery processes and indexation of payments.
- Principles of administration, including veteran-centric approach to decision-making.
- The powers of departmental officers, including delegations and compliance.
- Powers to make legislative instruments and the incorporation of documents by reference.
- Offences and penalties (if appropriate), for example in relation to the unauthorised disclosure of information by DVA officers, or the provision of fraudulent information by claimants.
- Definitions/Dictionary (particularly where these apply across the Principal Acts).

The key benefit of an Administration Act is simplification, which in turn will facilitate understanding of how the legislation operates and reduce confusion for veterans about why different processes apply. There is also potential for generic process provisions to allow DVA to achieve greater administrative efficiency.

Theme 2: Two schemes for veteran support

PC Recommendation

- 19.1 Two schemes for veteran support.

Background information

The PC proposes a re-shaping of the current legislative framework into a two scheme model:

- The Commission noted that the revised model would reduce complexity of legislation and remove confusion amongst veterans, and that there would be significant implementation and transitional issues that would need to be carefully considered prior to commencement in 2025.
 - Scheme 1, the current Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA) with some modifications; and
 - Scheme 2, a modified *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) which incorporates the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA).

Observations - Identified impacts and sensitivities

The PC noted that there would be significant implementation and transitional issues that would need to be carefully considered prior to commencement. There may be other large bodies of policy work that will be run parallel to the two scheme investigation, each of which are necessary precursors to commencement of the revised model.

There could be significant opportunities to harmonise provisions to remove discrepancies between the existing three Acts that could be progressed prior to and in pursuit of moving to the two-scheme model. Other threshold issues will also need to be resolved that will significantly impact the operation of the two-scheme model, such as the continued application of a "service differential" to PI claims for conditions linked to warlike/non-warlike service.

Theme 1: A Possible Administration Act

PC Recommendations

- 4.1 Objectives and principles for the veteran support system – administrative efficiency (easy to navigate and achieves timely and consistent assessments and decision making)
8.1 Harmonise the initial liability process
9.2 Appropriately train staff
10.2 Single review pathway
10.3 Veterans' Review Board as a review and resolution body
10.4 Review of ongoing role of Veterans' Review Board
12.2 DVA should provide assistance with primary claims
13.1 Harmonise the DRCA with the MRCA
13.2 Simplify the administration of invalidity pensions
19.1 Two schemes for veteran support

Background information

While the Productivity Commission Report did not specifically identify an Administration Act as a legislative reform measure, a range of recommendations including those listed above will be facilitated through the creation of an Administration Act. The aim of any legislative reform is to reduce the complexity of dealing with the three principal Acts for both veterans and for DVA, making it easier for veterans to understand the processes relating to their claims and for improved veteran experience, customer service and sustainability of DVA's administrative and financial aspects. This is consistent with a number of the Productivity Commission reforms and is also consistent with DVA's 'veteran-centric' reforms.

Drawing on the experience of other areas such as social security law, development of an 'Administration Act' will align process and machinery provisions across all three principal Acts so that they are unified, streamlined and consistent.

Observations - Identified impacts and sensitivities

The Administration Act will cover topics such as:

- A single claims approach – meaning that regardless of which Act(s) the claimant came under, they could make a single claim, potentially covering a range of conditions.
- Harmonisation of the processes relating to processing of claims, including lodging claims electronically, who may make claims on behalf of veterans and deemed claims (if appropriate – for example, deemed claims for war widows/widowers where special rate veterans pass away and have nominated their widow/widower).
- Harmonisation of the processes relating to decision-making about claims, including timeframes, the documentary evidence required, the date of effect of decisions, electronic decision-making (if appropriate) and notice of decisions.
- A single review pathway – ensuring that the review pathway for compensation/disability claims was consistent, regardless of which Act governs the claim.
- Information-gathering provisions, including requirements to provide information or undergo medical examinations.

Theme 3: Simplify and harmonise the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA)

PC Recommendations

- 7.3 Trial a veteran education allowance
8.4 Move MRCA to a single standard of proof
14.1 A single rate of permanent impairment compensation
14.5 Improve lifestyle ratings
14.7 Remove the MRCA Special Rate Disability Pension (SRDP)
14.8 Remove automatic eligibility for MRCA dependant benefits
14.9 Combine MRCA dependant benefits into one payment

Background information

The PC made a number of recommendations (some broad; others specific) aimed at bringing the MRCA up to date:

- That DVA support veterans to participate in education and vocational training once they leave the Australian Defence Force (ADF), and it should trial a veteran education allowance to provide a source of income for veterans who, after completing their initial minimum period of service and having been medically discharged, wish to undertake fulltime education or vocational training.
- Under the MRCA, service on operations is treated more beneficially in determining access to certain DVA benefits with a lower evidentiary threshold (standard of proof) and use of the more generous Statement of Principles (SoPs), and in the quantum of benefits, with higher permanent impairment compensation. It is the PC's view that this differentiation is less relevant given the nature of contemporary service, and the outcome is inequitable. Service on operations is recognised financially through specific ADF allowances and taxation exemption, and also in the eligibility for medals and awards.
- The permanent impairment guides used by DVA for measuring functional loss and lifestyle impacts of conditions are out of date and do not reflect modern clinical assessment tools and practices. It is timely for this proposed change to modernise the assessment tool(s) and incorporate best practices in the service offering of compensation and rehabilitation for veterans.
- The PC report noted that the SRDP provides little incentive for veterans to undertake rehabilitation and/or to return to work. The PC concluded that as the SRDP is not meeting its objective as an economic loss compensation safety net, the option of accessing SRDP as an alternative to MRCA incapacity payments should be removed.
- That dependants' payments be underpinned by notions of compensation for the death of a veteran only being payable where the death has resulted from the veteran's service, and that having two separate payments for widowed partners adds needless complexity and obscures the true value of the benefits.

Observations - Identified impacts and sensitivities

• Service differential
There is a distinction between types of service used in the determination of access to certain benefits and, in some cases, the quantum of benefits. This is a foundational (and at times divisive) element of DVA's compensation system that continues to be topical within the Defence and ex-service communities.

There are mixed views on the service differential, and any reduction in the reflection of operational service in the availability and quantum of benefits will possibly attract some level of criticism.



| |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent impairment In its report to Government, the PC stated that the current system of compensation and rehabilitation for veterans is difficult to navigate and needs to be brought more in line with contemporary workers' compensation schemes and modern approaches to rehabilitation, health care and disability support, and there may be a case to "harmonise" processes relating to the assessment of Permanent Impairment (PI) and lifestyle ratings for veterans. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependants The recommendation concerning automatic eligibility for dependant benefits refers to the MRCA only, but the VEA also contains automatic compensation to dependants of veterans most severely affected by their service. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRDP The PC questioned the rationale of offering a lifetime pension as an alternative to incapacity payments, given incapacity payments as compensation for loss of earnings ceases at retirement age. Recognising that the SRDP process is complex and often stressful for clients, there has been a shift towards a more beneficial application of the provisions, including in the evidentiary approach. Since 2004, there has been a number of modifications to the legislative structure and administration of SRDP, in order to improve its effectiveness as a safety net. |

Theme 4: Simplify and harmonise legislation across different Acts

| PC Recommendations |
|---|
| 8.1 Harmonise initial liability processes |
| 13.1 Harmonise DRCA with MRCA |
| 14.10 Harmonise funeral allowance |
| 15.2 Simplify and harmonise education payments |
| 15.3 Consolidate supplements into underlying payments |
| 15.4 Remove and pay out smaller payments |
| 15.5 Harmonise attendant and household services |
| 15.6 Harmonise vehicle assistance |

Background information
The PC made a number of recommendations on rationalising benefits and harmonising across the Acts:

- That having liability accepted for an injury, illness or death is the first step in most claims for compensation, and found that the variations in the initial liability processes (depending on which Act and the type of service applied) are no longer justified and should be reduced or eliminated where feasible.
- That the compensation available under the DRCA should be harmonised with that available through the MRCA. This should include harmonising the processes for assessing permanent impairment, incapacity and benefits for dependants.
- That there is opportunity to address the complex payment design and administration that exists under DVA legislation by making changes to a range of small payments through:
 - consolidation of supplements into the underlying payments, and the removal of supplements that have no rationale for continuation; and
 - cessation of certain allowances following a lump sum payout.

Observations - Identified impacts and sensitivities
These supplements and allowances are largely based in the history of the pension system.

The PC recommendation to consolidate supplements would require additional consideration where there is no primary or underlying payments.
Under the VEA, Recreation Transport Allowance, Clothing Allowance, Decoration Allowance are additional payments, which can be paid to a disability pensioner. Should current recipients be paid out with an age-adjusted lump sum as suggested by the PC, or is there another approach? The PC recommendation about funeral allowance suggests that not all VEA families be brought up to the higher MRCA/DRCA entitlement.

Theme 5: Interactions of DVA compensation and military superannuation

| PC Recommendations |
|---|
| 13.2 Simplify the Administration of Invalidity Pensions |
| 13.3 Replace Invalidity Pensions with Incapacity Payments |
| 13.4 Rehabilitation for Invalidity Payment Recipients |
| 14.6 Target Incapacity Payments at Economic Loss |

Background information
The PC proposes that:

- DVA should work closely with the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC) to streamline administration by moving to a single "front door" for invalidity superannuation pensions and incapacity compensation payments, a single medical assessment process, and more automatic data sharing;
- invalidity superannuation pensions under the ADF Cover scheme be closed, with medically discharged veterans instead having access to incapacity payments, and that dependants of medically discharged veterans who were in receipt of incapacity payments to be eligible for a reversionary payment;
- there should be a requirement for veterans seeking to access invalidity superannuation pensions to attend rehabilitation, if appropriate; and
- the MRCA remuneration loading be removed for future claimants of incapacity payments; and to introduce a superannuation guarantee for veterans without an invalidity superannuation pension, and who have been in receipt of incapacity payments for at least 45 weeks.

Observations - Identified impacts and sensitivities
Many veterans receive both incapacity payments and invalidity superannuation payments. While there are similarities between these financial entitlements, there are also many differences, in terms of who is eligible under each scheme, how the payments are calculated, for how long they are payable, and when the veteran dies, what benefits are payable to their dependants.
Veterans on MRCA incapacity payments can receive a remuneration loading — a top-up in the calculation of their normal weekly earnings to reflect the non-monetary benefits of military service. The PC considers the remuneration loading as not being targeted at the economic loss faced by veterans and reduces incentives to return to work; thus, it proposes replacing the remuneration loading with superannuation contributions.
The more substantial integration of superannuation and compensation benefits proposed by the PC would involve complex touchpoints, such as taxation and superannuation scheme rules. These would require extensive consultation with relevant agencies, to consider the implications for broader superannuation programs and initiatives, and aspects of retirement income policy.

| Theme 6: Governance and Structure |
|---|
| PC Recommendations |
| 11.1 Establish a Veteran Services Commission (VSC) |
| 11.3 Improving Policy Outcomes |
| 11.4 Create a Ministerial Advisory Council |
| 11.5 Move War Grave functions into the War Memorial |
| 8.2 Improve resourcing and transparency of the Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA) |
| 8.3 Abolish the Specialist Medical Review Council (SMRC) |
| Background information |
| The PC proposes that: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the VSC, a new statutory authority overseen by an independent board of part-time Commissioners, be established to administer the veteran support system by July 2022, to make all claims determinations, commission or provide services to veterans and their families, and manage, advise and report on outcomes and the financial sustainability of the system; responsibility for veterans' affairs be permanently vested in a single Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans; DVA to focus on strategic policy advice in the veteran support system, and work with Defence and the VSC on developing integrated 'whole of life' policy; a council be established to provide advice to the Minister on the lifetime wellbeing of veterans, best practice design, administration and stewardship of services; primary responsibility for the Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) be transferred to the Australia War Memorial (AWM), with DVA retaining responsibility for major commemoration activities and ceremonies; the resourcing and work practices of the RMA to change to allow timely reviews and investigations, and the publication of a full bibliography of the evidence used to create or update SoPs; and the SMRC be abolished, and that independent external medical specialists be called upon to review SoPs decisions as required. |
| Observations - Identified impacts and sensitivities |
| The Minister reaffirmed the Government's commitment to retain a stand-alone DVA in his foreword to the interim Government Response to the Report of the Productivity Commission. It is not possible to bind a future Government as to their preferred Ministerial arrangements. Under the existing arrangements, the present Minister is a member of Cabinet, and DVA is a single agency with which the veteran community can engage, and enables service delivery and policy development to continue to inform each other. The PC structural solution might not address problems associated with poor funding models and the complexity of the legislation that underpins the system. There could also be complications and unforeseen effects of creating a new entity or body. The role and statutory functions of the OAWG around individual recognition are different and distinct from that of the AWM as Australia's national memorial. Rather than looking only at the functions of the RMA and the SMRC, it may be timely to step back and first assess the SoPs legislative framework, and how SoPs operate in compensation processes to ensure they remain fit for purpose. |
| Stakeholder Response Template |
| Organisation Name: |
| Email: |
| Contact Person: |
| The PC received more than 300 public submissions to its inquiry into Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans. Submissions already received will continue to be recognised as part of this feedback process. Individuals and groups who have already provided submissions are not required to re-lodge those submissions. |
| To assist us with collation and analysis of the feedback, please identify the Theme or Recommendation on which you are commenting. |
| Feedback/Comments |



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SIGNIFICANT COMMANDO DATES

JANUARY - MARCH

JANUARY

22 January 1942

1st Independent Company began its fighting withdrawal from Kavieng New Ireland, New Guinea.

January 1943

2nd/5th & 2nd/7th Independent Company's fly into Wau Airfield to repel the Japanese invasion.

18 January 1943

The MV *Krait* left Camp Z at Refuge Bay, NSW headed for Cairns QLD. On board were: - Bill Reynolds, LUET D. Davidson, CPL. R.G. Morris, Acting AB W.G. Falls, Acting AB A.W. Huston, Acting AB F.W. Marsh, Acting AB M.M. Berryman and Acting AB A.M.W. Jones.

January 1944

2nd/9th & 2nd/10th Cav Commando Squadrons were raised as part of the 2nd/6th Cav Commando Regiment and 2nd/11th & 2nd/12th Cav Commando Squadrons were raised as part of the 2nd/9th Cav Commando Regiment.

FEBRUARY

February 1941

No.7 Infantry Training Centre was established at Wilsons Promontory Victoria, the home and birthplace of the Australian Commando.

19/20 February 1942

Japanese troops land in Dutch & Portuguese Timor, beginning the guerrilla campaign by the 2nd/2nd Independent Company, which would last until they withdrew in December 1942.

February 1943

2nd/2nd Independent Company arrives in Port Moresby after refit and retraining from her Timor Campaign.

February 1945

2nd/10th Commando Squadron begins combat operations protecting the flanks of the 2/5th & 2/7th Infantry Battalions 2nd AIF, pushing south towards Maprik, New Guinea.

1 February 1981

1 & 2 Commando Company's come under direct command of the 1st Commando Regiment when it was formed at Randwick Barracks in NSW. The Commando Company's would become known as 1 & 2 Company dropping the name Commando.

1 February 1997

4 RAR was re-rolled into a Commando Battalion at Jordan Lines, Holsworthy Barracks, NSW signifying the first full time Commando Capability since WW2. 4 RAR Commando would be commonly known as 4 Commando until it was renamed the 2nd Commando Regiment on 19 June 2009.

1 February 2002

Nine Commandos from 4 RAR Commando and Six RAN Clearance Diver's successfully completed the first Advanced Close Quarters Battle (ACQB) Course conducted at Swanbourne Barracks in WA. These 15 'Originals' were to become the 'Plank Holders' for the raising of Tactical Assault Group-East (TAG-E), 4 RAR Commando.

February 2003

Bravo Commando Company, 4 RAR Commando deploys to a Forward Operating Base (FOB) near Iraq as part of the Australian Special Forces Task Group, during Operation Bastille/Falconer in support of the US lead invasion of Iraq.

MARCH

March 1943

After returning from New Guinea, the 2nd/6th Independent Company (Ind Coy) reforms as the 2nd/6th Cav Commando Squadron later Commando Squadron (Cdo Sqn) of the 2nd/7th Cav Commando Regiment at the Jungle Warfare School at Canungra, South East Queensland.

For all advertising please contact...

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COMMANDOS FOR LIFE

OCTOBER to DECEMBER



04 January 2009
PTE Gregory Sher
2 Commando Company
1st Commando Regiment
Killed In Action
Urazghan Province Afghanistan



06 February 2017
SGT Peter Cafe
Delta Commando Company
2nd Commando Regiment
Died In Service
Sydney New South Wales



13 February 1963
REC Anthony Matulis
Bravo Commando Company, 4
RAR Commando
Died In Service at Engadine,
New South Wales



14 February 1981
LCPL Stephan Kennedy
1 Commando Company
1st Commando Regiment
Died In Service
Gosford New South Wales



17 February 1960
WO2 George Drakopoulos,
PTE Edward Myer & PTE Roger Wood
2 Commando Company & 41 Amphibious Platoon
Killed In Training, The Rip Victoria



30 March 1966
PTE Phillip Stewart
1 Commando Company
Killed In Training
Gan Gan, New South Wales



IN FOCUS

MAJOR GENERAL PAUL 'PK' KENNY, DSC. DSM. THE FIRST COMMANDO COMMANDER OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Major General Paul ('PK') Kenny assumed command of Special Operations Command on 26 November 2020, following his promotion in March 2020 to lead Joint Task Force 629 (Operation COVID-19 Assist) and subsequent appointment as Deputy Commander of the Defence COVID-19 Task Force in July 2020.

Graduating from the Royal Military College at Duntroon in 1989, Major General Kenny commissioned into the Royal Australian Infantry Corps. In 1994, he completed the Commando Officer Selection Course and he spent time at 1st Commando Regiment & 4 RAR Commando as a Captain, Officer Commanding (OC) Bravo Commando Company, 4 RAR Commando in 2000 and the last Commanding Officer (CO) of 4 RAR Commando in 2008-2009 & the first CO of the 2nd Commando Regiment from 19 June-December 2009.

In addition to leading Joint Task Force 629, Major General Kenny has commanded the Special Forces Training Centre (2006-07) and the International Security and Advisory Force – Special Operations Forces (ISAF SOF) in Afghanistan in 2013.

Major General Kenny's extra-regimental positions have included an instructional appointment at the Command, Staff and Operations Wing, and within Army Headquarters in the operations and preparedness staff areas. On promotion to Colonel, he was seconded to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet as the Senior Adviser Defence Policy and Operations in 2010.

Within Special Operations Command, Major General Kenny has served as Director Special Operations and Plans (2011-12) and, later, as Director-General Special Operations & Counter-Terrorism (2018-20). He also served as Deputy Director of Operations at United States Special Operations Command in Tampa, Florida, from 2015 to 2017.

Major General Kenny has deployed to Bougainville (1998), Solomon Islands (1998), Sierra Leone (2002-03), Iraq (2005) and Afghanistan (2008-09, 2012, 2013).



Official Defence Portrait of
MAJGEN Paul 'PK' Kenny, DSC. DSM.
Commander Special Operations Command Australia

Major General Kenny is a graduate of the Australian Command and Staff College and the Centre of Strategic Studies. He holds a Bachelor of Professional Studies (Disaster Management) degree, Graduate Diploma of Defence Studies, and a Master of Arts (Strategic Studies) degree.

Major General Kenny was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for exceptionally meritorious command and leadership in Afghanistan, and a Distinguished Service Medal for distinguished command and leadership of ISAF SOF. He has also been awarded the US Legion of Merit for his exceptional meritorious service as Deputy Director of Operations at US SOCOM.

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EIGHT MEN DROPPED FROM THE SKIES – PART 4 (FINAL)

FAREWELL TO SHANGRI-LA AND THE WHITE MAN'S FRIENDS

By MAJ TOM HARRISSON, DSO. MBE. Z Special Unit ~ WW2

Edited by Doug Knight – President ACA VIC

Until you've tried to walk from Brunei Bay to our hole in the jungle head-quarters at Bareo, you just wouldn't believe there could be so many mountains arranged parallel to each other and at right-angles to our line of march. Our show was male considerably worse by a peculiar native custom. When a hill tribesman dies, there is first of all a big party and feast a week later to celebrate his departure. For the next year, his family will be busy collecting rice, cattle, and gifts to have a much bigger party. The guests may run into a couple of thousand.

THE CLIMAX

The drinking of rice wine may last a week. The climax of the binge is that everyone climbs one of the local peaks and cuts a clearing or ride for 20 or 30 yards along the top of it. This is the door for the man's spirit to proceed to the afterlife. The bigger the party, the more the guests feel obliged to make a bigger door on a bigger and better peak.

And it is common form for the ordinary jungle tracks afterwards to go through these doors when they cross the range.

So, a nice flat bit of track doesn't interest a hillman. And these chaps are so long in the leg and powerful in the thigh they can carry 60 lbs. or more up the steepest mountain without worrying. I got pretty used to it myself, and ended up making two doors for my friends Squadron Leader Graham Pockleigh, D.F.C., R.A.A.F., and Major Ben Ellis, British parachutist with over 100 jumps, both of whom were lost when the plane which dropped our original party in March was shot down by the Japs a few minutes later on its way home. Only I selected the two highest and previously unclimbed mountains in Central Borneo for these two doors. That made even my native friends think twice!

SUICIDE RATE

The short-legged Japs, who had to carry all their own kit, took terrible punishment on the mountains. You are doing well here if you can march five miles a day. After about 50 miles the odd Jap began to commit suicide. After 100 the suicide rate was roughly one a day. Of course, we helped them to feel that way, ably assisted by the leeches, the rain and a few special tricks. In most places in

Borneo the leeches are a menace. They get worse as you go in. If you are in good shape, the loss of blood doesn't matter much. When you begin to weaken it makes a difference. Borneo rain is nobody's business. Up in the interior tableland it rains over 200 inches a year, and all the year round. It generally comes on about three o'clock in the afternoon. If you are wise you start marching at first daylight and start building your jungle-leaf shelters for camp by 2.30. (We never used tents or any other unnecessary equipment.)

"CREEPER" BRIDGES

Suddenly unaccountably, every stream and river in your track would be in raging flood. These floods can make progress impossible. We always had secret caches of food, and often knew special ways round difficult ridges or fords.

Better than that, the hill people are wizards at bridge building. Working with a very tough sort of vine or creeper, they can quickly swing a suspension bridge from one riverbank to another. The crossing is not recommended for those who get nervous when they hear the word Dakota. But it's a lot better than fording a flood or crossing a crocodile.

Everyone in the interior was on our side. So, as most of the areas the Japs had to cross were unmapped, they usually ended up having no idea where they were. Mostly they were trying to make for places hundreds of miles away where they believed there were Jap garrisons intact. To make sure they never got there, we obliged them by making phoney tracks. Long before the column approached, a gang of tribesmen would start from a village and cut an entirely new track slightly in the wrong direction, going off into the worst possible country for three or four days, ending nowhere.

Other tracks out of the village would be confused and obscured. Anyway, it's very difficult to find you way out of a village if you don't know, because there are scores of buffalo and wood-gathering trails in all directions. And there is no such thing as a main road in the interior. All tracks are the same width - a squeeze. On all tracks plenty of obstacles were provided. A team of natives can fell a 200 ft. jungle tree in a few minutes. It will probably take the best part of an hour to cut a way



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL
Leyburn, Queensland. 1945.
SEMUT Member undergoing Parachute Training before his insertion behind enemy lines in Borneo early in 1945.
Image courtesy of the AWM.



around. And if you are really clever you can cut one big tree on a slope and it will start a landslide.

BAMBOO TRAPS

Tribesmen are also ingenious trappers. Favourite trap is a camouflaged pit with bamboo spikes. In fact, the use of tiny dagger-shaped bamboos is common. Whole patches of ground on a track and both sides of it are sown with these needles of pain. Nothing shows, but the pressure of the foot drives the spike into the instep. Of course, we evacuated the whole population and all food supplies ahead of every Jap column. So, the further they got in, the less food they had. And they hadn't the native knowledge to live off the jungle. Nevertheless, I must pay my tribute to their amazing endurance and stamina. One column of 600 carried on for more than four months, making an average of only two miles a day, and losing one man a mile, and at the end of it 40 were still in fighting condition.

We made it easy for any column in their first stretch away from the coast. It was better to let them get in.

OUR OWN AIRFIELD

On the other hand, we didn't want them to get very far in case they started interfering with our own supply lines, radio network, or the wonderfully rich and fertile valleys of the Shangri-La uplands, where an army could live at ease for ever. And by now we had our own private airfield. We had never imagined when we dropped in that an airfield would be a possibility. But soon after we went in, we heard news of a number of American airmen shot down in the interior. We collected II and the question was: What to do with the chaps? They were in a shocking state, with Malaria, sores, dysentery and nerves. As it was impossible to walk them out, the only thing was to fly them out, so I decided to build an airfield.

I had one man to spare for the job - an Australian, Private Griffiths wonderful chap. The native labour supply was unlimited, but no one had the slightest idea on how to set about it. With a little frantic radio signalling I got a Yank Catalina to drop some buckets and spades. Unfortunately, the barefoot natives refused to use the spades. They cleared the area with

fire and sticks, hands, home-made hoes, and their feet. The men did the shovelling and flattening, the women carried away the muck. As usual, it rained every day, and our embryo airfield soon turned. The combined Australian initiative of Griffiths and bull-dog stupidity of Harrison determined to place on top of the rich mud a runway of bamboo.

IN SEVEN DAYS

Hundreds of natives cut down the biggest bamboos, which were sliced into strips. The bamboo was so elastic and strong that it never really sank into the mud. In seven days, we had a strip ready. So, two gallant Aussie pilots of an Aussie craft flight, led by Flight-Lieutenant Cheyney, of Sydney, made the hazardous journey over unmapped and unbroken country. They got in all right. He and I decided to try the first experimental take-off. After tearing through a number of rice fields and looping bank, we learned the hard way that the runway wasn't long enough. There had been an error in decoding the radio signal telling us the minimum length. Twenty-four hours later we had laid another 70 yards of bamboo.

Now, with a shuttle service to Labuan, we flew out the Yanks. And we were able to go down and consult with the regular army people, or even go out for the night for a party. It made a big psychological difference. One RAAF type, 6 ft. 3 in. Flight Lieutenant Paul Bertram, an Englishman from Oxford, took charge of the airfield and Shangri-La Headquarters. The place began to become a perfect tourist resort, with brass-hats coming up for a weekend for the cool mountain air and the strong rice wine.

The fertile valleys teemed with cattle, buffalo, pigs, goats, fowls, fruit and vegetables. The natives grew excellent tobacco and themselves were generous and hospitable. By the time the war ended in August we were ready to go home, or to sit in Shangri-La. Unfortunately, some Japs thought differently. In particular, one large column refused to surrender. After a month they ran out of salt. Then they heard that there was some salt away in the uplands. So, they started making for our airfield.

IN THEIR REAR

By this time, I was around in their rear, with Major Rex Blow, an Australian who had escaped from a Jap P.O.W. Camp in North Borneo, became a much-decorated guerrilla leader in the Philippines, and now came along with me for the fun of it, the war being otherwise over. Paul Bertram commanded the Forces from the Shangri-La end. The Australian Paratroop officers had all gone home. Paul knew nothing about soldiering. I sometimes think, after what I've seen in Borneo, that the less you know about it the better. Be that as it may, when the moment came, Paul stopped the Japs absolutely dead with some of the nicest, if most chaotic, pieces of military tactics I have seen or heard of. What was left of this Jap column finally gave



An Auster Mk III number A11-17 overturned on takeoff in Bawang Valley in the Borneo hinterland during an attempt to rescue the crew from a crashed American B-24.
Fit Lt Frederick Chaney and his passenger, Army Major Harrison were both unhurt.
Source: <https://www.goodall.com.au/australian-aviation/austers-mk1/austmilitaryausters.html>





Maj Rex Blow DSO
in Borneo 1945.

Image source: Courtesy of the AWM

first person to drop in, I thought I might as well be the last person to come out.

BRAVE AND TRUE

So, from November 1945 to July 1946, I remained in the lonely and beautiful mountains evacuating Japs, disarming guerrillas and clearing up the mess. Perhaps I didn't appreciate how lucky I was. At least, not until I hit the coast and the first newspaper hit me. Up there, we had never heard of UNO or Ernie Bevin, we innocently thought that after the war there would be peace in Europe as in Borneo. Now I can look back and think of the way those people risked every-thing to fight for the white man against the Jap. I hope the British and Dutch Governments will never forget that in Borneo, as in Burma, it was the hill tribes, the so-called backward and uncivilised peoples, who proved the truest and the bravest citizens.



SEMUT 1 - VP Day Celebrations - Belawet Bamboo Band
August 1945

Image courtesy of the: AWM - Item 8295657

up on October 31, 1945, exactly four miles from the airfield.

During the war no Jap had been able to get within 50 miles! It took the peace to really shake us up in our Shangri-La. The war was strictly over now. There were 350 sick Japs on our hands about as far from civilisation or the nearest military policeman as anyone could be: there was plenty of work left in the interior. As I had been the



A message from Luke

I'm encouraging as many people as possible across Australia to come up to Darwin and explore the Territory's military history, with up to \$1000 off your travel costs, thanks to the NT Government.

Did you know that Darwin was Australia's battlefield in World War Two? It had more bombs dropped on it over 18 months than Pearl Harbor.

I hope as many Aussies as possible can get up here to find out more, and to join us in commemorating the 79th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin on February 19.

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our Indigenous heritage and culture, wander through our colourful local markets, and explore the sites that make the Top End such an important part of Australia's Commando and WWII history.

Whether that's visiting the Darwin Military Museum and Defence of Darwin Experience at East Point or Darwin's Aviation Museum in Winnellie or RFDS Darwin Tourist Facility and the WWII Oil Storage Tunnels at the Waterfront, there's something for everyone. Find out more here:

northernterritory.com/promotions/summer-sale

A handwritten signature of Luke Gosling.

Luke Gosling MP
Federal Member
for Solomon
Co-Chair Parliamentary Friends of Veterans Commando4Life

Luke Gosling is the Federal Member of Parliament for Darwin and Palmerston and served in the ADF for 13 years.

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THE FORBIDDEN CROSS-BORDER HOT EXTRACTION

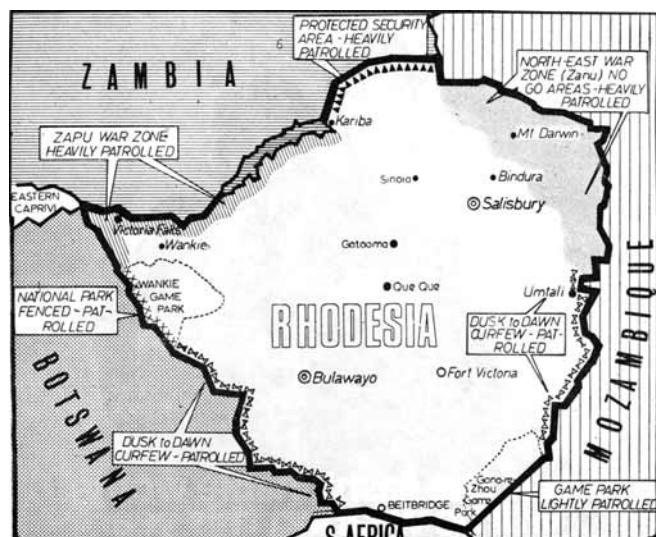
THE 'BUSH WAR' HELICOPTER PILOT ACE, FLT LT MIKE BORLACE RHODESIAN AIR FORCE

First Published in reclaimingrhodesia.com 08 February 2020

The secret night mission across the border into hostile Marxist Mozambique was completed. The CT [communist terrorist] camp was all but destroyed and all Hell had broken loose. The 31-man SAS patrol began a hasty retreat on foot back to the Rhodesian border. In a surprise counter-attack the SAS patrol found themselves cut-off from the border by swarms of armed troops of the extremely savage Frelimo government. They are everywhere, saturating the bush, using the cover of the night and then the light of the new day, to hunt down the trapped SAS men one-by-one...

By Sally-Ann Lowe

Despite an urgent radio communication request by the leader on the ground, Major Graham Wilson, for several helicopters to do an immediate 'hot extract' of all 31 troops out of enemy territory, Air Headquarters – disgracefully – were not immediately forthcoming, muttering about 'political ramifications of being seen using helicopters over the border' and 'considerations of using high value assets', and the like. No slouch to bravery, Major Graham Wilson was later to become the last Commander of C Squadron (SAS) and the most highly decorated soldier of the Rhodesian Bush War. The Rhodesian Air Force used French manufactured Alouette III helicopters¹ which were limited by weight and space to transporting only 4 soldiers, with their heavy military packs and weaponry, in addition to the pilot and his technician cum gunner, so a total of 6 was the maximum number permitted.



Map of Rhodesia during the 'Bush War'

Meanwhile the situation was seriously deteriorating by the minute for the pursued men hotfooting it back toward home territory. They were now conducting a continuous 'guns blazing' style fighting withdrawal with their very survival at stake. Back in Rhodesia at their Mary Mount Mission SAS support base in the north east of Rhodesia,

anxious Commander Martin Pearce, still awaiting approval for helicopters from the top brass in their ivory tower, had explained the drastic situation to local helicopter pilot Mike Borlace. Only one helicopter and pilot were allocated to support this Mission in case of emergencies and that was Mike Borlace.

Without hesitation Mike decided to use his lone helicopter, while they all awaited 'the nod', to start immediate hot extractions to begin the uplift of 'sticks' of 4 men at a time. They established a refueling point just inside the border and Mike would use minimum fuel and refuel to minimum requirement each time he dropped off a stick. But how to land, uplift and takeoff and all survive while constant battle was in progress?

"We devised a pattern whereby they stand and settle into a static firefight with their pursuers, then break contact and run hard when we are about 10 minutes away in order that there are no enemy forces around the LZ whilst we are in the vulnerable positions of approach, landing and take-off. It works well but there are Freds [Frelimo] all over the place and we keep taking fire on each trip from groups scattered between the patrol and the border. We've got down to 16 guys left over the way and we have a rethink. They don't want to leave an unviable fighting force on the ground. There is still no decision as regards extra helicopters. Ammunition is also becoming an issue so we take in a limited resupply on the next trip. Then disaster strikes."

Disaster Strikes During 'Hot Extractions'

A handling error occurred as Mike attempted an awkward manoeuvre down into a narrow refueling zone amongst tall trees with a load of the extracted soldiers. A loud cracking sound emanated from the Alouette! Mike held the helicopter in a low hover as the 4 men quickly exited. DB, his technician cum gunner, checked underneath the aircraft. He saw the nose wheel oleo had snapped. He therefore ordered the aircraft shut down as it was now officially u/s (under service).

Who Needs a Nose Wheel?

Once the helicopter was shut down it would have to remain out of action leaving the remainder of the SAS patrol over the border in isolation in a vulnerable position in defending themselves from the hordes of enemy. Mike Borlace ignores his technician's shut down order. Instead he maintains the low hover, and asks DB to remove panels underneath the aircraft to see if certain internal essential

¹The Aérospatiale Alouette III (Lark; company designations SA 316 and SA 319) is a single-engine, light utility helicopter developed by French aircraft company Sud Aviation.



parts are damaged. At the same time Mike is hooked up to communicate with distressed SAS Commander Martin Pearce while holding the hover.

Mike Borlace: "He tells me that the air request for more



A Rhodesian Air Force Alouette III

helicopters has been turned down but that they have now upgraded it to a 'life or death' request as things have turned pear shaped for the guys over the border and they are in deep serious doo-doo. The reinforcement helicopters cannot be here until last light at the earliest which probably means no extraction until the morning. DB reappears and says there doesn't seem to be any damage to the control rods but I must shut down as he is not prepared to certify the aircraft as fit to fly. I tell him to wind his neck in and dismantle the nose wheel and then get fuel in while I maintain the hover. He starts to give me a lecture on serviceability and the legalities of continuing to fly. The SAS Officer starts to reason with him about the peril the men over the way are in but I cut him short, explain to DB in words of one syllable that I'll take care of the paperwork and as long as I don't shut down the aircraft, it has not technically been put u/s, and to get his arse into gear as I am getting tired holding the hover. He is extremely hacked off but gets to work."

To be fair to the technician, from his perspective, their flights across the border had not been approved, he was responsible, in these times of global economic sanctions, for the survival of the Air Force's scarce thus precious resource, the Alouette helicopter, and he was following official regulations. Yet closing down the aircraft would have likely resulted in the deaths or worse, the capture, of the remaining 12 combatants.

A New Dilemma and Crucial Decision is Made

An unenviable decision now had to be made – whether to start returning men over the border to reinforce those left behind or whether to continue depleting the patrol by continuing to uplift 4 men at a time. Rather than another 3 trips which would leave just 4 men behind under attack at the end, Mike made the daring decision that he would attempt to uplift them all in just 2 further runs. This meant 5 men next run and then, unbeknownst to DB, all remaining 7 soldiers in a final run. This last uplift would therefore total 9 men, a number considered a physical space, weight and gearbox 'no-no' for the Alouette III.

This plan required that on the final run the last 2 soldiers boarding would need to remain outside the

aircraft standing on the step and hanging on for dear life. Those inside would have to hold on to them to prevent them falling to the ground if they got shot as the grossly over-weight and stressed to the max helicopter would never be able to manoeuvre back down to retrieve them.

Everything possible was first removed from the aircraft to lighten the load including tools, refueller, and ammunition. The first uplift of the 5 men went reasonably well as they had broken contact temporarily although DB grumbled a bit about the consequences to the gearbox. To increase power to take off "there is a maximum contingency setting which we can pull for 2 seconds for emergency use" and Mike went straight to this. They took a fairly heavy burst of small arms fire from a group of Frelimo on the way in and passed over another group on the way out though these instead ducked for cover.

"They unloaded the men and refueled at which point DB was stunned to find out that the intention was to uplift all 7 of the remaining soldiers in one go "and started whinging big time".

The last remaining 7 soldiers had meanwhile discarded and booby-trapped all their kit, except guns and communications radio. Just as they were entering the Alouette the leading edge of the Frelimo forces appeared at the LZ and started firing. Despite the extra weight and given that the power being used was way beyond the design limits, with Mike's skilful manoeuvring they took off fairly easily, with 2 men standing outside the helicopter on the step but hanging on. However, a new and serious problem then developed!

Disaster Strikes

"The centre of gravity of the helicopter is now out of limits too far forward and the cyclic stick is back against the stop. I have no more collective to pull in, and no more movement in the cyclic to raise the nose so we are not gaining any height to clear the bush in front. There is obviously no way we can land and sort this problem out so I scream to DB to get the soldiers to lean as far to the rear as they can and for the two chaps on the outside to move as far back as they can."

This worked sufficiently enough to enable Mike to aim toward a gap where the bush was thinner. They exploded through it, the rotor chopping branches. He carefully avoided tree trunks, but branches were flying everywhere! They slowly moved on out but were limited in power and



A RAF Alouette III showing the Technician (Door Gunner) (left rear) and a Rhodesian soldier with a MAG58 in the Navigator's seat.



speed and could only move forward just over the treetops. It was decided to drop off 4 men just before reaching the Rhodesian border, drop the rest over the border, then return immediately to pick up the 4. This was achieved successfully and incredibly, a later check on the Alouette showed there was no damage to the gearbox, a remarkable testament to its manufacture by the French.

On their arrival over the border SAS commander, Pearce, already had a security party right at the border to defend them as well as some crates and sandbags on which to rest the wheel-less helicopter nose so that the Alouette could be safely shut down. DB ensured the weight rested on a rare part of the nose that could handle the load, requiring several fiddly hovering adjustments from the pilot who at last could eventually rest the nose safely on the mount then shut down the rotors after having his hands on the controls for 3 hours, and exit the aircraft. *"Everyone here is just relieved and disbelieving that we are all here and unscathed."*

DB never flew with Mike again and he learned later that a few of the other technicians apparently refused to ever fly with him. Yet Borlace never took it personally and maintained tremendous respect for the role and capabilities of the Rhodesian helicopter technicians cum gunners under extreme pressure, so much so that the dedication in his book reads:

"This book is dedicated to the real heroes of the Rhodesian Air Force. All of the technician/gunners of 7 Squadron

But most especially to the memory of "Hajj" Flight Sergeant Henry Allan James Jarvie, MFC

Killed in action, Mtoko, 12 January 1978".

Mike Borlace, Gun Ship Pilot and Fireforce Commander, himself is a genuine hero of the Rhodesian Air Force. Call sign Spider Zero Seven, he was just one of the many exceptionally reliable and brave young men whose pivotal role in 7 Squadron as helicopter pilots under extreme pressure in the Bush War effort placed their lives time and again in mortal danger. They repeatedly performed essential tasks such as direct involvement in the unique and lethal fireforce counterinsurgency actions, lifesaving CASEVACS under the most hair raising situations and, in the enemy's killing grounds, doggedly performed 'hot extractions' under fire.

Mike, Rhodesia Silver Cross recipient², was a 'man among men' with that 'can do and will do when lives are at risk' defiant spirit. It was dependable men like him that nurtured the close bond of mutual respect achieved between Rhodesia's Air Force and the Ground Forces who greatly appreciated their support whenever the SHTF. On one mission alone his helicopter was hit 47 times. Amazingly, both he and his then technician cum gunner Mark Furnell and the aircraft (with some patching up) survived this barrage.

A Brit 'Press-Ganged' into the Rhodesian Air Force

Mike was born in Cornwall, England and trained in the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy, becoming an operational commando helicopter pilot. His entry into the Rhodesian Air Force was 'accidental'. In fact, he had just been approved to join the Air Force of the Sultan of Oman.

On receiving a discrete large brown envelope with his contract papers to fly Hawker Hunters for the Air Force of

the Sultan of Oman, Mike was mystified to receive at the same time a second large anonymous brown envelope containing a recruiting application from the Rhodesian Air Force, thanking him for his enquiries! Clearly, it can be amazing what comes out of a get together and chin wag between a group of ex-British military pilots visiting the Red Lion, their favourite London watering hole. New acquaintance, ex Royal Air Force character 'Jock' MacGregor, who had very closely quizzed Mike on his background experience and future plans, turned out to be in service with the Rhodesian Air Force and discretely trawling for suitable qualified 'volunteers'.

A partial quote from Patrick King, Producer, Westminster King Productions:

"I have known and shared adventures with Mike for over thirty-five years so it is a real pleasure to be asked to produce his book and a documentary about the Rhodesian conflict.

Of the 1,096 days he served in 7 (Helicopter) Squadron, 793 days were on combat operations. During this period 327 days were as a gunship pilot and fireforce commander, resulting in 149 contacts with the enemy, in addition to 204 fireforce operations that resulted in no contact.

He undertook 82 casevac and 99 operations with the Rhodesian SAS, the Selous Scouts and Rhodesian Light Infantry Commandos on cross-border raids, including several hot extractions of compromised troops under fire.

He was shot down 5 times and wounded twice, and is one of only 5 holders of the Silver Cross, the highest gallantry award given to members of the Rhodesian Air Force.

Mike's service record could easily be mistaken for a movie script except that real life is often more extraordinary than the wildest fiction. In 1978, he left the Air Force to join the highly secret Selous Scouts..."



FLT LT Mike Borlace on receiving the Silver Cross of Rhodesia (SCR).

²The Silver Cross of Rhodesia (SCR) was Rhodesia's second-highest military decoration for conspicuous gallantry. The medal was a sterling silver cross with an enamelled roundel in the centre bearing a lion's head, suspended from a ribbon woven half-red and half blue, with green edges and narrow white stripes at the inner edge of the green. The medal was impressed in small capitals with the recipient's name on the reverse, and was awarded with a case of issue, miniature medal for wear, and an illuminated certificate.

SCR Citation

Flight Lieutenant Michael Borlace

Flight Lieutenant Borlace, as a helicopter captain, has been involved in several heated engagements with terrorists and has on a number of occasions directed operations with complete disregard for his own safety. During one contact, his aircraft was hit and damaged to such an extent that it became extremely difficult to control. He then skilfully executed a precautionary landing some 1,500 metres from the main contact and, once the aircraft had been secured, joined the ground forces and continued the contact on foot. Within a few days, Flight Lieutenant Borlace was again in action. He came under fire and his aircraft was struck seven times, wounding him in the hand.

After he was shot, Flight Lieutenant Borlace had the use of only the thumb and index finger on the wounded hand but he continued to engage the terrorists until the operation was completed. Flight Lieutenant Borlace, under difficult and hazardous conditions, has displayed conspicuous gallantry, allied with aggressiveness and professional skill of an outstanding order.



THE LAST COASTWATCHER

Did the Japanese plan to invade Australia?

By Mr James 'Jim' Burrowes, OAM. – M Special Unit, WW2, ACA VIC

After bombing the US Fleet at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 and thus starting the Pacific War, the Imperial Japanese Air Force carried out regular bombing raids to terrorize the citizens of targeted countries. These included China (on its south coast), the Philippines, Hong Kong, the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), Malaya, Burma, Thailand, Singapore, New Britain (Rabaul) and New Ireland (Kavieng) as precursors to signal that an invasion was imminent (and, in most cases, later executed).

Following the occupation of Rabaul, including its airfields, the Japanese Air Force continued its campaign of terror when it bombed several townships along the north-west, north and east coasts of Australia. This was done in 97 bombing raids and included Darwin, capital city of the Northern Territory, which was bombed on 19 February 1942 at the cost of 243 lives.

Simultaneously, Japanese submarines also had significant successes operating along the east coast of Australia where 19 merchant ships were sunk by torpedoes, gunfire or mines off the New South Wales coast during 1941-1944. This included the hospital ship *Centaur* sunk on 12 May 1943, with the loss of 268 passengers, and the converted ferry *HMAS Kuttabul*, which resulted in the death of 21 sailors on the morning of 1 June 1942 when Sydney Harbour came under direct attack from Japanese midget submarines. These submarines were all subsequently sunk, and their entire crews lost.

However, with the Japanese advance in full swing and with Rabaul now operational as a Japanese base, did the Japanese plan to invade Australia?

Here is a response to that question based on information gleaned and collated from internet sources:

Subsequent to the invasion and occupation of Rabaul on 22 January 1942, elements of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) proposed an invasion of Australia. This proposal was opposed by Isoroku Yamamoto, the mastermind of Pearl Harbor and now Commander of the Combined Fleet, the Imperial Japanese Army, and Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, who did not regard it as feasible given Australia's geography and the strength of the Allied defences.

According to Tojo: 'We never had enough troops to [invade Australia]. We had already far out-stretched our lines of communication. We did not have the armed strength or the supply facilities to mount such a terrific extension of our already over-strained and too thinly spread forces. We expected to occupy all New Guinea, to maintain Rabaul as a holding base, and to raid Northern



Tojo Hideki was Japanese Prime Minister from 17 October 1941 to 22 July 1944.

Australia by air. But actual physical invasion—no, at no time. See 'Proposed Japanese invasion of Australia during World War II'.

Question Answered, By the Highest Authorities!

In so doing, the Prime Minister Hideki Tojo had automatically rejected any reason whatsoever for occupying Port Moresby as the launchpad for an invasion of Australia. Nevertheless, I list the dire consequences of four ensuing Japanese campaigns as they prosecuted their attempt to occupy Port Moresby, for which they now had no purpose.

1. At the Battle of the Coral Sea on 4-8 May 1942 the Japanese attempt to invade Port Moresby was defeated. The Japanese flotilla lost 15 ships, 5 aircraft and 966 crew, as it retreated to Rabaul.
2. From late July 1942 until the end of the Kokoda campaign and the 'Beachhead' campaigns at Buna, Gona and Sanananda, the Japanese suffered 13,600 killed, and in the end lost the campaign through lack of food and supplies, retreating to Rabaul.
3. In August 1942 the Japanese invaded Milne Bay with the objective of attacking Port Moresby from the flanked airstrip. In the event, they were repulsed and again forced to retreat to Rabaul, leaving behind 750 killed.
4. Whilst the Japanese objective of securing Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands in August 1942 was not a direct attack on Australia, it was nevertheless intended to secure control of the sea lanes of communication and to sever the provision of US supplies and equipment to the eastern seaboard of Australia. However, the defeat of the Japanese Navy by US Forces at Guadalcanal, based on intelligence reports sent by Australian Coastwatchers (M Special Unit), cost the Japanese 24,000 troops killed with an additional 6,000 wounded or dead from fever, as well as the crews of 38 warships and 683 aircraft lost.

So while it had been mooted that Port Moresby, if secured, could be used as a base from which Japanese aircraft could dominate the Torres Strait and Coral Sea (but not to support an invasion of Australia as noted above) it proved to be unnecessary given that ultimately they were able to bomb targets 97 times in Australia from the Rabaul airfields!

In the end, all of these campaigns were to no avail! So why did the Japanese prosecute these campaigns when Yamamoto and their Prime Minister Hideki Tojo had already rejected the notion of using Port Moresby as a base to invade Australia?

Tragically, thousands of Japanese soldiers were needlessly sacrificed in service to the flag of the Rising Sun.

Unfortunately, despite being significantly fewer in number, the fatalities of Australian and US troops were also innocent victims of an unprovoked war.



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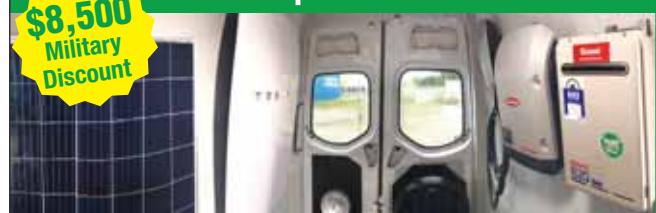
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RAAF SPECIAL FORCES

B Flight, 4 Squadron, RAAF – The ‘Combat Controllers’

BFlight No. 4 Squadron is a Royal Australian Air Force Flight composed of a Special Operations Combat Control Team (CCT) composed of Combat Controllers responsible for Reconnaissance, Joint Terminal Attack (JTAC) control and Advanced Force Operations (AFO), doing so either as part of a larger advanced force supporting the SASR or Commandos from the 1st & 2nd Commando Regiments, or independently.

Combat Controllers provide a range of capabilities, including Forward Air Control of Offensive Air Support, Landing Zone Reconnaissance, Aviation Meteorology Observation and Airspace Management.

History

The CCTs of B Flight (Flt), 4 Squadron (Sqn), Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) trace their origin to 2006 when the Special Operations Commander Australia (SOCAUST) asked the Deputy Chief of Air Force whether the RAAF was capable of fielding personnel similar to the United States Air Force Combat Controllers who had been working alongside Australian Special Forces in Afghanistan.

As a result, the RAAF Air Group Combat Commander established the Special Tactics Project Proof of Concept Trial. The aim was for selected volunteers to pass the Commando Reinforcement Training Cycle (CRTC), and trained as JTACs before deploying in Support of Special Forces Units.

Between 2008 and 2009, three intakes completed initial training and four members deployed during combat operations in Afghanistan with the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG). This resulted in the ‘Combat Controller’ mustering (RAAF terminology for ‘ECN’) and Air Surface Integration Officer streams being created in 2012 and the CCT role declared an Initial Operating Capability.

Selection & Reinforcement Training

Selection to become a Combat Controller is open to any ADF member and involves completion of the 8-week CCT Intake Course providing preparatory ground skills training and to prepare volunteers for the Special Forces Entry Test (SFET). Volunteers need to pass the Special Forces Entry Test, complete the Commando Reinforcement Training Cycle



The CCT Airpower Grey Beret & CCT Badge



CCT Badge surmounted on the SF Black Felt Shield worn on all Australian SF Berets by Qualified Operators.
Image Courtesy: Julian Tennant at www.juleswings.wordpress.com

(CRTC), Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC), Aviation Meteorology, Assault Zone Reconnaissance and Air Weapons Delivery courses.

CCT Beret, Badge & ‘Commando Wings’

After passing selection and completing nearly two years of training, the Combat Controller is awarded with their distinctive ‘Air-Superiority Grey’ coloured beret. The colour signifying the presence of aviation in the daily duties of the combat controller.



RAAF Combat Controller Team Qualification Badge



The CCT ‘Commando Wings’
Image Courtesy: Julian Tennant at www.juleswings.wordpress.com



The CCT Berets amongst the Commando Berets ready to be presented to the New ‘Operators’ at a recent Beret Parade in Sydney.

The distinct CCT qualification badge is of a gun-metal grey coloured wings on a black shield surmounted by the Australian Army Stiletto (AAS) ‘Commando Dagger’¹. The CCT unit badge when worn on the Grey beret is mounted on the black felt shield as per the Commando qualified operators of the 1st & 2nd Commando Regiments. The CCT badge is also worn as a qualification badge on RAAF Dress uniforms and Mess Dress on the left breast above medals, ribbons and flying wings but below the RAAF Ground Combat Badge².

The Commando Dagger on the CCT badge represents the close link Combat Controllers share with the Special Forces units they support. The Shield symbolises the protection of ground forces from harm during combat operations and the wings represent the air-power integration role of the Combat Controller.

The CCT ‘Commando Wings’ are of the same design as the ‘Commando Wings’ worn by Commando qualified operators of the 1st & 2nd Commando Regiments however, the CCT wings are of a white descending parachute with light blue wings on an Air Force Blue background. The wings are worn on RAAF dress uniforms and a miniature version is worn on Mess Dress.

¹The Commando Dagger (AAS) is the same as that on the current 1st & 2nd Commando Regiments unit badges.

²The GCB is the RAAF equivalent to the Infantry Combat Badge (ICB).





A CCT Operator From 4 Sqn, RAAF
On Exercise in Australia.

Image Courtesy: Department of Defence

Operations & Training

Between 2008 and 2009, three intakes completed initial training and four members deployed on operations with the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) to Afghanistan. Combat Controllers have served continuously with the SOTGs from 2008 rotating on each SOTG rotation until withdrawal of the SOTG in December

2013. A CCT Sergeant attached to Bravo Commando Company, 2nd Commando Regiment was awarded a Commendation of Gallantry (CoG) for his actions during heavy fighting in Afghanistan during Rotation XVI. CCT members are attached to the Commando Companies and SASR Sabre Squadrons and form an integral part of the JTAC capabilities.

Since their formation, the CCT's have conducted several joint exercises with allied nations and recently in late 2019 early 2020, assisted in humanitarian operations within Australia as part of the ADF efforts to combat the devastating bushfires that swept large tracts of the east coast of Australia over the summer months.

Article Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._4_Squadron_RAAF
<https://juleswings.wordpress.com/tag/raaf-4-sqn/>

COMMANDO FOR LIFE

ADDITIONAL COMMANDO NEWS

ADF Orders New NVGs with Augmented Reality

From CONTACT Magazine

Some Australian Defence Force personnel will be equipped with new night-fighting capability that combines low-light augmentation, thermal imagery and augmented reality inputs.

The \$173 million investment will deliver more than 5500 helmet-mounted fused night vision systems to the ADF in about three years.

Missions Systems Australia has been awarded the contract to deliver the capability which is expected to be rolled out by 2023.

Minister for Defence Linda Reynolds said the equipment would ensure Australian soldiers were better equipped to fight and win in all conditions.

"The new fused night vision systems will provide



Australian Army officer Lieutenant Jackson Healy, 2RAR, on Exercise RIMPAC 2018. INSETS: Top: a fused image in 'outline' mode and, Bottom: a regular night-vision image. The minister also supplied the main image to illustrate this story, but we don't know if the device Lt Healy is wearing is the device in question. Main photo by Corporal Kyle Genner.

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greater survivability to our ADF personnel through increased situational awareness and the ability to detect movement at greater distances," Minister Reynolds said.

"The fused night vision system will also allow augmented reality enhancements, including location and navigation data in the heads-up display."

Minister Reynolds said Mission Systems Australia was an Australian subsidiary* company with 150 employees nationally, and maintenance and distribution facilities around Australia.



THE STORY OF HMAS ARMIDALE & TEDDY SHEEAN, VC

By Mr Dick Pelling - ACA VIC



The Crest of
HMAS Armidale
(I) during WW2.

Readers might recall the recent Teddy Sheean, VC investiture ceremony that took place on Tuesday, 1st December at Government House, Yarralumla, where the Governor General, the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) presented the VC to Teddy's nephew Garry Ivory, representing the Sheean family.

In his address Governor General Hurley said: "The story resonates because of Teddy himself. Linda and I have had the pleasure of meeting some of his relatives who knew him. By all accounts he was charismatic, popular, loud and bursting with confidence. His rowdy last night in Latrobe before departing is still a strong part of local folklore". In the words of Dr Ray Leonard, the last surviving sailor from Armidale, "Teddy was the youngest man on the ship but also one of the most outspoken. He came across as a popular, affable, warm, likable man. He didn't speak quietly. He was not lacking in confidence. He was a go getter."

World War II hero Teddy Sheean finally received his posthumous Victoria Cross exactly 78 years after his death. The Honourable David Hurley continued with: "It is a momentous and historic day for the Sheean family, for the Tasmanian community, for the Royal Australian Navy and the entire ADF, and for Australia. It is a day to remember Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean".

Melbourne Service for HMAS Armidale

It was a few days after the Yarralumla investiture service, on Sunday, December 6th, 2020 after receiving an invitation to the 'Last Post' Ceremony from the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance, that the last survivor, Able Seaman Ray Leonard, laid a wreath to remember his lost ship mates from the sinking of HMAS Armidale. Ray attended with his wife Beryl and daughter Carol in company with Australian Commando Association Victoria Vice President John Woodruff and Dick Pelling. Also in attendance were Geraldine Hare and her children, family of the survivors of the sinking

of the Armidale, as well as Commodore Greg York CSC, RAN senior naval officer of Victoria, and staff from the 'Star of the Sea College' who support the Corvette Association.

This year marks the 78th year of the sinking of the Armidale which was one of sixty Corvettes built in Australia and was the only Corvette sunk by enemy action. After introductions were made Ray Leonard was invited, together with Commodore Greg York to lay a wreath followed by a wreath from ACA Victoria and a wreath from Geraldine Hare and family members. Ray was then invited to say The Ode which was followed by the Last Post and Reveille. It was a moving ceremony particularly for it being held in the Sanctuary of the Shrine of Remembrance where the resonance of the pipes and bugle raised the hairs on the neck, adding to the solemnity of the occasion.



Beryl (L) Ray Leonard (C) and daughter Carol Reid, at the Last Post Service, Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne
Image: Courtesy Sandy Pelling.



ACA Vic members
Dick Pelling (L) and
John Woodruff with
Ray Leonard, (C).
Image: Courtesy Sandy
Pelling

Ray Leonard's Story

Ray Leonard remembers that with no sign of rescue the survivors built a raft to cling to and over the next couple of days, using it as a dock to repair a bullet-riddled and half submerged boat called a whaler. Ray was one of the 29 men chosen to row the whaler toward Darwin. The others remained on the raft and Ray still recounts the tremendous silence and deep sadness of their separation. There was

dangerously little food and water on the whaler and as each day passed, the men suffered increasingly from hunger and thirst and began to show signs of physical and mental exhaustion.

On the seventh day a RAAF Catalina aircraft found the whaler and advised that they had dropped provisions to the men still on the raft. On the eighth day Ray and the others were finally rescued by HMAS Kalgoorlie and taken to Darwin. Despite extensive air and sea searches the men on the raft were never seen again.



HMAS Armidale's Task in Timor

Leading up to the *Armidale*'s sinking, it was late November 1942, when the RAN was called on to evacuate the Commandos of the 2nd/2nd Independent Company, a contingent of Dutch troops, and over 100 Portuguese civilians, while delivering a relief contingent from the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army. There were three AIF volunteers on board whose job was to go on the beach during the evacuations and provide air cover with machine guns. *Armidale*, sister ship *Castlemaine*, and the auxiliary patrol boat *Kuru* were assigned to the operation by Commodore Cuthbert Pope, Naval Officer in Charge Darwin, with *Castlemaine* the commanding ship. The plan was for *Kuru* to reach Betano Bay early on the night of 30 November, offload supplies and take on the civilians. The two corvettes were to arrive two hours later; *Kuru* would deliver her passengers to *Castlemaine*, which was to head for Darwin at first opportunity, then shuttle relief troops aboard *Armidale* to shore while evacuating the soldiers.

Many members of the Commando Association will be familiar with the corvette HMAS *Castlemaine* at Gem Pier close by Fort Gellibrand at Williamstown.

See <https://hmascastlemaine.org.au/>.

The corvettes sailed from Darwin at midday on 29 November, leaving just as Japanese aircraft flew over the harbour. At 0900 hours on 30 November, the two ships were located by a Japanese reconnaissance plane, but were unable to shoot it down. Because of the likelihood of attack during the day and the distance from the destination, the ships radioed Darwin and suggested that the mission be aborted, but Pope promised fighter support and instructed they were to continue after steering away from their intended destination for an hour.

HMAS's *Armidale* and *Castlemaine* were attacked at midday November 30, 1942 by 14 Japanese bombers, but these were driven off by a force of Bristol Beaufighters, which then returned to Australia. Another attack came at 1400 hours, but neither side was able to do damage. Delays from the evasive course and two air attacks meant the corvettes reached Betano Bay after 0230 hours on 1 December. With no sign of *Kuru*, they retreated to sea.



Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean (L). (R) Painting depicting Teddy Sheean strapped to *Armidale*'s aft Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun firing at Japanese bombers. Sheean was observed by his shipmates to continue firing at the enemy as the ship sank.
(AWM ART28160 by Dale Marsh)

HMAS Armidale Remembrance Service in Perth

HMAS *Armidale* was laid down by Morts Dock & Engineering Co in Sydney on 1 September 1941. As the ship was built in a dock, she was floated on 24 January 1942, with the ceremony officiated by Reverend A. G. Rix. *Armidale* was commissioned on 11 June 1942.

As the last Post ceremony at the Australian War Memorial was being conducted in Canberra the Remembering HMAS *Armidale* Association was conducting a well-attended remembrance service at King's Park in Perth WA, not far from the memorial to the 2nd/2nd Independent Company. Reflections were made by four next-of-kin on behalf of those KIA, those missing presumed dead, those who survived in the motor boat and those who survived on the whaler. Wreaths were laid by the President of the Association,



Consul General for the Republic of Indonesia, Mrs Dewi Gustina Tobing, paying her respects at the HMAS *Armidale* Service in Perth.

Image: Courtesy Jim Truscott.

the Consul General for the Republic of Indonesia Mrs Dewi Gustina Tobing, at Tree L287 at the foot of which are the plaques of PO Stoker Robert Quayle and Stoker Arthur Knight, the RSL WA, CO HMAS *Stirling*, CO Submarine Force and two family members. The names of 40 HMAS *Armidale* personnel who were either KIA, missing presumed dead or died of wounds were read out. The names of 64 Royal Netherlands East Indies (KNIL) Army personnel who were lost at sea were also read out.

For further information search;

- www.navy.gov.au/hmas-armidale-i
- HMAS *Armidale*, The Ship that had to Die, by Frank Walker, Kingfisher Press, Budgewoi, 1990. Details of the casualties on page 16, the head count of those who were in the sea on page 64, the death toll on pages 170 and 176. The names of all people that were killed in action or missing and the survivors at pages 177 to 179. \
- Newsletters from the Remembering HMAS *Armidale* Association at <https://remembering-armidale.org/> 10 men were KIA and 2 died. There were 46 survivors. The missing presumed dead were 28 Australians, 2 Dutch and 58 Indonesians.
- Attachment 5: AWM Research Page 30 of the Ted Sheean Expert Panel report from August 2020 includes a translation by Steven Bullard of the Japanese air attacks on HMAS *Armidale*.

Contemporary reports produced by Japanese Navy and Army air units in Timor record that on 1 December 1942, several enemy ships were located in the Timor



Sea. One of these ships, was attacked and sunk by seven, type-one, land-based attack aircraft (Betty bombers) from the 753rd Naval Air Group, with three Zero fighters from the 202nd Naval Air Group in support. The reports note that two of the Betty bombers received hits from enemy fire, but that all ten aircraft returned safely to Kupang without any significant damage. The record was sourced from the National Archives of Japan at www.jacar.go.jp/english/index.html

See <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/historic-vc-expert-panel-report.pdf>

Note: Additional information on the Remembrance Service at King's Park Perth WA by MAJ Jim Truscott (Retd).

Editor's Note: HMAS's Armidale, Kuru & Castlemaine were playing a significant role of trying to recover members of the 2/2nd Independent Company, Dutch East India troops and civilians from Betano on the South Coast of Dutch Timor.

On behalf of the National President and all the members of the Australian Commando Association, we congratulate the Sheean family on the posthumous award to Teddy of the Victoria Cross of Australia.

COMMANDO FOR LIFE

ADDITIONAL COMMANDO NEWS

Home Grown Commando Now Special Operations Commander

From Army News

Incoming Special Operations Commander Australia (SOCAUST) Maj-Gen Paul Kenny, DSC, DSM was welcomed to the role with a ceremony at RMC – Duntroon on November 26. A traditional Indigenous Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony started proceedings to symbolise the cleansing and healing of SOCOMD following the IGADF Afghanistan Inquiry. After signing the transition of authority, Maj-Gen Kenny said he was looking forward to the challenges of the role.

"Special Operations Command is facing a period of change. We will implement the IGADF Afghanistan Inquiry recommendations as SOCOMD continues its professional and cultural transformation to set conditions to realise the next generation of ADF special operations capabilities, concepts and approaches," Maj-Gen Kenny said. "I want to thank Maj-Gen Adam Findlay for his leadership as SOCAUST over the past three-and-a-half years and wish him and his wife all the best for the future."

"SOCOMD is committed to actively learning and incorporating all the lessons from the IGADF Afghanistan Inquiry to ensure we are a more capable force in the future." Maj-Gen Kenny is the eighth SOCAUST since the position was created in 2003. He has previously commanded JTF 629 (Operation COVID-19 Assist), International Security and Advisory Force – Special Operations Forces (ISAF – SOF) in Afghanistan, Special Forces Training Centre (now ADF School of Special Operations) and 4 RAR Commando/2 Cdo Regt.

Maj-Gen Kenny completed his Commando officer



Incoming SOCAUST MAJGEN Paul 'PK' Kenny, DSC, DSM (L) with Outgoing SOCAUST MAJGEN Adam Findlay, AM (R).

selection course in 1994, was posted to 1 Cdo Regt & 4 RAR Commando as a Captain, OC Bravo Commando Company, 4 RAR Commando (2000) & the last CO 4 RAR Commando (2008-09) & first CO 2 Commando Regiment (2009).

CA Lt-Gen Rick Burr attended the ceremony, along with other senior leaders of the ADF. Lt-Gen Burr said the Australian Army was facing a challenging time, but was confident in Maj-Gen Kenny's

leadership "Congratulations Paul, you are the right person for the job, and thank you Adam [Maj-Gen Findlay] for all the work you've done leading SOCOMD throughout your tenure," Lt-Gen Burr said.

"This is a challenging time for Army, but I am confident we will learn from the lessons of the IGADF Afghanistan Inquiry and we will continue to strengthen our army, to strengthen the culture, the leadership and the accountability to ensure we are ready now and future ready to serve the Australian people". Outgoing SOCAUST Maj-Gen Findlay passed Maj-Gen Kenny the SOCOMD weight, a replica Australian Army stiletto knife symbolising the qualities of leadership and the burden of responsibility of the position.

A gift from the Australian War Memorial, the stiletto knife was manufactured using salvaged parts from the restoration of the MV Krait, the wooden fishing vessel used to stage a successful Z Special Unit operation on Japanese shipping in Singapore Harbour on September 26, 1943.

Maj-Gen Findlay will become an adviser to the CA on the IGADF Afghanistan Inquiry implementation process.



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Former Governor General Passes

by The Governor General of Australia, General the Honorable David Hurley,
AC, DSC, OStJ, FTSE



Then Governor General, Major General the Honorable Michael Jeffery (Retd) (L) catches up with old friend General Sir Phillip Bennett, AC, KBE, DSO (Life Patron ACA) at the 2 Commando Company 50th anniversary celebrations in 2005.

Photo Courtesy: SGT Sean Burton.

The Governor-General has made the following statement following news of the passing of Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffery AC AO (Mil), CVO, MC (Retd).

"Linda and I are saddened at the news of Michael Jeffery's passing," the Governor-General said.

"On behalf of all Australians, our thoughts are with Marlena and the whole Jeffery family. "As a nation, we give thanks for Michael's extraordinary lifetime of service. "He was, by every measure, a great Australian.

"After graduating from the Royal Military College in 1958 he served on operations in Malaya, Borneo, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam, where he was awarded the Military Cross.

"He held numerous commands, including of the Special Air Service Regiment, before retiring from the military in 1993. "His distinguished military career was

just one chapter in his lifetime of service. "He became Governor of Western Australia in 1993 and, in 2003, Australia's 24th Governor-General. "After his term in office he became Australia's first National Advocate for Soil Health.

"Throughout his career – in its many iterations – he worked tirelessly, put others ahead of himself and brought immense intellect, work ethic and commitment to everything he did. "Unfailingly polite, he was, quite simply, a gentleman. "He was also a husband, father and grandfather.

"Our thoughts – as we give thanks and acknowledge a lifetime of service – are with his loved ones.

"Vale."

Editor's Note: On behalf of the members of the ACA we send our sincere condolences to all of the Jeffery family.

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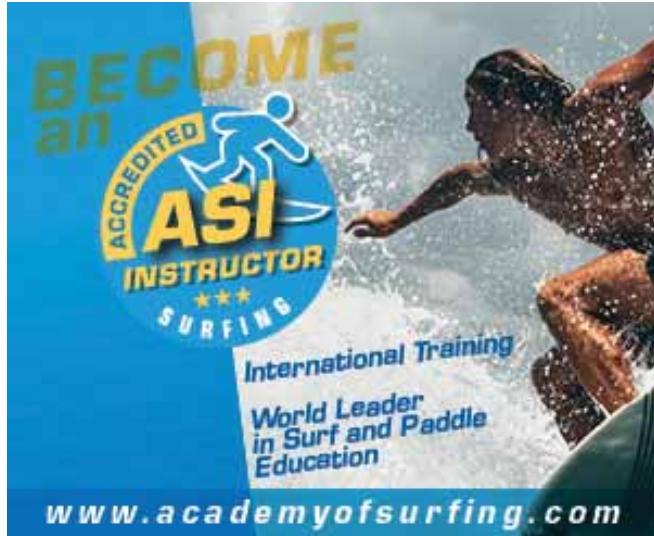
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SPECIAL RECONNAISANCE REGIMENT

The UK's Intelligence Gatherers

The Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRR) is a reconnaissance unit of the British Army. It was established on 6 April 2005 and is part of the United Kingdom Special Forces (UKSF). The regiment conducts a wide range of classified activities related to covert surveillance and reconnaissance. The SRR draws its personnel from existing units and can recruit male and female volunteers from any branch of the British Armed Forces.

Formation

The Special Reconnaissance Regiment conducts surveillance operations mainly concerning, but not limited to, "counter-terrorism" activities. It was formed to relieve the Special Air Service (SAS) and the Special Boat Service (SBS) of that role and is believed to contain around 500–700 personnel. Media reports state they are based alongside the SAS at Stirling Lines Barracks, Credenhillin Herefordshire, UK.

The SRR was formed to meet a demand for a special reconnaissance capability identified in the Strategic Defence Review: A New Chapter published in 2002 in response to the 2001 September 11 attacks. The regiment was formed around a core of the already established 14 Intelligence Company (14 Int), which played a similar role against the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) in Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

Operational History

Iraq War

The Regiment was active during the Iraq War as part of Task Force Black/Knight¹ (TF Black/Knight). Although members of other UKSF units were sceptical of the value of the Regiment, by mid-2006 a handful of SRR operators were operating in Baghdad. They formed Special Reconnaissance detachments that were commanded by SRR officers. The force was made up of

¹Joint Special Operations Command Task Force (JSOCTF) in the Iraq War was a joint American and British special operations unit, of which little is publicly known. It is described as a "hunter-killer team"^[1] with its core made up of the United States Army's 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta(Delta Force or Delta) and the 75th Ranger Regiment, as well as the United States Naval Special Warfare Development Group (DEVGRU or SEAL Team Six) and members of the United States Air Force's 24th Special Tactics Squadron (24 STS), all under Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) and elements from the United Kingdom Special Forces, including the Special Air Service (22 SAS or SAS), Special Boat Service (SBS), Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRR), 18 (UKSF) Signal Regiment (18 SR) and the Special Forces Support Group (SFSG). The unit was reported to be responsible for the cross border raid into Syria from Iraq in October 2008 that resulted in eight deaths including Abu Ghadiya, along with several US operations in the Horn of Africa targeting al Qaeda.



SRR Hat Badge

TF Black/Knight operators who carried out difficult surveillance missions throughout the city.

Islamic Terrorism in the UK

In the aftermath of 21 July 2005 London bombings, the SRR attached one of its members to each of the Metropolitan Police Service (The Met) surveillance teams to provide additional capability to a seriously overstretched SO12. On 22 July 2005 Jean Charles de Menezes was shot dead by armed police officers on a London Underground train at Stockwell tube station. Three media reports carry unconfirmed assertions by unattributed UK government sources that SRR personnel were involved in the intelligence collection effort leading to the shooting and were on the tube train while the offensive action occurred. A partial Ministry of Defence response was reported by *The Sunday Times*.

War in Afghanistan

On 27 June 2006, a 16-man unit from C Squadron, SBS and the SRR carried out Operation Ilois: an Operation that covertly captured four Taliban leaders in compounds on the outskirts of Sangin, Helmand province. As they returned to their Land Rover vehicles, they were ambushed by an estimated 60 to 70 Taliban insurgents. With one vehicle disabled by RPG fire, the team took cover in an irrigation ditch and requested assistance while holding off the Taliban force. The Helmand Battle Group had not been informed of the Operation until it went wrong; a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) made up of a Platoon of Gurkhas responded but ran into another insurgent ambush; one SBS member was seriously injured in the ambush. After an hour-long gunfight (some sources say three), UK Apache attack helicopters, the Gurkha QRF and the 16-man unit, supported by a USAF A-10 Thunderbolt and two Royal Navy (RN) Harrier GR7s² managed to break contact and return to the closest Forward Operating Base (FOB) of the four Taliban leaders were killed in the firefight while the remaining two escaped in the chaos. Upon reaching the FOB it was discovered that Captain David Patton, SRR, and Sergeant Paul Bartlett, SBS were missing – one was helping wounded out of a

²The British Aerospace Harrier II is a second-generation vertical/short takeoff and landing(V/STOL) jet aircraft used previously by the Royal Air Force (RAF) and, between 2006 and 2010, the Royal Navy (RN). The aircraft was the latest development of the Harrier Jump Jet family, and was derived from the McDonnell Douglas AV-8B Harrier II. Initial deliveries of the Harrier II were designated in service as Harrier GR5; subsequently upgraded airframes were redesignated accordingly as GR7 and GR9.



vehicle when he was shot and assumed killed, while the second went missing during the firefight. A company from the Parachute Regiment in an RAF CH-47 Chinook Helicopter took off to find them, a pair of UK Apaches spotted the bodies and the Parachute Regiment troops recovered them. One SBS member was awarded the Military Cross (MC) for his actions in the ambush.

Dissident Irish Republican Campaign

In March 2009, Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde informed the Northern Ireland Policing Board that he had asked for the SRR to be deployed in Northern Ireland to help the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) gather intelligence on Dissident Republicans. He claimed that they would have no operational role and would be fully accountable, as required by the St Andrews Agreement. Deputy First Minister and Sinn Féin MP Martin McGuinness and Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams condemned the move, but Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) MP Ian Paisley, Jr. said the SRR "poses absolutely no threat to any community in Northern Ireland".

In April 2011, the *Telegraph* reported that a surveillance team from the SRR had spent three weeks tracking a cell of 4 men belonging to the Óglaigh na hÉireann (ONH)-a dissident Irish republican paramilitary group operating in Northern Ireland made up of members who split from the Real IRA. The SRR members (who were reportedly working for Scotland Yard's Counter Terrorism Command) watched the men, who photographed key roads and buildings in London, including the Olympic Stadium. Intelligence suggested that ONH and other dissident Republicans were not aiming to launch mass-casualty attacks but continue to target police and military targets. One source said the unit was not thought to have the capability of launching a terrorist attack on mainland Britain, although some dissidents have that capacity. The cell was not thought to be targeting the royal wedding.

Libyan Civil War

By the end of July 2011, a 24-man British special forces team from D Squadron 22nd SAS Regiment, including members of the SRR who were expert in covert intelligence gathering had been deployed to Libya to train and mentor NTC units against the Gaddafi regime during the Libyan Civil war. These forces linked up with Commandement des Opérations Spéciales, the elite parachute regiment of the French Army, in Zuwaytinah, the command headquarters for the eastern front, 90 miles south west of Benghazi. From there they were sent to the west of the country via Tunisia to train rebels in the western mountains, in places like Zintan.

Yemen & Somalia

In April 2016, it was revealed that members of the Special Reconnaissance Regiment were seconded to

MI6 teams in Yemen to train Yemeni forces fighting AQAP, as well as identifying targets for drone strikes. Along with the SAS, they have been carrying out a similar role in Somalia.

Uniform Distinctions

Personnel retain the uniforms of their parent organisations with the addition of an "emerald grey" coloured beret and the SRR cap badge. The cap badge shares Excalibur in common with the other UKSF units, in the case of the SRR being placed behind a Corinthian helmet, surmounting a scroll inscribed RECONNAISSANCE. The stable belt of the SRR is similar in style to that of the SAS, however, being midnight blue, it is darker.



SRR Emerald Grey Beret & Hat Badge.

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The Positive Relationship between Physical Activity and PTSD

Exercise has a positive clinical effect on depressive symptoms and may be as effective as psychological or pharmaceutical therapies for some individuals with PTSD. Rosebaum et al, 2014 suggests Physical activity/exercise is a highly effective method in reducing symptoms of depression and for people experiencing other mental health disorders.

Evidence demonstrates that an appropriate exercise intervention can achieve significant benefits to symptoms, depression, anxiety and stress, changes in body shape and sedentary time associated with PTSD, and non-significant trends for sleep quality improvement according to Rosenbaum, 2013.

The associated symptoms and the improvements may be related to psychosocial benefits of the intervention, rather than functional capacity, but there is also a strong empirical (observational) link between improvements in functional capacity and psychological status according to the author, 2016.

People with PTSD are four times as likely to have type 2 diabetes (Lukaschek et al, 2013) and rates of overweight and obesity are as high as 92%. To add to these statistics, sufferers of PTSD are shown to be less physically active due to a number of factors including pain, dysfunctional and general lack of desire or both, according Boscarino et al, 2004.

Adding some form of regular physical activity can have a significant effect on a sufferer of PTSD. It's important to note, the type of activity doesn't matter, what matters is that the person is moving and also having fun doing it. If you would like to become physically active again and help to combat some of your PTSD related symptoms then please consult your GP and discuss your options for referral to another health care professional (exercise physiologist or physiotherapist) for help with your other associated or co-morbid conditions ie lower back pain, arthritis and or obesity.



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FROM THE PEN OF HARRY BELL

2nd/9th Commando Squadron, WW2



Well, that was 2020 AD! That was a pretty ordinary year, too, as they say – by “ordinary” meaning “extraordinary”, the exact opposite! It’s a funny language, isn’t it? Anyway, Happier New Year to you all!

On January 1, 1945 I was at a seaside “resort” called Suain, Plantation, a bit over half way from Aitape to Wewak (still in enemy hands). I wrote home that day and here are some extracts from my letter:

“Well, it’s 1945 in New Guinea and I’m lying in the 1/2 tent, hoping I won’t cop a fatigue. I think I’ll go for a swim soon for the surf here is really quite decent..... Had a little mail yesterday: The Namoi Valley Echo for 4 December ‘44 . . . and a letter from a pretty little V.A.” (a lass from Moree who was a member of the Volunteer Aid Detachment). “I don’t know how everyone saw the New Year in. I saw it from the listening post. I was on my own from 11.30 till 12.30 and I hummed Auld Lang Syne under my breath as the hands crossed. There was a pale moon whose light struggled through shreds of dirty, unwashed clouds. Behind me, I could hear the sea crashing like a freight train and in front were the mountains (the Torricellis). All round were the shorn trunks of palm trees, some with lower branches remaining and drooping, for all the world like giant umbrellas, others (one or two) with all branches intact and making a circle like a monstrous windmill. I could almost hear the clank of our old Southern Cross in the silence”.

(The Southern Cross was the most popular brand of windmill in NSW and every house in Wee Waa had a mill).

“It will be a new year to remember, though I don’t want any more like it. (I was aged 19 years and 4 months). “Had a really good surf this afternoon. When we got home; if we stay here long enough, I should develop into a reasonable surfer - I’ve never had the chance to learn till we came here. Have been having grouse tucker lately - real fresh meat, potatoes and real butter; the first of each we’ve seen since the Tableland, except for the few days on the ship.”

Fast forward to December 31, 1945. The Regiment had been broken up and all the younger blokes sent to 4th Battalion, a CMF unit camped on Wirui Beach, near Wewak. I was by now a Sergeant, attached to Army Education and my close mate, David Hammond (2/10 Sqn) had also been promoted Sergeant. We were in the same Company and we had just learnt that we would be heading for Rabaul early in the New Year. We had made arrangements to celebrate together. Here is an extract from my letter of January 1, 1946:

“Happy New Year and I certainly hope it’s the last bastard I spend here. Although it was a little better than New Year’s Eve 1945. Then I was sitting on guard at Suain Plantation, just the other side of the Danmap River. It was raining and my gas cape was soggy and slimy and sticking to my body and little drops were squeezing between the collar and the back of my neck. There were lots of flying, greyish clouds with torn edges and a moon squinting out at intervals . . . I held the watch in my hand and dead-on midnight I hummed ‘auld lang syne’ under my breath. Then at 1215 I woke my relief. “Happy New Year” I said. “Get F....d” was the response.

As I said, last night was a slight improvement . . . about 9.15 Dave and I got our doings from the company fridge where we’d planted them and retired to the beach. We only had 5 bottles between us but they were almost frozen - bloody delicious - and we had also some bread and fresh butter and a few slices of fresh meat so we span them out OK and hit the hay at about 12.30. The tide was nearly out and you could see the low, white surges rolling in. And the lights along the foreshore came to us across the water and gleamed on the wet sand where the sea had been. And at 12 there were red and white and green Verey lights that floated over the bay and dropped into it and their volleys from rifles and pistols and captured Nip artillery from Cape Wom down to Dove Bay. Dave and I had a glorious old earbash, he on his chair and I on the sandbags that we had laid to keep the high tide out of our tents.” Only 74 years ago and as I type I can see and hear and taste and smell it all.

There are very few living WW2 Commandos to write about, now, and not very many widows that I am in touch with. I can report that Bill Justo (Sig Sgt in B Troop 2/9 Sqn) is reasonably happy in his Queensland Nursing Home, though now he gets round in a wheelchair. He says he can walk OK but can’t get on his feet; he eats and sleeps well and is well looked after. Never short of a quip is Bill and sounds 98 years young.

Rex Davidson (4 Section, B Troop, 2/9 Sqn) is in fair health and lives on his own - he lost his wife, Natley, about a year ago, and is still grieving. Fortunately, he has daughters who live reasonably close, in the same Hobart suburb, and they help him a lot.

Ted MacMillan (6 Section, B Troop, 2/9 Sqn) who now lives in Burra, SA, has had a close shave after major surgery. We thought we might lose him, but he is as tough as green-hide and is hoping to get home soon. He too lost his wife nearly two years ago, but has daughters and grandchildren who live close enough to be able to keep an eye on him.

Faith Hammond, widow of David (see above) has left Tamworth and now lives in a Retirement Village in Greenwich, NSW. Grace Brodie, widow of Michael (“Bluey”; ex 6 Section, B Troop, 2/9 Sqn) Brodie, reports from Taroom (Qld) that she is well and that Riverview is slowly recovering from the drought - they lost a fair few bottle trees but the country - and its people - is resilient.

Paula Hunting, widow of Harry (2/10 Sqn) and sister of Arthur (“Sandy”) Williams, 4 Section, B Troop, 2/9 Sqn, KIA at Arrohimi) usually sends a beautiful, hand-painted Xmas card, but this year she has not been her usual self; a heavy fall some months ago left her unable to walk without the aid of a walking frame and she lives alone. Fortunately, two neighbours have been appointed her carers and are very generous with their time but she is still affected by the fall and suffers loss of balance (join the club!). Nevertheless, she remains cheerful and has plans for a new start in 2021.

And that’s it for now. If anybody has any news of WW2 Commandos, I would be delighted to hear from them, at Harry Bell, PO Box 1627, Bowral, NSW, 2576.

OVER AND OUT.

Harry Bell, (2/9 Cdo Sqn)



FLASH TO BANG TIME - 22 HOURS

Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment The Assault on The Rawah Terrorist Camp, Northern Iraq – June 2003

By James Schroder – First Published in 'Veritas' Vol1, No1, 2005

On 27 July 2004 Vice President Richard B. Cheney stated that the terrorist threat did not represent a "Foe we can reason with or negotiate with or appease. This is, to put it simply, an enemy that we must vanquish."¹

On the night of 11/12 June 2003, the Rangers from B Company, 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment (B, 2/75), attacked and killed over seventy Islamic terrorists at a training camp in the vicinity of Rawah, Iraq, thirty miles east of the Syrian border. During a coordinated assault on Objective Reindeer, two Ranger Platoons and a Company and Battalion Command Element infiltrated via four MH-60K Black Hawks and two MH-47E Chinooks, (Editor's note – Known as a Helicopter Assault Force (HAF)), from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) The 'Night Stalkers' and attacked the camp from the East. A third Platoon, with a Battalion mortar team, traversed 175 miles overland and arrived simultaneously with the other two Platoons, established blocking positions and a mortar position (Editor's note – Known as a Ground Assault Force (GAF)). Additional 160th SOAR assets, AH-6 Little Bird, Attack Helicopters, provided close air support during the operation. The Rangers' orders were clear: Destroy all terrorists in the vicinity of the camp in order to prevent attacks against coalition forces—an excellent mission for Army Rangers.

Mission Planning

The previous night at 2200 hours, Major (MAJ) John McGinnis (pseudonym), the Operations Officer (OPSO) and acting Commander of Ranger Elements in Iraq, and Captain (CAPT) Mark Everett (pseudonym), Assistant Operations Officer (AOPSO), received a Warning Order to begin planning for a combat mission against the terrorist camp. The 101st Airborne Division had been planning the operation for several days, but V Corps received new information that suggested that an attack from the terrorist camp was imminent. Even so, the Screaming Eagles needed several more days to execute the mission. Therefore, V Corps solicited a proposal from the 75th Ranger Regiment, which gave the mission to the 2nd Ranger Battalion. McGinnis and Everett, in conjunction with B Company OC, CAPT Hunter (pseudonym), developed a concept of the operation that same night. The collaborative planning process—including the OC B, 2/75 to develop the overall scheme—greatly shortened the amount of time that it took to complete troop leading



The assault on Objective Reindeer took the Rangers and 160th SOAR personnel far into the deserts of Western Iraq. SOAR Support was instrumental in the dismantling of the Rawah Terrorist Training Camp.

procedures². Hunter devised a simple scheme of manoeuvre to ensure that no terrorists escaped, and that concentrated fires on the objective would achieve their purpose. Within several hours, McGinnis sent the plan back through command channels to V Corps, indicating that the Rangers could strike within twenty-four hours. Even so, McGinnis thought that the 101st would retain the mission³.

Objective Reindeer was a wadi, 500ft (152m) long and 60-150ft (16-45m) wide, with steep rocky sides 35 feet deep, and two smaller wadis channelling into the main creek bed. Reindeer actually consisted of three separate Objectives; Rudolf (Southern), Dasher (Centre) and Comet (Northern). On 11 June at 0900hrs, CAPT Hunter issued the Operations Order (OPORD) to his Platoon Leaders (Platoon Commanders): 1st Platoon would insert via helicopters, then isolate and clear Objectives Rudolf and Dasher; next, 2nd Platoon would insert by helicopters, isolate, and clear Objective Comet; 3rd Platoon would simultaneously arrive overland in vehicles and establish blocking positions west of the objective to prevent any escapees. Minutes later, MAJ McGinnis informed Hunter that it looked like the mission would not take place; so, Hunter used the opportunity to run his Platoon Leaders through a planning exercise. By 1100, however, McGinnis informed him that the mission was to be executed that night, after all. Platoon Leaders briefed their Platoons, Hunter and his Fire Support Officer finalized plans with the

¹Jim Garamone, "Cheney Calls Terrorists 'Enemy We Must Vanquish,'" American Forces Press Service, 27 July 2004, http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2004/n07272004_2004072709.html.

²Major John McGinnis (pseudonym), 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, email to Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Jones, Jr., 18 November 2004, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.



160th SOAR planners, and the final air mission briefing and rehearsal drills were completed by 1700⁴.

The Insertion

The GAF departed from Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) at 1545hrs local, negotiating several damaged bridges as it moved along Highway 12 running from Fallujah through Ar Ramadi and Hit to a junction South of Rawah. Along the way, the GAF linked up with two M3 Bradley Platoons from the 3rd Armoured Cavalry Regiment (3ACR) in the vicinity of Hadithah, and established a Forward Arming and Refuelling Point (FARP) near the Highway South of Rawah. After quickly refuelling at the FARP, the GAF awaited the signal to begin movement to the objective: the commencement of Pre-Assault Fires. At the signal, the GAF proceeded to the objective, while the Bradley Platoons secured the FARP and stood ready to reinforce the GAF, if needed.

The HAF departed BIAP and flew to Al Asad Airfield for refuelling, arriving at 2030. After refuelling, an MH60-K Black Hawk failed to start minutes before the scheduled departure time. The crewmembers escorted key leaders to another Black Hawk in accordance with the 'Bump Plan' (a contingency plan to crossload key individuals or groups in the event of an aircraft breakdown), which left one Ranger Squad (Section) at the airfield. The HAF departed two and a half minutes late, but arrived on time for H-hour: 2200hrs. Sequencing into target, the first pair of AH-6 (Little Birds) gunships suppressed surviving enemy fighters on Objective Dasher after six Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs) had exploded in an airburst over the site, and an AC-130 Spectre Gunship had raked the area with munitions.

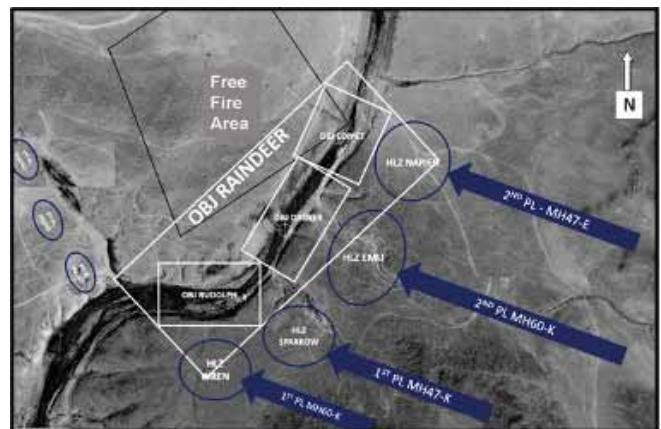
The Assault

First Lieutenant (1LT) Peter Korenek (pseudonym) and his 1st Platoon Rangers peered out the open cargo doors of the lead MH60-K Black Hawk and saw fires burning in the vicinity of Helicopter Landing Zone (HLZ) Sparrow. Once the Black Hawk touched down, the Rangers raced into the dusty darkness as a pair of AH-6 Little Bird gunships strafed an enemy position with minigun rounds and rockets. Enemy fighters shot wildly at the helicopters with rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), and one AH-6 sustained a hit to the nose bubble, but the rocket did not detonate. Landing several hundred meters short of the HLZ because of a Little Bird gun run, Staff Sergeant (SSG) Mitchell Burn (pseudonym) oriented his squad toward Objective Dasher and ran across the pancake desert with 1LT Korenek. The squad reached the draw as an MH47-E Chinook touched down with the remainder of 1st Platoon.

⁴Captain Mark Everett, (pseudonym), 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 16 October 2003, Fort Lewis, WA, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

⁵First Lieutenant Paul Korenek (pseudonym), 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 16 October 2003, Fort Lewis, WA, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; First Sergeant Philip Roemer (pseudonym), 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 16 October 2003, Fort Lewis, WA, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

South of Korenek's position, a second Black Hawk landed at HLZ Wren. SSG Alan White (pseudonym) disembarked with his squad and seized the high ground near the gulch overlooking Objective Rudolf within ninety seconds.



1st and 2nd Platoons of B 2/75 inserted by MH60s & MH47s assaulting Obj Rudolph, Dasher & Comet. The 3rd Pl GAF established blocking positions west of Obj Reindeer. The HLZs were arrayed in a semicircle southeast of the objective to block any attempts by terrorists to escape the free fire area.

Second Platoon inserted via a MH60-K and an MH47-E into HLZs Napier and Emu, respectively. Sergeant (SGT) Roger Mueller (pseudonym) and his team disembarked the Chinook first, followed by the Company Command Clement, and oriented on Objective Comet. Mueller and the Weapons Squad established a blocking position and prepared to clear through Comet. Company First Sergeant (1SG) Philip Roemer (pseudonym) was the last off the Chinook. He, senior medic SGT Brad Gillis (pseudonym), and the radio operator, moved toward the smaller East-West wadi leading to Objective Dasher to establish a casualty collection point (CCP). As they moved, two terrorists fired on them from the prone position, shooting the radioman's rucksack strap off his right shoulder. He and Gillis immediately shot and killed the fighters in the ditch near their CCP, registering the first kills in the fight. The remainder of 2nd Platoon moved from HLZ Napier into blocking positions, focusing on the wadi from the north and killing three fighters along the way with grenades and rifles⁵.

Meanwhile, the GAF arrived and successfully established blocking positions and a mortar position, but not without drama. One vehicle drove into a washout and had to be extracted. The mortar team switched vehicles were set up within ten minutes. The B Coy XO (2IC), 1LT Nielson (pseudonym) radioed CPT Hunter with an update about 3rd Platoon's situation, and then moved closer to Objective Reindeer, well protected by the higher ground on the western side of the wadi. All fires were oriented down into the wadi from both the east and west sides, reducing the potential for fratricide. Soon, the mortar team executed several fire missions in support of 1st Platoon along with the AH-6 Little Bird gunships⁶.

⁶Roemer interview; Sergeant Roger Mueller (pseudonym), 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 16 October 2003, Fort Lewis, WA, tape recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

⁶Captain Mark Everett interview.



SSG Burn and his squad moved into the gulch on the Platoon's right flank, locating a large weapons cache of 2,000x RPGs, 50x RPK machine guns, 87x SA-7 surface-to-air-missiles, and countless other types of munitions. He marked the cache for destruction and pressed forward. The Squad comprising the Platoon's main effort, led by SSG Roger Duncan (pseudonym), cleared the high ground south of Objective Dasher, killing five combatants, and then moved into the wadi. SSG Bradley Talbert (pseudonym) and his Squad secured the Platoon's left flank, and engaged the enemy from the high ground overlooking Objective Rudolf.⁷

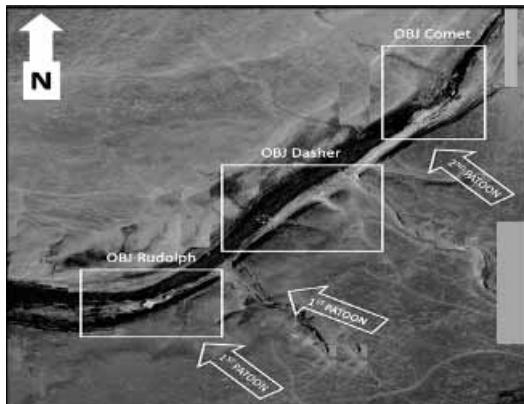
1LT Korenek and Sergeant First Class (SFC) Clint Anderson (pseudonym), the platoon sergeant for 2nd Platoon, coordinated their clearance into the wadi. SSG Duncan maneuvered his Squad down the wadi and found twelve terrorists attempting to reorganize, and killed them all with direct fire. While maneuvering his Platoon, Korenek received fire below the cliff, and dropped a fragmentation grenade in response. The grenade failed to stop the firing, so he climbed down the ledge to a point where he could get a clear shot on the enemy, killing them both. A burning vehicle in the centre of the wadi prevented SSG Burn and his squad from providing adequate overwatch, so they continued to observe and fire at movement across the wadi to the west.

As 2nd squad pushed south into the wadi, backlit by the burning truck, SGT Mark Walters (pseudonym), the lead team leader, spotted an RPG team and shouted, "RPG!" As he fired his M4 carbine, the enemy fired an RPG round that blew his leg off below the knee. In spite of his missing leg and shrapnel injuries to his left elbow, calf, and left thumb, Walters emptied a magazine into the grenade position, killing the gunner, all while shouting fire commands to his fellow Rangers. Platoon Medic Specialist Gomez stabilized Walters, expertly treating his wounds under heavy fire. After Gomez stabilized and packaged Walters for travel, SFC Oscar Weimer (pseudonym) directed several Rangers to move Walters on a "Skedco" (Sked brand rescue sled) to HLZ Sparrow for evacuation. En route, they met 1SG Roemer and SGT Gillis also making their way to the HLZ. Weimer handed Walters' equipment to the 1SG for accountability, and returned to the fight. Once Walters was prepared to move, the Battalion Joint Tactical Air Controller (JTAC) called in the CASEVAC (casualty evacuation) helicopter that was air loitering nearby, allowing CPT Hunter to focus on the ongoing fight. The helicopter landed within thirty seconds, and Walters was passed into the care of the on-board surgeon for the trip to Al Asad, where a medical airplane awaited.

Meanwhile, SSG Duncan pinpointed another fleeing RPG gunner with his infrared laser, enabling his Squad and SSG Bradley Talbert's (pseudonym) Squad to target and kill the gunner with their M240 (MAG58) machine guns. SSG Burn saw other enemy fighters run into the tall grass, and Korenek decided to clear the grass by fire with M240s and Squad Automatic Weapons (SAW). The Rangers attempted to burn out the vegetation with incendiary grenades, flares, and burning debris, but the grass was too damp. At this point, their Platoon declared their sector clear and the 1st Platoon Rangers began exploitation of the area⁸.

Second Platoon moved on line through Objective Comet, with SGT Mueller's squad clearing the West side of the wadi, and SSG Weimer's team clearing the East side by fire. Mueller identified two fighters moving out of the grass area below a ledge nearly two feet away from SFC Anderson. As he engaged the enemy with direct fire just feet away from his PL SGT, Mueller yelled out to identify himself to Anderson. Identifying the threat, Anderson threw several hand grenades into the terrorists' position, killing them. The Platoon continued toward the burning vehicles in the centre of the wadi, methodically engaging terrorists, but ever cognizant of 1st Platoon clearing from the South.

After approximately forty minutes, the two platoons linked up. Initial reports indicated fifteen terrorists killed,



1st and 2nd Pls Assaulted Objectives Rudolph, Dasher, and Comet in the Wadi that comprised Objective Reindeer. SSG Burn and his Squad from 1st Platoon located a large weapons cache in the smaller Wadi to the north of Objective Dasher.

but once the follow-on exploitation began, that number quickly increased to seventy. What the Rangers thought was burning debris and sandbags were, in fact, body parts scattered throughout Objective Rudolf. CPT Hunter and MAJ McGinnis were confident that the objective was now clear, and ordered his 1st and 2nd Platoons to prepare for egress. The Helos from 160th SOAR arrived at 0400 and extracted the Rangers from their infiltration points. The HAF departed back to BIAP, while 3rd Platoon remained to conduct a sensitive site exploitation of the area in daylight.

The mid-June Army Special Operations Forces raid on the Rawah Terrorist Camp thwarted at least one future attack on Coalition forces in Iraq. As is often the case, many factors contributed to the success of the mission. Several Rangers and Night Stalkers commented that the Operation played out just like a multilateral training exercise, and that "everything went like clockwork." The force's previous combat experience had also refined the Regiments' planning processes, enabling them to execute within hours of receiving a mission. Finally, the highly skilled force proved the effectiveness of such basic principles as keeping the plan simple and striking the enemy with violence of action.

Article Source: <https://arsof-history.org/articles>

⁷"Objective Reindeer Debrief, 13 June 2003," USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

⁸"Objective Reindeer Debrief."



SIMSON AT WAR

Arthur Bernard Simson – Lark Force & 2/12th Commando Squadron, WW2

Supplied by Mr Barry Higgins - ACA VIC

Arthur Bernard Simson was born on 26th May 1917 at Limestone Ridge Station and spent his first 6 years at there before the family moved to New-town, Geelong. Arthur was educated at Geelong College and the Gordon Institute. On leaving school, he joined Dalgety and Co. Colac branch.

On the 8th Feb 1939, Arthur joined the Militia and then after the outbreak of WW2 joined the 2nd AIF, and posted to Delta Company, 2/22nd Battalion (Known as "Lark" Force¹). In 1941, Arthur was stationed at Rabaul, New Guinea to fight the invading Japanese army. The Japanese attacked with overwhelming force and Arthur and the remnants of his battalion were forced into the jungle. He was "Mentioned in Dispatches" to the Queen for his bravery but suffered terribly.

On his return to Australia, he was only 6 stone in weight and was suffering cerebral malaria. He was discharged from the army on the 11 February 1946 with the rank of Staff Sergeant. After the war, Arthur went back to Dalgety's. Some years later he married Fay Billson (from Colac). They lived in Geelong for a period before moving to Melbourne. Arthur and Fay adopted 2 sons.

WW2

Rabaul New Britain Island, New Guinea

In 1941, Lark Force embarked on a troop ship. "We were on the boat, when they told us we were going to Rabaul, we were disappointed not to be going to the Middle East to fight. But when I finally saw Rabaul, I remember thinking it was paradise."

¹Lark Force was an Australian Army formation established in March 1941 during World War II for service in New Britain and New Ireland. Under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John Scanlan, it was raised in Australia and deployed to Rabaul and Kavieng, aboard SS Katoomba, MV Neptuna and HMAT Zealandia, to defend their strategically important harbours and airfields.



CPL Arthur Bernard Simson WW2



Map of New Britain with insert of Rabaul

or reinforcements. Lark Force was one of a number of units (the bird units) within the Australian army whose purpose was to slow down the advance of the Japanese invasion forces. Generally, they were poorly equipped and were not expected to stop the Japanese advance. The topography of New Britain included flat coastal areas bordered by coral reefs and other parts were very steep cliffs. A mountain range ran East-West with the highest peak standing at 8000 feet. Most of the terrain was covered with tropical rainforest and many rivers, large and small, were fed by the heavy rainfall. Spectacular waterfalls abounded in areas. There were several active volcanoes on New Britain. Tragically, surviving members of Lark Force did not have positive experiences with this topography.



On the 4th January 1942, Japanese carrier-based aircraft started bombing the Rabaul airfield and artillery positions. On the 23rd of January 1942, Arthur was on guard duty in Rabaul. His unit was located on a beach. There were approximately 900 men in the unit, with another 500 soldiers in the surrounding area. Arthur and his associates saw a large Japanese invasion force under the command of Vice Admiral Shigeyoshi Inou. It included two aircraft carriers—Kaga and Akagi—seven cruisers, 14 destroyers, and numerous smaller vessels and submarines offshore. They sounded the air-raid siren at 4am, the Australians stumbled out of bed, pulled on their clothes and headed for the beach. Half asleep, and used to being routinely woken at odd hours, most of the men mistakenly thought it was another drill and left behind what little equipment they had. Some of the men thought it was a false alarm and continued to sleep.

The Japanese landed along the coastline with a force of approximately 15,000 men. Whenever they struck resistance from Australian soldiers, they simply moved a little further down the coastline with their landing craft until all 15,000 were onshore. The Japanese forces, outnumbered the defenders by 20:1. The invaders were supported by dozens of warships, hundreds of warplanes and superior weaponry. Rabaul was important to the Japanese because of its proximity to the Japanese territory of the Caroline Islands, where a major Imperial Japanese Navy base was situated on the Truk Lagoon. The Lark Force commander, Colonel Scanlan had issued written orders to Lark Force on Christmas Day 1941 which stated, "There will be no faint hearts, there will be no thought of surrender. Every man will die in his pit". Within hours of the invasion occurring, Colonel Scanlan instructed personnel that, "It is now a matter of every man for himself. Get out of this pickle if you can."



Japanese marines attack Rabaul

The Japanese commander of the attacking air forces, (Mitsuo Fuchida), said of the invasion, "If ever a sledge-hammer had been used to crack an egg, this was the time." (excerpt from "Hostages to Freedom, P.Stone, P42). As the battle progressed, the overwhelming force of the Japanese became obvious to the Australians. There was a complete breakdown in communication; no structured escape or re-grouping plans and no food, medical, armament or ammunition

stocks. Despite the swift and comprehensive defeat of Lark Force, the commanding officer, Colonel Scanlan did not officially surrender. This dereliction of duty proved very costly for his men. Many of Scanlan's men thought if they escaped from the Japanese, they would eventually face a court-marshal in Australia for desertion. The Air force commander (Lerew) at the Vunakanau airfield signalled RAAF HQ in Melbourne with the Latin motto "Nos Morituri Te Salutamus" ("we who are about to die salute you"). Australian Prime Minister Curtin's government and War Cabinet made it very clear that Lark Force was not to receive any further assistance prior to or during the invasion. No plans were made to evacuate surviving members. No escape plans for Lark Force were permitted by Canberra. A sizeable freighter was in Rabaul harbour prior to the invasion. Requests were made for it to be used to evacuate people. The Australian government did not approve this and insisted that the freighter be loaded with copra instead.

Arthur and a number of other men climbed into the trees surrounding the Australian camp and acted as snipers. The Japanese quickly overwhelmed the Australian position and took many prisoners. Arthur and his compatriots remained in the trees for three days as the Japanese established their base on what was the Australian camp. Finally, the Japanese moved on, and Arthur and the others were able to climb down from the trees. They had observed the Japanese tie up some of the Australian prisoners and use them as bayonet practice. Arthur and his compatriots found 2 of the soldiers were still alive. They carried them to a mission station about 2 days walk away and left the wounded men under the care of Missionary Pratt. They later discovered from local tribespeople that the Japanese had gone to the Mission station and slaughtered all inhabitants. There appeared to be only two options. First was to go due west and try and outrun the Japanese, alternately to head due south.

The Australians split into smaller groups, some choosing to go west, whilst Arthur and 15 others chose to go south. There was another group of approximately 150 men that also headed south. With Arthur there



Late January 1942. Australian soldiers retreating from Rabaul cross the Warangoi/Adler River in the Bainings Mountains, on the eastern side of Gazelle Peninsula.

were the following men: VX 24455 Jack Sloan - VX 24188 Bill Neave - VX 25201 Lindsay Moon - VX 36341 D. Turner - VX 23994 Fred Meyer - (died on the trek out), Jack Collins - (died on the trek out), C. Griffith & David Laws - (had a teli-radio).

Sometime after the departure from their coastal beach camp, Arthur's group and other Australians ran into a party of Japanese soldiers at a place called Talligap. A serious battle occurred in which Arthur distinguished himself with honor, killing 8-9 enemy soldiers (RSL records).

From Official War Records:

Two other platoons, led by Lieutenants John G. "Geoff" Donaldson and boyish-looking Glenn Garrard, were also surrounded. The Japanese continued to close in, and by 1400hrs, following more than two hours of enemy probes and skirmishes, Travers knew it was time to commence an organized withdrawal. He first sent Donaldson's platoon to counterattack along the Kokopo Ridge Road and recapture a few trucks.

Twenty-four-year-old Corporal Arthur B. Simpson, (misspelled) carrying one of the new Thompson sub-machine guns, distinguished himself by advancing toward the enemy in leaps and dashes "using all available cover," and firing into clusters of surprised Japanese. The platoon successfully retrieved two trucks, which they drove back to Travers' position through a hailstorm of small-arms fire and exploding mortar rounds. Miraculously, not a single Australian was lost.

Arthur and his group moved further down the coast of New Britain. As they moved through the jungle, they were told by villagers of a major battle between Australians and Japanese. On arrival at the site of the battle at the Tol and Waitavallo Plantations on February 4th, 1942, 150 Australian soldiers and medical personnel had been slaughtered², they had their hands tied behind their backs, were tied in batches (except in one or two instances) and then were bayoneted or shot or

both and in the presence and hearing of others about to be killed. Several of the men were still alive, even though they had suffered up to 15 bayonet wounds. In the circumstances, they would inevitably die, and they pleaded with Arthur and his group to finish them off. The group drew straws and the soldiers with the short straw had to shoot the wounded men.

When Arthur joined the army, he was fit, 6'1" tall and of good physical stature. He had been a keen outback adventurer, having hiked into Ayers Rock in the Northern Territory several times before joining the army. He later attributed these expeditions to his survival in the jungle. The soldiers that moved south received word from villagers that a ship, (the Laurabarda) had been sent to pick them up. Arthur and his compatriots were approximately 50 miles from the pickup point. The ship waited approximately one day, and as scouts went out to find his group, but to no avail. The ship departed, and his group were left on new Britain. The debilitating effects of no food or clean water was devastating. The majority died on the track. At one stage, Arthur struggled into the local village suffering from cerebral malaria. His weight had dropped to approximately seven stone. The villagers showed great courage in protecting him and then transferring him to a nearby island via outrigger canoe. Arthur met up with American coast watch control and was redirected to find other Australians.

The Australians finally made it to a mission on the island and found an old mission boat. They repaired the boat and took the journey from new Britain to mainland New Guinea. On arrival on the New Guinea mainland, they decided to walk to the town of Wau. They finally made it to Port Moresby where they met with more Coastwatch people and were flown to Townsville in Australia. Arthur commented, that the men charged with shooting the wounded soldiers, were left with a terrible scar on their souls and that each inevitably died in the jungle from the guilt and pain resulting from their actions. Overall, Arthur spent 183 days from the 22nd of January 1942 making his way through the jungles back to Port Moresby. Army records show that Arthur was declared "Missing" on the 25 January 1942 and was declared "Now Not Missing" on the 27 June 1942.

The Japanese took 845 Lark force prisoners of war and loaded them on to the ship - "The Montevideo Maru". The ship was sunk by an American submarine. The fate of those on board was not discovered until the



Skeletal remains of Australians after the Tol Plantation Massacre on 4 February 1942.
Image Courtesy AWM P09455.001

²Remains of Australian soldiers killed during the retreat from Rabaul on 4 February 1942. Approximately 160 soldiers were massacred by the Japanese in a series of separate incidents at the Tol Plantation in New Britain on 4 February 1942. The soldiers were retreating south, alone or in small parties, from Rabaul following the successful Japanese attack on 23 January 1942. After crossing the Bainings Mountains many men decided to head towards Tol and Waitavallo, while others continued heading south. On 3 February 1942, the Japanese attacked Tol, capturing a number of men as they tried to escape from the plantation. Others were captured when they were unable to cross the rivers in the area around Henry Reid Bay and at least one group surrendered. The men, now Prisoners of War (POWs) were forced to surrender all of their personal belongings and were tied together in groups of two or three. They were asked in sign language by the Japanese if they preferred to be shot or bayoneted. The groups were then taken into the jungle where they were shot, bayoneted or burnt alive. Six men survived the massacre and with the help of local natives were able to make contact with the 150 others from Rabaul who had evaded the Japanese and gathered around Palmalmal Plantation. This group was evacuated from Palmalmal Plantation on 12 April 1942 on HMAS Laurabada. Parts of the men's uniforms, including a helmet and boot can be identified. Caption written by VX149141 Pte Ivan Harold Jones reads 'Tol'.



war ended. Overall, 1224 soldiers were killed including 133 men of 1st Independent Company. On his arrival back in Townsville, with cerebral malaria and weighing only six stone (fully dressed), he was treated badly by the local military. It was only after the stories from the New Britain villagers of their mighty escape filtered through and stories of the battles that they had fought became confirmed by Army Intelligence, that Arthur received true recognition in the form of a Mention in Dispatches³ to the King "for exceptional service in the field for the period 7 December 1941 to 30 April 1942. It took Arthur a number of months to recuperate from cerebral malaria and to regain weight and fitness. However, he and the very few others that survived, felt a great guilt about their survival. They had lost so many of their friends that they wondered why they were spared. On the 11 January 1943, Arthur was also awarded the "Commendation Card" signed by the Head of the Australian Army – General Sir Thomas Blamey.

After recovering, Arthur approached his brother-in-law, Major Jack Mahoney, to see if he could help him join a new special forces group that had been developed by the Australian army - the "Z Special Unit". Jack refused on the basis that "Arthur had done more than 10 men to defend his country" and Z Special was almost suicidal. The purpose of Z Special was to penetrate behind the Japanese lines with a view to gathering intelligence information and conduct sabotage operations (it was a forerunner to the SASR). Arthur later joined the 2/12th Cav Commando Squadron⁴ (Cdo Sqn) as part of the 2/9th Cav Commando Regiment, (formed as part of the 9th Division's reserve).

Morotai

"The Battle of Morotai", began on 15 September 1944, and continued until the end of the war in August 1945. In July 1944, General Douglas MacArthur, the Commander of the South West Pacific Area, selected Morotai as the location for air bases and naval facilities needed to support the liberation of the Philippines.

On 28 February 1945, Arthur departed Brisbane by plane for Morotai. The flight took 4 days. Arthur was

³To be mentioned in dispatches (or despatches, MiD) describes a member of the armed forces whose name appears in an official report written by a superior officer and sent to the high command, in which their gallant or meritorious action in the face of the enemy is described. In some countries, a service member's name must be mentioned in dispatches as a condition for receiving certain decorations.

⁴Alan Grant Past President NSW Commando Association. 2/12 Commando Squadron. The Cavalry Commando Regiments were formed at the end of 1943 until the end of hostilities. The 2/12 Squadron was formed as part of 2/9 Cavalry Commando Regiment. The Australian Independent Companies received commando training, they gained their reputation for toughness and combat success from lengthy patrol operations and guerilla warfare. Their tough specialist training, ability to live off the land if necessary, improvise and employ battle cunning made them ideal candidates for these tasks, especially when Australia was short of infantry battalions and unable to guarantee a regular supply line. On many occasions they worked closely with local tribes and native police. What better candidate than Arthur Bernard Simson to fit this mold!!!

involved in Intermittent fighting for the following 4 months. From April 1945, the island was used by the Australian 1st Corps to mount the Borneo Campaign. Australian Army engineers expanded the base facilities at Morotai to support this operation and Morotai remained an important logistical hub and command centre until the end of the war. On 9 September 1945, Australian General Thomas Blamey accepted the surrender of the Japanese Second Army at a ceremony held on the 1st Corps' sports ground at Morotai.

Labuan

On 27 June 1945 Arthur flew to Labuan for "The Battle of Lubau". Labuan was a small island off the coast of Borneo. It formed part of the Australian invasion of North Borneo (Malaya) and was important as a base to support future offensives.



WW2 Medal Group similar to Arthur Simson's. L-R 1939-45 Star, Pacific Star, Defence Medal, War Medal 1939-45 w/- Oak Leaf (MiD) & Australian Service Medal 1939-45.

Following several weeks of air attacks and a short naval bombardment, soldiers of the Australian 24th Brigade were landed on Labuan on the 10th of June 1945. The Australians quickly captured the island's harbour and main airfield. The greatly outnumbered Japanese garrison was mainly concentrated in a fortified position in the interior of Labuan and offered little resistance to the landing. The initial Australian attempts to penetrate the Japanese position in the days after the invasion were not successful, and the area was subjected to a heavy bombardment. A Japanese raiding force also attempted to attack Allied positions on the 21st June, but were driven back.

Arthur, as part of the 2/12th Cdo Sqn conducted patrols of the outlying areas of Labuan to clear them of any Japanese forces. In the following days, Australian patrols killed or captured the remaining Japanese troops on the island. On the 1 September 1945, he left Labuan for Morotai, arriving on the 6 September 1945, and then returning to Brisbane on 9 September 1945. He was finally discharged from the army on the 11 February 1946. Arthur received the following medals and awards:

- 1939/1945 Star
- Pacific Star
- Defence Medal
- War Medal 1939-45 with Bronze Oak Leaf Device (Mention in Dispatches)
- Australian Service Medal 1939-45
- Commendation Card

Article Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lark_Force
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2/22nd_Battalion_\(Australia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2/22nd_Battalion_(Australia))
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mentioned_in_dispatches



A COMMANDO'S CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE

PART 2

Contracting in The Green Zone & Baghdad International AirPort Iraq 2005

By Mr Luke O'Brien – ACA QLD Treasurer & Membership Secretary

As I continue on from my last article from 2005 working at the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP), Check Point 1, Baghdad and Basra (in that order), I wanted to rewind a little and continue on from the BIAP times. It is hard to describe BIAP/CP 1, Camp Victory, and the sheer volatility of Baghdad at the time in 2005. Numerous Marine Airborne Re-Transmission System¹ (MARTS) 'Blimps' were situated above both AO's as there was the constant threat of rolling Mortar and rocket attacks on the BIAP. The typical enemy SOP's is they would roll along outside the BIAP, normally in pick-ups, 'crash action', or hastily assemble one or two mortar tubes, put as many mortars into the AO as possible then leave before detection; which would normally be seconds. The Camp Victory Post Exchange (PX)² was mortared, so someone had to have the co-ordinates from inside the Camp for that to happen. I was rolling down the BIAP MSR (Main Supply Route) with my QRF team and had an old Chinese rocket land around 300m in front of me. I dug out was left of it and subsequently identified it as a rocket from the thickness of the casing. Another time I was about to step out of my Trailer (or Hooch) and a mortar round landed just outside the walls, subsequently sending a heap on dirt onto the roof and also fragging the outside of the concrete T-Wall³, if I'd left a few seconds earlier I would have been splattered – quite close!!

One of my mates on the BIAP contract, who was a Brit, drove down Route Irish at night time in a marked

¹MARTS - Tethered aerostats are unmanned non-rigid lighter-than-air vehicles (a.k.a. blimps), which remain anchored to the ground by one or more ropes. They are used for various surveillance tasks, where a low-cost long-endurance (up to a month) stationary aerial platform is needed. In all tethered aerostat systems, the main tether not only holds the blimp in position, but also provides electrical power to the vehicle's systems as well as a data link (via fiber optics in all modern systems) to communicate with the on-board sensors. The main envelope of an aerostat is filled with helium, while the stabilizing tail fins are normally filled with air.

²An exchange is a type of retail store found on United States military installations worldwide. Originally akin to trading posts, they now resemble contemporary department stores or strip malls. Exact terminology varies by armed service; some examples include base exchange (BX), and post exchange (PX), and there are more specific terms for subtypes of exchange.

³A Bremer wall, or T-wall, is a twelve-foot-tall (3.66 m) portable, steel-reinforced concrete blast wall of the type used for blast protection throughout Iraq and Afghanistan. The name is believed to have originated from L. Paul Bremer of the Coalition Provisional Authority, who was the Director of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance for post-war Iraq, following the Iraq War of 2003, in the early years of the Iraq War. T-Wall or Texas Wall due to the size of the State of Texas and the smaller Jersey Barrier named after the State of New Jersey which is 3-foot-tall (0.91 m) high.



CP-1 @ BIAP in 2005. Note the Jersey Barrier the author is leaning against and the Texas Barrier (T-Wall) on the other side of the cars.

Photo Courtesy: Luke O'Brien

soft skin company vehicle with a couple of Gurkhas, supposedly looking for a brothel. He ended up in the wrong neighbourhood and was peppered by rounds, he returned fire and fled. The vehicle came back full of holes, a couple of the rounds just missed vital engine parts as well as people so it is anyone's guess how any of them made it back without disabling the vehicle and/or surviving – he was subsequently fired.

Every civilian and military plane that entered the BIAP had to do an extremely steep descent and upon leaving a very steep ascent, in a spiral type pattern, to avoid incoming fire. One unlucky US Serviceman was shot in the back through the wall of a C130 Hercules on approach to the BIAP – *how unlucky would you have to be?* US Military and CIA would often receive cargo planes full of US currency. This cargo was promptly picketed at the end of the BIAP by US Military/CIA armed to the teeth, the rule was not to go anywhere near them as they were extremely nervous. Russian Cargo Planes would arrive at BIAP and spend 2 days at the Cargo terminal while the crew got drunk on Vodka. The first time I took off from BIAP was in a small twin prop plane piloted by Russians, as we were taking off, I looked out my window only to see that the prop on my side was not spinning – now I am no expert but I knew that was bad. We didn't end up taking off that day and spent the next 8 hours in the heat while the Pilots fixed the plane. I was not happy!!

Check Point 1, when not receiving incoming fire or returning fire to and from the surrounding area, receiving casualties and watching for the constant



threat of VBIED'S, was a logistical bedlam. Thousands of people through every day to be searched, all travellers, workers – everybody. There would typically be up to 50 large trucks waiting in the 50o C dusty Baghdad heat down Route Irish in the civilian lanes of the Check point in any one day. You could cut the tension with a knife, all of these trucks had to be searched, and trucks that would not move out of the way of a Security call signs/Military were considered suspicious at best. It was my job as QRF Commander to walk my call sign down Route Irish through the mess of trucks, people and vehicles with weapons drawn and order the driver to move his potential truck bomb out of the way. The Military lanes of CP 1 were a lot quicker as long as you presented your DoD/CaC Card clear and present out the window for the US Military to sight through their Binoculars. If not expect an M2 QCB (Quich Change Barrel) .50 CAL rounds through your windshield due to the VBIED threat on the Checkpoint.



The author (C) front with the BIAP QRF Team 2005.

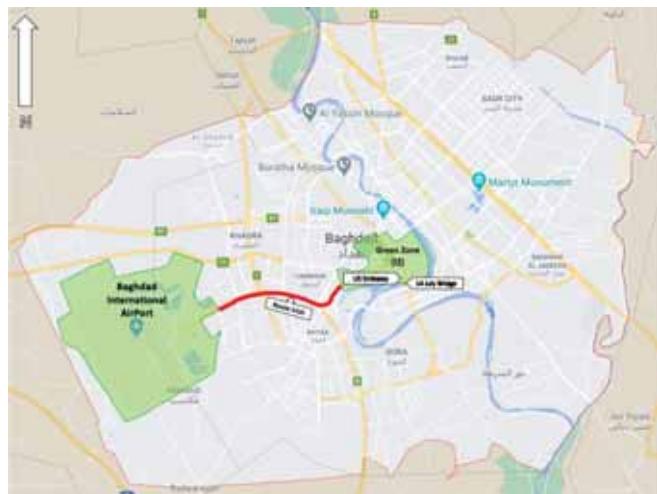
Photo Courtesy: Luke O'Brien

I was working on the BIAP contract with a Platoon size element of 2nd Regiment Fijians, a great bunch of blokes that I had the privilege to meet and get on the Cava with in East Timor. In East Timor my section was invited to their AO for a day of eating their delicious food and Cava. In Iraq in 2005, they were mainly manning the static positions around BIAP along with around a company size Gurkha group. BBQ's were organized when anybody could organise it. At one of these BBQ's the Gurkhas and the Fijian's had a tug of war, the Gurkhas won the contest, naturally the Fijian's weren't too impressed with this outcome so, it ended up in a massive punch up between both groups.

One dusty 50° C day I was hanging out in the Cargo area of BIAP with my team, when 3 cargo planes arrived from Dubai, all 3 were packed full of AK-47's, now that is a lot of AK-47's. A crazy Dubai Indian business man, by the name of Sanjay, was in charge. He gave me the paperwork for this arsenal, which was a dodgy bit of paperwork at best. Now, Sanjay didn't realise that I was the go-to for the Iraqi Government official in charge of the Cargo section of BIAP. It was my job as "the connect" between the Iraqi "Boss" in charge of this section (who had all the power at the time) and Sanjay. This Iraqi official liked me so I

essentially had the power to let this arsenal into Iraq or not. I did the right thing by Sanjay and worded him up correctly to "the boss", but also let Sanjay know that when I next got to Dubai, everything was his shout and I wanted to be shown around and looked after. So, after what was probably a very large bribe to "the boss", Sanjay entered Iraq with his AK-47's. Upon my next leave I met up with Sanjay in Dubai, he put me up at a nice Hotel for a couple of nights and the first night I swear we went to every bar in Dubai – a great experience. The city was still quite small in 2005, I know I wouldn't make it to every bar in Dubai these days. I became mates for a few years with this crazy Dubai businessman, we'd catch up for drinks while passing through Dubai when possible from then on, I believe he sells scrap metal in India now.

By October 2005 I was to work on "Operation VANQUISH⁴" for the same Company, supervising 1000 Gurkhas in a Gurkha camp in the Green Zone on the edge of the Tigris River, bordering the 14th of July bridge in Baghdad. The Gurkhas job was the protection of the International Zone (IZ) also known as the Green Zone, including protection of a very large and deep hole which was situated next to the Gurkha Camp, which was also part of my AO, it is now the current US Embassy of Iraq.



Map of Baghdad in 2005 showing the Green Zone (IZ) US Embassy & 14 July Bridge, Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) in green and Route Irish in red.

Coming back off leave I was stuck in Kuwait for a week as Military personnel got first pick of the spots on the Military airframes into Baghdad. I didn't mind, I was on full pay and staying at the Hilton Hotel. Alcohol is illegal in Kuwait, but the company movement's manager, who was a Kiwi, opened up his secret fridge of booze on the last night I was there. I spent many hot and painful hours the next day on the Military airside, then the next night on the armoured United States

⁴Global Strategies Group (GSG) held the armed protection of the entire IZ for a few years, including all of the venues within including Saddam's Palace and CP 12 (start of route Irish). Using a couple of handfuls of ex pats and 1000 Gurkhas – Luke O'Brien.



'RHINO' Bus down Route IRISH and finally got to the Green Zone in Baghdad about 3am 24 hours later.

These last 3 months of 2005 were great, I was supervising a Battalion of Gurkhas, Platoon and Company formations. They protected the entire Green Zone including high risk Diplomatic venues, and the US Embassy construction site within the IZ. The entire IZ expatriate team would meet daily for briefings at the Gurkha Camp. While just above the constant sights and sounds of low altitude UH-60 Blackhawks, CH-47 Chinooks and of course the "Blackwater" MH-6 little birds were always present as they buzzed by. The team consisted mainly of South African Security Contractors, who were all highly experienced and ex Angola veterans, including the Project Manager, one of the finest men I have ever met. I still remain friends with a couple of the Angola veterans to date. The team also had a few Brits, this team basically ran all of the venues within the Green Zone; the Al Rasheed Hotel, Assassins Gate, the Al Zaqlura building, Saddam's Palace etc. I had an up armoured vehicle and had free reign of the Green Zone with my DoD/CaC card.

In the month of October 2005, the Gurkhas, being mainly Hindu, celebrated their holy week of Dashain. Unlike Ramadan, which also occurred late in 2005, the Gurkhas basically hosted a week-long eating and drinking festival with lots of Goats getting chopped with the infamous Kukri⁵ knife for Goat Curry. I was lucky to be one of their guests for their legendary goat curry. The Gurkha Camp that week was a host to numerous parties, one as many as 2000 people. Word quickly got around the Green Zone of this popular yearly event. The week was full of Gurkha Curry, beer and meeting many new people from many different professional fields. I will never forget those three months in Baghdad, I worked with a great group of people, the biggest party I have ever been to, was ironically in the Green Zone in late 2005.

The glamourous side of Security Contracting, and the lifestyle and bubble of the Green Zone late 2005 is hard to describe. It was almost like a Hollywood lifestyle, with the permanent threat of incoming mortar and rocket rounds mainly from Sadr City. There were thousands of International expatriates, including the US Military, all there for the exorbitant pay check and to party across the many International venues. All forms of PSD call signs and Military from many nations, with all forms of Military vehicles. The US Military mainly used the HMMWV (Humvee) but eventually upgraded to the far superior MRAP⁶. Some PSD call signs were

flat out cowboys, still doing high profile vehicle manoeuvrability drills (or maintaining the security bubble within the security call sign) while inside the Green Zone. Other call signs simply ripped off all the vehicle doors with weapons outward, up armoured F350 gun trucks with mounted M2 QCB .50 CALs were not uncommon.



Entrance into the Liberty Pool Complex in the Green Zone. Not the sign on the Texas Barrier & Weapon Clearing Bay right front.

Photo Courtesy: Luke O'Brien

Within the Green Zone there were PSD team members with Mohawk's, double mounted revolvers, knives, even swords – with an abundance of grenades, chewing tobacco, Krispy Kreme, Subway and Burger King. Breakfast at the Palace was always typical US Military – Donuts and Coffee - to say I was enthralled was an understatement. I got to know most of the Personal Security Company's (PSC's), every night of the week there was a party at any one of the many PSC's very lavish Villa's, all with Bars and pools. We used these pool party's to trade various weapons, MP-5s were a particularly desired item. There was a bar named "the bunker bar" which was situated right next door to the Gurkha Camp, and on all four walls, had every assault weapon imaginable, and it was always packed. The Green Zone Liberty Pool was booked out every weekend, mainly by International Companies and the US Military, for loud, large speaker music and bikini parties with plenty of booze.

I turned up one day to the Australian Embassy in Baghdad whilst a Company of my first unit, 1 RAR. They were standing around in body armour, I was wearing a singlet, shorts and thongs – I knew they were there so just wanted to stop by and say a quick hello.

My Gurkhas were fantastic, I was popular with the Battalion and the British trained Gurkhas were mainly Falkland's veterans. Each Platoon would make a Gurkha curry most nights, they all worked out that I was a big fan of the Gurkha curry (goat or chicken), and still am, so I was lucky enough to get one delivered to my room in the camp every night. Each Trailer was surrounded by concrete T-walls, and the weather was that hot that you would turn on just the cold tap of your trailers shower and the water was too hot to handle.

⁵The kukri is a type of machete originating from the Indian subcontinent, and is traditionally associated with the Nepali-speaking Gurkhas of Nepal and India. The knife has a distinct recurve in its blade. It serves multiple purposes as a melee weapon and also as a regular cutting tool throughout most of South Asia.

⁶Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) is a term for United States military light tactical vehicles produced as part of the MRAP program that are designed specifically to withstand improvised explosive device (IED) attacks and ambushes.



We didn't get the same amount of mortar activity as the BIAP, besides the T-walls acted like shields so dropping a mortar in would be like dropping a bomb into 100 concrete buckets, the blast would simply go upwards.

At the end of 2005 the Green Zone contract was lost to an American company, it was sad for all. I was avidly looking for work elsewhere, in hindsight I should have stayed with the same company. The handover with the new Americans took about a month, their reactions were extremely jumpy when they heard a mortar round go off. They also employed guards from Honduras to replace the incumbent Gurkhas. There were many UD's (Unauthorised Discharges of weapons) at Saddam's Palace, and at most high-risk diplomatic venues – it was unprofessional.



The compulsory Baghdad photo @ the the Swords of Qādisiyah (Victory Arch) in the background.

Photo Courtesy: Luke O'Brien

Basra Airport. I ended up meeting his client "Flour AMEC" in the Green Zone, an amalgamation of a British and US Company. They grilled me on my CV as well as grilled my new boss about his poor handling of the Basra Project – alarm bells should have rung at this but I was inexperienced at the time. I asked for 20 Gurkha volunteers from my GSG, I had no problems gaining 20 of the best Gurkhas as they were all facing returning to Nepal. My potential new boss needed myself as the Project Manager (PM) for Basra and another person, I emailed my mate from BIAP who I mentioned got the company soft skin vehicle shot up and subsequently fired, who was at the time floating around Baghdad, to join me – which he did. Before leaving "Operation Vanquish", my mate and 20 British trained Gurkhas went via the Rino bus to BIAP, for the chartered flight to Basra. I spent my remaining days on the project in the Gurkha Camp, saying goodbye to everyone, I then made my way to my new compound within the IZ, then with my new Armenian boss, down took off down Route IRISH via soft skin vehicle, and onto a civilian flight to Basra.

I had my bag on my back, in the 50° degree C heat and walked out through the outer British Checkpoint at Basra Airport, into no man's land, at 2005's end – the British Military could not believe what they were seeing. They asked me if I was 'barking mad', I couldn't resist and told them I was just going for a stroll. My Armenian boss was considered a local so he left

through the Checkpoint without notice. Waiting around the corner was a local driver in a low pro soft skin vehicle. I immediately grabbed my AK-47, body armour and mags and jumped in the back of a vehicle that looked like it was about to break down.

Basra is as hot as hell, the city was the pits, piles of rubbish everywhere, dead horses, dead dogs, large packs of wild dogs, random gunfire and frequent detonations. IED's were often hidden inside roadkill. Local females were being executed on the street simply for wearing makeup on their faces while wearing their Burqas, hence they moved to the Niqab. If you were an expatriate on the streets you were killed, I will write about these incidents in Part 3. I didn't trust the Iraqi Police Checkpoints; you didn't know which ones were real or illegal. We did not get stopped that particular day as we were very low pro, I was wearing a shemagh, but was very itchy on the trigger of the AK never the less. We drove through the twin Mosques of Basra, known for its high rate of incidents, just next door to these Mosques was the Serpentine T-Walls of my new Projects man camp, now manned and protected by my 20 Gurkhas.

It was good to see the Gurkhas upon arrival, as well as my mate from Baghdad. Little did I know he had already had enough and was about to quit and return back to Baghdad – he lasted 2 days. I had over 70 employees, in the next 2 days my boss departed for Dubai and never returned.

My next article (Part 3) I will focus on the next six months of my life operating in Basra 2006. It was an extremely different world to Baghdad's IZ. I was now a fledgling Project Manager on a near impossible Project in the most volatile location in Iraq at the time – Al-Basrah.



Following a US Army M2 Bradley IFV on the BIAP MSR. Photo Courtesy: Luke O'Brien



ROYAL AIR FORCE COMMANDOS

RAF Servicing Commandos 1942 - 1946

Foreword by MAJ Brian Liddy (Retd). ACA – National Public Officer



An embroidered Post WW2
RAF Servicing Commando
Breast Patch worn by
Association Members.

The Royal Air Force Commandos were formed from units of the Royal Air Force (RAF) during the Second World War. They were formed in 1942 and served in the European and Far Eastern theatres of war before being disbanded in 1946.

Background

The commander of Combined Operations Lord Louis Mountbatten on 22 January 1942 recommended that the RAF create a number of Commando units. These units, called Servicing Commandos, would accompany the Allied Armies when they invaded Europe, either to make German airfields serviceable or to make operational the new airstrips built by the Army Airfield Construction Units. Eventually 12 Servicing Commandos were formed in the United Kingdom and three in the Middle East. The force consisted of 2,400 officers and men skilled in aircraft maintenance, armaments, communications and airfield activation skills and were capable of working on all types of aircraft to keep them flying under all kinds of conditions.

These Commando Units were trained on similar lines to the British Army and Royal Marines Commandos. Each Commando unit comprised two or three officers and between 150 and 170 other ranks. They were equipped with jeeps, motorcycles and up to 15 three-ton trucks. Commando units were involved in the major seaborne landings, either going in with the initial invasion forces or giving active support in other ways to keep the aircraft flying.

RAF Commandos were trained to do two jobs. The first was to maintain, repair, refuel and arm operational Allied aircraft during the assault phase of a major landing close to the advancing front line. The second was to vigorously defend themselves and the aircraft in their charge against enemy attack. The additional training, they needed for this included two weeks at the No 1 Combined Training Centre, Inveraray on Loch Fyne in Scotland.

The wartime work of the RAF Servicing Commandos is less well known than their Army, Marine and Navy counterparts. They kept operational aircraft flying in support of the advancing troops until the arrival of the squadrons' regular ground personnel. In the case of Normandy, the Units were regularly on the move as the front-line advanced eastwards towards Germany. The volunteers were recruited from the service personnel of RAF Squadrons through notices posted at RAF Stations; 'Volunteers wanted in all trades for units to be formed to

service aircraft under hazardous conditions.' Despite the lack of detail, there was no shortage of volunteers prepared to undertake their vital work in the battle grounds. Planners identified a need to provide forward aircraft servicing support during the assault phase as the Allies advanced through enemy occupied territory. It would take time for squadron ground crews to reach forward positions so small self-contained, mobile servicing units were needed to fill the gap. A memorandum from the War Cabinet Annex in Whitehall to the MOD, dated 27/1/42, recommended the formation of an RAF Servicing Commando Force.

The memo was signed by Lord Louis Mountbatten, Commodore of Combined Operations. The Commandos were required to set up operations, under fire if necessary, including fuel, spare parts and ammunition for the servicing of engines, guns and air-frames... and all from tools and equipment carried through an assault landing! They would also assist during assault landings as necessary.

Formation

Fifteen such units were formed, each commanded by an engineering officer and usually with an armament officer and an adjutant. Each unit comprised about 150 men organised into four flights similar to army platoons. There was a flight sergeant with corporals as section leaders. A sergeant was responsible for each trade, such as engine, airframe and armourers.

Fifteen 3-ton trucks held each unit's equipment and personnel when on the move. There was also a 15 cwt (3/4 of a ton) vehicle, a jeep for the Commanding Officer and a motorcycle for the unit despatch rider. Airmen were armed with Sten guns or rifles and each flight had a Bren gun.



Image: Courtesy IWM (CL 600).



Training

All ranks undertook military training, supervised by Army Officers seconded for the purpose. Their training included driving and swimming, the former because they were a mobile unit and the latter because they would be involved in amphibious landings. After this initial 'toughening up' training, they spent two weeks at the Combined Training Centre (CTC) at Inveraray in Scotland.

CTC Inveraray specialised in minor landing craft amphibious training but was also a location for Commando training. Here the volunteers trained to safely embark and disembark landing craft, including the use of scrambling nets, together with physically demanding assault exercises in the surrounding rugged, mountainous countryside, which usually followed mock landings. On completion of this training, the coveted Combined Operations badge was issued.

During the following few months, the units frequently moved from airfield to airfield to gain experience of servicing a wide range of aircraft including Spitfires, Typhoons, Mustangs and Mosquitoes. Each Commando Unit had a mobile workshop, which was amongst the first vehicles to go ashore in assault landings, while fuel tankers and ancillary vehicles landed later in the day. The object was to establish a landing strip ready to receive aircraft flying in support of the ground forces.

Theatres Of War

The Commando Units were deployed in three distinct geographical areas during the years 1942 to 1945. These were:

The Mediterranean

Commando Units - 3201, 02, 03 and 04 took part in operations in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. In addition, 3230, 31 and 32 trained in Palestine and served in Sicily and Italy.

Normandy

Commando Units - 3205, 07, 09 and 10 embarked at Gosport on the south coast of England early on the morning of 6th June, 1944. They crossed the Channel on an American Landing Ship Tank (LST) and several Landing Craft Tank (LCTs); one of which was torpedoed and set on fire during the crossing. Two airmen were injured but they returned safely to England by naval craft along with others rescued.

South East Asia

After withdrawal from Normandy, the four units (3205, 07, 09 and 10) embarked for passage to South East Asia. However, the operational life of the units came to an abrupt end with the unexpected surrender of Japan on 2/9/45. Operation Zipper, the invasion of Malaya, in which they would have been involved, was cancelled with the ending of the war.



LAC Henry John Clifford Elcome, 'Cliff' to his friends, of Cdo Unit 3204 taken sometime in 1943/44. Note Commando insignia on shoulder and dagger on hip.

Commando Unit Deployments

Commando Unit 3201 trained in the UK and landed in North Africa on D-Day at about H + 60 minutes and reached Maison Blanche airfield at 09.10 hrs. When not involved in assault landings, the unit worked alongside aircraft recovery units. They were in Sicily in 1943 and Corsica in January 1944. Their CO throughout the 2.5 years was Flt Lt H Webster, who made this critical comment... *the unit was misused after Sicily, no one on the staff knew its capabilities.*

Commando Unit 3202 trained in the UK and served in North Africa and Italy. It was disbanded in December, 1943, at Taranto, Italy.



Operation TORCH: airmen of No 3201 Servicing Commando loading ammunition drums for the Supermarine Spitfire Mark Vs of No. 322 Wing RAF at Maison Blanche, Algeria.

Operation TORCH was the first occasion on which RAF Servicing Commandos were used. Their duties were to undertake the servicing and replenishment of aircraft during the assault stage of an operation, until the arrival of the squadrons' ground personnel.

Image: Courtesy of IWM (CNA 33).

Commando Unit 3203 trained in the UK and served in North Africa, Sicily and at Salerno in Italy, where they serviced any fighter aircraft that came their way. They were disbanded at Portici, Italy in February, 1944.

Commando Unit 3204 landed in Sicily in July, 1943 and disbanded at Catania, Sicily on 3/2/44.

Commando Unit 3205 embarked at Gosport early on the morning of 6/6/44. They landed on the Normandy beaches on D+1. One vehicle hit a mine on leaving the landing craft, resulting in 2 fatalities. The unit serviced Spitfires during June. They sailed for India on 2/11/44 with 07 arriving in Chittagong, India on 5/12/44. They landed at Akyab in January, 1945 from Landing Craft Mechanised (LCMs). They subsequently operated on the Arakan peninsula. In early September, 1945, the unit was at sea bound for Morib in Malaya. As planned, they landed there on or around September 9th a few days after the surrender of Japan. Their landing was unopposed and they moved on to Kelanang. Later, the unit was posted to Batavia, now Jakarta, in Java, by way of Singapore. They were disbanded on February 28th, 1946.



Commando Unit 3206 landed in Normandy on D + 10 and operated through France to Belgium. They were disbanded in April 1945.

Commando Unit 3207. The day-by-day account below was written by Sgt Tom W Edwards, 637669, RAF Servicing Commando Unit 3207. He landed on Gold Beach on D Day plus 1 (June 7, 1944). Apart from expanding abbreviations and acronyms, for ease of understanding, the entries are as written by Sgt Edwards.

June 5 - 14.00 Left camp area for mooring area.

June 6 - 04.00 Left mooring area for embarkation area (Fareham). Last on D Day! 11.30 Embarked.

June 7 - 08.40 French coast sighted. 13.00 Hove to five miles out. Anti-aircraft activity in night. No enemy aircraft. Fire in aft hold put out. Received American cigarettes, chocolate and gum ration. % of unit landed on Landing Craft Tank (LCT) and % torpedoed off coast LAC killed (Leading Aircraftsman).

June 8 - Turkey for dinner. Grapefruit, fruit salad and white bread for previous meal. 16.00 Landed on beach and wagon bogged in sand and eventually towed clear by Royal Engineers (REME). Proceeded vehicles to assembly areas and first French sign was a notice "Pension Famila" on a house. Local inhabitants waved and cheered. Proceeded to Rest and Recuperation Station (RRS) and slept in wagon. Heavy ach-ach overnight. Bazenville.

June 9 - Fairly easy day. Stores, ammo & octane coming in from beaches. Inspected dump of German Tellermines & stick grenades. Heavy ach-ach overnight.

June 10 - Exceptionally busy day preparing changes on strip. French women snipers reported in locality. Seafire and Typhoon crash landed on strip.

June 11 - Runway unusable. Recce for German.

June 12 - Liberator touched down and crew, apart from 2, bailed out. Royal Engineer caught sniper in woods at rear of strip. He had been supplied with food & clothing by French civilians. Obtained eggs from French farmer for ten francs late in evening.

June 13 - First squadron on strip - Spits. 06.30 Five Dakotas landed with WAAF orderlies. Two Thunderbolts landed - one pranged. Two Mitchells shot down in evening by anti-aircraft fire.

June 14 - One Typhoon pranged. Two Typhoon squadrons and one Spitfire squadron and five Mustangs.

June 15 - Two Typhoon and one Spitfire squadron in. Heavy ach-ach overnight. 365 sorties for the day.

June 16 - Three Focke Wulf 190s hedge hopped with twelve more above them over strip. More Dakotas arrived

to transport wounded. One German soldier had lost two eyes and a hand. Air Force took over at midnight. Two Typhoon and two Spitfire Squadrons in. Liberator & Lightning, both shot up, landed on strip.

June 17 - Left strip at 3pm for Vaux-sur-Seulles. Went to village in evening and had cognac and citroen. Total prangs on strip for five days - Five Spitfires, Four Typhoons.

June 18 - Day of rest. Haircut, hair washed, bath in bowl and two sets of laundry cleaned. Petrol, ammo & oxygen in for strip in evening.

June 19 - Convoys in during day with stores for new strip. Went to cafe in village and indulged in vin blanc and black coffee.

June 20 - 15.45 Strafed on strip while unloading stores by six Focke Wulf 190s. Heavy ach-ach. Junkers 88 crashed 1/2 mile away and bomb load exploded. Went to Vaussieux and had six vin blancs in cafe.

Commando Unit 3207 arrived in India in December 1944, spending Xmas 1944 at Imphal where, together with No 3 R&SU, they engaged in recovery and salvage work. In February, they moved by road to Monywa, where part of the unit was later flown into Meiktila in Burma. Here, they occupied a landing strip inside a defensive box. They were joined by the RAF Regiment, who assisted in the defence of the box. During this period, both Sgt. Brown and Nobby Coxhall, who had served in Normandy with 3209, earned the Military Medal.

The part unit was withdrawn from Meiktila on 29/4/45. After the fall of Mandalay, the unit left for Mingladon which, by then, was securely in Allied hands. They then moved to Rangoon where they took part in a victory parade. They then sailed to Singapore, arriving there on September 5th. Prior to being disbanded (possibly at Kallang) on 31st March 1946, 3207 serviced planes used to repatriate ex POWs (prisoners of war).

Commando Unit 3208 landed in Normandy on D + 10, where they serviced Mustangs and other aircraft. They moved to forward airfields with the advancing Allied troops and serviced Mosquitoes covering the Rhine crossing. They were disbanded in March 1945.

Commando Unit 3209. Most of 3209 sailed from Gosport on an American LST with the remainder of the unit on an LCT together with all the unit's cooking equipment. Unfortunately, the LCT was sunk by enemy action and two airmen were killed and others injured. Most were picked up by naval craft and returned to England but one member was deposited on his designated landing beach in Normandy ahead of the main body of men. On their arrival, he admonished them with, "Where have you lot been?", while resplendent in a naval jersey given to him by one of the sailors! Because the unit had lost all its cooking equipment, for several weeks they survived on canned compo rations delivered to them on crates containing food for 14 men for one day. For cooking and heating water, they used empty motor transport fuel cans, cut in half, filled with earth and soaked in petrol. When



Sgt Edwards



replacement cooking equipment arrived, the unit cooks resumed their duties. The units operated mostly on the B2 and B3 landing grounds in Normandy, returning to England at the beginning of August. They were given leave before sailing for the Far East at the end of the year.



Servicing Commandos watching a bulldozer clearing ground for the first new landing strip in Normandy.

On landing in Bombay in January 1945, spent some time in a transit camp possibly called Worli. From there, they crossed India to Singabeel in the state of Assam; to Calcutta, for a short stay on the Midan; back across India to a Seaplane base at Korangi Creek on the coast not far from Karachi. Here they underwent some training on landing craft but spent most of the time swimming! Once more across India to Bobbilli on the coast north of Madras, where they waited for the delivery of some Bedford trucks, then down to Madras and aboard a Tank Landing Craft (TLC) to Rangoon. They were scheduled to take part in Operation Dracula... the seaborne assault on Rangoon but this was cancelled upon the surrender of the Japanese in early September 1945. 3209 was then split up and never again operated as a unit. A Squadron (1 and 2 flights) sailed to Rangoon from Madras and then to Bangkok by landing craft, where they established a staging post for servicing visiting aircraft. B Squadron (3 and 4 flights) sailed from Rangoon to Saigon on board the troop ship 'Silesia.' It was not altogether safe, since Nationalists fired on a following vessel on the Saigon River. They established the No 2 staging post for aircraft en-route to Japan and also took part in airfield defence against insurgents seeking to prevent the return of the French. The squadron also patrolled the countryside looking for terrorists and arms and they provided a guard of honour for Lord Louis Mountbatten on his arrival in Saigon. 3209 was disbanded on 22nd November 1945 and members were posted to RAF units throughout South East Asia.

Commando Unit 3210 landed in India on 14/1/45 and, after training at Worli, moved to Calcutta. Flights were employed at various stations until orders came through to prepare for Operation Zipper. However, the surrender of the Japanese on 5/9/45 changed everything. In mid-September they sailed to Malaya on board the SS Dunera and on the 17th, they transferred to landing craft off Morib beach, having to negotiate four feet of water and a nine-mile march to their assembly area!

Neville Colfer writes; The SS Dunera arrived off Morib Beach on the 9th according to the log of my father's RAF squadron - the 89th Squadron. They also transferred to LCIs and then another transfer to smaller landing craft before wading ashore on the afternoon of the 9th. They

set off on a 10-mile march to a transit camp at Telok Datok, same one as the 3210, I expect. But it was too late in the day and so they were ordered to bivouac. It was so dark they couldn't see where they were setting up their tents. Unfortunately, some erected their tents on a dry river bed which, unbeknown to them, was subject to flash flooding. They woke up during the night in several inches of water! Overnight monsoon rains thoroughly soaked them and all their kit. When they arrived at Telok Datok, which was no more than a collection of huts, it took two days to dry out!

Their orders were to prepare airstrips at Port Swettenham or Port Dickson, ready for operational duties by the 15th September when new mosquitoes were due to arrive. This was also what, I expect, 3210 were going to do under fire, if opposed. However, all that had changed, of course, with the end of the war. With war plans abandoned, the 89th Echelon received new orders on the 23rd of September to "Make your way to Seletar, Singapore".

42651 personnel and 3968 vehicles were landed on Morib beach according to a monument erected there by the 46th Indian Beach Group.

Aircraft were serviced at airfields in Port Swettenham and Kuala Lumpur's Kelanang airfield. On the 21st of September, a move to Batavia in Java was intimated and, shortly thereafter, they sailed from Port Dickson to Batavia, with their vehicles, aboard four LCTs. On arrival they took over airfield defence from an army detachment and serviced incoming aircraft and, initially, two squadrons of Thunderbolts. With little notice, the unit was disbanded on 31 October, 1945.

Commando Unit 3225 was formed in the UK in July 1943 and served in Egypt around the end of 1943.

Commando Unit 3226 was formed in July 1942. They served in Sicily and Salerno, Italy where, despite the airstrip coming under enemy fire, petrol was brought up from the beachhead area. After further service, the unit was disbanded in January 1944.



Desmond Spruce, of Commando Unit 3210, celebrating his 100th birthday with family, friends and the local branch of the Royal British Legion, whilst observing social distancing measures during the Corvid 19 pandemic of 2020.

Commando Units 3230 and 3231 were formed in Palestine (Egypt?) in the Spring of 1943. They were deployed to Sicily and the toe of Italy before being disbanded in November 1943 and January 1944 respectively.

By 1946 all Commando Servicing Unit had been disbanded and returned to the UK. RAF Commandos lost 17 members killed during WW2.

Commando 4 Life.

Article Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Air_Force_Commandos
<https://www.combinedops.com>
<http://www.tspscdoassn.co.uk>



BOOK REVIEW

"MOSUL"

MOSUL, Australia's Secret War Inside the ISIS Caliphate, By Ben McKelvey,
Hachette Australia, Sydney 2020

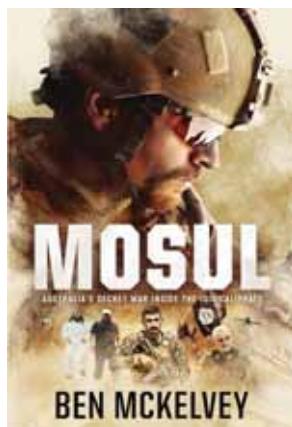
Reviewed by MAJ Jim Truscott (Retd) - ACA VIC

There has not been a book like this since our last victory in combat in 1960 in the Malayan Emergency. We have not won a war since then. The feeling of undulated victory is quite really extraordinary, and it is in no small part due to the role played by Australian Commandos in the defeat of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Ben McKelvey is to be commended for this warts-and-all account at a time when all Australians desperately need a psychological win. While it is a tale about success on the urban battlefield in a different style of high technology warfare, it is a grim reminder of the toll on human life, both civilians caught up in an insidious urban conflict, and our own Operators and their families enduring mental anguish and suffering. Exquisite victory has come at a terrible cost.

It is also a vivid reminder of the enemy within our own country, some 115 religious fanatics who proselytized Jihad as the so-called sixth pillar of Islam, and who had no qualm in killing the rest of us at home or abroad. Most of them have been now been killed or are in jail. Their god is truly great.

This insightful book covers a lot of territory, from domestic battlefields in Sydney and Melbourne, to international fronts in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. It is as much a story about the ever-present post-traumatic stress disorder lurking within our troops, as it is about



the brainwashing of religious zealots in our prayer rooms in western Sydney and our cafes in Melbourne.

The book juxtaposes personal stories about these terrorists in our mosques and on our streets and about a band of Australia Commando brothers who have taken the fight to the mountains and valleys of Afghanistan, and who badged as diplomats have taken the cudgel to the cities and deserts of Iraq and Syria for over a decade. The retaking of the cities of Fallujah, Mosul and Raqqa reads like something out of the bone fields at the encirclement of Stalingrad, 75 years ago.

The futility of fighting a war in Afghanistan is ever so apparent, and it was depressing to read some valiant parts of this story which had no impact on defeating the enemy there at all. Equally the success of security and law enforcement agencies in Australia combined with the highly successful employment of multiple 10-man Special Forces Assistance Teams (SFAT) inside Iraq and Syria gives all readers hope that this insidious threat can be kept at bay. In the end I felt like gleefully shouting 'laurels to the victor' from my rooftop cum minaret.

What I particularly liked was the first-hand and extremely personal stories of some of the men and women involved. They are raw and there is plenty of hurt. These dashing combat stories on the front line

and painful after-action stories in the suburbs of Holsworthy will never end up in sanitized official histories, but it is ever so important that they be told. This delightful and grim book must be read by every politician who has just cause to send Australian men and women into mortal combat, and who remain responsible for their wrecked minds and bodies after they return. This book about the sound of religious freedom should also be read by every Australian who wishes to walk down their street without fear impacting their daily lives.

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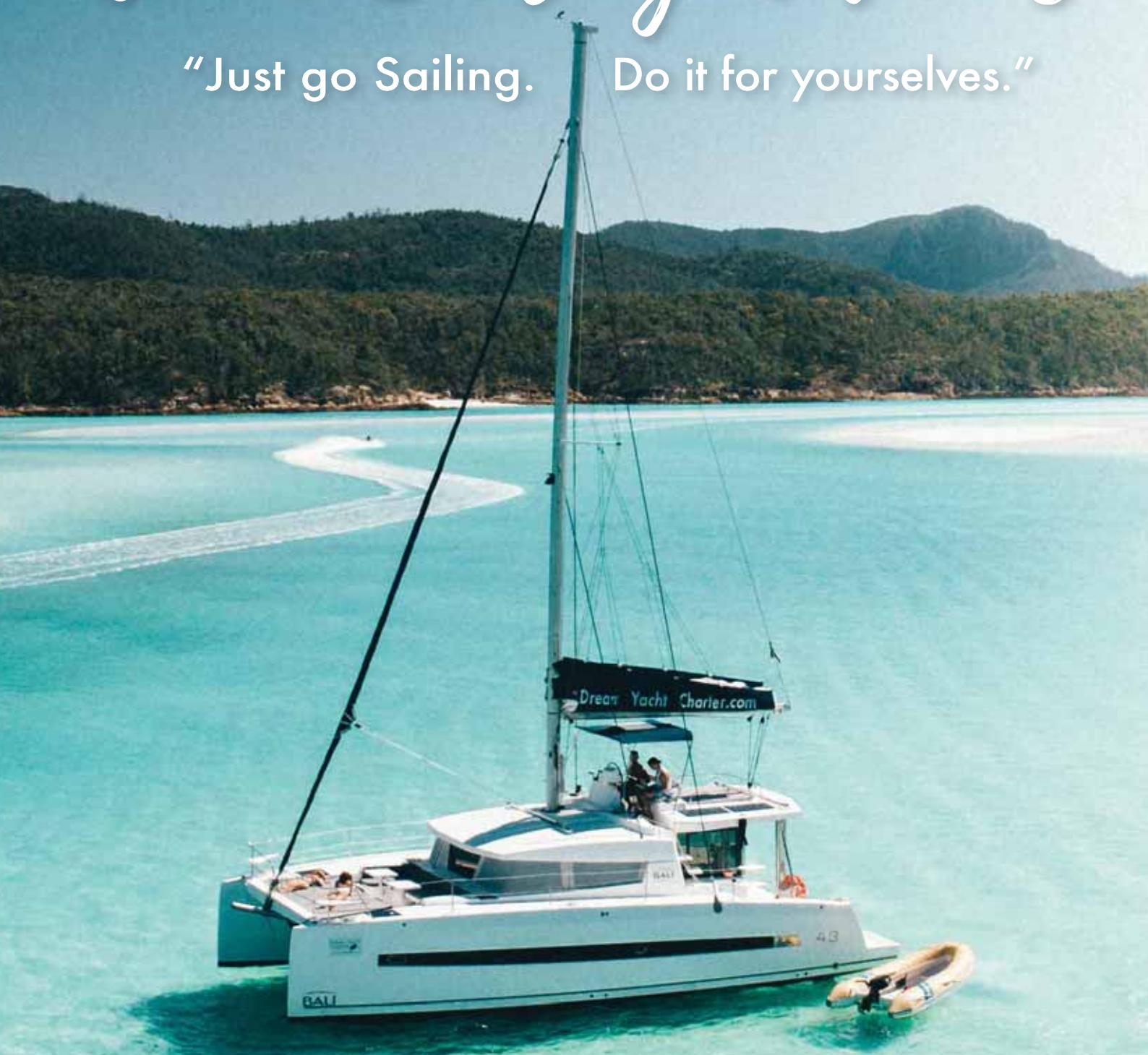
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Being out on the water has a beneficial effect on happiness, health and wellbeing, as highlighted by marine biologist Wallace J Nichols in his book, Blue Mind (a great read on board). The ocean has a calming effect and the big expansive views help quieten busy minds. There must be something in it, as some of the world's most creative people enjoy sailing, from Einstein to Steve Jobs.

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How upskilling online can help veterans transition back into the workforce

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- What opportunities can I do to improve my employment prospects?

Studying a relevant qualification can help those who have served the Defence Force develop the skills and knowledge needed to be work-ready. It can also provide them with the self-confidence and motivation to keep working towards their career goals outside of the Defence Force.

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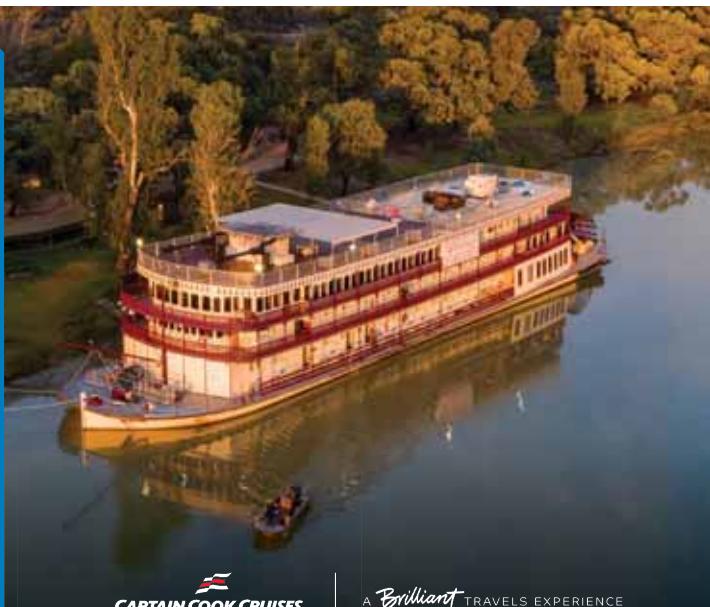
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