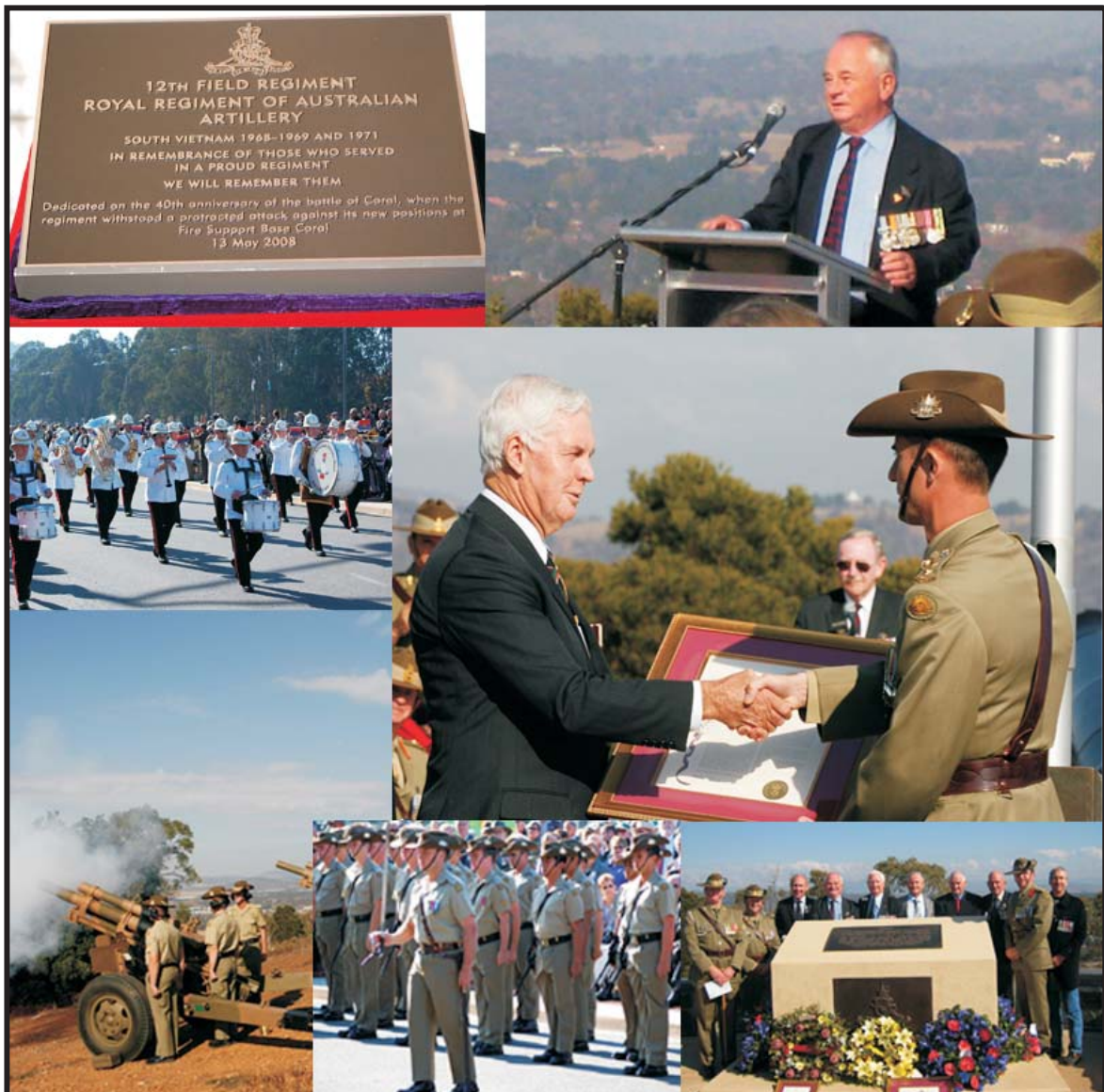


The Royal Australian Artillery **LIAISON LETTER**

Spring Edition 2008



The Official Journal of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery
Incorporating the Australian Gunner Magazine

First Published in 1948



RAA LIAISON LETTER

Spring Edition 2008

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Next Edition Contribution Deadline

Contributions for the Liaison Letter 2009 – Autumn Edition should be forwarded to the editor at his home postal or email address, by no later than Friday 20th February 2009. 'Late' correspondence or submissions after that date should be forwarded to the editor via the School of Artillery or his defence email address.

Liaison Letter In Colour On-line

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AUSSIE GUNNERS PULL THEIR WEIGHT IN AFGHANISTAN



Lieutenant Nick Cooper confirms map information versus target information after receiving a request for artillery support from a coalition patrol.



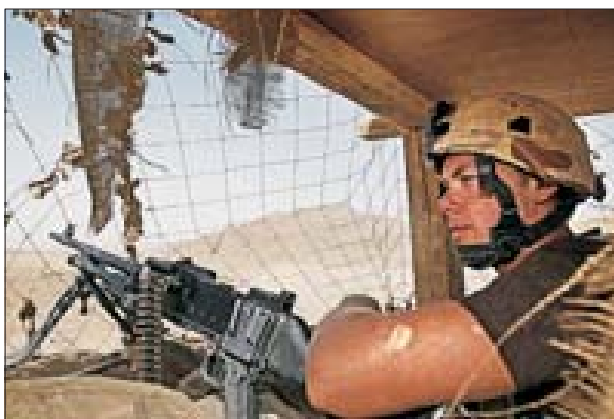
Gun Detachment Commander Sergeant Bryce Watson with his L118 Light Gun at the remote Forward Operating Base Kajaki in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.



Gunner Nathan Wallace prepares a new salvo of rounds during a firing mission in support of coalition forces.



Gunner Nathan Wallace proudly flies the Australian flag in his outdoor bomb sheltered accommodation at Forward Operating Base Armadillo, Afghanistan.



Gunner Damien Chatterton keeps watch from a lookout post at Forward Operating Base Kajaki in Afghanistan.



Gunner Adrian Broadhead and a British Gunner stack ammunition boxes at Forward Operating Base Kajaki.

Editors Comment



Introduction

Welcome to another Liaison Letter, I am pleased to report I have had great support from across the Regiment for this edition. The Regiment remains busy both home and overseas and the wide variety of articles in this edition is a reflection ranging from current operations in Afghanistan to the awarding of the honour title 'Coral' to 102nd Field Battery for the exploits of its members 40 years ago.

A constant theme after the mail out of each edition is I always receive a number of 'return to sender' copies back and the last edition was no exception. I would ask readers to let me know if you change your mailing address. Further as a consequence of this and my ongoing efforts to reach as many of our Gunner community as possible, I plan on regularly publishing the names of a few lost people starting with this edition. I would appreciate assistance with obtaining the contact details for Colonel's Kevin Farrer and David Pearce.

Subscriptions

There has been a great response from both serving and retired members of the Regiment with regard to subscriptions especially life subscriptions. Whilst I thank everyone who has decided to contribute and it is pleasing to see the significant increase in junior officers and warrant officers heeding the request. The gesture by these individuals and others is a wonderful example but we can still do better. I am still very disappointed at the number of senior officers including many who have held key appointments within the Regiment but have not taken up the opportunity to become a life subscriber. I would ask them to seriously consider becoming a life subscriber.

Writing Articles

As editor I am required to read all the submissions I receive and this can at times be as frustrating as it is time consuming. I would ask that those who are charged with writing or drafting articles remember

their audience and that in some small way you are contributing to recording the Regiment's history. I would make a plea that you reduce abbreviations as much as possible and when necessary explain what it stands for or means; and minimise the use of upper case and capitals. When referring to an individual either provide their initials or preferred name, for example, Major D.T. Brennan or Major Terry Brennan, do not simply provide a rank and surname. Above all else be consistent in the manner and style of your writing, for example, do not swap between using a term in full and randomly reverting back to it in abbreviation.

Terminology

As part of my reading I am also required to digest a significant amount of terminology which is included in various articles. I do not plan to air my opinion on whether I think our terminology is being 'Americanised' especially for the sake of doing it – I will leave that to those more directly involved than me to decide. As a former doctrine officer I would like to comment on what at this point in time appears to be the use of the first term that comes to mind rather than what is the current accepted / authorised term. I appreciate terminology changes and evolves, and doctrine is a flexible beast. What concerns me at the moment is that there appears to be no one griping up and managing or at least implementing this change. The task is not difficult!

Customs and Traditions

Commencing with this edition I invited Chris Jobson, author of RAA Customs and Traditions to make a regular contribution. I am pleased to say that Chris readily agreed. Whilst on the subject of customs and traditions it continues to annoy me that some Gunners do not understand that when referring to the Royal Australian Artillery, Gunners use the term Regiment or Royal Regiment – the term 'Corps' should not be used! It is especially grating to read officers and senior non-commissioned officers using 'Corps' when they should know better.

The other aspect of customs and traditions which has come to my attention recently has been what could be best called 'local' traditions. The first was a reference to the 'Premier Regiment' in an article by 16th Air Defence Regiment. I am sorry air defenders, but as a former second in command of 1st Field Regiment there has only ever been one 'Premier Regiment' and that is 1st Field Regiment.

Colonel Reg Foster - Colonel Commandant Central Region recently posed the following local tradition to the Staff Officer Grade Two Head of Regiment, Major Kym Schoene:

'As a former member of 8th/12th Medium Regiment I recall it is tradition that medium artillery officers wear one blue and one red sock to a dinner. Could you remind me which sock is worn on which foot. There is a story about a medium gunner who was wounded in the field and who bled so profusely it turned one of his socks red, well you can guess the rest, but in the mid '80's in 8/12 it cost you extras if you got it wrong or failed to wear one red and one blue sock to dinners.'

Major Kym Schoene responded with the following:

'I have found several answers, which is always a good start.

The first states that the custom originated in the sergeants' mess where the medium battery sergeants wore a red and a blue sock. The red was worn on the left foot. Red over blue = left foot always steps off first. Another version included 'no red port left', the link to the lights on a boat mixed with coastal gunnery. This medium gunner dress then spread to the officers' mess, and is continued to this day.

The officers' mess version has the red sock worn on the right foot. There is a plaque / written account in the Regimental room in the Robertson Barracks Officers Mess which was written up by a subbie in the last couple of years which has the red sock worn on right foot. Although I have not seen this document, I have checked with a couple of medium gunners who collaborate red sock-right foot.

Your version remains more colourful and the custom appears to have ebbed and flowed over the years. I am sure that your wearing of a red and blue sock will re-initiate discussion and adherence to the custom. It remains unclear if all 8th/12th Medium Regiment dress in this manner or only those who have served in the medium battery? I would be interested in the outcome.'

If there is any reader who can shed any more light on this particular tradition or quirk I would love to hear what you have to say on the matter.

Further I would appreciate feedback on any other 'local' or 'quirky' tradition which may be lurking out there in the Regiment. One that was around in my junior officer days was wearing your Gunner tie on Friday's. Whilst I appreciate this is still followed by some Gunners I do not believe it is as strongly implemented. On the same theme but probably only a very personal tradition followed by myself and Colonel Steve Goltz is the wearing of the Gunner bow tie with our mess dress or black tie. I

was pleased to hear that more recently Captain Phil Hickey had adopted the tradition. It may catch on across the Regiment!

Conclusion

In the last edition I discussed a number of milestones and anniversaries reached by the Regiment. I have reached a small personal milestone with this edition – it is the 15th Liaison Letter I have compiled and edited since commencing starting with the 2000 edition. In my view the quality and variety of content has improved greatly and this is due in part to the increasingly positive support received for each subsequent edition.

Again thank you to everyone who has made the effort to support this edition by contributing, even those who I think may have been dragged a little reluctantly to the computer. Your support and interest is most certainly appreciated not only by me but also the wider Gunner community.



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Editor's Note: Retired or serving Gunners who would like to receive future copies of the RAA Liaison Letter should contact the editor by email or write to the address above with their mailing details. Conversely if you would like your name removed from the mailing list please advise the Editor.

Letters to the Editor

Wide Ranging Observations

Dear Terry

What good reading and, after all, that is what the Liaison Letter is all about irrespective of whether it is glossy and coloured or black and white. If I may I would like to comment on some aspects in the Autumn Edition of the 2008 Letter.

Artillery Directorate

Which officer in the Australian Army has the primary and fulltime task of providing advice on artillery personnel, equipment, doctrine and training and coordinates these matters? As I understand it he has not existed since the disappearance of the Directorate of Artillery in December 1997. So who fights for the Gunners? Bring back the Director and the Directorate of Artillery or a similar organisation instead of having functions, previously performed by the Directorate, dealt with in the disparate manner of the current Army structure. If so, maybe articles like the *Battle for Relevance* would not be needed.

Headquarters 1st Division Artillery

I have just finished reading *The Great War* by Les Carlyon. A constant theme throughout the book is that had the British early in World War I employed their artillery correctly and in the right amount, it is more than possible that the War would have finished earlier and saved many, many thousands of lives. The lack of guns and the incorrect use of them had a telling effect on those earlier battles. Contrast this with the beneficial use of artillery by such commanders as Monash and Plumer. Leading on from this, I note from the Letter that this year the Regiment is holding its first 'divisional artillery' concentration for many years. How is the fire from the different field / medium regiments to be coordinated? Who is advising the Commander 1st Division on the effectiveness of the exercise and where he needs to invest resources to ensure the Supported Arms are well served? Who is providing the function of Headquarters 1st Division Artillery at a time when fire support coordination or joint fires (American terms!!) appears to be back on the

agenda. Hopefully, on the exercise some larger concentrations will be fired so that today's soldiers can better observe the effectiveness of artillery on the battlefield.

RAA Troop Afghanistan

How refreshing to read that 15 personnel from 8/12 Medium Regiment are to be deployed to Afghanistan as part of G Parachute Battery, 7 RHA. It does raise the question of why only 15? For at least ten years the RAA provided a field battery as one of the sub-units of a Royal Artillery regiment in Malaya / Malaysia and Singapore. Why not now in Afghanistan where the Gunners would have the opportunity of putting into practice their 'core and corps skills' at sub-unit level on operations. What a pity that they are not deployed to support Australian operations.

Regimental Fund Subscriptions

From your list of Regimental Funds allocations (page 109), it is obvious that the Fund is used for numerous purposes, many of them for the benefit of RAA units. I support your plea to individuals and units / organisations to contribute. As you say on page 6, it is '...to support the selective good of the Regiment rather than focus on the individual.'

On this subject, I note that 8/12 Medium Regiment last year and in 2006 commendably raised in the order of \$50,000 each year for the Royal Darwin Hospital. I guess other units also are committed to fundraising for worthwhile causes. I wonder how the personnel in the units would feel if, say, 10% of the donations were to be provided for the unit's regimental fund and the RAA Regimental Fund, provided this was made clear to those donating?

The Liaison Letter

I only hope that when you hang up your editorial boots, your successor has the same interest, enthusiasm and commitment.

Thanks Terry and best wishes

Colonel Mick Crawford (Retd)

Editor: I sought the support of Lieutenant Colonel Sean Ryan to answer your letter – see below:

Dear Colonel

Once again the sharpness of our sage Regimental tribal elders comes to the fore with your letter to the editor. Who is in charge of the RAA and who has their guiding hand on the Regimental lanyard? This is a very good question and one the current serving

Gunners ask everyday as each and every new crisis hits the Regiment.

There is no simple answer to your question. Yes, the Directorate of Artillery, Commander Land Command Artillery, Commander 1st Division Artillery and Commander 2nd Division Artillery have gone and maybe never to be resurrected. As a result of their demise there is no organisation or organisations with the responsibility to advise the Chief of Army, Land Commander and Divisional Commanders on personnel, training, equipment and doctrine matters affecting the Regiment. In their place is a suite of agencies in disparate locations trying to bring together the Regiment as best they can and let me say they are doing a great job in these trying conditions. The new order has not been without its advantages as well. The artillery is increasingly becoming better integrated in the combined arms after twenty years of Defence of Australia doctrine. The other Corps are starting to realise how much more capacity the RAA has over their own Corps with 50% less people and units. While they are subjects we Gunners knew, it is refreshing to see the other Corps realise how far they are behind.

However in saying this the RAA has been better served in this new rationalised environment than other Corps or Regiments. Our Head of Regiment, Brigadier Winter, plays an active role in guiding the Regiment on a daily basis. Commanding Officers regularly seek his advice and direction, and he constantly walks the halls of Canberra driving the RAA agenda. This is all on top of his day job of protecting Australian sailors, soldiers and airman from Improvised Explosive Devices. The RAA Commanding Officers have complemented the Head of Regiment's work through establishing an era of a collegiate approach towards manning, equipping and training the Regiment. An approach that has seen the establishment of the RAA Executive, which meets quarterly, to steer the personnel, training, equipment and doctrine issues that effect the running of the Regiment. The Division's artillery concentration was the brain child of this group and has become a model for other areas of the Army for remediating core warfighting skills. While these are a far cry from the initiatives that the leadership of a Directorate could provide they are nonetheless significant achievements that cannot or have not been achieved by other Corps and Regiments in the same circumstances.

In concluding the absence of a Directorate is hurting the RAA, and the other Corps, but the RAA

is showing innovation on how to overcome this significant inadequacy. However, this innovation is coming at a price in terms of staff effort and time and the innovation is not as good as having a dedicated organisation responsible for personnel, training, equipment and doctrine matters affecting the Regiment. Unfortunately the return of the Directorate or the establishment of a Gunner Force Element Group (FEG), like the one you once commanded at Field Force command, is highly unlikely and the RAA has to deal with the hand it has been dealt.

On the matter of the Regimental Fund contributions I will take your sensible suggestion to the RAA Executive and Regimental Committee for consideration.

Regards

Lieutenant Colonel Sean Ryan
Deputy Head of Regiment

Battles of Coral & Balmoral

Now the Coral / Balmoral 40th anniversary events are past us we all must pause to reflect the significance of that wonderful three days that was had by all Artillery participants of that time all those years ago. Not a bad word was said by any Gunner as to how the functions were carried out. However there has been heaps of praise to our artillery committee under the great leadership of Colonel Don Tait (retired). The artillery figured heavily in the Coral / Balmoral committee representing all Corps, other than that of infantry, in the Brigade action at Coral / Balmoral. The artillery team on that committee certainly paved the way for the great success that it was, for ALL Corps involved in the battle.

At the forefront of our minds must be the work that the teams from the Department of Veteran Affairs and the Australian War Memorial has done for us all, and they did a lot, look at all the programs, look at the organization and look at the book!!!!!! These few people were just great, and more than that, great to work with. We thank them all!!!!!! A man that really stands out for me for the organization of the Coral events is, ex RSM Ceremonial, Mr Chris Jobson. Chris organized many things and did it easily, no fuss, no worry, he just did it, and got on with it. At every meeting Chris had it all under control. I bet the Army misses him, as cranky as he is sometimes.

We the Veterans of Coral, thank the Royal Australian Artillery for the great effort put into the

event by them in our commemorations, where would we have been without you all? The parade by you all on Anzac Parade was magnificent and the efforts by you all at Mount Pleasant were more than spectacular. I made a particular effort to have a chat with the catafalque party of 8/12 Medium Regiment at Mount Pleasant and what a great group of young Gunners they are, the manners were impeccable even to the point of calling me Sir, that was very embarrassing to me and I soon set them straight as to my mongrel background. They were more relaxed after that. They certainly did us proud by their actions on the mountain and all the other duties that they carried out. I do hope the Gunners of 8/12 have their certificate of appreciation from 12 Field hanging in their mess now as I did particularly want to give it to the boys from the catafalque party but they had left before I could do so.

In conclusion we members of 12 Field Regiment thank you all for your great efforts to make our commemoration, one to remember for the rest of our lives and without your participation it would not have been possible. You all have done a great job and we thank you all for your great and tireless efforts.

Yours faithfully

Rob Costello
President
12 Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association

Editor: On behalf of the Regiment thank you for your kind words. I can assure you the recognition and accolades showered on the 'Coral' veterans in May this year from the Governor General and Prime Minister down were very deserved and long overdue.

Terminology – Unit & Sub Unit Titles

Dear Major Brennan

For some time now I have become increasingly confused about the correct manner in which unit and sub-unit numbers should be written and pronounced. In my experience there appears to be no real logic in the way that these numbers are expressed. For example: should 4 Field Regiment be four (4) or fourth (4th)? 2 Field Regiment was two (2) and 10 Medium Regiment was ten (10). However when the units were combined, for some reason the new unit became known as Second/Tenth (2nd/10th) Medium Regiment. This is not the second time that 10 Medium Regiment has been raised.

To make this even more confusing the 2/2 (Second/Second) Field Regiment and the 2/4 (Second/Fourth) Field Regiment were raised during WW2. The '2' in this case, as far as I understand, refers to the second raising of these units.

The sub-unit numbers as a general rule appear to be expressed as Three Eight (38), One Owe Seven (107) etc.

If the above appears to be disjointed and confusing, it is because I am confused.

Perhaps somebody who knows could explain the reasoning and dispel my confusion.

Major Neil Hamer (Retd)
President
RAA Association (Victoria)

Editor: I sought the support of Colonel Arthur Burke (Retd) to answer your query – see his answer below:

Dear Neil

With the deftness of a half-back dodging being pulverised by an onrush of opposing forwards, Terry flicked your question to me. This one raises its head every so often and I must admit that I have never been able to find a definitive and concise explanation. However, here are a few facts:

- CEW Bean's *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18* uses the terms 1st Field Artillery Brigade (sic Regiment) and 1st Battery.
- The first book in the series *Australia in the War of 1939-1945 (To Benghazi)* uses the terms 1st Anti-Aircraft Regiment whilst the first use of a numbered battery appears to be in the second volume (*Tobruk and El Alamein*) - 8th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery.
- *To Benghazi* also gives a good explanation of the prefix '2/' being used to designate units of the 2nd AIF, for example, 2/1st Field Regiment. (However, this is pronounced 'Second-First Field Regiment'.)
- When units combined, and an example was the 55th and the 53rd Infantry Battalions from New South Wales cited in *South-West Pacific Area First Year* (McCarthy), the official history records the amalgamation as the 55th/53rd Battalion.
- Finally, the last 'Stud' book (*The Army List of Officers of the Australian Military Forces*) produced in 1970 lists under Titles for Regiments and Corps, the combined units 2nd/14th Queensland Mounted Infantry and 4th/19th Prince of Wales's Light Horse.

From these official precedents, I have concluded that:

- The full written title of a unit uses the ordinal number format, that is, 1st Field Regiment.
- The full written title of a subunit uses the ordinal number format, that is, 101st Field Battery.
- When two units amalgamate, the full written title uses the ordinal number format for both units, that is, 2nd/10th Field Regiment.
- Second AIF units use the prefix '2/' followed by the full written title using the ordinal number format, that is, 2/1st Field Regiment.

Rules for staff duties abbreviations in the Army reduce unit and subunit titles to their shortest possible formats, that is, 1 Fd Regt, 101 Fd Bty and 2/10 Fd Regt. This acknowledges that the 2nd AIF 10th Field Regiment is abbreviated 2/10 Fd Regt which could be confused with the combined 2nd and 10th Field Regiments. In cases where the difference is not obvious, the official histories seem to refer to the 2/10th Fd Regt to denote the AIF unit.

It is acknowledged that the use of the ordinal number format can be somewhat of a mouthful in speech, so with the typical Aussie trait of abbreviating everything, the 101st Field Battery is more often than not spoken of as 101 (one-oh-one) Field Battery and the 1st Field Regiment as 1 (one) Field Regiment. Australian Diggers have thus complicated 'our' version of the English language yet again by writing our units in one format and pronouncing them in another.

No wonder people become confused!

Ubique

Colonel Arthur Burke, OAM (Retd)
Colonel Commandant Northern Region &
RAA Historical Sub Committee Member

Corso to Corso

It was very pleasing to read of Lieutenant Colonel Ryans' satisfaction with the evolution over 10 years of The School of Artillery at Puckapunyal. It brought home to me my address to the RAA Association (NSW) Dinner on 9 August 1997 on the occasion of the last Annual Gunner Dinner to be held at North Head. An extract from that address is:

'Well, Puckapunyal is going to be different, a lot different (to North Head). But I am in no doubt that from the point of view that really matters, excellence in training, Puckapunyal is going to be worth sacrificing all that Manly offered.'

However, there is one point in the article that causes me concern. The article repetitively refers to the previous location of the School as being at North Fort, Manly. North Fort is merely the area on the eastern side of the stone wall that provided a landward boundary to the 9.2 inch Gun Battery on North Head and is now occupied by the RAA National Museum and the RAA Historical Company. It is true that, at various times this area was occupied by elements of the School of Artillery: for many years Locating Wing was positioned there, as also was the 14.5 mm Trainer Range and it was frequently used for local exercises such as practicing deployment, live firing out to sea and survey. But the principal location of the School was not in North Fort but in North Head Army Barracks: there were the School's Headquarters, its instructional wings (other than Locating wing for some years as mentioned above), its parade ground, its personnel accommodation, its Q stores, workshops, messes and playing fields.

I would not like present and future gunners to be brought up with a belief that the School came from North Fort to Puckapunyal. It came from North Head Army Barracks!

Media Release – Opening Ceremony for the School of Artillery Puckapunyal 14 March 1997

You rightly picked up the mistake in the title of the release that '1997' should have been '1998' but there is another significant mistake. The article erroneously refers to Major General Sir William Throsby Bridges being 'killed in action while commanding the 1st Division at Gallipoli'. Bridges was not killed in action! To quote extracts from the Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18, Vol II, The Story of ANZAC by C.E.W. Bean:

'(on 15th May 1915) ... Thompson ran out to find Bridges lying with a large bullet-hole through his thigh. Both femoral artery and vein had been cut and, though Thompson stopped the bleeding, the loss of blood had been very great.

..... Bridges was taken at once to the hospital ship Gascon. But the whole blood supply to the limb had been cut off, and nothing could save his life except complete amputation at the thigh, an operation which, it was considered, to a man of his years, must prove fatal. Before the Gascon left for Alexandria he knew he was dying. "Anyhow," he said to Colonel Ryan, "anyhow I have commanded an Australian Division for nine months." He died before the ship reached port.'

Thus he was not 'killed in action' but 'died of wounds'.

Regards

Brigadier George Salmon (Retd)

Editor: I sought the support of Lieutenant Colonel Sean Ryan to answer your letter – see below:

Dear Brigadier

Thank you for your reply to my 'Corso to Corso' article in the last RAA liaison letter. I should have known that my subaltern like generalisation in the article would have been picked up by a fellow Commanding Officer and Chief Instructor. As a Commanding Officer and Chief Instructor of the School I should not have broken rule one of gunnery – the ruthless implementation of the independent check. Had I followed rule one I would have corrected the obvious mistake that you picked up. For those not in the know the School of Artillery was in fact at North Head Army Barracks and not North Fort. Thank you for the gentle reminder on the heritage of the School of Artillery and I beg your indulgence on this mistake (Of course I accept the mandatory 7 days loss of pay, 14 days restriction of privileges and 28 days stoppage of leave as a suitable officer punishment.)

Regards

Sean Ryan

The slightly embarrassed Chief Instructor

113 Battery History

Dear Terry

Since my retirement I have been keeping up with the Liaison Letters as 'hand me downs' and have only just received the 2007 copies. I was pleased to see that I can have them sent direct, so would you please add me to the mailing list.

While the information is now a bit dated, I feel I must make some comment on firstly the 113 Battery history that appeared in the Autumn edition. This was put together by Doug Roworth and myself for the Battery web page and was more of a grab than a history and was used to 'protest', either by or at the request of the Battery Commander of 113, that the Battery did not get a mention in your great series on the 100 series batteries.

Secondly, it was Dick Mort's history (Spring edition), that in part, inspired Doug and I to try and

write a full history of the Battery. We have been slogging our way through this, on and off, for eight years, and while we have made some good progress, there are still some huge gaps and if anyone has any information that can help, it would be greatly appreciated.

The Liaison Letters are great and I look forward to getting mine in a timely manner.

Regards,

Major Karl Milic (Retd)

Editor: As a keen advocate of preserving history I support the worthy goal of Karl Milic and Doug Roworth. I encourage anyone who has information that can assist to contact them. If you do not have their contact details I can provide them.

Welcome Feedback

Terry

Another splendid copy.

I fully support 'The Editor' in that it is easier to use internal sources to print it 'free' even though it is not glossy and full of adverts. *Cascabel* I think is printed under similar circumstances. The Defence Reserves Association magazine is a presentable glossy magazine, full of advertisements, but it came out three months late for various reasons – none of which would have occurred under service printing.

Colonel Graham Farley (Retd)

Editor: I am pleased to hear you support my 'simple' approach for the style and production of the Liaison Letter.

Mess Standards Debate

Dear Terry

I was most interested, among the many valuable contributions to the Autumn 2008 RAA Liaison Letter, in Major Neil Hamer's letter on the 'Mess Standards Debate'.

Both RSM, WO1 Bill Boyd, ... (and his predecessor WO1 Bill Storey) ran excellent Sergeants Messes of a very high standard. Simultaneously Major Frank McAskill ran an exemplary Officers Mess.

May I join those who sent their congratulations to you on your Spring Edition. The Autumn 2008

production was even more comprehensive and commendable. Well done.

Your sincerely

Brigadier John Salmon (Retd)

Editor: Many thanks for taking the time to enter the debate and providing the photographs. I still believe we have a way to go to stop the downwards slide towards clubs. Part of addressing this is to ensure mess expectations and standards are kept at the highest levels. Sadly I believe our 'officer' education is failing in this area.

Memories Stirred

Dear Major Brennan

Another excellent edition of the Liaison Letter to hand proving again its worth as a first class channel of communication to serving and former members of the Regiment.

The article 'Field Artillery in Newcastle' was of personal interest to me. On occasions my civilian occupation took me to Newcastle for lengthy periods and I would attend training with 'R' Battery. I was there in 1955 when at the post evening parade conference the BC, Major J.E. Lewis produced a number of artefacts purchased at auction that morning.

Major Lewis said that the items had belonged to the late Sergeant Major Holt an early volunteer artilleryman in Newcastle. The items were:

- A Small SBML gun.
- A decrepit wooden trail.
- Two metal rims from long gone wooden wheels.
- A training manual, 'The Artillerist's Handbook and Compendium', 1856.

I opened the manual and read 'To form detachments rear', nothing changes.

'Fort Scratchley' by L. Carey and others states that in 1861 Samuel Holt was elected First Lieutenant of the artillery unit of the Volunteer Artillery and Rifle Corps at Newcastle. On 13 August in 1869 Holt was promoted Captain of No. 3 Battery, Volunteer Artillery, Newcastle.

Major Lewis had the gun restored with the result that can be seen in the photographs [Editor: See Liaison Letter 2008 Autumn Edition].

Regards

Laurie Hindmarsh

Editor: I am pleased to see that you are an avid and dedicated reader of the liaison letter. It is also good to receive snippets of information which add to the rich history of the Regiment.

Gunner Three Stars

Dear Terry,

Congratulations once again on your continued publishing of the RAA Liaison Letter and thought that you and others may be interested in the following.

For some time and even as recently as the National Artillery Dinner I have heard Lt Gen Des Mueller referred to as the first Three Star Gunner General since World War 2. I have a high regard for Gen Mueller having known him for many years and served with him on several occasions.

However we seem to have forgotten General Sir John Wilton KBE CB DSO also a Gunner officer who rose to Three Star General in 1963 and Four Star in 1966.

Sir John Wilton graduated from the RMC in Dec 1930 but due to limited vacancies in the Australian Army at the time accepted with others a Commission in the British Army where he served until 1939. At the outbreak of World War 2 he returned to the Australian Army. In the 'Army List of Officers of the AMF Vol 1 The Active List 1966' his service is recorded as serving with 2/4 Aust Fd Regt from 1940 as a Major. He was also BMRA 7 Aust Div and GS02 Arty 1 Aust Corps from 1941 to 1943. He continued to serve in many distinguished appointments including his promotion to Lt Gen and appointment as Chief of the General Staff in 1963 and to General as Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee in 1966 until his retirement in 1970.

His service is detailed in David Homer's book 'Strategic Commander General Sir John Wilton and Australia's Asian Wars'. (Chief of Army's Reading List Senior Officer Level Page 14 of RAA Liaison Letter Autumn Edition 2008)

He was always proud to be a Gunner but we seem to have forgotten him. The last time I spoke to him was when I stood next to him at the opening of the RAA National Memorial by Her Majesty the Queen in 1977.

Kind regards

Keith Cossart WO1 (Retd)

Editor: I may have started this claim. I do not dispute your claim either. The basis for my assertion is that Lieutenant General Des Mueller is a post world war two officer. General Sir John Wilton served in World War Two. When I worked for General Mueller he told us 'Words are Bullets – Use them Wisely' perhaps my choice of 'bullets' when I wrote Head of Regiment's brief were not wisely chosen. I am happy to be proven wrong.

Another Happy Gunner Found

Thank you for a copy of the Autumn Edition of RAA Liaison Letter. It arrived out of the blue a few weeks ago – I am amazed that my address was still 'live' in someone's system. I must have dropped off the list since retiring and suddenly I am back on it.

Congratulations on the Liaison Letter. It was not only informative (eg. things haven't changed much in 10 years!) but also entertaining. Your team has done a great job.

I remember being the SO3 and then SO2 SS ARTY in DARTY in the dark ages and having to write to every member and beg for funds for the RAA Regimental Fund. So I immediately felt guilty that I had not paid any subs to the RAA Regimental Funds for 10 years when I received the Liaison Letter! Please find my contribution enclosed.

Best wishes

Colonel Peter Lawrence (Retd)

Editor: When I received your email from Head of Regiment it was wonderful to read your positive feedback. Your life subscription is most appreciated.

Setting the Record Straight

Dear Terry,

Thank you indeed for the past copies of the RAA Liaison Letters. I presume that this has occurred because of my involvement with Fire Support Base 'Coral' as the RSM of 12 Fd Regt RAA. Even so, it is nice to catch up with news both past and present of the Royal Regiment. Having read through the three that you sent me (even though rather hurriedly I might add), there are several points that I would like to bring to your attention:

- In 1959, 102 Bty was known as 102 Lt Bty as it was equipped with mobile (towed) 4.2" mortars. Then in 1960, it became 102 Fd Bty when it became the first battery to be issued with the 105mm M2A2 howitzer.
- When 103 Fd Bty was in Malaysia during 1961-63, the BK was Capt Peter Badcoe. He went

on to be awarded the Victoria Cross whilst serving as a Major in the AATTV.

- 12 Fd Regt RAA was not raised at Ingleburn, but at Kokoda Barracks in Holsworthy, plus 104 Medium Bty was located there also in the lines to the west of 107 Fd Bty prior to their departure for Malaysia. 104 was converted to a Fd Bty in 1967 just one year prior to going to Vietnam as part of 12 Fd Regt RAA.

Several weeks ago, (14 -16 February 08), I attended a 12 Fd Regt RAA re-union at Bankstown NSW. This was well attended and included several members who were present for their first ever re-union after nearly 40 years, even some from 131 Div Loc Bty. It would seem that many are looking forward to the 40th Anniversary of FSBs 'Coral' and 'Balmoral' in Canberra during May 08. On 16 Feb, a bus load of Gunners and their families went on a tour of the North Fort Artillery Museum at North Head. The Museum Staff are to be congratulated on an excellent presentation of Artillery Memorabilia and should be supported in their endeavours to remain at a location so rich in the history of Gunners.

Once again, thank you for the copies of the Liaison Letter.

Yours sincerely

Major Les Partridge (Retd)

Editor: Your sub unit feedback on my 100 series is most appreciated. The Regiment and especially those who toil tirelessly at the National Museum to ensure that our Gunner history is presented in the most professional and positive light possible will appreciate your very generous words.

An Inspired Life Subscriber

Dear Terry

I have been inspired by your editorial in the recent Liaison Letter to do something about life membership of the Regimental Fund; may be it was a guilt complex when I read your 'an absence of names of senior officers ... recently retired'!

Anyway please find enclosed a solution to my problem.

Kind regards

Brigadier J.G. Hughes (Retd)

Editor: I am very pleased that you were able to redress your problem. Hopefully your gesture will act as an example, if not a prod, to other readers. Again many thanks for becoming a life subscriber.



Australian Government
Department of Defence

DEFENCE MEDIA RELEASE

MSPA 266/08

Wednesday, 27 August 2008

AN ADAPTIVE ARMY FOR THE FUTURE

The Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, this evening announced the restructuring of the Australian Army's higher command and control structures.

The *Adaptive Army* initiative better positions Army to conduct the generation of land forces for current operations and preparation for other contingencies directed by Government.

"As operational tempo has increased over the past few years, the development and implementation of more effective and efficient structures and processes has become necessary. This ensures we continually improve our ability to achieve operational objectives," Lieutenant General Gillespie said.

"The evolved structures and processes will allow those about to deploy to receive the benefits of the lessons learnt by preceding force elements on current operations. This ensures our soldiers are well postured, and prepared, for future commitments.

"The current Functional Command structure has served the Australian Army well over the last couple of decades. However, the rapid improvements in the ability of our soldiers and headquarters to share information in recent years have challenged this traditional approach to command and control," Lieutenant General Gillespie said.

The implementation of the Army structures will be phased in over the next couple of years, with transition to the final structure planned for early 2011.

Starting early in 2009, Army will raise a Forces Command which will be responsible for the conduct of individual and collective training (force generation) for a large proportion of Army.

At the same time, Army's 1st Division will assume a primary role as Army mounting, assessment and certification authority for all individuals and conventional force elements deploying on operations.

Media Note:

Further information regarding the Adaptive Army initiative will be made available tomorrow morning at: www.army.gov.au/AdaptiveArmy

Media contact: Defence Media Liaison: 02 6265 3343 or 0408 498 664

Issued by Ministerial Support and Public Affairs, Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT
Phone: 02 6265 3343, Fax: 02 62656946

Media Releases are available via e-mail if you register at www.defence.gov.au/media

CHIEF OF ARMY EMAIL TO ARMY - 28 AUG 08

ADAPTIVE ARMY

On assuming command of the Army last month, I promulgated an Order of the Day in which I forecast changes in how Army operates. In particular, I undertook to review our structures and organisation to ensure that we adapted to changes in the security environment, and in the ADF's joint command and control, over the last decade.

The last time that the Army undertook such a wide ranging re-examination of itself was in the early 1970s. Then, General Hassett introduced Army's extant Functional Command structure. However, as our operational tempo increased in the late 1990s, this structure started to show its age. The rapid improvements in the last decade of the ability of soldiers, units and headquarters to share information has challenged our traditional notions of command and control. The hierarchical and stove-piped approaches of the 1970s and 1980s are no longer appropriate in an age of blackberries, PDAs, weblogs and VOIP. The duplication of functions at different headquarters, the multiple layers of headquarters, has often slowed the passage of information within Army and affected our capacity to adapt and respond to changes in the security environment.

At the same time, the significant developments in joint command and control have necessitated a re-examination of how we conduct our force generation and preparation activities for operations and contingencies. To this end, we have developed the *Adaptive Army* initiative to ensure that our generation and preparation of land forces is conducted more effectively and efficiently, and in better alignment with the new joint command framework.

The main impact of this restructuring will be felt at the Divisional level and above. Starting early in 2009, Army will raise a Forces Command (based on Training Command and commanded by a Major General) which will be responsible to me for the conduct of individual and collective training (force generation) for a large proportion of Army. At the same time, HQ 1 Div will assume a primary role as Army's mounting, assessment and certification authority for all individuals and conventional force elements deploying on operations. This means that Army, from 2009, will have three Functional Commands (Forces Command, HQ 1 Div and Special Operations Command).

An important consideration in this restructure has been to ensure that our structure aligns with Army's learning loops. As such, HQ 1 Div's primary focus will be the short-term learning cycle. This is to ensure those about to deploy get the benefits of lessons learnt by preceding force elements. Forces Command will focus on the medium-term learning cycle, ensuring Army is well postured, and prepared, for contingencies. Army Headquarters will focus on the long-term learning cycle, ensuring Army remains relevant to Australia's Defence requirements.

To provide more information on these changes, I have established internet and DRN intranet websites with further information on this initiative.

<http://intranet.defence.gov.au/armyweb/sites/CA/comweb.asp?page=145264&Title=Adaptive%20Army> <http://www.defence.gov.au/army/AdaptiveArmy/> <http://www.army.gov.au/AdaptiveArmy/>

There is also an opportunity for you to provide your feedback on the changes at the intranet site. I encourage and welcome your input into this process which will fundamentally change our Army.

It is not my intention to compromise the ongoing preparation for operations that many of you are currently undergoing. So, if you are posted into one of Brigades, the impact on you will be minimal. In the medium term however the higher level restructuring will free up more resources for more focussed collective training by Army units, and provide a more systemic approach to the assessment of our combat teams and battle groups.

I would emphasise that my staff and I do not have all the solutions for the challenges we face. That is why the *Adaptive Army* initiative provides my intent but relies on subordinate headquarters and formations using this design to develop detailed solutions. This is what mission command is all about. I will ensure that those with the best situational awareness at each level are provided the wherewithal to address the challenges without highly prescribed solutions being issued from Army Headquarters.

The restructuring in Army is planned to take place 2009-2010. There will much for us to achieve in that time. However, this evolution of Army's Functional Commands better positions us to conduct our responsibilities for force generation and preparation while ensuring the most effective and transparent utilisation of resources. The changes will ensure that our Army is better able to adapt and respond to the challenges of generating and preparing land forces for 21st century operations.

Ken Gillespie

Lieutenant General

Chief of Army

Gen Y set to fight next war

Patrick Walters | July 05, 2008, The Australian

WHEN Peter Leahy joined the Australian Army 37 years ago, our soldiers were highly proficient in counterinsurgency warfare. Coming out of the New Guinea campaign in World War II, the army had been engaged continuously in unconventional conflict, including the Malayan emergency in the 1950s and confrontation with Indonesia in the early 1960s, followed by Vietnam.

Nearly four decades on, the army is back in the counterinsurgency game in Afghanistan, acquiring new war-fighting skills. Army planners are now writing a new counterinsurgency doctrine that embraces a wholly different battlefield to that experienced in the jungles of South Vietnam.

Lieutenant-General Leahy, 55, retired from the army on Thursday as the longest serving army chief since Harry Chauvel 80 years ago.

But unlike Chauvel, who stepped down in 1930 at the onset of the Depression, leaving a budget-starved permanent land force of barely 1500 men, Leahy is leaving when the army is flourishing and in the middle of a 10-year, \$10 billion rebuilding program.

During his six years as army chief, Leahy has presided over the most radical transformation in the land force since Vietnam. The 21st-century Australian army has undergone significant changes in its combat formations and acquired new equipment worth billions of dollars, including tanks, armoured

fighting vehicles, sophisticated satellite communications and armed reconnaissance helicopters.

The new hardware has been accompanied by a thorough overhaul of training and war-fighting doctrine, as well as the army reserve. During the Leahy era the army has been fully stretched by a broad range of overseas operations, including combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and stabilisation missions in East Timor and Solomon Islands.

Under Leahy's leadership the army's intellectual core has been reinvigorated, putting it well ahead of the air force and the navy when it comes to defining its essential military doctrine and capabilities. Leahy has combined this intellectual rejuvenation of the officer corps with political skills of a kind seldom seen in a service chief in the modern era.

As chief of army he won John Howard's support for a \$10 billion rebuilding of the army under a hardening and networking plan that involves increasing the land force to 30,000 personnel by 2014. He also stared down opposing military and departmental chiefs, convincing Howard that the army should acquire new tanks.

In a farewell interview with *Inquirer* this week, Leahy's key message is that the army must be progressively more skilful, adaptable and flexible in the face of an overcrowded and disordered world.

He predicts that the army may have to grow even larger than the planned 30,000 within the next decade in the face of globalised security challenges.

"If this volatility is sustained in the security environment, there would be an argument for a larger army beyond this. Now I don't know how big that is, but right now it's about right. But in the future, in the next five to 10 years, there could be an argument for a larger army.

Gen Y Set to Fight Next War continued

“What we are seeing and will see increasingly in the future is that deployments will be land-centric. The army is naturally the force best suited to working among populations. Post-Iraq it's not a momentum that's going to subside.”

Leahy argues that the post-Cold War era has led to a “democratisation of lethality” as insurgents use more powerful weapons such as rocket-propelled grenades and roadside bombs. The enemy has vacated an ordered battlefield and gone to the cities, he says.

For the Australian Army, this unconventional challenge means building composite combined arms teams with a high degree of firepower and protection, an army “harder to hit, and able to hit harder with real precision”.

A typical battle group now deployed overseas on operations has specialists drawn from more than 20 different corps or skills sets with the “big muscle movement” provided by infantry and cavalry units serving alongside each other.

The 2000 defence white paper called for the army to be capable of sustaining a brigade on overseas operations as well as having at least a battalion group available elsewhere. This strategic guidance has underpinned the planned expansion to a 30,000-strong force, including two new battalions, one of which has already seen operational service.

Leahy is unapologetic about the army's drive for more firepower and armoured protection in the form of the Abrams tanks, light-armoured fighting vehicles and troop transports such as the highly successful Australian-made Bushmaster. “I am a conservative sort of guy,” he says. “There are unnecessary risks that other people are prepared to take with soldiers' lives that I am not prepared to take. Tanks save lives and I just wish the critics would inform themselves rather than continue with inaccuracies.”

He sees Afghanistan as a long-term assignment for the Australian military, with “five or more years of work to be done”.

Leahy believes Afghanistan is winnable but will require a sustained and focused effort involving a much broader strategy than military operations against the Taliban.

“We can only do so much and then you need people to help with education, roads and the economy and everything else that needs to be done.”

Leahy is cautious when asked about a wider military role for Australia in Oruzgan province should the Dutch reduce their involvement from 2010, but acknowledges the army has the capacity to do more if required.

“We are a non-NATO contributor and we are one of the larger contributors. I think there is an increased role (for) NATO and we should not be rushing to do any more before we see NATO make a forward commitment.”

“Do we need more Australians? No. We are making our contribution. Do we need more NATO forces? Yes. It would be good to have them more broadly spread across the south.”

He says he had no misgivings about Australia's military involvement in the March 2003 invasion of Iraq.

He adds, however, that the US made mistakes in the post-war phase of its occupation of Iraq, particularly in terms of disbanding the Iraqi army and the extent of the de-Baathification process in the Iraqi civil service.

A lesson from Iraq, Leahy says, is that there are strict limits to the utility of military force in contemporary conflicts. “There needs to be a concerted whole-of-government approach,” he says. “We can deliver security but we can't deliver reconstruction and rehabilitation without a lot of help.”

Leahy nominates among his achievements the enhanced role of women in combat units and the revamp of the Army Reserve, which now includes reservist units serving in Solomon Islands.

Today's soldiers, he says, are better prepared for operations in places such as Afghanistan than ever before, learning local languages and cultural mores before deployment, in addition to undergoing intensive pre-deployment exercises. “We have native speakers come to them. We have imams come to them and talk to them about how to show respect in the local communities. We are doing protecting, supporting and persuading.”

Army recruitment rates are the best in years despite the nationwide skills shortage, with retention rates now averaging more than 10 per cent.

“I keep hearing about generation Y, the short attention spans, wanting more. We are getting generation Y but they are not the ones I see described in the literature,” he says about recruits born between 1980 and 1994.

“These are people who are making a commitment and are proud to do the traditional things and are prepared to go overseas and accept the difficulties and the dangers and do something for Australia. We have got plenty of them and I think Australia should be very proud of them.”

Leaving the service he joined nearly 40 years ago at the age of 18, Leahy has no doubts the army is in good shape.

“I think we are a generous country. I have fond memories of Villers-Bretonneux (the French town Australian troops recaptured in April 1918), where French men and women come up to you and say, “Thank you for coming to help save our democracy.”

“We have got a great country and we have ideals for other people as well as ourselves. That's what I saw in the army when I joined in 1971, and that's what I see today.”



Australian Government
Department of Defence

**Defence
MEDIA RELEASE**

18/09/2008

MSPA 304/08

AUSSIE GUNNERS PULL THEIR WEIGHT IN AFGHANISTAN

16 'Gunnery' from the Darwin-based 8/12 Medium Regiment are providing vital fire support to International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Afghan National Army troops in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) Gunnery have fired over 140 fire missions involving over 2500 artillery rounds so far in the first deployment of Australian artillerymen in their primary role since ADF operations ceased in Vietnam in 1972.

Brigadier Brian Dawson praised the contribution the Australian Gunnery are making.

"They are undertaking an extremely demanding job in some of the harshest and most austere operating environments. The Gunnery are required to live virtually beside their guns and are required to react at very short notice to fire missions at any time of the day and night," Brigadier Brian Dawson said.

Since late March the Gunnery have been serving with the British 7th Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery. They provide accurate and timely artillery fire as part of the wider Task Force Helmand organisation.

"This deployment is unusual in that our Gunnery are working as part of a United Kingdom (UK) unit and operating with their equipment. Our Gunnery are standing side by side with their UK mates and have been involved in supporting numerous operations, including support to the recent movement of key generator equipment to the Kajaki Dam in Helmand.

"In the true tradition of our Armies, the Australian and UK Gunnery have bonded extremely well and are enjoying this unique, albeit dangerous, experience," Brigadier Dawson said.

Prior to this deployment the Gunnery completed six months training in the UK preparing for their deployment. The Australian gunners employ the 105mm L118 Light Gun, a similar weapon to the ADF's L119 Hamel Gun.

The deployment is conducted under a bilateral arrangement and will enhance the training and experience of the Australian Gunnery. This deployment will be followed by a similar embedding of Gunnery from Townsville's 4th Field Regiment later this year.

Media Note: Vision of the Australian Gunnery in action with their UK unit will be fed to television networks, Press Gallery, Parliament House. Still imagery will be available at <http://www.defence.gov.au/media/download> .

Media contact: Defence Media Liaison: 02 6265 3343 or 0408 498 664

**Issued by Ministerial Support and Public Affairs, Department of
Defence, Canberra, ACT**

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Regimental

Representative Colonel Commandant

Major General Tim Ford AO (Retd)



Dear Fellow Gunners,

The 40th Anniversary of the Battle of Coral was celebrated in Canberra from 12th-14th May with great success with the RAA involvement very appropriately acknowledged and represented. I have

written to thank many of the key players but I would like again to express the appreciation of all Gunners, past and present for the excellent work done by Don Tait, Ian Ahearn, Terry Brennan, Chris Jobson and their team in coordinating the various events. It was a particularly moving ceremony on Mt Pleasant when the Governor General presented the Honour Title to 102nd (Coral) Field Battery, and it was great to see Gunners from all over Australia and many Coral veterans at this historic occasion and the other events. The RAA National Dinner at the Federal Golf Club on the Tuesday night was also a wonderful and noisy get together of Gunners from several eras – perhaps we should aim to gather nationally as Gunners more often.

We took the opportunity of having many Gunners in Canberra for these events to also conduct informal meetings of the RAA Colonel Commandants and the RAA Historical Sub Committee. I am pleased to report that much progress is being made on a wide range of regimental matters that will be considered by the full Regimental Committee during the Regimental Conference in Puckapunyal from

13th-15th November. At that Conference we will farewell a number of prominent Gunners, including Colonel Arthur Burke and Brigadier Doug Perry as Colonel Commandants in Queensland and Victoria both whom have both provided wonderful guidance to the RAA in their regions for many years. I hope to announce at the Regimental Conference that the Chief of Army has confirmed the appointment of two very suitable replacements.

I was delighted to see in the Queen's Birthday Day honours list that several Gunners had been very aptly recognised for their contributions to the Defence Force at home and on overseas operations. On behalf of the Regiment, I have congratulated Colonel Michael Kingsford CSC, Warrant Officer Class One Bob Thompson OAM, Colonel J.P. Smith DSM and Major Stuart Seabrook for his Commendation for Distinguished Service. It is also pleasing to note that with the promotion of Paul Symon to Major General in early 2009 to take up the position of Deputy Chief of Army, that for the first time for many years there will be three serving Gunner Generals.

... promotion of Paul Symon to Major General in early 2009 to take up the position of Deputy Chief of Army, that for the first time for many years there will be three serving Gunner Generals.

It is fitting that the talent of our senior Gunners is being recognised at the same time as RAA soldiers are receiving many accolades for their fine service on overseas operations. In particular we have received many reports on the fine performance of the field gunners from 8th/12th Medium Regiment during their deployment to Helmand Province in Afghanistan with 7 Royal Horse Artillery. I noted that our RAA units had been active overseas in my annual greeting to our Captain General for Artillery Day. In this respect we continue to exchange greetings and explore opportunities for

maintaining and developing our links to Gunner organisations in the Commonwealth and with other allies.

In respect to overseas operations, I am pleased to advise that following our representations the Chief of Army has now confirmed that when RAA batteries deploy under command of other units in stabilization roles, they will retain their RAA title. In this respect, 110th Air Defence Battery will do so as part of their deployment to Timor Leste with the 5th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. This decision overcomes an anomaly that has existed in recent years and will assist the Regiment to appropriately recognise and record the service of our RAA units.

There have been developments also on the RAA historical front. You will recall that we established a RAA Historical Sub Committee in 2005 under the leadership of Major General John Whitelaw to ensure that the history of the Australian Artillery is fully and accurately recorded. Over the last 3 years, John and his team of volunteers has established a firm base and a coordinated approach to this ongoing task. John has now handed over chairmanship of the committee to Brigadier John Cox. The Regiment is most appreciative of General Whitelaw's significant contribution and guidance to this task and thank John Cox for taking up the challenge. I am pleased to report that John Whitelaw has agreed to remain as a project leader for three of the 26 projects that this committee has established.

The RAA Historical Company (RAAHC) has also had a change of leadership with Kevin Browning taking over from Cliff Dodds. Kevin's long experience with the RAAHC and the RAA National Museum will be invaluable as negotiations occur with the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust on the future strategic plan for the North Fort area. Our recent meetings with the Trust have ensured that they have a very clear understanding of the significance of the RAA presence there over many years and the importance of the RAA National Museum and the other memorials and structures in the area, including the 9.2in gun emplacements.

I look forward to meeting with you at RAA activities and to your continued contributions to our effectiveness as a Regiment and to our heritage. Good luck and good shooting to all.

Ubique



Vietnam veterans honoured in Canberra

May 12, 2008 - 8:54PM | smh.com.au (The Sydney Morning Herald)

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Opposition Leader Brendan Nelson acknowledged that Australia didn't necessarily treat soldiers returning from the Vietnam War with the respect they deserved.

At a Parliament House reception for the veterans of the battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral, Mr Rudd paid tribute to the men who took part in the battles, described as some of the most hazardous of the war.

Twenty-six Australians were killed during the fighting at Coral and Balmoral, which took place during the "Mini-Tet" offensive by Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces in May 1968.

"Tonight, as prime minister of Australia, I want to pay tribute to your service to Australia in this great battle of the Vietnam War," Mr Rudd told the veterans.

"For those whose service to the nation through this terrible war has not been properly honoured by government, I express regret.

"We can never repay the price that you have paid, but tonight I say that we will properly honour the memory of those who fell in the actions around Coral and Balmoral."

Dr Nelson, a former defence minister, said the treatment of diggers upon their return from Vietnam was one of the things Australia had got wrong as a nation.

"There are many things in our country of which we are immensely proud but there are some things that we have got wrong," he said.

"The way in which significant elements of Australian society responded to your return to our country at the end of your service and at the end of the war is one example of something we got wrong."

To rousing applause Dr Nelson said: "Whatever we do as a nation facing our future we must always make sure that we work tirelessly to honour the service and sacrifice of men and women who, in our uniform, serve the policies and views of the government of the day of our country."

On Tuesday there will be a national commemorative ceremony at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra to mark the 40th anniversary of the battle.

RECEIVED

15 MAY 2008



Major General S V Mayall
Assistant Chief of the General Staff
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GS/06/08/03 (ACGS)

Air Commodore S R Martin, AM
 Head, Australian Defence Staff
 Australian High Commission
 Australia House
 Strand
 London
 WC2B 4LA

14 May 2008

My dear Steve,

Thank you for your letter informing me of the decision by the Australian Government regarding a change in policy of the deployment of Australian Defence Force personnel to Iraq in any combat or training of Iraqi force role. Early warning of this potential change in policy has allowed us to minimise any impact, but I will ensure that all are informed of the dates at the earliest opportunity. May I take this opportunity to thank you for all of the help that your exchange officers have provided to the UK effort over the years – we are truly grateful.

May I also take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support to our operations in Afghanistan. I have heard nothing but praise for your gunners from 8/12 Medium Regiment Royal Australian Army who are now firmly embedded within I Troop, 7th Parachute Regiment Royal Horse Artillery and operating out of Forward Operating Base ARMADILLO in Helmand Province. As I Troop is tasked with the provision of offensive support to Battle Group Centre, an area of operations commanded by the Danish, we can truly claim to be a combined force! I have it on good authority that ANZAC Day was commemorated in traditional fashion with a dawn service conducted by the Regimental Padre, and indeed even filmed and photographed by a Reuters journalist. I have also heard that the training of 4th Field Regiment Royal Australian Army contingent is progressing well, and that they are looking forward to deploying with 3 Commando Brigade in October of this year.

Yrs. most sincerely,

Simon

Head of Regiment

Brigadier Phil Winter CSC

Greetings Fellow Gunners



This edition of the Liaison Letter marks my final contribution as Head of Regiment (HOR) before I hand over the baton to Brigadier Wayne Goodman, AM on

Saint Barbara's Day, 4th December 2008. I have enjoyed immensely the opportunity to be again associated with the Gunner fraternity in a 'hands-on' capacity as HOR. Brigadier Goodman is an experienced Gunner of note who many will remember as a former commanding officer / chief instructor of the School of Artillery not so long ago. Wayne will provide the Royal Regiment the benefit of his extensive experience and wisdom – so congratulations Wayne, and I trust you enjoy the HOR appointment, as I certainly did, especially meeting so many Gunners of all ranks across Australia.

Looking back on my two years or so as HOR, I believe one of the main highlights has been the co-operation and enthusiasm of the current crop of Commanding Officers, Regimental Sergeant Majors and other key staff who work in our RAA Executive. Despite heavy workloads, the commanding officers and I are in regular dialogue to discuss a wide variety of RAA issues – may I thus congratulate, on your behalf, the outgoing Commanding Officer / Chief Instructor of the School of Artillery, Lieutenant Colonel Sean Ryan (also Deputy HOR); Commanding Officer 8th/12th Medium Regiment Lieutenant Colonel Craig Furini; and Commanding Officer 16th Air Defence Regiment Lieutenant Colonel Paul McKay. Their two year unit command terms have been highly successful, and they will leave command with the undoubted satisfaction of seeing their unit prosper and having acted as stewards of note for the RAA.

I wish to also acknowledge the work this year of Commanding Officer 1st Field Regiment (Lieutenant Colonel Stu Kenny); Commanding

Officer 4th Field Regiment (Lieutenant Colonel Andy Combes) and Commanding Officer 20th Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regiment (Lieutenant Colonel Dean Pearce) for their work on the RAA Executive in their first year of command. Similarly, Lieutenant Colonel Mitch Kennedy, Staff Officer Grade One Joint Fires in Army Headquarters, has worked very hard for the RAA – and leaves for a well deserved operational tour in January 2009. Similar, Major Kym Schoene, Major Terry Brennan and Mrs Mignon Harvy provide great support to the HOR. I also received wise and frank advice from the Regimental Master Gunner, Warrant Officer Class One Phil Matthysen, on many issues especially during his attendance at the RAA Executive.

... I am proud to have again worn the white lanyard in 2007-2008 as HOR, and I have been privileged to do so at every rank level now in Gunner appointments from Second Lieutenant to Brigadier.

One of the key initiatives the RAA Executive has embraced in 2008 has been the conduct of the RAA Force Structure Review (FSR), and Lieutenant Colonel Kennedy and I will present the outcomes of this Review to Chief of Army and the other Chief of Army Staff Advisory Committee members this year. We will be recommending some significant changes for the RAA, including a move to functional trades, and in due course functional structures – so as to maximise our skills and training. For example, for the field artillery we need to maximise our expertise at the observation post end especially joint terminal air controllers (JTACs) – functional trades will enhance this mastery of skills. A draft of our paper has been widely circulated for input from all Gunners.

A less certain issue – as at the time of writing – is how the Defence White Paper, and also Army's restructure of Commands, will affect the RAA. Many Gunner elders have assisted in shaping the White Paper process, it is to be hoped that the lessons of history remind our Defence planners of the need for balanced combined arms teams that are well trained – with the Gunners playing their main role as the experts of co-ordinating and delivery of fire support.

Also at the time of writing we have many Gunners serving the RAA proudly overseas. On Operation Herrick, 8th/12th Medium Regiment Gunners are

performing superbly with 7 RHA – and 4th Field Regiment members will soon follow these steps with 29 Commando Battery, followed by 1st Field Regiment elements in due course. The feedback I received a few weeks ago in the United Kingdom when I met the British Director of Royal Artillery (Brigadier Colin Tadier) was that the Australia Gunners were great workers and totally reliable – he wanted more Australians for work with the RA.

Gunners from the 16th Air Defence Regiment are also overseas bound with demanding operational duties in East Timor, most importantly as formed bodies, and Chief of Army has confirmed the battery's should not be termed 'Golf Company'. Instead, 110th Air Defence Battery will deploy as an RAA battery entity and maintain our traditions as such. Once 110th Air Defence Battery return, they will be replaced by 111th Air Defence Battery – so it is a busy year ahead for 16th Air Defence Regiment.

Similar, all Gunners will be immensely proud of the work of 20th Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regiment. Our Gunners in 20th Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regiment have been on continuous operations for nearly four years as they lead the Army in unmanned aerial vehicle and weapon locating radar skills. They have also incorporated females into the unit – and it is great pleasure to visit and to see that the ladies have truly become valued members who take pride in their work and are creating a culture of smooth integration in the RAA.

Within 2nd Division, our Reserve units are facing a new and significant challenge – we eagerly await the decisions of the Commander 2nd Division and Land Command Australia in confirming the employment of mortars as part of the High Readiness Reservist concept.

In conclusion, I have enjoyed immensely the appointment as HOR. Over two years I have taken great pride in the RAA's highly successful collective co-operation, and successful performance by Gunners on operations, as well the 'Coral' celebrations and National Gunner Dinner, the RAA Regimental Conference and Farewells and seeing the RAA professionally and successfully embrace extra challenges instructing Enhanced Land Force (ELF) recruits at the Army Recruit Training Centre, or the recent integration of females into the RAA. As I observe other Armies, I remain certain our field gunners would do an outstanding job if called on to serve overseas. I hope to see our guns in action at some stage to see us demonstrate our professionalism in the combined arms teams. Finally, I am proud to have again worn the white lanyard in 2007-2008 as HOR, and I have been privileged to do so at every rank level now in Gunner appointments from Second Lieutenant to Brigadier. My best wishes to all Gunners and to the new HOR.

Ubique

P. D. W. P.



RAA Executive Meeting in Brisbane (L to R): MAJ M. Taylor, CAPT P. Bertocchi, LTCOL D. Pearce; LTCOL S. Summersby, LTCOL S. Ryan, LTCOL M. Kennedy, BRIG P. Winter, WO1 P. Matthysen, LTCOL N. Sweeney, LTCOL S. Kenny, LTCOL C. Furini, LTCOL A. Combes, LTCOL P. McKay and LTCOL A. Garrad

Brigadier C W Tadier CBE ADC
Director Royal Artillery



DA/DO

Headquarters
Director Royal Artillery
Royal Artillery Barracks
Larkhill
SALISBURY
Wiltshire
SP4 8QT

Larkhill Mil Ext: 5902
Civilian: 01980 845902

8 July 2008

Dear Phil,

From Lieutenant Colonel James Learmont,
Commanding Officer 7th Parachute Regiment
Royal Horse Artillery:

Captain Ryan Barrow - added clarity and
purpose to the Fire Planning Cell.

Lieutenant Nick Cooper - assured and competent
CFO, who has grasped the operational aspects
with vigour.

WO2 Core - an assured Gun Line Section
Commander (GLSC) with a fine sense of
balance as a leader and team player.

Gunners / Bombardiers - lively bunch and
full of character.

In essence, the RAA are doing a cracking
job.

Yours ever,
Chris



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Regimental Master Gunner

Warrant Officer Class One Phil Matthysen



Gunners, greetings from the Combined Arms Training Centre.

The end to another demanding year is bearing down on us and I would like to

take this opportunity to raise a couple of observations and pass on my thanks and well wishes to you all prior to a well deserved break. Members of the RAA have been involved in an increasing range of operations in our region and further abroad; such operations have included peacekeeping and peace-enforcement. The successful conduct of these operations is dependant on the performance of the soldier in the field. Today's soldier must acquire a broad suite of skills to competently operate in the field environment in order to achieve military objectives. Complexities in the field environment, including political and cultural nuances and the impact of rules of engagement, have culminated in a more demanding environment and increasing requirements of our soldiers. I believe the Regiment to be in a strong shape; I base this observation on the achievements of the RAA and the application, dedication and professionalism of all members. We are entering an exciting period with the transition to a new era of equipments and structural review along with significant changes in doctrine and technology that will impact on our profession. This will ensure the Regiment remains capable, responsive and relevant now and into the future. It goes without saying that the decisions and actions taken today will be with us for many years as a result.

But our future does not necessarily lie just with the transition to new equipment or doctrine. The future of the RAA will also be defined by our response to a series of other but no less important challenges. Essential to meeting these challenges, is the training and retention of soldiers and officers. Leadership is vital to training and retention; our soldiers are fundamental to capability. A wise man once said 'few people are born leaders ...

leadership is achieved by ability, alertness, experience and keeping posted..'. Commanders at all levels have a responsibility to look after the soldiers, ensuring that they are well led, well supported and well administered. This can be done by investing in our subordinates, providing development and learning opportunities that help them do their jobs better and at the same time, encourage them to work towards the achievement of their personal goals. Further, commanders need to set realistic workload expectations and recognize good performance. The time taken by all levels of command to provide high quality training is but one way of working towards retaining the soldier; others are but not limited to include leading by example, being consistent, having integrity and loyalty, the list goes on – I think you get my point.

I believe communication is also an area of weakness, not necessarily the passage of day to day information concerning the chain of command but rather, personnel in appointments not talking to peers when issues arise. There is an attitude of 'I know boats' and while this is a good mentality to have, it has proven the downfall of some as they don't know them as well as they thought. There is vast amount of experience at all levels within our organisation with no requirement to reinvent the wheel entirely when something arises – peers or superiors may be able to provide advice or direction.

*... political and cultural nuances
and the impact of rules of
engagement, have culminated in
a more demanding
environment...*

I would like to take this opportunity thank Brigadier Winter for his contribution to the Regiment over the past two years as Head of Regiment; he has been quiet busy in Canberra lobbying the Gunner point of view to the upper echelons of Army Headquarters at a time of high work tempo and dramatic change for us. From an operational viewpoint, I congratulate and thank those that have deployed throughout the year; I also want to acknowledge the support from the families during these long periods where the husband and or father were away. For those going on posting, I thank you and your family for your dedication and commitment and wish you all the best for the future. Enjoy your well-earned break, good luck and good soldiering.

Ubique

Northern Region

*Colonel Arthur Burke OAM (Retd)
Colonel Commandant Northern Region*

Anzac Day in Brisbane. In the pre dawn darkness, it was as though a squadron of fireflies had gathered to watch the ghostly illuminated figures of the bowed catafalque party and the RAA Band Brisbane in their white ceremonial liveries. The 1st Field Regiment Dawn Service again attracted a crowd of about 300 people and a unique feature this year was the use of sheltered candles by which to follow the service. Numerous attendees then filed through the new Vietnam Room of the 105th Battery Historical Collection on their way to the now traditional big breakfast in the Gunners' Club. Reserve members from 1st Field Regiment were proudly up front in the city march with the banners of those Gunner units who were no longer able to parade. A mint condition GMC towing our beautifully restored 25-Pounder led the post World War 2 veteran contingents. The marchers just had time for a quick thirst quencher at the RAA Association's venue (the Pig 'n' Whistle) before some 150 veterans and a few family members embarked on the Captain Cook for a two-hour river cruise. This included a barbecue lunch and reasonably priced drinks, which, together with perfect autumn weather, led to a most memorable day on the Brisbane River. Afterwards, those still with the taste rejoined the RAA Association's members ashore.

7th Division Artillery Luncheons. The May and November luncheons have continued at the Sherwood Services Club. It is sad to note that the attending widows are now almost equal to the surviving South East Queensland veterans of the 2/2nd Anti Tank Regiment and the 2/4th and 2/6th Field Regiments. Nevertheless, their associations and the Club's generosity allowed the November Christmas luncheon to be a free-of-charge affair.

Fort Lytton Living History Weekend. The Queen's Birthday weekend at the mouth of the Brisbane River again heralded every young (and the not so young) persons' delight to see and hear the light horsemen in action; the Scottish fort encampment; Viking camp fires, tents and battles; second world war allied and enemy mock battles around the fortifications; and of course, the dramatic firing of the 64-Pounder.

RAA Band Brisbane Concerts. The annual gala charity concert by the RAA Band Brisbane again held at the Gaythorne Services Club was one of the more ambitious combinations of big band (Queensland University Regiment and Australian Army Band Brisbane supplements), pipes from the National Servicemen's Memorial Pipes and Drums, and the return, on loan from the Australian Army Band Melbourne, of their darling diva, vocalist Fiona Wilkins. Feet never stopped tapping and the finale of Finlandia / Last Post brought the house down, demanding an encore. Fiona obliged with I Still Call Australia Home which left everybody on a very nostalgic high from such a delightful evening's entertainment. Prior to this, the Band had performed a gig in the bush at Shoalwater Bay for the 1st Field Regiment on exercise. This had been an extraordinary pipe opener for their charity concert and received rave reviews from all the Diggers.

Reserve Forces Day March. The day attracted a good roll up from the Brisbane Gunners and the camaraderie afterwards at the Treasury Casino Bar led to several new life subscriber memberships for the RAA Association. (Talk about Shanghai-ing!)

Second World War Gunners' Luncheon. Age doeth weary them, but there were half a dozen stalwarts who joined with representatives from the Post World War 2 Gunner associations and the RAA Association members to form a very happy dining group at the Victoria Barracks Mess on 1 August.

Gunners' Dinners in Townsville. This is not a typo — there were two Gunners' Dinners in Townsville this year. On 1 August, the RAA Association (North Queensland) held the traditional dinner at the RSL Club where it was great to catch up with the old and bold of 'Gunners North'. Then on 15 August, 4th Field Regiment held an all-ranks Gunners' Dinner, again at the RSL Club. This was a very well attended function with the young soldiers turning out in a very high standard of dress and having a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

Vale Ludinski, Tye, Irvine and Harkin. Winter is always a sad time for losing our tribal elders and this year was no exception. World War 2 stalwart from Fort Lytton, George Ludinski OAM departed first, followed by the tragic accidental death of the very popular 1960s Lieutenant Bruce Tye. Major Stan Irvine then passed away following complications from a heart valve replacement, and old CMF Captain Danny Harkin completed the quartet of Brisbane Gunners ascending to the Great Gun Park up above. Rest in Peace, old mates.

Queens Birthday Honours

Medal (OAM) in the Military Division

Warrant Officer Class One Robert James THOMPSON, Vic. For meritorious service as Regimental Sergeant Major of 7th Field Regiment, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, 4th Field Regiment, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, and Career Manager Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery.

Distinguished Service Medal (DSM)

Colonel John Peter SMITH, ACT. For distinguished leadership in action as the Australian National Representative and Chief J7 to the Multi National Division, South East, Iraq.

Commendation for Distinguished Service

Major Kelvin Stuart SEABROOK, NSW. For distinguished performance of duties in warlike operations as operations and training Major for the 10th Iraqi Army Division Military Transition Team during Operation Catalyst.

Conspicuous Service Cross (CSC)

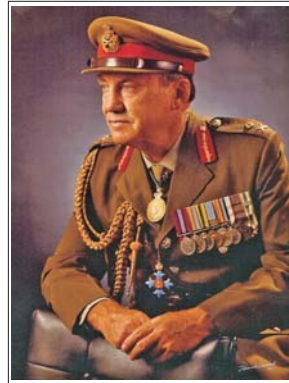
Colonel Michael James KINGSFORD, ACT. For outstanding achievement as Commanding Officer of the 4th Field Regiment, and as the Brigade Commander Rear, 3rd Brigade.



Vale

Major General John Dennis Stevenson AO, CBE (Retd)

*Provided by Colonel Arthur Burke, OAM (Retd)
Colonel Commandant Northern Region*



Major General John Dennis Stevenson AO CBE (Retd) passed away on 30th July 2008 following some nine months of failing health.

This tribute is an amalgam of a formally recorded interview which I had with General John in 1998 and the

masterly eulogy which his son-in-law, Geoffrey Nettle delivered at the celebration of John Stevenson's life on 6th August. To reduce almost 83 years of a very active life down to an acceptable size for publishing has been a daunting task. To comply, I have concentrated more on the Gunner aspects of his 40-year military career.

From birth in Melbourne on 13th August 1925, John Stevenson was destined to be in the Army. His father, Colonel George Stevenson had served with distinction in the Boer War, had been appointed a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) for his service at Gallipoli and a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for achievements in France during the Great War. John completed his secondary education at the Geelong Church of England Grammar School in 1942 when the Second World War was at full volume in both Europe and the South-West Pacific. He wanted to enlist immediately.

However, at this father's insistence, John entered the Royal Military College, Duntroon for the three-year war course. With scholastic achievements as a dux in Latin, first in class in mathematics and a good performer in cricket, Australian Rules and the 880 in athletics, John enjoyed life at Duntroon – especially the relative barracks luxury and delicious meals compared with those at his former boarding school.

Aussie Rules were not part of the Royal Military College curriculum at that time-rugby ruled. John Stevenson became a formidable player, earning his lifelong nickname of 'Punchy' for his method of softening up the opposition in the scrum at the breakdown. So much did John embrace this code that he captained the Melbourne Rugby Union Football Club to a premiership win in 1954 and later coached the Australian Capital Territory rugby union team, now the ACT Brumbies. His support for Army rugby was legendary.

Graduating into Artillery in December 1946 and too late for active service, Lieutenant Stevenson, along with classmates John Salmon, Dick Cubis and Brian Loveridge joined A Field Battery with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan. Returning to Australia with the battery at the end of 1948, John began a number of courses at the School of Artillery which led to his selection for the Long Observation Course at Larkhill in England. Despite its name, this was predominantly a series of locating courses followed by an attachment to the British 7th Armoured Divisional Locating Battery in Germany.

On return to Australia, Captain John was posted to the composite field / embryo locating / light anti-aircraft 1st Field Regiment which was spread between Middle and North Heads in Sydney. He became the inaugural battery commander of 104th Locating Battery before being sent to Korea, attached to the Headquarters 1st Commonwealth Division.

On return to Australia in 1953, John was appointed the adjutant / quartermaster of 10th Field Regiment on the Mornington Peninsula, Victoria. Despite the massive influx of 18 to 20 year olds from the 1950s' National Service Scheme filling out the unit's manning, John made time to pursue his passion for rugby, joined the Melbourne club at South Yarra and captained their premiership win in 1954.

The adjutant / quartermaster's job must have been relatively easy in those days, for Captain John also found time to woo a young nursing sister from western Queensland who had been introduced by his RMC classmate, John Salmon. John Stevenson married Vivienne Ann Cotton in Brisbane on 6 July 1955 and began a 53 year union, ended only by his passing. Geoff Nettle described the next few years as 'a fruitful union – for with the rapid fire accuracy of which any member of the Artillery would be proud, by 1958 he with Ann had brought forth three daughters, Jenny, Wendy and Suzie'.

The Stevensons' first married accommodation was at Captain John's next posting – the Royal Military College, Duntroon. Then Staff Cadet John Bullen describes Stevo's priorities as being 'our instructor in Rugby and our coach in Artillery'. This posting prepared John nicely for Staff College at Fort Queenscliff, Victoria in 1958 which, in turn, qualified him to become the Brigade Major (BM) at Headquarters Northern Command, Brisbane. All this happened, remember, whilst producing and caring for three young daughters.

Finally, it was time for Major Stevenson to return to the Gunners and on the opening day of the fledgling 4th Field Regiment at Wacol, 4 May 1960, he marched-in as the second-in-command to John 'Happy Jack' Studdert. As if Ann was not busy enough at this time, John invited his new commanding officer and the adjutant, Pat Gowans to dinner and a bed at their Bardon married quarter that night because the Officers' Mess was not yet functioning. But this was typical of the warm hospitality and strong friendships which the Stevensons established throughout their life together and Ann merely took it in her stride.

These were tough and trying times as the new unit was raised from scratch. Nevertheless, with his dedication to working hard and playing hard, 'Punchy' established the beginnings of a unit rugby team and with few other service teams available, played his side with quite pleasing results in local civvy competitions.

Twelve months later, Major John not only completed his Tactics 5 course for promotion at the Jungle Training Centre, Canungra, but was then retained as a member of the staff. With his continued short posting cycle, but next with the carrot of promotion to lieutenant colonel, he was then appointed the General Staff Officer Grade One in the Directorate of Military Training at Army Headquarters, Canberra. This was June 1962 and with the look forward of a two-year posting, Ann and John purchased their first house in Campbell. Was this stability at last?

On 9th June 1964, Lieutenant Colonel John Stevenson took over the reins of command of 4th Field Regiment at Wacol from Joe Hooton who was off to the US Armed Forces Staff College. The new CO admitted his technical and tactical field gunner experience within the new Pentropic Division organisation's *modus operandi* was limited. 105th Battery had been kept up to strength as the priority force plan artillery unit, but this had been at the expense of the 101st Battery which had returned

from Malaysia in 1963 and then suffered the loss on posting of most of its key personnel and many of its gunners. John's superiors in both artillery and command headquarters imposed unrealistic pressures to man two batteries for field exercises.

John's leadership and diplomacy were tried to their fullest for the next 18 months, but with the experienced Majors Craig Beck and Bill Silverstone in the unit, he successfully transitioned it from a peacetime Pentropic organisation to a light-scaled Tropical Warfare establishment. The final test was launching 105th Field Battery as the first Royal Australian Artillery unit to serve in the Vietnam War. By Stevenson's own admission, he 'loaded' 105th Battery at the expense of 101st breaking up trained teams within the 105th because of the urgency and short notice of this launch. Nevertheless, he directed some very realistic final testing exercises which stood Peter Tedder's 105th in good stead in Vietnam.

Just when John's command including the newly raised 108th Field Battery was settling down, he was posted back to Canberra as the Assistant Military Secretary in early 1966. He never returned to a Gunner appointment for the remainder of his fulltime career as higher level command and staff appointments now took control of his life. A benefit of this was stability for Ann and the girls in their Canberra home for the next six years. John was posted to Vietnam to take command of the 1st Australian Logistic Support Group from his Royal Military College classmate and life-long friend, Ian Gilmore. When this position was raised to a colonel's appointment, John was promoted and remained in command. In recognition of his exceptional service in this role, John Stevenson was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 1970 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Colonel Stevenson returned to Canberra as the Deputy Director of Military Plans in January 1970. Almost two years later, he was promoted brigadier and appointed the Commander Headquarters 6th Task Force and Southern Queensland Area, in Brisbane. At 46 years of age, Geoff Nettle pointed out that John was 'right in the middle of mainstream' military at this time.

The post Vietnam War reorganisation of the Army raised the command status of Tasmania to a brigadier's appointment and John was chosen for this position. Despite thinking at the time that they were being 'sent to Coventry' in June 1973, Brigadier and Ann Stevenson threw themselves

professionally and socially, wholeheartedly into this new environment and in Geoff's words, 'fell in love with the place and the people in it ... he [bringing] a new level of discipline and professionalism ... [and] she charming the squatocracy.' A vessel's collision with the pylons of the Hobart Bridge brought a sudden operational urgency to this idyllic life, but with characteristic leadership, John organised almost every piece of Bailey bridging in the Army to reconnect the city of Hobart across the Derwent River.

By now, there was an almost empty nest at home. Eldest daughter, Jenny had begun tertiary studies and was destined to marry and remain in Tasmania; Wendy had remained in Brisbane to finish school then move to university in Melbourne; and Suzie was completing school in Hobart prior to taking off for the Australian National University in Canberra. Ann and John thought long and hard about settling down in Tasmania with their many local friends.

However, the rise of the new Fraser government created a new Defence system of command and early in 1976, John was elevated to major general to become the inaugural General Officer Commanding Logistic Command in Melbourne. Back on his home turf, General John seemed to relish every aspect of this appointment – operational logistic priorities, ceremonial parades, aide-de-camp to Her Majesty the Queen, Army concerts at the state theatre and military tattoos at the MCG were all taken in his stride – and all ably supported by Ann. On the family side, Wendy married Geoff and their Melbourne world seemed a perfect place for the Stevensons. Major General John was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in the 1980 Australia Day Honours for his services as GOC Logistic Command.

Geoff Nettle's eulogy reminded that the world is not perfect and after three years, Major General John Stevenson was appointed the Chief of Logistics in Canberra. As the only other Gunner officer in Logistics Branch in 1980, I found it refreshing for an Arms officer to be captaining this organisation and, under his indirect guidance, learnt much about the impact of the logistic system on operational planning. It was also an area of amusement to other staff members when these two Gunners celebrated Royal Australian Artillery Day and Saint Barbara's Day within the logistic walls.

At just 57 years of age, Major General Stevenson reached statutory retirement and completed almost 40 years of dedicated service to the

Australian Defence Force. Feeling far too young to retire, John and Ann returned to Melbourne, purchased a house in Stevenson Street, Kew and he threw himself headlong into a range of occupations – chairman of the Industrial Mobilisation Course (later its National President) and writing for Dennis Warner and others on defence matters. Such was his contribution to a work on defending northern Australia that one of the carriages on the Darwin rail was recently named after him. Regrettably, he was too ill to attend the naming ceremony, but Ann was there in his stead.

John was always an active member of Legacy, became National Chairman of the Order of Australia Association, was President of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia, Patron of the Melbourne Rugby Union Football Club, and was an enthusiastic participant in activities at the Naval and Military and Athenaeum Clubs. Somehow, he managed to fit regular tennis and occasional golf into this very full life.

Neither were his links with the Army nor his Gunner roots overlooked after leaving the service. General John became the Honorary Colonel of the Melbourne University Regiment (1982-88), Colonel Commandant RAA Victoria (1988-92) and Representative Colonel Commandant RAA (1989-92).

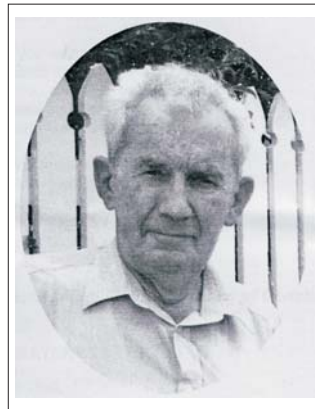
Barely perceptible during my interview in 1998, the onset of the insidious disease progressed slowly at first then more pronounced in the last few years. A major setback late in 2006 began to number John's days.

Geoff Nettle's summation was masterly. 'John Stevenson was ... a gregarious man who delighted in the company of others and in what they did and knew. He was a charming companion and generous host, a gentleman of the old school whose urbanity was as intuitive as it was instructed. John Stevenson was, too, a family man – a devoted husband, an adoring father and a loving grandfather for whom the greatest pleasure lay in the gatherings of family occasion ... we recognise that his death is ... a blessing. For even a hard man can only take some much pain, and by the end of it all, he had taken more than enough.'

Vale Major General John Dennis 'Punchy' Stevenson AO, CBE – military leader, loving family man, rugby devotee, gentleman, and always a Gunner. Gone to that Great Gun Park up above at 83 years young.

Major Stanley James Irvine (Retd)

*Provided by Colonel Arthur Burke, OAM (Retd)
Colonel Commandant Northern Region*



Major Stanley James Irvine (retired) passed away on 2nd August 2008 from a heart attack following heart valve replacement surgery at Greenslopes Private Hospital, Brisbane.

Stan was born at Gympie, Queensland on 15th January 1933

to farming parents. One of nine children, he sought freedom from his very close family and the land so, on completing a secondary education, enlisted in the Army just after his 19th birthday in 1952. Though he was then posted all around the world for the next 31 years, he always valued attending the annual family reunions back on the farm whenever he could make the occasion.

Gunner Stan's early years were divided between the Army's only fulltime artillery unit, 1st Field Regiment at Georges Heights then Holsworthy and the 11th National Service Training Battalion in Brisbane where, as a junior non commissioned officer, he gained his first instructional experience with the 18 year olds of the 1950s compulsory military training scheme. His secondary education and fondness for technical gunnery led him naturally into the command post and by 1959, he was a sergeant TARA (Technical Assistant Royal Artillery) in the 101st Field Battery.

This was good news because in September that year, it was his battery's turn to serve in Malaya within the 28th Commonwealth Brigade. There, Stan also did his share of patrolling and ambushing tasks as infantry attached to the 1st/3rd Anglians. His unit's home base was at Butterworth till the Emergency ended officially on 31st July 1960 and it moved to join the British 26th Field Regiment at Terendak Camp in Malacca. Stan revelled in the combination of field artillery with 25-pounders and light scale air mobile training with 4.2-inch mortars and mastered the technical challenges of mobilisation exercises. Fellow Sergeant Len Cooper described Stan as a very proficient, quiet and dedicated senior non commissioned officer who 'never got into trouble like some of the others'.

When the 103rd Field Battery replaced the 101st, Stan's unit returned to Wacol, Brisbane in 1961 and took over the old 103rd's lines within 4th Field Regiment. The experience gained in Malaya proved invaluable as these Gunners prepared for the new Tropical Warfare establishment. Stan shone under the very high standards demanded by battery commander Bill Silverstone and was rewarded by being promoted warrant officer class two and posted as an instructor to the School of Artillery at North Head, Sydney. Nevertheless, life at Wacol had not been all work, as it was there that he courted and then married Tess.

Warrant Officer Class Two Irvine thrived upon and excelled in two military loves – technical gunnery and instruction. His quietly persuasive, never shouting manner and willing helpfulness gained many a poor student a course pass rating and earned Stan lifelong friends in return. These sincere endeavours did not go unnoticed and it was with great joy that he announced to Tess one evening that they were off to the Royal School of Artillery at Larkhill, England for 20 months on a Long Gunnery Staff Course followed by a training attachment.

Then Captain Ken MacKenzie was on the officers' course at Larkhill at this time (1966-68) and recalls how Stan's conscientious, professional approach and quietly modest attitude soon won the admiration of his British peers and instructors. Captain Phil Ratcliff who had worked with Stan at North Head and was also on the officers' course at Larkhill confirms Stan's dedication by describing how 'he topped his course and the Brits wanted to keep him as an exchange instructor' instead of his returning to Australia. However, this was destined not to occur and whilst other people were returning home with the latest colours in duty free Volvos and Mercedes Benz, Stan came back with an Army green vehicle.

The Vietnam War required Warrant Officer Class Two Irvine back in Australia as the battery guide of his beloved 101st Battery so he returned to 1st Field Regiment (now at Enoggera) in April 1968, and 12 months later was on active service in Vietnam. The 101st's gun position officer at that time, Bill Boyd says that he admired and often sought technical advice from Stan. In Vietnam, he was 'very zealous of this role as LZO [landing zone officer] and personally looked after all aerial re-supply, often talking to very young [American] pilots ... across a major language barrier.' He also earned the nickname 'Gyro Gearloose' after he jacked up a Landrover and used its rear wheel to power a hand

pump to empty water out of a flooded command post.

On return from active service, Stan 'elected to go over to the dark side' and was commissioned as a lieutenant on 22nd July 1970. He became a proof officer at the Proof and Experimental Establishment, Graytown, Victoria where again, his technical expertise and quiet personality melded so well with both the civilian and military staff. Warrant Officer Class Two Les Cooper describes Stan as 'a great and very knowledgeable boss' and was proud to serve with him.

Stan's love for technical gunnery continued with his promotion to captain in 1974 when he returned to the School of Artillery, this time in Development Wing. Senior Instructor John Griggs remembers him as a very dedicated and hard working member of the team whilst student (then) Captain Ron West recalls how Stan was only too happy to 'appear from behind his newspaper in the mess and explain patiently some esoteric aspect of gunnery' to a confused group of Reserve officers. It was also during this period that Stan wrote that masterful paper on 'basilage', a very technical discussion on an absolutely fictitious topic that had people citing and expounding upon for years to come.

With promotion to major also came the opportunity to return to a field artillery unit – this time as the training officer with the Army Reserve's 5th/11th Field Regiment at Annerley in Brisbane. Commanding officer Paul Feeney recalls that Stan's wide experience and quietly efficient attitude was ideally suited for this appointment. Battery commander Ron West recalls, 'I never ever saw him get mad at anyone, though when his lean towards one looked like a 'full master [ship] in a gale' and the veins stood out on his neck, one knew there was trouble brewing.' This was to be Major Stan's final posting for just after his 50th birthday, he hung up his spurs on 14th March 1983 after some 31 years of dedicated service.

In retirement in Brisbane, Stan Irvine took up bricklaying (producing the great brick staircase in the front of their home), rock cutting and polishing (the Mt Cootha Reserve has some of his handiwork), faceting gemstones and landscape painting. This, interspersed with his regular rounds of golf at Virginia, prawning and fishing, and his above average talents as a cook, left him just enough time to attend church each Sunday. He never lost his very dry, drawling sense of humour and was a frequent raconteur amongst his many

old friends at the quarterly Retired Gunner Officer Luncheons at Victoria Barracks.

Vale Stanley James Irvine – loving family man to Tess and Michael, talented instructor and technical soldier, unique humorist, officer, gentleman and a friend to so many in the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. Gone to the Great Gun Park up above at 75 years young.

Major George Anthony Ludinski, OAM, ED (RL)

*Provided by Mr Harry Lynas
Fort Lytton Historical Association*

George Ludinski was born in Brisbane in 27th April 1913, and first came to Fort Lytton in 1932, where he enlisted as a Gunner in the Militia in the 22nd Heavy Battery, Australian Garrison Artillery. He rose steadily through the ranks and by 1936 he was promoted to Sergeant. He was involved in the last firing of the disappearing guns in 1938 at Fort Lytton and then attended annual camp at Moreton Island where he showed his prowess as a Lewis machine gunner against aircraft.



George (on the right) in 1936, when he was a Sergeant in 22nd Heavy Battery, Australian Garrison Artillery, marching battery personnel along the wharf at Fort Lytton for the start of the annual encampment.

During World War Two George was promoted to Lieutenant and became involved in the movement of guns for the Letter Batteries from Wallangarra to Brisbane. He was later posted to Darwin to serve on the coastal guns defending that city. For a short while he became the senior officer left in Darwin

when the other much more senior officers beat a strategic journey south after the bombing raid on 19th February 1942. He followed this up with service in the jungles of Papua New Guinea and was posted to D Australian Heavy Battery to serve on the coastal guns at Buna.

George was posted out of D Australian Heavy Battery on 28th April 1944 and was returned to Australia to take up positions in Movement and Control, due to his civilian work prior to the War. He met his future wife, Dulcie, when he walked into the clothing store, where she was working as a member of the Australian Women's Army Services, in Townsville and they were married in Brisbane on 10th February 1945. George became involved in the administration of one of the depots in Brisbane involved in the demobilisation of men and equipment. George finally left the Army on 1st July 1946 with the rank of Major. (AWM Records state that he was a captain in D Australian Heavy Battery at the time of his discharge, however D Australian Heavy Battery was disbanded in September 1944 and George had been transferred out on 28th April 1944.)

After the War George returned to his civilian work as office manager for McDonald Hamilton, who handled shipping in Brisbane. In 1949 he was talked into rejoining the Militia (CMF), but this time into an Engineer unit and finally retired from the Army in 1966.

In 1988 when Ampol returned Fort Lytton to the Queensland Government George was among the first to answer the call to volunteer for duty as a Guide when Fort Lytton reopened to the public as a tourist attraction. He served in this capacity until late 2007, so in all George had links with Fort Lytton for 75 years. Mention must also be made of his research into the history of Fort Lytton, and along with Dulcie, George spent many hours at the State Library poring over old newspapers and documents. With the help of Harry Lynas, George then produced 6 books detailing the history of Fort Lytton and the men who passed through the fort gates. For this work at Fort Lytton George was awarded the OAM, and was also made a Life Member of the Royal Australian Artillery Association, Queensland.

George and Dulcie had three children consisting of Doug, Judy and George, in all a total of 3 children and 5 grandchildren, all of whom, including Dulcie, survived him. George Anthony Ludinski passed away on 1st June 2008.

Customs & Traditions

*Provided by Christopher Jobson
Former RSM Ceremonial & Protocol – Army; and
Author of RAA Customs and Traditions*

Introduction

Given the Australian Army's origins as a colonial force of the British Empire, it is hardly surprising that many of its customs have been inherited from its British Army parent. It is generally true that most family customs are traditionally passed down through parents and other family connections, and it is no different with the Australian Army. The British army is its 'family'.

These customs have, nevertheless, served the Australian army well over the years and have proven their worth time and again. Indeed they are now as much a part of Australia's army as they are of the British army. Customs are, in many ways, the valuable foundation of a Corps or unit and contribute to the creation of that organization's lifeblood; its esprit de corps. Customs and traditions cannot be accorded a monetary value – they are far more important than that. As renowned American General Colin Powell noted: 'customs and traditions install a sense of belonging in the lives of young soldiers'.

What, then, is a custom? A custom is a practice, a form of behaviour, or a particular way of acting in a given set of circumstances. A tradition is a custom that has been passed down over time.

What, then, is a custom? A custom is a practice, a form of behaviour, or a particular way of acting in a given set of circumstances. A tradition is a custom that has been passed down over time. While some of the inherited British army customs have fallen by the way over the years, the majority remain because they still have a place in today's modern Australian army. Customs and traditions, like the English language, are dynamic and alive, and therefore prone to evolve and adapt by dint of changing circumstances, as does the Army itself. While

customs and traditions have a place in the Australian army they will continue to live, to adapt, and to retain their relevance to the modern army.

Colours

The Colours of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery are the guns. On ceremonial occasions the guns are accorded the same compliments as the Standards and Guidons of the Royal Australian Armoured Corps, and the Colours of the Corps of Staff Cadets and infantry regiments. As such the guns take precedence over the Queen's Banner.

*The Colours represent the heart,
soul and spirit of the Regiment.*

Although there are many occasions when it is impracticable to pay compliments to the Colours they are, never-the-less, at all times accorded the greatest dignity and respect. It is customary to salute a formed body of guns when they pass in a ceremonial capacity and to fall-out the guard as they leave from and return to a unit's lines. It is unacceptable conduct to smoke on or in the vicinity of the guns, to decorate them for social occasions, to sit (with the exception of the layers when a particular equipment is fitted with seating arrangements – eg. the 25 pounder, the L5 Pack Howitzer, etc), or stand on them (unless in the course of duty), or to lean on them.

The origin of the guns being the Colours dates back to the period when the largest piece in an artillery train carried the then equivalent of the current King's (or Queen's) Colour. It was referred to as the 'Colour' or 'Flag Gun'. The operational employment of a 'Colour Gun' was last recorded in 1783 and the guns evolved as the Colours when this practice ceased.

The Colours represent the heart, soul and spirit of the Regiment. In previous eras when the infantry carried their Colours into battle they were always located in the centre of the front rank, a position from which they were easily seen and recognised, and they represented a rallying point for the soldiers; the rallying point for gunners has always been the guns. Until the twentieth century guns were deployed in the open, in full view of the enemy. For very honourable, as well as practical reasons the detachments were instilled with the tradition of serving their guns under fire. The guns are to be protected at all times and to abandon them was, and still is the ultimate disgrace. However, if the tactical situation demands that

they be abandoned they are never to be left in operational use.

Guns made in Great Britain and Australia have a Royal Cypher or an Australian Coat of Arms respectively engraved into the external top-side of the barrels. There is a misconception that these signify that the guns are Colours (similar to the Crown and regimental title in a Queen's Colour); however, they are simply symbols of proofing by the ordnance factory from which they were manufactured. No cypher appears on Australian purchased guns produced by the USA, as the US standard of proofing is accepted by Australia and is required as a part of the purchase agreement. However, the Royal Cypher appears on the Italian-made 105mm Pack Howitzer barrels because they were all re-proofed by the British after their purchase from Italy (at the time, in 1960, the Italian proofing practices did not meet the UK required criteria).

When the guns and the Queen's Banner are paraded together the guns take precedence and the Banner is marched-onto parade before the guns, and marched-off after the guns.

The Light Guns (Hamel) have the Australian Coat of Arms engraved into the external top-side of the barrels simply because they were manufactured in Australia.

Today the guns on parade (regardless of the number, be they a regiment (normally eighteen guns), or a section, which in the case of a heavy battery could be one gun) constitute both the Queen's and Regimental Colours. When the guns and the Queen's Banner are paraded together the guns take precedence and the Banner is marched-onto parade before the guns, and marched-off after the guns.

Banners

The King's Banner

In November 1904 the then Governor-General (Lord Northcote) presented, on behalf of His Majesty King Edward VII, twenty Banners to Australian units that saw active service in the Second Boer War (1899 - 1902). The Banners were presented '... in recognition of their valuable services to the Empire'. The units that received the Banners were eighteen Regiments of the Australian Light Horse,

the Royal Australian Artillery (in recognition of the services rendered in the War by A Field Battery) and the Australian Army Medical Corps.

The Banners were originally referred to as 'King's Colours' and were presented by the Imperial Government to each overseas contingent from the Empire.

The Banners were originally referred to as 'King's Colours' and were presented by the Imperial Government to each overseas contingent from the Empire. The pikes of each Banner bore an inscribed silver plaque. The plaque on the pike of A Field Battery's Banner read:

PRESENTED BY HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY THE KING EMPEROR TO THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY IN RECOGNITION OF SERVICES RENDERED TO THE EMPIRE IN SOUTH AFRICA 1904.

In 1908 a promulgated Military Order stated that the King had granted the Honorary Distinction SOUTH AFRICA to all the units which had fought in the War. The order further stated: 'The Banners ... are not King's Colours, but Honourable Insignia presented by the King as a special mark of favour in recognition of valuable services rendered in South Africa in 1899 to 1902, and that Honorary Distinctions are not to be borne upon these Banners'. In 1953 the gunners' Honourable Insignia became officially known as the Royal Australian Artillery King's Banner.

Whereas Colours, Standards and Guidons are replaceable, the awarding of the King's Banner was an isolated occasion, it being presented for a particular campaign. This posed a maintenance problem; as a consequence of the King's Banner being routinely paraded on ceremonial occasions it became worn and very fragile. However, 1971 was the Centenary of A Field Battery and a decision was made to approach Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II with a proposal for a new Banner be presented to the Regiment in conjunction with the Battery's 100th Birthday. Her Majesty approved the request and a Queen's Banner was presented to the Regiment in August 1971.

The King's Banner was paraded for the last time at Sydney's Victoria Barracks on 1st August 1971. The honour of providing the Banner's Armed Party, Ensign and Escorts was allocated to 12th Field Regiment. The Banner's Ensign was Lieutenant J.M. Sheedy and the Escorts were Sergeants Allen Green and Dave Quirk. The Banner was laid-up at the

Australian War Memorial at the conclusion of the 1972 ANZAC Day Parade, 68 years after its presentation to the Regiment.

The Banner of Queen Elizabeth II (The Queen's Banner)

The birthday of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery is celebrated on the 1st August (the date of the raising of A Field Battery; however the Regiment was, in reality, formed on 24th August 1899, from the Regular Army artillery units of the Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland colonies). In 1971 A Field Battery was on active service in South Vietnam when the Queen's Banner was presented to the Regiment; the Banner was presented as both a replacement for the King's Banner (presented to A Battery, New South Wales Regiment RAA for services in the South African (Boer) War) and in recognition of the Regiment's Centenary. The wording on the Banner pike's plaque is:

PRESENTED BY HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II, CAPTAIN-GENERAL OF THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY, TO REPLACE THE BANNER PRESENTED BY HIS MAJESTY KING EDWARD VII AND IN HONOUR OF THE CENTENARY OF THE REGIMENT 1971.

The Banner was presented to the Regiment by the then Governor-General, His Excellency Sir Paul Hasluck, on behalf of Her Majesty, at Sydney's Victoria Barracks on the 1st August 1971, the same time that the King's Banner was last paraded.

The Banner is accorded all the honours and dignity of Colours when it is displayed in public on ceremonial parades, taking second place only to the Regiment's Colours – the guns.

The Banner, which is housed in the dining room of the Regimental Officers' Mess, is officially named The Banner of Queen Elizabeth II; however, it is commonly referred to under many names: The Queen's Banner of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, The Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery Banner, and The Queen's Banner. The Banner is accorded all the honours and dignity of Colours when it is displayed in public on ceremonial parades, taking second place only to the Regiment's Colours – the guns.

Battle Honours

Prior to 1832 the Royal Regiment of Artillery shared, with a large number of other British Regiments, a number of Battle Honours, including *GIBRALTAR* and *WATERLOO*; however, in 1832 these were substituted with the single Honour of *UBIQUE* (Everywhere). The Honour implies that where and whenever there is a battle the artillery will be found in support.

The gunners are the only Regiment to share both a Battle Honour and a motto ...

The Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery was granted the Battle Honour *UBIQUE* by His Majesty King George VI in 1950. The gunners are the only Regiment to share both a Battle Honour and a motto (the Royal Australian Engineers also has the motto *UBIQUE*; however, it is not the Corps' Battle Honour). The Battle Honour *UBIQUE* is not placed onto the Queen's Banner.

Honour Titles

In 1925 the Royal Regiment of Artillery initiated a system of granting Honour Titles to individual batteries. The title signifies either the name of a particular battle, a famous battery commander or a badge associated with the unit.

There is a provision made in the Royal Australian Artillery Standing Orders for batteries to be granted Honour Titles, however, to date only one has been awarded and that was the title *CORAL* to 102nd Field Battery in 2008. The primary rule governing eligibility for these titles is 'Place names should be limited to occasions of historic interest; and even then, be awarded only in outstanding cases'. Honour Titles are not placed onto the Queen's Banner.

The Regimental Standard

In July 1945 the Royal Artillery put forward a submission to the Master Gunner's Committee for unit flags; the result, approved by the College of Arms, was a series of standards. The Royal Australian Artillery adopted the Standard in 1952 with the approval of the then Master Gunner of St James's Park, Field Marshal the Viscount Alanbrooke.

The Standard conforms in both shape and style to heraldic usage and custom. It includes the Regimental badge (with the upper scroll bearing

the motto Ubique, but minus the lower scroll), the relevant unit's number, along with two scrolls bearing the second motto (Quo Fas et Gloria Ducunt) and the flamed grenade. There is, however, a unique aspect about the Standard and that is to do with the grenade. The College of Arms was not supplied with an adequate brief with regard to the full required design and, as a consequence, the College employed the universal bursting grenade pattern of six flames, instead of the Regiment's seven-flamed bursting grenade; by the time the mistake was realized the College had approved the Standard's current design.

There is, however, a unique aspect about the Standard and that is to do with the grenade.

The Standard is granted to independent units, but not sub-units. It is only flown on special occasions such as visits by Royalty or vice-regal dignitaries (eg. the Governor-General), visits or inspections by general officers, Regimental colonels-commandant or Artillery formation commanders, or in conjunction with regimental birthday celebrations. The Standard may also be flown for visits by senior VIP civilian personages (such as the Prime Minister, the Minister for Defence, etc) or allied officials of comparable rank or appointment. The only time that the Standard was flown daily was at Artillery Headquarters during the existence of the Directorate of Artillery.

Gunners receive first-ever honour title

theage.com.au | The Age | May 14, 2008 - 8:43PM

In an historic first, an honour title has been bestowed on an Australian military unit, 40 years after the event and on a outfit that no longer exists. But that mattered nought to veterans of 102nd Field Battery who gathered at the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery national memorial atop Canberra's Mount Pleasant.

They were there to witness Governor-General Major General Michael Jeffery present the honour title scroll to the present-day 8/12 Medium Regiment.

The honour recognises the sterling performance of the unit during the Vietnam Battle of Coral, fought in May 1968. In that epic battle, the battery, comprising six field guns and their crews, engaged in savage close-quarter fighting as North Vietnamese units sought to overrun an Australian fire support base.

Traditionally, Australian military units such as infantry battalions and warships have been awarded Battle Honours for distinguished performance in direct combat.

However, the Australian Battle Honour system, modelled on Britain's, includes provision for the use of an Honour Title to recognise a outstanding performance by a unit or sub-unit.

In this case, the unit will now be known as 102 (Coral) Field Battery. "The awarding of the Honour Title Coral to 102nd Field Battery is the first Honour Title to be awarded to any Australian sub-unit," a Defence spokeswoman said.

Retired Colonel Ian Ahearn, 102nd Battery gun position officer at Coral, vividly recalled the green glow of incoming tracer rounds, the fiery trails of rocket-propelled grenades and the tearing sound of miniguns fired from gunships high overhead.

"There is no greater feeling of helplessness than being on the wrong end of any type of artillery. That experience filled me with admiration for those who suffered far greater bombardments during two world wars," he said. "Through all of this we were still able to answer the call for fire from the infantry."

One gun position was overrun and two gunners from the regiment headquarters were killed. Two members of 102 were wounded. Nearby, five members of the 1RAR mortar platoon lay dead.

Colonel Ahearn said this was the gunners' day.

"You should be filled with pride and melancholy. The melancholy is for those that can't be here, for those that we lost and for those that have passed away since. "But this is also a day of pride."

Governor-General Major General Michael Jeffery, who approved the honour, said it was entirely fitting that 102 Field Battery, which shared the same dangers as 1RAR, should also share in battle honour recognition.

"And so it is that on this 40th anniversary, we remember and honour the Australian servicemen who acquitted themselves so supremely well in these fierce encounters and in particular the gallant gunners of 102 Field battery," he said.

Major General Jeffery said Vietnam, like any other war, was not pleasant.

"It was dirty, frightening at times, boring in part for some, and for short period exhilarating but certainly not glorious," he said.

"What was glorious was that our gunners did what was asked of them by their country and their mates in dire need."

Operations

Colonials 'Do Time' at 29

By Lieutenant Chris Lingard
108th Field Battery

The Australian Contingent arrived at the seaport city of Plymouth on 11th April 2008 after a two-week conversion course conducted at Larkhill by the Gunnery Training Team. On arrival in Plymouth, the coaches wound their way up to our soon-to-be home, 29 Commando Regiment based at The Royal Citadel. The imposing battlement sits on the waterfront, just a stone's throw from the city centre and the picturesque Hoe. Approaching the large front gate of this spectacular fortress the Aussies' jaws dropped – they realised the next six months of their lives would be spent living in a castle – a far cry from anything we have back in Australia.

... the Aussies' jaws dropped – they realised the next six months of their lives would be spent living in a castle ...

There was little time for relaxation. After our first weekend sampling the Plymouth nightlife we were straight into the thick of things. During our first week at work we were warmly greeted by our hosts 8 Alma Commando Battery, who we were to be integrated in for the next 13 months. The second day took us to the wind and rain swept Dartmoor range, conducting transition to field firing in preparation for the Operational Training Assistance Group (OPTAG) range packages in the coming weeks. The Australian contingent was quick to realise our boots were not designed to compete against the likes of Dartmoor's bogs and creeks.

On 25th April, 8 Battery and others from the Regiment helped us pay tribute to fellow Australians who had served and fallen during our

Anzac Day memorial service. The day began at the break of day with the traditional rum and coffee and dawn service. This was to be followed with a not so traditional eight mile coastal fun run. However, once we returned the real proceedings of Anzac Day were to begin, including a barbecue, beers and the Australian game of 'Two Up.'

The days soon turned to weeks and were peppered with various range practices including the live fire OPTAG package at Lydd. Here we covered mobile section and platoon live fire attacks, vehicle anti-ambush live fire, top cover shoots, static section and platoon house defence, grenades and general infantry tactics. The packages were successful in achieving their aim of increasing confidence among the various weapon systems the soldiers are likely to be operating in theatre.

This was soon followed by the Australians' first regimental exercise, Exercise Pashtun Sabre, with our British counter parts on the notorious Otterburn training area. Fortunately for us, Otterburn did not live up to its reputation on this occasion – we were blessed with relatively good weather for the two weeks that we were there. The exercise began with a two-day command post exercise on the Otterburn airfield which moved into a two-day battery commanders phase. During this phase the battery split down into two independent troops and we developed our troop standard operating procedures and tactics, techniques and procedures. We concluded with a live fire battery commanders fire plan. For the remainder of the exercise the troops participated in the commanding officers phase. This phase consisted of live fire defensive shoots, modified indirect and direct firing, emergency firing, quick actions and live fire counter ambushes, which was aimed at preparing us for the upcoming Exercise Helmand Gunner.

On conclusion of the Exercise Pashtun Sabre we departed for Thetford where we prepared for the confirmatory Exercise Helmand Gunner, run by the OPTAG team. This was a hectic four-day exercise where the troops of 8 Battery were put through

their paces in a number of different Afghan specific scenarios – all assessed by the OPTAG staff who provided feedback from recent experience in theatre. Once we had gained the tick in the box from OPTAG we finished the exercise and moved back to the Royal Citadel.

This was a hectic four-day exercise where the troops of 8 Battery were put through their paces in a number of different Afghan specific scenarios ...

The following weeks were taken up with driver training and military advisory training team preparation. This was priority training identified by the Regiment leading up to our final pre-deployment training exercise on Salisbury Plain. The mission rehearsal exercise began with the Regiment providing support for the danger close inoculation. The following week was spent supporting the brigade's manoeuvre arms providing offensive support and conducting basic forward operating base protection and local patrols.

Anzac Day Afghan Style

*by Lieutenant Nicholas Cooper
8th/12th Medium Regiment
Contingent Commander*

The 15 Royal Australian Artillery Gunners serving in the province of Helmand, Afghanistan have marked Anzac Day in their combined British and Danish Forward Operating Base (FOB). The FOB, on the fringe of the green zone, houses Danish mechanised infantry, tanks and mortars, as well as British combat support troops, which includes the gun troop to which the Australians are embedded.

For the Australian Gunners, who had been sent to Colchester, England for six months of pre-deployment training in October 2007, it was a relief to finally arrive in theatre. With Anzac Day occurring in the troop's first month on the ground it proved a poignant moment to reflect on their service and of those who had gone before. Planning for the day was under close eye of Warrant Officer

Class Two Nathan Cole, who was determined that the day would be in the best traditions of the Australian Army.

Bombardier Lance Newell got a work party together and began building the centrepiece. Fortunately he came across a full size flag pole that he thought would come in useful for flying the Australian flag. Once this was erect, ammo boxes had to be wrapped in HESCO material to build the cenotaph around the base of the flagpole. Rehearsals got underway and the normal drill had to be adapted because the Australian Gunners had to use the British Army's SA80, however it looked good.

With a strict no alcohol in theatre policy, the gunfire breakfast was missing rum, however the dawn service which followed had all that an Aussie Soldier needs, an Australian flag at half mast, a rifle, bayonet-first, in the ground, a catafalque party ...

At 0430 h on 25th April the dawn service started in order to get the sunrise in. Padre Gallucci led the service and there were several readings by Lieutenant Colonel James Learmont, Captain Ryan Barrow, Lieutenant Nick Cooper, Warrant Officer Class Two Nathan Cole and Sergeant Bryce Watson. With a strict no alcohol in theatre policy, the gunfire breakfast was missing rum, however the dawn service which followed had all that an Aussie Soldier needs, an Australian flag at half mast, a rifle, bayonet-first, in the ground, a catafalque party commanded by Bombardier Lance Newell, carrying out their solemn duty with pride, and a service, with the familiar words concluded in unison – *Lest we forget*.

Being again under British command on 25th April was a source of light-hearted mirth for many of the Australians. The British were enthusiastic participants sending two helicopter loads of



dignitaries for the 1100 h service. They were lead by Commander of Task Force Helmand, Brigadier Charlton-Smith. The Danish battlegroup, whom the gun troop is currently in direct support of, also sent along their hierarchy wearing their enormous Viking like beards.

Being the first Aussie Gunners to deploy in role since 1971, there are big expectations on the troop to set new standards in their responses, including speed, accuracy and safety.

Being the first Aussie Gunners to deploy in role since 1971, there are big expectations on the troop to set new standards in their responses, including speed, accuracy and safety. The Australians so far have fired a mix of high explosive and illumination rounds, in support of Danish operations. As the 'fighting season' approaches this is likely to intensify.

After both services the day continued with a traditional Aussie BBQ followed by an Australia versus Britain volleyball match in which the Australians were able to emerge victorious. The day ended how every good Anzac Day should, with two-up and beer, albeit non-alcoholic (with a refreshing soap taste) under the light of Petzl headlamps. The betting was as fast and furious as ever with the coalition currency of choice being US dollars. The average bet was \$1 but went up to \$10 on some occasions. Gunner Chris Maroschek lead in the winnings and walked away with a tidy sum. The British enjoyed playing two-up so much that many of them vowed to introduce the game into their next Regimental party or BBQ. It was a great day, in a different land.



Offensive Support in Uruzgan

*By Captain Andy McDonnell ('A' Field Battery)
Joint Fires Team Commander
Reconstruction Task Force – Four*

Since the first iteration of the Reconstruction Task Force (RTF) arrived in Uruzgan the security situation has been steadily evolving. Whilst the Taliban are still well and truly present in the Tarin Kowt Bowl, their freedom of action has been significantly curtailed by the actions of the coalition forces within the province. The application of offensive support (OS) in support of RTF 4 and its predecessors has contributed to this improvement in security, while going through its own evolution at the same time.

Whilst the Taliban are still well and truly present in the Tarin Kowt Bowl, their freedom of action has been significantly curtailed by the actions of the coalition forces within the province.

The RTF 4 OS model, based around the command, liaison and observation group (CLOG) of 'A' Field Battery and a section from mortar platoon 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, has been augmented by a mobile fire controller (MFC) with a 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment background and an Air Force Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) from RAAF Base Williamtown. Within Uruzgan the CLOG has tapped into both the fixed and rotary wing assets, as well as the ground based fire support of the Dutch 155 mm SP PzH2000 (affectionately known as 'Maximus').

RTF 4 has continued to use and build upon the OS model introduced by the previous RTF. The concept of a five-man party consisting of Joint Offensive Support Team (JOST) forward observer (FO), assistant (FO Ack), MFC and two signallers operating as a complete entity at combat team level was replaced with a more flexible model that places two-man teams at platoon level. The Joint

Offensive Support Coordination Centre (JOSCC) consists of the battery commander, his assistant and signals bombardier. The eight JOST members were split into two-man teams with the commander (FO) and senior signaller located at the combat team headquarters, and the RAAF JTAC, MFC and FO Ack (each with a signaller at platoon level). This structure of the observers almost identically mirrors the new Joint Fires Team which is being adapted under the new OP trade structure. The mortar section operates under command of the senior deployed headquarters at the time, be it combat team or RTF headquarters. The success of this model is attributable to the thirst for continual improvement from all the OS members, and in particular the professionalism and personalities of the non-RAA members: Flight Lieutenant Steve Duffy (JTAC), Sergeant Colin Brock (MFC), and Corporal John McDonald (Mortar Section Commander). Their willingness to be a fully absorbed into the group led to all three men contributing significantly over the training and deployment periods. Whilst we may have had some arrogance about how much we already knew about the spectrum of OS assets prior to concentrating for the deployment, none of the gunners would say that we did not learn a hell of a lot from those specialists.

The eight JOST members were split into two-man teams ...

Pre-deployment training took place at Wide Bay Training Area north of Brisbane from the start of January until late March. In this time we conducted live fire mortar shoots for the combat team attack, observation post training and a significant amount of simulated close air support training in the urban environment around Wide Bay. The battery commander, Major Payne, left us briefly for the



RTF 4 OS Group

birth of his twins while we deployed north to Shoalwater Bay for more mortar live firing and F-111 engagements. On return to Wide Bay we completed the pre-deployment training with the mission rehearsal exercise.

Initial operations in country saw Bombardier Turner, Bombardier Craig, Gunner Rowe and the mortar section commence their handover patrols up to Patrol Base Worsley, approximately 15 km north of Camp Holland in Tarin Kowt. At the same time Major Payne with Sergeant Potter took command of the JOSCC. Sergeant Brock, Lance Bombardier Richardson, Flight Lieutenant Duffy, Gunner Rutledge and Lance Bombardier Cleary all arrived shortly afterwards to commence their handover patrols on the Operation Pegasus series.

... three FO pairs deploy forward to conduct a significant amount of patrolling with their supported infantry platoons.

The first significant operation with Combat Team Hammer (based on the engineer squadron) went for 10 days and was based around completing engineering tasks at both Patrol Base Worsley and 5 km up the road at Patrol Base Lyddiard. This saw three FO pairs deploy forward to conduct a significant amount of patrolling with their supported infantry platoons. In this operation we tested and confirmed our standard operating procedures to ensure that the structure was right for us. The operation saw our callsigns call in 'Maximus' to conduct 'H and I' Illumination missions in the dasht (or desert).

... Task Force came under rocket attack on numerous occasions.

The most significant operation in terms of scale and length was Operation Baray Pul. This operation required every member of the OS group to rotate through the site of Patrol Base Qudus, 20 km north in the Baluchi Valley where the RTF built the Patrol Base, an all weather crossing and a school. During this mission, the Task Force came under rocket attack on numerous occasions. A few targets presented themselves which we responded to in kind with 81mm missions. During the operation Captain Sandner (1st Field Regiment) and Bombardier Rafferty ('A' Field Battery) reinforced the group to cover the manning shortfalls associated with leave. On 5th August 2008, after being deployed with the first group out on the

operation, the OS group redeployed to Tarin Kowt with some guys deploying for in excess of seventy days on the operation.



RTF 4 Captain McDonnell Controlling AH64

Arguably the most exciting and rewarding operation was the bridge building task in Zabul. Just as everyone was expecting to conduct the much anticipated refit-to-fight period we were presented with a mission from 'left field'. Within three days from being given a warning order, Combat Team Dagger with all available OS assets deployed 350 km on routes known to be frequently interdicted by the Taliban to rebuild two bridges. Enroute we had a small contact which was over as soon as the Cavalry engaged with 25mm cannon fire. The Combat Team safely arrived at the bridge sites, conducted the task then successfully returned to Tarin Kowt.

... we had a small contact which was over as soon as the Cavalry engaged with 25mm cannon fire.

We are preparing for our last major operation which will again involve all elements of the group in one way or the other. We are focused on maintaining the force protection of our guys, ready to respond to any threat and looking forward to continuing our efforts to make the province a better place to live for the locals that can see a better future. Once we return our focus will switch to ensuring that the Mentoring Reconstruction Task Force One (MRTF 1) get the best possible handover to ensure that they are able to continue the good work of all of the RTFs. The RTF 4 OS group will redeploy home safe in the knowledge that they put in the effort to ensure that their mates were as well supported as could be and that the task force has successfully completed its mission.

Timor Leste & 'A' Battery

*By Lieutenant Michael Corkran, 'A' Field Battery
Battle Captain, Timor Leste Battle Group-Four*

In March 2008, 14 personnel from 'A' Field Battery deployed on Operation Astutue as part of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR) led Timor Leste Battle Group Four (TLBG-4). The role of the TLBG is to assist the Timorese Government to maintain a stable and secure environment. It is based on an infantry battalion with attached supporting assets. As always when 3 RAR needs critical support it can count on 'A' Field Battery as part of the Airborne Battle Group (ABG) to provide.



(Standing L-R) GNR Carmona, LT Corkran, GNR Freeman, BDR Dawson, LBDR O'Brien, (Sitting L-R) GNR Bunton, GNR Setter

Unlike the 2006 crisis or TLBG-2 deployments, there was no requirement to raise a 'Golf' Company comprising of re-roled gunners. Instead 'A' Field Battery personnel were employed largely in their capacity as excellent signallers. During the initial force concentration, gunners were quickly picked up as the signallers of choice by many seniors including the commanding officer. Their selection for these roles based on reputation alone is a testament to the high standards set by gunners everywhere.

Whilst the majority of the 'A' Field Battery contingent deployed after a mission rehearsal exercise in Townsville, a small element deployed on very short notice after the 11th February 2008 attacks on the Timorese president and prime

minister. This rapid reinforcement of 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (2 RAR) based TLBG-3, is a credit to the ABG maintaining the high state of readiness required of 3rd Brigade.

Mutual trust and professional respect between both infantry and artillery is essential ...

The RAA career progression lends itself to the employment of gunners in a range of flexible roles. 3 RAR was quick to capitalise on the knowledge of 'A' Field Battery members utilising them to provide considerable signals and all arms call for fire training.

Unlike the 2006 crisis or TLBG-2 ... there was no requirement to raise a 'Golf' Company comprising of re-roled gunners.

Mutual trust and professional respect between both infantry and artillery is essential in synchronising tactical manoeuvre with offensive support. The members of 'A' Field Battery deployed with 3 RAR have conducted themselves in a fine manner assisting to maintain a strong rapport with their airborne brethren. Whilst the Australian Defence Force mission in Timor Leste may not be as attractive as other operations, 'A' Field Battery's support to 3 RAR demonstrates an enthusiasm and commitment to the ABG regardless of what is contemporarily popular.



Timor Leste & Golf Company

*By Lieutenant Will Close
Gun Position Officer, 53 Battery*

The last two decades has seen one significant change to the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. During the period from 1996 to 2007 there was a necessity for the RAA to extend its focus on operations other than its primary role of providing offensive support. Cambodia, East Timor, The Solomon Islands, Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon have all been theatres of Gunner operations during this decade. None of which have seen a single Australian artillery round fired in country. Stabilisation, non-combatant evacuation, civil military cooperation, training teams as well as joint terminal attack controlling have been the recent operational focus of the RAA.

None of which have seen a single Australian artillery round fired in country.

2008 has seen an extremely important milestone; RAA personnel have been deployed in their primary role in large numbers as part of the British Royal Horse Artillery in Afghanistan. While this is exciting for all members of the RAA, it is important to look at the recent achievements of RAA units operating in sub-unit formations that have set the conditions for Gunner deployments.

In the early months of 2006, after a typically busy start to the year, 4th Field Regiment (4 Fd Regt) was preparing to deploy on the 3rd Brigade's Combined Arms Training (CATA) Exercise. 'A' Field Battery, as part of the Airborne Battle Group, had arrived in Townsville and began to prepare at Lavarack Barracks when the political situation in the neighbouring country of Timor Leste began to deteriorate.

The Ready Battalion Group was put on standby and ordered to prepare for what was likely to be non-combatant evacuation operations followed by short-term stabilisation operations. The 'A' Field Battery ('A' Bty) JOSCC quickly formed a deployable civil military co-operation group at the request of brigade headquarters (Bde HQ). The remaining members of 'A' Bty and 108th Field Battery (108 Bty)

were unsure of what was likely to occur however, preparations were immediately put in place by the commanding officer, then Lieutenant Colonel Michael Kingsford, to form a rifle company in the case of a large scale battalion deployment.

... the previous operational experiences in Timor of several ... personnel were used to best effect in order to create realistic and valuable training.

Several days passed as the Australian Government closely monitored the developing situation in Timor Leste. The sacking of 600 Timorese Defence Force (F-FDTL) soldiers had sparked large scale rioting and division within the country's government. While this was progressing, the newly formed Golf Company (G Coy) managed to quickly deploy on a three day mission rehearsal exercise as well as undertake basic training in riot control, local language skills, vital asset protection and vehicle check points. The company was under the command of the Regimental 2IC, MAJ Mick Dawson with the Coy 2IC and CSM being CAPT Matt Smith and WO2 Matt Sullivan respectively.

While only a short period of time was allocated for mission rehearsal, the previous operational experiences in Timor of several 4 Fd Regt personnel were used to best effect in order to create realistic and valuable training for G Coy.

On 25 May 2006 approximately nine unarmed Timorese Police Force (PNTL) members were killed and 27 wounded while moving to the UN compound in Dili in what was an apparent large scale military ambush by the F-FDTL. This sparked the immediate request for the deployment of Australian soldiers to the troubled nation as violence erupted within Dili, the Timor Leste capital.

Alpha Company (A Coy) 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) was already embarked on HMAS Kanimbla and steaming toward Timor however it was determined that the Dili airport would be secured by Australian Special Forces before the battle group (BG) entered Dili via C-130. G Coy was the third company to arrive in country after Bravo Company (B Coy) 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR) and Charlie Company (C Coy) 2nd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (2 RAR).

The flight from Darwin to Dili was extremely uncomfortable for the soldiers as the Coy had been

ordered to fly in a combat ready loading configuration with all members having to wear their marching order and personal protective equipment for the duration of the flight. The soldiers had been instructed that this was so they could disembark ready to fight if required. This was a poor decision. The soldiers could not fit properly on the C-130's cargo net seats with their packs on their backs thus making their shoulders turn numb. This meant the intent of being ready to fight was actually the opposite as most soldiers could barely lift their arms upon arrival in Dili.

This was a poor decision. The soldiers could not fit properly on the C-130's cargo net seats with their packs on their backs thus making their shoulders turn numb.

G Coy landed just prior to dark on the 26 May 2006 with 1 Platoon (Pl) and the Coy 2IC arriving approximately an hour earlier. The Coy assembled in a grassy patch to the south of the tarmac and awaited direction. The general procedure for the planning for G Coy was that MAJ Dawson would attend orders with the BG commander, LTCOL Mick Mumford, and CAPT Smith would attend briefings with the OPSO and battle captain. MAJ Dawson, a lateral transfer from the British Army, was happy to accept that his knowledge of Australian TTPs in stabilisation operations was not sufficient, therefore CAPT Smith delivered all orders and delegated tasks to the platoon commanders while MAJ Dawson provided the higher level liaison.

The majority of attacks were not related to the political trouble ... but were acts of revenge due to family disputes, land disputes and gang related crime.

The Coy's initial task on arrival was to provide security to the southern boundary of the air point of disembarkation. The second task was to secure the beach landing site for the arrival of elements of B Squadron 3rd/4th Cavalry Regiment as well as the Combat Service Support Team from HMAS Kanimbla moored a few kilometres off the north coast of Dili.

The Coy then had a platoon detached and moved under the command of A Coy 1 RAR with the remaining two platoons occupying TAORs to the

south of the Airport stretching west to the F-FDTL barracks, east to the Comoro River, south to the mountains and north to the coastline. The area was known as Kampung Baru and it was a large area of operations for two platoons.

The majority of gun-shot wounds were identified to have been caused by 9mm hand guns ...

1 Pl located its headquarters in the vicinity of the airport with 2 Pl establishing a position in a cemetery on top of the 63 feature which had observation over the majority of the AO and the F-FDTL barracks where the majority of the Timorese Defence Force key elements were located.

The tasks allocated to the platoons were predominantly reactive to reports of incidents such as looting or arson. Other tasks such as vehicle check points were established in areas to prevent the movement of weapons between the F-FDTL barracks and the city as well as trying to locate persons of interest. The most challenging tasks, while also the most exciting, were conducting cordon and search operations in the urban environment.

After approximately two weeks the Coy changed AOs and consolidated in central Dili with the headquarters being located in the UN compound known as Obrigado Barracks. 1 Pl were to remain at Obrigado barracks and establish a patrolling program and maintain the Coy quick reaction force (QRF), 2 Pl was tasked to secure the PNTL Headquarters and Timor Telecom while 3 Pl maintained their current task of providing security at the Timorese Parliament House.

This had a dampening effect on morale as the AFP personnel were working regular hours as well as being able to drink when off duty while ISF had to pick up the slack where the AFP left off.

The tasks were similar in nature to those in the previous AO however the buildings were more business related rather than being homes. This meant that there was less activity there during the night making it easier for patrols to target likely trouble makers.

Arson was the most common occurring crime with several buildings destroyed in Dili each night. The

majority of attacks were not related to the political trouble that caused the deployment of Australian soldiers but were acts of revenge due to family disputes, land disputes and gang related crime.

The majority of gun-shot wounds were identified to have been caused by 9 mm hand guns, similar to those used by the PNTL. Following the attack on the PNTL headquarters on 25 May 2006, many PNTL officers fled taking their fire arms with them. All PNTL officers take their firearms home upon completion of their daily duties which created large security problems during the crisis.

There was no love lost between A Coy 1 RAR and G Coy after one of the G Coy platoon commanders had written a damaging email back to Australia accusing A Coy of a poor performance with the email subsequently being leaked to the media.

A moratorium was to occur allowing former PNTL officers to hand in their firearms. Over a period of approximately two weeks G Coy collected approximately one hundred weapons during patrols and check points throughout the city. The weaponry consisted mostly of Glock 17 hand-guns however a mixture of other small arms weapons and gas guns were also collected. From a negative financial and security perspective, the PNTL had more advanced weaponry than the Victorian Police serving in Timor with the Federal Police.

While the collection of so many weapons dramatically decreased firearm related violence in Dili, the gang war continued. These gangs, known as Martial Arts Groups (MAGs) were extremely large and well organised groups who operated in Dili and the surrounding districts. The three dominant groups at the time were 7-Seven, Sacred Heart (PSHT) and Mambo 5. 7-Seven and PSHT were also politically aligned making it difficult for the International Stabilisation Force (ISF) to target these gangs without interference from Timorese Government personnel. G Coy patrols began to have AFP personnel attached in order for them to gain situational awareness as well as become familiar with the layout and major players within each Coy AO. This was the first phase in the transition to a police orientated focus in incident management and response. The second phase of the transition was AFP would undertake tasks or patrols as required and G Coy patrols would

provide their security with the final phase being AFP Patrols between 0600 h and 2200 h with ISF assuming responsibility for their AOs from 2200 h to 0600 h. This had a dampening effect on morale as the AFP personnel were working regular hours as well as being able to drink when off duty while ISF had to pick up the slack where the AFP left off. One evening the AFP had a trivia night in their compound at Timor Lodge Hotel, during this period there were only two AFP patrols out in Dili, each consisting of two people and vehicle mounted. All G Coy members were concerned that the good results they had achieved were being undone by the AFP. The ISF always maintained a strong QRF capability during AFP patrol periods.

Upon completing approximately two and a half months in Dili, G Coy was tasked to conduct a handover with A Coy 1 RAR in Baucau, a former Portuguese settlement approximately 3 hours drive to the east of Dili. There was no love lost between A Coy 1 RAR and G Coy after one of the G Coy platoon commanders had written a damaging email back to Australia accusing A Coy of a poor performance with the email subsequently being leaked to the media.

Baucau was one of the original Portuguese settlements in Timor which was first inhabited by the Portuguese in 1556, namely by a group of Dominican friars, and officially declared a Portuguese colony in 1702. The city of Baucau is divided into two definable areas known as Old Baucau and New Baucau. Old Baucau was the original Portuguese city and closer to the coast whereas New Baucau was developed by the Indonesians following their invasion in 1975. G Coy occupied the already established FOB in the stadium in New Baucau with CHQ and 1 Pl remaining in that location. 2 Pl was allocated a troop of M113 APCs and tasked with conducting patrols in the surrounding districts in approximately a 20 kilometre radius outside the main city. 3 Pl occupied an FOB in the Baucau Old Marketplace in Old Baucau. There had been very little trouble in the Baucau district since the crisis began in May and the majority of the area was peaceful and accepting of Australian soldiers, which was a welcome respite for G Coy.

After spending approximately 3 weeks in Baucau the Coy headed back to Dili after conducting a final range shoot to expend ammunition on the way out. The Coy then received its orders to return to Australia and arrived back in Townsville toward the end of August.

There were several major difficulties faced by G Coy during their deployment to Timor Leste. The lack of notice prior to the deployment, while completely unavoidable, did not allow the Coy to be at its maximum potential prior to deploying with soldiers having to learn various TTPs during the trip, such as cordon and search operations. The maps the Coy had to work off for the first 3 weeks of the deployment were below standard and out of date. Considering the ADF had maintained a constant presence in East Timor since 1999 the imagery should have been of better quality. The communications the platoons had to rely on internally was the RTF 700 Pintail which was completely inadequate over the large AOs sections and bricks were tasked to patrol. Lastly, while the AFP was a necessary organisation in Timor Leste, they were given too much control and leverage over the ADF well before they were ready to manage the AO properly. This allowed trouble to continue in Dili for much longer than it initially should have.

Considering the ADF had maintained a constant presence in East Timor since 1999 the imagery should have been of better quality.

The experience gained by the members of 4 Fd Regt during Operation Astute were valuable to the development of all personnel involved. Deploying as a rifle company allowed commanders the latitude to develop and implement tactics that they had been trained in and, in particular, allowed JNCOs to plan and conduct section level operations in unfamiliar environments. The success of the operation set the conditions for a follow up rotation of a Bty from 16 AD Regt followed by the rotation of 107 Fd Bty. Initial civil military cooperation (CIMIC) was provided by the 'A' Fd Bty JOSCC with follow up rotations from 105 Mdm Bty JOSCC and then elements from 4 Fd Regt. While stabilisation operations in Timor Leste are not the most exciting or dangerous operations for a Bty to undertake, they provide valuable experience and employment to Gunners as well as alleviate some of the operational demand placed on infantry battalions. The simple fact that the transition from a gun Bty to a rifle Coy can happen so quickly indicates the versatility and flexibility of the RAA.

Guns gallop at Bunday

By Cpl Jane Ashby-Cliffe

SOLDIERS of 8/12 Mdm Regt have directed rounds to within 175m of friendly positions in training that has equipped them for Afghanistan later this year. The danger close practice was conducted during Exercise Predators Gallop at Mount Bunday Training Area in June to certify the Joint Offensive Support Teams (JOST) as ready to deploy with Mentoring Reconstruction Task Force 1 (MRTF 1). The JOST, four to five artillery soldiers, are a capability brick attached to a combat team responsible for calling in indirect fire, or other offensive support assets, close to own troops. Bdr John Toby, a 101 Mdm Bty forward observer, described the danger close practice as "awesome". "I would be lying to say that I wasn't nervous but we had trained hard for this practice and it paid off," he said. "Knowing that I was in control of firepower so close to friendly troops was amazing and it showed us that if we're faced with close combat overseas we can do our job."

7RAR soldiers watched the rounds landing from the safety of a Bushmaster dug in to prevent damage to the vehicle. Pte Fabian Hilker, 1 Force Protection Coy Gp, 7RAR, said that the practice "was exciting". "We



felt pretty safe because the Bushmaster is well protected so the shrapnel was just bouncing off," he said. "I didn't think that the rounds would have such an impact over such a large area so it was good to see, so we know what to expect." Capt Simon Hunter, 8/12 Mdm Regt Adjit, said it was

important for the training to include soldiers of 7RAR, who will also deploy on MRTF1, so they understand what artillery can do and the affects of indirect fire. "It is the first time we have used the Bushmaster, which allowed all of the soldiers to view the affects, unlike a closed down APC or

ASLAW," he said. The danger close practice is one of the highest risk missions that artillery will perform and is employed when enemy fall within 800m of friendly troops.

'Army' - The Soldiers Newspaper, July 10, 2008

Take Post

Mortars for Reserve Gunners ...?

*By Lieutenant Colonel R. Crawford
Commanding Officer 2nd/10th Field Regiment*

At the time this article was written Army is considering equipping its Army Reserve Artillery units with 81 mm mortars. It must be stressed that Army's final decision to conduct the 'mortar conversion' is still pending, so some information about the subject is still 'in-confidence' and obviously not included.

With regard to the 'tribal' views, mortars are not new to the Royal Australian Artillery.

The idea to equip Reserve Gunners with mortars is already widely known, although the reasons for such an idea are not well understood. Many questions have been asked by the serving and ex-serving communities about the 'mortar conversion', particularly those of the Artillery and Infantry. Therefore, this article will outline the contemporary reasons why Army is considering mortars for its Reserve Artillery units.

The concept of converting Reserve Artillery units from guns to mortars has been met with scepticism by some, who hold the view that the mortar is an Infantry weapon and/or that the Artillery should only man guns.

While the scepticism is understandable it is often born out of 'tribal' views; or the reasons that have given rise to the "mortar conversion" concept are not well understood.

With regard to the 'tribal' views, mortars are not new to the Royal Australian Artillery (RAA). Even a brief glimpse at the RAA's history shows different periods when mortars were included in its arsenal, most recently the 4.2 inch mortar.

So, why would Army now consider equipping its Reserve Artillery units with mortars again? The following facts are known:

- 105 mm guns are to be withdrawn from Australian service and replaced by a fleet of new 155 mm guns.
- The technical training associated with the new 155 mm fleet, in particular training time, will make delivering it to Reserve soldiers very difficult.
- Reserve Artillery units will still be expected to maintain capabilities in offensive support (OS) coordination and observation. That is the types of capabilities delivered by Joint Offensive Support Teams (JOSTs or forward observers' parties using older terminology).
- The requirement by Reserve infantry battalions to deliver riflemen for operations has meant maintaining mortar platoons has become extremely difficult.
- 81 mm mortars are to be retained as a capability within Army.

... situation that faces the Army Reserve in the near future is that its 105 mm guns will be withdrawn from service and it is assessed that 155 mm is not a practical solution.

Therefore, the situation that faces the Army Reserve in the near future is that its 105 mm guns will be withdrawn from service and it is assessed that 155 mm is not a practical solution. Army will keep 81 mm as an indirect fire calibre; however, Reserve Infantry units will have difficulty in the extreme maintaining the capability due to the pressures of training riflemen.

As a way forward, Army has studied the viability of maintaining indirect fire support (IFS) and OS coordination capabilities for the Army Reserve by employing 81 mm mortars in its Artillery units. The conversion to mortars would maintain an organic IFS capability in the Army Reserve, beyond the withdrawal date of 105 mm. The conversion would also facilitate a regional live firing capability for training forward observers and their JOSTs, particularly those of the High Readiness Reserve.

While the challenge can be resolved, it will require substantial staff and physical effort over time.

So, what has happened already?

The 2nd Division sponsored a RAA Mortar Trial. 2nd/10th Field Regiment, a Reserve Artillery unit in southern Victoria, conducted a trial conversion to 81 mm mortars between September 2007 and March 2008. Since March, post the trial, 2nd/10th Field Regiment has continued to consolidate its mortar skills and knowledge; ready to assist with training if a more permanent conversion is given the go ahead.

The trial proved that Reserve Artillery units would be capable of taking on mortars as a weapon system. Additionally, the current role would remain unchanged, that is, providing IFS and OS

coordination to Army Reserve units and formations.

However, converting Reserve Gunners to mortars would bring with it a number of challenges.

The major challenge identified during the trial is the need to build a training system, supported by appropriate remuneration, for all ranks that would specialise in mortars. While the challenge can be resolved, it will require substantial staff and physical effort over time. It will also subject the Artillery's Reserve units to a considerable period of change that will need careful management. Additionally, the effort needed to establish a mortar trade and training continuum will need to be prioritised against other Army training development projects.

This article opened with the caveat that converting Reserve Artillery units to mortars is still subject to a final decision by Army. The concept of maintaining IFS and OS coordination capabilities in the Army Reserve by equipping Artillery units with mortars represents a possible course of action. The 2nd Division RAA Mortar Trial helped prove the concept, but also highlighted the challenges to be overcome if a conversion to mortars by Reserve Gunners is to be successful.



Mortar Detachments from 2nd/10th Field Regiment RAA Firing at Puckapunyal Range in May 2008

Capturing our Heritage

*Provided by Kevin Browning
Chairman of the RAA Historical Company*

The National Artillery Museum at North Fort is only a shop front to a much larger undertaking of the Regiment. It all started back in 1981 when the Director of Artillery identified the lack of attention being given to history of Artillery in Australia. Many items of relevance to gunners were slowly but surely deteriorating with little interest being shown.

Rather than giving the task to serving members of the Regiment as an extra regimental appointment – a second job without extra hours – the Director called upon retired gunners to help. He deduced it was better to give the task to those who not only had the time but also had the interest. At that time the collection of the Regiment consisted of historical items held mainly within the Messes of the various units and a small display at the School of Artillery which was housed within the Conference Room, a small room above the archway at the entrance to the School. A room that very few ever entered. A number of old guns were also positioned around the various unit lines, many of them starting to show the effects of life in the outdoors.

Rather than giving the task to serving members of the Regiment as an extra regimental appointment – a second job without extra hours – the Director called upon retired gunners to help. He deduced it was better to give the task to those who not only had the time but also had the interest.

The retired gunners formed the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society (RAAHS). The old Drill Hall at Manly Vale was provided for use as a base to house the collection. Items, both large and small, were moved to the site and work began on gathering additional items as well as raising awareness in the wider community on the significance of the items they had in their care. The Society was the centre pin of the work but all States

were involved and results began to show almost immediately. Old fortifications were identified and heritage listing commenced. As a result of this aspect of the work a number of these sites are now assured of survival and attract many visitors.

Most of the historic guns at the time were 'guns in the park' and many were in various states of decay.

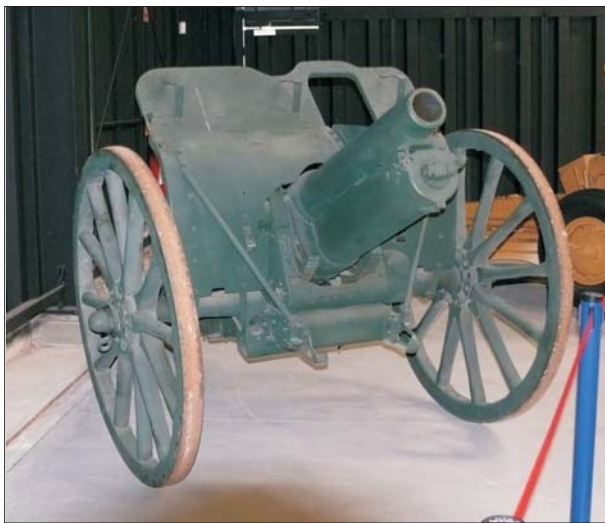
Meanwhile the collection began to grow. Despite fears from some organizations that they would lose their own collections it soon became clear that this was not the intention of the exercise. In fact the opposite was to occur whereby these other organizations stood to receive additional items. Most of the historic guns at the time were 'guns in the park' and many were in various states of decay. The old wooden wheels were collapsing under the weight of the gun. Becoming dangerous to those around them they were quickly being discarded to the local dump.

A program was begun to try and recover significant items and restore them. Some of the success stories are worthy of note here. During world war one the two most significant guns used by the Australian Forces were the 18 pounder field gun and the 4.5 inch howitzer. Both items had continued in service until the end of the second world war. By 1981 the only existing 18 pounders were pneumatised (wooden wheel removed and converted to take rubber tyres) and were all being used as funeral carriages. One was obtained for the RAA collection and having been converted back to wooden wheel configuration is now on display at the museum. The 4.5 inch howitzers were a different story.

Becoming dangerous to those around them they were quickly being discarded to the local dump.

No 4.5 inch howitzers were known to exist and a search was undertaken to try and find one of these significant items. One was found in a creek bed on a farm in Victoria. It was recovered and restored by the Army Apprentices School at Balcombe. This howitzer was a pneumatised version, they had been converted in 1939, and is now on long term loan to the RAAHS (WA). The barrel and shield of a second howitzer were donated to the Society from

a collector at Bathurst. A carriage was found at Proof & Experimental Establishment Graytown. It was being used in the testing of mortar ammunition. Permission was obtained to acquire the carriage and Puckapunyal Workshops undertook the restoration. Parts were supplied from the RAAHS collection and the howitzer converted back to its original wooden wheel configuration. Brake arms are yet to be manufactured for this howitzer but other parts have been acquired over many years, including the firing lever from New Zealand. These two 4.5 inch howitzers are the only two known to exist in Australia.



4.5 inch Howitzer. The 4.5 inch howitzer was one of the two main equipments used by gunners of the 1st AIF during World War I and continued in service until the end of World War II. This howitzer is about to undergo a makeover to enhance its appearance.

Another gun of significance is the 3 inch 20 cwt anti-aircraft gun on mobile carriage. These were the first guns manufactured in Australia and set the way for expansion into the production of other guns when world war two commenced. A gun with its roots in world war one it was the main anti-aircraft gun of British forces up to the commencement of world war two when the 3.7 inch gun took its place. The 3 inch was the first gun to fire at the Japanese from Australian soil when they engaged Japanese aircraft over Rabaul. A high angle (Naval) version of the gun was transferred to the collection from the School of Artillery in 1990. A mobile carriage was located at Graytown where it had been used to transport a generator. When its usefulness ended it was abandoned in the paddocks where the local sheep used it as a shelter.



3 inch 20 cwt. The 3 inch 20 cwt AA gun was developed during World War I and was the main anti-aircraft gun of the British Empire up to the commencement of World War II. It is the first gun made in numbers in Australia and prepared the way for the mass production of guns in Australia.

The Ordnance Factory at Maryibynong in Victoria, where the guns had originally been manufactured agreed to restore the gun. The task was given to their apprentices. Around this time the decision was made to close the factory and one of the last tasks they completed was the restoration. The gun was far from complete. The absence of the sight system was the main concern and then having found one it took over ten years to finally persuade the owner to part with it. Around the same time an anti-aircraft version of the gun was obtained from Proof & Experimental Establish Port Wakefield. Work then commenced at North Fort to restore the gun to a complete unit. It is now on display and is a testament to perseverance and the excellent work of volunteers at the museum. Two other 3 inch anti-aircraft guns exist in Darwin but North Fort's example is the only one of its type on mobile carriage in Australia.

These are only examples of some of the now vast collection of the Museum. Not only do the major items include field and anti-aircraft guns. Searchlights, anti-tank guns, coastal artillery, locating and command and control equipment are included. The collection also contains a vast number of uniforms and the best library collection within the whole of the Army Historical collection. The library contains a number of very significant items, including the original photograph album of the NSW School of Gunnery (1885 – 1911), fortification maps, personal papers and manuals.

In 1990 the Drill Hall at Manly Vale was sold and the Museum Collection had to be relocated. North Fort was identified as the new site and Locating Wing moved to accommodation inside the School area. Two small buildings were erected on the new site and the Museum officially open by its patron Sir Roden Cutler, VC. The requirement for additional display space became evident and two aircraft hangars were obtained from Army. Cost of their erection was the responsibility of the Museum under supervision of Army Engineers. Today the requirement for additional and proper display facilities remain.



90 cm Searchlight. Original members of 67 AA Searchlight Battery who served during World War II, provide their expertise in the restoration of this 90 cm searchlight. It is now an operational light and used on special occasions.

When the School of Artillery moved to Puckapunyal in 1997 the decision was made to leave the Museum at North Fort. The decision was based on commercial as well as historic reasons. Sydney Harbour was the site of the first fortifications in Australian and had the longest history of association with artillery. North Fort also contains the buildings and underground emplacements of the 9.2 inch Coastal Battery and thus is a tangible link with the coastal branch of artillery. Other reasons for leaving the Museum at North Fort were the very strong base of volunteers and the potential to attract large numbers of visitors to the site, both by the magnificent harbour views and the population base of metropolitan Sydney.

Management of Army Museums passed to Army History Unit (AHU) in 1998 and with this responsibility for the National Artillery Museum.

The Museum is staffed with one regular warrant officer class two and four reservists including the museum manager (major). A requirement of the new management arrangements saw the RAAHS transfer its operation to the RAA Historical Company to assist AHU with volunteer support and funding. The Head of Regiment however remains a major stakeholder.

There has been discussion over the years about whether the museum should be collocated with the School of Artillery at Puckapunyal or remain in situ. The decision is one for Defence but present indications show the Museum will remain at North Fort. Should this change then the requirement to support the Museum should not be under-estimated. The original reason for the collection to be placed in the care of volunteers as opposed to giving it to people who had a full commitment to their work load remains unchanged. The Museum could not run without the support of volunteers. Requirements to maintain, restore, collect and record the collection is no small task. Nor is it a responsibility that can be ignored. Heritage requirements today are far stricter than they were in 1981 and awareness of our heritage is better appreciated.

Regardless of the long term outcomes the Regiment should be grateful to the AHU staff and volunteers at North Fort. A collection which once fitted into a small alcove has become a collection of which we can all be justifiably proud and which has saved and display items of great significance to the history of artillery in Australia and Australian Military history. Not only are many items rare but some are unique.

The support of the Regiment to 'our Museum' is fully recognized and appreciated by all involved at North Fort. Whilst we stand proud of the commitment you, presently serving the Regiment, have demonstrated in these times of great activity in world events we hope our support in preserving the Regiments history and recording your continuing commitment is also supported.



Shark bares teeth

By WO2 Graham McBean

RESERVISTS from 1 Fd Regt qualified to operate the M198 155mm howitzer during Exercise Shark's Thrust.

The live firing took place in the Wide Bay Training Area, where more than 220 rounds were fired.

The live-fire artillery gunners from 13 Fd Bty's Gallipoli Barracks depot ended three months of training to operate the M198.

Bdr Matthew Check said the team-work was a charge and it was "an experience that can't be achieved in civilian life".

He is currently studying civil engineering at QUT and the Army Reserve provides an opportunity to get out from behind the desk.

"The gun is exciting to fire, there is a lot of noise and people running about – it is a real experience," he said.

"It is a complex piece of equipment and there are a lot of jobs – 10 people have to work together to get the job done as a single team."

CO 1 Fd Regt Lt-Col Stuart Kenny said Exercise Shark's Thrust completed three months of training for the reservists and qualified them as the only part-time soldiers

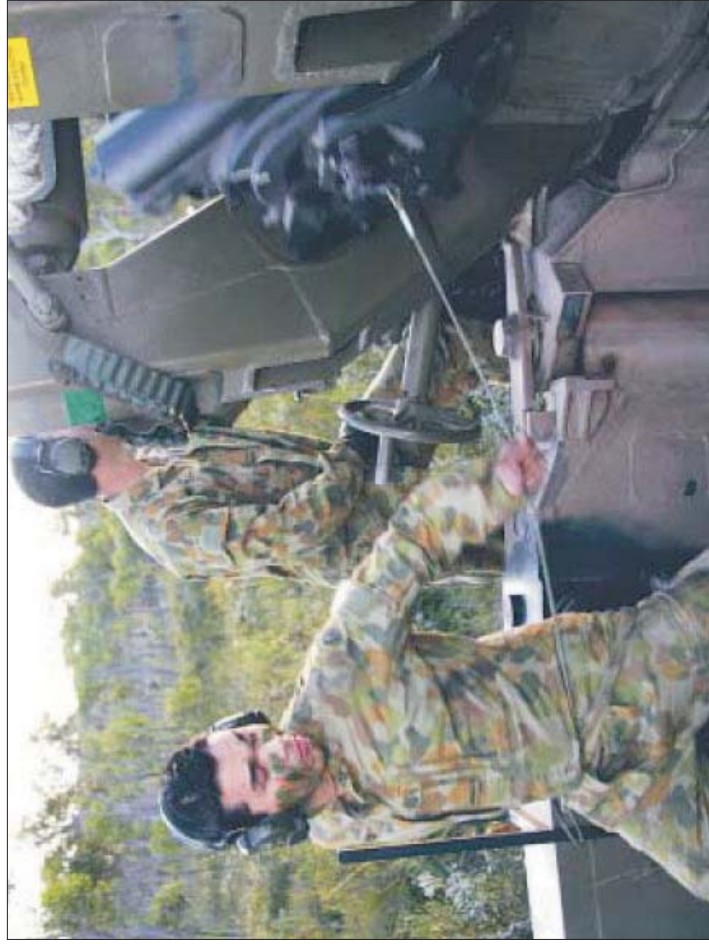
in the Australian Army to operate the weapon.

"It is a watershed moment for the Army Reserve Artillery in demonstrating that reservists provide a real capability to the Army," he said.

The Enoggera-based reservists had a blast as they joined an elite team of soldiers qualified to operate the largest calibre weapon in the Australian Army's land arsenal.

The M198 can fire a 40kg shell to ranges of up to 30km. As well as the extended range and greater weight of fire provided it can also engage targets with pinpoint accuracy using precision-guided munitions.

Lt-Col Kenny said he was grateful for the support of the Tin Can Bay community. "Training within areas like Wide Bay can only be successful with the support of the local community," he said.



Letting it rip: Bdr Matthew Check yanks the lanyard to fire a 155mm shell on Exercise Shark's Thrust

Photos by WO2 Graham McBean

'Army' - The Soldiers Newspaper, June 12, 2008

Around the Regiments

The Premier Regiment

By Lieutenant B.R. Duffy

2008 has seen the transformation of 1st Field Regiment into a Regiment operationally focused. It has seen 105th Medium Battery once again deploy the L119 Field Gun in preparation to deploy with the British L118; while 13th and 41st Battery swap over to the M198 Medium Gun. It has also seen an increase in the interoperability with other units from the 7th Brigade.

... involved a live fire defence of the fire support base, with two overhead guns engaging direct fire targets ...

In March members from 105th Medium Battery deployed in support of 8th/12th Medium Regiment on Exercise Southern Reach at Cultana. 105th Medium Battery contributed two gun detachments commanded by Sergeant Maurice Hall and Bombardier Travis Whittaker. The members participated in a series of training activities leading up to the culminating event of a live fire defence of the gun position and modified safety. The activity involved a live fire defence of the fire support base, with two overhead guns engaging direct fire targets, 84mm and M113's in support. This provided the groundwork for the gun line of the 105th Medium Battery in what would be a busy year for all.

In mid June, the Regiment welcomed back its members who were deployed to Iraq as part of the

Australian Army Training Team Iraq - Nine (AATTI-9) and Overwatch Battle Group (West) – Four [OWGB(W)-4].

1st Field Regiment deployed Captain Scott Denner, Captain Rodger Dudziak and Sergeant Lee Vermeer as part of AATTI-9. They were to coordinate and conduct the training of recruits, officers and the counter-insurgency training of the Iraqi Army. This was located at Tallil, Baghdad and Taji.



Gunner Matthew Reid No. 2 on the Gun

Highlights from their deployment included seeing the 30,000th member of the Iraqi Army graduate, and as the final AATTI also the handover of the counter-insurgency course to Iraqi instructors.

As part of OBG (W), the Regiment deployed two forward observer (FO) party's; these were attached to the Cavalry Combat Team (CT-Waler) and the Infantry Combat Team (CT-Heeler). OBG (W) was based in the Southern Iraq town of Tallil just south of the large city of An Nasiriyah. OBG (W) was primarily focused on the two Southern Iraq provinces of Al Mutthanna and Dhi Qar and the intimate security of Ali Air Base. The FO party's

coordinated offensive support (OS) and surveillance and target acquisition (STA) support to the combat teams and for the battle group.

G31, commanded by Captain Duncan Anderson, and his assistant Sergeant Matthew "Breaker" Morante, were attached to CT-Waler. The first half of their tour consisted of patrols into the Al Mutthanna province and the facilitation of civilian and military co-operation (CIMIC) projects and liaison with key community figures. They were also involved with security of Ali Air Base through constant patrolling. The indirect fire and improvised explosive device (IED) threat started to escalate in the latter half of the tour and the focus for CT-Waler became counter-IED patrolling until Australian forces were withdrawn in June.

Highlights for G31 included seven day patrols to Al Mutthanna where they went as far as a town bordering Saudi Arabia and the conduct of a medical assistance program (MEDCAP). G31 coordinated a variety of offensive support platforms including F-16's, US 120mm mortars, a British AS-90 and two US M109s in support of CT-Waler operations. G31 also coordinated Australian Scan Eagle and Skylark UAVs as well as coalition assets including MQ-1 Predator and P-3.

... conducted numerous patrols north of the Euphrates River into regions that Australian forces had only been once or twice previously.

G32, commanded by Captain Rhys Myors, and his assistant Sergeant Aaron Hong were attached to the CT-Heeler. CT-Heeler was primarily responsible for Dhi Qar province and conducted numerous patrols north of the Euphrates River into regions that Australian forces had only been once or twice previously. The focus of these patrols was also the facilitation of CIMIC projects and meeting with key community figures. CT-Heeler also conducted patrolling in support of the security of Ali Air Base. Once the focus became counter-indirect fire (C-IDF) patrolling, G32, had members constantly on patrol with the platoons and troops from the CT. These members were responsible for co-ordinating OS and STA platforms to 'saturate' the area and deny the enemy ability to IDF on Ali Air Base.

Highlights for G32 included HNI missions with the AS-90 and M109s during the conduct of C-IDF patrols and visits to the Provincial Joint Operations Centre (PJOC) in the middle of An Nasiriyah which

involved the coordination of US and Australian STA and OS platforms.

The Regiment commenced its exercise campaign in May with the deployment to Shoalwater Bay Training Area for Exercise Tigers Prowl. This saw both the tac groups and gunline deploy into the training area, whilst the Headquarter Battery elements constructed and provided security for Forward Operating Base Elanora. With the gunline preparing to deploy to the United Kingdom later on in the year, their main focus was the implementation and practise of tactics techniques and procedures and standard operating procedures. The tac groups on the other hand had the opportunity for the first time to work together. The exercise provided a great foundation.



105th Battery Gunline Ready to Deploy to England

Upon the completion of Tigers Charge, the Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Stu Kenny gave his approval for Captain Trevor Watson, the two gun detachments commanded by gun position officer 105th Battery, Lieutenant Khalid El Khaligi and Battery Sergeant Major 105th Battery Warrant Officer Class Two Shaun Graham to deploy to the United Kingdom to join 40 Royal Regiment in preparation to deploy to Helmand Province as part of Operation Herrick.

With short notice deployments, and support to Army Recruit Training Centre, the Regiment has been able to maintain its primary function to coordinate and execute indirect fires to a high standard. With a number of exercises remaining in the year, including Premier Gunner and Long Guns, the Regiment will continue its preparation for future operations.

Dominance Through Firepower

2008 has been an interesting year for 2nd/10th Field Regiment. The year has included the usual mix of training, recruiting, ceremonial and social activities. However, at the forefront of all activities have been the 2nd Division RAA Mortar Trial and what appears to be a conversion to mortars for the Regiment. This article will not dwell on the 'mortar conversion' as that is covered in a separate article.



The enduring public image of 2nd/10th Field Regiment

In an Army that is increasingly busy the Army Reserve is being asked to do its bit. 2008 has seen 2nd/10th Field Regiment trying to determine what now constitutes 'business as usual' for a Reserve RAA unit. Over the year we've:

- Been coming to grips with the High Readiness Reserve (HRR), where our commitment is JOSTs (FOs) not guns. So our operational focus is now more on 'the watchers' and less on 'the shooters', which represents a cultural shift.
- Continued to improve our recruiting process, with a re-growth in the need to find our own soldiers.
- Fought the ongoing battle of getting recruits and new officers trained, particularly on RAA courses.
- Converted to mortars, with the added challenge of a couple of ammunition suspensions.

- Dealt with the morale and procedural consequences of having a soldier accidentally shot during training. Mercifully the soldier has recovered quickly, but 2nd/10th Field Regiment learnt a very nasty lesson about weapon safety.
- Carried vacancies in key ARA and ARes personnel; like other units.
- Done all of the above inside an environment where most of our logistics and administration are now delivered centrally within the Brigade. The Regiment is left with a single Orderly Room and Q Store the size most of you would equate with a Battery.

In an Army that is increasingly busy the Army Reserve is being asked to do its bit.

Despite the above challenges almost all in the Regiment remain positive and dedicated. 2nd/10th Field Regiment has enjoyed some highpoints during the year; which were:

- The 'mortar conversion' is being seen as positive move. Some of the Regiment's members will freely admit it is not their first preference for the future, but is a great solution given the circumstances and keeps us firing.
- Personnel were provided to Operation Anode in late 2007 and early 2008, which is likely to continue in 2009 with the next 4th Brigade rotation.
- The Regiment exceeded its recruiting target in 2007/2008.
- The Regiment conducted a courses camp for the first time in many years. This included basic mortar, basic combat communicators' and gun courses. It gave a number of non commissioned officers the opportunity to instruct on a course for the first time.
- 2nd/10th Field Regiment has sufficient people qualified to conduct 81 mm live firing without seeking external support. We also have provided some mortar instructional support to the School of Artillery and 1st Division.
- The 2nd/10th Field Regiment Band continues to be one of Army's show pieces in Southern Victoria. The Band is one of the busiest elements of 4th Brigade and also supported the Coral/Balmoral activities in Canberra.
- The Band turned 60 this year; drawing its lineage from the 3rd Division Artillery Band established in 1948. This makes the Band 20 years older than its parent Corps, AABC.
- 2nd/10th Field Regiment played the principal role in organising the Victorian Grand Artillery

Ball in June at the Sebel Hotel; attended by over 165 people.

- Bombardier James Overell, 22nd Field Battery, was awarded a Defence Reserves Association Orchid Book Prize for an article about his experiences on Operation Anode, submitted to the Australian Reservist magazine.
- The operations officer, Major Joe Kelly, returned from Iraq where he worked with the US Army. He was awarded the US Army Commendation Medal for his response during a rocket attack on the base where he was serving, including assisting in the management of casualties. He was also awarded the US Meritorious Service Medal for the job he did throughout his tour. Well done.
- It is appropriate to acknowledge the service of some people, who are departing 2nd/10th Field Regiment at the end of the year.
- MAJ Joe Kelly, for two years as the executive officer / operations officer, who is off to Land Warfare Centre as an instructor.
- Captain Ash Wright, for three years work as the adjutant and also over a year as the acting operations officer, who is posted to Army Technical Staff Officer Course in 2009.
- Major Tom Nairn, after three years as Battery Commander 22nd Field Battery (and earlier postings) is to be a student at Reserve Command and Staff Course next year.



The Tactical Future of Reserve Gunners?

A very special thank you and farewell must be made to Brigadier Doug Perry for the fantastic support he has given the Regiment as the Colonel Commandant Southern Region for over six years. He has been a great mentor to all ranks; demonstrating that good soldiering is a balance of

serious training, social events and mateship. Sir, to Deborah and yourself, all the best for the future; you will be missed.

If you're thinking about leaving the ARA and will be settling in Southern Victoria consider giving some time to 2nd/10th Field Regiment.

Finally, an advertisement to the broader RAA. If you're thinking about leaving the ARA and will be settling in Southern Victoria consider giving some time to 2nd/10th Field Regiment. We understand you probably won't want to do this straight away, while you 'civilianise' and adjust to a new life. However, after a couple of years you might be interested in getting back into 'Green' on a part-time basis. 2nd/10th Field Regiment will always negotiate how and when you provide part-time service. The experience you've gained in the ARA is always valuable.

North Queensland Gunners

*By Lieutenant D.C. Schweinsberg
107th Field Battery*

In 2008 the 4th Field Regiment has focused on the task of setting the foundations for the future of the Regiment. For a number of years the unit has been primarily occupied with a myriad of out of role tasks to the detriment of individual rank and trade qualifications and collective gunnery skills. A new direction was required and a need to organise along functional lines was identified, as well as an urgent need to refocus on our core role.

... unit has been primarily occupied with a myriad of out of role tasks ...

A key feature of the return to a gunnery focus was the continuation of the RAA contribution to Operation Herrick with the British Royal Artillery. Fifteen 4th Field Regiment gunners, comprising of two gun detachments and a command element left

Australian shores bound for England in April 2008. They were attached to 29th Commando Regiment Royal Artillery that would be replacing 7th Parachute Regiment Royal Horse Artillery in the Helmand Province in September 2008.

*A new direction was required ...
as well as an urgent need to
refocus on our core role.*

In February the Regiment also successfully deployed the Joint Fires component of RTF-4. The force element comprised of a Battle Group Joint Fires and Effects Coordination Cell (JFECC) and two Joint Fires Team's (JFT); under the command of Battery Commander A Field Battery Major Alwyn Payne. This contingent was able to capitalise on the structures, relationships and reputation that the Regiment's RTF-3 contingent under Battery Commander 108th Field Battery Major Adam Worsley had accomplished.

February to June 2008 saw three platoons worth of instructional staff posted on temporary duty to Kapooka contributing towards the Regiment successfully march out over 130 new soldiers from Basic Army Recruit Training.

The Regiment's first live fire training for the year occurred in May with Exercise First Run. The exercise was conducted at High Range Training Area and saw approximately 2200 rounds fired over two weeks. For a number of members within the Regiment that deployed to East Timor as part of Golf Company in 2007, this exercise was the first time they had been able to live fire in over two years. However, all rose to the challenge and were able to achieve advanced training levels by the end of the exercise.



GNR Bunton, SGT Bell and BDR Elliott

May also saw three JFTs deploy with 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment into the Combat Training Centre (CTC) 'Box' for two weeks of instrumented force-on-force training. The 3rd Brigade Orienteering Competition took place in the final week of a very busy May for the Regiment. The efforts of all participants from the unit, including Lieutenant Graham Cumming's individual performance of second overall helped the Regimental team to also finish up coming in second place.

*Over 7000 rounds were expended
over the three week activity, the
majority employing modified
safety, danger close practices and
battle group level fire planning.*

The tempo continued in June with the Brigade Combined Arms Training Activity (CATA) 2008 taking place at High Range Training Area led by the regiment, with support from 2nd Cavalry Regiment, B Squadron 3rd/4th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Combat Engineer Regiment, 3rd Combat Service Support Battalion, 44 Wing RAAF and combat team commanders across the battalions. Over 7000 rounds were expended over the three week activity, the majority employing modified safety, danger close practices and battle group level fire planning. To close the activity a Regimental inter-battery sport competition involving Australian rules, soccer and a cross country run was conducted. 107th Field Battery took out the Australian rules and Combat Service Support Battery the soccer. In the cross country, Captain Jeremy Schieb from A Field Battery was the fastest individual and the Battery was also the fastest overall Battery.

Also during June the Brigade shooting competition took place. The team was placed seventh overall with an outstanding shoot by Bombardier Lee Jessop scoring 215 out of 225 making him the third best shot in the Brigade.

The Regiment was able to capitalise on the trust developed over several combined live fire training activities by firing in support of 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment during Exercise Chau Pha conducting both 'Danger Close' and live fire battle run activities in late July. The exercise required the coordination of offensive fire support to support combat team activities, alternating between defensive and attack scenarios over six days and required the expenditure of approximately 3200

rounds of gun ammunition. The exercise was supported by a mortar platoon (plus) from 1st and 2nd Battalion's Royal Australian Regiment, a troop of M1 tanks, cavalry, snipers, 50.cal and javelin direct fire support and combat engineers.

August saw the Regiment take a break from live fire training and participate in the Brigade obstacle course competition. The 4th Field Regiment team placed third overall and was highly commended for the best team work in the competition.



CO Presents CAPT Scheib with X Country Trophy

The Regiment, having focused on re-building the foundations, then moved to a transitional phase to commence planning to extend the separation of unit capabilities (it commenced in 2003 with the split of Headquarters Battery into Combat Services Support and Operations Support battery) for the implementation of a 'functional' structure and training continuum for 2009. Feedback on the results of the planning activity was provided by several visiting officers including the Staff Officer Grade One Joint Fires – Army Headquarters, Project officers from Capability Development Group and Staff Officer Grade One Offensive Support at Force Development group.

Whilst the transitional phase continues in its implementation for the remainder of 2008, the Regiment has continued its momentum in its training with a focus on survivability. 108th Field Battery will be leading the live firing in support of the Joint Tactical Air Controller '31' course then providing both JFECC/JFT and consolidating the Regiment's gunline into the CTC 'box' as a full call-sign during Exercise Swift Eagle 2008. 108th Field Battery will be joined in the field by 'A' Battery and fire units from across the 1st Division for the conduct of Exercise Long Guns. Over 5000 rounds of 105mm and 155mm natures are programmed to be utilised, including 1000 rounds from 161st 'Kapyong' Battery, Royal New Zealand Artillery who will make the journey for the activity.

Of note throughout the year has been the performance of A Field Battery throughout the year, through the individuals and teams selected for a range of operational deployments, the support to the JTAC LFX, their integration in every live firing, planning and sporting activity conducted within the Regiment, not to mention the maintaining of airborne capabilities. The battery is well placed for its participation on Exercise Long Guns this year and an intense training year for 2009 in support of 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment as the Ready Battalion Group.

The 2009 issue of this letter will highlight 4th Field Regiment's contribution of individuals and teams to operations, maintain the Ready Battalion Group capability and under a functional structure, improving the delivery and sustainment of Joint Fires within 3rd Brigade.

Combined Arms Training

Provided by Lieutenant Graham Cummings

4th Field Regiment played a prominent role in 3rd Brigade's Combined Arms Training Activity (CATA) in June, acting as the Brigade 'main effort'. This allowed the Regiment to exercise two battery groups in a regimental, live fire setting, which has not been done in several years.

CATA 08's scenario was an extension of the recent 'Silicon Brolga' Brigade command post exercise scenario, which found 3rd Brigade intervening in 'Tropicana Enclave' to defeat the 'Rogue Tropicana Security Forces' (RTSF) in order to restore law, order and stable governance. For this exercise, 4th

Field Regiment deployed a regimental command post, a brigade joint offensive support coordination centre, a battalion joint offensive support coordination centre, two gun batteries (of two and three guns respectively) supporting several joint offensive support teams. All of this combat power was supported by the various combat service support elements within the batteries, regiment, and the brigade, who formed a realistic and functional logistics chain for the duration of the exercise. The exercise for the main body began with a five day fire and movement across the Star training area from 4 to 8 June, with the batteries engaging high tempo missions during the day followed by harassment and interdiction tasks during the night, topped off with two 'modified safety' regimental fire plans, utilising realistic rates. At the completion of the Star River serial, the Regiment redeployed to High Range in order to conduct direct fire practices from Fire Support Base (FSB) Barbara, and 'danger close' missions from 'Cable Beach'. On 11 June the gun batteries occupied a regimental hide for some much needed maintenance and conducted battle prep for the next phase, which would see the batteries deployed into FSB Joan and FSB Myrtle for three days of 'modified safety', 6400mil shooting, defended by a company of Papua New Guinea infantry. The final phase of the exercise found the Regiment re-deploy back to the familiar gun positions 'Black Widow', 'Cable Beach' and 'Sentry Point 1', in order to conduct AACFF serials, 'danger close' practices on 2nd Cavalry Regiment, and a culminating commanding officers fire plan with 'modified safety', conducted on the morning of 19 June. In total the Regiment fired over 6000 rounds of HE PD, Smoke BE, Illuminating and HE CVT ammunition.



The Victorious OS Bty Obs Cse Team LBDR Tampas, LBDR McLennan, BDR Bond, GNR Banks, LBR Andrews, PTE Reimer, PTE Green

After a brief RTP, 107th Field Battery, heavily supported by the rest of the Regiment, deployed six guns to High Range in order to support 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment live fire exercise, known to the gunners as Chau Pha. This exercise involved firing danger close in defence and attack for each of the three rifle companies as they rotated through over a two week period from 28 July. Conducting rehearsals, and working within safety limitations, the infantry of the Royal Australian Regiment were treated to the awesome power of a six gun concentration close in front of their entrenched company position, before the artillery would prepare, cover, and screen the combined arms assault on two objectives the following day. Overall the gunners had a great time, enjoying a relaxed daily lifestyle on the gun position in between missions where they fired over 2000 rounds of HE PD, Smoke BE and Illuminating ammunition.

The Sharp End

Provided by Sergeant Joe Littleton

While the Regiment is desperately trying to send Australian guns offshore to serve in the Middle East, 4th Field Regiment recently deployed a small joint offensive support coordination centre / joint offensive support team element to Afghanistan on Operation Slipper.

Our primary role was to protect the reconstruction task force. In doing this, on several occasions, we defeated Taliban with close-air support, including the ever-reliable Apache attack helicopter, and in some instances engaged the enemy with our own 81mm mortars at danger close.

One thing we were exceptional at, as all gunners are, was providing the manoeuvre arms commander with updated battlefield commentary through the use of UAV live feeds and observation posts.

All 4th Field Regiment soldiers on Reconstruction Task Force – Three arrived home safely. But our thoughts go out to those 4th Field soldiers who took our place in Afghanistan and to the families of the soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice.

Multi Roled & Multi Skilled

Commanding Officer

Provided by Lieutenant Colonel Paul McKay

The 16th Air Defence Regiment has two key tasks; providing Ground Based Air Defence (GBAD) capability for the ADF, and provision of individuals or groups for out of role tasks. 2008 has allowed the Regiment to achieve both of these goals.

The recent Exercise Pitch Black in Darwin and Tindal had elements of the Regiment deployed in our primary role. Led by the 111th Air Defence Battery, we worked through a range of Air Defence scenarios against a multi-national air threat. Through integration with the Royal Australian and Royal Singaporean Air Forces, the Battery performed very well and was able to integrate new early warning and operational procedures. Exercise Pitch Black demonstrated both the capability of the Regiment, and the complexity of the Air Defence task. The efforts of all of our personnel deployed on the exercise showed that we are well positioned to not only achieve, but excel at this mission.

As shown in the past, Gunners of all persuasions have proven that we can readily adapt ...

The second half of the year will see the Regiment also support out of role tasks with the deployment of a Company Group to East Timor with the 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. Led by the 110th Air Defence Battery, the Golf Company Group is attached as a sub-unit of the Battalion and will assist in the Peace Keeping and Civil Support tasks. As shown in the past, Gunners of all persuasions have proven that we can readily adapt to these tasks and I am sure that 110 will represent both the Regiment and the Corps in the best manner. This period will also see 111 continue to develop our core skills with deployment of GBAD Troop elements to Exercise Swift Eagle with the 3rd Brigade, and planning officers to Malaysia with Exercise Bersama Lima.

With all of the above, we often fail to fully acknowledge the efforts of our other Corps and support elements. Support Battery at Woodside has excelled throughout the year. They provide all of the essential services that allows the Regiment to function, both in Barracks and in the field. Then, as for the Missile Batteries, they turn to out of role tasks as required. Support Battery will deploy personnel to East Timor with the Battlegroup and will continue to provide us with excellent service, whether in role or on general Golf Company tasks.

16th Air Defence Regiment's diverse year is not unique across Army or the RAA.

16th Air Defence Regiment's diverse year is not unique across Army or the RAA. As I have mentioned before, it is both an interesting and challenging time. The Regiment has had success in both of its key tasks and, thanks to the efforts of all our soldiers and officers, I feel that we are well positioned for the challenges of the future.

110th Air Defence Battery

*Provided by Major Peter Grant
Battery Commander*

Preparations for Golf Company's upcoming deployment as part of TLBG-5 are well underway at the 16th Air Defence Regiment. Whilst the majority of the Regiment was deployed on Exercise Pitch Black 2008, a small command element began planning training and administrative preparations for a two-week program to take place in Woodside commencing 21st July 2008.

The main focus is to transition the members of Golf Company from their base trade into a mind-set and skill-set ready for light infantry operations in Timor Leste. This preliminary two-week period will provide the foundation before commencing individual, collective and mission specific training in Darwin over August-September 2008.

The training will initially involve DP1 administration and a series of ROE, intelligence and welfare briefings, before commencing revision and practice of basic light infantry skills. The Company will also be introduced to urban and security operations, and cultural and language training, before conducting small arms range

practises. The training will conclude with a number of small scenario-based activities that will provide commanders an opportunity to assess our readiness at all levels before integration into Battle Group Tiger.

... assess our readiness at all levels before integration into Battle Group Tiger.

It will be a busy time for all involved; however we seek to provide as much opportunity as possible for members of the Company to be with their families before moving to Darwin for pre-deployment training followed by an extended tour of eight months.

This is the second Golf Company rotation to Timor Leste for the 16th Air Defence Regiment and all involved are looking forward to a rewarding trip.

111th Air Defence Battery

*Provided by Major Bede T. Galvin
Battery Commander*

111th Air Defence Battery, aka 'the surface to air guided weapon or SAGW Battery', deployed from Adelaide to Tindal on Exercise Pitch Black using all forms of transportation available. The journey saw the Battery upload all vehicles and equipment on train in Adelaide for the long journey to Darwin, with the majority of the personal deploying by RAAF C130. After a short consolidation period in Darwin the Battery Group deployed by road to Tindal to commence the exercise.

The focus ... to exercise the higher command and control functions...

In support of the exercise objectives of building international relationships, the SAGW Battery was quick to coordinate an airfield defence with the 160 Sqn RSAF. The SAGW Battery deployed a GBAD Command Post to take charge of the situation, with two GBAD Troops, a Combat Service Support Troop and an Electronic Warfare Detachment being integrated with the Singaporean GBAD elements. The focus for the SAGW Battery on PB 08 is to exercise the higher command and control functions required to integrate GBAD operations into the contemporary operational environment. The use of

the Recognised Air Picture and both active and passive electronic warfare measures have been successfully used to enhance this integration with all soldiers, airmen, seamen and officers alike learning from the experience at every juncture.

For the Air Defenders, the exercise was a valuable training event for all highlighting the skills of all services and the versatility of the ADF to meet the challenges of the next fight.

Rudd, Nelson honour veterans of Vietnam battles

ABC News | Posted Mon May 12, 2008 9:12pm AEST

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has paid tribute to Australian soldiers who fought in two battles in the Vietnam War 40 years ago.

Veterans and their families have gathered in Canberra to mark the anniversary of the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral.

Twenty-six Australians were killed in the battles, which were fought along a key route for the Viet Cong from Saigon.

Mr Rudd has thanked the veterans for their service and offered his sympathies to the families of those who died.

"We can never repay the price that you have paid, but tonight I say that we will properly honour the memory of those who fell and the actions around Coral and Balmoral," he said.

"Veterans of Australia, tonight it is my great pleasure to host this reception in your honour and nobody else's honour."

Opposition Leader Brendan Nelson also thanked the veterans and their families for the sacrifices they had made.

"Whatever we do as a nation in facing our future, we must always make sure that we work tirelessly to honour the service and sacrifice of men and women, who in our uniform serve the policies and views of the government of the day of our country," he said.

Territorian Gunners

*Provided by Captain Simon Hunter
Adjutant 8th/12th Medium Regiment*

The Regiment started off the training year with the annual journey to South Australia for Exercise Southern Reach. The difference this year was a week of firing in the desert and salt lakes of Woomera. The featureless terrain provided challenges that can not be replicated on any other range and tested the skills of both joint offensive support teams and navigators. The exercise concluded in Cultana with the establishment of a fire support base and culminated in a live fire defence of the regimental gun position with concurrent provision of fire support. The live firing program was interrupted by days of total fire ban, however alternate training developed individual and small team skills and procedures. Benefits of which became evident in June when a team lead by Bombardier Partridge won the 1st Brigade Military Skills competition.



Fire Support Base Cultana

Shortly the Regiment will welcome home the 16 members deployed on Operation Herrick, the first operational deployment for Gunners from a gunline doing their 'core' business since Vietnam. Despite basic facilities in their remote forward operating base, harsh environmental conditions and a relentless routine of providing fire support to British manoeuvre units, the men have risen to the challenge and performed to an exceptional standard. They have been wonderful ambassadors

for the Regiment, RAA, Army and of course Australia.

Currently the Regiment has close to 50 personnel deployed between the two Battle Groups in Timor Leste and Afghanistan. It is very early in the deployment but initial reports indicate all members are settling into the operational routine that will be their lives for the next eight months.

Back in Darwin the Regiment is busily preparing for the remainder of the year. Exercise Long Guns is shaping up to be a good exercise, albeit short as time on the road between Darwin and Townsville will be greater than the time in the field. Five batteries co-located is not an everyday event and will provide an excellent opportunity to review and validate Regimental level training and doctrine. Concurrently there will be a large number of personnel remaining in Darwin to become qualified on AFATADS. The urgency for the AFATADS knowledge is driven by the initial introduction to service of both AFATADS and Excalibur in mid December. This is an exciting addition to the capability of the Regiment and, as discovered by the Americans, will enhance the versatility of artillery, particularly in the urban environment.

The end of 2008 will coincide with the end of tenure for a number of personnel who have served in the Regiment. Of particular note is the posting out of the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Craig Furini and Regimental Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer Class One Peter Simic. Both have worked tirelessly in the pursuit of the interests of the Regiment and the RAA and have been instrumental in the success of the Regiment, which includes some significant milestones, notably the highly successful deployment of Gunners serving guns on operations.



Honour Title

MEDIA RELEASE

Governor-General Approves Unique Military Award

The Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Ret'd), has approved a unique military award to a unit of the Royal Australian Artillery. The 102 Field Battery Royal Australian Artillery has received the Honour Title "Coral" for its actions during the Vietnam War. This will be the first time that such a title has been presented to any Australian military unit.

Forty years ago the soldiers of 102 Battery withstood an attack on their gun position, Fire Support Base Coral, by more than 1,000 North Vietnamese troops. The North Vietnamese succeeded in overrunning a gun and the adjacent mortars of the 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment.

In the fierce fighting that followed, the Gunners not only fought off the attack, but were also able to provide fire to assist the Australian mortars that had also been overrun as well as other Australian infantry who were also battling the North Vietnamese.

The events are recorded in an Honour Title Scroll that the Governor-General has signed and will present to the Royal Australian Artillery at a special ceremony on Mount Pleasant in Canberra on 14 May 2008. Once the title is presented, the Battery will be known as 102 (Coral) Field Battery RAA.

The ceremony on Mount Pleasant will be one of a series of activities in the national capital that will mark the 40th Anniversary of the Battle of Coral/Balmoral, the largest engagement of Australian Forces in the Vietnam War.

The Prime Minister will host a reception for Coral/Balmoral veterans at Parliament House on Monday 12 May.

A National Memorial Service will be held at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial, Anzac Parade, on 13 May.

Details: Presentation of the 102 Field Battery RAA Honour Title Scroll

Date: Wednesday 14 May 2008

Time: 10:00 AM

Place: Mount Pleasant
Duntroon ACT

Media

Contacts: Ian Ahearn 0417 691 741





His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retd)
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

13 February 2008

The Honourable Joel Fitzgibbon, MP
Minister for Defence
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your letter dated 20 January 2008 seeking approval for the conferment of the Honour title 'Coral' to the 102nd Field Battery, the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, in recognition of its services in South Vietnam.

I am pleased to approve this Honour.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Jeffery'.

(Michael Jeffery)

GOVERNMENT HOUSE CANBERRA ACT 2600 AUSTRALIA
TELEPHONE +61(2) 6283 3525 FACSIMILE +61(2) 6283 3595



MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
THE HON JOEL FITZGIBBON MP

The Governor-General
His Excellency Major General
Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retd)
Government House
Dunrossil Drive
YARRALUMLA ACT 2600

Your Excellency

I am writing to seek your approval for the conferment of the Honour Title 'Coral' to the 102nd Field Battery, the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, in recognition of its services in South Vietnam. If approved, this will be the first conferment of an Honour Title to an Australian Army unit or sub-unit.

In July 2007, the Army Battle Honours Committee reviewed a submission from the Royal Australian Artillery for the actions of the 102nd Field Battery at Fire Support Patrol Base 'Coral' over the period 12 May 1968 to 6 June 1968. The committee considered the 102nd Field Battery's engagement in close combat on 12 and 13 May 1968 and its continued close support of the 1st Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment in Area of Operation SURFERS during this period, were worthy of the conferment of the Honour Title 'Coral'. I enclose the background information to this submission and the minutes of the Battle Honour Committee for your consideration.

The Chief of the Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston AO, AFC and the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy AC, have recommended the conferment of the Honour Title 'Coral' to the 102nd Field Battery and similarly I recommend it to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Fitzgibbon', written over a circular stamp or seal.

JOEL FITZGIBBON

Encl

20-1-08

A0016
076

CONFERMENT OF THE HONOUR TITLE 'CORAL' TO THE 102 nd FIELD BATTERY, THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY		
FOR: Mr Fitzgibbon <i>(through CDF)</i>	Category: Defence Initiated	Ministerial action required by: 21 December 2007
FROM: ARMY	Ref: OCA/OUT/2007/1635	Reason: To gain your endorsement for the conferment of the Honour Title 'Coral' to the 102 nd Field Battery

14:06:42 11DEC'07

Copies: Secretary, CDF, FASCPA



Recommendation

That you:

- (a) **endorse** the conferment of the Honour Title 'Coral' to the 102nd Field Battery, the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, in recognition of its service in South Vietnam.
- (b) **sign** the enclosed letter of recommendation to His Excellency, the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Major General Michael Jeffery AC, CVO, MC (Retd). (**Attachment C**)

Key Issues

1. Artillery and Engineer units are awarded the all embracing Battle Honour "UBIQUE", which means everywhere, to signify their presence at almost every significant battle. An Honour Title is conferred to an Artillery or Engineer sub-unit in order to recognise a particular outstanding achievement.
2. In July, 2007, the Army Battle Honours Committee reviewed a submission from the Royal Australian Artillery (RAA) for the actions of the 102nd Field Battery at Fire Support Patrol Base 'Coral' over the period 12 May 1968 to 6 June 1968. The committee considered 102nd Field Battery's engagement in close combat on 12 and 13 May and its continued close support of the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment in the Area Of Operation SURFERS during this period, worthy of the conferment of the Honour Title 'Coral'. Background information and the minutes of the Battle Honour Committee are attached. (**Attachments A and B**)
3. This is the first time that an Honour Title will be awarded to an Australian Army unit or sub-unit. The 102nd Field Battery is not currently raised.
4. I endorse the conferment of the Honour Title 'Coral' to the 102nd Field Battery and recommend that you similarly endorse the application and forward the attached letter of recommendation to the approving authority, the Governor-General of Australia Major General Michael Jeffery AC, CVO, MC (Retd). (**Attachment C**)

 COL	<input type="checkbox"/> (a) ENDORSED/NOT ENDORSED <input type="checkbox"/> (b) SIGNED/NOT SIGNED		
	J.P. CANTWELL MAJGEN DCA Tel: W: 6265 4258 M: 0419 149 540 Dec 07	JOEL FITZGIBBON 19/12/2007 	
Action Officer:	Mr Roger Lee	W: 6266 2204	Mob:

Sensitivity

5. Not applicable.

Resources

6. Not Applicable.

Consultation

7. Nil.

Attachments

- A. Background Information.
- B. Minutes of the Army Battle Honours Committee dated 20 July 2007
- C. Letter of recommendation to the Governor-General of Australia Major General Michael Jeffery AC, CVO, MC (Retd).

Attachment A**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Honour Title**

1. Units that usually engage the enemy with direct fire, the Cavalry (latterly Armoured Corps), Infantry and Aviation have traditionally been awarded Battle Honours for distinguished performance in battle. The fact that units of the Royal Australian Artillery (RAA) and Royal Australian Engineers are present at almost every significant battle, and that they do not usually engage the enemy with direct fire, has been recognised by the award of a single, embracing battle Honour, UBIQUE (Everywhere).
2. In order to recognise particular performance by sub-units of the RAA and Royal Australian Engineers, the British Army has used a system of Honour Titles, in which a distinguishing feature is incorporated into the name of the sub-unit. As is usual with British units, the exceptions to the rule tend to outnumber those in accordance with the rules, but examples are 5 (Gibraltar) Battery, 32 (Minden) Battery, etc.
3. Defence Instruction (Army) Administration 38-3 Administration of Australian Army battle Honours, theatre honours and honour titles defines the basis for granting an honour title as:
 - a creditable performance of a close combat function;
 - an outstanding close combat support in operation for which a Battle Honour was awarded (to the manoeuvre units involved); or
 - an outstanding close combat support in operations where no single operation would attract a specific title relating to a battle honour.

Action Summary

4. In May, June and July 1968 the Australian Task Force deployed most of its forces to Bien Hoa and nearby areas to assist in preventing a National Liberation Front (NLF) assault on Saigon. Several Fire Support Patrol Bases (FSPB), notably 'Coral' and 'Balmoral', were established across projected NLF withdrawal routes between Saigon and the War Zone D area.
5. FSPB 'Coral' was established in Binh Duong Province North East of Saigon. 'Coral' attracted only relatively minor contacts until 13 May. The FSPB then sustained the first of two very heavy attacks that were to demonstrate the enemy's ability to deploy quickly in strength and to react violently against defensive positions placed across its lines of communications.

6. The build up of the 1st Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) into Area of Operation (AO) Bondi (which included FSPB Coral) occurred slowly over the day of 12 May 1968 and was just complete by last light. The rifle companies were deployed into independent Area of Operations and the remainder of the Battalion Group was at Coral. The FSPB was defended by the Battalion Headquarters, the Mortar Platoon, the Assault Pioneer Platoon, the Anti-Tank Platoon, Headquarters the 12th Field Regiment and the 102nd Field Battery.

7. In the early hours of 13 May 1968, FSPB 'Coral' was attacked by an estimated battalion of Peoples Army of Vietnam (PAVN) forces with very heavy and accurate mortar fire, rocket propelled grenade fire and a ground assault. The PAVN forces were aiming for the guns and for the mortar position of 1RAR. During the assault one 105mm howitzer position and much of the mortar platoon were overrun. In very heavy fighting, which included air support from American helicopter gunships, 'Coral' remained defended until first light when the enemy broke contact and withdrew. 58 PAVN troops were killed.

8. During the period 13 -15 May 1968, the development of FSPB 'Coral' continued. After the action on the night of 12 May 1968 all the rifle companies were recalled to the FSPB in anticipation of a more substantial enemy attack.

9. A second major attack on 'Coral' was launched on the early hours of 16 May 1968. A heavy rocket and mortar barrage was followed by an estimated battalion sized attack against the part of the perimeter defended by A and B Companies. While some of the fighting pits of A Company were occupied, no substantial penetration of the Battalion occurred. A second major assault developed in front of A, B and C Companies, just prior to first light. Intelligence reports indicated that the PAVN forces had moved to within 250 metres of the base, waited three hours, and then attacked. The enemy were stopped on the wire defences. The PAVN forces broke contact at 6.30am and then concealed themselves effectively before dispersing. At least 37 PAVN troops were killed and one detained.

10. The attacks on 'Coral' resulted in nine Australians killed and 26 wounded.

11. The 102nd Field Battery was allocated 'in direct support' of 1 RAR during operation Toan Thang and throughout 1968/1969.

12. While at FSPB 'Coral', the Battery was in action during the period 12th May to 6th June 1968 either engaged directly with the enemy or through the provision of indirect fire support to the 1st Australian Task Force.

Awards to Artillery and Engineer Units

13. In measuring the performance of the 102nd Field Battery against the criteria for the award of an Honour Title, the Committee noted that:

- Creditable performance of a close combat function – achieved with distinction by members of 102 Field Battery on 12-13 May 1968;
- Outstanding close combat support in operation for which a battle honour was awarded – in 1983, the Royal Australian Regiment was awarded the Battle Honour of 'Coral/Balmoral'; or
- Outstanding close combat support in operations where no single operation would attract a specific title relating to a battle honour awarded – the 102nd Field Battery supported the operations of 1 RAR at Coral and the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR) at Balmoral over an extended period of 26 days and in excess of 50 actions.

Precedent

14. This submission represents an Honour Title precedent, as it is the first proposed award to an Australian Army sub-unit.

15. In 1981 the Governor-General approved the award of Battle Honours for the Australian Army in recognition of service in South Vietnam. The honours awarded were:

- Theatre Honour – 'South Vietnam 1965 - 1972'; and
- Five Battle Honours – 'Long Tan'; 'Bien Hoa'; 'Coral-Balmoral'; 'Hat Dich'; and 'Binh Ba'.

Concurrence by Army Battle Honours Committee

16. The Battle Honours Committee have reviewed the submission by the RAA for the actions of the 102nd Field Battery at 'Coral' at the meeting held on 20 July 2007 and recommended that the Honour Title 'Coral' should be conferred.

17. If approved, the 102nd Field Battery, RAA will be known as the 102nd (Coral) Field Battery, RAA.

Attachment B

(EXTRACT)

MINUTES OF THE BATTLE HONOURS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT CAMPBELL PARK ON 20 JULY 2007

Present:

Chair	Major General John Hartley
D/Chair	Brigadier Paul Symon
Member	Brigadier Mick Moon (Land Headquarters)
Member	Professor David Horner (Australian National University)
Member	Mr Roger Lee (Army History Unit)
Member	Mr Bill Houston (Army History Unit)
Secretary	Major David Evered (Army History Unit)

Invitees:

Brigadier Phil Winter (Royal Australian Artillery Association)
Colonel Don Tait (Retired) (Royal Australian Artillery Association)
Colonel Ian Ahearn (Retired) (Royal Australian Artillery Association)
Major Terry Brennan (Representative Head of Corps Royal Australian Artillery)

Introduction

The meeting was opened at 12.30pm.

Major General Hartley greeted all attendees to the second meeting, especially the invited attendees from the Artillery Association.

Previous Minutes

Professor Horner outlined some minor errors in the previous minutes. It was proposed Brigadier Symon, seconded Professor Horner that the minutes as presented be accepted with the omissions outlined by David Horner be included.

Item 1. RAA Honour Title

Brigadier Winter presented the revised submission for the Honour Title Coral to be granted to the 102nd Field Battery. The meeting unanimously agreed to the proposal.

Action:

Army History Unit is to prepare a brief for the Chief of Army requesting that the Governor-General concur to this proposal.

Brigadier Winter requested that the superb efforts of Major Brennan in revising the proposal be recorded in the minutes.

END OF EXTRACT

102 Fd Bty

**FOR THE VIETNAM WAR 1962 – 1972, THEATE OF WAR SOUTH-EAST ASIA
CLAIMED BY 102nd FIELD BATTERY**


References:

- A. DI(A) ADMIN 38-3 Administration of Australian Army Battle Honours, Theatre Honours and Honour Titles dated 9 February 2004
- B. Army Ceremonial Manual 2003, Volume 2, Chapter 2 – Battle Honours of the Australian Army

Serial No	Name of Honour Claimed	Serial No in 'Approved List of Battle and Theatre Honours	Unit on behalf of whom Honour is claimed (if applicable)	Brigade, Division of Formation with which then serving	If detached, organisation with which then serving
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
1	Honour Title of 'Coral'	Serial No 232 Coral Balmoral Reference B Annex E – Vietnam War 1962-72	102nd Field Battery	12th Field Regiment, 1st Australian Task Force	N/A

Enclosure:

- 1. Justification for Honours claimed in Exceptional Circumstances – Honour Title of 'Coral'
- 2. DVD – Battle of Coral – 'A Gunner Perspective'


G.P. FOGARTY
 Brigadier
 Head of Regiment
 Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery

28 October 2005



T.R.FORD
 Major General (Retd)
 Representative Colonel Commandant
 Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery

28 October 2005

‘REVISED’
JUSTIFICATION FOR THE AWARD OF THE HONOUR TITLE OF
‘CORAL’
TO 102nd FIELD BATTERY
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY

INTRODUCTION

1. This submission is based on events which occurred during the Vietnam War specifically in 1968. It provides the background to Operation Toan Thang and the involvement of 102nd Field Battery (102 Fd Bty) in the Battle of Coral in May/June 1968.
2. Major General D. Vincent, Commander Australian Forces Vietnam, in January of that year offered 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) for use outside of Phouc Tuy Province, stating later *It was clear [early January] that there was something big going to happen in '68. The build up was there.*¹ The apparent withdrawal of communist main force units from Phouc Tuy, taken with other indicators, pointed to a threat against Saigon and the US base at Long Binh.
3. General J. Wilton, Chairman, Australian Chiefs of Staff Committee directed that one battalion from 1ATF must remain for the security of Phouc Tuy Province. On 24th January 1968 the 1ATF (-) commenced the Operation, titled Coburg, the biggest operation undertaken by Australian forces to date. The deployment of 1ATF to the east of a US logistics complex at Long Binh was the first deployment outside of Phouc Tuy Province. Operation Coburg broke up North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong (VC) attempts to attack Long Binh and Bien Hoa City. The 1ATF casualty list for Operation Coburg was seven killed-in-action (KIA), three died of wounds and 75 wounded-in-action (WIA). 1ATF had been highly successful in a number of significant small unit contacts. The Operation concluded on 1st March.
4. The North Vietnamese Government launched the anticipated large scale offensive on the morning of 31st January during the lunar New Year holiday in January/February 1968 against most of the provincial capitals and major cities, including Saigon and the former imperial capital of Hue. This operation, known as the Tet Offensive, was over by 25th February. It was a military and political defeat for the north. As a result of the offensive the mission of 1ATF was amended from reconnaissance-in-force to a blocking operation to interdict the enemy withdrawing from their attacks on Saigon. Until mid March the focus of allied operations was to clear the remaining enemy away from populated areas in the vicinity of Saigon. This was followed by an operation to clear the enemy from the surrounding rural regions. These two operations were then followed by the allied Operation Toan Thang.
5. Despite the Tet Offensive being a victory for the allies, it was a political turning point. The catalyst for this change of attitude was the film footage flashed home by television reporters which created the perception that the offensive was a victory for the NVA and VC. This was symbolically highlighted by 19 VC entering the outer perimeter of the US embassy in Saigon which was reported as a catastrophe for the allies although the reality was that they were quickly defeated. The official history states *The Tet Offensive has been widely regarded as a pivotal ‘turning point’ in the Vietnam War; but its effects were political and psychological as much as military.*²
6. Following the Tet experience the North Vietnamese Government made a shift in their strategic approach. The scale and intensity of enemy operations increased dramatically and regular NVA forces became more involved. In 1967 one estimate was that 96 per cent of all engagements involved VC units of company size or smaller.³ This pattern was to change after the 1968 Tet Offensive as the conflict evolved into a conventional war with a guerrilla dimension. *According to one interpretation, it was the military failure of the*

1. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, *On the Offensive: The Australian Army in the Vietnam War 1967 - 1968*, Allen & Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, Australia, 2003, p. 289.

2. *ibid.*, p. 317.

3. *ibid.*, p. 316.

*Tet Offensive and its aftermath which drove the [North Vietnamese] Government to offer in April 1968 to commence peace talks with the US.*⁴

7. Prior to Operation Toan Thang, 1ATF had operated primarily in Phuoc Tuy Province conducting independent battalion operations known as pacification operations. These focused on aggressive patrolling in order to dominate the area and reduce guerrilla or insurgency threats from *parts of D445 [VC Battalion] or even less than that.*⁵ Battalions and consequently artillery batteries operated independently. Operation Toan Thang however, was to be different. *The months following the Tet Offensive would see a change in the scale and focus of Australia operations as the task force was called upon to participate in large, combined operations, outside Phuoc Tuy and against sizeable NVA main force elements.*⁶ In the Australian Area of Operations (AO) Surfers during Operation Toan there was a requirement for formation level command, control and coordination to manoeuvre the task force. Headquarters (HQ) 1ATF including the 12th Field Regiment (12 Fd Regt) Fire Support and Coordination Centre (FSCC), would be actively involved in the conduct of operations.

102 FD BTY

8. 102 Fd Bty was allocated 'in direct support' of 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) during Operation Toan Thang and throughout 1968/1969. Whilst at Fire Support and Patrol Base (FSPB) Coral, the Battery was in action during the period 12th May to 6th June 1968 either engaged directly with the enemy or through the provision of indirect fire support to 1ATF.

9. In AO Surfers in May/June 1968 the enemy was at least two Regiments of the 7th NVA Division and its headquarters, two VC Regiments of 9th VC Division, the Dong Nai Regiment and elements of several other VC units ranging from battalion to platoon level.⁷ 102 Fd Bty was involved in repelling attacks on FSPB Coral and in providing fire support to the companies of 1 RAR during major battles around and near the FSPB.

10. In the context of the Australian involvement in the war in South Vietnam the actions in, near and around FSPB Coral in 1968 have been overshadowed by those associated with the battle of Long Tan on 18th August 1966. The official history states *The engagements around FSPB Coral and Balmoral exceeded in both intensity and duration the battle of Long Tan, formerly the largest action by Australian soldiers. Both the total number of units and men engaged on both sides and the total casualties incurred by each side were greater than those in any other actions by Australians in the Vietnam Conflict.*⁸ Despite this, the Battle of Coral does not have the formal recognition in Australian military history or in the wider Australian public psyche that the scale and intensity of the protracted 26 day battle deserve. The official history further states that *in a series of fierce engagements with NVA main force elements around FSPB Coral and Balmoral ... task force units experienced the most sustained and intense battles ever fought by Australian soldiers in Vietnam.*⁹ During Operation Toan Thang the cohesiveness of the combined arms team of 102 Fd Bty and 1 RAR was tested to a level which the Royal Australian Artillery (RAA) has rarely been called upon to deliver under combat conditions, especially post World War Two.

AIM

11. The aim of this submission is to seek the award of the Honour Title of 'Coral' to 102nd Field Battery. It is sought primarily for the actions at FSPB Coral on the night of 12th/13th May 1968, as well as the night of 15th/16th May 1968 and for its sustained support to the 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment throughout Operation Toan Thang during the period 12th May to 6th June 1968.

OPERATION TOAN THANG

(Battle of Fire Support and Patrol Bases Coral & Balmoral)

12. On 8th April 1968 the allies launched Operation Toan Thang, involving 70 000 allied troops, the largest operation to this point of the war.¹⁰ Operation Toan Thang (Complete Victory) was aimed at eliminating any remaining enemy formations involved in the Tet Offensive, while disrupting plans by the enemy for a second attack on Saigon.

4. *ibid.*, p. 316.

5. *ibid.*, p. 350.

6. *ibid.*, p. 320.

7. FRAGO No 6 to OpO 19/68 (OP TOAN THANG), Annex A Enemy Forces dated 10th May 1968.

8. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, *op cit.*, p. 349.

9. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, *op cit.*, p. 346.

10. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, *op cit.*, p. 347.

13. The Australian involvement in Operation Toan Thang commenced on 21st April when 3 RAR began a reconnaissance-in-force operation east/southeast of Long Binh. The scale of operations increased from battalion to task force level on the 22nd April 1968 with the issue of the 1ATF Operation Order 19 of 1968. The concept of operations changed to multi-battalion reconnaissance-in-force operations. Battalions operated over a wide area, with rifle companies spread out in platoon patrols. Enemy contact remained sporadic.

14. On 3rd/4th May there were mounting signs of a formidable enemy build up west and northwest of Saigon. Early morning on 5th May the attack on Saigon commenced, which became known as 'Mini Tet'.

1ATF DEPLOYMENT ON 12th MAY 1968

15. It was within this environment that HQ 1ATF (Forward) located at Bear Cat issued FRAGO No 6 to the 1ATF Operation Order 19 on 10th May. The enemy estimate in the FRAGO for the deployment into AO Surfers indicated a strength of at least 3 000 to 4 000 enemy operating in the vicinity of the location identified for FSPB Coral and Balmoral.

16. The Australian artillery units did not receive written deployment orders from HQ 1ATF; instead they received abbreviated radio orders on the night of 11th May. These orders indicated the enemy were demoralised and in the process of withdrawing from the Saigon area. No mention was made of enemy operating in large formed bodies moving south towards Saigon.

17. On 12th May the execution of the plan became confused even before it started due to the 1st US Infantry Division (Big Red One) being heavily engaged in the area. This was evident by the number of air strikes being conducted as the first Australian troops deployed. Prior to the first sortie of helicopters carrying B Company (Coy) 3 RAR, the commanding officer (CO) 3 RAR had departed for AO Surfers to do a last minute check of the landing zone (LZ) which had been selected the previous day from a high altitude reconnaissance due to significant enemy activity in the area and associated intense allied operations. He quickly realised that the LZ was unsuitable as it was covered with saplings and scrub up to three metres high. Consequently he ordered B Coy to land to the southeast of the LZ.

18. On the evening of 11th May the second-in-command (2IC) of 3 RAR had moved the HQ of the 'Big Red One' to assist with coordinating the deployment. Once there he was ordered to request the services of a US rifle company to secure the LZ. He succeeded and walked with them to AO Surfers. The US rifle company prepared the LZ. This whole event added to the confusion, given the task had been allocated to B Coy 3 RAR.

19. On arrival of the 12 Fd Regt reconnaissance party there were US infantry at the LZ but no sign of B Coy 3 RAR. It is assumed these US troops were those escorted by the 2IC 3 RAR. The rest of the deployment was disrupted due to the diversion of the allocated aircraft to the Americans. The late 'fly-in' of 12 Fd Regt (-) to FSPB Coral on 12th May 1968, combined with poor map reading, resulted in 161st Field Battery (161 Fd Bty) Royal New Zealand Artillery and 102 Fd Bty ultimately being deployed some 1 500 metres apart. The 102 Fd Bty Gun Position Officer (GPO), Lieutenant Ian Ahearn, stated *None of the normal procedures for an artillery regimental layout were conducted and 161 Fd Bty was forced to accept its guns at the reconnaissance party LZ when a US pilot indicated that if the guns weren't taken, then they would be dropped.*¹¹

20. The 12 Fd Regt 2IC had not been sighted, however the GPO 102 Fd Bty, travelling with the 161 Fd Bty reconnaissance party, managed to contact him by radio. The GPO was ordered to join the 2IC but there was some confusion as to the latter's location. The 2IC's party was requested to throw smoke and the 102 Fd Bty party took a compass bearing and moved 1 500 metres northeast to where the 102 Fd Bty position would be established. Lieutenant Ian Ahearn subsequently described the situation as *the presence of US troops, the ongoing air strikes to the east and the large number of fresh enemy weapon pits located in a nearby rubber plantation indicated that this was not to be a routine deployment.*¹² He then recalled a member of the US infantry company who had secured the LZ prophetically observing *Charlie will come looking for you ... you won't have to find him.*¹³

21. The delayed 'fly-in' meant 102 Fd Bty guns were not complete on the ground until mid-afternoon. The bulldozer and defence stores did not arrive until even later. The protection company (D Coy 3 RAR) never 'married up' with 102 Fd Bty.

11. Colonel I.F. Ahearn, (b. 1945), regular officer, retired, (GPO 102 Fd Bty) Interviews 1998 and 2007 involving Author.

12. *ibid.*

13. *ibid.*

22. The 1 RAR Mortar Platoon(-) arrived late in the afternoon and deployed to the north in the immediate proximity (approximately 50 metres) of the gunline.¹⁴



23. When dusk 'stand-to' was ordered the command post (CP) had been 'dug-in' with over head protection, but only three guns had been bunded, which later was fortuitous for the Battery's survival. Due to their late arrival at 1700 h the mortars had only dug shell scrapes (0.5 m), while most of the gunline had achieved stage one (1.2 m). This possibly contributed to the significant casualties later received in the mortar line. No barbed wire had been laid and other defensive devices had not been deployed. Machine gun pits, equipped with General Purpose Machine Gun M60's (MG), had been sighted and coordinated by the junior officers from 102 Fd Bty, the mortar line and RHQ. No local defence orders group for the defence of FSPB Coral was held.

24. The last company of 1 RAR flew in with fading light at about 1730 h and then had to move some 2 000 metres to an ambush site. The battalion headquarters with two Support Coy platoons (Pioneer and Anti-Armour) was deployed to the southeast of 102 Fd Bty. It should be noted that HQ 1ATF (Forward) was to deploy into FSPB Coral by road the next day.

25. The deployment into FSPB Coral was being observed by elements of 141 NVA Regiment, 7 NVA Division, which were located to the east of the FSPB. To make matters worse, the 'Big Red One' to the south and west of the FSPB and the US 101st Airborne Division to the east, were both in heavy contact throughout the day.

ENEMY ACTIVITIES

26. As the day ended and night fell, the companies from 1 RAR deployed into their allocated positions. 102 Fd Bty continued to carry out the routine duties of a 'in direct support' battery which included adjusting defensive fire (DF) and final protective fire (FPF) tasks. As the companies moved out from the LZ contacts began to occur with the enemy. These continued until mid morning the next day. Northeast of the FSPB, A

14. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, op cit., p. 361, (Two mortars remained at Nui Dat to assist with base protection).

Coy with the mission of ambushing had one contact, whilst to the north D Coy, with the same mission, had three contacts.¹⁵ Concurrently B Coy was ambushing to the southeast and was contacted no less than four times.¹⁶ C Coy was preparing to conduct a road clearance of Route 16 to the south towards Saigon. From last light on 12th May until the attack on the FSPB in the early hours of 13th May, these companies were in contact with enemy groups up to company strength that were moving into their assembly areas for the attack on Coral. This was unknown by the Australian Forces at the time.

27. At approximately 0130 h there was a probe on the MG pit of the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon. The sentries observed movement, opened fire and the enemy withdrew. The area surrounding the FSPB then fell silent. At approximately 0225 h D Coy was contacted by enemy in its ambush position. As a result of enemy rocket propelled grenades (RPG) fired at the company, 11 Platoon had one KIA and 11 WIA. As part of this contact 102 Fd Bty was called upon for fire support. At 0312 h D Coy reported the last helicopter evacuating the wounded had departed. The occurrence and timing of this fire mission was to have a very significant impact on the events as they unfolded during the night. As a result of this contact the Battery Commander (BC) issued two FPF tasks, one on D Coy to the north and one on centre of arc to the east. As a result of this amended FPF responsibility, the Battery now had three guns laid north (No 4, No 5 and No 6). These guns were those with partly prepared bunds.

12th/13th MAY – FIRST ATTACK

28. At about 0330 h, a silent period was suddenly broken by intense incoming enemy preparation fire on the 102 Fd Bty position consisting of RPG and small arms fire which lasted for approximately 10 minutes. This was preparation for what is now assessed in the official history as an attack by *one battalion of 141 NVA Regiment, augmented by 275 and 269 Infiltration Groups* against 102 Fd Bty and the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon.¹⁷ The 102 Fd Bty position was the enemy objective.¹⁸¹⁹²⁰²¹ The sentries at No 4 and No 6 gun MG pits located in front of their respective gun platforms observed a long line of enemy approximately 60 metres in front of them stand up and begin to advance. The manner in which RPG were fired at and into occupied positions was evidence of the thorough and detailed reconnaissance conducted by the enemy prior to the attack. The 1 RAR Mortar Platoon and 'step up' element of 12 Fd Regt Regimental Headquarters (RHQ) sentries engaged the enemy assault on the northwest flank with their MG. The sentries from No 6 gun fired a burst at the assault wave and were forced to withdraw into the No 6 gun bund. As they withdrew the gunner carrying the MG was shot in the hand. He dropped the MG and did not recover it.

29. In *The Gunners – A History of Australian Artillery*, Lieutenant Ian Ahearn is quoted describing the commencement of the enemy assault as:

*Green tracer signalled the start of the attack as the enemy swept in from only 50 metres out. The rest was confusion ... the zzzzzt of RPGs ... green, glowing lines of tracer ... the rattle of small arms as the detachment of D sub engaged ... the crack of grenades ... the roar of D sub as it fired over open sights. In the first five minutes both the battery and the mortar forward machine gun posts had been overrun; F sub was in NVA hands, the mortar line was a chaotic jumble of shouting men and stabs of light from the muzzles of small arms.*²²

30. The attack was so quick that the enemy were soon using the No 6 bund for protection while throwing grenades and directing MG fire in the area of the gun platform. The detachment was forced to withdraw to No 5 gun platform where both detachments began to engage the enemy with small arms fire. Unbeknown to the GPO, the quick thinking detachment commander of No 6 gun had rendered his gun unworkable by removing the firing lock prior to his withdrawal. Meanwhile the No 4 gun MG pit was forced to withdraw to

15. 1 RAR Operation Toan Thang 3 May - 7 Jun 68, Combat Operations After Action Report 2/68 dated 30 Jun 68, Annex C and Annex F.

16. *ibid.*, Annex D.

17. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, *op cit.*, p. 364.

18. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, *op cit.*, p. 364 and p. 367.

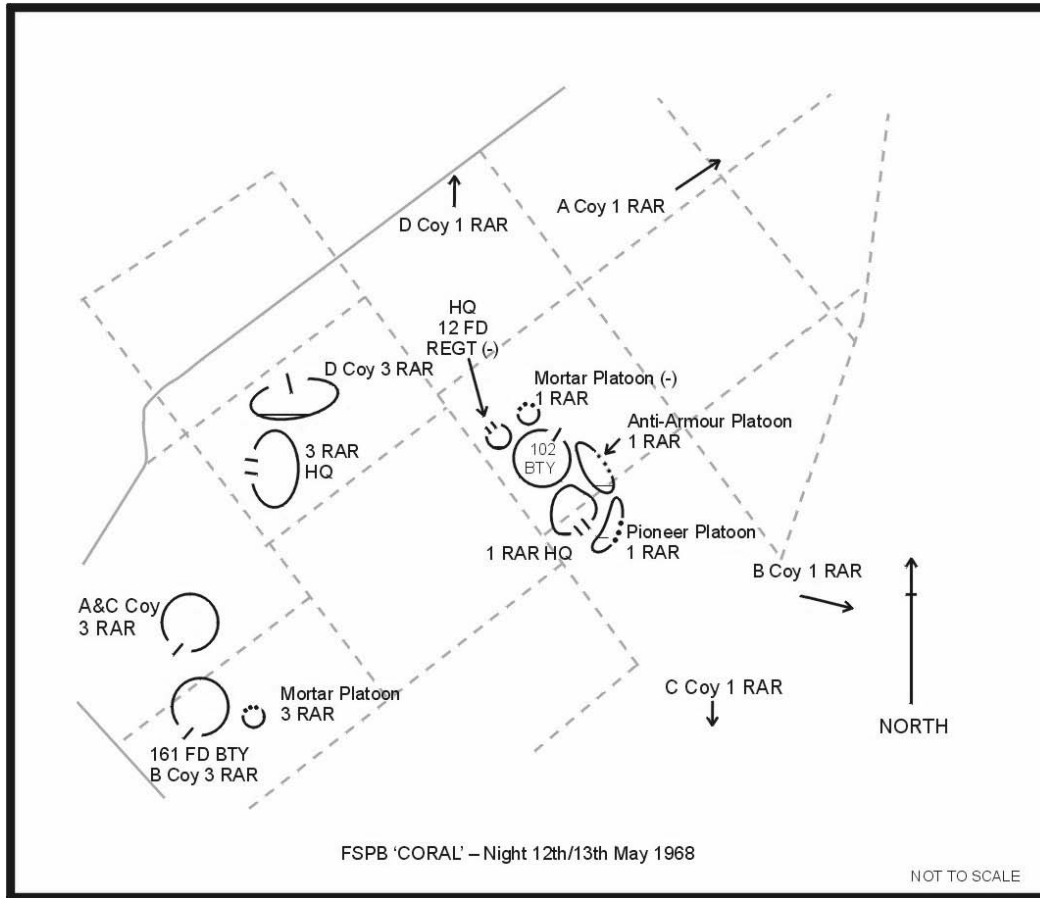
19. D.M. Horner, *The Gunners: A History of Australian Artillery*, Allen and Unwin, Australia, 1995, p. 486

20. L. McAulay, *The Fighting First - Combat Operations in Vietnam 1968-69 The First Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1991, p.p.48-49.

21. L. McAulay, *The Battle of Coral - Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral*, Hutchinson Australia, Hawthorn Victoria, 1988, pp. 38-39.

22. *ibid.*, p. 486.

their gun platform when their MG jammed. At this point the No 4 gun detachment began to engage the enemy with small arms fire.

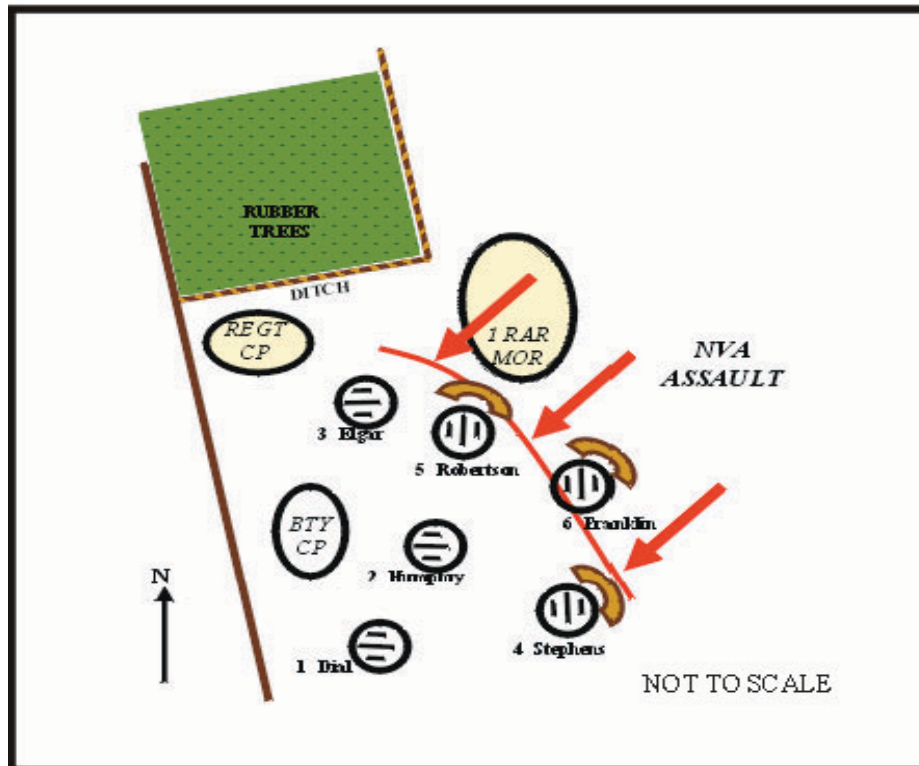


31. Despite the heavy incoming RPG and small arms fire, all members of the gun detachments remained 'standing to' around their guns. The detachments of No 4 and No 5 gun began to call for small arms ammunition and were resupplied by runners from the ammunition bay which was located on the LZ to the east of the gun position.

32. Although the gun communication system (tannoy) connected from the CP to each gun was badly damaged, only No 5 gun and sometimes No 4 gun were working, the CP was aware that No 6 gun was in enemy hands. Orders had to be relayed by voice from outside the CP and passed on by personnel to the gun detachment commanders. Coordination of the defence was made more difficult as radio communication was restricted to the Bty Net, as the radios on the Regt Net and the Air Ground Net had been destroyed by enemy fire.

33. At approximately 0345 h intense enemy fire was still coming from in front of the position. In addition there were at least two enemy snipers active, one in the tree line to the left flank and one to the rear of the position. The enemy were in the bund of No 6 gun. No 4 gun requested permission to fire splintex and was ordered to do so. As each gun only carried six splintex rounds, it was necessary to transfer rounds from other guns to No 4 gun. No 4 gun fired 18 rounds of splintex in total. When this supply ran out, the detachment commander was ordered to fire high explosive rounds over open sights. No 2 gun had been hit in the trail by an RPG which wounded one detachment member and destroyed both tyres. Consequently the detachment had to manhandle the gun to keep it in action. No 5 gun was ordered to lay on the overrun No 6 gun as a precaution against the threat of its use by the enemy. [Author - The 'final' splintex distribution was No 1, No 2 and No 3 gun each kept a reserve of two rounds unfired; No 4 fired 18 rounds; No 5 fired five of six rounds; and No 6 had six unfired when captured.]²³

23. Colonel I.F. Ahearn, *op cit.*, Interview 2007.



34. Fortunately for the survival of FSPB Coral the three guns (No 4, No 5 and No 6) which had been allocated the new FPF to the north were laid directly on the axis of the enemy assault. Even more fortuitously the detachment from one gun involved in the previous fire mission were still up and able to react quickly to the attack.

35. A ready reaction force/reserve had been created from off duty CP staff and was held centrally behind the CP. They played a vital role in the resupply of ammunition. No 4 gun began to call for ammunition, whilst the three rear guns also required resupply. The members of the reserve and the transport bombardier in a landrover carried out the task under heavy fire most of the time, as any movement and/or voices (orders) attracted immediate enemy fire.

36. The defence of the gun position was also hampered by no readily available hand grenades. The Battery standard operating procedure directed that hand grenades were to be held centrally at the ammunition point until issued.

37. At approximately 0400 h an RGP round struck the No 1 gun ammunition bay creating a fire. Although the detachment aided by signallers and surveyors, attempted to control the blaze, the bay was completely burnt out. None of the ammunition exploded in the fire. The fire became a reference point for air support including Light Fire Teams (LFT) comprising helicopter gunships and a C47 'Spooky'. From this time until dawn, the air support put down heavy fire around the perimeter augmented by fire from US artillery units controlled through the Battery Commander (BC) 102 Fd Bty.

38. Although the position was still under fire, the enemy assault now swung to the left flank of the Battery through the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon. Two slightly wounded infantrymen from the mortars crawled back from their position to No 5 gun. The 1 RAR Mortar Platoon was completely overrun by the right flank of the enemy assault. The presence of the mortars caused confusion for the enemy commander, as the position had not been there during his reconnaissance the previous afternoon. It was evident the enemy thought that they were amongst the guns. The attack began to falter and the situation created delays and soaked up enemy time and resources, giving the gun position valuable time to consolidate. At the same time 161 Fd Bty began to fire DF targets in support of FSPB Coral in response to calls for fire from the Mortar Platoon 21C.

39. At this stage (approximately 0410 h) a fire mission was received from B Coy which was also in contact. 102 Fd Bty continued to fire missions employing three guns in support of the infantry companies. No 2 gun had been brought back into action by extensive manhandling. No 4 gun continued to fire over open sights for some two and a half hours at the enemy that could be seen in front of the gun position. The high explosive

rounds from No 4 gun were exploding 100 metres from the gun; one round passed through the bund of No 6 gun before exploding amongst the enemy.

40. The enemy occupying No 6 gun began to engage the rest of the position with the dropped MG from No 4 gun. The detachment from No 5 gun, using small arms and M79 grenade launchers silenced the MG fire by killing two of the enemy located at No 6 gun.

41. The gunners did not know whether the mortarmen were alive or dead. No 5 gun had repeatedly called out to the mortar position and received no answer until just prior to dawn. At the same time the Mortar Platoon 2IC requested fire from 102 Fd Bty onto his position. So at approximately 0500 h the CP received orders to engage the mortar position with splintex rounds. No 5 gun fired five rounds across the mortars; these rounds were delivered with devastating effect against the enemy. The mortarmen received no further injury as they had been warned to lie flat in their shell scrapes.

42. At dawn on 13th May Battery fighting patrols cleared the remaining enemy from the Battery and Mortar Platoon areas. Lieutenant Bob Lowry, a 102 Fd Bty Section Commander, took six men from No 5 gun platform and conducted a sweep through the position to secure No 6 gun, before moving out to clear the front of the mortar position. When they reached No 6 gun there was evidence that the enemy had attempted to use explosive charges to destroy it. There was damage to the under side of the barrel and recoil system. This group contacted and killed two enemy. The mortar platoon requested help to withdraw to the gun position. A second group under the command of Lieutenant Ian Ahearn probed *gingerly*²⁴ into the mortar platoon position to evacuate the mortarmen. In the process they captured two NVA.

43. At approximately 0630 h the enemy broke contact. 51 enemy bodies were found in and around the perimeter of the 102 Fd Bty gun position. Five enemy were captured including two wounded. A large number of AK47's and SKS rifles, RPG launchers and bangalore torpedos were seized along with a large quantity of ammunition.

44. In AO Surfers on the night 12th/13th May the total own casualties were nine KIA and 28 WIA. Of these, 102 Fd Bty had two WIA; 1 RAR Mortar Platoon had five KIA and eight WIA; RHQ 12 Fd Regt two KIA and three WIA.

45. During the heavy fire from the enemy assault on FSPB Coral, 102 Fd Bty fired three missions in support of the 1 RAR rifle companies. These were extended engagements in support of B Coy and D Coy over a period lasting approximately two hours. The first two were in support of B Coy at 0410 h and 0515 h and the third was for D Coy at 0545 h.²⁵ A Coy was also contacted at 0510 h but the enemy were too close to employ artillery.²⁶ The number of rounds fired during these missions cannot be confirmed as the signallers log book became wet and was destroyed.²⁷ An indicator of the level of support provided by 102 Fd Bty during the operation is evident in the 1 RAR After Action Report where it states It is estimated that approximately 4 000 rounds of field artillery were used on close targets²⁸. In defence of the gun position No 4 gun fired 84 rounds and No 5 five rounds over open sights.²⁹

POST FIRST ATTACK EVENTS

46. Once the battlefield clearance was complete, 102 Fd Bty set about focusing on the task of providing fire support to 1 RAR and determining the RPG and other damage to its guns. Two damaged 105 mm guns and the bulldozer had to be replaced. *The attack on Coral had been the most sustained ground attack on an Australian field gun position since the Pacific War. Yet the gunners recovered their guns and were in action, supporting the infantry, the following morning.*³⁰

47. Several hours after dawn on 13th May the 1 RAR companies were ordered back to FSPB Coral. At 0815 h just prior to withdrawing, B Coy was engaged by the enemy and 102 Fd Bty provided fire support with three guns.³¹ At 0924 h D Coy sighted five enemy in a bunker system and conducted a company attack with

24. RAA Liaison Letter, Directorate of Artillery, September 1975, Canberra, p. 26.

25. 1 RAR Operation Toan Thang 3 May - 7 Jun 68, *op cit.*, Annex D and Annex F.

26. 1 RAR Operation Toan Thang 3 May - 7 Jun 68, *op cit.*, Annex C.

27. Colonel I.F. Ahearn, *op cit.*, Interview 2007.

28. 1 RAR Operation Toan Thang 3 May - 7 Jun 68, *op cit.*, p. 2.

29. D.M. Horner, *op cit.*, p. 488.

30. D.M. Horner, *op cit.*, p. 488.

31. 1 RAR Operation Toan Thang 3 May - 7 Jun 68, *op cit.*, Annex D.

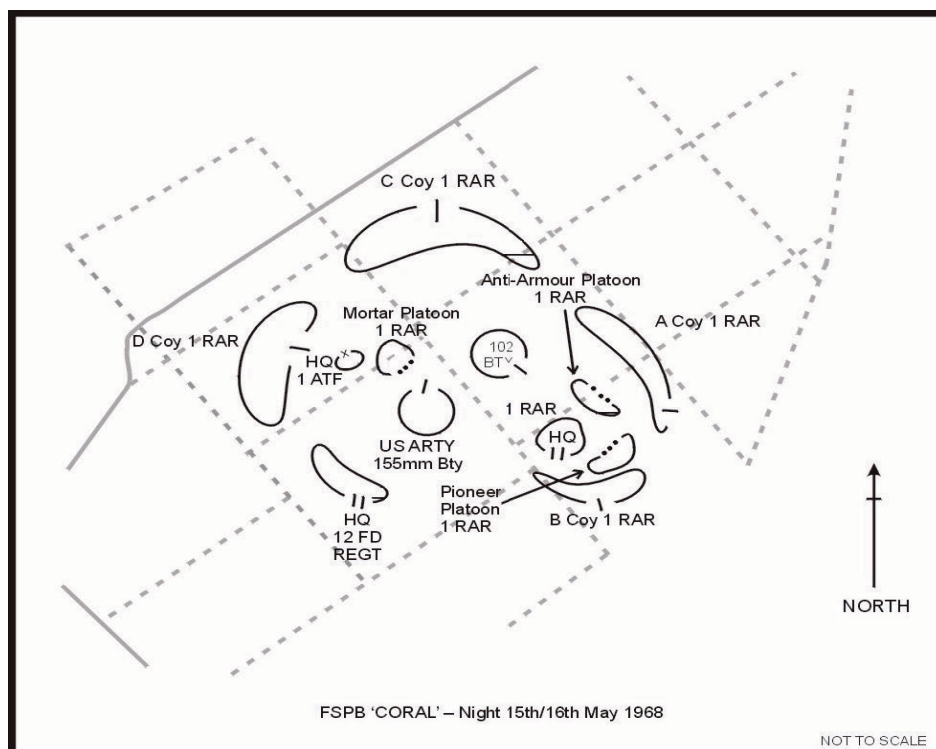
artillery support from 102 Fd Bty.³² The BC Major Gavin Andrews recalled ... *as his most vivid memory of the entire operation, 'the one I feel privileged to have. The answer from the guns ... first, two guns fired, then three I felt extremely proud of them, as I did on many occasions, but that time was very special to me.'*³³

48. During the period 13th to 15th May FSPB Coral was developed into a defensive position. It was occupied by HQ 1ATF, 1 RAR, armoured squadron elements (tank, cavalry and APC), 102 Fd Bty, A Bty 2/35 US Artillery (155 mm battery), engineers and logistics support elements. The enemy continued to conduct reconnaissance of the FSPB by day and to mortar it by night. 102 Fd Bty provided fire support onto enemy mortar positions and movements during this period.

15th/16th MAY – SECOND ATTACK

49. FSPB Coral again came under attack at approximately 0230 h on the morning on 16th May commencing with incoming preparation fire including mortars. The official history assessed that a *Regimental size group* conducted this attack.³⁴ 102 Fd Bty, A Bty 2/35 US Artillery (A Bty arrived on 14th May) and elements of HQ 1ATF were the prime targets for the assault, receiving mortar and RPG fire, 122mm rockets and small arms fire during the ground attack. As a result 102 Fd Bty had two guns placed out of action by mortar fire. No 2 gun again lost both tyres and the CP was hit. At approximately 0340 h the main enemy ground assault began against FSPB Coral. However 1 RAR was now established in strength, which resulted in A, B, C and D Coy, especially A and D Coy, receiving the brunt of at least four attacks including two battalion size ground assaults.

50. Throughout the attack, despite incoming indirect and direct fire from the enemy, 102 Fd Bty fired missions from 0315 h until dawn. [Author - Enemy broke contact at 0615 h.]³⁵ *The command post survived a direct hit and was able to control three missions fired simultaneously employing two guns on each task.*³⁶ Once again all gun communications were destroyed and all orders had to be relayed by voice; this was made difficult by the activities of a sniper who gave the CP his full attention.



32. 1 RAR Operation Toan Thang 3 May - 7 Jun 68, *op cit.*, Annex F.

33. L. McAulay, *The Battle of Coral*, pp. 95-96.

34. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, *op cit.*, p. 375.

35. 102 Fd Bty After Action Report, Lieutenant I.F. Ahearn, GPO, p. 5.

36. RAA Liaison Letter, *op cit.*, p. 27.

SUBSEQUENT OPERATIONS

Post Second Attack Activities

51. After the second attack, FSPB Coral was never seriously threatened again from a direct ground attack. However, it was mortared almost every second night and, on one occasion, rockets were fired into the position.
52. On 18th May FSPB Coral was re-organised and an intensive daytime patrolling program commenced. An indication of the intensity and scale of NVA operations during the period was that a decision was made by HQ 1ATF that only company size patrols would be deployed supported by tanks and APC.
53. Throughout the 26 day period at FSPB Coral, 102 Fd Bty fired in support of extensive combined arms company level operations against heavily armed and well trained NVA units. In particular 102 Fd Bty supported 1 RAR in some 30 or more separate contacts ranging from battles to fleeting exchanges of fire, as well as 3 RAR at FSPB Balmoral.³⁷ [Author - 1 RAR had a total of 36 contacts. It is not possible to confirm accurately which were not supported by 102 Fd Bty. As the 'in direct support' battery it is assumed 102 Fd Bty fired for all contacts requiring artillery support.] In addition 102 Fd Bty provided support for 101st Airmobile Brigade during an air insertion operation. Ammunition expenditure on this task was so heavy that the US undertook to replace the rounds in the middle of the night using Chinooks with rear door dumping runs of canistered 105 mm ammunition.
54. On the 28th May 102 Fd Bty, as part of 12 Fd Regt(-), provided sustained fire support during a major enemy assault on FSPB Balmoral. This support was provided whilst receiving incoming mortar and RPG fire.

Company Operations

55. To gauge the amount of enemy activity that occurred and to assist in developing an appreciation of the extent of the operation, three 1 RAR company actions are outlined below:
- a. 25th May – B Coy whilst escorting three tanks to FSPB Balmoral contacted a platoon (+). This contact developed into a prolonged battle lasting two hours against an estimated battalion (+) occupied base camp area. *Arty and mors were used throughout this contact. They provided effective neutralising fire for the aslt by 6 Pl who were able to close within 20 metres of the en. Subsequently the posn was subjected to an airstrike as the Coy broke contact...*³⁸
 - b. 26th May – D Coy attacked the enemy base camp previously contacted by B Coy destroying 14 bunkers from the complex. This attack continued for two hours and fifty minutes. *The Coy withdrew still in contact under the cover of accurate and close arty and mor fire;*³⁹ and
 - c. 30th May – C Coy patrolling to the northwest of the FSPB, was ambushed by an elite NVA group. This group was believed to be part of an enemy Coy (+) bunker system. This engagement lasted for three hours and fifteen minutes. *En mors started firing ... and were silenced by our own counter mor and arty fire. Mor, arty and light fire team gave good support ...*⁴⁰
56. During all three actions artillery fire was bought in to close range (as close as 50 metres) of the friendly troops for protracted periods at high rates of fire. During the B Coy contact, 1 000 rounds were fired in one hour by 102 Fd Bty.⁴¹ Any mistake at the gunline, or by the forward observers would have resulted in Australian casualties from friendly fire. The situations confronting the companies demanded this close intense rate of fire support. 102 Fd Bty delivered the accurate fire that was demanded and expected of it.

37. 1 RAR Operation Toan Thang 3 May - 7 Jun 68, *op cit.*, Annex A, Appendix 2.

38. 1 RAR Operation Toan Thang 3 May - 7 Jun 68, *op cit.*, Annex D, p. 2.

39. 1 RAR Operation Toan Thang 3 May - 7 Jun 68, *op cit.*, Annex F, p. 3.

40. 1 RAR Operation Toan Thang 3 May - 7 Jun 68, *op cit.*, Annex E, p. 2.

41. Colonel D.M. Tait, regular officer, retired, (Forward Observer B Coy 1 RAR) Interview in 1998 involving Author.

ENEMY COMMENT – 1 RAR AFTER ACTION REPORT

57. Some of the significant points/ observations from the 1 RAR After Action Report on the enemy attacks on FSPB Coral were described as:

- a. **First attack (12th/13th May):**
 - (1) heavy and accurate supporting fire;
 - (2) aggressive enemy – fighting into position and holding contact after first light; and
 - (3) enemy had gun positions pinpointed.
- b. **Second attack (15th/16th May):**
 - (1) heavy and accurate mortar and RPG fire;
 - (2) determination of the enemy; and
 - (3) willingness of the enemy to continue the attack after first light.
- c. **Overall:**
 - (1) enemy was very aggressive and willing to prolong contacts and initiate contact, highlighting the difference between NVA Main Force soldiers and the VC guerrilla;
 - (2) accurate and sustained use of mortars, RPG and recoilless rifles (RCL);
 - (3) the large numbers of infiltration groups passing through AO Surfes showed the importance of the area to the enemy; and
 - (4) the enemy's extensive use of close reconnaissance by day and night enabled him to pinpoint areas of our defence (saplings were found pointing to 105 mm guns and MGs).

OWN/ENEMY CASUALTIES

58. Total enemy casualties during Operation Toan Thang in AO Surfes were 237 KIA, 56 unconfirmed killed and 11 PW (10 NVA and 1VC).

59. To highlight the significance of Operation Toan Thang to the Australian Army it should be noted that during the 26 days from 12th May to 6th June – 1ATF lost 25 KIA⁴² including two Gunners, and 75 WIA⁴³. In comparison on the afternoon of 18th August 1966 at Long Tan, there were 18 KIA and 24 WIA.

102 FD BTY ACTIONS AT FSPB CORAL SUMMARY

12th/13th May

60. The bravery, professionalism, devotion to duty and mateship that were displayed by all members of 102 Fd Bty during the first battle for FSPB Coral were exceptional. In the words of the officer commanding A Coy he ... *was awed by the accounts of the gunners of 102 Field Battery...*⁴⁴ The history of 102 Fd Bty published in the RAA Liaison Letter in 1975 states that thirteen citations for members of the Battery were submitted as a result of actions at FSPB Coral.⁴⁵ After the operation three bravery awards were issued to 102 Fd Bty; one Military Medal (MM) to Sergeant John Stephens No 4 gun; one British Empire Medal (BEM) to Sergeant 'Robbie' Robertson No 5 gun; and one Mentioned In Dispatches (MID) to Sergeant 'Algie' Elgar No 3 gun.

61. Specific instances of note were:

- a. This attack on FSPB Coral was a close quarter combat infantry style battle fought primarily by Gunners to defend their position and defeat a conventional NVA Battalion (2 Bn 141 Regt – identified in the 1 RAR After Action Report 2/68) size assault. Whilst there were infantryman collocated in the mortar position, their priority was fighting for their own survival rather than the defence of FSPB Coral. The official history describes an example of this close quarter fighting

42. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, *op cit.*, p. 401.

43. HQ 1ATF Intelligence Review OP TOAN THANG dated 21 Jun 68.

44. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, *op cit.*, p. 370.

45. RAA Liaison Letter, *op cit.*, p. 27.

by the Gunners of 102 Fd Bty as *On reaching the artillery position, the North Vietnamese overran two guns and desperate fighting at close quarters occurred between gun emplacements. They succeeded in capturing Number 6 gun of 102 Battery on the extreme edge of the gunline, but were driven off by an assault with grenade and personal weapons, coordinated by the gun position officer, Captain [Lieutenant - Author] Ian Ahearn*⁴⁶.

- b. The 102 Fd Bty gunline not only fought a highly successful close quarter combat action, but also at the same time at least three guns continued to support the infantry companies who were under attack elsewhere in AO Surfers by providing indirect fire support for extended periods. The professionalism and dedication of the Gunners were epitomised by the efforts of No 2 gun under the command of Sergeant 'Skeeter' Humphrey. Despite having a wounded member, both tyres destroyed and the associated difficulties with manhandling the gun into position, the detachment managed to respond to every indirect fire order issued from the CP.
 - c. The enemy assault was repelled by Gunners defending their 105 mm guns by firing over open sights and through the use of their MGs, grenades and personal weapons. *In the view of Major Kim Patterson, 1 RAR Operations Officer, it was the gunners' steady fire over open sights which 'saved the day' for the Australians.*⁴⁷
 - d. It was the first and only time splintex has been used by Australian Gunners. As it had not been used before in training or on operations, the Gunners learnt to use it as they engaged the enemy.
 - e. It is the only time in the Vietnam Conflict Australian troops have requested 'direct' artillery fire (friendly) onto their own position to clear the enemy.
 - f. Having successfully defended their gun position they then recaptured the No 6 gun from the enemy who had overrun it when they breached the Battery perimeter. Major General J.D. Kelly, former CO 12 Fd Regt, recalled on his arrival at the gun position ... *a mass of enemy bodies, basically where they had fallen. It was a graphic demonstration of how close they had got, in fact, to the gun pits themselves and a graphic illustration of how they were killed. We proceeded to No 6 gun position. When I got there they were still recovering, and were getting rid of dead and wounded. But they were calm, the gunners, and quite in charge of their job. There was no panic at all.*⁴⁸
 - g. Despite a gun being lost to the enemy, two guns were maintained in the direct fire role and the gun detachments continued to engage the enemy using small arms and with direct artillery fire over open sights. The three other guns were used to provide support to calls for fire from the 1 RAR rifle companies. The members of the gun detachments selflessly exposed themselves to enemy fire as they laid and loaded their 105 mm guns to fire over open sights and to respond to calls for fire from the rifle companies.
 - h. The Battery Guide Warrant Officer Class Two Les Wheeler organised personnel to replenish ammunition from the LZ located 200 metres to the east whilst under fire. The bravery and unselfish concern for their own safety of these 102 Fd Bty personnel was highlighted by the transport junior non commissioned officer, Bombardier Riley who drove a landrover around the gun position throughout the battle delivering small arms and 105 mm ammunition with his lights on, which attracted significant volumes of enemy fire.
 - i. The deliberate and determined clearance of the battery and mortar platoon areas by battery clearing patrols as the enemy withdrew. *Some of the gunners were surprised to find themselves doing just what they had been trained to do [clearing patrols], though never thinking that one day the situation would be as it was that morning.*⁴⁹
 - j. There were many personal and collective acts of bravery concomitant with the exceptional set of circumstances that the Gunners of 102 Fd Bty confronted.
62. The BC, Major Gavin Andrews, his FSCC and forward observer parties with 1 RAR played their part in the battle through coordinating helicopter gunships and C47 'Spooky' support to FSPB Coral and fire

46. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, *op cit.*, p. 368.

47. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, *op cit.*, p. 371.

48. L. McAulay, *The Battle of Coral*, *op cit.*, p. 102.

49. L. McAulay, *The Fighting First*, *op cit.*, p. 58.

support from other Gunner units to the companies. *The first salvo ...destroyed the radios in the FSPB Coral Headquarters – detachment of 12 Field Regiment Headquarters – so 1 RAR Headquarters [102 Fd Bty FSCC] took control of coordination and fire support ...*⁵⁰ Major General J.D. Kelly recalled as one of his vivid memories *The ability of the young officers employed as Forward Observers, who did a great job around Coral.* L. McAulay, *The Battle of Coral*, op cit., p. 336.⁵¹

15th/16th May

63. 102 Fd Bty was again subjected to heavy and sustained mortar and RPG fire, as part of the second major enemy ground assault against FSPB Coral. 102 Fd Bty had two more guns damaged, one of which was the hapless No 2 gun. All tannoy communications with the guns were destroyed again. Despite the communication problems, the damaged guns and incoming enemy fire (including small arms), the guns of 102 Fd Bty continued to provide indirect fire support to 1 RAR.

64. The BC, his FSCC and forward observer parties with 1 RAR coordinated and controlled, in extremely difficult conditions, close fire support from field, medium and heavy artillery, gunships and a C47.

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF 102 FD BTY ACTIONS

65. If FSPB Coral had been lost on the first night, the NVA would have been in a position to 'by pass' the US 'Big Red One' and the 101st Airborne Division. *Sighted squarely on the enemy's line of approach [to Saigon]*⁵² the axis would have then been clear for the NVA advance to Saigon which was approximately 35 kilometres away. *The NVA Regiments and Infiltration Groups which dashed themselves against Coral and Balmoral would undoubtedly have moved into the attacks on Saigon, if they had not been consumed in the actions around the FSPBs.*⁵³ The resistance of 102 Fd Bty on the night of 12th/13th May effectively gained time to permit a coordinated defence of AO Surfers to be established. It also afforded time for 1ATF to commence aggressive offensive operations against the NVA. It disrupted the momentum of the NVA operations in the area and diverted enemy troops over an extended period of time as they struggled to evict 1ATF from the area. In the words of the US commander in the III Corps area 1ATF effectively forced the enemy *to postpone, if not forego for the foreseeable future, plans to initiate another major offensive against Saigon.*⁵⁴

66. On the night of the first attack on FSPB Coral apart from 102 Fd Bty and the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon, the only other 1ATF forces in the immediate proximity were 12 Fd Regt RHQ reconnaissance party; 1 RAR Battalion HQ; and 1 RAR Pioneer and Anti-Armour Platoon's. Only hindsight can assess the political, strategic and tactical outcome if 102 Fd Bty had been defeated. Experience and sound military judgement would conclude that those other elements in the vicinity would have been defeated. The consequence of this event for Australia could have been 150 to 200 personnel killed, wounded or captured. A defeat at this juncture of war, so close following the Tet Offensive (considered by many historians to be the turning point of the Vietnam Conflict), would have placed great political pressure on the Australia government.⁵⁵ The extent of that pressure could be disputed; what is beyond dispute is that had 102 Fd Bty not successfully defended its gun position, the outcome would have had major consequences for Australia's involvement in South Vietnam.

EXTANT RECOGNITION OF AUSTRALIAN INVOLVEMENT

Post Operation

67. **US Army.** At the conclusion of the operation the Commander Second Field Force Vietnam, Lieutenant General F.C. Weyand, issued a letter of Commendation to 1ATF. The content was as follows:

Congratulations to the 1st Australian Task Force for its outstanding conduct of the combat operations in AO Surfers in the Catcher's Mitt area north of Tan Uyen during the period 12 May to 5 June 1968. The aggressiveness and true professionalism displayed by you and your men in interdicting this main enemy route of movement to Saigon disrupted and disorganized the movements of at least seven identified enemy

50. L. McAulay, *The Fighting First*, op cit., p. 55.

51. L. McAulay, *The Battle of Coral*, op cit., p. 336.

52. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, op cit., p. 401.

53. L. McAulay, op cit., p. 322.

54. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, op cit., p. 403.

55. I.G. McNeill and A.K. Ekins, op cit., p. 371.

infiltration groups. Concurrent with the offensive operations, you successfully defended your fire support bases against strong attacks and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy in both men and materiel.

*The professionalism, planning and successful execution of this combat operation in South Vietnam adds another laurel to the already magnificent combat record of the Australian Army. Please convey my personal appreciation for their efforts to the men and officers of the 1st Australian Task Force.*⁵⁶

68. **Australian Army.** CO 1 RAR, Lieutenant Colonel P.H. Bennett, issued the following statement on the 13th May after the first attack on FSPB Coral:

*Today this callsign (1RAR) with G10 (102 Bty) and G98 (12 Fd Regt Recon) ably held up the honour and traditions of those before us. I now believe that an enemy Bn has been severely mauled and our losses have more than been accounted for. I congratulate you all on a job well done with steadiness and bravery second to none. We will all remember this day with pride in our achievements. Let us all thank god for the courage which was added up to the honour of our country.*⁵⁷

Battle Honour

69. The importance of the Battle of Coral to the Australian Army was cemented when the Royal Australian Regiment was belatedly awarded the Battle Honour 'Coral Balmoral' in 1983, 15 years after the battles. This award recognised the collective contribution and bravery of the members of 1 RAR for their efforts during Operation Toan Thang, and in particular at Coral.⁵⁸

Supporting Testimonials

70. Following are three statements by 1 RAR Coral veterans attesting to the critical role which 102 Fd Bty played in the Battle of Coral on the night of 12th/13th May 1968.

71. General Sir Phillip Bennett, former CO of 1 RAR, in an address at the 38th Anniversary of the Battle of Coral stated:

As you know the enemy attacked in the early hours of 13 May. Such was the speed and strength of the initial enemy battalion attack supported by an NVA Regiment that the Mortar position was soon overrun and 102 Field Battery lost a 105 mm Gun before the enemy were forced to withdraw as daylight approached.

*In those 3 or so hours, Lieutenant Tony Jensen and the 17 men in his position **and the Gun Position Officer, Lieutenant Ian Ahearn, with the men of 102 Battery, fought most courageously in close quarter combat.***

*The efforts of these men throughout that night displayed all the determination and personal courage Australian soldiers are so well known for in battle.*⁵⁹

72. A mortarman's perspective of the first night is provided by Lieutenant Colonel Tony Jensen, who as lieutenant was the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon 2IC:

I was responsible for the operations of the mortar base plate position. On arrival at FSPB Coral at about 1700hrs 12 May 68, I was given a position about 50 metres to the north of 102 Field Battery. I sited the platoon and we then set about digging shell scrapes for ourselves, the mortars and the command post. I coordinated the siting of our M60 machine gun, which was part of the defensive perimeter of the fire support base, with the GPO of 102 Bty and HQ 12 Fd Regt.

About 0230 hrs the sentry woke me saying there are about 400 enemy 50 metres away. At this time my mortars and 102 Battery came under very heavy rocket and mortar fire and the FSPB was assaulted by an NVA Regt.

My mortar position was quickly overrun with many casualties. I told Bn HQ what was occurring and requested fire support on our position from the nearby 161 NZ Field Battery and 3 RAR mortars as I decided that with the casualties we had taken and the equipment we had to stand and fight. We could not withdraw.

I yelled to my platoon that I was calling for fire on our position and told them to stay in their pits and defend their ground.

56. Copy of letter held by Australian War Memorial (AWM95 569-2-80 Pt 1).

57. Copy of signal held by Australian War Memorial.

58. Army Ceremonial Manual 2003, Volume 2 Chapter 2 - Battle Honours of the Australian Army, Annex E, p. 2E1.

59. General Sir Phillip Bennett AC, KBE, DSO, 38th Anniversary of the Battle of Coral address, 2006.

Throughout the battle which lasted till dawn we had radio contact on the Bn Comd and Arty Fire Spt nets. I also had voice contact with the GPO 102 Battery and each exchange between us drew enemy MG fire.

After repeated requests and what appeared to be an eternity 102 Battery got clearance to fire splintex over our position. This was coordinated and cleared between GPO 102 Bty and myself and I told my platoon that splintex will be fired over our position, stay in your weapon pits. This occurred 3-4 times. The accuracy of the fire was shown by splintex darts being lodged in a lot of our mortar ammo as well as penetrating two mortar barrels and our radios.

The splintex cleared the enemy from within our position but they continued to move about engaging us, the artillery, and collecting their dead and wounded.

We also had direct fire support from Light Fire Teams and Spooky (a C47 armed with mini guns).

At dawn the GPO 102 Bty told me that he was bringing a clearing patrol out which swept through our position and beyond and then assisted with casevac. 5 of my soldiers were killed and 8 wounded.

Throughout the battle 102 Bty coordinated and provided close and accurate direct fire support to the mortar position whilst defending themselves against ground attack and providing indirect fire support to other sub units of 1 RAR.

Without their very professional provision of this fire support the mortar platoon casualty list would have been much greater.⁶⁰

73. Lieutenant Colonel Kim Patterson, who as a major was 1 RAR Operations Officer has provided an overview of the battle and the contribution of 102 Fd Bty:

During the NVA attack on FSB 'Coral' on the evening of 12/13 May 1968 which over-ran the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon and one gun of 102 Battery RAA, I was the 1 RAR Operations Officer.

1 RAR and 3 RAR flew into new Operational Areas on 12 May. Our aim was to ambush NVA/VC who were retreating from Saigon. The fly-in was disrupted and delayed. Consequently the FSB was poorly laid out and not adequately prepared for defence. The 1 RAR Mor Pl was on the FSB perimeter forward of 102 Bty rather than behind D Coy 3 RAR as anticipated. No-one anticipated what was to follow.

The 1 RAR HQ was fully alert after 2:30 am as D Company had had a brush with what appeared to be a company of NVA. The enemy withdrew but only after inflicting casualties on half of 11 Platoon. The Americans provided medevac helicopters protected by a light fire team of two gunships. The 'dustoff' was complete at 3:30 am and the light fire team leaving, when heavy rocket and mortar fire landed on the mortar platoon and 102 Battery. HQ 12 Field Regiment, commanding the FSB, was put out of action with radios destroyed and HQ 1 RAR assumed control of the FSB defence. Shortly after the incoming fire ceased the Mortar Platoon and 102 Battery was attacked by several hundred NVA, probably a NVA Battalion.

My first reaction was to re-establish radio contact with the light fire team. They responded quickly to provide fire support, forward of the mortar platoon. They also advised neighbouring American gun batteries within range of our plight and several assisted with gun support. As one light fire team ran down its ordnance, it was replaced by a fresh team. Their support was first class.

The enemy was soon all over the mortar base plate position. Contact by phone was continuous with LT Tony Jensen (2IC Mor Pl) and he was able to control the fire support of the 3 RAR mortars. He ordered his men to lay low when the guns fired splintex rounds at the approaching NVA. One section stayed in their position while the other section tried to withdraw to the guns of 102 Battery. They were caught in the cross-fire and nearly all were casualties.

The enemy approached the guns of 102 Battery. Luckily the guns nearest the enemy all pointed at the enemy because of their possible support of the D Company 'dust-off'. They were also behind bunds giving them defensive cover. The large numbers of the NVA enabled them to over-run the number six gun and threaten the number five gun. But the gunners had a good reply with splintex rounds which fired a multitude of steel darts at the NVA. Grenades were exchanged and the NVA were first held and then the number six gun re-captured under the leadership of Gun Position Officer, LT Ian Ahearn. Once the NVA reached the gun position they seemed to run out of leaders – perhaps the covering fire had killed their officers.

60. Lieutenant Colonel A.H. Jensen, regular officer, retired, written statement provided to author, 2007.

CO 1 RAR (LTCOL Bennett) and his HQ team stayed in touch with support company platoons. The Anti-Tank Platoon was able to fire across the front of the Mortar Platoon with fleshette rounds from their 90 mm RCLs. As well as the light fire teams and 'Spooky' DC3 equipped with mini-guns gave good supporting fire. The BC 102 Battery (Major Gavin Andrews) and his Battery 'Ack' (Sergeant Nev Lemon) co-ordinated the fire of 161 Battery and American Battery's, as well as keeping in close touch with the battle raging only 100 metres away.

The fighting became less fierce after 5:00 am. The NVA began to withdraw and fire was directed at their escape routes. Clearing patrols had swept the position by 6:30 am. Our own casualties were 9 KIA and nearly 30 wounded – the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon lost 5 dead and 8 wounded out of 18 men present.

The memories that remain with me were of the many NVA bodies lying just forward of the guns. Some fifty lay there and bloody drag marks indicated that there were many more casualties. **The fighting at the edge of the gun position had obviously been very fierce. The mood of the gunners was very positive – they knew that they had done everything that could be expected of them. Their stalwart defence earned them the respect of all 1 RAR who referred to them as '102 Company' following the battle. 102 Battery was providing gun support again by mid-morning.**

The Mortar Platoon had to survive a different experience, namely lying low in the path of the NVA advance, knowing little of what was happening, occasionally shooting lone NVA moving over their position. After the battle they looked drawn and exhausted, many with distant stares, counting their blessings and mourning close friends.⁶¹

HISTORY OF 'CORAL' HONOUR TITLE SUBMISSION

74. In 1998 a presentation on Operation Toan Thang to the RAA Regimental Committee concluded with a recommendation that the RAA actively pursue the awarding of the Honour Title of 'Coral' to 102 Fd Bty. After consideration of the presentation content and through subsequent informal discussions and formal meetings, the Committee agreed that the feats of 102 Fd Bty at Coral met the guidelines for being allocated the Honour Title of 'Coral'. In 1999 the Regimental Committee endorsed the recommendation that a submission be made seeking 102 Fd Bty be awarded the Honour Title of 'Coral'. Due to the lack of a formal process at the time a decision was never reached with regard to the 1999 submission.

75. In 2005 the RAA Representative Colonel Commandant and the Head of Regiment restaffed the 'Coral' Honour Title submission with the aim of recognising the critical involvement of 102 Fd Bty, on behalf of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, and particularly those veterans of Operation Toan Thang and FSPB Coral.

AUSTRALIAN HONOUR TITLE APPROVAL GUIDELINES

76. The Army authority and guidelines for the awarding of 'Honour Titles' states under the principles for an award, *that honours preserve the memory of events of which not only the past and present, but also future generations, can be proud.*⁶² It also acknowledges that the service of the RAA and Royal Australian Engineers (RAE) is recognised, following British custom, by the award of the motto 'UBIQUE' which is an all encompassing battle honour. It qualifies this acknowledgement by stating that in order to recognise outstanding achievement in battle by individual sub units of the RAA and RAE that the Australian Army will award honour titles to such sub units. The basis for the granting of an honour title is either:⁶³

- a. creditable performance of a close combat function – **achieved with high distinction by the members of 102 Fd Bty on night 12th/13th May 1968;**
- b. outstanding close combat support in an operation for which a battle honour was awarded – **in 1983 the Royal Australian Regiment was awarded the Battle Honour of 'Coral/Balmoral'; or**
- c. outstanding close combat support in operations where no single operation would attract a specific title relating to a battle honour awarded – **102 Fd Bty supported the operations of 1 RAR at Coral and 3 RAR at Balmoral over a extended period of 26 days and in excess of 50 actions.**

61. Lieutenant Colonel K.A. Patterson, regular officer, retired, written statement provided to author, 2007.

62. DI(A) ADMIN 38-3 Administration of Australian Army Battle Honours, Theatre Honours and Honour Titles dated 9 February 2004, p. 2.

63. *ibid.*, p. 7.

CONCLUSION

77. It is concluded that the actions of 102 Fd Bty throughout Operation Toan Thang and in particular at FSPB Coral meet the requirements outlined above both through individual and collective actions.

78. The RAA Regimental Committee commends this submission to the Army Battle Honours and Awards Committee. 102 Fd Bty fought as a team with steadiness and resoluteness at FSPB Coral and in support of 1 RAR in AO Surfers. The Battery's actions in defeating a battalion NVA ground attack and its concurrent support to the other elements in the FSPB and the rifle companies on the night of 12th/13th May 1968 displayed the highest examples of individual and collective bravery and the upmost professionalism whilst under extreme pressure from ground assault. These events were well beyond the level and scale of contingencies that members of an artillery gunline were expected to prepare for and confront within a routine deployment during the Vietnam Conflict.

79. In the annals of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery history, the conduct and bravery of 102 Fd Bty at FSPB Coral on the night of 12th/13th May 1968 was of the greatest magnitude. The close fire support 102 Fd Bty provided to 1 RAR operations from 12th May to 6th June 1968 in AO Surfers was again unparalleled since at least the end of World War Two.

80. The belated acknowledgement of the actions of 1 RAR has established a direct link for the actions of 102 Fd Bty to be also recognised. Hence the RAA Regimental Committee belief that 102 Fd Bty should be formally awarded the Honour Title of 'Coral'.

RECOMMENDATION

81. **It is recommended that 102 Fd Bty be granted the Honour Title 'Coral'** for its actions at FSPB Coral during the period 12th May to 6th June 1968, especially on the night of 12th/13th May 1968 and for its close fire support to 1 RAR in AO Surfers during this period.

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Prepared by: Major D.T. Brennan - Staff Officer to Head of Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery

Background Information: Colonel I.F. Ahearn (Retd) - GPO 102 Fd Bty at FSPB Coral and Colonel D.M. Tait (Retd) - Forward Observer 102 Fd Bty with B Coy 1 RAR.

Date: Friday 6th July 2007

Post Approval Addendum To 'Revised' 102nd Field Battery 'Coral' Honour Title Submission

As part of ensuring the process and facts associated with securing the honour title 'Coral' for 102 Fd Bty are recorded and preserved I would like to add a number of points of clarification and/or amplification that I have become aware of since the 'revised' submission was presented to the Army Battle Honours and Awards Committee in July 2007.

- *Final number 'Killed In Action' during Operation Toan Thang.* Shortly before the 40th anniversary commemorations in 2008 it was agreed that Major George Constable, an army aviator, who was killed while flying route reconnaissance should be officially recorded as being KIA during Operation Toan Thang. Therefore the official number of Australian's KIA has been increased from 25 to 26.
- *Why had the mortar platoon only dug personal shell scraps?*
 - In early 2008 during a conversation with Lieutenant Colonel Tony Jensen (Retd), 1 RAR mortar platoon second-in-command & mortar line commander at Coral, he confirmed that the reason for only digging shell scraps was as a direct consequence of he and his platoon (-) arriving very late in the afternoon (not long before last light). Due to only having limited daylight available to prepare the defences he nominated as the highest priority the 'digging in' of the mortar tubs.
- *Number of calls for fire support / missions fired during the attacks on the early hours of 13 May 1968.*
 - The number of responses by 102 Fd Bty to calls for fire outlined in the submission were established by researching the operations logs of HQ 1 ATF, 1 RAR and 3RAR for the night of 12/13 May 1968 and reviewing the post operation after action reports of the rifle companies of 1 RAR and 3 RAR.
 - One call for fire not recorded anywhere was from Second Lieutenant Gordon Alexander the forward observer with D Coy 1 RAR. At approximately 0330 h (or thereabouts) Second Lieutenant Alexander requested fire support from 102 Fd Bty against enemy activity in the vicinity of his Coy. Much to his surprise the response received from the GPO was – 'This call sign under ground attack – wait out!!' Due to the activity on the gun position there was no immediate response from the guns.
- *What happened to the 102nd Field Battery signals log book from the first night?*
 - In 2007 during a discussion with Colonel Ian Ahearn (Retd), Gun Position Officer 102 Fd Bty, he revealed the signals log book used for recording the actions on the night of 12/13 May 1968 was 'drowned' on the following night (14 May) when it poured rain and the command post was flooded. The log book was damaged beyond recovery.
- *Where is the 12 Fd Regt commander's diary (s) for the Regiment's 1968 / 1969 tour of South Vietnam?*
 - The existence and location of the Regiments diaries remains unknown. What happened to them post Vietnam is a mystery.
- *The use of the terms – Fire Support Patrol Base and Fire Support Base.*
 - Fire Support Patrol Base (FSPB) was American terminology which was adopted by the author of the Australian official history.
 - Fire Support Base was Australian doctrine terminology.
 - The two terms are interchangeable.
- *Bravery Awards.* Colonel Ian Ahearn provided his Battery Commander 13 nominations for bravery awards? After the operation three were awarded. What ultimately happened to the other 10 nominations is unknown?
- *Where are the original framed 'Coral' honour title scroll and approval letter both signed by the governor general held?*
 - Until 102 Fd Bty is re-raised the scroll and letter are held on behalf of the battery by 8/12 Mdm Regt located at Robertson Barracks in Darwin.

Prepared by: Major D.T. (Terry) Brennan, Staff Officer to Head of Regiment

Date: 10 September 2008

Coral honour a first

By Cpl Andrew Hetherington

ARMY's first honour title was presented to 102 Fd Bty by Governor-General Maj-Gen Michael Jeffrey during a service at the Mount Pleasant Artillery Memorial in Canberra on May 14.

The Honour Title Coral was bestowed on the unit for the dedicated service and sacrifice made by its members during the Battle of Coral in Vietnam, fought on May 13 and 16, 1968.

Maj-Gen Jeffrey paid tribute to the unit's members, who fought hard to repel a large advancing North Vietnamese force at Fire Support Base Coral 40 years ago.

"In all the battles and clashes that took place in the sustained and heavy fighting, the guns were always there, invariably providing close, accurate and immediate support to their infantry, armoured, engineer and cavalry colleagues in need," he said.

"[The battery] itself was assaulted and bombarded and temporarily lost a gun, yet in these hectic and very tough battle conditions, the gun crews stuck brilliantly and bravely to their task of supporting their infantry, armour and cavalry comrades, even though at times they were firing over open sights at a determined enemy assault force closing on their own gun lines."

Col Ian Ahearn (ret'd), who in 1968 served as a gun position officer in the unit, made an address reflecting on what the award meant to former members.

"This is our day; this is a gunner's day, you should be filled with pride and melancholy," Col Ahearn said.

"The melancholy is for those who can't be here, for those who we lost and for those who have passed away since. But this is also a day of pride, a day of

commemoration and presentation that you will remember for some time." Receiving the title on behalf of the veterans, CO 8/12 Mdm Regt Lt-Col Craig Furini said he was honoured to be asked to be involved in such a significant occasion by the members of the battery. "More importantly, it was great to see them, after waiting so long, to finally receive the recognition they deserve," Lt-Col Furini said.

To end the service, 8/12 Mdm Regt gunners fired two M2A2 guns in memory of the two gunners killed during the battle.

In a related ceremony on May 13, 12 Fd Regt also received an honour when a commemorative plaque in its name was dedicated at the Australian War Memorial.

More than 350 veterans and guests attended the event. The plaque was unveiled by ex-soldiers of 12 Fd Regt, 161 Fd Bty RNZ Artillery and 131 Div Loc Bty.

Les Partridge, RSM of the regiment from 1966-1969, thanked all who attend-ed and said the plaque was a significant reminder of the efforts of the soldiers of the regiment who fought during the Vietnam War.

"We would like to thank the director of the Australian War Memorial, Maj-Gen Steve Gower (ret'd), for allowing the 12 Fd Regt Vietnam Association to place the plaque in the memorial's grounds," Mr Partridge said.

"It's a permanent reminder to all Australians of the service and sacrifices made by the members of 12 Fd Regt during its two tours of duty in South Vietnam."

'Army' - The Soldiers Newspaper, May 29, 2008



Special moment Guns are fired in memory of Gnr Christopher James Sawtell and Gnr Ian James Scott, HQ Bty, 12 Fd Rgt, RAA.



Recognition: Governor-General Maj-Gen Michael Jeffrey presents Lt-Col Craig Furini with the Honour Title Coral



Memorial: The 12 Fd Regt commemorative plaque unveiled at the War Memorial by Vietnam veterans

Coral 40th Anniversary

Battles of Coral & Balmoral

*By Major D.T. (Terry) Brennan
Editor RAA Liaison Letter*

Introduction

There has been significant coverage of the 40th Anniversary of the Battles of Coral and Balmoral activities held in Canberra in May this year. The purpose of my article is primarily focused on capturing and preserving a record of the anniversary events and the awarding of the honour title of 'Coral' to 102nd Field Battery.

The planning and conduct of the events was overseen by two committees – a National Coordinating Committee co-chaired by 102nd Field Battery veteran Colonel Don Tait (Retired) and an RAA Committee which focused on dedicated Gunner activities. The members of this committee were members of the national committee. The national committee had representatives from across all the major units present during Operation Toan Thang. Gunner members of the committees included Colonel Ian Ahearn (Retired), Rob Costello (President of 12th Field Regiment [Vietnam] Association), Charlie Hankin, Laurie Bird, Allan Harrison, Terry Brennan and as required the Deputy Head of Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Sean Ryan and Regiment Master Gunner Warrant Officer Class One Phil Matthysen. Brigadier Phil Winter, Head of Regiment, on behalf of all Head of Corps maintained a critical overwatch and was chief trouble shooter within Army Headquarters and beyond as necessary.

National Reception

The anniversary commenced with a reception hosted by the prime minister, the Honourable Mr Kevin Rudd, in the Great Hall of Parliament House. This was a resounding success with the numbers present being so large the function spread outside of the hall confines into the foyer. There were speeches from numerous dignitaries including the prime minister and Dr Brendan Nelson the leader of the opposition and General Sir Phillip Bennett commanding officer of 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment at Coral. Some of these speeches are published in this section of the liaison letter. The speeches by Mr Rudd and Dr Nelson were listened to intently by the veterans given the thrust of both was a public acknowledgement of the poor way in which veterans had been treated by the wider Australian community. In fact sections of Dr Nelson's address delivered without notes were received with thunderous applause and cheers from the veterans.

*... Dr Nelson's address delivered
without notes were received with
thunderous applause and cheers
from the veterans.*

In my view from a Gunner perspective the only negative during the speeches was the lack of recognition and acknowledgement of the critical role played the gunners especially 102nd Field Battery and Headquarters Battery in the success of the operation. The conduct of the gunners especially on the first night was brushed over and there was a failure to acknowledge the operation could have ended in disaster for the task force almost before it started had the gunners and mortarmen not stood their ground at Coral. During

this evening and throughout the speeches at the subsequent national commemoration event and in media interviews by non gunner commanders there was a common thread which focused on the impact of introducing tanks to the operation. What was overlooked was there were no tanks at Coral on the first night.

National Commemoration

The following day on a brisk but pleasant Canberra winters day on Anzac Parade in front of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial a national commemoration ceremony was held in the presence of the governor general Major General Michael Jeffery, the prime minister as well as Lieutenant General Sir Donald Dunstan (the deputy commander 1st Australian Task Force and acting commander during most of Operation Toan Thang). The governor general received a royal salute comprising a combined arms 100 man guard on his arrival which was commanded by Major Nick Foxall the current battery commander of 101st Medium Battery. The prime minister delivered the commemorative address while General Dunstan made the veterans address. The very moving prayers were delivered by Father John Tinkler, a Coral veteran, and Father Greg Flynn, while Colonel Ian Ahearn, 102nd Field Battery gun position officer at Coral, lead the Ode. At the conclusion of the ceremony there was a march past reviewed by the governor general of serving soldiers representing all the units at Coral and Balmoral. The major units had their colours on parade as well. The march past was concluded by a wide range of association, unit and veteran group banners being paraded at the rear of the parade. The ceremonial aspects of the commemoration and parade were coordinated by former Regimental Sergeant Major Ceremonial and Protocol – Army Mr Christopher Jobson and the Regimental Master Gunner Warrant Officer Class One Phil Matthysen. The overall parade Regimental Sergeant Major was the Regimental Master Gunner. This ceremony was a moving tribute to all the Coral and Balmoral veterans.

Dedication of Commemorative Plaque

The national ceremony was followed by a dedicated artillery ceremony at the Australian War Memorial. This was to unveil and dedicate a 12th Field Regiment plaque in the sculpture garden to mark the Regiments two tours of South Vietnam. Against a back drop of the war memorial and in a sea of late autumn leaves the court yard chairs were filled to capacity as the gunner family came together. This

was a simple yet poignant ceremony introduced by Major General Steve Gower, director of the memorial, with members representing each battery which had served with the regiment during both tours including 161st Field Battery Royal New Zealand Artillery participating in the unveiling. These individuals were Mal Hundt, Headquarters Battery; Ronald (Tex) Bassan, A Field Battery; Peter Geelen, 102nd Field Battery; John Sullivan, 104th Field Battery; Rod Balwin, 161st Field Battery; and John Dellaca, 131 Divisional Locating Battery. The commemorative address was by Colonel Don Tait, a forward observer and battery captain with 102nd Field Battery. The prayers were lead by Chaplain John (Tink) Tinkler and the ode was delivered by John Stephens, MM the number one of Delta gun at Coral. The Regimental Sergeant Major of 12th Field Regiment at Coral Les Partridge formally thanked and farewelled those present which added a sense of occasion. At the conclusion of this ceremony the war memorial hosted a most welcome light buffet lunch and series of guided tours.

Against a back drop of the war memorial and in a sea of late autumn leaves the court yard chairs were filled to capacity as the gunner family came together.

National Gunner Dinner

In the evening most gunner 'Coral' veterans attended small detachment and group dinners with friends and colleges – many had not seen each other for years. Concurrently Major General Tim Ford and Brigadier Phil Winter hosted a national gunner dinner. This was the first such dinner held since the opening of the national artillery memorial on Mount Pleasant in 1977. The guest speaker was Colonel Ian Ahearn the gun position officer of 102nd Field Battery at Coral. There was a wide cross section of the Royal Regiment present ranging from some of our key old and bold tribal elders to young gunners from a number of the Regiments and everyone in between represented. The feedback was the dinner was a great success with many suggesting there should be another in the not to distant future. I believe Major General Gower summed up the general positive feelings of those present in the following message he sent to me 'Well done in organising ... the National Gunner Dinner. I trust we do not have to wait another 31 years for another one. If we do, I'd better tender my regrets now!'

Artillery Coral Commemorative Ceremony

The next day saw the dedicated gunner commemoration in front of the national artillery memorial. It was a beautiful clear blue sky day which afforded panoramic 360 degree views of Canberra and its environs. In the opening words of the veterans address by Colonel Ahearn 'This is [was] our day!' and yes it was our day and what a magnificent day unfolded in front of the governor general and our extended gunner family. In the Minister of Veteran Affairs subsequent speech in parliament, outlined in 'hansard', he highlighted the uniqueness of this occasion and the quirky 'gunner' sense of humour. There is a copy of the 'hansard' extract containing the comments made in parliament about Coral and Balmoral in this section of the liaison letter.

... opening words of the veterans address by Colonel Ahearn 'This is [was] our day!' and yes it was our day ...

The highlight of the ceremony was the formal announcement of the awarding of the 'Coral' honour title to 102nd Field Battery by the governor general during his address. This is the first honour title ever awarded in the Australian Army. The honour title scroll was formally presented by the governor general to the current commanding officer of 8th/12th Medium Regiment Lieutenant Colonel Craig Furini. In a small ceremony prior the governor general presented to Major Terry Brennan the framed letter signed by him formally approving the award. This gesture was to recognise the key contribution made by Major Brennan over the almost eleven years it took to secure the honour title for 102nd Field Battery. The framed approval letter and scroll will be held on behalf of the veterans by 8th/12th Medium Regiment until 102nd Battery is re-raised.

The prayers were lead by Father Greg Flynn and the ode was delivered by Lindsay Elgar the number one of Charlie gun. The master of ceremonies was Colonel Allan Hutchinson.

A moving moment for me personally occurred after the formal proceeding had concluded when I met and spoke with veterans of Headquarters Battery. I was particularly honoured to meet Mr Vic Page who was wounded on the first night at Coral and has been in a wheel chair ever since. I got a sense that for them the very moving ceremony had been 'bitter sweet'. The two minute guns fired in

memory of Gunner's Sawtell and Scott who were killed at Coral were ironically firing for members of Headquarters Battery. This highlighted the dilemma faced by these veterans. Due to Headquarters Battery only being represented at Coral on the first night by elements of the regimental reconnaissance party they were not eligible to be considered for the award of an honour title. Whilst the ceremony at the war memorial the day before had been in part to address this abnormally it still left those Headquarters Battery veterans on top of Mount Pleasant with a sense of sadness.

... the very moving ceremony had been 'bitter sweet'.

Veterans Dinner

The formal artillery Coral activities concluded with a Coral veterans only dinner in the evening. By all the accounts of those present who I have subsequently spoken, the night was one of healing, camaraderie, high spirits, and above all a real sense of bringing closure on recognition which had been over due and a long time coming.

Conclusion

In conclusion on behalf of the veterans of Coral I would like to acknowledge the support and contribution to ensuring the success of the activities from the following people and organisations: the gunner members of both organising committees, Mr Ian Cartwright and his staff from the Department of Veteran Affairs; Captain Caroline Kelly and Warrant Officer Class Two Mick Spring from Army Headquarters; the combined RAA bands of 1, 7 and 23 Field Regiment's; 8th/12th Medium Regiment members; Australian War Memorial, National Capital Authority, the Federal Golf Club and everybody else who in no matter how small a manner contributed to the overwhelming success of those very special 48 hours in Canberra over the period 12th to 14th May 2008.

Great Hall Reception

Welcome Address

*The Hon Alan Griffin MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs*

Parliament House, Canberra

Monday 12 May 2008

The Prime Minister of Australia, the Honourable Kevin Rudd MP; the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Dr Brendan Nelson MP, General Sir Phillip and Lady Bennett; Major General Peter Phillips and Mrs Phillips; distinguished guests; veterans of the Battles of Coral and Balmoral; ladies and gentlemen.

It is my privilege to officially welcome all of you to this reception – here in the people's Parliament – in honour of those who fought and those who lost their lives during the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral.

We gather this week to remember a moment that is part of our nation's history, our military history and – for many present tonight – their personal history. We have with us the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and many Members of Parliament who are attending tonight to honour this special group of distinguished Australian servicemen.

Recognising this chapter of our military history, present are senior officers of the three Services and the leaders of the Australian ex-service community. I would also welcome the many members of Australia's Vietnam veteran community, here to honour their mates.

Most of all, in recognition of their place in our history, I offer a special welcome to the veterans of Coral and Balmoral, their families and, in particular, the families of the Australians who lost their lives during these battles 40 years ago. Tomorrow, we will gather on Anzac Parade for the national 40th anniversary commemorative ceremony to remember Coral and Balmoral. But first, tonight's reception is an occasion to express Australia's

gratitude to you for your service during the Vietnam War.

Achieving recognition has not always been an easy thing for Australia's Vietnam veterans. Much of the recognition you have received over the years has come through the hard work of the Vietnam veteran community. I think I can say, however, that in recent years Australia has come to better understand and acknowledge the important part you played in defending our nation's interests. You were sent by your nation to Vietnam with a tough job to do. You did that job professionally, with skill and compassion. You earned the respect of your comrades, your allies and your enemy (foes).

*Achieving recognition has not
always been an easy thing for
Australia's Vietnam veterans.*

And, in May 1968 at Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral, you showed all of the bravery and determination that has been the mark of Australia's servicemen and women since the first Anzacs landed at Gallipoli. So this week, I am proud to see the nation give due recognition to Coral and Balmoral – the most protracted and most costly engagement of our long involvement in the war in Vietnam.

In welcoming you here tonight, I would like to acknowledge the hard work that has been done by your National 40th Anniversary Committee and your co-chairs, Don Tait and Garry Prendergast. Bringing together so many veterans from different units and places all over Australia is a big task.

Your attendance here tonight is evidence that so many of you have kept in touch with each other in the years since Vietnam. This is a night for you, your mates and your families. A chance to catch up, to swap stories, to remember those who did not make it home, and those who are no longer with us.

It is now my pleasure to invite the Prime Minister to address you.

Prime Minister's Speech

The Hon Kevin Rudd MP

12 May 2008

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Honourable Alan Griffin MP; The Leader of the Opposition; General Sir Phillip Bennett and Lady Bennett; Major General Peter Phillips and Mrs Phillips; Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, Chief of Army, and Mrs Leahy; veterans of the Battle of Coral and Balmoral; families of those who gave their lives; members of the diplomatic corps; distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

We gather here in the nation's parliament to mark the 40th anniversary of a great example of the courage, conviction and dedication of Australia's servicemen in Vietnam. We gather to honour you, the veterans of the Battles of Coral and Balmoral.

These battles saw some of the heaviest fighting and some of the most prolonged engagements of Australian forces in that theatre. Between 12 May and 6 June 1968, the Australian forces were engaged almost daily with North Vietnamese Army regular forces. The fighting was fierce because the North Vietnamese forces needed to clear the path to Saigon. They had to eliminate Coral and Balmoral and the Australian Task Force so that they could secure their routes to and from Saigon following on from the Tet Offensive.

So the North Vietnamese forces launched attack after attack on Coral and Balmoral. The first attacks began in the early hours the day after our forces arrived. And that first encounter was a sign of things to come – fierce fighting, bloody fighting and at close quarters. It could have been a disaster on that first night. One soldier wrote of that first night at Coral:

'Ammo was low, no grenades, the VC were all around us. Out of the 7 men around the M60, I had lost one dead and one wounded – there was nothing I could do.'

But, thanks to you, thanks to your determination, your professionalism and your courage, that first night was not a disaster. In fact, far from it.

The enemy got a little more than they were bargaining for on that first night. One officer said of his men: they 'fought like thrashing machines'.

But of course our troops – you, our guests of honour tonight – did not just defend, you took the fight up to the enemy. You spent days patrolling,

searching for the enemy and on many occasions came into contact with a determined foe. I understand that initially the infantry – like the infantry in every war, were a bit suspicious of working with tanks. But after the first day's operation alongside elements of the 1st Armoured Regiment against enemy bunkers, perhaps more than a few minds had been changed.

And, just like 50 years earlier in the First World War when General Monash showed at the Battle of Le Hamel that tanks and infantry could work together, you showed that armour and infantry could form an effective fighting team.

The team at Coral and Balmoral went beyond the infantry and the tanks. It included the APCs; it included the artillery; it included air crews and, of course, the medics.

What is remarkable about the battle is that despite all the chaos of the battlefield, and the chaos of trying to establish new positions, and coordinate all the elements of a complex and changing battle plan, everyone played their part – and everyone played their part with distinction.

In spite of the individual danger you all faced, in spite of the risks you all faced, you got on with it. You did your jobs. When that happens, the people around you know that they can have confidence in you. It let them get on with their job too.

It is an important part of the great Australian tradition of looking after your mates. It's part of the tradition of not letting your mates down. It's part of the Australian tradition of the profession of arms. And that is the tradition that you lived up to 40 years ago. It is that tradition that you added to by your actions 40 years ago.

Tonight, as Prime Minister of Australia, I want to pay tribute to your service to Australia in this great battle of the Vietnam War. For your service, I say thank you. For family members here tonight of those who lost their lives, I offer my sympathies. For those whose service to the nation through this terrible war has not been properly honoured by government, I express regret. We can never repay the price you have paid. But tonight I say that we will properly honour the memory of those who fell in the actions around Coral and Balmoral.

Veterans of Australia – tonight it is my great pleasure to host this reception in your honour. The political debate around the Vietnam War was great. But there can be no debate about the valour of those who fought in that war – wearing proudly the uniform of Australia. On this the 40th anniversary of the Battles of Coral and Balmoral, the nation salutes you.

National Ceremony

Welcome Address

*The Hon Alan Griffin MP
Minister for Veterans Affairs*

Anzac Parade, Canberra

Tuesday 13 May 2008

Your Excellencies the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia Major General Michael Jeffery and Mrs Marlena Jeffery; the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Kevin Rudd MP; the Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP, representing the Leader of the Opposition; Members of the Diplomatic Corps; Chief of the Defence Forces, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston; the many distinguished veterans of the Battles of Coral and Balmoral; other distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen.

Australia has a strong tradition of commemorating those who have served in the defence of our nation. For decades, we have gathered on our national days of commemoration to remember and honour the Australians who have served in times of war and conflict, and those who have given their lives in that service. Today we gather here, at our nation's Vietnam Forces Memorial, to remember the battles that took place 40 years ago at Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral.

*... especially welcome the families
of the Australian soldiers who lost
their lives at Coral and Balmoral ...*

Today we bring together, not only the men who fought in those engagements, but the veterans for whom the Vietnam War has been both a shared experience and a bond in the years since they returned home. We gather to share with them the remembrance of their service in Vietnam and to express our appreciation for that service. And we especially welcome the families of the Australian

soldiers who lost their lives at Coral and Balmoral, to assure them that the nation has not forgotten that sacrifice.

On behalf of the Australian Government, I welcome all of you:

- veterans and their families;
- serving members of the Australian Defence Force;
- distinguished guests; and
- members of the public

to this 40th anniversary ceremony. Join with us now in the spirit of commemoration, and in remembrance of absent friends

Prime Minister's Speech

The Hon Kevin Rudd MP

Anzac Parade, Canberra

13 May 2008

Your Excellencies the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Major General Michael Jeffery and Mrs Marlena Jeffery; The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Honourable Alan Griffin MP; The Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP, representing the Leader of the Opposition; The High Commissioner of New Zealand, our co-combatants in this action; Members of the Diplomatic Corps; Veterans of the Battle of Coral and Balmoral; Families of those who gave their lives; Distinguished guests; Ladies and gentlemen

Welcome to this beautiful Canberra morning. On this, our avenue of heroes.

In this country the Vietnam War is sometimes remembered not for what happened in Vietnam, but for what happened in Australia. Today, I want to say that the Australian Government remembers what happened in Vietnam with our men and women in uniform. The Government remembers the sacrifice of those who fought. The Government remembers the ultimate sacrifice of those who fell. And we remember with pride the qualities displayed by our men and women who served in Vietnam.

Australia's defence forces served with great distinction through the Vietnam War. As did their father's before them, and as did their father's before them, in previous conflicts, all wearing, proudly, the uniform of Australia.

You – the veterans here today – upheld all the great traditions that are ANZAC. 60,000 Australians served in Vietnam. 520 gave their lives in Vietnam. And many others still their lives scarred by that conflict.

The battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral were the largest and longest series of actions of the war for Australian forces. Today the nation pauses to mark the 40th anniversary of those battles. Coral and Balmoral has become a part – an important part – of Australian military history.

It was a large action, it was a long action, it was a bloody action. It was strategically significant. And it was an action costly in the lives of the brave young Australians – Regulars and Nashos – who gave, literally, their all.

A couple of months ago I went to the Australian War Memorial to open the new gallery for conflicts from 1945 to the present. One of the battles that is commemorated in that gallery is Coral and Balmoral. I saw the Howitzer from Fire Support Base Coral there in the gallery. It is the No.6 Howitzer from the gun pit at Coral that was overrun on that first night of fighting. The gun pit that was, in true Australian fashion, retaken soon after and the gun reclaimed. It says a lot about the way you fought, it says a lot about the way in which you died. Always looking to go on the offensive, never turning back.

This was but one action in a long and tough battle. A battle 'like looking death in the eyes' according to one veteran from the engagement. When you look through the combat diaries from 1 RAR and 3 RAR for May, you get a feel for the level of the engagement – day and night, week in, week out heavy enemy action. Patrols and contacts. Sniper fire and mortar attacks. Mass attacks against both fire support bases.

At one stage the order was issued to fix bayonets to advance on the enemy. And through it all, you, the troops, displayed all that is great and good about Australia's defence force.

Not everyone returns from war and the battle of Coral and Balmoral it was the same. 26 brave young Australians lost their lives, men in the prime of their lives – 11 Regulars and 15 Nashos.

Today we honour the memory of the fallen. Today they are our silent partners in this great national reflection. Though their families are with us still I would say this to them. We honour your loss and we thank you for their sacrifice. We also honour the veterans here with us today, from that great battle.

*We have not always been good at
thanking our Vietnam veterans.*

We have not always been good at thanking our Vietnam veterans. In fact at, times we've been very bad at it. The time has well and truly come to turn the page and to turn the corner. To thank you all on behalf of a grateful nation for doing your duty to the nation.

After the first engagements then Lieutenant Colonel Philip Bennett, Commanding Officer of 1RAR sent around a message to all units involved saying: 'We will all remember this day with pride in our achievements'. Lieutenant Colonel, now General Bennett was absolutely right. You should be proud of your achievements. We are proud of your achievements, we are proud of your achievements in the profession of arms.

So, on this, the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Fire support Bases Coral and Balmoral, let us never forget our men and women in uniform. Those who have worn the uniform and those who still in conflicts abroad wear the uniform today. Because there is no higher calling in this great nation of Australia, than to wear our nation's uniform.

RAA National Ceremony – Mt Pleasant

See over page for address by Governor
General

ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JEFFERY AC CVO MC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
**REMEMBRANCE SERVICE AND PRESENTATION OF HONOUR TITLE TO 102ND FIELD
BATTERY RAA**
ROYAL REGIMENT OF AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY NATIONAL MEMORIAL, MOUNT
PLEASANT, CANBERRA
14 MAY 2008

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Tet offensive - one of the pivotal campaigns and a turning point psychologically in the Vietnam War.

And today we specifically mark 40 years since the heavy and sustained battles at and around the Fire Support Base known as Coral.

Some history:

At the end of January 1968, communist forces in South Vietnam launched concentrated attacks against most major cities and regional centres.

The 1st Australian Task Force deployed two battalions twenty kilometres northeast of Bien Hoa city to intercept and disrupt the approach of enemy forces towards Saigon and possible attacks on the US base complex at Long Binh - Bien Hoa.

Several fire support bases were established to provide flexible, defended firing points for artillery and mortars, in support of our infantry, armoured and cavalry forces.

Occupation of fire support base Coral began on 12 May 1968, however the defences were still incomplete when at about 3.30 am the next morning, a brief but intense rocket and mortar barrage preceded a violent assault on Coral by North Vietnamese Army regular forces.

The ensuing battle was fierce; genuine close-quarter fighting, with guns firing splintex rounds over open sights, and at one point Tony Hammett, Commanding D Company 1RAR, ordering his company to 'fix bayonets'.

The 1RAR mortar platoon position was over-run, along with one of 102 Field Battery's six 105 mm howitzers.

However by 6.30am and with the aid of extensive air support the attack was finally beaten off and the gun pit and howitzer retaken.

Eleven Australians were killed and 28 wounded, whilst a further three died in patrol clashes on 14 May. At least 52 of the enemy were killed.

At 2.15 am on 16 May Coral again came under attack, this time from a North Vietnamese Army force estimated at three battalions.

The base was now defended by armoured personnel carriers of A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, and 1RAR's rifle companies, all of which were heavily engaged.

Part of the A Company position was occupied for a period, but the enemy was forced to withdraw.

The attack was repelled after four hours of fighting, with the Australians having suffered five men killed and nineteen wounded.

Two members of an American battery which had reinforced the base were also wounded.

Some 34 enemy bodies were recovered, but blood trails and drag marks indicated that many more casualties had been removed.

On 22 May Coral was subjected to yet another rocket and mortar barrage, but this time the North Vietnamese Army troops were dispersed by return fire from 1RAR's mortars as they formed up to attack.

Although there were further bombardments on 26 and 28 May, and patrols sent out from the base came into contact with the enemy, Coral was not seriously threatened again.

During fighting on 26 May the base's defenders even turned the tables on the enemy by sending a troop of Centurion tanks from C Squadron, 1st Armoured Regiment outside the perimeter wire with infantry support.

These engaged and destroyed most of an enemy bunker system that had been discovered. God bless the tanks; they saved all our bacon on so many separate occasions throughout the Vietnam War.

Between 26 and 31 May further fighting continued at Coral and its surrounding patrol zone, before operations were terminated on 6 June 1968.

During this period, at least 45 of the enemy were accounted for, for the loss of one Australian with seven wounded.

So why do we specifically recognise 102 Field Battery through the award of the 'Coral' Honour title today?

Essentially it is because in all the battles and clashes that took place in that three weeks of sustained and heavy fighting, the guns were always there, invariably providing close, accurate and immediate support to their infantry, armoured, engineer and cavalry colleagues in need.

Secondly, we honour the Battery because it itself was assaulted and bombarded and temporarily lost a gun, yet in these hectic and very tough battle conditions, the gun crews stuck brilliantly and bravely to their task of supporting their infantry, armour and cavalry comrades, even though at times they were firing over open sights at a determined enemy assault force closing on their own gun lines.

And thirdly, it is totally fitting and appropriate that with the award of the battle honour 'Coral Balmoral' to the Royal Australian Regiment, that the Battery which shared the same dangers and experiences should also share in battle honour recognition.

And so it is that on this 40th anniversary, we remember and honour the Australian servicemen who acquitted themselves so supremely well in these fierce encounters, and in particular the gallant gunners of 102 Field Battery.

We remember with sadness, pride and gratitude, the 25 Australians killed and 100 wounded at Coral and Balmoral, and those wives, children, brothers, sisters and mums and dads left to mourn the loss of a loved one; many of whom it was Marlina's and my privilege to meet at the Vietnam Memorial Service yesterday.

Today we can also extend our sympathy to the families of our adversaries who perished in these attacks, because generosity of spirit is part and parcel of the Australian ethos and Vietnam and Australia are now good friends.

Ladies and gentlemen

Over 60,000 Australians served in Vietnam. Of that number, 520 died and over 3000 were wounded or injured.

While the Tet offensive cost our adversaries 45-50,000 troops, and was a decisive tactical defeat for them, the propaganda effect of the offensive caused huge consternation in the minds of the Australian and American people.

It led to a major change in government policy in both countries towards the conflict in South Vietnam.

Decades of downplaying the achievements of our Australian forces in Vietnam then followed.

As a former serving officer and now as your Commander-in-Chief, it is therefore a particular privilege and pleasure to see put to right another part of our gallant historical Vietnam record by recognising the professionalism, the valour and the indomitable spirit of all members of 102 Field Battery of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery.

In honouring their service and sacrifice, we should remember that the Vietnam War - like any other war - was not pleasant.

It was dirty, frightening at times, boring in part for some and, for short periods, exhilarating, but certainly not glorious.

What was glorious was that our gunners did what was asked of them by their country and their mates in dire need, and did it magnificently.

A number of them still suffer from personal, health and relationship difficulties because of these experiences and perhaps because of an unsatisfactory homecoming.

For them, the Vietnam Veterans' Association together with our magnificent Service and Unit Associations, including the Returned and Services League, offer vital assistance and I encourage veterans to support these organisations, through membership and committee work.

And so it is we come together today to commemorate and honour those who served the guns and their country at Coral.

We honour them all; those who did not return, those who returned hurt in body or mind and those who have passed on since.

None should ever be forgotten and none will.

Congratulations 102 Field Battery and God bless you all.

Veteran's Address

By Colonel Ian Ahearn (Retired)

Gun Position Officer 102 (Coral) Battery 1968

Your Excellencies - Major General and Mrs Jefferies; Minister Griffin – Minister for Veterans' Affairs; Major General Power – Commander Training Command; Veterans; Ladies and Gentlemen

Last but not least – the veterans of Coral; the men of 102 Battery, Headquarter Battery and 131 Divisional Locating Battery.

This is our day. This is the day of the Gunners! It is a day filled with Pride and melancholy. Pride in formal recognition of what we achieved some forty years ago. Melancholy for those our brothers in arms who paid the supreme sacrifice all those years ago and for those of the battery who have since passed away and cannot share this experience with us.

This is both a commemoration and a presentation; a commemoration to remember those of us that did not survive Coral – not only Gunners Scott and Sawtell but all the other Australians that gave their lives in that battle. A presentation that makes us all part of history. There has been no other Honour Title issued to an Australian Army unit or sub unit – so history will be made today when our Commander-in Chief bestows the Title 'CORAL' on 102 Battery.

Napoleon Bonaparte, another famous short Gunner, said 'Leave the Artillerymen alone, they are an obstinate lot...'

Forty years ago the North Vietnamese Army proved Napoleon right. We were an obstinate lot on the first night that the NVA roared into our position preceded by a rolling barrage of RPGs and machine gun fire. We all have our own distinctive memories of that night without end but my memory is of the steadfastness of all of you as you responded to the chaos all around you.

Some of my memories are still vivid. The green glow of the incoming tracer; The fiery trails of the RPGs; the fierce flames as the charge bags of No 1 gun ammunition burnt; Doc Mackenzie treating the wounded in the Command Post; Peter Riley driving the Landrover through the position with its lights on, re-supplying ammunition; The flashes of small arms in the turmoil that was the 1 RAR mortar position; The crash of the rounds fired by No 4 including the breathless moment when an illumination round was fired point blank; The pop of flares and the tearing sound of mini-guns from

Spooky and gun ships; the silence in the mortar position after the splintex from No 5 scythed across it; the sad sight of the wounded and dead Mortarmen when we moved into their position.

Through all of this we were still able to answer the call for support from the infantry. Initially three guns provided this support but shortly after dawn all five remaining guns answered a call for fire and Gaven Andrews, our Battery Commander, recorded his most vivid memory of the entire operation;

'first two guns fired, then three then five. The gunners had shrugged off the events of the night, and began to function in their primary role, that is, give close support to the infantry. I felt extremely proud of them, as I did on many occasions, but that time was very special to me.,

You will all have similar vivid flashes of memory each connected to your own experiences and perspective on the night.

We must not forget the others that shared our experiences that night and that the presentation of this title owes as much to them as to the efforts of 102 Battery. The men of 1 RAR Mortar Platoon, Headquarter Battery 12th Field Regiment and the Detachment of 131st Divisional Locating Battery must be included whenever we reflect on the award of the Honour Title. It is their day as much as it is ours.

Yet that was but one night over a long three weeks of days and nights. On the morning of the 16th May the NVA came back. They announced their presence with a fierce bombardment of Coral mainly centred on the guns of 102 Battery and A Battery 2/35th US Artillery. I know I speak for all that experienced that bombardment when I say there no greater feeling of helplessness than being on the wrong end of any type of artillery. I can only say that the experience filled me with admiration for those who suffered much greater bombardments in the two World Wars. The infantry of 1 RAR bore the heavy lifting in this attack and we reverted to our fire support role all be-it with enemy small arms fire zipping in and around the guns.

The endless fire missions including the all day support for the US airmobile group that repaid our efforts by the delivery of ammunition in the middle of the night, with cartridge canisters strewn all over our LZ which they lit up with their search lights.

The tour of the battery by the US Airmobile brigadier to thank us for a job well done and a promise of beers which, despite rumours to the

contrary was never delivered and certainly not consumed by the officers in some hidey hole!

The constant mortar attacks; the arrival of the Centurion tanks a sight that gladdened us all.

Our experiences together have created a bond that has lasted these forty years. Those experiences have finally been recognised after a long and convoluted process with the awarding of the Honour Title 'Coral'. We the veterans need to give thanks to the people that laboured so hard over the last eleven years to reach this point

I believe that some of those people need special mention. Major Terry Brennan has toiled tirelessly over a long period to achieve the recognition that you so justly deserve. On your behalf I would like to express our heartfelt thanks for the outstanding job he has done. Thank you Terry.

Brigadier Phil Winter has, as Head of Regiment been unstinting in his support and enthusiasm. Thank you Phil.

Chris Jobson, who made the mistake of answering his telephone 18 months ago and who has contributed so much. Thank you Chris.

Thanks must also go to the staff of DVA who have laboured so long to bring about these days of commemoration. Our appreciation and thanks to all involved but especially to Ian Cartwright, Susan Nolan and Kylie Matruglio.

Thanks also to the sterling efforts of the Gunner Members of the Committee not only for this day but for all the activities associated with the wider commemoration.

It has been an emotional few days but today is special for the Royal Regiment. There is an old gunner saying

'Gunnery will always fight together, drink together, laugh together, and mourn together.'

We have fought together forty years ago. We have been drinking and laughing for all of those forty years and will do so again tonight.

Today we will mourn together.

To the veterans of 102 Battery present here today and for those who are no longer with us. You have earned this accolade. You can and should feel proud of this singular recognition of what you have achieved. You have created a legacy for those that follow.

It is an honour to be so recognised and you should cherish it. I feel privileged to have served with you. Thankyou

Ceremonies remember key battle

ABC Online - Posted Tue May 13, 2008 10:01am AEST.
Updated Tue May 13, 2008 2:53pm AEST

The 40th anniversary of a key battle in the Vietnam War will be remembered during ceremonies in Canberra.

In May 1968, units of the 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) confronted members of the North Vietnamese army in fierce action around Fire Support Base (FSB) Coral and FSB Balmoral in Bien Hoa province. Fighting continued into June and 26 Australian soldiers died during the battle.

Around 1,000 guests and veterans attended a service at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade this morning ahead of a plaque unveiling at the Australian War Memorial (AWM).

AWM senior historian Ashley Ekins says the Coral/Balmoral battle was the most sustained and arguably most hazardous battle of the Vietnam War.

"The engagements around these fire support bases rivalled in intensity and duration the largest action previously by Australian soldiers during the battle of Long Tan in August 1966," he said.

Former Australian commander Lieutenant General Donald Dunstan says tanks were used for the first time to repel the enemy and were a dominating factor in the battle. "Infantry and tanks had not worked together and had not had time to train together. The tanks arrived only a couple of weeks before the Coral/Balmoral hit us," he said. "So When they went into action against a very strong enemy they were beginners but they were so marvellous and they were so successful and I'm quite sure there were many many Australian infantrymen still alive because the tanks were there."

Recognition

Sir Dunstan says he is glad the Coral/Balmoral battle is finally being given the recognition it deserves.

"Long Tan had all the publicity, which they deserved, but we had nothing, absolutely nothing at the time it was taking place and very little since. Now this is going to correct that I hope" he said. "Long Tan had media ... They saw a lot of it, they were only mile or two away from it. We were a 100 miles away from the media because most of them were in Saigon. It wasn't surprising that we didn't get any publicity at all. There was practically nothing at all in the Australian papers."

Sir Dunstan says it is important the battle is remembered.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd agrees, telling this morning's ceremony Australia has not been good at honouring Vietnam veterans.

"We in this country have not always been good at thanking our Vietnam veterans. In fact at times, we've been very bad at it," he said.

"The time has well and truly come to turn the page and to turn a corner."



His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retd)
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

16 May 2008

Brigadier Philip Winter, CSC
Head of Regiment
Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery
Russell Offices
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Brigadier Winter,

Thank you for hosting Marlena and me so well at the ceremony commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Battle of Coral/Balmoral recently.

Commemorations such as these are important in remembering and honouring our fallen soldiers, and this service was particularly poignant as we reflected on the deeds of the soldiers of 102 Field Battery and both 1 and 3RAR over some three weeks of heavy fighting.

It was an honour to lay a commemorative wreath at the ceremony, and I particularly enjoyed the opportunity to speak with so many friends, veterans and serving soldiers after the service.

I commend you and your staff for the good work in organising such an outstanding memorial service.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Jeffery".

(Michael Jeffery)

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Hansard Extracts

No. 5, 2008

Tuesday, 13 May 2008

FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Commence Page 2550 HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES Tuesday, 13 May 2008

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLES OF FIRE SUPPORT BASES CORAL AND BALMORAL

Mr RUDD (Griffith—Prime Minister) (2.24 pm)—Mr Speaker, I seek indulgence to make a statement on the 40th anniversary of the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral from the Vietnam War. Forty years ago today, on 13 May 1968, Australian soldiers in the South Vietnamese province of Bien Hoa were coming to grips with the first engagements of what would become known as the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral.

The Australian forces had only deployed to their new positions late on 12 May. Their defences were still unfinished when the first contacts were made in the early hours of 13 May. When the North Vietnamese army attacked in the vicinity of a mortar platoon and a gun battery at 3.30 am the battle began in earnest. The first night was a harrowing experience for the soldiers fighting against overwhelming numbers of enemy, fighting in the flare and trace of darkness, fighting a bloody engagement that left 11 Australians dead. We do not know how many North Vietnamese army soldiers died although they left 52 dead scattered around the base.

In the morning one soldier recalled looking around and seeing that everyone was covered in grey mud. There was a strong smell of cordite and gunpowder. It was an opening action in which our troops in the words of one senior officer, 'Performed with steadiness and bravery second to none.' The battle that started that night ebbed and flowed for nearly four weeks. That is an extraordinarily long military engagement. Our troops - including tank and APC crews, aircrews, artillery, infantry and support troops - defended their positions against repeated attacks. They patrolled into areas held tight by the North Vietnamese army and in the end they prevailed. The North Vietnamese army was forced

to withdraw, badly mauled by the Australian forces. It was a hard won victory for the Australian troops. It cost 26 Australian lives and over 100 wounded. Coral and Balmoral saw Australia's first all-arms brigade-sized action since the Second World War. It is recognised as the longest and most sustained series of engagements fought by Australian forces in the Vietnam War.

Today I want to ask the House to join me in expressing our thanks to all the Australians who fought in the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral. The veterans of Coral and Balmoral added another chapter to the proud history of the Australian military. They showed all the qualities that Australian troops first displayed to the world at Gallipoli and during the Battle of the Western Front in the First World War and in the great battles of the Second World War and conflicts since - courage, determination and ingenuity. We in Australia have sometimes fallen short in our duty to recognise the veterans of the Vietnam War. We should not fall short in that duty any longer.

Today I want to make clear to everyone that the Australian government is proud of our veterans. The Australian government is proud of the way in which they have served. The Australian government on behalf of the Australian people is grateful for the veterans who have served their country with honour including in this action in Vietnam.

Today we remember the veterans of Coral and Balmoral, some of whom I had the pleasure of meeting last night together with the Leader of the Opposition. Today we also remember those who fell. We remember those who gave their lives in serving their country. We honour their memory. Today we also remember their families. The family members of those who died, whose suffering 40 years on still remains and remains felt deeply. To those family members I say that we cannot repay the price that you have paid but we can assure you of one thing - and that is the thanks of a grateful nation. Today we honour all those Australians who fought at Coral and Balmoral.

Dr NELSON (Bradfield—Leader of the Opposition) (2.28 pm)—On indulgence, I join the Prime Minister in supporting this statement. Forty years ago last night Australia was a different country and it was quite a different world when brave Australian men, Australian soldiers, again in our uniform, went to Coral and Balmoral Fire Support Bases some 20 kilometres north of Bien Hoa in South Vietnam.

Over a 3½-week period 2,000 Australian soldiers would be engaged in what was very heavy contact. As the Prime Minister said, almost 60 Vietnamese were confirmed dead, but the reports are in the order of some 300. Three and a half weeks after the initial movement on the evening of 12 May, 26 Australians would have given their lives and 100 would be wounded, but every single one of those men that returned to this country was a different man from that which he had been when he went.

It is very easy for us in this century to look back and settle for the broad brush strokes of our history and to not fully appreciate individual sacrifices that have been made in our name. But in our uniform, under our flag, under the Australian Army rising sun, they were wounded, they gave their lives and they suffered emotional and other traumas. Their families made enormous involuntary sacrifices to allow them to serve our nation. In doing so, their deep unyielding grief for those who were lost and those who were wounded in emotional and physical terms should remind every Australian that there are some truths by which we live that are worth fighting to defend.

As I said last night at the reception for these men and their families and the men and women who wear our uniform today, there are many things of which our country can be and is enormously proud. These men are one of the highest, if not the highest, examples. But one of the things that we must seek to do as a nation is this: whatever the circumstances and whatever the decisions taken by our governments to send men and women forward in dangerous ways in our name to fight for our values and our beliefs, we should never repeat the way in which these men were treated when they returned from the conflict in South Vietnam. We will honour them not only by this gesture but mostly by the way we choose to live our lives and shape our nation. We thank them for what they have done for us. Lest we forget.

MAIN COMMITTEE

40th Anniversary of the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral

Reference

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (2.31 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the orders of the day relating to the resumption of debate on the Prime Minister's motions and further statements by indulgence relating to the fortieth anniversary of the battles of

Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral, Vietnam, be referred to the Main Committee.

Question agreed to.

No. 6, 2008

Tuesday, 27 May 2008

FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Commence Page 3439 Tuesday, 27 May 2008
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLES OF FIRE SUPPORT BASES CORAL AND BALMORAL

Debate resumed from 13 May.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (Mackellar) (8.00 pm) - On indulgence: in rising to speak on this matter, I do so in the sense that we have had a very successful reception given for those who fought in the battles of Coral and Balmoral. We have also had a very important commemorative service at the Vietnam Memorial for 3RAR as well as for Coral and Balmoral. There has been a general awakening of thought and the need to remember and put into context the fine service given by Australian soldiers fighting in the battles of Vietnam. We have heard how badly our men were treated when they came back from fighting in Vietnam and yet the intensity, malice and vitriol of those people who denigrated them and their families during the Vietnam War I think also need to be revisited to understand exactly what it was that those men and women went through. It is also important to put in context the battles of Coral and Balmoral as fire support bases and perhaps to revisit the Tet offensive of 1968 and Operation Thuan Thang (Complete Victory) from April to June of 1968, of which Coral and Balmoral were a part. The Tet offensive was the aspiration of the North Vietnamese to, in their terms, 'liberate South Vietnam' with uprisings all over South Vietnam, with the intention of winning the war.

Part of that Tet offensive was the battle of Hue, where an incredible massacre by the Viet Cong took place of the people who lived in Hue. Hue was a city where intellectuals lived and there was a real understanding of what democracy was about. I am most grateful to be one of many people reading Vietnam, the Australian War by Paul Ham, which

puts into context and explains so many of the things that happened.

Paul Ham wrote of that battle:

The massacre of some 6,000 inhabitants of Hue who were the educated citizens who were chosen for death by shooting, clubbing, bayoneting or being buried alive because they were educated and middle-class and they would not capitulate to the North Vietnamese.

Paul Ham's book says:

The massacre fulfilled the letter of the Liberation Front directive of 2 December 1965 sent to regional and district commissars, party and political training schools and said in areas temporarily under enemy control, 'We are to exterminate key and dangerous elements of such parties as the Vietnamese Nationalist Party.'

Sentiments perhaps reminiscent of Pol Pot and his killing fields, but the barbarity of the attack on the people of Hue was not reported in the Western press. They were much more interested in reporting against our troops and against our people. The stories that I have heard since, with people coming together, tell how wives living at Holsworthy would not be served by shopkeepers in Liverpool because their husbands were serving in Vietnam. Children were singled out for bullying in the playground because their father was serving in Vietnam. One story told of a soldier who had died of appalling wounds and whose parents were rung up by an anti-Vietnam demonstrator. Speaking to this person's parents, they said, 'He got what he deserved.' Their home was then daubed with red paint. These are truly shameful incidents that occurred and have been pushed back in memory. But if we are truly to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of the men and women who served in Vietnam then we must revisit the malice and vitriol that was around at that time.

The Tet offensive was unsuccessful for the North Vietnamese. Something like 45,000 Vietcong lost their lives. But the TV coverage of the Tet offensive sent a message that preached against the actions of those opposed to North Vietnam and the Vietcong. The result was that President Johnson announced on 31 March 1968 that he would not seek re-election and that he would stop the bombing of North Vietnam and negotiate with Hanoi. General Westmoreland's departure to the US was announced. He was being kicked upstairs, as the jargon went. Hanoi was buoyed by the failure of nerve, and the People's Army troops poured into South Vietnam.

On 13 May, the communist leaders agreed to begin the so-called peace negotiations in Paris, which coincided with an escalation of the war. Hanoi saw the West's weakness and they launched a mini Tet offensive. Contemporaneously with the announcement of peace talks was the beginning of Coral and Balmoral. Australia's General Macdonald agreed to send two Australian battalions, the 1st and 3rd, to support the defence of Saigon. Lieutenant Colonel Phillip Bennett and Lieutenant Colonel Jim Shelton were the respective battalion commanders, two very esteemed gentlemen—soldiers; brave.

The Australians were under American command and were tasked to block enemy withdrawals and reinforcements from Saigon. They were to be dropped into country rife with enemy and were meant to lure the enemy into the open. 'Surfers' was the codename they gave to the area around Bin Hoa, which they further divided into areas called Bondi, Newport and Manly. They had to establish a fire support patrol base, which they called Coral, named after an Australian officer's girlfriend. The aim was to protect the weapons system and armoured operations in the area of operations.

On the night of 12 May, initial contact was made with the North Vietnamese army, who all day had been observing them being dropped in by helicopter. The North Vietnamese struck with full force at 3.30 pm, but the Australians' training kicked in. I would like to read an extract from Paul Ham's book. He says:

Both sides fought like threshing machines. 'The enemy withdrew under devastating firepower and was severely mauled,' said Bennett the next morning. The gunships and fighters, the bravery of the Australian mortar and artillerymen and the effective operation of the 1st Battalion command post, notably the fire support control centre, had saved the base from being completely overrun. The ashen-faced Australian survivors rested amid the shambles, many in a state of shock. The wounded were airlifted to Vung Tau, and Staff Sergeant Terry Loftus packed the personal effects of the dead for dispatch to Australia. Some-where in the jungle, hundreds of North Vietnamese soldiers dragged their comrades to makeshift field hospitals and the strange mournful utter of the battlefield subdued into birdless silence. On the earth before Coral lay hundreds of pairs of Ho Chi Minh sandals. Fifty-two North Vietnamese army bodies were recovered and buried in a mass grave.

Private Dick Nordon, whose action prompted Sir Roden Cutler VC to remark quietly when decorating him, 'I do

not know what one has to do these days to win a Victoria Cross.' He was caught in an ambush. Nordon had rushed forward under covering fire to retrieve two Australian wounded. His section commander and forward scout shot 20 metres ahead. As he ran, Nordon himself was wounded. He shot a Vietnamese soldier then, out of ammunition, grabbed the dead man's rifle and continued firing until he reached his section commander, whom he dragged to safety. Nordon then raced forward again under fire and reached the now dead Australian scout, whose corpse the Vietcong rifleman was using as a shield. Nordon killed this soldier, returned to his section, ran forward a third time with grenades and cleared the area so that the scout's body could be retrieved. Nordon single-handedly saved his section commander's life and reversed the enemy's advantage with complete disregard for his own safety.

The men who fought for Australia in Vietnam were proud, courageous and endowed with the Anzac spirit. Balmoral was the name given to the second fire support base in the Newport area near the village of Bingmei. It was another tethered goat strategy - that is, designed to lure the enemy out into the open. Lieutenant [Colonel] Jim Sheldon of the 3rd Battalion was chosen for this second base. He made two very important decisions: firstly, he welcomed Australian centurion tank support; and, secondly, instead of flying in his battalion for the North Vietnamese Army to observe, he sent them in quietly on foot. He also had an innovation that was called Sheldon's Mortar Marauders. He had armed personnel carriers mounted with mortars, which did short tours around so they would think that was all they had.

The Australian destroyed at least fourteen bunker systems in the first encounter and they thought they had pretty well succeeded, but on the 28th of May the North Vietnamese Army returned to Balmoral.

Again, I read from Paul Ham's book:

For fifteen minutes they mortared the base with frightful accuracy thanks to the courage of their nocturnal scouts, who crept up and captured the distance with lengths of string. Then in an exact replica of an early attack, only bigger, at least 800 North Vietnamese threw themselves on the tethered goat. As foolish as they were courageous, the attacks were suicidal, reminiscent of Japanese determined-to-die units. Perhaps the Vietnamese were drugged, some wounded. Those who reached the wire met a hail of canister and rifle fire and fell chiefly at the feet of Major Peter Phillips' company, who withstood the brunt of both attacks for which Phillips' leadership earned him a Military Cross. Some corpses hung on the wire until dawn.

An examination of the North Vietnamese bodies revealed that they were boys aged 15 to 17. The Australians were fighting an army of teenagers and the destruction of so many lives disturbed many Australian soldiers. 'To waste all that young manpower seemed to be criminal,' said Major Peter Phillips afterwards. 'It is a measure I guess of Hanoi's skill that they were able to indoctrinate these young kids. I never saw the grey eminences who were directing them. We only saw the young kids.'

It was a fearful war. It was a disgraceful reaction when the people of Australia let those men down. When the welcome home parade happened so many decades too late, some of the damage that we had done was rectified. We still owe those men and women a great apology. We owe them thanks for the courage and for wearing the uniform of which they were proud and of which I can say we must all be truly proud. They gave of themselves, as indeed any soldier has ever given in any war that this nation of ours has been involved in.

The battles of Coral and Balmoral are important to learn about and to know about, because they again give our young people and the coming generations more information about the sorts of things that they had to endure. But it needs always to be seen in context. It needs to be seen in the context that we, as a people, let them down at that time - as did the politicians of that time. Now we have an opportunity to make some of that up. Now we have the opportunity to do some things right that will help those people ease their pain. The scars that were left have been endured quietly by so many for so long. Perhaps having statements like these will help assuage the pain. We must never forget that they were fine, proud soldiers who served our country well.

Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce - Minister for Veterans' Affairs) (8.20 pm) - I too stand tonight to acknowledge the courage and the service of those who fought and those who fought and died in the battles of fire support bases Coral and Balmoral. I note that the shadow minister for veterans' affairs and also the Prime Minister went through quite a bit of the detail of what actually occurred in those events of some 40 years ago, so I will not go back over that detail on this occasion. I join with them in acknowledging the fact that these men brought great credit to their units, their mates and their country through their service at that time. As others have said - and it ought to be acknowledged yet again - it was in the very best spirit of the Anzacs over the last century and there is no doubt

that they can proudly hold their heads high for the way they performed under fire so many years ago.

The shadow minister and others mentioned a bit of the history of the time. There is no doubt that, to an extent, that colours the memory of many of what occurred on the home front back in the sixties and early seventies. It was a turbulent time. It was a time when Australia and America in particular were coping with the first televised war, and there is no doubt about it: neither country did their fighting men proud in the way in which they responded to the circumstances of that time. As I said earlier, these Australian men served their country in the very best spirit of the Anzac tradition and we owe them our respect and our gratitude. They were prepared to do what needed to be done at that time on the instructions of those whom they represented, the Australian people as represented by the governments of the day. In that they are as every other soldier has been in serving on behalf of our country over the last century.

When we bid farewell to troops today, to those going to Afghanistan, Iraq, East Timor or the Solomon Islands, we always honour their service and respect their performance. We know that they will do a great job for their country. As we farewell them they always go with our blessing - as it should have been at the time of which I speak - and when they return it is with our blessing and our acknowledgement of their service. The reaction at the time of which I speak was unfortunate and disgraceful in many respects. I was 12 years old when the Australian commitment to Vietnam ended. I have seen some of the TV footage, but my memories extend not much further than that. But I know that what happened did cut to the quick many of those who served and that it is still an issue that they deal with even today.

Among the things that have been most important to me in my job as the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and when previously serving as the shadow minister for veterans' affairs - and I note the presence in the chamber of a former Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Danna Vale, and the current shadow minister - are the personal stories of what people went through and their insights into the circumstances at that time. These stories have been told by people in conflicts from World War II right through to Vietnam and to Iraq and Afghanistan today.

Getting an insight into that personal experience has been very significant in gaining some understanding of what they went through. Having dealt with many veterans of Coral-Balmoral in the

last couple of weeks, I have memories that I will treasure over the years - understanding individual acts of bravery, understanding the terrible loss felt by family members who lost loved ones and by comrades who lost mates, getting a sense of the small things, which in fact mean so much when one is under fire. I have never been in that situation; I do not think I ever will be. But I pay tribute to those who were. Over the last couple of weeks, it has been an immense privilege for me as minister to be a small part of what they have been going through, to share aspects of what they went through so long ago, to have a few beers and to hear them tell a few stories about each other in a very blokey fashion, as is the Australian way, but in a manner which shows their enduring respect for each other in a very digger-like fashion.

I think it has also been clear to many of them that what has occurred over the last week has been part of a healing experience. I have had individuals come to me and say: 'This has taken 40 years. I haven't been to a reunion in all that time, and this has been very special to me.' I have had blokes come to me and say: 'I wasn't going to come. Bloody hell, I'm glad that I did.' I have had people say to me, 'The acknowledgements that we have received in recent times have' - as I think the shadow minister referred to - 'been part of moving me along a journey towards coming to terms with aspects of what did take place so long ago.'

There was certainly a huge crowd at the reception in the Great Hall. I was talking to the secretary of my department several days beforehand, and he said, 'I think we are going to need a bigger hall.' I will not use the exact words I used in response, other than to say that I said: 'I don't think we have got one. You'd better open the foyer.' It was a huge crowd, bigger than the crowd at the commemoration of Long Tan a couple of years ago. There were more people at Coral - Balmoral and there was also a higher acceptance rate. On that night, the diggers did themselves and their families proud in the way they conducted themselves. I got a real sense from the group that although it was, to an extent, a solemn occasion, at the same time it was also a very proud occasion. There were plenty of laughs and quite a few beers, and a good time was had in circumstances which I know for many of them were very tense. The next day at the Vietnam veterans memorial there was a more solemn service. Again, it was done with great dignity and with great respect, with the emphasis on those who had lost their lives so long ago.

I also had the honour of representing the government at the 102 Field Battery remembrance service at Duntroon. It was very quirky, and I have now learnt that is the way gunners tend to behave. Some excellent words were employed by the speakers, involving things like asking the younger artillerymen to tell the older artillerymen when guns went off, because it is the nature of artillery that you do not tend to know, particularly as years go by and hearing degrades.

I then had the honour of going to Townsville, attending the 1RAR dawn service at the barracks and the dinner that they had that night. Again, they were great occasions, quirky in their own way. It was certainly a great honour to share that time with them and to talk to some of the more recent diggers who have been serving our country overseas. It gave a real sense that this was cross-generational in terms of the circumstances of service, and that in itself was also special.

I shared some time with the shadow minister last Sunday at the 3RAR memorial service at the Vietnam vets memorial, where the focus was on Balmoral, in particular, and what occurred throughout their tour of duty. They had performed with honour on a number of occasions — in the Tet offensive, as was mentioned earlier, in Operation Pinnaroo, in Coral-Balmoral and in other engagements as well. As I mentioned earlier, the sense that I got was of men who had done their country proud but whose country had not recognised that to the extent that it should have in the years gone by. I certainly join with the shadow minister, as I have on previous occasions on these matters, in apologising for the way they were treated - as much as I can apologise in the circumstances for what occurred at a time before I served in this parliament. We have to ensure that this never occurs again to our fighting men and women. I have to say that I do not have much doubt about that. I think that the country took a long time to learn from what occurred back then, but I think it has learnt and I do not think we will ever see that situation again. I would certainly see it with dread.

I will end with some of the positive comments that I have been very pleased to receive on behalf of the parliament in a bipartisan fashion about what has occurred with these commemorations. I received an email recently from one of the key organisers, Garry Prendergast. I certainly want to congratulate him, Don Tait and the rest of the committee of veterans who organised what occurred, with the assistance of DVA. I am on the record saying this and I will say it again: organising Vietnam veterans is very much like herding cats. The fact that these

guys did it without injuries I found quite amazing and to their credit. But, having spent a bit of time with these blokes, I can understand how they managed to do it. The email from Garry reads as follows:

G'day Allan,

Let me say again,

Your DVA Staff did a magnificent job in assisting our 40th Anniversary Committee and my Townsville team in particular to make the Anniversary week such a memorable event for all the diggers and their partners that attended. The feedback is terrific.

I really mean that.

Every one of your staff who were involved need to see that their efforts were important and very much appreciated.

From the people helping at the entrance to Parliament House and at the Memorial, to the publication editors/producers for the Booklet and the Invites, to the staff on the end of the DVA phone and all the principal players like Bill Rolfe, Kerry, Richard, Ian, Susan, Kylie and Jim D plus Allison and Glenda in Townsville, they were so co-operative, helpful and diligent. I know they worked long hours at times and it showed in the quality of the results of their work.

I was especially pleased that you were able to come to Townsville and see the '1 Bn grunts' do our thing. I hope you enjoyed our unique Dawn Service and the Dinner function ... and I appreciated spending some of the time chatting with you.

Last but not least, thank you for the DVA financial support. It was definitely needed.

PLEASE pass this around DVA for all to see.

Cheers ... Pepe.

Garry Prendergast

Co-Chair of the 40th Anniversary Committee

To all those involved: congratulations on a job well done. I mean that with respect to those who organised these events on this occasion, be they veterans or DVA staff, but particularly all those involved in what happened so many years ago and who have been dealing with the issues that they came away with over the last 40 years. You brought credit upon your country then and you certainly brought credit upon your country over the last couple of weeks. It was a great honour and a privilege to spend some time with them at this very special time for them. As I also said in an email recently to a vet, 'There are times when this job is a complete pain, but there is no doubt that events like this and the opportunity to spend time with veterans who have done our country proud is something that makes it all very much worth while.'

Combined RAA Bands

*Warrant Officer Class One Steve Bull
Bandmaster
Royal Australian Artillery Band Brisbane*

The period 12 to 14 May 2008 presented a rare opportunity for the three Reserve Bands of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery to combine in the one location in support of activities to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Battle of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral.

It has been 18 years since the Royal Australian Artillery Band Brisbane (RAA Band Brisbane) of the 1st Field Regiment, RAA, the Band of the 23 Field Regiment, RAA, based in Sydney and the Band of the 2nd/10th Field Regiment, RAA from Melbourne last combined.

Whilst current manning levels of the bands are low, with the assistance of musicians from Queensland University Regiment and 4th/19th Prince of Wales Light Horse, we were able to put together a combined band of 43 musicians.

Concentrating at HMAS Harman on 10 May, the band members were soon catching up with old friends, making new friends and generally getting to know one another.

Marching band rehearsals were first up the next day. Under the supervision of the Drum Major the band did not take long to demonstrate that they were a well balanced group that sounded good and looked impressive. Attributes expected of an Australian Army Band for such an event.

Later that day we made use of the facilities of the Band of the Royal Military College, Duntroon. We could not pass up the opportunity of a concert band rehearsal. Nothing to do with the Battle of Coral tasking but more to give the members of the undermanned bands a chance to play in a full concert band situation. The sound was awesome and for the musicians, a very satisfying experience.

Coral Week tasking: The tasking requirements of Coral Week presented our musicians with the opportunity to diversify and perform in a number of configurations beginning with a seven piece ensemble for a reception at Parliament House on

the evening of Monday, 12 May. All bands were represented in this ensemble.

The combined bands participated in the march past at the Vietnam Memorial on Anzac Parade on the morning of Tuesday, 13 May as part of the National Commemoration Service. We also provided a six piece ensemble and Bugler for this service. That evening we split into individual bands to support the various dinners that were being held around Canberra.

The 23 Field Regiment Band played at the Eagle Hawk Resort for the 12th Field Regiment, RAA Association Dinner, the 2nd/10th Field Regiment Band played at the Ainslie Football Club for the All Corps Dinner and the RAA Band Brisbane played for the RAA National Gunner Dinner at the Federal Golf Club. From all reports each group did themselves proud with many compliments being paid by attendees at the functions.

A combination of 14 musicians from the 23 Field Regiment and 2nd/10th Field Regiment Bands provided musical support to the RAA Commemoration Service at the RAA National Memorial, Mt Pleasant on the morning of Wednesday, 14 May. Once again our musicians performed very well attracting favourable comments from people who attended the service.

On the evening of Wednesday, 14 May, the RAA Band Brisbane provided musical support to the RAA Battle of Coral Veterans Dinner.

Overall it was a fantastic experience for our part time army musicians. They represented themselves, their Regiments and the Australian Army with a high level of professionalism and I felt extremely proud to have commanded this dedicated and committed group of soldiers who formed the Massed Bands of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery in support of Coral Week.

I take this opportunity to publicly thank all members of the combined bands for their support and participation, particularly:

Warrant Officer Class One John Franklin, Drum Major RAA Band Brisbane;

Warrant Officer Class One John Hadlow, Band Sergeant Major RAA Band Brisbane;

Warrant Officer Class Two Stephen Deakes, Bandmaster 2nd/10th Field Regiment Band; and

Sergeant Michael McGillion, Bandmaster 23 Field Regiment Band.

Anniversary marks service of a regiment whose 'guns were always there'

By Megan Doherty

As an eagle soared above Mt Pleasant, Governor-General Michael Jeffrey presented the army's 102 Field Battery with the Australian military's first honour title, saying the recognition was because "the guns were always there".

The honour title Coral was awarded to 102 Field Battery, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, in recognition of its actions during the Battle of Coral/Balmoral in South Vietnam against North Vietnamese troops between May 12 and June 6, 1968.

In a 40th anniversary remembrance service at the Royal Australian Artillery national memorial on Mt Pleasant, the Governor-General said it was a "particular privilege and pleasure to see put to right another part of our gallant historical Vietnam record by recognising the professionalism, the valour and the indomitable spirit of all members of 102 Field Battery.

"Essentially it is because in all the battles and clashes that took place in that three weeks of sustained and heavy fighting, the guns were always there, invariably providing close, accurate and immediate support to their infantry, armoured, engineer and cavalry colleagues in need," he said.

"Secondly, we honour the battery because itself was assaulted and bombarded and temporarily lost a gun, yet in these hectic and very tough battle conditions, the gun crews stuck brilliantly and bravely to their task of supporting their infantry, armour and cavalry comrades, even though at times they were

firing over open sights at a determined enemy assault force closing on their own gun lines."

During the ceremony, two M2A2 minute guns were fired for Gunner Christopher Sawtell and Gunner Ian Scott, members of the Headquarter Battery of the 12th Field Regiment who were killed during the first battle, on May 13, 1968.

Gunner Sawtell's 87-year-old mother Jess Sawtell, of Canberra, was at the ceremony, saying her son was only "19 years and 13 days" when he was killed.

Mrs Sawtell said her son had wanted to be a soldier since he was five-years-old and when he was 18, with a friend, begged a colonel to let them go to Vietnam.

"They both went up to the colonel and said, 'We're not 19 now, but we will be 19 by the time the regiment goes'. So they let them go," she said. "He came racing up the side of the house yelling at the top of his voice, 'Mum, mum, we're going to Vietnam, we're going to Vietnam'. So he wanted to go." She felt "very proud" of her son.

Pat Scott, of Victoria, the sister of Gunner Scott, was also at the ceremony.

The veterans' address was by Colonel Ian Ahearn (retired), who said the gunners would stay true to their creed to "always fight together drink together, laugh together and mourn together".

Colonel Ahearn said, "This is our day. This is the gunner day. You should be filled with pride and melancholy.

"The melancholy is for those who can't be here, for those that we lost and for those who have passed away since.

"But this is also a day of pride." Mr Ahearn also evoked the won of Napoleon Bonaparte, "a famous short gunner" who had said "Lea the artillery men alone, they are at obstinate lot".

"Forty years ago, the North Vietnamese army and us proved that that obstinate lot had a lot to offer. We were an obstinate lot.

"On the first night that the NVA rolled into our position, heralded by a whole bunch of rocket-propeller grenades and too much machine-gun fire to think about, we started showing how obstinate we were," he said.

The president of the 12th Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association, Rob Costello, said yesterday's formal recognition of their efforts had been a long time coming.

"It should have happened 40 years ago and I'm just so proud today," he said.

The ceremony also featured a UH1H "Huey" helicopter fly-over on a perfect morning in Canberra.



Remembrance: Governor-General Michael Jeffrey with Jess Sawtell, mother of Gunner Christopher Sawtell, who was honoured at the event.

Picture: Karleen Williams

The Canberra Times, May 15, 2008



Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

VA047

Monday, 12 May 2008

AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST VIETNAM BATTLE REMEMBERED 40 YEARS ON

The Australian Government will hold an official reception for the veterans of the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, said today.

"This week marks the fortieth anniversary of the battle of Coral/Balmoral, Australia's largest and most protracted engagement of the Vietnam War," Mr Griffin said.

"More than 2000 Australians served during these engagements, with 26 killed. It is important that we remember and honour these veterans, and the families that have supported them for the last forty years."

Tonight the Australian Government will host a reception for veterans of the battles in the Great Hall of Parliament House, Canberra.

Around 1200 veterans and their families are expected to attend, including relatives of those killed in action.

At 10am on 13 May a National Commemorative Ceremony will be held at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial, Anzac Parade, Canberra.

The Australian Government has provided \$100,000 to the National 40th Coral and Balmoral Anniversary Committee to support these commemorative events.

Media inquiries: Laura Ryan 0437 863 109

Battle of Coral/Balmoral

In the early hours of 13 May 1968 the North Vietnamese attacked Fire Support Base Coral which had been established only hours earlier on the route used by the Viet Cong to move to and from Saigon.

The base provided defended positions for artillery, mortars and armoured vehicles which supported infantry patrols of the area.

Fire Support Base Coral was attacked on several occasions. The Australians continued to launch aggressive patrols from Coral, engaging in combat against North Vietnamese forces and experiencing fierce fighting through until early June.

The North Vietnamese next turned their attention to Fire Support Base Balmoral, 4.5 kilometres north, and on 26 May two battalions of North Vietnamese attacked the base. A second attack followed on 28 May, but a combination of infantry, armour, aircraft, artillery and mortars from Australian and Allied forces repelled the North Vietnamese assault.

For more information visit www.dva.gov.au/commemorations/

Parliament House Canberra ACT 2602

Telephone **02 6277 7820** Facsimile **02 6273 4140**

Professional Papers

‘Bringing On the Rain’ RTF 3 Offensive Support

*Provided by Major Adam Worsley
Battery Commander 108th Field Battery*

*Stonecutter 91 ‘... Group of ten Fighting Age Males suppressing our
advance from the south Located in large orchard
nth of Quallah WU11123’*

Rammit 62 ‘Copy, your location?’

Stonecutter 91 ‘Approx 200m south of Quallah..., marked by red smoke’.

Rammit 62 ‘... Copy your location,..... copy target’

Stonecutter 91 ‘Request one by GBU 12 this pass....’

Rammit 62 ‘Copy, standby..... Rammit 6 in live’

Stonecutter 91 ‘.... Clear live...’

Introduction

With these radio orders, and within eight minutes of our first contact with the enemy, Bombardier Toms accurately engaged Taliban fighters utilising NL (Netherlands) F16 in close air support (CAS). This action temporarily upset the momentum of an enemy quick attack and allowed the combat team time to regain the initiative in the fire fight.

This contact was to set the scene for our tour in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan; and clearly demonstrated the application of Offensive Support (OS) for the engineer led Reconstruction Task Force (RTF) – highly reactive, an unlimited access to a wide array of coalition assets, and well trained to provide integrated OS effects for our combat teams.

This paper will aim to outline the application of OS for our protected reconstruction mission.¹ It will describe our task organisation and employment; highlight our adapted tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP), and detail important OS lessons learnt in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations.

1. The paper will describe the use of OS in protected reconstruction ops. TF 66 (Special Operations Task Group) applied significant OS in support of their operations. While operating in close proximity to our taskforce, their experiences, TTPs and lessons learnt will not be discussed and should not be associated with our observations - however similar/dissimilar they may have been.

Reactive OS – Changing the Mindset

Due to the nature of our rules of engagement (ROE), the necessity to adhere to a clearly defined collateral damage estimate (CDE), and the way in which COIN operations are fought meant that OS provided to the RTF was reactive in nature and proportional in its response. While this may go against the traditional artillery model of concentrated massed fires from multiple firing platforms against well defined targets, this was the challenge that the Gunners faced in our asymmetric battle against the Taliban.

*Despite the restrictions in place, it did not preclude us from being
'proactive not reactive'.*

Despite the restrictions in place, it did not preclude us from being 'proactive not reactive'. Various TTPs were employed, within limitations, to negate the threat presented by the Taliban and allow for protected reconstruction to occur. Key to the employment of the adopted TTPs was the way in which we were task organised and employed within Task Force-Uruzgan (TF-U).

OS Construct

The way in which OS had been task organised within the RTF operational manning document (OMD) has changed significantly between RTF 1 and RTF 3. Largely dependant on the wider taskforce OMD construct, RTF 3 adopted a combat team approach to protected reconstruction; Combat Team (CT) Spear (based upon an infantry company) formed the security element and CT Hammer (based upon an Engineer Squadron) formed the reconstruction element. This allowed our observers to pair down to support the combat teams, and retain a command element (JOSCC) within the RTF Headquarters.

The RTF 3 OS team consisted of myself, Sergeant Littleton (*battery commanders assistant*) and Bombardier Lack (*JOSCC signaller*) as the command element; Captain Will Harvey as the JOST commander for CT Spear, Bombardier Toms (*JOST assistant commander*), Bombardier Heenan (*CT JOST Assistant commander*), Bombardier Bohmer (*CT JOST assistant commander*), Lance Bombardier Cox (*JOST signaller*), Gunner Peterson (*JOST signaller*) and Gunner Scott (*JOST signaller*). Bombardier Heenan would later be replaced by Bombardier Wyndridge (due to injury), and my signaller redundancy was retained through Gunner Ashcroft (who we had trained as a reserve) who deployed as part of the 'OA' detachment. In addition, for the first time, a mortar section from 2nd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (2 RAR) was included in the OMD. The section was commanded by both Sergeant Tschiderer and Sergeant Van Oorschot (*both MFCs*), and provided the RTF with much needed organic fire support.

Importantly for RTF 3 we were well stocked with forward air controllers for the deployment. Three JTACs (Captain Harvey, Bombardier Toms and Bombardier Heenan), two JFOs (Sergeant Littleton and Bombardier Bohmer) and an old and bold battery commander (Dagger 29) were all well trained and of varied experience in the trade of calling in close air support. This structure (and trade qualification) allowed us to adequately



Operation Spin Ghar – Bombardier Bohmer



Operation Ghat Rud – Bombardier Bohmer, Major Worsley, Bombardier Lack

support the two CT with the necessary advice and liaison required of observers, while at the same time manage rest cycles, leave rotations, and handovers.

The JOSCC was located in the RTF operations room, which was in turn in close vicinity (next door) to the TF-U operations room, and close by the NL battle group operations room. This setup allowed for close coordination with our higher headquarters and provided excellent situational awareness to the RTF operations room (we all know the capability of the artillery net). Also located in the TF-U operations room was the TF-U Fires Cell. This cell consisted of chief fires (NL), the air liaison Officer (NL F16 pilot) and the AH 64 ground liaison officer (NL). The battle group fire support officer (NL Captain) and myself rounded off the combined fires representation for TF-U.

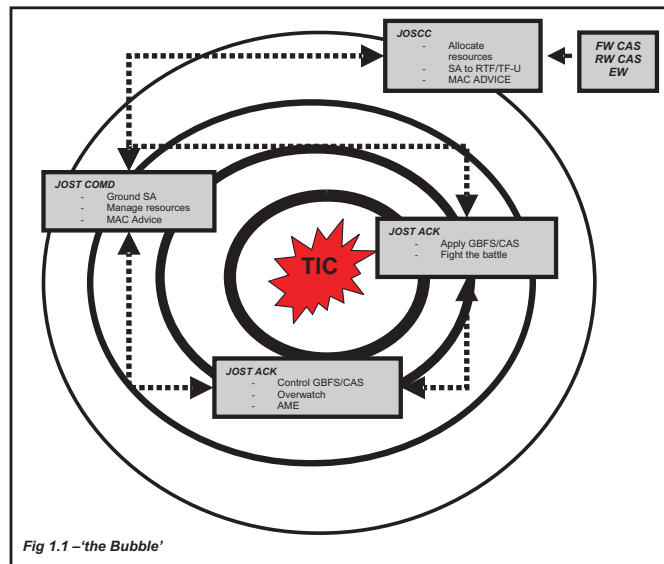
The nature of the mission drove the construct of the OS manning. In order to increase our effectiveness and increase our operational flexibility the only habitual relationships that were created were the battery commander/commanding officer and JOST commander/officer commanding CT Spear partnerships. All other observers were regularly rotated through various combat teams and platoons. This meant that the manoeuvre commanders became comfortable with the different observers and signallers, and more importantly, came to trust each and every one of them.

... it came to fundamentally drive how we reacted as fire supporters within the battle space.

Employment as observer battle pairs became the norm – an observer and a signaller. The nature of the terrain and high threat environment meant that the manoeuvre elements wanted observers spread as much across their combat teams as possible. This placed new pressures on the observers who now not only relied upon their signallers for communications, but also the ruthless implementation of the independent check!

OS Bubble

With the necessity for observer battle pairs became the adaptation of the OS ‘security bubble’. While it sounds common sense, it came to fundamentally drive how we reacted as fire supporters within the battle space to almost all situations. In essence we relied heavily on each battle pair to best manage and apply the available assets in accordance with their position in relation to the incident. Figure 1.1 clearly defines the ‘bubble’ and how it was applied; key to this application was the establishment and maintenance of communications. At any one time during the battle there could be the requirement to communicate with a NL AH-64, a US F-15, and the JOSCC and monitor the combat team or platoon internal net. The ability to work the communications and establish this balance fast became a critical skill for the signallers and observers within the team.



Assets available

The observers, at any one time, had access to an amazing array of coalition platforms and weapon systems. Whether it was the most advanced self propelled howitzer (PzH2000), an attack helicopter (AH64), an armed UAV (Reaper/Predator), a fast jet (F15E) or a strategic bomber (B1B), our observers gained valuable experience in the application of all these assets in support of operations.

The process for gaining these assets was very simple. Requested through the JOST commander to the JOSCC, any asset could be accessed from TF-U operations room. MIRC Chat (real time internet conversations) allowed us visibility of all activities within our regional command, and if required we could redirect assets at the push of a button and a release authority. Communications would be established and the JOSCC would pass the asset into 'the Bubble' (as previously described).



PzH2000 Firing in Support of RTF Operations

As mentioned previously, new to the RTF was the establishment of a mortar section. This asset would become CT Spear's organic fire support and an integral part of the TTPs for establishing security around a reconstruction site. The mortar section was used for illumination, show of force, immediate neutralisation, marking of targets and quick smokes. Along with the mortars, the observers could utilise the 155mm PZH in direct support. This system proved highly accurate and possessed a rapid rate of fire. Whilst never used in the danger close (yet) it expended both conventional and extended range ammunition in support of our operations. An example of extended range potency was a registration mission during Operation Spin Ghar where the time of flight was over two minutes and range exceeding 35 km – commercial clear air had to be gained! To give some indication of ammunition expenditure approximately 950 - 81 mm and 155 mm rounds were fired by NL and Australian call signs for the month of October.

It was an invaluable experience to be able to have unlimited access to these assets, however, the constant challenge for the JOSCC and the JOST was to synchronise them in a such a way as to maximise each individual asset into a combined effect– essentially maximising your 'bang for your buck'. The key to achieving this was layering these assets. An example of this was the unfortunate incident on 8th October 2007 when an Australian call sign, returning from Chora, was struck by an improvised explosive device (IED) on the east bank of the Dorafshan. This was not a troops in contact (TIC), however, the IED incident highlights the importance of synchronising OS and its effects.

At the time of the incident an Australian UAV (Scaneagle) was in direct support and observing the route. Upon detonation the UAV created an 'inner cordon' and commenced observation of the immediate area for any potential direct attack threat. Simultaneously, a second UAV was launched and placed in support of the wider intelligence collection plan. An AME was requested and launched to the incident site, the AH64 and PzH 2000 were placed on a reduced notice to move, the mortars reported in action, and a B1B was requested and tracked overhead.² In close coordination with the intelligence cell airborne and ground electronic warfare sensors were activated and synchronised, NAIs and TAIs determined and a restricted operating zone (ROZ)³ established. An effective layering of assets was established within minutes over the incident site, with all assets described coordinated by the JOSCC and implemented by the JOST.

By enabling and then synchronising these layers the manoeuvre elements were able to fight the close fight and remain confident that the deep fight was being well coordinated. Coincidentally, this example also provides a good example of 'the Bubble'. Bombardier Toms, who was involved directly in the incident, applied first aid, re-established communications, sent close defensive fire locations and provided invaluable initial situation reports. Bombardier Heenan moved into immediate overwatch and controlled the AH-64 and B1B. Captain Harvey delivered concise situational reports, established the electronic warfare (EW) link, coordinated the AME (and sited LZ) as well as coordinating the handoff of OS assets. The JOSCC provided timely updates and gained the necessary assets to support the operation for the duration. Figure 1.2 provides a visual example of the asset synchronisation during the incident – the 'Layering Effect' at work.

2. The B1B was to conduct three Show of Force runs throughout the incident and subsequent recovery op. It proved invaluable to force protection.
 3. Airspace Control Measure.

Layering and synchronising assets meant that the observer significantly increased his value to the manoeuvre elements. While each individual asset controlled in isolation delivers an individual effect, the combined and synchronised effect of several assets exponentially increases the OS effectiveness in the battle space.

What We Have Learned – Some Observations

COIN operations have presented us with many OS challenges. More often than not these challenges have been overcome, not by new and fancy methods, but by reverting back to our basic principles and training and then applying them to the problem at hand.

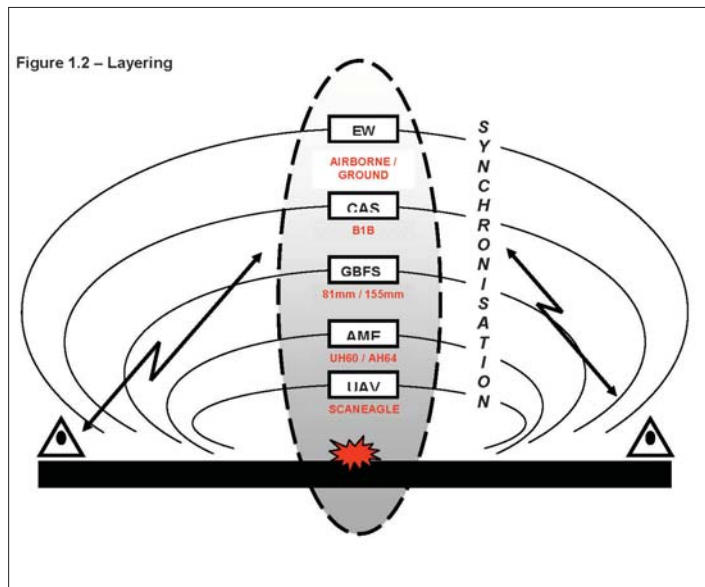
Utilising the WG2 (we used them for every fire plan), reporting zone of observation, submitting patrol DF Lists, monitoring frequencies, constant situational awareness, sending locstats etc. are all critical components of providing OS. They do not disappear during COIN operations.

The issue is time – every target is time sensitive. Every missed target is a missed opportunity, and you must, as observers, be in a position to prosecute at all times. The challenge was to stay on a constant footing over a protracted period in order to prosecute on those opportunity targets. This is not an easy feat to achieve.

The issue is time – every target is time sensitive.

The key observations raised below assisted us in maintaining this vigilance and enabled us to prosecute on many occasions.

- Our training is on the money. We encountered nothing over here that could not be solved by reverting back to our training back home and applying this, with adaptations, to the problem.
- Every man is an observer. The challenge is to link ‘every man’ to an asset that can execute. Attention to detail in the planning of OS should prevent any isolation by the manoeuvre element from their OS.
- The ‘Bubble’ and the ‘Layering Effect’ works.
- Small observer teams spread across manoeuvre elements are more effective than a large observer team centrally located with a manoeuvre element. Pivotal to the success of these types of groupings is knowledge of the manoeuvre plan and reliable communications.
- The integrity of the ISTAR process is critical to the effectiveness of the application of OS. The JOSCC and the S2 cell must work in close coordination in order to ensure that the sensor to shooter link is well synchronised and the appropriate effect is achieved. In COIN operations the second and third order effects generated by the use of OS must be closely monitored – if not, you will find yourself taking two steps back for every one step forward.
- There is no doubt that UAV adds an extra dimension to the observation plan of the JOSCC and JOST. The UAV detachment and JOSCC must work in close coordination to ensure that the manoeuvre intent is understood and that the UAV concept of operations can support this intent.⁴
- The effectiveness of EW in support of operations is misunderstood and underestimated. EW is a critical enabler in target acquisition and target confirmation. Initially we were very ‘green’ with regards to EWs utility, however, early exposure to the effectiveness of the asset quickly changed our approach and they are now considered an essential tool in the OS kitbag. The lack of knowledge in EW operations



4. The JOSCC employed the Scaneagle UAV for overwatch of manoeuvre operations. The other UAV function was to support the ISTAR collection plan - tasks that supported Int Ops. UAV in support of Int Ops will not be discussed in this paper.

probably stems from a lack of training and working with the capability, and is something we need to rectify as OS coordinators.

- The JTAC/JFO is a force multiplier. The ability to coordinate close air support is critical in this operation considering the asset availability and the lack of organic Australian OS within RTF. Of note is the use of close air support graphics. Every 'quala' within the province was numbered and distributed throughout the command so that every OS asset was operating off a common picture.
- Working for an engineer taskforce was different to working with a traditional infantry taskforce. This is due to the lack of familiarity in the employment of OS by engineers. As the subject matter expert on all matters OS, the advice across all levels had to be accurate and often went unquestioned. A tremendous amount of trust is placed on the small OS team and this trust was generally built around good advice and job competency.
- Establishing and maintaining communications, no matter the circumstances, defines your success as observers. On numerous occasions during critical incidents the Fires Net was relied upon for situational awareness and passage of information – this builds trust and a reputation. The signallers need basic observer skills as well as possessing a high degree of expertise on communication equipment.⁵
- Fire support coordination measures (FSCM) are of paramount importance when applying OS within a coalition environment in COIN. Clearance of the air and ground must be clearly articulated, boundaries agreed upon and promulgated to all participants, airspace control measures established, etc. An example of the importance of FSCM was Operation Spin Ghar. The operation involved OS assets from Australia, Netherlands, United States, United Kingdom, Canada and France. Close liaison was required to develop and promulgate FSCMs. A full fire support rehearsal and OS command post exercise was conducted to test ground based FSCMs and an airspace coordination cell was established in order to manage HIDACZ Samson.⁶
- An organic fire support system (2 RAR mortars) was a welcome addition to the task force. It acted as both an immediate OS capability, and importantly, a show of force when operating within an AO. Mortars high rate of fire, portability and trajectory remain its strong suits, while range, accuracy and 'hitting power' are its weaknesses.

The Taliban are ruthless and cunning opponents who deserve our respect. If you drop your guard they strike hard and fast.

Beyond RTF 3

The operational experience gained from providing an OS capability to the RTF has been invaluable to the RAA. While it is frustrating that there is not the opportunity to raise and send a fire unit⁷ in direct support of the RTF, the employment of the JOST and JOSCC in support of protected reconstruction operations is certainly a step in the right direction for the Regiment. The deployment is re-establishing the RAA's standing in the minds of combat arms officers and soldiers who have previously not had the chance to experience the effect that OS brings to the battle. It is not my intent in this paper to recommend rapid change, suggest acquisitions and propose a new direction – I will save that for the AAR! My aim was to provide an understanding of the way in which OS is being applied in support of the RTF, and outline the challenges facing our Gunners on COIN operations. Hopefully there are also a couple of 'pearls' to take away for your training and future deployments.

Future RTFs will prove that the need to coordinate and apply OS in this part of the world will increase before it decreases. We are certainly not at the top of the mountain just yet. The Taliban are ruthless and cunning opponents who deserve our respect. If you drop your guard they strike hard and fast. Integral to negating this potent threat is the aggressive application of OS – a skill that is being applied in Afghanistan. A skill that is our bread and butter.

5. Noting that the communication equipment used in country differs from what is being used in training in Australia. The 117 TACSAT is an extremely capable piece of kit.

6. HIDACZ Samson was created over the Op Spin Ghar AO in order to control all air movement. It consisted of two zones - North and South. These zones were geographically separated by the Baluchi Valley. The first 72 hours of the operation had continuous air support within the HIDACZ in support of UK, AS and NL ground forces.

7. No doubt this has been argued at higher levels than me!

Meteorological Support – The Way Ahead

*By Warrant Officer Class Two D.G. Ogden
Assistant Doctrine and Development Officer
Surveillance and Target Acquisition, CADDSS*

Situation

Due to operational tempo, manning and equipment shortages, and a change in priorities for the 20th Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regiment, the traditional support to gun regiments in the form of meteorological messages (CM7) has continually been difficult to achieve.

Background

The Artillery meteorological data, available on the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) web site, is a compilation of testing results in cooperation with and assistance of Rick Houghton current BoM National Manager Defence Weather Services, Geoff Moynihan the previous National Manager, and Warrant Officer Class Two David Ogden; from 1993 to today.

The history behind the development of BoM generated CM7 goes back to 1993. At which time a number of live balloon ascents were conducted, in coordination with BoM live ascents. The areas used were Singleton, using BoM data from Williamtown; and Puckapunyal, using data from Broadmeadows.

This data includes Standard Artillery Computer Meteorological Messages, in the form of CM7, and meteorological data relevant to the deployment of UAVs in the Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO); the latter having been at the request of the former commanding officer of 20th Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regiment.

The meteorological information being used is information is based on data modelled by BoM, and converted into usable information for the RAA. The modelled data was obtained employing various methods; which included 'live' balloon flights, aircraft transiting airspace, and ground station information for wind speed, direction, and temperature.

The missions were fired for 105 mm and 155 mm, through all four quadrants of the compass, and at high and low angle, out to a range of seven kilometres.

It is imperative to understand that a modelled CM7 is not gained by any one method of obtaining meteorological data; nor does it stem from a specific balloon launch site, which traditionally tied the RAA to a 30km area of validity. The messages available on the BoM site are time specific, but can be tailored to a user unit's position; eliminating the area of validity problem.

Currently, BoM automatically generates data for a number of artillery training areas; including Puckapunyal, Shoalwater Bay Training Area, Singleton, and Mount Bundy along with an interactive forecast wind profile that allows a user to define a central point for CM7, by entering in your unit latitude and longitude.

The UAV data also makes use of the larger area of information made available by the World Meteorological Organisation, which feeds information into BoM. The UAV specific data is used for mission planning both prior to flight and for any in flight deviations. This allows for greater endurance, but also enables a mission controller to see possible icing levels and layers, critical to UAV operation.

BoM data was converted to CM7, by analysing the information, and dividing the information into vertical layers, the same as an RAA generated CM7. Then, using a gunnery computer, each meteorological message was loaded and a mission was fired. The missions were fired for 105 mm and 155 mm, through

all four quadrants of the compass, and at high and low angle, out to a range of seven kilometres. This was done for the live RAA message, the BoM message and the integral firing table message available within the gunnery computer. An impact point was plotted for each mission and the displacement was worked out using bearing and distance from coordinates.

These results were plotted using displacement from the RAA CM7 as a 'zero' line. It was noted that the BoM results were closely related to the RAA CM7 on the ground (between – 2 m and 20 m); however, the firing table data gave a number of significantly larger differences (between 37 m and 45 m) this is the average of the extreme spread.

These results raised a second question; the compared data (RAA and BoM) was very close, although they had been derived from sources between 80 km and 100 km away (Williamstown and Broadmeadows); the question being the one of area of validity. The current area of validity used by the RAA is 30 km radius from the launch point of the meteorological balloon, varying for terrain (mountainous and coastal), both of which had effects in the four areas used to obtain data for the testing. Given the initial results of the trial it maybe suggested that an extended area of validity maybe able to be achieved; possible between 50 km and 80 km radial?

A good portion of the information provided on the BoM site has been 'dumbed' down to allow a wider audience to assimilate the data.

A further series of tests were conducted in 1998, at Shoalwater Bay Training Area, using two launch and track teams. They conducted concurrent launches, starting at a 10 km displacement. On the completion of each launch the teams stepped out a further 5 km each. This continued until they were 120 km apart. On initial, visual, comparison the data looked very similar up until to 60-70 km area. This data was never processed through the gunnery computer and has been lost.

Solution

The BoM supply RAA meteorological messages on the register user services page of their web site (<http://www.bom.gov.au/reguser/>). These messages are available for use by any RAA unit; in a field or barracks environment (an internet connection is required). If the BoM method of providing CM7 is approved for use by RAA live fire activities this would alleviate the problem of the provision of CM7 within Australia and neighbouring regions. These regions are yet to be confirmed. There remains a problem with the provision of similar messages on operations in that BoM cannot supply sufficiently accurate resolution off shore.

There remains a problem of resolution of modelling data. BoM refers to modelling data within Australia as having a resolution of 5 km, and Iraq as having a resolution of 75 km. This does not refer to an area of validity, but to the model having input from all four vertices of a 5 km square in the Australian example. Thus, a resolution of 75 km in the MEAO would not be able to supply a suitably accurate CM7 for guns; however, it can supply indicative conditions for use with UAV.

Impact on Training

A good portion of the information provided on the BoM site has been 'dumbed' down to allow a wider audience to assimilate the data. To allow a better understanding of the complexity of the information made available by BoM, further training is required in meteorology. This would insure that, planning for UAV operations, in particular would be better supported. A greater understanding of meteorological mechanics would facilitate the ability to conduct UAV planning and operations, independent of other agencies. In the current deployed situation UAV operations are dependant on our deployed coalition partners.

This would not be limited to STA however, but would have a flow on effect into gunnery; considering operator command post would now have the responsibility of down loading and applying the BoM CM7.

Impact on Doctrine

A number of current publications would require inclusions to allow the proposed solution to function seamlessly. They would include:

- LWP-CA (OS) 5-3-2 , Target Engagement Coordination and Prediction – Duties in Action, 2003;
- LWP-CA (OS) 5-3-1, Gun Group Employment Routine, 2001;
- RAA Directives, 2003;
- LWP-CA (OS) 5-3-4, Artillery Meteorology and Survey, 2005; and
- LWP-CA (OS) 5-2-6, Mortar Handling Drills and Command Post Procedures, 2004.

Benefits

There are currently two accepted methods of obtaining RAA meteorology; a CM7 generated by an artillery meteorology and survey detachment or by firing a registration mission. A third method is the outlined BoM method.

Validation of BoM messages for use in training, within Australia would facilitate the saving of resources, man power, and money alike.

Registration missions require up to six rounds, varying between \$2370 and \$3030 total, depending on the nature of the ammunition in use. Ideally an RAA generated CM7 should require only two – three rounds of adjustment, but come with a man power and resources cost. The BoM generated CM7 will require an internet connection in a field environment (satellite phone), after which the on going cost is limited to ISP bandwidth cost and time and frequency of use for the satellite phone.

Validation of BoM messages for use in training, within Australia would facilitate the saving of resources, man power, and money alike. It would also allow for consideration of the safety aspect of using this data when firing high explosive ammunition and other natures.

Recommendations

- BoM generated CM7 messages be further assessed by an appropriate agency (DSTO), to provide the scientific rigor to all previous data collection and observations.
- Limit the use of BoM CM7 to the Australian footprint, as outlined by BoM.
- An appropriate agency (DSTO) to assess the potential to increase the area of validity for RAA generated CM7 from the current 30 km to 50 km radial.
- Conduct a training needs analysis to insert a BoM basic meteorologist module on the initial employment training artillery meteorology and survey course.
- Conduct a training needs analysis to insert a meteorological operations planning module into the supervisor/manager surveillance and target acquisition course, to allow a greater ability to understand meteorological mechanic.

OP Trade & Structure

*Lieutenant Colonel Stu Kenney
Commanding Officer 1st Field Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Craig Furini
Commanding Officer 8th/12th Medium Regiment*

Introduction

1. In Dec 06 the Chief of Army released his concept paper 'Adaptive Campaigning'. This paper challenged the Army's current doctrine across the spectrum of conflict/operations and included the need to provide access to Joint Fires (JF) to all combat small teams of Army. This access is defined as a key capability in the conduct of Joint Land Combat to meet the challenges of 'Complex Warfighting'.
2. Concurrent with the adoption of Adaptive Campaigning is the introduction of new artillery capabilities. This includes Land 17, Joint Fires Observer (JFO), Excalibur and AFATDS. Consequently, it is appropriate to review RAA Field Artillery (Fd Arty) Trades in order to ensure that these new capabilities are fully realised to meet the demands of Adaptive Campaigning. These structures have not seen a major review or development since the loss of the RAA Signals trade in 1999.

Aim

3. The aim of this paper is to chart the way forward for the establishment of dedicated OP Trade within the 1 Div Fd Arty, its implementation and the structure of Arty Tactical Groups (TAC Gps) within 1 Div Fd Arty Regts.

Scope

4. As endorsed by the RAA Executive in Feb 08, there is recognition that the future Fd Arty branch of the RAA will require a least two trades; operator gun line and operator OP. There may also be a requirement for a dedicated trade to manage digitisation within the branch. However, this paper will only address the issues surrounding the OP Trade as this is the most urgent area requiring immediate remediation.

Situation

5. As endorsed by the RAA Executive of Feb 08, the JOSCC will be renamed the Joint Fires and Effects Coordination Centre (JFECC) and the JOST as the Joint Fires Team (JFT).
6. Adaptive Campaigning.
 - a. The key capability to achieve the requirements of 'Adaptive Campaigning' and access to JF is the RAA's Fd Arty JFECC and JFTs (TAC Gps). The current establishment and structure of TAC Gps across the ARA units of RAA is based upon structures from the Vietnam War era and are not consistent in size or structure between the units.
 - b. A key element to achieve the requirements of the above concept is the number, size and structure of the Fd Arty TAC Gps. The current establishment within TAC Gps does not provide sufficient capability to allow for access to JF at the lowest appropriate level or the retention of skills to enable the TAC Gps to effectively and consistently operate in a complex environment at the standard required.
 - c. Increased access to JF at the lowest level has been interpreted by many to mean that there is limited need for arty TAC Gps as all members of the combined arms team will have immediate links to call for fires. This is not a valid argument as infantry and armoured commanders will be consumed fighting the tactical/close battle and will be unable to dedicate the time or energy required to coordinate and direct JF. Additionally, the skill sets required to determine target locations and then direct and de-conflict arty, NGS or air fires (and other effects) are complex and

- require dedicated experts. This includes requirements to assess collateral damage, conduct battle space management and ISTAR integration.
- d. The current JF requirement from the Army's Battle Group (BG) CO's is the provision of a capability to provide access to and execution of JF down to Pl/Tp level when they are deployed either on independent operations or within their Combat Team (CT). The current 4-5 man JFT structure found in the RAA's Fd Arty Regts does not allow for this to occur, without withdrawing assets from other JFTs/CTs which is an unsustainable practice.
7. The overall JF system must be:
- a. 24/7 all weather;
 - b. Responsive;
 - c. Flexible;
 - d. Loitering/endurance;
 - e. Provide reach and be pervasive; and
 - f. Provide tailorable effects - PGM, area, smoke, illum, size of payload.
8. **Lessons from Operations.** The experiences of UK and CAN gunners in Afghanistan is that the traditional 4 x pers FO party is insufficient to provide JF advice and execution at the CT level and does not provide sufficient flexibility to ensure access to JF down to Pl/Tp level. As a result both countries have amended the size and structure of their JFT equivalents to be 6-8 x pers, with at least 2 x FO Acks.
9. **Looming Land 17 and other related projects.** The upcoming introduction into service (IIS) of improved STA and signals equipment within TAC Gps, the introduction of a Battle Management System (BMS) - Fires and new Gun Systems and the development of the JFO will enhance the ability of the RAA to provide access to and plan and coordinate JF across Army. To ensure that these capability increases are fully harnessed the RAA must review its current structures and trades to meet the requirements to employ these enhancements effectively.
10. **Current Trade and Structural issues.** A number of trade and structural issues within the current RAA TAC Gps affect the ability of the RAA to provide JF support to meet the challenges of Complex Warfighting.
- a. *Current Trade Issues within RAA TAC Gps:* The current RAA TAC Gps are made up of ECN 254-2 & 3 (OPCP) and ECN 162-2 (OS GNR). There is no natural progression from being an Artillery Communicator (ECN 162-2) in a JFT to becoming a FO Ack/JFO (ECN 254-2 or 254-3). The current career progression sees Artillery Communicators return to the Gunline to gain promotion and advancement in trade and can only return to the JFTs after a trade transfer and subsequently completing time as an ECN 254-1 OPCR at the Bty CP. This practice does not support the retention of specialist skills required in the JFT or JFECC in the complex battlespace and provides a sub-optimal solution that does not support the development of the specific capabilities required by Army. This current structure interferes with the development and retention of JF skills, particularly the JTAC skill.
 - b. *Structural Issues.* The current structure of BG level TAC Gp is as follows:
 - i. BG JFECC. In most cases the ARA BG JFECC is structured as a single team of 5-6 pers made up of BC (MAJ), BC Ack (SGT), Sig BDR (ECN 162-4) and 2 or 3 Arty Communicator (GNR, ECN 162-2). Due to the manning the current structure does not allow the splitting of the party to provide effective JF planning, advice and coordination when the BG CO's TAC HQ and BG Main HQ are deployed and operating simultaneously.
 - ii. JFT. The current JFT is a team of 4-5 pers made up of; FO (CAPT/LT), FO Ack (BDR) and 2 or 3 Arty Communicators (GNR, ECN 162-2). At best the JFT is only able to split into two teams for short periods, therefore is only able to provide JF access or advice to the CT Comd and one Pl simultaneously.
 - c. *Current Training Issues.* Due to the current trade structure within the RAA TAC Gps there is a lack of continuity of personnel within the teams. Due to the need for development and promotion as an ECN 162, in many cases Arty Communicators only spend 12 months within the TAC Gp. Whilst many FO Acks arrive in a JFT without any previous experience within a RAA TAC Gp. The result is

that there is insufficient time to develop all the essential JF, tactical and equipment skills required in a team to be effective in the complex battlespace.

The 'Way Ahead' for employment of RAA BG level TAC Gps

11. As identified above there is a need to revolutionise the RAA Fd Arty to adopt a dedicated OP trade and to employ it within the combined arms environment in a new way to ensure the needs of Adaptive Campaigning are met and that new capabilities are fully harnessed.

12. **Levels of integration.** JF must be dovetailed into the supported arm with appropriate levels of C2, advice, and observation. This is achieved by:

- a. *BG CO's TAC Gp.* A BC's TAC Party must be capable of supporting the BG CO at the point of ME with fires and effects advice, as well as being able to plan and direct the application of fires and effects simultaneously in support of a dynamic tactical situation.
- b. *BG Main HQ.* BG Main HQ must be supported by a robust fires and effects coordination cell capable of 24h/7 day operations. This cell will manage all aspects of JF and effects on behalf of the BC to ensure that fires assets are available, coordinated and logistically supported. This activity will include the ability to support current ops and influence planning of future ops.
- c. *CT level.* The CT Comd who will be intimately involved in the close fight must be able to call upon a JFT to execute and plan fires and effects in a highly complex and dynamic environment. This function will also include the ability to get 'eyes on target' to conduct Collateral Damage Estimates (CDE) and engagements by all forms of JF. This team must be capable of breaking down to small splinter teams for short durations to provide JF, and most importantly conduct target acquisition and engagement at Pl/Tp level.
- d. *Pl/Tp Level.* Close combat is executed at the Pl/Tp level and as such the need for immediate JF is greatest at this level. At this level the Pl/Tp HQ will be completely absorbed in gaining situational awareness, developing a tactical plan and directing his forces. Consequently, to ensure mission success he needs a specialist to advise, request, plan and execute JFs. This expert does not need to be permanent but rather is task allocated from the CT JF element as identified in sub para 12c.

13. **BG level JF TAC Gp Capabilities.** In order to achieve the demands IAW para 12, the RAA's BG level TAC Gps must have the following capabilities across all levels (each level will require a different balance of capabilities - these are described in detail at Annex C). Importantly, at each level there must be a capability to plan and execute multiple JF assets simultaneously.

- a. *Planning.* JF planning will ultimately become a critical factor in determining a BG, CT or Pl/Tp Comd tactical plan. JF planning includes:
 - i. Advice;
 - ii. Fire Spt planning;
 - iii. ISTAR integration;
 - iv. FSCM planning;
 - v. Requesting assets;
 - vi. Logistics planning; and
 - vii. CDE.
- b. *Communications.* The JF communications architecture must cover the supported arm, the organic AS or coalition JF assets and other temporarily assigned AS/coalition JF assets. This architecture must be capable of providing C2 of these assets as well as full situational awareness to the JF Comd and the Supported Arm Comd. The capability must include:
 - i. Arty;
 - ii. Combined arms;
 - iii. Joint Fires;
 - iv. Digitised - BMS and AFATDS;
 - v. Voice;

- vi. Joint ISTAR; and
- vii. Situational awareness.
- c. *Execution.* The successful execution of JF in support of a Supported Arm Comd's plan relies on the following:
 - i. Observation. Accurate target grids or accurate misses.
 - ii. Engagement. Providing on time, on target and safe engagement with beyond line of sight, and airborne weapon systems requires specialist skill sets, many of which require annual currency testing.
 - iii. Modification. Being able to adapt the plan IOT cater for the dynamic nature of complex warfighting.
 - iv. Effects assessment. Critical to the success of any engagement is the conduct of effects assessment which will enable Comds to make tactical decisions to prosecute or modify his plan, or to conduct re-engagement.
 - v. Battle space management. FSCM, air etc.
 - vi. Applying to CDE restrictions.
- d. *Combined arms understanding and Force protection skills.* In order to successfully plan and execute JF in the Land Battlespace the BG level JF TAC Gps must have the following:
 - i. Must be able to operate in and interpret the Land Battlespace and the tactics used by manoeuvre elements in all phases and types of conflict.
 - ii. Have the small team tactical, weapons and field craft skills to operate and survive in a complex environment without protection.

'Way Ahead' for TAC Gp Structures

14. To meet the requirements of the employment of RAA BG level TAC Gps and Complex Warfighting the size and structure of the JFECC and JFT must be amended. The TAC Gp structure must provide the capability to provide access to JF down to Pl/Tp level, provide the ability for the independent check to ensure troop safety and minimise collateral damage issues and provide a structure that supports the development of specialist JF skills. This structure must incl pers of the appropriate rank and experience to provide JF advice, coordination and execution at all levels. It is assessed that this structure cannot be established immediately and should be developed via interim structures.

15. The proposed structure of the BG level TAC Gp is at Annex A. This structure is developed in interim stages to allow for the new structures to be established prior to Trade changes and then an incremental increase in size of the TAC Gp post establishment of an OP Trade. All stages of the structure see an increase in numbers and the separation of the JOSCC into two teams, the BC's Tac Party and the BG Fire Planning Cell.

Requirements of an OP Trade

16. In order to address the requirements of the structure and skills described above to meet the challenges of Adaptive Campaigning and Complex Warfighting there is a need develop a distinct OP Trade to enable the planning, coordination and execution of JF. The Introduction Into Service (IIS) of LAND 17 and associated capabilities will see a revolutionary change to the provision of JF. As a result there is a need for a philosophical change to the employment and deployment of the JF capability.

17. **Risks/Gaps:** Lack of development of the wider JF skills required due to ad hoc trades within TAC Gps, which results in a loss of currency in specific skills (skill fade). The current structure also does not support the further development of the JFO concept or retention of JTAC qualification, which has resulted in a sub-optimal failure rate and resulting loss of faith in the RAA's capability to provide JF by the ADF's Hierarchy.

18. **Skill sets required within the current RAA TAC Gps:** Each team within RAA TAC Gps require similar skills sets which increase in complexity as the level of supported manoeuvre commander increases. The skills required are detailed in Annex B. The acquisition of these skills sets will be enhanced by the

development of TAC Gp members through a trade training continuum where the skills are further enhanced through trade promotion courses.

Proposed OP Trade Structure

19. Note that the proposed OP Trade structure is not a simple amendment of either the current ECN 254 or the old Arty Signals Trade. This is a new trade with particular skill requirements and thus a specific career progression to ensure the development of new skills and the retention of specific target end skills learnt throughout a soldier's career.

20. **Skill Sets:** The skill sets required within the proposed OP Trade vary by rank, with an increase in knowledge and skills required as soldier's progress in the trade. These skills sets increase incrementally IOT ensure that knowledge is retained and developed within teams. The detail of the skills required in the OP Trade by rank is IAW Annex C

21. **Career Progression:** IAW Annex C. JOST Mod 1 is combination of current JOST Mod 1A & 1B. The JFECC Course is equivalent to a SUB 4 SGT Course which is Target End focussed (skills and duties for BC Ack, a SGT within the BDE JFECC and an AFATDS manager).

22. **Sustainable Rank Ratios:** Within the BG level TAC Gps there is a sustainable pyramid of ranks to allow for promotion with both Interim Structures 1 and 2 having 13 x GNRs to 4 x LBDRs to 4 x BDRs to 1 x SGT, whilst the Final Structure having 16 x GNRs to 4 x LBDRs to 7 x BDRs to 1 x SGT. Note that the WO2 is not included in these ratios, as both trades in Fd Arty will be competing for the position due to the WO2 Gunnery Course qualification. Note that the ratios do not include those positions within the Bde JFECC and those required at SOARTY or non-corps appointments.

Timing for Change

23. The RAA must be postured ready to receive the LAND 17 and related equipment rather than react to the introduction into service (IIS) of this capability. Waiting to change the Fd Arty structures until the IIS of the LAND 17 and related equipment will cause significant friction to the maintenance of capability to support current operations and provide a 'train smash' of priorities to the SOARTY in developing new courses, new trades and new doctrine. Current operations demand an improved OP structure. The RAA requires an interim TAC Gp structure within the current restriction of the current trade model IOT meet the demands of the current complex and dynamic operations. Once the OP Trade model is developed a transition plan needs to be developed to achieve the desired endstate. It is recommended that the interim TAC Gp structure is established by Jan 2010.

Conclusion

24. The oncoming IIS of BMS, AFATDS and LAND 17 provide a positive opportunity to improve the capability of the RAA in its key role of Planning, Coordinating and Executing JF, Effects and Influence activities. The RAA can ill afford to maintain a weak trade structure that does not provide the appropriate skills to allow the development of capability at the target end- to do so would see the continued perception of a decreasing relevance of the RAA.

25. This paper has been a collaborative effort by CO and RSM 1 Fd Regt and CO 8/12 Mdm Regt and included consultation with CO 4 Fd Regt, CO 1 GL Gp and CO SOARTY. Any queries regarding this concept paper should be directed to the undersigned or to RSM 1 Fd Regt, WO1 David Lehr, david.lehr@defence.gov.au, or 07 3332 6085.

Annexes:

- A. Proposed BG Level TAC Gp structure
- B. Skill sets required within the RAA TAC Gp
- C. OP Trade Skills Required by Rank
- D. Indicative Career Flow Chart – OP Trade

Annex A to
RAA OP Trade Concept Paper
Dated Sep 08

Proposed BG Level TAC Gp Structure

Interim Structure, pre OP Trade Establishment: (1)

Ser	Organisational Gping		Posn Title	ECN	Rank	Corps	Remarks
1	JOSCC (JFECC)	BC TAC Party	BC BC Ack JFO OP Sig (Dvr qual)	RAA Offr (Fd) 357-2 254-3 162-2	MAJ SGT LBDR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA	
		BC Main Party (Fire Planning Cell)	FSO (LT) FO Ack (3) OP Sig OP Sig OP Sig (Dvr qual)	RAA Offr (Fd) 254-3 162-2 162-2 162-2	LT BDR GNR GNR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA	
2	JOST 1 (JFT 1)		FO OP Sig FO Ack OP Sig JFO OP Sig	RAA Offr (Fd) 162-2 254-3 162-2 254-3 162-2	CAPT (4) GNR BDR GNR LBDR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA	
3	JOST 2 (JFT 2)		FO OP Sig FO Ack OP Sig JFO OP Sig	RAA Offr (Fd) 162-2 254-3 162-2 254-3 162-2	CAPT (4) GNR BDR GNR LBDR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA	
4	JOST 3 (JFT 3)		FO OP Sig FO Ack OP Sig JFO OP Sig	RAA Offr (Fd) 162-2 254-3 162-2 254-3 162-2	CAPT (4) GNR BDR GNR LBDR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA	
<p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The number of JOST per TAC Gp to reflect the number of CT in spted BG. The JOSTs will rely on the MFC party (SGT + 1) to provide 4th Splinter Team for a CT. Preferably JTAC Qualified. Or a senior LT (3rd yr in Rank). 							

Interim Structure- Post OP Trade Establishment: (1) (2)

Ser	Organisational Gping		Posn Title	ECN	Rank	Corps	Remarks
1	JFECC	BC TAC Party	BC BC Ack FO Ack OP Sig (Dvr qual)	RAA Offr (Fd) OP Trade-5 OP Trade-4 OP Trade-2	MAJ SGT BDR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA	
		BC Main Party (Fire Planning Cell)	FSO (3) JF Coord WO FO Ack (4) OP Sig OP Sig OP Sig (Dvr qual)	RAA Offr (Fd) 357-4 OP Trade-4 OP Trade-1 OP Trade-1 OP Trade-2	LT WO2 BDR GNR GNR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA	
2	JFT 1		FO OP Sig FO Ack OP Sig JFO OP Sig	RAA Offr (Fd) OP Trade-1 OP Trade-4 OP Trade-2 OP Trade-3 OP Trade-2	CAPT (5) GNR BDR GNR LBDR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA	

Ser	Organisational Gping	Posn Title	ECN	Rank	Corps	Remarks
3	JFT 2	FO OP Sig FO Ack OP Sig JFO OP Sig	RAA Offr (Fd) OP Trade-1 OP Trade-4 OP Trade-2 OP Trade-3 OP Trade-2	CAPT (5) GNR BDR GNR LBDR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA	
4	JFT 3	FO OP Sig FO Ack OP Sig JFO OP Sig	RAA Offr (Fd) OP Trade-1 OP Trade-4 OP Trade-2 OP Trade-3 OP Trade-2	CAPT (5) GNR BDR GNR LBDR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA	
Notes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The number of JFT per TAC Gp to reflect the number of CT in spted BG. The JFTs will rely on the MFC party (SGT + 1) to provide 4th Splinter Team for a CT. The alternate option to the FSO posn, is to have this as the JFECC/BG STA Offr filled by a RAA Offr (STA). Preferably JTAC Qualified. Or a senior LT (3rd yr). 						

Structure- Post OP Trade Establishment: (1) (2)

Ser	Organisational Gping	Posn Title	ECN	Rank	Corps	Remarks
1	JFECC	BC TAC Party	BC BC Ack (3) JFO OP Sig (Dvr qual)	RAA Offr (Fd) OP Trade-5 OP Trade-3 OP Trade-2	MAJ SGT LBDR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA
		BC Main Party (Fire Planning Cell)	FSO (3) JF Coord FO Ack (4) OP Sig OP Sig OP Sig (Dvr qual)	RAA Offr (Fd) 357-4 OP Trade-4 OP Trade-1 OP Trade-1 OP Trade-2	LT WO2 BDR GNR GNR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA
2	JFT 1	FO OP Sig FO Ack OP Sig FO Ack OP Sig JFO OP Sig	RAA Offr (Fd) OP Trade-1 OP Trade-4 OP Trade-2 OP Trade-4 OP Trade-2 OP Trade-3 OP Trade-2	CAPT (5) GNR BDR GNR BDR GNR LBDR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA	
3	JFT 2	FO OP Sig FO Ack OP Sig FO Ack OP Sig JFO OP Sig	RAA Offr (Fd) OP Trade-1 OP Trade-4 OP Trade-2 OP Trade-4 OP Trade-2 OP Trade-3 OP Trade-2	CAPT (5) GNR BDR GNR BDR GNR LBDR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA	
4	JFT 3	FO OP Sig FO Ack OP Sig FO Ack OP Sig JFO OP Sig	RAA Offr (Fd) OP Trade-1 OP Trade-4 OP Trade-2 OP Trade-4 OP Trade-2 OP Trade-3 OP Trade-2	CAPT (5) GNR BDR GNR BDR GNR LBDR GNR	RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA RAA	
Notes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The number of JFT per TAC Gp to reflect the number of CT in spted BG. This option does not incl the MFC capability. The alternate option to the FSO posn, is to have this as the JFECC/BG STA Offr filled by a RAA Offr (STA). Must be JTAC qualified. Or a senior LT (3rd yr). 						

Skill sets required within the RAA TAC Gp

The following are the skill sets required with a RAA TAC Gp.

<i>Ser</i>	<i>Team</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Skills</i>
1	Bde JFECC	Joint Fires	Provide advice on Joint Fires. Plan and coord Joint Fires IAW manoeuvre comd's plan. Execute Joint Fires.
		Battle Management	Employ and manage BMS's. Manage Joint Fires BMS network. Plan and develop Battlespace management. Input into Bde Airspace management.
		Communications	Manage communications Nets. Employ equip (mtd and dismounted), incl: - Personal Role Radios - VHF - HF - UHF - TACSAT Employ Arty RATEL procedures and Fire Discipline
		Effects/Influence	Advise, Plan and Coord/synchronise Bde level effects/influence actys (lethal and non lethal)
		STA	Provide input/advice to the Bde STA planning cycle Coord effects/influence with STA effort Integrate JF and ISTAR
		Veh	Drive and Command appropriate C2 veh IAW unit capability
2	BG JFECC	Joint Fires	Provide advice on Joint Fires. Plan and coord Joint Fires IAW manoeuvre comd's plan. Execute Joint Fires.
		Battle Management	Employ and manage BMS's. Manage Joint Fires BMS network. Plan and develop Battlespace management. BG Airspace management.
		Communications	Manage communications Nets Employ equip (mtd and dismounted), incl: - Personal Role Radios - VHF - HF - UHF - TACSAT
		Effects/Influence	Advise, Plan and Coord/synchronise BG level effects/influence actys (lethal and non lethal)
		STA	Provide input/advice to the BG STA planning cycle Coord effects/influence with STA effort Integrate JF and BG ISTAR

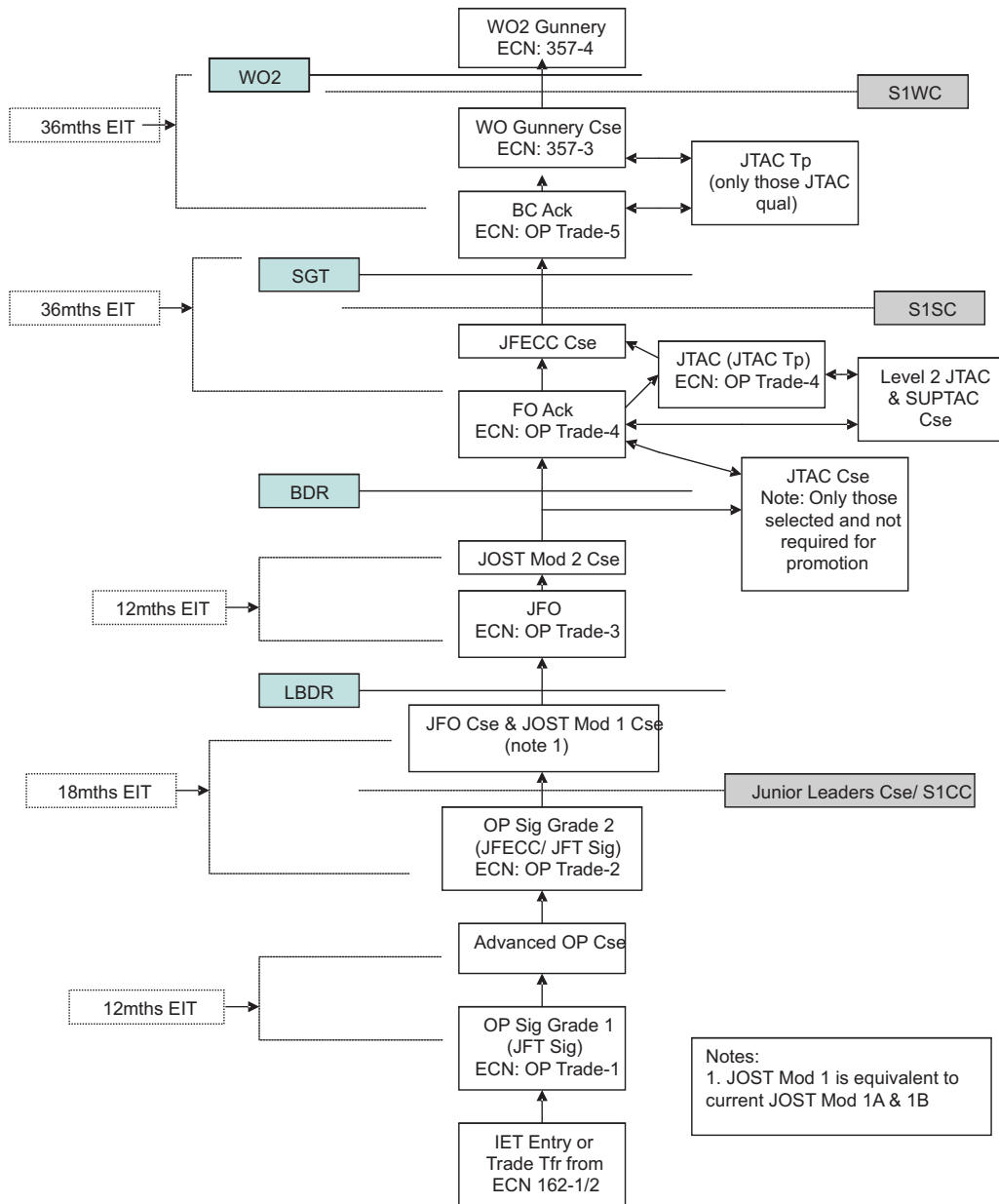
<i>Ser</i>	<i>Team</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Skills</i>
2	BG JFECC (Cont'd)	Small Team/Field Craft	Small Team Skills, incl: Tactical movt and Battle fitness Small Arms Skills, incl: F89; GLA; GREN; Claymore; MAG 58; NVG/NFE; Pyrotechnics Advanced Navigation skills Insertion skills (eg. parachute or Helo repelling, to suit unit role)
		STA Equipment	STA Equip use and Maintenance, incl: AMSTAR; TSS; Laser Range Finders and GPS
		Veh	Drive and Command appropriate C2 veh IAW unit capability
3	JPT	Joint Fires Coord and Planning	Provide advice on Joint Fires. Plan and coord Joint Fires IAW manoeuvre comd's plan. Execute Joint Fires.
		Joint Fires Execution	Employ Joint Fires assets (Arty, Mor, NGS, CAS)
		Battle Management	Employ and manage BMS's. Manage Joint Fires BMS network. Plan and develop Battlespace management. CT Airspace management.
		Communications	Employ equip (mtd and dismounted), incl: - Personal Role Radios - VHF - HF - UHF - TACSAT
		STA	Provide STA to CT Provide input/advice to the CT STA planning cycle Coord effects/influence with STA effort Integrate JF and CT ISTAR
		Small Team/Field Craft	Small Team Patrolling and OP Skills, incl: - Tactical movt - Occupation of OP and OP routine - Break contact drills - Battle fitness Small Arms Skills, incl: F89; GLA; GREN; Claymore; MAG 59; NVG/NFE and Pyrotechnics Advanced Navigation skills Insertion skills (eg. parachute or Helo repelling, to suit unit role)
4	JPT (Cont'd)	STA Equipment	STA Equip use and Maintenance, incl: AMSTAR; TSS; Laser Range Finders and GPS
		Veh	Drive and Command appropriate OP variant veh IAW unit capability

OP Trade Skills/Competencies Required by Rank

Note: Only those new skills required at each rank level are included, it is assumed that each rank will have achieved the previous rank skills and experience.

<i>Ser</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Skills Required</i>
1	GNR (OP Trade- 1)	<p>JFT Communications Equip Skills, incl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal Role Radios - VHF (manpack and veh stack) - HF (manpack and veh stack) - UHF (manpack and veh stack) - TACSAT - ROVER - BMS/AFATDS <p>Arty Communications Ratel Procedures and Fire Discipline Small Team Patrolling and OP Skills, incl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tactical movt - Occupation of OP and OP routine - Break contact drills - Battle fitness <p>Small Arms Skills, incl: F89; GLA; GREN; Claymore; MAG 58; NVG/NFE and Pyrotechnics Basic Navigation skills Driver qualifications (most likely done at units to suit unit capabilities) Insertion skills (eg. parachute or Helo repelling, to suit unit role)</p>
2	GNR (OP Trade- 2)	<p>Intermediate Arty Communications Skills (equip and procedures) ROVER Communication Procedures Basic STA Equip use and Maintenance, incl: AMSTAR; TSS; Laser Range Finders and GPS Advanced navigation skills</p>
3	LBDR (OP Trade- 3)	<p>Observation of Fire (FO qualification) JFO qual Basic Fire Planning Skills IOT spt a Pl Comd, incl: Provide advice; Plan and Coord and Execute Advanced STA Equip and Maintenance, incl: AMSTAR; TSS; Laser Range Finders and GPS Advanced Arty Communications Skills (equip and procedures) Veh command qualifications (APC or PMV as required)</p>
4	BDR (OP Trade- 4)	<p>JTAC (only those ident as suitable & not essential for promotion to SGT) Advanced Fire Planning Skills IOT spt the FO, incl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide Advice - Plan and Coord - Execute <p>Advanced Small Team Patrolling and OP Skills (planning and orders) BMS/AFATDS management skills Basic Joint Battlespace management skills</p>
5	SGT (OP Trade- 5)	<p>Advanced Fire Planning Skills IOT spt the BC JFECC/CP skills/procedures/setup/Duties of BC Ack SUPTAC/Level 2 JTAC (not essential for promotion, only for those ident) Regimental Signals Supervisor qualification Advanced BMS/AFATDS management skills Intermediate Joint Battlespace management skills</p>
6	WO2 (ECN 357-3)	<p>Joint Fires Coord (Skills to be taught on WO2 Gunnery Cse) to incl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - C2 of BG level JFECC Main - Duties of Ops WO2 in Bde JFECC - Duties of Regt Signals Supervisor - Advanced Joint Battlespace management skills

Indicative Career Flow Chart – OP Trade



Final Version

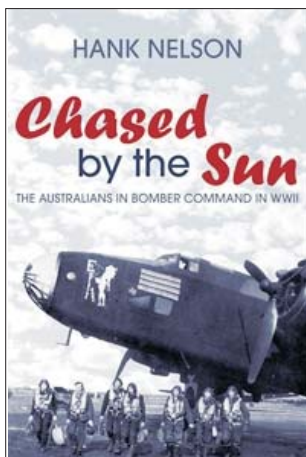
Book Reviews

Chased by the Sun

by Hank Nelson

*Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Sean Ryan
Deputy Head of Regiment &
Commanding Officer/Chief Instructor
School of Artillery*

ISBN1741148472; PUBLISHED ALLEN AND UNWIN, CROWS NEST, NEW SOUTH WALES; SOFTCOVER, ILLUSTRATED BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS; 319 PAGES



Over 10000 miles from home and fighting an air war people in Australia could barely comprehend but this was the life of over ten thousand Australian airmen who joined RAF Bomber Command. 'Chased by the Sun' is a reflection on the lives of the Australians in Bomber Command during World War II. In

this book, Hank Nelson looks at the real life experiences of the Australian in combat in the air over Germany and their lives on the ground between sorties. The author examines the excitement of recruiting and basic training in Australia, the adventures of travel through the Empire Training Scheme in Canada and Africa, social delights of war time England and the sheer terror of an operational tour in the air over Germany. Hank makes this book come to life with the personal anecdotes of the air crew life of being an 'Aussie' in Bomber Command.

... the value of training and lots of it ... the enduring nature of operations and duration of deployment.

I found the book particularly poignant in two areas. The first was the value of training and lots of it. The second was the enduring nature of operations and duration of deployment.

The author goes into great detail over the time and effort it takes to produce the various aircrew skills needed for an RAF bomber. It was clearly not an easy task with basic training in Australia on World War I style planes through the cold and ice in Canada or blistering heat of Africa and finally the demands of a Heavy Operational Conversion Unit in England. Interestingly the young men of Bomber Command were not immune from the pressures of training with training accidents in England accounting for almost as many casualties as operations did. However through all this one thing remained true and that was that skill and training was always a significant factor in mission success. A fact that remains true today in modern combat.

... skill and training was always a significant factor in mission success.

I also found it interesting in the way it discussed the open ended nature of the Australian's deployments in Bomber Command. It was very much a case of once you were in you were in until the war was won. Many of these RAAF airmen left Australia in 1941 only to return in 1946 after they had completed operational tours in a squadron, trained replacements and won the war. This is a far cry from the short four or six month deployments Australian's currently deploy on. Maybe there is a point in that for us today.

... airmen left Australia in 1941 only to return in 1946 after they had completed operational tours in a squadron, trained replacements and won the war.

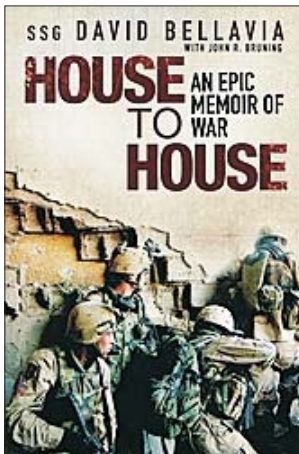
The book provides many insights and vignettes into the experiences of the Australians that served in Bomber Command. It recounts the experiences of men who served over four plus years 10000 miles from home in the darkened skies over occupied Europe. The book serves as a timely reminder of these unremembered Australians, 4000 of whom never returned home. This book provides a valuable insight to our young soldiers and commanders in Australia today on how easy they have it and why they have it so easy. I suggest that this is a book all Australian military personnel should measure themselves against.

House to House: An Epic of Urban Warfare

by David Bellavia with John Brunning

*Reviewed by Captain Dave Ryan
Instructor in Gunnery, School of Artillery*

ISBN 9781847370907 (PBK); PUBLISHED 2007;
LONDON: SIMON & SCHUSTER; PHOTOGRAPHS;
321 PAGES



Mr Bellavia served as a Staff Sergeant in the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, a unit which played a major role in arguably the most successful urban battle in the modern era, the battle of Fallujah. It was refreshing to read an account of a recent conflict that was not written by an officer nor a special forces soldier.

His honest account of the lead up, conduct and post battle sequence of events, details not only the tactical obstacles he faced, but also the emotional hurdles he and his soldiers had to defeat.

The account of hand-to-hand fighting was vivid and raw but most brutal of all was the treatment of these men at the hands of their own commanding officers ...

It was particularly interesting to note the perspective he and his soldiers took on certain officers and the decisions they made, both good and bad. Additionally, as the reader progresses through the book, the changes in attitude towards particular officers is worthy of note. The account of hand-to-hand fighting was vivid and raw but most brutal of all was the treatment of these men at the hands of their own commanding officers at the end of the battle. Furthermore, the fears he faced at the thought of losing one of his men in battle and his enduring commitment to prevent such an incident. Perhaps exaggerated throughout his account of events, it does however provide the reader with an understanding of the psychological state of a soldier and leader prior to, and during a conflict.

Throughout the battle, the squad was faced with numerous obstacles and challenges which Staff Sergeant Bellavia use all available assets to overcome. As a squad leader, Staff Sergeant Bellavia demonstrated the ability assume the responsibilities assigned to him and execute using excellent initiated to achieve the tasks. This is something the Australian Army does not encourage nor instil amongst our non-commissioned officers.

Whilst Staff Sergeant Bellavia's account does not disregard the supporting arms and the combined arms effect, the reader should not indulge in this book for a good example of a combined arms battle.

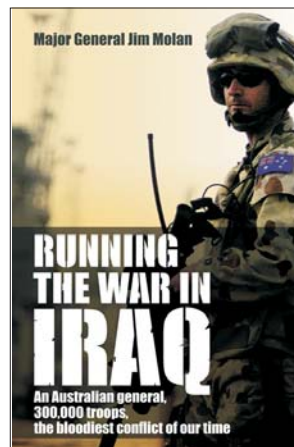
The book certainly describes the complexities of urban fighting and the total confusion that engulfs the soldiers on the ground. The challenge to motivate subordinates to charge through a building door, knowing there is a real chance of an improvised explosive device on the other side, arguably is the greatest of them all. A enthralling read, particularly for combat officers or combat arms non-commissioned officers.

Running the War in Iraq – An Australian General, 300,000 troops, the bloodiest conflict of our time

by Major General Jim Molan

*Reviewed by Major D.T. (Terry) Brennan
Editor RAA Liaison Letter*

ISBN 978 0 7322 8781 8 (PBK); PUBLISHED 2008;
HARPERS COLLINS PUBLISHERS AUSTRALIA PTY LIMITED; COMBINATION OF BLACK & WHITE AND COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHS; 358 PAGES.



On purchasing this book I thought the title was a little self indulgent on the part of the author. When I finished reading it I was still left with the feeling that perhaps it was, however in no way does this detract from the book. I am sure it was used by the publisher to maximise sales. Despite

the level at which Major General Molan worked in Iraq the book is still very much an easy to understand personal account which I am pleased to say is refreshingly open and honest. It has appeal to any reader with a military (regardless of background or rank) or general interest in the events in Iraq.

If there is one lesson that the Australian Defence Force could take from the experiences recorded in this book, it is that whilst the Australian military is very good at the tactical level of war fighting, it is not sufficiently prepared for or good at the operational level of war or more broadly the 'operational art'. I got the real sense that this lack of focus in our higher defence colleges remains a particular frustration for Major General Molan.

... whilst the Australian military is very good at the tactical level of war fighting, it is not sufficiently prepared for or good at the operational level of war or more broadly the 'operational art'.

His account of carrying out the major tasks associated with his various appointments in Iraq and may I say they were challenging: – initially solving or at least addressing the national infrastructure problems (oil, electricity and rail) as deputy chief of staff for operations (Civil Military); overseeing the first of the democratic votes including 'shaping' the nation in preparation which included the second battle for Fallujah, whilst looking after his other tasks associated with being deputy chief of staff for strategic operations; – is a fascinating insight into the constant juggling act between diplomatic as well as local and national civilian and military interests that a senior officer in his position has to manage in order to achieve the desired, if not always perfect, results.

On a personal level he openly mentions his self doubts about whether he was up to the job; he honestly explained the challenges of being accepted by a United States military staff suspicious of coalition generals. This challenge was epitomised on meeting the commanding general in Iraq when he was asked simply 'What do you think you can contribute?' This was despite being told by the Australian Government and Chief of the Defence Force he was being sent to Iraq specifically to be Chief of Operations. He openly discusses the 'negative or at least sceptical' initial attitude shown towards him. He essentially had to earn the right to

the appointment. He highlights the 'turning point' for him was when in front of the commanding general a colonel spoke to him '...in that tone reserved for working around non-US coalition officers who are never to be taken seriously, ...'. Major General Molan decided he could not let the '... thinly veiled professional insult pass ... knowing [his] status and credibility would be gone for ever ...'. His immediate and forceful response broke the nexus and opened the door for him. A lesser person may have backed away from the confrontation and been sidelined for the remainder of their time in Iraq in some non essential role.

He is frank about his less than perfect grip of targeting when he assumed the chief of operations role. Even when he was more experienced he is open about the taxing nature that the decisions he was required to make had on him personally. He does not side step the issue of 'friction' between fellow senior officers when addressing conflicting priorities / tasks / goals which occurred from time to time. I might add he did not always win! I found this refreshing as at times I think officers are always expected to resolve issues in a 'nice and politically correct manner' regardless of the situation. In my view the strength of personality to ruffle a few feathers is a very good quality to have.

Another interesting aspect that shows through from his experience is the high regard he developed for United States reserve and national guard forces in Iraq. Perhaps the Australian Defence Force could take something from this and apply it to how our Australian reserve forces are managed and employed, especially the Army. He also returned to Australia with a great respect for the manner in which the United States soldiers and commanders manage the complexity of war.

... enduring thread of frustration with the level of 'negative and inflammatory' reporting by the media with total disregard for the facts.

Throughout the book regardless of what task or appointment he held there is an enduring thread of frustration with the level of 'negative and inflammatory' reporting by the media with total disregard for the facts. This is a challenge for commanders at all levels and is a reality of current and future operations and the military must learn to manage it in the best possible manner.

The book is littered with one line observations / comments / understatements which sum up situations beautifully and add to the reading enjoyment including ‘... to hold the attention of the commanding general he [Major General Molan] ‘exploited the “power” of power point.’ Another one liner from his executive office (then Major Steve Summersby an Australian Gunner officer) which brings out the classic Australian laconic sense of humour as well as summed up the enormity of Major General Molan's challenges was when he received the order appointing him as chief of operations and outlined his duties. Major Summersby commented to him ‘Perhaps in your spare time you can find a cure for cancer!’

His frustration with the ‘arm chair generals and bureaucrats’ in Canberra is no more evident then when he spent five of nine days of his mid tour break in Australian meeting senior people in Canberra. He concluded their focus was on making sure our small number of troops did not get hurt and that these official did not have any better appreciation of the big picture than when he had left four months earlier. This lack of appreciation and narrow view of Australia's involvement in Iraq continued when he returned to Australia and was he highlighted when asked ‘... what is the most significant thing that Australia could do to influence how this war is being fought?’ His answer ‘...You should have replaced me with another Australian general.’ Australia had chosen not to as ‘...we did not have officers available with the operational background necessary.’ I think this statement says a lot about our higher level commanders at that time.

... the senior officer ‘Mentor’ concept used by the United States in Iraq which Major General Molan talks about as a very clever way of doing business and an honest admission that no one person has all the answers.

Whilst this may not be new to some readers I certainly found the senior officer ‘Mentor’ concept used by the United States in Iraq which Major General Molan talks about as a very clever way of doing business and an honest admission that no one person has all the answers. I have not heard of the Australian Defence Force using this approach formally at least. It appears to me a very worthy strategy.

He talks of the constant tiredness and the need for self discipline to drive yourself to carry out your job fully. I found it also interesting that the commanding general espoused a mantra of balancing work with reading, sleep, exercise and thinking. In Australia this attitude is often raised as the need to balance work, family and leisure. The reality for Major General Molan was he worked 20 hours a day, and then routinely had his four hours rest interrupted. I am convinced senior commanders everywhere must say this to give themselves a sense of looking after their subordinates because if the guidance was followed things would not be done and the senior officer would be the first to ask why not.

...he belonged to the first generation of Australian officers to spend a career preparing for war, while rarely, if ever being exposed to combat.

Graduating from the Royal Military College, Duntroon in 1971, like many who followed him into the Army, Major General Molan's early military experience and views are influenced by the realities of being in a post Vietnam era ‘peace time’ Army and the lack of operational experience which that brought with it. In his words ‘...he belonged to the first generation of Australian officers to spend a career preparing for war, while rarely, if ever being exposed to combat.’ There is also a thinly veiled thread in the book that our national government although wanting to look like good global citizens, as a nation was not prepared to commit our military to the full brunt of warfighting in Iraq due in large part to our Vietnam experience.

This is must read for any one with an interest in the conduct of modern military operations. If you only have time to quickly review it I would suggest you read chapter 12 – Playing Casey in Germany, where Major General Molan reflects on what he learnt from his Iraq experience and the key conclusion he drew which was he ‘...did not feel that [his] performance in Iraq owed a lot to the Australian professional officer education system.’ The very positive aspect of this chapter (and book) is he at least offers some macro answers on how to address this problem. I wonder if we as a Defence Force have heeded any of the advice?

Army strength questioned

Patrick Walters, National security editor | July 19, 2008. The Australian

NATO and its allies have less than half the number of troops necessary to ensure military success in Afghanistan, according to the Australian general who served as chief of operations inside the US-led coalition headquarters in Iraq.

Major General Jim Molan says there is also a gap a "mile wide" between the Rudd Government's rhetoric on the strategic importance of Afghanistan and Australia's military presence on the ground in Oruzgan province.

General Molan, who left the army earlier this month after a 40-year career, was the most senior Australian to have served inside the coalition's war-fighting machine in Baghdad.

In his new book, *Running the War in Iraq*, to be published next week, General Molan has detailed his year in Baghdad helping direct the coalition's war effort.

His book also poses some fundamental questions about the way our defence forces are being used in Iraq and Afghanistan and how well-prepared Australia's military will be for the wars of the 21st century.

"To be generous, we (NATO and its allies) have a quarter to a half the number of troops that we need to make a fist of it.

"Not having enough troops means that it's going to be a long, long fight and that exposes your national resolve," General Molan told *The Weekend Australian* yesterday.

"If you look at Afghanistan, there is no unity of command.

"There is inadequate troops and there is no coherent plan.

"I would say that those three things are replicating exactly the situation in Iraq in 2003, 2004 and 2005."

General Molan says that while the question of more Australian troops in Oruzgan is a matter for the Government, he personally believes the Afghanistan conflict, like Iraq, is a war worth fighting.

He says the \$22 billion defence budget and the army's steady build-up in capabilities and numbers should, by 2010, enable Defence to sustain a 3000-strong force on combat operations.

"If we match the rhetoric with our actions, then someone has got to provide the forces in (Oruzgan) province sufficient to do the job.

"If we do nothing, we can wait around for the Americans to come in.

"I can only assume the overall American strategy is to stabilise Iraq, generate some forces and put them into Afghanistan, and that's what people are talking about at the moment."

General Molan says the ADF can maintain its current 1000 strong military commitment to Afghanistan indefinitely, and at minimal cost, until "the whole war falls apart and we bring our troops home".

"It all depends whether you are in the fight to show commitment or in the fight to win.

"If you are in the fight to win, you have got to conduct offensive operations."

General Molan says Australia's army is now more capable than it has been since the end of the Vietnam War, with "99 per cent" of the change having occurred since the East Timor operation in 1999.

"Our capability now at the tactical level is very high, except for our experience of close combat. Our strategic generalship is as good if not better as it has ever been. But there is a black hole in the middle in the operational area.

"I would question whether the Australian Defence Force can produce battlefield commanders who are capable of what we call campaigning - that is, designing a successful operation from beginning to end with all the resources that a competent military country should have."

General Molan points out that the army has not seen sustained combat since Vietnam.

"You can compensate in some ways for that but I don't think we are taking advantage of the opportunities that we have at the moment to learn from those who are fighting.

"The concern that I have is that the Australian Defence Force thinks that the superb performance it has shown in East Timor and the Solomon Islands in less than ferocious combat situations is the maximum level of capability that we have to show. I would argue that there is a lot more to it than that."

The Battle of Brallos Pass

*Provided by Brigadier D.I. Perry RFD, ED
Colonel Commandant Southern Region
Battery Commander 3rd Battery 1972-1973*

In the officers' mess of 2nd/10th Field Regiment at Chapel Street East St Kilda there are two significant items of Regimental Property. The first is a painting 'Brallos Pass' by Sir William Dargie¹ and the other, a portrait of Brigadier C. E. Cremor.²

During the withdrawal of 6th Division to the Thermopylae Line, 19th Brigade was rear guard with 2/2nd Field Regiment in direct support and Commanders Royal Artillery 6th Division³ ordered two guns to be deployed to cover the bridge at the Sperkios River. Lieutenant Colonel Cremor then ordered two guns of A Troop 3 Battery to provide the support and they were deployed on a forward slope.

Lieutenant J.A. Anderson⁴ commanded this section and he is still alive and well. John is a great supporter of the Regiment and his efforts at getting to dinners, re-unions and church parade are legend.

... despite a common belief that the Anzac Corps was only formed in World War 1, the Anzac Corps was again formed in Greece during World War 2.

John Anderson always made the point that, despite a common belief that the Anzac Corps was only formed in World War 1, the Anzac Corps was again formed in Greece during World War 2. and as if to demonstrate that point Peter Ewer has recently published "Forgotten Anzacs"⁵ in which the Campaign in Greece is described in some detail.

Up to this time, the description of the action was as printed in the Official History of Australia in the War 1939-1945⁶ and the line that always springs to my mind is 'The Gunners opened fire at 10,900 yards

and, in three rounds, hit and stopped the leading truck' and I encourage all Gunners to read the full account.

The description in Peter Ewers book is drawn from more recent interviews with the survivors and in current style places greater emphasis on the personal aspects of the participants and I have taken the liberty of providing his parallel account below.

The Battle of Brallos Pass

(An extract from 'The Forgotten ANZACS' by Peter Ewer)

Next stop for the Anzacs was the fabled Thermopylae Line. The use of historical analogy was more for theatrics than for geographic accuracy – in the 2000 years since Leonidas had held up the Persians, the topography had changed considerably, principally because silt deposits had significantly expanded the land area toward the sea. The Anzac line actually comprised two quite widely separated passes: one at Brallos in the south-west, to be held by the Australians, and the other at Molos in the north-east, allocated to the New Zealanders.

Once again, the most effective element in the fighting at Brallos-Molos came from the Anzac field gunners, who had the capacity to hit the Germans before they could bring their advantage in tanks to bear. At Brallos, the ability of even a few well-handled guns to hold up the Germans for many hours was demonstrated in one of the most heroic and determined small-unit combats of the campaign.

... the most effective element in the fighting at Brallos-Molos came from the Anzac field gunners ...

To conduct the rearguard at Brallos, Blamey allocated George Vasey's 19 Brigade, now having regained its breath after the fighting at Vevi and the withdrawal from Servia. Vasey's men began taking up position on 19 April. That night, Vasey finally

1. Sir William Dargie Kt CBE OBE. Initially this painting was unsigned, however due to the efforts of Major B Jackson, Sir William was, shortly before his death, invited to the Mess and upon identifying his work, signed it on the spot.
2. Brigadier William Edward Cremor CBE ED BE Dip Ed
3. Lieutenant General Sir Edmund Herring KCMG KBE CBE DSO MC
4. Captain J. A. Anderson MC
5. Forgotten ANZACS by Peter Ewer. Published 2008 ISBN: 9781921215292 (hbk)
6. Australia In The War 1939-1945, Greece, Crete and Syria Pages 145-147

got back the 2/11th Battalion, which now joined its parent brigade for the first time in the campaign after its temporary attachment to Savige Force. Along with his own depleted 2/4th and 2/8th battalions, Vasey was lent a number of other units, including the 2/1st Battalion from 16 Brigade, and the 2/5th, although the latter unit reverted to 17 Brigade on 21 April before the battle commenced.

Across the pass, Vasey placed from left to right the 2/4th, 2/1st, and 2/11th Battalions, using the 2/8th as a local reserve behind this front line. As he had to good effect at Vevi, Vasey stationed the carrier platoons available to him as a mobile response force, well behind his infantry, on this occasion north of Brallos. His artillery comprised the 2/2nd Field Regiment, commanded by Cremor, the officer invited in Jerusalem to train his men by having them fight the Black Watch.

The 2/2nd Field Regiment had been part of the withdrawal across the plain of Lamia, and its soldiers suffered their share of wrong turns and detours along the way. Phillip Worthem and his gun crew lost contact with the main body of the regiment, forcing the sergeant in command to go back and retrace his steps. Coming to a bridge near a road junction, with a big house on the hill, the Australian gunners got some directions from a British officer. Before accepting this navigational advice, Worthem and his comrades, hungry and tired, elected to explore the house on the hill above them. This proved to be a recently vacated headquarters of a British unit, complete with a larder of whisky, chocolates, and other luxuries that the ravenous Australians had not enjoyed for weeks. They quickly loaded up their truck, complete with a recently slaughtered pig and, catching up with the rest of the regiment, were hailed as conquering heroes as they handed out bottles of George IV whisky, packets of Players cigarettes, and Cadbury chocolates.

... leave behind two guns on a forward slope, where they could overlook and disrupt German efforts to get across the Spherkios River ...

While Worthem enjoyed his booty, Vasey was preparing his line of defence. On the way up the pass, the Australian brigadier asked Cremor to leave behind two guns on a forward slope, where they could overlook and disrupt German efforts to

get across the Spherkios River, the bridge over which the Anzac engineers had destroyed.

Cremor gave this hazardous job to Lieutenant John Anderson, the militiaman who had left the Citizens Military Forces in 1938 after six years to pursue accountancy studies and his choral career with the church choir. Anderson had 17 men with him from A Troop, 3rd Battery to crew two 25-pounder guns, together with a number of signallers. The only spot that could be found to take them was nothing but a ledge on the side of the mountain beside the pass.

... 'against all artillery tradition and practice', got another 500 yards range from his guns by taking out charge two and replacing it with a second and more powerful charge three, thereby risking a burst gun barrel ...

Thus exposed, Anderson and his men went into action at 6.00 p.m. on the evening of 21 April, when German vehicles left Lamia and made toward the pass. The Australian guns opened up, and Anderson was initially unimpressed. He remembered thinking the Germans 'a bit chicken', and that the Australians would 'fire a few rounds and they'd go off again'. Having announced his presence, Anderson kept up a harassing fire through the night, discharging one gun every ten seconds on a pre-determined pattern through the night. In battle, needs must – the Australians lit their lamps with kerosene, and used the empty tins for toilets, and Anderson laid his guns using the fluorescent markings on his compass as the roughest of guides.

The lonely vigil of the artillerymen grew hotter the next day as the full weight of the German attack bore down upon them. On the morning of 22 April, the Germans established a battery of four 150-millimetre guns in a small wood south-east of Lamia. These were probably from the 1/116 Artillery Regiment, operating in support of the 8 Panzer Aufklarungsabteilung from the 5th Panzer Division. The German medium artillery far outranged Anderson's 25-pounders, and the young lieutenant opted for a dangerous expedient in an effort to reply. The 25-pound gun was fired with a combination of three charges, depending on the range required: over short distances, only charge one was used; for longer ranges, charges two and three were added. Anderson, 'against all artillery

tradition and practice', got another 500 yards range from his guns by taking out charge two and replacing it with a second and more powerful charge three, thereby risking a burst gun barrel – and the hideous consequences to himself and his detachments that went with it.

Even with this desperate act of bravery, Anderson found his rounds still falling short of the German battery, and his position quickly became critical as the medium guns found their range: '... one gun was soon put out of action, the gun tractors were blown to bits, and one trailer loaded with ammunition – it all went off.' Anderson was caught unaware at around 1.00 p.m. when the Germans succeeded in getting some infantry across – 20 trucks appeared at the basement of the escarpment to his left. Anderson reacted swiftly to meet the peril: 'I wheeled the gun round and depressed the barrel, used charge one and reduced the "oomph" and did the firing myself ... we fired 50 or 60 rounds [and] didn't have any more trouble with them'.

*... of Anderson's team of 17 men,
seven were killed and three
wounded.*

Anderson's treatment of their infantry colleagues infuriated the German gunners, who re-doubled their bombardment, and they reported the destruction of an 'enemy battery in the pass'. Even so, Anderson was not yet done. He temporarily withdrew his men, but returned at around 4.00 p.m. in an effort to get the remaining gun back into action. One of Anderson's men was soon killed, and another lost his arm at the elbow – Anderson performed the first aid, and congratulated himself on his handiwork after the war when he saw the man again, on the grounds that his wounded comrade still had the same amount of arm. It was not only the first aid that kept the Australian gunner alive, but also his evacuation under fire – Anderson got him onto a stretcher and up the hill to safety, helped by his batman, Gunner E.S. Brown, a tram conductor from Kew.

Leaving their comrade in safer hands, Anderson and Brown returned yet again to the guns, only to find that more casualties had been inflicted by the German shelling. In all, of Anderson's team of 17 men, seven were killed and three wounded. The accompanying signallers fared better physically, but suffered the strains of battle alike. Anderson recalled one particular signaller: '... he was buried under shell fire. He was alright physically, but his hearing and nerves were shot. He got a disability

pension after the war when I confirmed it in writing.'

The sadness of the losses on that mountain ledge haunted the regiment, which published its own history after the war with modest tributes to the men killed: Bombardier Orm Tulloch, a 'talented musician, quiet and reserved'; Bombardier Lionel Caldwell, the battery artificer, whose job required him to go back to the guns in an effort to return them to action, and in doing so 'shared their fate'; Sergeant Len Ingram, who died while his brother, also a member of the regiment, waited further up the pass; Gunner John Drake, the youngest son of a large family whose eldest boy had died in the First World War; Gunner Frank O'Brien, who never saw his father also killed while serving in the first AIF; and Bombardier Fred Kerr the 'only son of a very brave set of parents, and a brilliant athlete'.

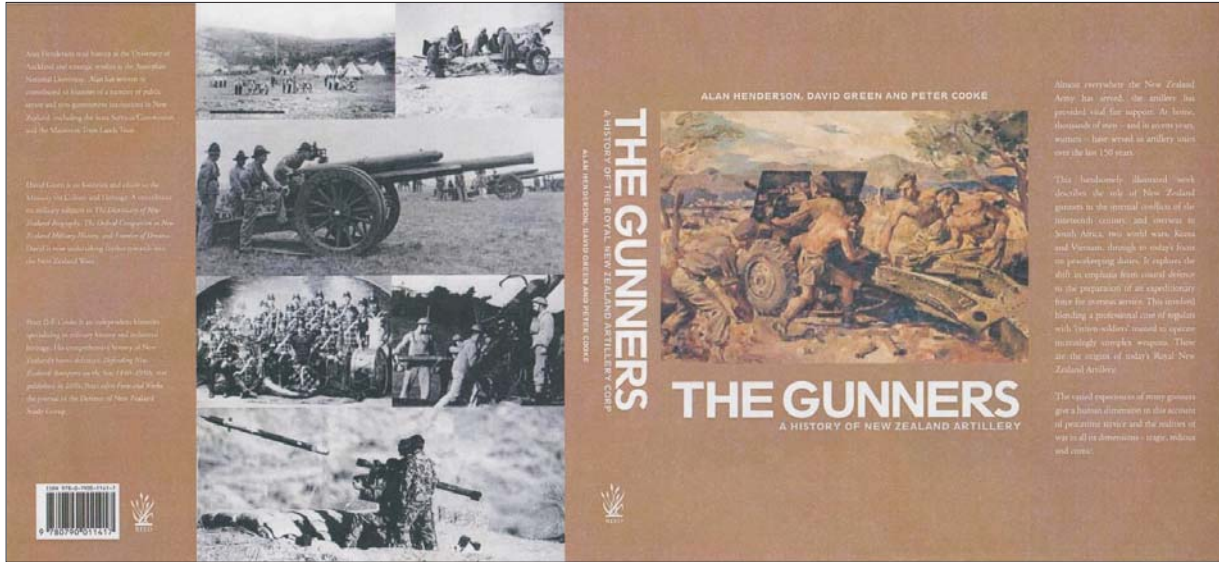
With no guns left to fire, and his men mostly dead or wounded Anderson took the gun sights and buried the breach blocks as the best that could be done to permanently disable the 25-pounders. Anderson and his men had been in action for 31 hours, and under fire for much of that time. He reported this as a 'pretty solid experience', which left him 'a bit tired afterwards'. Justice flows to soldiers no more regularly than it does to anybody else, but Anderson received some measure of it – he was awarded the Military Cross for his exploits at Brallos Pass, and Brown received the Military Medal, the equivalent award for non-commissioned ranks.

The heroism of Anderson and his men served the 19 Brigade well, allowing it to withdraw to a new position at Brallos on 23 April.

Editors Note: Brigadier Perry has submitted this article to encourage research and reading of military history. He also feels that a parallel may be drawn or at least a comparison made with the conduct of the members of 102nd Field Battery in the night of 12th/13th May 1968 and the deeds of members of 3rd Battery.



The Gunners



Our history is now with the printers and will be available early March 2008. It is a handsome book edited on the Regiments behalf by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage (which we used to know as the War History Branch), with full input from the RNZA Historical Committee and from many serving and retired members of the Regiment. It is over 500 pages in length with more than 140 black and white and coloured photos and maps, comprehensively covering all aspects of the Regiments activities in war and peace; RF and TF; Field, Coast, Air Defence, Locating, Anti-Tank, Survey and Bands; from the early 1800s up to 2007. It complements the war histories. It is published by Reed (a division of Penguin Books) and because of its size and quality it is now being printed in hardback only. It is a 'living' book with personal recollections, outline organisations and details of our weapons.

The Publishers have offered the Regiment copies for pre-publication sale at a publishers reduced price. These will be available for sale through the Regiment at \$40 each, inclusive of packing and postage. This is a particularly good price for a hardback book of this quality. Sales are being coordinated by the Regimental Funds Committee administered by the School of Artillery at Waiouru.

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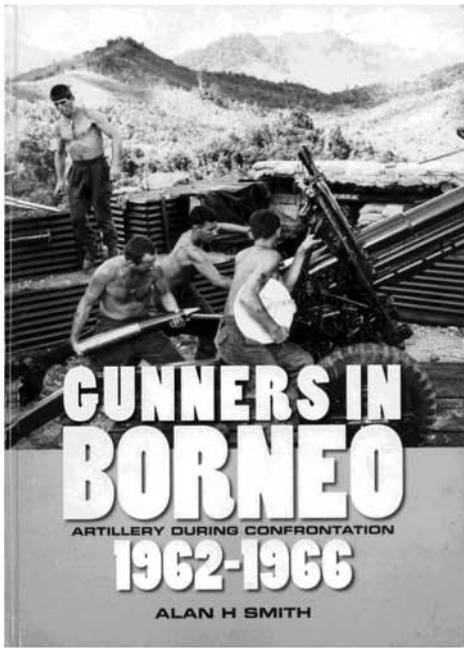
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'GUNNERS IN BORNEO—Artillery During Confrontation 1962-66' brings together for the first time an account of the most economical war ever fought from a mainly artillery perspective. It uses the active service of 102 Battery RAA in the most threatened Western Division as an example of artillery operations, which were shared with other British and Malaysian batteries. During 1964-66, several Australian gunner officers were attached to British batteries. Two Australian battalions, 3 RAR and 4 RAR also deployed to become key elements in the Security Forces in the Western Division of Sarawak. Known as the Borneo or Confrontation war, it was fought by the Security Forces, a mix of British, Australian, New Zealand and Malaysian armies, navies and air forces for five years. They were augmented by a significant field engineer presence involved with infrastructure projects. The fledgling UK Army Air Corps made its reputation during the war, which was also a triumph for counter-insurgency and expeditionary warfare waged by the Security Forces against Indonesian terrorists and Regular Forces.

Major General CMI Pearson, AO, DSO, OBE, MC (Retd) writes: "The importance of the artillery commitment is given in detail and will be invaluable as a record ... During Confrontation we were ... on the threshold of the electronic age ... It was of little use given the conditions all the servicemen operated under ... So this account is historically most valuable to illustrate how improvisation was a potent military virtue ..."

208 pages, contents, maps, illustrated, glossary, foreword, appendices, bibliography, Security Forces Order of Battle, nominal roll and index

Major General John Whitelaw, AO, CBE (Retd) writes: "This is an appreciation of the use of artillery in Borneo during 'confrontation' with Indonesia. It is a little known story ... a war with extraordinary military and political complexities ... During my service with Australian Force FARELF, the high reputation of our gunners, infantry and sappers in Borneo operations was well known and acknowledged. This work will fill a void in our Army history".

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Appointments

Senior Officers

The Chief of Army has approved the following 'Gunner' senior officer appointments:

Brigadier P.B. Symon, AO, DCA, AHQ, wef 19 Jan 09, promoted MAJGEN (Sub) wef 19 Jan 09

Brigadier W.L. Goodman, AM, COMDT ADFA, wef 14 Jan 08

Brigadier W.L. Goodman, AM, COMDT ACSC, wef 19 Jan 09

Colonel D.P. Coghlan, AM, DG Strategic Policy, wef 19 Jan 09, promoted BRIG (Sub) wef 19 Jan 09

Colonel P.D. McLachlan, DGFLW-A, AHQ, wef 19 Jan 09, promoted BRIG (Sub) wef 19 Jan 09

Unit Command Appointments

The Chief of Army is pleased to announce the following Royal Australian Artillery command appointments wef 21 January 2009:

- Lieutenant Colonel N.T. Sweeney – 8th/12th Medium Regiment
- Lieutenant Colonel J.B. McLean – 16th Air Defence Regiment
- Lieutenant Colonel B.A. Wood – School of Artillery

Regimental Sergeant Major Appointments

The Chief of Army is pleased to announce the following Royal Australian Artillery Regimental Sergeant Major appointments for 2009:

- Warrant Officer Class One I. Gardiner – 8th Brigade
- Warrant Officer Class One J.S.B. Armstrong – Ceremonial Hobart
- Warrant Officer Class One W.J. Degenaro – WO & NCO Academy
- Warrant Officer Class One T.A. Byrne – 4th Field Regiment

- Warrant Officer Class One D.T. Rayment – 8th/12th Medium Regiment
- Warrant Officer Class One A.M. Hortle – Adelaide University Regiment
- Warrant Officer Class One M.A. Johnston – Joint Proof & Experimental Unit
- Warrant Officer Class Two C. Clifford – 23 Field Regiment

The Chief of Army congratulates all the above on their appointments.

DOCM-A

Major Dave Kelly, Career Advisor Artillery

Thank you for the opportunity to again contribute to the liaison letter and provide an update on Officer Career Management. In this edition I would like to focus on the key issues that DOCM-A will work through in the second half of the year.

Performance Appraisal Reports

Performance Appraisal Reports (PAR) continue to be the single most important document used for career management and are a vital document when an officer is considered at a Personnel Advisory Committee (PAC). In recognising the importance of the PAR, DOCM-A has commissioned a DVD that offers both officers and their commanders guidance in the effective construction of a PAR. Importantly the DVD highlights the relationship of the PAR to the PAC process through the use of a mock PAC video. This DVD should now have been received at unit level.

Personnel Advisory Committee

The captain, major and Australian Command & Staff College (ACSC) PAC will be held during the period 11-21 November.

The key enablers for those presenting to PAC are:

- 2008 PAR – complete and on time, with promotion recommendations from **both** your AO and SAO.
- AIRN – You must be compliant at the time of PAC.
- ACOTC – complete for target rank.
- Have no outstanding adverse administrative action.
- You are occupying a position at the higher rank WEF January 2009 (captain / major PAC).

If you are to be presented to the ACSC PAC you will also need to produce a biography which will be included in your PAC file and read by PAC members.

I will be sending out information by email to each target group to re emphasise these requirements.

Sub Unit Command

I have had a number of questions posed this year in relation to selection for Sub Unit Command (SUC). I found that in some cases there was an expectation that a SUC would just happen.

SUC appointments are highly sought after and SUC is a key discriminator for future progression. The reality of SUC is that demand exceeds supply and therefore not all officers will be afforded the opportunity for these appointments. For those officers who are not selected for an RAA SUC, there are a limited number of non corps positions.

The appointment of SUC, corps and non corps, is selected through a PAC process. Like all other PAC, the key enablers of performance, AIRN compliance and ACOTC are considered. You will be provided feedback on your competitiveness for SUC through both your ACG and annual interviews.

Courses

The annual Individual Training Cycle (ITC) for 2009 is now underway. The first part of the ITC involves DOCM-A emailing officers who require an ACOTC course in 2009, this email will be accompanied by next year's course schedule. On receipt of this email it is the individual officer's responsibility to nominate against a course that suits both their requirements and that of the chain of command. If you are due for a course in 2009 and do not/ can not nominate, DOCM-A will nominate you.

It is worth highlighting the importance of course reports in career management. Whilst a PAR will always be the source document from which to gauge an officer's competitiveness, course reports provide another excellent tool. The grading and suite of recommendations you receive on each course report is important and is scrutinised in the selection of key appointments such as SUC.

Graded Officer Pay Scale

DOCM-A will conduct a 100% Graded Officer Pay Scale (GOPS) review in September/ October 2008. As part of this review, adjustments of pay groups that are applicable to the January posting cycle will be completed.

Finally, I will hand over to Major James Kerr. James is an officer with broad experience across both the RAA and Army. He will conduct his interview tour between February and April 2009.

SCMA

*by Captain Piero Bertocchi &
Warrant Officer Class One Robert Thompson*

Introduction

As the year rapidly draws to a close and my tenure as career manager thus ends, I wish to take a few moments in order to extend a warm thanks to those that have supported SCMA's efforts and re-affirm some key matters in relation to personnel management. However, as a prelude, let us examine the year in brief from a career management perspective.

Initially, the Personnel Advisory Committee (PAC) cleared 46 RAA soldiers for promotion across all ranks and streams. Subsequently over 200 posting orders were issued to personnel across the Regiment, and over 20 soldiers were recruited to RAA units from other trades. RAA career management interviews were completed in all major localities, and the perceived attitude, presentation and trade knowledge of personnel was seen to be excellent across the broad spectrum. Notably, we currently have significant numbers of RAA soldiers deployed in all theatres of operations, and likewise posted to high profile appointments both within Australia and overseas. Reports indicate these personnel are acquitting themselves to a high standard. Thus in review, the year has been challenging yet rewarding.

Appointments and Awards

Congratulations to all soldiers who were successful in clearing the PAC for promotion. The standard was very competitive at every rank and trade. In particular, Warrant Officer Class One W. Degenaro is to be congratulated on his upcoming Level 2 appointment as RSM Warrant Officer / Non Commissioned Officer Academy for 2009. Warrant

Officer Class One Thompson was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Career Management Cycle

Please use the following time line for planning purposes:

- *Personnel Advisory Committee:*
- RSM PAC Nov 08 (Regt WO1 across Army)
- WO1 PAC Mar 09 (target rank Regt WO1)
- WO2 PAC Not Before Apr 09 (target rank WO2)
- SGT PAC Not Before Apr 09 (target rank SGT)
- *PAC Notification* – Four weeks after PAC sits.
- *Postings* – NLT 15 Jul 09
- *Unit Visits / Interviews* – July to Oct 09

Please Note – Unit visits to SCMA should be planned not before June 2009 due to the RAA Cell presenting late in the PAC series.

Key Issues

2009 promises to be equally as challenging for the RAA. The following issues deserve special mention:

- *'Empowering the soldier'*. SCMA has tasked you, the soldier, to take ownership of your career. The responsibility for effective career management lies as much with you, the individual, as the career manager, and you must take all opportunities and support mechanisms to assist in achieving your goals. Notably, new Electronic Preferences and Restrictions (EPAR) on PMKeys Self Service has well subscribed, every soldier should take the time to ensure that their EPAR is correct and up to date. Instructions for its use are maintained on the SCMA web site.
- *Pay/Trade*. PORs are still problematic. In almost every trade stream within the RAA, soldiers require a POR to change ECN/grade after relevant experience in trade and/or time in rank. Without appropriate paperwork, pay/trade cannot conduct the appropriate transaction.
- *Career Courses*. To grow Army, develop our people and enhance our work force, soldiers must attend career courses. The way to achieve this is through early and continuous engagement with the career managers so that a suitable career pathway can be planned. Our soldiers should be panelled as early as possible and use the S1 courses as professional development. In consultation with the career manager, units can then agree on the best window to get the soldier qualified. By removing the 'just in time' approach we will achieve better results.
- *Training Command-Army*. Chief of Army is clear in his intent to ensure that Training Command units

(including ARTC, RMC and School of Artillery) are manned to the best possible level. Although the Regiment is deficient in bombardier / sergeant rank, it does not lessen our responsibilities in providing necessary support. As per RAA ECSOs, all personnel from bombardier to warrant officer Class two should expect several training command / non corps postings throughout their career. Be realistic in your expectations. Such postings raise your profile when striving for promotion.

- *Unrestricted Service*. Once again, we must reinforce the requirement for unrestricted service. Last year's message remains extant: Our 1st Division Australian Regular Army units are in Australia's north, and training command / non-corps appointments are generally south. As a bombardier onwards, you will be required to uplift in order to meet the needs of the Service as outlined above. If you argue that this is not possible due to a range factors (the normal ones include home ownership, wife's employment, family network, undesired locality), you are providing restricted service, and your personal needs no longer meet those of Army. At times, this creates unfavourable friction and will inevitably end with separation. Read DI (A) PERS 34-8. The nature of service in the ARA is well described.

Incoming Career Manager

With my tenure complete, I am due to depart SCMA in order to take up my next appointment at 8th/12th Medium Regiment. My replacement is Captain Rob Ryan who is currently posted as the Adjutant of 4th Field Regiment. I wish him well in what has proven to be a very rewarding job. Warrant Officer Class One Thompson will remain a further 12 months to maintain continuity within the RAA Cell. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Warrant Officer Class One Thompson for his excellent service for the past 18 months. I would also like to thank RSM SCMA, Warrant Officer Class One Paul Washford who has acted as the caretaker career manager whilst Warrant Officer Class One Thompson serves on operations in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those who have provided sound advice and counsel throughout my tenure as Career Manager RAA. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at SCMA and firmly believe that our best assets, our people, are second to none. Finally, I would like to wish you and your families a very happy festive season and a safe return for 2009.

Dragon rages at Shoalwater

THE Army's tactical information collection capability was rein-forced by 20 Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regt conducting its first regimental exercise.

Exercise Raging Dragon, at Shoalwater Bay, marked the first time a task-organised structure of an STA battery was deployed in field-testing the interoperability of the regiment's many capabilities and training members for operations.

Throughout the exercise, 20 STA Regt worked with 1 Fd Regt, 2/14 LHR (QMI) and the RAAF's 37 Sqn. The regiment undertook a number of varied tasks, giving soldiers the opportunity to deploy on a C-130, packing and securing their kit and preparing themselves for air movement – for many of the soldiers a new experience.

Possessing the ability to augment the provision of real-time tactical information produced from its various force elements, the regiment provided this information to combat commanders giving an extra dimension of situational awareness.

Arty, Met and Svy Tp provided accurate weather data. Tgt Acq Tp conducted radar missions and tracked 1 Fd Regt artillery. Surv1 Tp used its radar and observation equipment to provide situational awareness from the field.

Using the Skylark UAV, UAV Dragon rages at Shoalwater Tp provided extra situational awareness for 2/14 LHR (QMI) through remote viewing imagery terminals. The Skylark is a small UAV that can be launched by dismounted units and provides aerial imagery faster and with less

equipment than its larger counterparts. It is considered well suited for "over the hill" reconnaissance.

Surv1 Tp Sgt Matthew Quarby said the exercise was a good opportunity to use thermal and observation equipment. "Doing fall of shot was also a good experience, particularly for some of the younger soldiers."

Sect Comd 132 UAV Bty Lt Courtney Ames said "it was good to use the infra-red camera and see the differences between imagery by day and night; the level of detail presented and mimicked by the mock village was quite good and we were able to see the activity of the people in the village".



Eyes on the prize: Surveillance begins at Shoalwater Bay

'Army' - The Soldiers Newspaper, July 10, 2008

For the record

I WOULD like to point out a couple of errors in the account of the Battles for Coral/Balmoral (**Army**, April 17).

The account lists those units involved, but fails to acknowledge the significant role played by C Sqn, 1 Armcd Regt. The actions of the tanks were crucial to the reinforcement of the position at Coral in particular, and resulted in 1 Armcd Regt being awarded the Coral/Balmoral battle honour it proudly displays on its standard today.

The article also listed A Sqn, 2 Cav Regt; this should of course read A Sqn, 3 Cav Regt.

As a former OC of C Sqn I felt I needed to address this. Aside from that, the newspaper is a very welcome read while here overseas – keep up the good work!

Maj Scott Winter
RAAC

UK Advanced Command and Staff Course

'Army' - The Soldiers Newspaper, May 15, 2008

Capability & Training

Future Artillery Seminar

*By Lieutenant Colonel A.W. Garrad
Force Development Group, LWDC*

Introduction

'Future Artillery 2008' was a three day seminar conducted in the United Kingdom over the period 31st March to 2nd April 2008. The seminar profiled international developments in artillery systems, provided various national army offensive support (OS) perspectives (NATO), future capability requirements and operational feedback. This conference is one of the most comprehensive international forums of this type and this year included a diverse range of key note speakers from both industry and from across the international gunner community including Commanding General US Fires Centre of Excellence Major General Vangjel.

The purpose for attending the seminar was to better inform Force Development Group core business processes (capability gap analysis, future force structure and capability design) on current and developing international military technologies and capabilities associated with OS.

Purpose

The intent of this submission is to highlight just some of the more interesting and relevant issues among the many items presented over the three day period of the seminar.

Observations

General. The consistent theme expressed throughout the forum was that as a consequence of current operations, artillery branches within respective national armies were '*back in business*' after a prolonged period of uncertainty. Whilst there have been significant developments in precision munitions and high levels of dependence on CAS on contemporary operations, the enduring capabilities of artillery systems had been re-confirmed on operations. Responsive 24/7 fires able to neutralise areas and engage point targets in very close proximity to own troops have ensured the artillery's continued place on the battlefield. It was also widely acknowledged among the key ISAF/Iraq contributing nations that skills fade within the gunner profession due to operational commitments was a significant challenge to maintaining capability. The US Field Artillery in particular had been seriously challenged with many artillery units having been re-rolled to support current operations and not having undertaken training in role for over 24 months.

Precision Artillery Munitions. Particular emphasis was given to artillery support to the close fight in complex terrain. Precision systems particularly GMLRS and Excalibur were proven to be highly successful in surgically defeating determined insurgents without levelling the whole building or surrounding buildings. In doing so, friendly casualties have been minimised by avoiding the need to expose combat troops through conventional fire and movement. The use of artillery precision munitions has quickly become the modus operandi against stubborn resistance. The concept of '*mass precision*' was outlined by the Commanding General US Fires Centre of Excellence Major General Vangjel. This concept involves the

means to deliver multiple precision engagements simultaneously.

Suppression versus Precision. This subject was discussed by several speakers with the general consensus of opinion being that whilst precision artillery munitions brought a significant increase in capability to support the close battle, particularly in complex terrain, the requirement to suppress or neutralise area targets with lethal fires remains an extant requirement. Area neutralisation remains the most effective means of providing the manoeuvre arms commander freedom of action against numerous adversaries whose precise locations can not be determined accurately.

UAVs. The evolving role of the UAV was alluded to in several presentations. Collective developments are trending toward the merger of strike and ISTAR functions into the same platform such that precision + find = destruction. This is the capability intent of the UK Watchkeeper and US Predator systems. This significantly shortens the kill chain improving response times to the engagement of fleeting targets.

The fusion of non-lethal capabilities with kinetic is an area of development which seems to have defaulted to the 'Gunners' of most armies ...

The Royal Artillery is proceeding with development of an Indirect Fire Precision Attack system (loitering munition) with the production of a concept demonstrator. The concept entails an expendable ground launched aerial platform with up to six hours endurance, able to locate targets with onboard sensors and directed by a GCS onto a single point target once identified. The developmental path has been expedited for an operational capability to be in service by 2009.

The subject of loitering munitions versus recoverable armed UAVs is the subject of ongoing operational analysis. Advantages of loitering munitions are their relatively lower operating costs, lower cost per unit, no need for recovery and fewer maintainers. Armed UAVs have the advantage of being able to deliver multiple payloads, have increased endurance and are reusable.

Counter Fires. The Counter Fires problem was analysed from the perspective of future systems development. The challenge posed by Stand Off Weapons (SOW) (ranges <20km) makes conventional CBF engagements ineffective when

the accumulative time needed to fix the HB, generate the mission and TOF exceeds 90 seconds. The range of possible solutions involve defeating the threat projectile in flight (Counter Rocket Artillery Mortar) or the need for pre-planned direct sensor shooter links to detect, track and destroy the HB.

Fires and Influence. The fusion of fires and influence was a common theme in the UK/US presentations. The fusion of non-lethal capabilities with kinetic is an area of development which seems to have defaulted to the 'Gunners' of most armies due to their inherent ability to incorporate this aspect into the targeting process.

OS Coordination. Tactical level integration of OS coordination, particularly CAS, with manoeuvre elements has led to the growth in relevance and size of artillery observer parties which are trending toward larger tactical groupings. The UK Fire Support Team (FST) for example has up to seven personnel including a JTAC, with the capability to support sub elements of the CT (Platoon/Troop).

105mm Light Gun. The continued utility of the 105mm light gun system in support of current operations was supported by UK and US perspectives. The system fills an important gap between medium arty and light mortar systems. Its lighter platform weight (air portable at high altitude), smaller logistically supportable round and effective gun range make it ideal for operations in Afghanistan. The Royal Artillery are reviewing their requirements for a LOT extension to the current equipment and the future development of a 105mm precision round is under consideration.

Mortars. With some exceptions (Scandinavia and Germany), there was consensus among national perspectives about the trend toward amalgamating mortars into artillery organisations to provide an expeditionary/organic capability for manoeuvre units. The USMC and Norwegian arty capabilities presently incorporate dual equipped batteries with both guns and mortars. The French artillery has a 120mm mortar battery embedded within their artillery regiment structure. Additionally the idea of a universal observer was discussed in lieu of separate MFCs and FOOs.

Weapon Locating. SAAB systems presented on the introduction of a multi-mission radar post 2015 able to track 150 targets simultaneously (air platforms out to 120km and ballistic tracks out to 20km). This raises interesting questions about the

type of force structure capable of performing CBF missions, airspace battle management and GBAD.

Capability Gaps. The seminar identified a number of emerging capability gaps across national armies. These included:

- Long range precision surface fires (out to 200km) is a recognised capability gap for UK, Canada and US artillery organisations.
- Engagement of mobile fleeting targets precisely.
- Flexible precision attack options which can employ a variety of guidance systems (IR, millimetre wave, GPS, laser guided).

Conclusion

Future Artillery 2008 provided an ideal opportunity to gain insights into the range of OS lessons being derived from contemporary operations, OS capability developments occurring within various NATO armies as well as the relevant R&D activities occurring within defence industry.

Regular attendance at such seminars is part of the work undertaken by staff within the Force Development Group and can provide a thoroughly interesting and rewarding staff posting for gunner officers.

structurally beneficial, cost effective, and in line with proposed future structures of the RAA.

The RAA currently provides composite batteries with fire support elements and JOSTs located in gun regiments. The future structure being discussed here will allow the 'plug and play' process by harnessing capabilities and existing developments from units to a deployable force. The evolution of an all encompassing STA regiment is an option worth investigating. Simply stated, it may be worth considering moving all the JOSTs from the regiments to 20th Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regiment (20 STA Regt). This would see changes that are cost effective and manageable. The benefits would provide increased interoperability within ADF and coalition partners.

One obvious disadvantage would be battery commanders and JOSTs would be separated in garrison. My immediate answer to this is that on operations they are separated as well, and in today's application of numerous independent JOSTs, the RAA would be conforming. This also allows the deploying battery to request a number of JOSTs to be attached to his battery.

... it may be worth considering moving all the JOSTs from the regiments to 20th Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regiment (20 STA Regt).

Is the Orbat Correct?

Major D.D. Johnson, SO2 Offensive Support Force Development Group, LWDC

Information Surveillance Target Acquisition Reconnaissance (ISTAR) is a process and not a structure. In glossary and physical terms the STA portion is artillery specific. I will not argue the concepts of STA, however, I would like to generate discussion of why the RAA does not combine all STA capabilities under one structure? For instance, if the Joint Offensive Support Teams (JOSTs) contribute to STA by way of identifying and fixing targets, why are they not embedded within that organization? What I am proposing would be

The importance of integrating current fire co-ordination and targeting processes with information doctrine cannot be over stated. This would form a STA Bty consisting of artillery 'universal observers'. This would support the 'Observer Trade' model currently being considered under the FSR, and would allow persons within the RAA observer trade to cross train on unmanned aerial systems, radars, and JOSTs. When a manoeuvre element deploys the fire support asset is allocated from the gun regiments, and the STA elements are plugged in by the amount required for the specific operation. Conversely, the RAA could disband 20 STA Regt and embed an STA battery within each gun regiment. This would provide greater working interoperability between sense and shoot functions reducing kill chain response times.

These two approaches are easily manageable, and definitely conform to aligning Army tasks to the RAA. I am not professing that these are viable, but, in the RAA community we should continue to

provide solutions that are relevant, and in an open mind both of these options are interesting to discuss in a wider forum. The figure below illuminates how the STA Regt elements would plug into the wider battle group or task force Operational structure. This structure needs to be generated and considered, as this will provide the *Act, Sense, Decide, Adapt* in line with Adaptive Campaigning.

notion that other combat arms can be ‘universal observers.’

... describes the increasing importance of the artillery specific observer on the battlefield, and dispels the notion that other combat arms can be ‘universal observers.’

Terminology

*Major D.D. Johnson, SO2 Offensive Support
Force Development Group, LWDC*

The fundamental relationship between offensive support (OS) and other capabilities will not change in the future, specifically targeting, and fire planning to ensure the required attack resource can be executed as planned by Joint. The role of OS has undergone subtle changes in emphasis, which has understated the critical role that OS plays during modern operations. For example, recent definitions globally have stated that the role of the field artillery is to ‘destroy or neutralize the enemy with indirect fire as part of the all arms battle’. Really, this definition is inadequate when looking at the capabilities and contributions of a modern artillery force. Instead, a more appropriate definition of the role for RAA in a modern context could be more accurately stated as ‘*Contributes to the defeat of an enemy or adversary through surveillance, target acquisition and orchestration of lethal and non-lethal effects to be synchronised within a joint environment across the spectrum of operations*’. This definition is less narrow in focus, and emphasizes the fact that a true artillery capability is in fact a ‘system of systems’ as described in the figure below.

Within the RAA context, providing the fire and effects that are required to defeat the enemy’s capability and will to fight is the defining mission of the Artillery. These capabilities must be framed within the context of Adaptive Campaigning. Thus, the traditional methodologies, command relationships, and sequencing of RAA operations must evolve to reflect this new operating concept.

The term Synchronise Precision Effects of Attack Resources (SPEAR) is a possible solution. This describes the increasing importance of the artillery specific observer on the battlefield, and dispels the

The timing is perfect as the RAA conducts the Force Structure Review. When streamlining the trade model to create an observation post battery, I am suggesting the RAA call that battery within each regiment the SPEAR battery. This acronym provides the required torque to justify what the artillery has done in the past and will continue to do into the future.

If the responsibilities of directing indirect fire were to become a secondary duty for soldiers engaged in reconnaissance, manoeuvre or intelligence as primary tasks, then it is likely that the full effects of indirect firepower would be lost. By having a dedicated expert in all aspects of OS allocated to each tactical level, commanders can concentrate on the operation, thus ensuring that the Artillery commander allocated handles the coordination and synchronization of firepower. This sees firepower complimenting manoeuvre. These roles are not equal. Rather, they should be seen as a pyramid, with firepower and manoeuvre equal and complementary under the direction of the manoeuvre arms commander.

The future battlespace challenges the coordination and application of joint fires and the notion of traditional fire support roles. No other command structure has the professional ability to conduct this task. A true Artillery capability is in fact a ‘system of systems’, which together plays a critical role in the operational functions of *Act, Sense, Decide, Adapt*.

In providing forward thinking for the RAA, it would be less than prudent if we did not to look at re-defining the role of the RAA, or suggesting a more powerful acronym to encompass what the forward observer executes at the pointy end. We can pontificate this in conferences; however, if we continue to approach the future like that, then our infantry brethren will continue to suggest anyone can be an observer.

DMO

Combat Support Systems Program Office

LAND 17

LAND 17 will deliver an enhanced, networked and digitised field artillery system. The current capability will be enhanced to provide superior coordination of Joint Fires (JF). This will result in a JF system that supports the Army's future requirements outlined in the Future Land Operational Concept (Complex Warfighting). Second Pass for the project is scheduled for June 2009.

The project's deliverables include:

Protected 155mm Self Propelled Howitzers (SPH). Protection will allow the crew to operate the system from behind armour.

- Lightweight 155mm Towed Howitzers (LW155). Airportable by Chinook helicopter.
- A Battlefield Management System–Fires (BMS–F) consisting of:
 - BMS–F (C2) — A command and control system use in the JOSCC and higher and lower command posts to coordinate JF; and
 - BMS–F (FCS) — A digital fire control system for the SPH and LW155 that will interface with the BMS–F (C2).

The Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System (AFATDS) has been selected as the BMS–F (C2) pending government approval at Second Pass. The provision of a BMS–F (Forward Observer (FO)) system has been devolved to LAND 146 Phase 2 to exploit synergies with that project.

The project has conducted market solicitation and identified a preferred capability solution for the LW155. Responses to a Request for Tender (RFT) for the SPH are in the process of being evaluated and remain commercial in confidence.

*POC: Lieutenant Colonel Steve Hume,
Project Director LAND 17*

LAND 19 Phase 6 - Short Range Air Defence System

LAND 19 Phase 6 seeks to enhance the Short Range Air Defence System (SHORAD) capability by acquiring additional RBS 70 Weapon Stations of the latest build standards along with associated

thermal sights, identification friend or foe (IFF) equipment, PSTAR-ER Target Sensors and a Tactical Command and Control System (TaCCs) as well as upgrading the current equipment fleet. The equipment will be issued to 16th Air Defence Regiment and Training Command. Following the initial deliveries of the RBS 70 Weapon System, PSTAR-ER and TaCCS, the project's focus is now on completing the remaining deliveries, including additional weapon systems, the establishment of in-service support and improving the TaCCS functionality and connectivity.

POC: Mr Robert Hudson, Project Director SHORAD

LAND 58 Phase 3 - AN/TPQ-36 Weapon Locating Radar Life of Type Extension

LAND 58 Phase 3 proposes to extend the Life of Type of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) AN/TPQ-36 Weapon Locating Radar, beyond the end of its service life date of 2007. The AN/TPQ-36 Radar was introduced into service in 1987 as an earlier phase of LAND 58. A total of seven radars, a simulator and support and test equipment were purchased. The upgraded radars will be capable of locating (detecting and providing targeting data) mortars, guns and rockets in the tactical land environment.

The project received Second Pass approval in December 2006. A contract was signed with Raytheon Australia Pty Ltd on 20th April 2007 for the Life of Type Extension of the ADF's Weapon Locating Radars and Simulator. The new radars will be introduced into service in 2009 and will comprise new operating computers and a vastly improved man-machine-interface based on the Israeli developed Firestar software. Of note is that the ageing map drum will finally be replaced with twin 19 inch LCD monitors, bringing the radars into the 21st century!

*POC: Lieutenant Colonel Shaun Harding, Project Director
Radar Projects*

AMP040.10 - Medium Artillery Replacement Project

Medium Artillery Replacement Project (MARAP) plans to replace the existing 155mm ammunition with a new family of 155mm conventional ammunition, to improve range and effects. The new family of ammunition is primarily intended for use in the M198 Howitzer but is additionally intended to be compatible with 155mm howitzers to be introduced by LAND 17. The projectile family will be delivered with a modular charge system, fuses and ancillary equipment. Some changes to

the user requirements of this project have necessitated Ministerial approval as the changes have modified the scope, schedule and project budget. Accordingly, the project will not progress until the changes have Ministerial approval. Timings TBC.

POC: Major Tony Pearce, Project Manager MARAP/IDFCS

AMP042.18 - Indirect Fire Computer Software Project

The purpose of the Indirect Fire Computer Software (IDFCS) project is to deliver 125 licences for replacement ballistic calculation software for the RAA. The software is used to calculate a ballistic firing solution for an artillery battery. The project will also deliver a hardware replacement for the current IDFC and CFC with a ‘ruggedized’ notebook computer common to BCSS. Operational release of the IDFCS is likely to be delayed until early 2009 when IDFCS software version 1.3 is forecast for acceptance and delivery.

POC: Major Tony Pearce, Project Manager MARAP/IDFCS

Indirect Fire Support Weapons Fleet Sustainment

The Indirect Fire Support Weapons (IFSW) Fleet Sustainment Team, based at DMO at Victoria Barracks - Melbourne, ensures that IFSW fleet is effectively managed to deliver optimal operational and training availability levels at an affordable cost throughout the equipment life cycle. The team works to target specific issues such as maintenance

management, management and supply chain management and unit support.

IFSW Stakeholder Working Group. An IFSW Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) (formally known as a Configuration Control Board), was held on 18th June 2008 and was well supported by a range of stakeholders. The SWG has representation ranging from the School of Artillery, Army HQ, Joint Logistic Units, DMO Technical Advisers, DMO RAA SME and RAA. It is convened quarterly. Topics such as the Firing Tables, Ancillary Artillery equipment issues and the incoming ammunition projects have been discussed recently.

If any RAA members have suggested topics/input for future SWG, please feel free to contact the NFM Mr Brett Snelling on 03 9282 5906 or the ANFM CAPT Kathryn Christie on 03 9282 5007.

M2A2 Disposal. The M2A2 operational fleet will be disposed using the strategy outlined on the following page.

The M2A2 Disposal Plan is pending AHQ endorsement. Subsequently, MINDEF approval will allow the implementation of the disposal strategy. US DoD approval is required to transfer/sell the rendered M2A2 to civilian organisations. Approval from the US DoD is anticipated to occur in 2011.

Breach Upgrade for M198. The M198 Breach upgrade project is ongoing. All units less Joint Logistic Unit have been force issued all parts required for the M198 Breach upgrade. In order to ensure your unit is ready for the imminent Excalibur rollout, it is requested that units make

M2A2 Disposal Strategy

Quantity	M2A2 Configuration	Disposal Activity
40	Ceremonial (Salute)	<i>Conversion.</i> M2A2 will be converted to ceremonial guns for saluting purposes.
10	Live Fire (Display)	<i>Re-utilisation.</i> A residual M2A2 live firing capability will be retained. AHU will manage the operational M2A2.
8	Rendered for AHU	<i>Re-utilisation.</i> Operational M2A2 will be rendered innocuous for display purposes.
8	For Salvage	<i>Re-utilisation.</i> A number of M2A2 will be salvaged for spare parts to support the ceremonial M2A2 and the live firing M2A2.
51	Rendered for Civilian Disposal	<i>Transfer/Sale.</i> M2A2 will be rendered innocuous for display purposes and allocated to civilian historical organisations. Recipients will have to pay \$3600.00 for the rendered M2A2.
117	Total M2A2 Guns	

the upgrades a priority if they have not already done so.

The EMEI – Modification Instructions (Weapon T 307-27) have been published on the Technical Data Centre website at:

<http://vbmweb.sor.defence.gov.au/TECHDATA/Dofa/Emei/Weapon/T307-27.pdf>

Firing Tables. There has been a number of issues raised relating to the accuracy of the current firing tables. When the new M32 Ballistic Calculator and AFATDS are introduced into service, it is planned that the problems with the 81mm and 155mm ammunition will be resolved. DMO is currently investigating inaccuracies with the 105mm ammunition.

POC: Mr Brett Snelling, National Fleet Manager and
CAPT Kathryn Christie, Assistant National Fleet
Manager

LAND 53 - NINOX

Project NINOX is named after the Powerful Owl (Ninox Strenua) which is found only in Australia and is a particularly large and aggressive member of its genus. LAND 53 Project NINOX, formerly a CSSPO project and is now managed as a SSSPO project, seeks to introduce a range of night fighting and ground based surveillance capabilities to the ADF. This includes night fighting equipment, thermal surveillance systems, ground surveillance radar and unattended ground sensors.

LAND 53 Phase 1F - Thermal Surveillance Systems

Phase 1F is acquiring Thermal Surveillance Systems (TSS) to provide the ADF with the capability to detect and monitor targets during day and night in all weather conditions. A contract was signed with Thales Optronics (formerly Pilkington) on 24th May 2001 for the delivery of 217 systems.

Phase 1F has commenced introduction into service activities and currently all but one unit has received the surveillance, target acquisition and fall of shot correction systems. The project office is expected to commence transfer of support responsibilities to fleet in early 2009.

LAND 53 Phase 2B - Unattended Ground Sensors

LAND 53 Phase 2B - Unattended Ground Sensors (UGS) Phase 2B seeks to provide near real time information of target activity at remote sites. A sensor suite comprising acoustic, seismic, magnetic, infra-red and electro-optical devices will

be required to detect aircraft, watercraft, vehicles and personnel. These sensors will be required to transmit detection data to monitor sites located remotely from the sensor string. A contract was signed with Textron Systems Corporation in August 2001.

Textron have been unable to deliver equipment to the contract specification. The project office and Textron are in discussions to determine an appropriate course of action.

POC: Mr Chad Burke, Project Director Surveillance

Other projects of interest (non-CSSPO)

JP 2085

JP2085 is scoped to acquire 155mm Artillery Precision Guided Munitions as part of ADF war stock remediation. The Excalibur Artillery Guided Munitions and the SMArt155 Sensor Fused Munitions have been selected as the APMG solutions.

Excalibur is a precision guided unitary warhead projectile developed in partnership by Raytheon Corporation and BAE Systems Bofors. The projectile is equipped with a Global Positioning System and an Inertial Navigation System for precision guidance and has an impact point Circular Error Probability of less than 10m. An initial Excalibur capability is expected to be fielded early in 2009.

The SMArt155 Sensor Fuzed Munition is a carrier projectile manufactured by Gesellschaft fur Intelligente Wirksysteme MBH, collaboration between Diehl and Rheinmetall. The SMArt155 projectile is spin stabilised and dispenses two top-attack sensor fused munitions that each deliver an explosively formed projectile designed for engaging hard and semi-hard combat vehicles which may be moving or stationary. The SMArt155 capability will be introduced into service in 2009.

Land 146 Ph 2 – Combat ID

This project will enhance the operational effectiveness of Land Force Elements, while minimizing the risk of fratricide. The project delivers the BMS Fires (FO) system comprising a Digital Terminal Control System (DTCS) and Target Location, Designation, and Hand-Off System (TLDHS). The capability is to be a man-portable suite of equipment comprised of software and hardware to be operated by RAA FO, JTAC and SF users. The acquired solution will allow the operator

to terminally control Joint Fire Assets to deliver lethal effects from artillery, mortars, naval surface fire support (NSFS) and offensive air support (OAS). Due to the commonality in purpose and function between the capability requirements for the LAND 146-2 DTCS and the LAND 17 BMS-F (FO) it was decided to deliver a common system under LAND 146 Ph 2. The project IIS dates are 2011 to 2013. LAND 146 seeks second pass approval in September 2009.

The Army Mortar System Project

The Army Mortar System Project (AMSP) has not had an approved re-scoping since solicitation activities concluded in 2006. At the conclusion of the solicitation tender, it was confirmed that industry were not able to offer an acceptable solution that met Army's requirement for a Long Range Mortar. Whilst some may see this as a negative outcome, it was a positive result, as the formal solicitation activities achieved one of the outcomes they are developed to achieve – in this case confirming that industry was not able to offer a solution that met Army's requirements. The solicitation saved Army from exposure to potentially significant scope, budget and schedule risks.

It was initially proposed to re-scope the project to procure a replacement for MORFIRE, however this initiative was curtailed early in 2008. In the meantime, Army initiated and directed the procurement of new US 81mm mortar ammunition and supporting M32 ballistic calculators for use in the MEAO. This direction from Army saw DMO divert the AMSP staff to supporting what was to become an Explosive Ordnance Division led activity.

The Combat Support SPO (CSSPO) project staff became extremely busy once Army provided the 'directed procurement' direction in May 2008. The CSSPO project team, under the leadership of Major Mike Hartas, worked alongside Munitions Branch staff from EO Division to deliver new 81mm ammunition and a supporting ballistic computer by 31st August 2008 for use on operations and Mission Rehearsal Exercises.

At the time of writing, the Commonwealth had received all of the initial order of ammunition, the entire fleet of ballistic computers and all the associated requested training, satisfying Chief of Army's requirement for delivery of the items by 31st August 2008 (and with a couple of days to spare – in fact the last of the 50 computers were received by the Commonwealth almost 6 days before the deadline).

Early reports confirm that the operators have been impressed with the accuracy and functionality of the system along with the ability of the system to be integrated into a digital battle management system if required in the future (eg, AFATDS).

The new ammunition includes High Explosive, a Red Phosphorus (RP) projectile and an infra red (IR Illum) illumination round, all offering a new and extremely effective capability to the 81mm platform.

Throughout the project the DMO team worked intimately with a number of organisations including the School of Artillery's Mortar Section, and Combined Arms Doctrine Development Section, ensuring that in doing so, Army has a useable capability and not just a piece of rushed delivery equipment. The support of both of these organisations, along with the technical and trial support provided by the Directorate of Ordnance Safety, Joint Proof and Experimental Establishment and Land Engineering Agency has enabled the DMO to meet the extremely tight timeframe imposed by Army in order to meet operational requirements. All supporting agencies deserve a vote of thanks for their collective efforts and inherent flexibility. Many concurrent activities took place in near unheard of time frames in order to meet the ultimate objective of getting the equipment into operational use.

Although the future of the AMSP remains unclear, the achievement of this rapid procurement has provided the soldiers using the 81 mm mortar system on operations with an enhanced capability that may yet ultimately assist in informing future capability decisions for the 81mm mortar capability.

***Project Director's note:** Major Michael Hartas graduated from ATSOC in 2007, was posted to CSSPO and was subsequently cast into leading this procurement with no practical experience in DMO procurement activities. Though supporting EOD, Major Hartas' personal efforts in ensuring that this capability was delivered on time and in accordance with Chief of Army's requirements are commendable. Whilst Army provided the initial request in late May 2008, it was not until late Jun 2008 that the CSSPO support aspects for the EOD procurement were confirmed, leading to Major Hartas' rapid involvement and execution of a delivery plan. From project start up to project delivery encompassed just over 10 weeks of rapid activity! A job well done.*

POC: Lieutenant Colonel Shaun Harding, Project Director Radar Projects

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Website: <http://gunnersnet.com/theguns.html>

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RAA Unit Websites

RAA and other unit websites maybe accessed via the Australian Army website.

<http://www.defence.gov.au/army/RRAA>

<http://intranet.defence.gov.au/armyweb/Sites/RRAA>

Coral battle regiment honoured for two Vietnam tours

BY MEGAN DOHERTY – The Canberra Times |
14/05/2008 8:56:00 AM

Under the golden leaves of two plane trees in the grounds of the Australian War Memorial, a plaque was unveiled yesterday to the members of the 12th Field Regiment of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. It recognised the sacrifice and service of the regiment's members, dedicated on the 40th anniversary of the battle of Coral, when the regiment withstood a protracted attack against its new positions at Fire Support Base Coral in Vietnam on May 13, 1968.

The plaque represented the two tours of South Vietnam by the regiment, in 1968-69 and in 1971. Chaplain John "Tink" Tinkler said he thought there might be a few tears from heaven from their fallen comrades. There was no rain but a rabbit did run through the courtyard during the minute's silence perhaps a sign there was a larrikin spirit somewhere.

"May all who visit here just pause and give a silent tribute to these men," Chaplain Tinkler said.

A battery captain with the regiment, Colonel Don Tait (retired), gave the commemorative address. "The people are the heart and soul of the regiment and they have built its very enviable reputation," he said.

Among the diggers in the crowd was Vic Page, of Queensland, who was in Vietnam for only seven days before he was paralysed shot in the head, chest and spine during the defence of Fire Support Base Coral. "We only get together now and then but when we do it's marvellous. You lived and died for these blokes," he said.

Regimental Fund – Seeking Your Contribution

Introduction

The RAA Regimental Fund is designed to provide a source of funds that can be utilised for the benefit of all Gunners. One of the most important uses for these funds is to support requests from RAA units and organisations to assist in the ongoing preservation and promotion of the Regimental heritage. Other worthy goals that this funding supports, is not limited to, but includes purchasing:

- Cyphers for presentation to officers, warrant officers and sergeants who retire from service after more than 20 years.
- Paintings depicting the Regiment in its many campaigns and at peace.

The Regimental Committee cannot achieve these very worthy goals without the support of individual members and organisations within the Gunner community. All officers, warrant officers and sergeants are encouraged to make an annual financial contribution to the Regimental Fund either as individuals or as a mess or organisation/association or take up the option of a 'Life Subscription' which then absolves the subscriber from being asked for any further subscriptions. The list of life subscribers is published in the Liaison Letter.

Recent Projects

Over the years the Regimental Fund has supported a wide range of requests for financial support, including some of which are ongoing such as insurance and maintenance of the AIF and Mount Schank Trophies. It is worth noting that the sums of money requested from the Fund are generally significant and therefore can only realistically have any chance of being provided if each and everyone of us support the Fund. Recent projects supported by the Fund include the allocation of:

- \$2500 to 8th/12th Medium Regiment to assist the Regiment to build a Regimental Memorial to coincide with the Regiments 30th anniversary celebrations;
- \$500 to 131st Surveillance and Target Acquisition Battery to improve the Battery memorial and add a plaque to mark the 50th Anniversary of the unit and its name change from 131st Divisional Locating Battery;
- \$1000 to 1st Field Regiment for its 50th anniversary celebrations;
- \$1000 to 4th Field Regiment for its 40th anniversary celebrations;
- \$1500 for shield to be held by winner of Mount Schanck trophy;
- \$1000 to 1st Field Regiment to mark 50th anniversary of 105th Field Battery, 50th anniversary of commitment to Malaya and 40th anniversary of commitment to South Vietnam;
- \$1,000 to complete the Major General T. Cape Bequest to the Regimental officer's mess;
- \$5,000 to commission a painting to mark the withdrawal from service of Rapier;
- \$6,000 to commission a painting to mark the pending end of service of the 155 mm M198; and
- The on-going Royal Military College Graduation Artillery prize which is approximately \$85 per graduation.

Suggested Level of Contribution

The suggested rate of contribution is currently deemed as \$120 for a life subscription and the following sliding scale based on rank for an annual subscription:

- LTCOL and above – \$25,
- MAJ and CAPT – \$20,
- LT and WO – \$15, and
- SGT – \$10.

It is understood that some individuals may not be in a position to meet the suggested scale, therefore any contribution will be gratefully appreciated in helping to continue the good work the Fund has provided the Regiment over many years.

Without your financial support the Regimental Committee is unable to support the preservation of Regimental history and requests for financial support from units.

Regimental Fund Benefactors

Correct as at 27th August 2008

LTGEN D.M. Mueller	COL C.B.J. Hogan	LTCOL P. Landford
MAJGEN J.E. Barry	COL J.H. Humphrey	LTCOL S.F. Landherr
MAJGEN M.P. Crane	COL W.T. Kendall	LTCOL J.H. McDonagh (AALC)
MAJGEN P.J. Dunn	COL M.J. Kingsford	LTCOL P.D. McKay
MAJGEN G.J. Fitzgerald	COL J.C. Kirkwood	LTCOL K.W. McKenzie
MAJGEN T.R. Ford (see note)	COL P.J. Lawrence	LTCOL D.M. Murphy (see note)
MAJGEN S.N. Gower	COL M.G. Lovell	LTCOL S.W. Nicolls
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Note:
 MAJGEN T.R. Ford, MAJGEN J.P. Stevens, MAJGEN J.D. Stevenson, MAJGEN J. Whitelaw, BRIG R.K. Fullford, BRIG J.R. Salmon, COL A.D. Watt; LTCOL D.M. Murphy and LTCOL G.W. Finney have paid two life subscriptions.

Deceased Benefactors

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2	Royal Australian Artillery Personnel Notes – 1978#

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* Copy held by SO to HOR

Copy held by Puckapunyal Area Library

+ Copy held by HOR at School of Artillery

@ Not available to HOR at School of Artillery



102nd (CORAL) Field Battery Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery

The Honour Title 'CORAL' is awarded to 102nd Field Battery, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, in recognition of its conduct during the Battle of Coral in South Vietnam between 12th May and 6th June 1968.

During Operation *Iron Throne* 102nd Field Battery deployed to Fire Support Patrol Base Coral in support of 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. Early morning on 12th May an intense enemy barrage of rocket propelled grenades and small arms fire was directed into Coral. This barrage was the prelude to an assault by 2nd Battalion, 14th Regiment, 7th North Vietnamese Army Division, against the Battery and the 1st Battalion's Mortar Platoon (minus). The Battery engaged the assault waves with small arms and Delta Gun firing anti-personnel rounds over open-sights. The enemy overran Foxtrot Gun and the Mortar Platoon; Bravo Gun was hit by a rocket propelled grenade; and Alpha Gun's ammunition bag caught fire. At the request of the Mortar Platoon's Second-In-Command, the Battery engaged the mortar position with anti-personnel rounds. Throughout the assault Echo Gun was laid onto Foxtrot Gun with orders to destroy the equipment if the enemy attempted to move or fire it. The Battalion Fire Support Centre coordinated and controlled close air and artillery support during the attack. At dawn two Gunner patrols cleared the position, recaptured Foxtrot Gun and gave assistance to the Mortar Platoon. The enemy left 52 dead and evidence of a significantly higher number of casualties.

The gun position defence was a close quarter infantry-style battle fought by Gunners and Mortarmen to defeat a conventional North Vietnam Army battalion (plus) assault. Whilst fighting against a sustained ground attack, three Battery guns remained in support of the 1st Battalion's companies deployed in ambush positions away from Coral. On at least three occasions



the Battery responded to calls for fire from the Battery's forward observers.

On 16th May another major enemy assault was launched against Coral. Whilst the brunt of the attack was directed at 1st Battalion's Alpha and Bravo Companies, a heavy mortar and rocket barrage was directed at the Battery and 'A' Battery and 15th United States Artillery. The Companies repulsed the attack supported by fire support from the Battery and other gun batteries, mortars and close air support. Throughout the attack the Battalion Fire Support Centre coordinated close fire support from field, medium and heavy artillery, and close air support which was controlled by the Battery's forward observers.

Although Fire Support Patrol Base Coral was never seriously threatened after the second attack, the Battery continued to support the 1st Australian Task Force until 6th June 1968 when it redeployed to Phuoc Tay Province. These operations encountered heavy resistance and required Battery fire support of the highest calibre.

There were many acts of bravery accompanying the exceptional set of circumstances that the Gunners of 102nd Field Battery confronted. The Battery displayed professionalism, dedication and courage under extremely dangerous and confusing conditions at Coral.

The Honour Title 'CORAL' recognises these attributes and the outstanding contribution 102nd Field Battery made in supporting 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, on operations in South Vietnam.

His Excellency Major General P. M. Jeffery AC, CVO, MC

Governor-General
May 2008

