

Veterans Support Centre

CONTACT FRONT



November 2024

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association (NSW)
Hastings Manning Macleay Branch Inc.



Image - A close view of some of the ceramic poppies that appeared around the Tower of London in 2014

Source - Historic Royal Palaces
by Mr Alex Hamilton - see pages 18-20

BLOOD SWEPT LANDS AND SEAS OF RED

*There are NO COSTS to access the services such as Pensions, Welfare and advice provided by Veterans Support Centre, Hastings Manning Macleay Branch VVPPAA Inc
At Wauchope Wellbeing Centre, located within the Wauchope Club Ltd (upstairs)*

"The Commonwealth has not participated in the research, production or exercised editorial control over the Activity or its contents. The views expressed and conclusions reached herein do not necessarily represent those of the Commonwealth, which expressly disclaims any responsibility for the content or the accuracy of the Activity".

IMPORTANT INFORMATION - VETERANS SUPPORT CENTRE

No change to the support and assistance that we offer **free of cost** to ALL veterans

VETERANS SUPPORT CENTRE

Cnr Young & Cameron Streets, Wauchope

Veterans Support Centre, Hastings Manning Macleay Branch VVPPAA Inc
At Wauchope Wellbeing Centre, located within the Wauchope Club Ltd (upstairs)

Email: Vets614@gmail.com.au

Advocate/Pension contact - email to vetpensions@gmail.com

OFFICE IS MANNED ON TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY 1030 TO 1330
OUR OFFICE IS UPSTAIRS, LIFT AVAILABLE

Phone: **02 6581 5230** (office enquires/appointments)

0493 717 807 (Advocate appointments/queries 9-4 if possible)

Phone answered/checked each day, if unanswered leave a message

Website: www.veteranssupport.org.au

TUESDAY general enquiries, appointments with the Compensation Advocate

WEDNESDAY general enquires

THURSDAY general enquiries, Thursday Lunches, all welcome, 1200 'til finished,
order your meals in Bistro and enjoy the chat

Thank you: To all donors, supporters and advertisers: Your continued support has helped us to keep our doors open for veterans, serving and ex-serving personnel who need our help. Members are encouraged to support businesses whose advertisements appear in this newsletter.

PAGE INDEX

Pg 5	Vietnam Veterans Day, Wauchope
Pg 6	Vandalism thug caught , accomplices still being sought
Pg 7	Exercise Austral Shield 2024
Pg s 8, 9	Advancing Naval Capabilities - future plans
Pgs 12, 13	Ben Roberts-Smith; Pigs piped out of 7 RAR
Pgs 14, 15, 16, 17	The attack on Pearl Harbour
Pgs 18, 19, 20	The Tower of London poppies
Pg 21	Our last Rat of Tobruk - Mr Tom Pritchard
Pgs 22, 23, 25	Israel Gaza War - the IDF
Pgs 26, 27	106 Field Workshop RAEME in Vietnam
Pg 28, 29	Christmas Humour
Pg 31	Reports
Pgs 32, 33	AH-64E Apache - Australia's future attack helo
Pgs 34, 35	Russian spies, UXB in Penrith, British Laser weapon
Pgs 36, 37	25th anniversary of Australian service in East Timor
Pgs 38, 39	Military humour
Pg 40	Tributes

Contact details -
(all volunteers)

President :
Bill Wagner

Vice President :
Bill Starrenburg

Treasurer :
Peter Dorman

Compensation Advocates
Mike Opie
Glen Peterson

Members Officer :
Trevor Morrow

Editor :
Jill Opie

Reception :
Volunteers

Q Store :
Committee members

Postal Address:
Hastings Manning Macleay
VPPAA Inc.
PO Box 5330
Port Macquarie 2444

Telephone:
02 6581 5230
If unanswered, leave a
message & we will call you
back asap

Email:
Vets614@gmail.com

Advocate email :
vetpensions@gmail.com

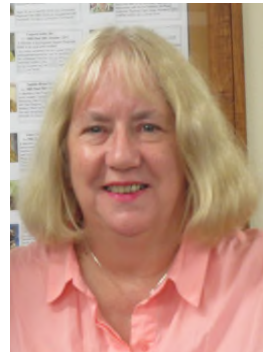
Website:
www.veteranssupport.
org.au

From the Editor's Desk

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP - SEE BACK OF THE ADDRESS LABEL FROM THIS ISSUE, ASSIST VSC TO STAY OPEN

Hello again,

If you have been into the Veterans Support Centre recently I hope you enjoyed seeing the gorgeous wall hanging that was made by Wendy van Kalken. The young man pictured below (with parental approval) is looking at the hanging with admiration. It is particularly relevant at this time of year as we draw close to Remembrance Day and our thoughts go out to those lost to service and to their families.



Continuing that theme, Mr Alex Hamilton asked if the Tower of London poppy exhibition could be in Contact Front. Thank you Sir, for your interest and for the documents that you sent in. I hope that readers enjoy details of the way the exhibit was assembled and the many man hours taken to show it off to the best advantage. Every one of the **888,246** British and Colonial military fatalities is represented by a single poppy each and the display is very moving.

Following the pages on Tobruk last quarter, I have included an article on Mr Tom Pritchard. Tom Pritchard, Australia's last Rat of Tobruk, has died aged 102. He was the last direct link with the 14,000 Australian servicemen who served in World War II in Tobruk. Lest we forget.

Please remember that it is time to renew your membership to the HMMVPPAA, renewal page is on the back of your address label with details of how to pay. Remember that a portion of that money comes directly to your branch here at Wauchope for use for our own members.

VSC is open Tues, Wed and Thurs each week subject to volunteers availability. Ring to book a time with the Advocates on Tuesday or pop in and talk to us. Good company for lunch on Thursday every week - pay for your meal in the Bistro and the company is FREE!

I wish you and your loved ones a very peaceful Christmas and happiness for 2025.

Stay safe and well, Jill



ALL veterans are supported by the Veterans Support Centre which is also part of the Hastings Wellbeing Centre (operates out of the Club/sub-branch facilities at Wauchope). Contact us if you need help or advice, information, a cuppa with like-minded folk - phone (leave a message if no answer and we will get back to you), email or pop in during open hours (Tues, Wednesday, Thurs 1030 - 1330).

Have you checked out our web site designed to give veterans easy to find information about what we do and how to contact us?

www.veteranssupport.org.au

Don't forget - Chuckle pages are just meant to make you chuckle, finish off the magazine with a smile. They are, as is this magazine, for adult consumption and aimed at military veteran humour. Please feel free to ignore them.

The opinions expressed above are mine alone and may not be the opinions of Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia, VPPAA Inc, or contributors to Contact Front and its readers.

GOLD CARD

The Gold Card - 'DVA Health Card – All Conditions within Australia' and 'DVA Health Card – Totally & Permanently Incapacitated' give you access to a wide range of public and private health care services, for the treatment, at the department's expense, of all your health care conditions whether war or service related or not.

Aged 70 + ?

You may be entitled to a Gold Card even if you have never made a claim for your war or service related health condition if you have qualifying service.

Apply to DVA or talk to Compensation Advocate Mike or Glen



The WPPAA is dedicated to the welfare of all Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers, ex-service and serving personnel and their families. If you, or someone you know, is ill and you suspect the illness may be a result of military service, please do not hesitate to consult one of our trained volunteers.

We are here to help you and there is no cost associated with our services.



Veterans and first responders!

Every Wednesday you can find me at [Broken Hearts Barbershop](#) an [Australian Veteran Owned Business](#) providing discounted buzz cuts and crew cuts.

Just what our Veterans and first responders want .

As my cutting repertoire grows I will offer more services. All cuts will be checked over at the end of the service.

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY, Wauchope

On 18 August, we commemorate Vietnam Veterans' Day on the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan in 1966. We remember the sacrifices of those who died and say thank you to almost 60,000 Australians who served during the 10 years of our involvement in the Vietnam War.

Australians and the Vietnam War

The Vietnam War was Australia's longest military engagement of the 20th Century. The arrival of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam in South Vietnam during July and August 1962 marked the start of Australia's involvement in the war. By the time the war had come to an end, almost 60,000 Australians served during a decade of conflict between 1962 and 1972. Tragically, 521 of them died and 3000 were wounded.

Battle of Long Tan

The Battle of Long Tan was a significant moment in Australia's war in Vietnam. On 18 August 1966, in a rubber plantation near the village of Long Tan, Australian soldiers fought one of their fiercest battles of the war.

The men of Delta Company, 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, faced a force of some 2000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops. The battle was fought in wet and muddy conditions during a heavy tropical downpour.

By the end of the day, 17 Australians had been killed in action and 25 were wounded, one of whom died a few days later. This was the largest number of casualties in a single operation since the Australian Task Force had established its base at nearby Nui Dat the previous April.

On this day, we commemorate all the battles fought by Australians in Vietnam, from large-scale operations to platoon and section-level encounters. We remember the sailors of the Royal Australian Navy who supported land operations, and members of the Royal Australian Air Force who served in combat and transport roles.



A day to say 'thank you'

On Vietnam Veterans' Day, we pause and reflect on the bravery, teamwork and endurance that Australians displayed throughout the war. It's a day when we recognise all who served in Vietnam. We honour those veterans who:
Lost their lives during battle
Returned home wounded, ill or injured
Lost their lives in the years since they returned
Still carry the physical and emotional scars of their service
We also pause to reflect on the impact of service on our veterans' families.



Source - Veterans Support Centre, Wauchope, photos - Ed

THEY GOT HIM!!!

Man arrested for allegedly spray-painting pro-Palestinian slogans on War Memorial and ABC buildings in Canberra



CCTV footage released by police they said led to the arrest of a man charged with damaging property. (Supplied: ACT Policing)

A man has been arrested in relation to pro-Palestinian slogans spray-painted onto the Australian War Memorial and ABC Canberra buildings. The 20-year-old man has been charged with five counts of damaging property after the incidents, which occurred between February and June.

A man has been charged with multiple counts of damaging property after pro-Palestinian slogans were spray-painted onto the Australian War Memorial (AWM) and ABC Canberra buildings earlier this year. Multiple memorial sites in Canberra were defaced with slogans relating to the ongoing conflict in Gaza in June. Earlier, similar slogans were spray-painted on the exterior of the ABC Canberra building in Dickson on four occasions in February and March.

Police say the 20-year-old man attended Gungahlin police station and was charged with five counts of damaging property. They said the man was due to face court.

Detective Acting Superintendent Stephanie Leonard from ACT Policing said the maximum penalty for the offences is 10 years in jail. "We also believe that the man was not acting alone, and we are seeking to identify and locate any others who are involved in that incident," Ms Leonard said. "Investigations are ongoing in relation to those other accomplices, and further charges are likely in the future. I would like to remind the community that while peaceful protests are part of a healthy democracy, criminal acts such as vandalism will not be tolerated."

'Inappropriate and offensive'

At the time, Australian War Memorial Director Matt Anderson said he was "saddened" by the graffiti. "The memorial's purpose is to commemorate the sacrifice of those Australians who have died in war or on operational service," he said. "It is the memorial's view that the vandalism is both inappropriate and offensive." In July, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese condemned the defacing of war memorial sites in Canberra. "I do not know what goes through someone's head in thinking that a cause, any cause, is advanced by the desecration of what are sacred sites here in Australia," he told parliament in July. "There should be full prosecution about the denigration of offices and the denigration of other public buildings but nothing, nothing is as bad as the desecration of those memorials."

On the same day, the Senate passed a motion condemning the spraying of pro-Palestinian slogans on Canberra war memorials. Independent Senator Jacqui Lambie, who moved the motion, described the defacing of war memorial sites in the nation's capital as "a kick in the guts" to veterans. "Do these people really think that this helps their cause? Do they really think these disgusting acts of vandalism will bring about a ceasefire?" Senator Lambie said. "To say it's a slap in the face to all veterans isn't strong enough. It is an absolute kick in the guts. It is a rejection of their sacrifices."



Senator Jacqui Lambie called the graffiti a "kick in the guts" for veterans. (pictured)

Sources - ACT Policing; ABC News: Ian Cutmore; ABC News;

Exercise shields Australia's North

In the largest Army Reserve exercise in three decades, nearly 2000 personnel practised a rapid deployment to Australia's north to respond to simulated security threats.

Soldiers from 11th and 13th Brigades, and the Regional Force Surveillance Group alongside maritime and air capabilities, formed security response task units in Derby and Cairns during Exercise Austral Shield 2024, held from July 12-28.

Exercise director Brigadier Damian Hill said the exercise tested the ADF and its contingency forces in domestic security response. "The exercise demonstrated that we can deploy our reserve and full-time capabilities at relative short notice," he said. "Also, that we have the mechanisms in place to work with emergency services and other national security agencies to defend our nation against any type of adversary."

In the east, 11th Brigade soldiers from Townsville, Brisbane and Sydney deployed by road to secure infrastructure at Cairns Airport, Barron Gorge Hydroelectric Power Plant and HMAS Cairns.

Attacks by the opposing force were light at first, with discrete surveillance that escalated to drive-by shootings, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and fully armed, close-quarters combat.

Army forces worked with local authorities in both states to enhance security, including joint patrols with Australian Federal Police in Cairns. "The exercise demonstrated that we can deploy our reserve and full-time capabilities at relative short notice."

AFP Operational Delivery Team Lead, Acting Sergeant Brian McAlonan, said they didn't often get to work closely with Army. "Seeing blue and green working side by side at Cairns Airport goes to reassure the travelling public that in the event of a major incident, the best possible protection will be afforded to them," he said.

The task force also conducted offensives against an enemy at Cowley Beach, Tully and Townsville. Meanwhile, in the west, 13th Brigade deployed from Perth to Derby in north-western Australia to secure the town and RAAF Base Curtin.

Soldiers worked out of Derby Airport to clear enemy from the town's infrastructure, including a night-time clearance of the fishing club. They also conducted joint vehicle checkpoints and patrols with West Australian police officers, including clearance of an IED at the water purification plant.

Brigadier Hill said after years assisting with bushfires, floods and COVID-19, the exercise was an opportunity for reservists to get back to foundation soldiering. "They don't necessarily join the Army Reserve to undertake humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, although as we have seen they are always willing when those issues occur," he said. "They joined to be a soldier, and what they got out of this exercise by and large was soldiering."

Plans for Austral Shield 2026 are already underway, with a more expansive and challenging 'all domain' environment that will bring together three services, along with space and cyber elements.



Top left - A soldier from 11th Brigade checks on his mates as he advances forward during an assault on an "enemy" defensive position at Cowley Beach training area in northern QLD. Photo Cpl Michael Currie

Top centre - Soldiers from 10th Light Horse Regt conduct mounted vehicle patrols as part of domestic security operations in Derby, WA, during Astral Shield. Photo Cpl Lisa Sherman

Right - Soldiers from 11th Brigade conduct a joint patrol with Australian Federal Police and Queensland Police Service officers around Cairns Airport in Qld. Photo Cpl Michael Currie



Source - Defence News, article by Cpl Michael Rogers, photos noted separately



Missing parts of your favourite movie?

Catch the punchline every time with a **FREE** listening device

As a DVA card holder you could be entitled to complimentary hearing products that can help you to hear more clearly.



131 797
hearing.com.au



Supporting The Veteran Community in Port Macquarie

Leicht's Tyre and Auto
97 Hastings River Drive
Port Macquarie NSW 2444
P: 02 6583 6611
F: 02 6583 4555
E: admin@leichtstyres.com
www.leichtstyres.com

"We don't take your safety lightly"

Serving and Supporting the Veteran Community in Port Macquarie

Leicht's Tyre and Auto
97 Hastings River Drive
Port Macquarie NSW 2444
P: 02 6583 6611
F: 02 6583 4555
E: admin@leichtstyres.com
www.leichtstyres.com

"We don't take your safety lightly"

Pavy's Glass

THE CLEAR CHOICE IN GLASS

FRAMELESS SHOWER SCREENS PAINTED GLASS SPLASHBACKS
ALL GLASS REPLACEMENT MIRRORS

Showroom 6/25 Central Road Port Macquarie

MOB: 0438848928 PH: 65815555 E: pavysglassptyltd@bigpond.com

FIND US ON FACEBOOK &
WWW.PAVYSGLASS.COM.AU



Ian Knobbs
GENERAL MANAGER

188 High Street
Wauchope NSW 2446

Phone: 02-6585 2122
Fax: 02-6585 3646

Rock

MOTORCYCLES &
POWER EQUIPMENT



175 Gordon Street
Port Macquarie NSW 2444

p. 02 6583 6655

p. 1800ROCK

f. 02 6584 1380

ABN: 58 754 808 635

sales@rockmotorcycles.com.au

www.rockmotorcycles.com.au

MEDAL MOUNTING

Court & Swing Mounting
Replica Medals
Ribbon Bars, Clasp & Rosettes
Family History Research
Medal Storage Boxes

FRAMING

Fine Arts & Canvas
Heirloom & Memorabilia
Framing Supplies
Glass Cutting & Supply



DARREN & TRACEY HOOPER

P: 02 6586 4665 M: 0404 095 793

E: arranbeemedals@bigpond.com

123 Arranbee Road, King Creek NSW 2446

ABN: 61 232 693 880



Please consider supporting our Donors/Sponsors/ Advertisers

Advancing Navy Capabilities - Surface Combatant Fleet

Independent Analysis into Navy's Surface Combatant Fleet

The Australian Government has released its blueprint for a larger and more lethal surface combatant fleet for the Royal Australian Navy in response to the recommendations made by the Independent Analysis of Navy's Surface Combatant Fleet.

Australia's strategic circumstances require a larger and enhanced lethality surface combatant fleet, complemented by a conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarine fleet.

Navy's future surface combatant fleet will be an integral component of Australia's joint force for operations in the immediate region to ensure the safety and security of our sea lines of communication and maritime trade.

<i>Tier 1 – Frigates and Destroyers</i>	
Urgently execute the Destroyer Capability Enhancement upgrade activity for the three Hobart class destroyers to increase Tier 1 lethality.	Agreed
Proceed with project SEA 5000 Phase 1 Hunter Class Frigate project and acquire one batch of six Hunter class frigates of the current design.	Agreed
Fit the Hunter class frigates with the Tomahawk cruise missile capability for precision long-range strike.	Agreed in-principle
Commence planning and requirements setting to replace the Hobart class destroyers to ensure surface combatant fleet capability into the future and ensure continuous naval shipbuilding at Osborne Naval Shipyard in South Australia.	Agreed in-principle
<p>Government response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government agrees that frigates and destroyers are a critical component of the enhanced lethality surface combatant fleet, with future upgrades necessary to ensure they possess the lethality and survivability to operate in our complex and heightened strategic environment. Subject to a feasibility study, Government endorses the need to incorporate the Tomahawk cruise missile into the Hunter class frigate. The Government will consider the replacement program for the Hobart class destroyers in the context of the 2026 National Defence Strategy. Government decisions will be consistent with continuous naval shipbuilding at Osborne Naval Shipyard. 	
<i>Large Optionally Crewed Surface Vessels</i>	
Large Optionally Crewed Surface Vessels (LOSVs) should be acquired through formal engagement with the United States Navy program as a fast follower to enable construction of the LOSVs at either the Henderson shipyard in Western Australia or overseas.	Agreed
Increase the vertical launching system cell capacity of the Tier 1 surface combatant fleet by acquiring six LOSVs.	Agreed
<p>Government response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government agrees these optionally crewed vessels will enhance the lethality and survivability of the joint integrated force, with this modern technology also reducing the crewing requirement for Navy. The intent is to build these six vessels in Western Australia. 	

Advancing Navy Capabilities - Surface Combatant Fleet

Tier 2 – General Purpose Frigates

Acquire at least seven, and optimally 11, Tier 2 surface combatants.	Agreed
Urgently execute the planned Transition Capability Assurance Program (TransCAP) activity to upgrade the Anzac class frigates to prevent a Tier 2 capability gap.	Not Agreed
Establish a project to acquire Tier 2 surface combatants via an offshore then onshore build process, where ships are built overseas before transitioning to an Australian build.	Agreed
Four platforms have been identified as Tier 2 surface combatant exemplars and these should form the basis of a deliberate selection process.	Agreed

Government response:

- The Government agrees that in addition to Hunter class frigates, optimised for undersea warfare, and upgraded Hobart class destroyers, general purpose frigates are needed to provide Navy with the necessary number of platforms to meet the strategic challenges Australia faces, provide enhanced availability and to secure our northern approaches.
- The Government will accelerate the acquisition of 11 general purpose frigates to deliver capability sooner and address the risk presented by an ageing and increasingly fragile surface combatant fleet.
- The Government will not proceed with the Anzac class TransCAP, which would have delivered upgrades to the Anzac class frigates to extend their life and increase capability. The accelerated acquisition of a new general purpose frigate allows for a more cost effective and lethal capability outcome, thus negating the need for TransCAP.
- The six remaining Anzac class frigates will be upgraded with enhanced maritime strike capabilities.



Sources -both pgs reproduced in part from Australian Government document with DoD permission

Top left- Long range fires are among the Defence innovation, science and technology priorities on the ADSTAR agenda this year - Photo Leading Seaman Daniel Goodman; right - nuclear submarine is in planning stages; frigate - to be upgraded as needed. Naval vessels will, hopefully, follow the blueprint with some haste.

Still considered guilty despite no proof and no conviction

Disgraced former special forces soldier Ben Roberts-Smith has been welcomed into Western Australia's Government House to receive a special honour from King Charles III, a year after a federal court judge concluded the ex-corporal had executed and brutalised Afghan prisoners and disgraced the nation's military.

Roberts-Smith's decision to attend Government House in person to receive a medal that King Charles has bestowed on all of Australia's living Victoria Cross recipients, along with the move by the palace to recognise the ex-soldier, is likely to stir controversy given Justice Anthony Besanko's damning judgement last June and the fact that Roberts-Smith remains the subject of multiple ongoing war crime investigations. It comes a year after a Federal Court judge found Mr Roberts-Smith was involved in the unlawful killings of four Afghan prisoners – a verdict the former soldier is appealing.

A military official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said it was open to Roberts-Smith to decline or not receive the medal in person, recognising the controversy it could cause after Besanko's finding.

The judge ruled to the civil standard that Roberts-Smith had kicked an Afghan prisoner off a cliff in September 2012, ordered the execution of the wounded man and was implicated in three other executions of unarmed prisoners.

Roberts-Smith was pictured with his parents, including his father, retired major general and former supreme court judge Len Roberts-Smith, attending government house. (June 2024) Governor Chris Dawson refused to comment or answer repeated questions about the event at government house. It is not clear whether he was personally involved in Thursday's event at Government House.

Roberts-Smith is the only recipient of the Victoria Cross to face war crime allegations. The ex-soldier was awarded the coveted valour medal after his actions in the 2010 battle of Tezak.

But in the defamation case Roberts-Smith unsuccessfully launched against this masthead, the Federal Court heard evidence there was disquiet from fellow soldiers about the award. During the trial, Roberts-Smith's lawyers accused multiple SAS soldiers who implicated him in war crimes of being motivated by jealousy over Roberts-Smith's Victoria Cross. This was wholly rejected in Justice Besanko's judgment.

Justice Anthony Besanko's findings on Ben Roberts-Smith

The federal court judge made a number of highly critical rulings against the disgraced former soldier finding him a murderer, liar and bully.

The judge instead concluded that during missions in 2012 and 2009, Roberts-Smith had broken the moral and legal rules of military engagement, ordered executions and was therefore a criminal. Besanko also declared Roberts-Smith had disgraced his country and the army by his conduct in Afghanistan.

The Office of the Special Investigator, an elite policing agency probing war crimes, has a dedicated taskforce gathering evidence about Roberts-Smith's involvement in summary executions in Afghanistan between 2006 and 2012.

A spokesman for Governor-General David Hurley, a former chief of the Defence Force, said in a statement that he had no role in determining recipients of the medal. A second well-placed source, speaking anonymously to discuss confidential information, said the decision to award the medal was taken in the United Kingdom. Roberts-Smith's appearance at Government House also highlights the military's failure to move to rescind individual honours bestowed on soldiers who have been implicated in war crimes. Instead, Defence has chosen to await the outcome of future criminal trials.

The Office of the Special Investigator has charged only one ex-SAS soldier, but is investigating several others. Roberts-Smith has appealed against Besanko's findings, with hearings held in February and a judgment expected imminently.

Mr Roberts-Smith, who is appealing that verdict, maintains his innocence and has not been criminally charged. Last June, Justice Anthony Besanko dismissed the case.

Mr Albanese has told Channel Nine it would be wrong for the government to get involved.



Sources for article- Blake Kagi, AAP, ABC News, N McKensie, J Burton, H Thompson Sydney Morning Herald; Wikipedia. Sources for Pictures - Left - AAP - Flavio Brancaleone Right - ABC News David Weber; This article is a shortened compilation of the articles listed above

Snouts up as unit pipes out its pigs

Clad in unit colours, William and Elizabeth, the beloved pig mascots of the 7th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (7RAR), trotted through Horseshoe Lines at RAAF Base Edinburgh for the final time. Bagpipes sounded and soldiers applauded as the porcine pals were given a full colour-party escort out the unit's front gate on July 4. The well-fed hogs received a formal farewell at the unit boozier, dubbed the Pig Pen, before being piped out of the compound.

Commanding Officer 7RAR Lieutenant Colonel Von Lambert said they didn't want the pigs to depart before the unit's last warfighting exercises and operational commitments were completed. "We waited until July so we weren't doing without our 'spirit animals' because it felt like a bad omen," Lieutenant Colonel Lambert said. The pigs marched with the unit on ceremonial occasions, attended open days and sporting matches to raise morale, and made their fair share of trouble, according to the Commanding Officer. "I can remember at least two occasions where they have escaped from their enclosure, wandered straight past the guard room, and commenced tearing up the base gardens," he said. "They tended to leave gifts on the lawn at the local WONCO [Warrant Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers] Academy, as well."

According to handler Corporal Thomas Alexander, the pigs were well liked, with diggers teaching William to sit for food. "They were a representation of the unit, more than anything else; they just brought morale to whatever event we had," Corporal Alexander said. "One of our great traditions involves the pigs – they reflect us as a unit – they are rough, determined and no-fuss."

The pair were handed over to Padma and Kim from Freedom Hill Sanctuary, a local animal rescue farm, with the unit raising funds for their care. "We knew straight away that this was the best place for them to continue to live long and happy lives ... you could see just how happy they were to take ownership of Willy and Elizabeth," Lieutenant Colonel Lambert said.

The pigs arrived at the unit in 2022 and were housed in Horseshoe Lines, a departure from the normal approach to sponsor a pig in another location. "There's a sad feeling around the battalion, seeing the pigs get sent out, especially from guys who have come into the unit in the last few years, because that's all they know," Corporal Alexander said. "It's a bit of a sign for the unit coming to a close. Seeing the mascots go, it becomes all the more real that the battalion's going to be moving as well."

The Piping of the Pigs was last undertaken in 1973 before the Royal Australian Regiment's 5th and 7th Battalions were initially linked.

A pig was chosen as 7RAR's mascot when its first commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Eric Smith, allegedly called the soldiers a "mob of pigs" after they trashed their lines during a long weekend in early 1965.

A soldier at the back of the next morning parade is said to have shouted "oink oink" and the Pig Battalion was born. "One of our great traditions involves the pigs – they reflect us as a unit – they are rough, determined and no-fuss," Lieutenant Colonel Lambert said. "Importantly, they are always 'snouts to the ground', always looking for the next job and unbothered by the world around them. We are so very proud to serve as the Pig Battalion."



Top left- Mascots William and Elizabeth prepare for their farewell from their home unit at RAAF Base Edinburgh

Top right - Mascots William and Elizabeth are piped out as the mascots for the Pig Battalion (7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment)

Bottom - Pig mascots William and Elizabeth are farewelled by the 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment at SAAF Base Edinburgh



Source - Defence web - Army and pictures by Cpl Michael Rogers

ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOUR 1941

The attack on Pearl Harbor was a surprise military strike by the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii, in the United States, just before 8:00 a.m. (local time) on Sunday, December 7, 1941. At the time, the United States was a neutral country in World War II. The attack on Hawaii and other U.S. territories led the United States to formally enter World War II on the side of the Allies the day following the attack, on December 8, 1941. The Japanese military leadership referred to the attack as the Hawaii Operation and Operation Al, and as Operation Z during its planning.

The Empire of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor was preceded by months of negotiations between the United States and Japan over the future of the Pacific. Japanese demands included that the United States end its sanctions against Japan, cease aiding China in the Second Sino-Japanese war, and allow Japan to access the resources of the Dutch East Indies. Anticipating a negative response, Japan sent out its naval attack groups in November 1941 just prior to receiving the Hull note—which states the United States desire that Japan withdraw from China and French Indochina. Japan intended the attack as a preventive action. Its aim was to prevent the United States Pacific Fleet from interfering with its planned military actions in Southeast Asia against overseas territories of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States. Over the course of seven hours, Japan conducted coordinated attacks on the U.S.-held Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island; and on the British Empire in Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

The attack on Pearl Harbor started at 7:48 a.m. Hawaiian time (6:18 p.m. GMT). The base was attacked by 353 Imperial Japanese aircraft (including fighters, level and dive bombers, and torpedo bombers) in two waves, launched from six aircraft carriers. Of the eight United States Navy battleships present, all were damaged and four were sunk. All but USS *Arizona* were later raised, and six were returned to service and went on to fight in the war. The Japanese also sank or damaged three cruisers, three destroyers, an anti-aircraft training ship, and one minelayer. More than 180 US aircraft were destroyed. A total of 2,393 Americans were killed and 1,178 others were wounded, making it the deadliest event ever recorded in Hawaii. Important base installations, such as the power station, dry dock, shipyard, maintenance, and fuel and torpedo storage facilities, as well as the submarine piers and headquarters building (also home of the intelligence section) were not attacked.



Top left - Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, as seen from a Japanese aircraft during the attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet, December 7, 1941.

Top right - Pacific War: Japanese-controlled areas of China

Below Left - Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki
Below right - Yamamoto Isoroku, commander in chief of Japan's Combined Fleet during World War II

Sources - Wikipedia; Encl Britannica; nationalmuseumww2.org

ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOUR 1941

Japanese losses were light: 29 aircraft and five midget submarines were lost, and 129 servicemen killed. Kazuo Sakamaki, the commanding officer of one of the submarines, was captured. Japan declared war on the United States and the British Empire later that day (December 8 in Tokyo), but the declarations were not delivered until the following day. The British government declared war on Japan immediately after learning that their territory had also been attacked, while the following day (December 8), the United States Congress declared war on Japan. On December 11, though they had no formal obligation to do so under the Tripartite Pact with Japan, Germany and Italy each declared war on the United States, which responded with a declaration of war against Germany and Italy.

While there were historical precedents for the unannounced military action by Japan, the lack of any formal warning, as required by the Hague Convention of 1907, and the perception that the attack had been unprovoked, led then-President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in the opening line of his speech to a Joint Session of Congress the following day, to famously label December 7, 1941, "a date which will live in infamy". Due to Short's anti-sabotage measures, the U.S. military aircraft were packed tightly together at the Naval Air Station on Ford Island and adjoining Wheeler and Hickam fields, and many were destroyed on the ground by Japanese strafing. At Wheeler Field in particular the destruction was fearful. Of the 126 planes on the ground, 42 were totally destroyed, 41 were damaged, and only 43 were left fit for service. Only 6 U.S. planes got into the air to repel the attackers of this first assault. In total, more than 180 aircraft were destroyed.

At the same time a massive action was directed against Kimmel's fleet. The ships anchored in the harbour made perfect targets for the Japanese bombers, and, because it was Sunday morning (a time chosen by the Japanese for maximum surprise), they were not fully manned. Most of the damage to the battleships was inflicted in the first 30 minutes of the assault. The battleship USS *Arizona* blew up with a tremendous explosion. Riddled with bombs and torpedoes, the USS *West Virginia* settled on an even keel on the bottom of the harbour. The USS *Oklahoma*, hit by four torpedoes within five minutes, rolled completely over, with its bottom and propeller rising above the waters of the harbour. The USS *California*, the flagship of the Pacific Battle Force, was torpedoed and ordered abandoned as it slowly sank in shallow water. The target ship USS *Utah* also was sunk. Hardly a vessel escaped damage. The antiaircraft crews on the various vessels were fairly prompt in getting into action, and army personnel fired with what they had, but the force of the attack was in no serious way blunted.



Top left - Japan attacked Pearl Harbor causing the United States to join Allied forces in World War II

Top right - Explosions rocking the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor

Bottom - Japanese dive-bombers attack the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor to spark the Pacific War

Sources - Wikipedia; Encl Britannica; nationalmuseumww2.org

ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOUR - 1941

At 8:50 am the second wave of the attack began. Less successful than the first, it nonetheless inflicted heavy damage. The battleship USS *Nevada* had sustained a torpedo hit during the first wave, but its position at the end of Battleship Row allowed it greater freedom of action than the other moored capital ships. It was attempting to get underway when the second wave hit. It was struck by seven or eight bombs and was grounded at the head of the channel. The battleship USS *Pennsylvania* was set ablaze by bombs, and the two destroyers moored near it were reduced to wrecks. The destroyer USS *Shaw* was split in two by a great explosion. Shortly after 9:00 am the Japanese withdrew.

No one could doubt that the Japanese had gained a great success. The *Arizona* and the *Oklahoma* were destroyed with great loss of life, and six other battleships suffered varying degrees of damage. Three cruisers, three destroyers, and other vessels were also damaged. U.S. military casualties totaled more than 3,400, including more than 2,300 killed. Heavy damage was inflicted on both army and navy aircraft on the ground. The Japanese lost from 29 to 60 planes, five midget submarines, perhaps one or two fleet submarines, and fewer than 100 men. The Japanese task force retired from the theatre of battle without being attacked.

There was, however, one consoling feature to the tragedy. As a result of the dispositions made by Kimmel, two U.S. aircraft carriers were not in the harbour. The USS *Enterprise*, under Adm. William F. Halsey, was on a mission to reinforce the Wake Island garrison with marine planes and aviators. The USS *Lexington* was undertaking a similar mission to ferry marine dive-bombers to Midway. These operations also meant that seven heavy cruisers and a division of destroyers were at sea. The *Enterprise* was scheduled to return to Pearl Harbor on December 6 but was delayed by weather. A third carrier, the USS *Saratoga*, was embarking a fresh complement of aircraft in San Diego on the morning of the attack.

The Pearl Harbor attack severely crippled U.S. naval and air strength in the Pacific. However, of the eight battleships, all but the *Arizona* and *Oklahoma* were eventually repaired and returned to service, and the Japanese failed to destroy the important oil storage facilities on the island. The "date which will live in infamy," as U.S. Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt termed it, unified the U.S. public and swept away any earlier support for neutrality. On December 8 Congress declared war on Japan with only one dissenting vote (Rep. Jeannette Rankin of Montana, who had also voted against U.S. entry into World War I).



Top left - Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Centre above - USS *Arizona* ablaze, immediately following the explosion of her forward magazines, 7 December 1941. Frame clipped from a colour motion picture taken from onboard USS *Solace*, Top right - The battleship USS *Pennsylvania* in dry dock with the heavily damaged destroyers USS *Cassin* (left) and USS *Downes* after the Pearl Harbor attack Below left- American sailors at Ford Island Naval Air Station reacting to the explosion of the USS *Shaw* during the second wave of attacks on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor Below right - The USS *Arizona* in flames following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour - image Library of Congress



Sources - Wikipedia; Encl Britannica; nationalmuseumww2.org; Library of Congress

Pearl Harbour National Memorial Museum, Honalulu, Oahu, Hawaii



Made up of several historic sites and memorials, Pearl Harbour honours and educates the public about the Japanese attack on the United States on Dec 7, 1941 that propelled the country into World War II. It's one of Hawaii's most visited attractions and one of the country's most significant.



Top left – photo from the denverpost site 2016 marking the 75th anniversary of the bombing
Above left - Memorial wall;
cnn.com
All other images - from the Memorial Museum website



Sources - navy.mil (US); denverpost.com

How we made the Tower of London poppies

'It took 300 of us a year to make 888,246 flowers. We sprayed them red and counted them. Then the Beefeaters counted them. This was vital – every lost soldier had to be represented' **Paul Cummins, artist**

Paul Cummins, artist

One rainy day in 2012, I ducked into my local library for shelter and, for some reason, started looking at wills. I found one written by a woman from Derby who had disguised herself as a man and gone off to fight – and die – in the first world war. She had written her will phonetically, which made it easier for me to read as I'm dyslexic. That was one reason why I connected with it. Another was the phrase: "Blood swept lands and seas of red where angels fear to tread." It leapt out at me, made me think about the war's death toll. With a bit of research, I discovered that there had been 888,246 British and Colonial military fatalities.

I decided to represent those deaths through ceramic flowers, something I had first started making at university. Ceramics are transient and fragile, like we are. They feel part of our very humanity – societies have always been carbon-dated by their ceramics and pottery. I considered making roses, which symbolised sacrifice in Victorian times, but I settled on the poppy because of its links to war and remembrance.

I needed a large space so that people could walk all around the installation. While I wanted it to be free, I was keen to have a venue that was historically significant. The Tower of London was the fourth place I tried. I got put through to someone by sheer chance: the Tower's deputy governor has a friend also called Paul Cummins and they thought I was him. I didn't stop talking until a meeting had been agreed. Then I did lots of drawings and presented them with a flower I'd made to show them what it might look like.



Top Left - the Weeping window Below Left - the Weeping Window and the Wave
Both from historic royal palaces - hrp.org.au
Top Right - Aerial view of the moat filled with poppies Photograph by John McLellan/Rex
Below right - an original poppy currently on display in the Wauchope RSL conference room

This article was suggested by Mr Alex Hamilton, thank you

Sources these 3 pages - Historic Royal Palaces - hrp.org.au; The Guardian newspaper - guardian.com

How we made the Tower of London poppies

Tom Piper, designer

Of course it was an exciting and bold project, but at the point of planning I was worried that there would be so much first world war memorabilia and associated events that people wouldn't be interested and that first world war fatigue would have set in.

I started thinking about whether there was a way it could relate more closely to, and engage with, the Tower itself. Given that you can't see the moat until you're right on top of it, we needed something you could see from a distance. So I designed Weeping Window: the moment you came out of the tube station, you could see poppies cascading out of the Tower's bastion window. It became the starting point, the place all the poppies flowed out from and crept around the Tower. A second section, Wave, was visible from across the river.

Planting all 888,246 poppies was a huge undertaking. It became a piece of performative art lasting four months, with people watching the volunteers at work and often applauding. Many of the planters had service backgrounds and brought their own powerful stories. Others identified an individual flower with a relative who'd died in the war and thus the planting became ever more meaningful.

I sprayed contour guidance lines around the moat for the volunteers to follow, but they quickly started doing their own thing – putting higher ones in with lower ones and mixing things up, so that some areas were densely populated, others sparse. It made for a more living organic piece with its own natural energy and flow.

The Tower didn't do a massive publicity campaign. Nobody really knew what we were doing. As we were planting, people would ask: "What are you up to?" So its huge success took us all by surprise. It was a genuine word of mouth phenomenon.

The last poppy went in on 11 November 2014 and the next day we started taking it down. There were calls to save the poppies, but we needed to get the flowers to the people who had bought them, not least as Paul had to recoup the costs of making them and get the promised money to the six charities. Two sections, Weeping Window and Wave, were bought and gifted to the nation, which meant we could tour them around Britain. By the time we finish in November, as many as five million people around the country will have seen the poppies.

Making nearly one million ceramic poppies is a long process. Each had six petals, one for each charity I wanted to support with money raised from selling the poppies afterwards. I did nothing but make flowers for almost a year: 300 people at three different sites rolled, cut and shaped every poppy by hand. Each one is unique. By the time we'd stacked them all up to dry, on piles of boards raised by bricks, the studio looked like it was full of trenches. We sprayed them red and counted them in and out, then the Beefeaters counted them all again at the Tower. This was vital. Every single life had to be represented. A huge team of volunteers planted them all in the moat. One, a soldier who'd been injured by an explosion in Afghanistan that had killed half his regiment, told me the poppies he was planting represented the friends he had lost. As you looked out onto the sea of red, you felt overwhelmed by the thought of so many people sacrificing themselves for what we have now.



'The success took us all by surprise' ... Tom Piper, left, and Paul Cummins at the Tower. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian



Above - Remembrance Day - last poppy planted at Tower of London
Photograph by guardian.com

This article was suggested by Mr Alex Hamilton, thank you
Sources these 3 pages - Historic Royal Palaces - hrp.org.au; The Guardian newspaper - guardian.com

How we made the Tower of London poppies

The Military Heraldry & Technology section has received two ceramic poppies from the Tower of London's Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red centenary installation for the National Collection. The evocative art installation was on display in the Tower of London's moat from 5th August to 11th November 2014. 888, 246 individually handmade poppies 'represented a British military fatality during the war' and progressively filled the grounds over many months.

British Prime Minister David Cameron presented a ceramic poppy to Australia's Prime Minister Tony Abbott at the G20 summit in Brisbane in November 2014. It was one of six poppies presented to commonwealth leaders at the meeting. On Tuesday 17th February 2015 Tony Abbott presented the poppy to AWM Director Brendan Nelson, in the presence of Rear Admiral Doolan, at Parliament House.

The other poppy was privately donated by Mr John Butt of London, who saw service with the Royal Navy from 1977 to 1996. He retired from the Navy as a mechanical air engineering artificer, with the rank of petty officer. John's poppy travelled a distance of around 17,000kms from London to Canberra, and was received by Assistant Curator Craig Blanch.

Both ceramic poppies arrived in perfect condition, and in their original boxes. Printed on the inside of the box lid is a landscape photograph of the installation, and a step by step assembly guide on the base. An information booklet and official certificate are also included.

The poppies will be preserved in the Memorial's collection for posterity. They serve not only as a record of a significant First World War centenary and commemorative event, but also symbolise the ongoing relationship between Australia and the United Kingdom.

Author - Eleni Holloway

awm.gov.au



This article was suggested by Mr Alex Hamilton, thank you

Source this page - Australian War Memorial

**Tom Pritchard,
World War II veteran and Australia's last Rat of Tobruk, dies aged 102**



Left - Tom Pritchard was assigned to the 2/5th Field Ambulance.
Right - Tom Pritchard was Australia's last Rat of Tobruk. (Supplied: The Rats of Tobruk Association.)

Tom Pritchard, Australia's last Rat of Tobruk, has died aged 102. He was the last direct link with the 14,000 Australian servicemen who served in World War II in Tobruk. A public memorial for all Rats of Tobruk will take place in Melbourne.

The World War II veteran was the the last direct link with the 14,000 Australian servicemen who held the Libyan port of Tobruk against the German Africa Corps in 1941 during the Siege of Tobruk, a vital battle for the Allied forces. He died just shy of his 103rd birthday.

Born in Victoria in 1921, Pritchard enlisted in the army in 1940 despite lying about his age, and was assigned to the 2/5th Field Ambulance, which was eventually attached to the 18th Infantry Brigade. He served as an ambulance attendant during the eight-month-long Siege of Tobruk, which is regarded as a stand-out battle for Australia's soldiers. Mr Pritchard had been the last standing Rat for 12 months. "The biggest thing for us, was that he was the link," said secretary of the Rats of Tobruk Association Lachlan Gaylard.

"You were able to say to him, do you remember this, I've read this, do you know anything about that?" Mr Gaylard said that often Mr Pritchard would say no, but then come back with an answer two days later. "But now, we've lost that," he said. "I think we took for granted, a little bit, that he was the last one left."

The association, which was formed by the returned veterans looking for continued comradeship, will have to "pick up the flame" that was carried by Mr Pritchard, says Mr Gaylard. "We risk it [Tobruk] becoming a ghost of our past," he said. "And it shouldn't."

The efforts of the Australian soldiers holding down the Tobruk harbour during the Siege of Tobruk was pivotal to the Allied victory in North Africa. "The important part of the siege was that if you didn't hold that harbour at Tobruk, you couldn't control the Mediterranean or Middle East," said Mr Gaylard. "So really, it was the linchpin for that whole conflict, down to 14,000 Australians," he said. "It is extraordinary."

Mr Pritchard's duties during the siege involved collecting wounded soldiers and taking them to the dressing stations and to the hospital at the harbour, the association wrote. "This was no mean feat, as it meant having to balance and hold onto 4 or 5 stretchers in the ambulance, in an effort to steady them, while travelling on terrible roads; a journey which would sometimes take an hour or two," the association wrote. It said before his training, Mr Pritchard admitted he could "barely stick a bandaid on".

The association said they were extremely grateful "to have had Tommy for so long", in a post on Facebook confirming his death. "Tommy was a stalwart member of our association and a most humble veteran. We mourn his loss and the last direct linkage with some 14,000 Australian servicemen who served in Tobruk. We should always remember that those men in Tobruk gave us their today for our tomorrow," said Mr Gaylard.



Tom Pritchard (left) with Ron Williamson, who was president of the Rats of Tobruk Association until his death in June 2016. Tom Pritchard and members of the Rats of Tobruk Association marching on Anzac Day. (Supplied: The Rats of Tobruk Association)



Sources - The Rats of Tobruk Assn. and abc.net.au by Maddy Morwood

Israel-Gaza war: What is the IDF and how does conscription impact the conflict?

For more than seven months, Israel's invasion of Gaza has dominated the news, with members of the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) regularly explaining or defending the latest Israeli position – and facing fierce criticism along the way. The IDF is Israel's national military, made up of the Israeli ground forces, the Israeli air force and the Israeli navy. But the IDF is more than a military body. Since 1948, it's played a central role in the lives of countless Israelis and, in doing so, helped shape the country's national identity.

"The IDF was the most important social institution in early Israel, and it stayed as the most important social institution in Israel," Haim Bresheeth, author of *An Army Like No Other*. So what happens when a country is this closely intertwined with its military?

How the IDF works

Dozens of countries have some form of military conscription. Yet Israel is one of only a handful of these – including Norway, Sweden and North Korea – where both men and women are required to serve.

After high school, most young Israelis must serve in the military: 32 months for men and 24 months for women. They are then assigned to a reserve unit, train with that cohort and can be called up for active service if needed until 40 (or even older, depending on the role). These reserve units form the majority of the strength of the IDF ground forces. "This has really important implications," says Eitan Shamir, a professor at Israel's Bar-Ilan University. "Because not only do people do conscription, once they finish conscription ... they are constantly called into the army. They're constantly involved," he says. "The interaction between people in Israel and the military is a nonstop interaction. It's not something that you leave behind."

Reuven Gal, a senior research fellow at the Samuel Neaman Institute for National Policy Research and a former chief psychologist for the IDF, says this makes the IDF unique globally. "It's not like in other countries where the military is kind of a caste or a separate institution. In Israel, you will not find a home that doesn't have family members serving in the military," he says. "They don't do ceremonial things. This is a fighting military."

There are some exemptions to conscription, including Palestinian citizens of Israel, religious women and married secular women. And, since the early days of the state of Israel in the late 1940s, ultra-Orthodox Jews have been exempt from military service, so they could study and preserve religious knowledge after the Holocaust. But recently there has been strong pushback against this exemption from other areas of Israeli society, creating a political crisis for the current government.

The start of the IDF

In 1947, the British announced their withdrawal from Palestine after controlling it for almost 30 years. A United Nations partition plan split the territory into separate Jewish and Arab states (with a small international zone of Jerusalem and surrounds). War ensued between the two groups. In May 1948, David Ben-Gurion, who would become the country's first prime minister, declared the independence of the state of Israel and the establishment of the IDF.

Dr Gal says the fact that the IDF was created during a war is significant. "When a military is born in the middle of a war, it affects its genes, its DNA. It was a fighting military and remains this to today," he says. The idea of having a large reserve army was there from the start. "Ben-Gurion said, in a small country like ours, we cannot afford a standing army big enough to defend our borders. Hence, we will have to count on reserve corps."

And the vision for the IDF was always more than just a military – it was established as a nation-building institution. From 1948 onwards, large numbers of Jewish people started arriving in Israel from a variety of countries. There were survivors of the Holocaust from Eastern Europe, but also Jews from Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, all bringing different languages and cultures.



Left - In Israel "you will not find a home that doesn't have family members serving in the military", Reuven Gal says .(Reuters: Ronen Zvulun)
Right - Most Israelis start their training after high school.(Reuters: Amir Cohen)

Source - ABC RN - May 2024 By Jennifer Leake and Nick Baker for Rear Vision, ABC News

Israel-Gaza war: What is the IDF and how does conscription impact the conflict?

"The IDF was a vehicle or platform of socialisation for all these newcomers into Israel," Dr Gal says. Along with its military missions, the IDF also had social and cultural missions, like teaching these newcomers Hebrew. But it was not always straightforward.

Haim Bresheeth arrived in Israel as a baby in 1948 with his parents — both survivors of the Auschwitz concentration camp. "My father refused to fight [in the IDF]. He said that after six years of what he had undergone as a Jew in Europe, under the Nazis in Poland, he refused to kill, he refused to fight," he says. But Professor Bresheeth says his father later had mixed feelings. "He did not become a supporter of military action [but] he was ashamed that he actually refused to fight." Professor Bresheeth says when he turned 18, he served reluctantly. "I didn't want to do it ... [But] I didn't have the moral and personal courage to say 'bugger you guys, I am not joining this army'. So I did join," he says. "Thankfully, I never hurt anyone. But it could have been otherwise."

Conflict after conflict

Since its establishment, the IDF has been involved in many major conflicts. In 1956, Israel successfully joined forces with Britain and France to attack Egypt after the Suez Crisis and tensions over the Sinai Peninsula. And the Six-Day War of 1967 was its most decisive victory. "Within six days, [the IDF] managed to combat three big militaries — Jordanian, Syrian and Egyptian," says Dr Gal, who fought in the war. By the end of the war, Israel had massively expanded its territory, seizing the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Sinai Peninsula. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Syrians fled or were expelled.

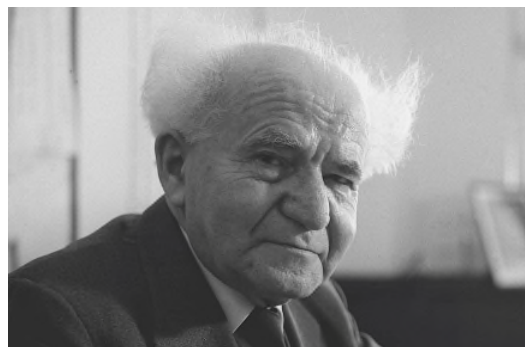
In 1973, Israel was caught off guard when a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria launched an attack. This became known as the Yom Kippur War. Dr Gal views Israel's 1982 war with Lebanon as a turning point. "All the wars until 1982 were wars for survival, were wars of sheer existence [for the state of Israel]," he says. "The IDF reached the city of Beirut and that's when people in Israel realised that this is not a war about our existence or survival anymore but it's a political effort." And Israelis started to protest, including many reservists.

Dr Gal also says the nature of combat changed from here on. "All the other wars until 1982 were fought against enemies that were states ... And the militaries were ordinary militaries. These were conventional wars," he says. "In the last few decades, we're not fighting states, we're fighting guerillas."

After the First Intifada

In the late 1980s, the First Intifada marked a big shift. This was a series of Palestinian uprisings against Israel: mass demonstrations led by women; labour strikes; children throwing stones at Israeli tanks. It required a very different response, and one that the IDF wasn't necessarily trained for.

"Now it was soldiers against citizens, sometimes kids ... It was more like constabulary, like policing," Dr Gal says. He says it "became even more like policing when they started to put in all those checkpoints", primarily in and around the West Bank. The IDF maintains that every "operational activity and exercise" is to "defend the state of Israel and its civilians". But human rights groups like Human Rights Watch have slammed the country for "repression, institutionalised discrimination and systematic abuses of the Palestinian population's rights" over the decades.



Cont'd next page

Above left - Israeli troops advance into the Golan Heights during the Yom Kippur War.(Getty: Keystone)
Above right - David Ben-Gurion helped unite Jewish militias to form the IDF.(Wikimedia Commons: Public domain)

Source - ABC RN - May 2024 By Jennifer Leake and Nick Baker for Rear Vision, ABC News



Mid North Coast
Allied Health

VETERANS Wellness Programs

Physiotherapy • Exercise Physiology
Home Visits • Men's Health
Neuro Rehab • NDIS

GOLD CARD HOLDERS

are entitled to clinically necessary treatment covered by DVA's health care arrangements for all health conditions.

WHITE CARD HOLDERS

are entitled to clinically necessary treatment for an accepted disability ie: an injury or disease accepted by DVA as service related.

Start today and experience the benefits...

- ✓ Increase mobility and balance
- ✓ Reduce and manage age related illness
- ✓ Assist with the management of chronic health conditions, back pain, cardiovascular disease, arthritis, diabetes and more



PORT MACQUARIE | SOVEREIGN HILLS | LAURIETON
WOOLGOOLGA | MOONEE BEACH | COFFS HARBOUR | URUNGA

1300 27 37 47  mncalliedhealth.com

Israel-Gaza war: What is the IDF and how does conscription impact the conflict?

Most Israelis serve

Cont'd from previous page

Dr Gal says being in the IDF — especially undertaking the constabulary role — can have an adverse effect on some of those who serve. "But it depends a lot on the background of that soldier," he says. "We have now in the IDF many soldiers ... [who are] religious soldiers, many of whom leave their homes within settlements in the West Bank [and] they have a very clear right-wing, nationalistic ideology," Dr Gal says. "They [can be] more immune against these traumatic impacts, compared to another soldier in the same unit, who comes from a left-wing home. When [these people] see 100,000 refugees in Gaza, and have to shoot into them, or fight, or destroy their homes and so on — it creates such a moral, conscientious conflict ... a foundation for post-traumatic sensation."

Eyal Mayroz is a senior lecturer in peace and conflict studies at the University of Sydney who served in the IDF in the 1980s. He lived in a kibbutz — a small township where people live and work together. Those who live in a kibbutz have traditionally opposed the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. "Most people living on kibbutzim are on the left side of the political map," Dr Mayroz says.

But he says he was told that if left-wing Israelis refused to serve in the IDF, then it would be dominated by right-wing Israelis. "That's a recipe for even worse human rights violations. So that's why we should swallow the pill [and serve]," he says. "I remember that as a big incentive on the kibbutzim ... We should serve and try to avoid worse situations."

The war in Gaza

On October 7, 2023, Hamas-led militants undertook a surprise attack in southern Israel. Israel says around 1,200 people were killed and 253 hostages were taken. Its response has been an extensive bombing campaign and a ground invasion of Gaza to "eliminate" Hamas. "Israel is under severe trauma. Part of that was expressed in the way that the IDF soldiers went into Gaza ... There were bursts of vengeance and aggression [by some soldiers]," Dr Gal says. The IDF has called on 360,000 reservists to fight. Meanwhile, there is a small group of Israelis, known as refuseniks, who are refusing to serve and facing time in jail.

Since Israel's invasion, Gaza's health ministry is reporting more than 35,000 Palestinians have been killed. According to UNICEF, around 1.7 million people have been internally displaced — half of them children. Human rights groups have strongly condemned the invasion, with Amnesty International saying it has created a "catastrophic humanitarian crisis". In a rare rift between close allies, the US delayed a shipment of thousands of bombs to Israel in early May due to concerns about Palestinian civilian deaths in Gaza.

And this week, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court announced he was seeking arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, over alleged war crimes. Both Israel and Hamas have previously dismissed allegations of war crimes.

But the war in Gaza shows no signs of abating. Israeli forces have pushed into Rafah in southern Gaza and Jabalia in northern Gaza, as aid agencies warn of further civilian suffering. It means international scrutiny of the IDF will continue in the days, months and years to come.



Above - Israel has vowed to "eliminate" Hamas in Gaza. (AP: Ohad Zwigenberg)

Top right - Israeli soldiers stand next to military vehicles near the Israel-Gaza border, in southern Israel. (Reuters: Amir Cohen)

Bottom right - Palestinians walk through the rubble of buildings destroyed by Israeli air strikes in Gaza City. (AP: Hassan Eslaiha)



Source - ABC RN - May 2024 By Jennifer Leake and Nick Baker for Rear Vision, ABC News

106 Field Workshop in Vietnam

Units of the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RAEME) have served Australia well in many conflicts and Vietnam was no exception. Their skill and dedication to keeping essential equipment repaired and in good working order have been well documented. The 106 Field Workshop was one of the few Australian units to be raised in theatre of war.

In 1969-70 Major Claude Palmer was Officer Commanding the unit. He said that while the first priority in Vietnam was fighting the war, an essential element of Australian operations was the winning of hearts and minds of the local Vietnamese. "Since the earliest deployment in the Sudan, the Australian Digger has always opened his heart and his wallet to the local children - especially those disadvantaged by war, so members of 106 Field Workshop readily adopted the Ba Ria Orphanage and, later, the Long Thanh primary school. There were regular runs with "surplus" rations, sweets, building repairs, well cleaning, and even playground equipment."

These activities were gratefully acknowledged by the local populace. At Christmas 1969, Major Palmer received a card from the local school.

Dear Major,

We. All the teachers, wish you, the benefactors of our school, A MERRY CHRISTMAS and A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Signed Representative Nguyen van Huy.

Claude said 106 Field Workshop was extremely proud of its work in the field. It not only repaired damaged vehicles such as tanks and Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs), often under extreme conditions, but worked on making improvements to existing equipment.

Concern about casualties caused by vehicles hitting mines led to 106 Field Workshop being asked to design and construct armour kits. After a number of trials using VC mines and damaged APCs, their modifications were approved. This additional armour became a universal modification for Australian APCs and proved so effective that it saved many young soldiers from death and serious injuries.

In 1977, Claude Palmer, was a member of a Duntroon Entry Selection Board convened in Sydney, and accommodated in the Kings Cross area. The Board had adjourned and members were walking to dinner along Darlinghurst Road, near the famous El Alamein fountain, when a young man rushed up to Claude. "I know you - your unit designed that anti-mine kit that was fitted to my APC in Vietnam," the young man said. He then shook Claude's hand firmly, saying, "I've wanted to thank you personally for years. Soon after your boys rearmoured my APC, it hit a mine. Thanks to your work, my mates and I survived in one piece."

On one occasion, a Centurion tank was badly damaged when it struck a Viet Cong mine during clearing operations near Nui Dat. It was essential that the tank be back in operation as soon as possible. Following closely behind the tank were members of the 106 Field Workshop, travelling in their specially adapted armoured mobile repair unit. The tank's track assembly was a complete write-off but the team managed to repair the tank, replacing the complete front suspension unit, front idler wheels and track in only eight hours. Claude said there was intense but friendly rivalry between the various units and this manifested itself in many ways.

"The Centurion tank being used by the Australian Army was powered by a V 12 petrol engine originally designed and built by Rolls Royce for the Spitfire fighter aircraft. Tanks repaired by 106 were adorned by a stencil which read: Serviced exclusively by Vietnam's Rolls Royce dealer, 106 Field Workshop".

Not to be outdone, the APC Repair Section somehow obtained Detroit Diesel insignias and attached them to their overalls. (The M113A1 APC had a Detroit Diesel engine matched to an Allison transmission.)



Left - View of 106 Fd Wksp; Right - Digging a weapon pit; photo by Gerry Lloyd

106 Field Workshop in Vietnam

Australian soldiers have always had a strong sense of humour under the most arduous conditions. The Task Force rubbish dump some 500 metres distant received much daily traffic. The local VC observed this, and logically, but wrongly, assumed that the Headquarters must be there, and so launched a rocket attack at what they thought to be a prime target. When it became apparent that 106 was not the target, 106 soldiers within sight of the dump could be heard cheering at each impact, rather like a crowd at a darts game.

Officially unacknowledged though it may be, Diggers of the first and second AIF were known to creatively interpret regulations to achieve what had to be achieved. Following in the great tradition, men of 106 did likewise, and to this day, no one will reveal the true identity of a certain Sergeant E. Kelly whose signature is said to have appeared on certain requisitions at the US Depot at Long Binh.

Resourceful 106 craftsmen would often scrounge unserviceable equipment, which had been written-off by the US Army, from salvage dumps, and then repair it to operational use, thus saving the Australian taxpayer many thousands of dollars. So 106 Field Workshop continued the proud tradition of the RAEME throughout its tour of duty in Vietnam.

Claude was full of praise for the work of voluntary organisations such as the Salvation Army. "Australian forces are fortunate in always having the Salvation Army and/or Everyman Organisation representatives. These courageous philanthropic souls provide welfare and spiritual advice, cold drinks, hot beverages, and biscuits to troops in action - sometimes literally," he said. "The local "Sally" as he was affectionately known, had a rather battered Land Rover. When he was due to return to Australia for his well-earned week of R&R, he asked if 106 could perform an oil change on his vehicle while he was away. The men of vehicle and general engineering platoons voluntarily completely rebuilt and repainted the vehicle so well that when he returned, the owner could not recognise his Land Rover which was waiting for him at the airstrip."

The unit adopted its own mascot, a young monkey known as Charlie Goloski. He spent much of his "working" day in Recovery Platoon and would often go on recovery missions. In the evenings he developed a taste for certain beverages and was seen to swoop from the rigging of the mess tent to swipe an unattended can of beer which he proceeded to drink.

He met an untimely end when he discovered a bottle of sleeping tablets which he promptly opened and ate. Despite desperate efforts from a US Army vet, Charlie never recovered. Later, he was replaced by another monkey, a female known as Suzie Goloski. She remained with the unit until it returned to Australia, at which time she was given to the children of the Ba Ria Orphanage.

So 106 Field Workshop continued the proud tradition of the RAEME throughout its tour of duty in Vietnam.



Photos this page by Frank Ellingham

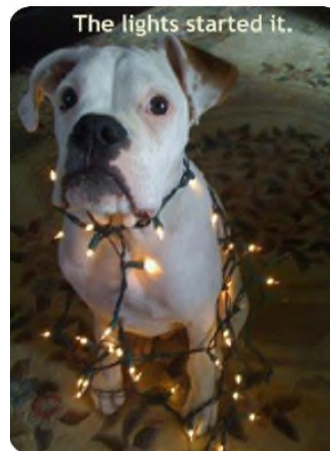
Permission to use images was granted by
106 Field Workshop, RAEME Assn Qld

Sources - The written material for this article was supplied by Claude Palmer of Queensland. Also DVA Anzac portal, photos from 106 Field Workshop web pages
Date: 1969-1970
Unit: 106 Field Workshop, RAEME

A MERRY CHRISTMAS STARTS WITH A LAUGH



A Very Merry
Christmas
from the
President and
all Committee
members and
staff at VSC



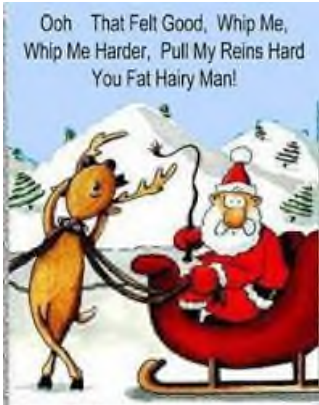
ON THE 12TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS
MY GENERAL SENT TO ME



A MERRY CHRISTMAS STARTS WITH A LAUGH



**A Very Merry
Christmas from
the President
and all
Committee
members and
staff at VSC**



Sources - mostly pinterest sites, military memes, webhumour.com and our readers

VETERANS MERCHANDISE FOR SALE IS NOW FROM A REDUCED RANGE -

SEE YOUR COPY OF "THE VIETNAM VETERANS NEWSLETTER"
OR TALK TO STAFF AT VETERANS SUPPORT CENTRE OFFICE

Order direct from www.vvfagranville.org then select "SHOP" or ask us and we will be happy to help

Merchandise



All proceeds from the sale of goods, including raffle tickets, go toward the funding of scholarships for veterans' children and grandchildren

Pens, keyrings, lapel pins, belt buckles, patches and badges, book "The Minefield", number plate surrounds and more - check it out - all raising money for veterans dependants



Assorted: Army, Navy, Airforce bumper stickers



Assorted: Stubby holders



Please see staff at the Office every Thursday from 10:30 - 13:00

Thank you to our members, advertisers and supporters for their continuing support of our Veterans Support Centre

REPORTS

President's Report - October 2024

The Sub-Branch Conference held in September at Bankstown Sports Club.

Reports from all Branches were presented which are available in our office for all to read.

Reading the reports, two main items arose - falling membership due to the age of the Vietnam Veterans and overworked Advocates and Support Officers. Our members are down to approximately 58 which is a lot lower than when I first joined our Wauchope branch which was about 200 in 2002. Mike and Glenn our two Advocates spend a day in the Office and numerous hours at home working and following up on their Advocacy work and assisting Veterans with phone calls. This is very much appreciated by the number of younger veterans that they are assisting. After all this time the workload is not getting any easier, it makes you wonder if the government of the day has learned anything.

Also attached to this report is a summary of presentation by DVA representative Sonia Gilmore, Deputy Commissioner. This summary is of current issues of interest to the Veteran Community with questions and answers from the floor to the representative from DVA.

Vietnam Veterans Day was held at Wauchope RSL Club with a service at the Memorial Wall followed by lunch and refreshments in the Club. Approximately 56 Veterans and their partners attended enjoying the day with good company. Many thanks to those who attended to make it a good day. Also to the Sub-Branch members and the Club for their support and assistance.

In the newsletter there is a membership renewal form. Your membership fees help us to support and work for the more recent veterans who certainly require our concern for their wellbeing. If you can please do not let your membership lapse. At this particular time I thought we would be slowing down with our advocacy work but it would appear that after 50 years it is still required more than ever.

As the year is closing I would like to thank all in the office, Jill our Secretary and journalist, Peter Dorman our Treasurer, Trevor Morrow our Membership Officer and all of the Committee who have assisted me throughout the year and for putting up with me. Bob Holley our resident health nut for all his words of wisdom on how to stay healthy. And a very big thank you to our Advocates Mike and Glen on their constant hard work throughout the year.

To all members, their families and friends may you have a safe and wonderful Christmas and New Year and I am looking forward to the New Year to continue our friendships. To those who aren't in the best of health, our thoughts are with you.



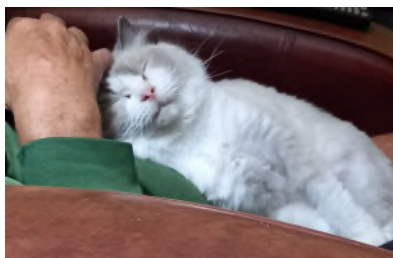
President - Bill Wagner



Membership Officer
Trevor Morrow



Treasurer
Peter Dorman



Compensation Advocate
Mike Opie
and furry friend



Compensation Advocate
Glen Peterson

Membership Officers Report (November 2024)

This is my quarterly report to bring you up to date regarding membership matters for 2024.

Sub-Branch Membership is based on the **Calendar Year**, so membership renewals for 2025 will soon be due.

As at 14 October we have **58** financial members for this year.

Note that for every membership payment of \$30.00 made here at your local sub-branch, **\$12.50 is retained by your sub-branch for local use.**

To those who have continued their membership again for this year, thank you!

Enjoy the upcoming festive season, and please stay safe and well!


Trevor Morrow

Membership Officer

Compensation Advocate's Report -

Mike and I have been working hard to complete claims and follow-up with DVA on claims on behalf of the veterans. The new electric system that has been installed is going well. We are updating things as we progress throughout the year.

My training is going slowly, but I'm getting there.

Any enquiries to your claim please contact Mike or me at the Veteran Support Centre.

We both wish a peaceful and safe Christmas
to all veterans and their families

Army's future attack helo - AH-64E Apache

With the arrival of Australia's first Apaches just over 12 months away, five Army pilots are getting a head start on flying the attack platform. The aviators, former ARH Tiger pilots from the 1st Aviation Regiment, are embedded with the US Army where they are in full flight gaining experience on the aircraft, having completed their type-conversion course at the US Army Aviation Centre of Excellence (USAACE) in Fort Novosel, Alabama, last year.

One pilot flew almost 1000 hours on the ARH Tiger before transitioning to Apache. He knew flying an Apache would be completely different as soon as he saw it. While the Tiger is lighter, nimble in the air and more forgiving to fly, according to the pilot, the Apache is packed with armour, sensors and enough power to carry 16 hellfire missiles – compared to the Tiger's eight. "Apache has a max all-up weight of about 10 tonnes, so you need to be a little bit more accurate with your flying," he said. "There's more armaments and armour on board, so there's more momentum that you're dealing with."

Following their initial training, the pilots were posted to all corners of the US Army's combat aviation organisation – from the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade in Hawaii, to 16 Combat Aviation Brigade in Washington and the 101st Airborne Division in Kentucky. Two remain at Fort Novosel in instructional roles. All pilots fly the AH-64E Apache, the most advanced model, and the aircraft type Australia will receive. Their experience gained at the controls, and their understanding of how allies employ weapons and tactics will support the development of Australia's own Apache doctrine.

The US Army E model has recently integrated the Spike missile to complement extant joint air-to-ground missiles – featuring laser and radar seekers – that will eventually replace their Hellfire missile. 'Everyone's focused on accuracy to make sure we're doing it effectively to achieve the mission.' It can acquire targets at more than double a Tiger's range, assisted by colour TV screen, infrared sensors and a Longbow fire-control radar mounted above the rotors.

Link 16 and other data links enable sharing of information with other Apaches and ground HQ elements. Exact sensor range is classified, but Apaches can see and detect at ranges further than they can shoot. The large amount of information coming into each cockpit means the US takes a formation approach to receiving and using data. This typically means a troop of four Apaches with mixed configurations of longbow radars and upper-receivers. "Longbow radar aircraft can share their targets, then the troop leader can assign them between the flight to attack," the pilot said. "It's an adrenaline rush to be in a four-ship formation with four aircraft firing simultaneously. Everyone's focused on accuracy to make sure we're doing it effectively to achieve the mission."

Similar to a tank squadron, US Army attack battalions can conduct deep strike to support division manoeuvre – including deliberate attacks, attack out of contact and movement to contact missions. "It's not typically in close proximity to ground forces; more forward of their forward line of own troops to hit strategic targets in depth," the pilot said.

The pilots, who are due home late next year when the first of Australia's 29 Apaches are scheduled to arrive, are confident Australia can maximise the Apache's performance for the local environment.

"The new Apache brings the ability to see and detect more, share that information more rapidly and apply more weaponry. It's a fantastic machine," the pilot said. "The aircrew flying the Tiger are still doing a great job; it will be able to do what the Army needs until Apache is ready to take over."



Above left - An Australian Army pilot operates a US Army AH-64E Apache while on exchange with the 16th Combat Aviation Brigase in Washington

Above right - Australian Army pilot, Capt A, in a US Army AH-64E Apache while on exchange with the 16th Combat Aviation Brigase in Washington

Source - defence web; words and pictures by Warrant Officer Class 2 Max Bree unless stated otherwise

Army's future attack helo - AH-64E Apache

Australian maintenance personnel are getting their hands on Army's future attack helicopter, the AH-64E Apache, more than a year before it arrives on Australian shores.

Six Aviation Command engineers, aircraft and avionics technicians are participating in the United Kingdom Apache Exchange program – spending between 12 and 18 months working side by side with British Army counterparts.

The British Army's 3 Regiment Army Air Corps in Suffolk, which introduced the AH-64E into service in 2022, has been sharing its experiences with the Australians to give them a head start in their future roles. "There's more to a transition from Tiger to Apache than just acquiring new aircraft," an Australian maintainer said. "This exchange was all about making sure we don't just have people who are qualified; we've actually embedded people into a maintenance workforce to gain experience in the roles they will be conducting."

Some of the Australian maintainers deployed on exercises across Europe to witness the Apache in action in a combined-arms setting.

One said it was an eye-opening experience. "Going out to Finland and Estonia was a real highlight. Packing up a squadron of aircraft to go and operate in another country is not something I've done before, and I learnt a lot from it," the maintainer said.

As part of the exchange, the Australians have shared their experiences working on the ARH Tiger. British Army Aviation Artificer Staff Sergeant Maxwell Porter said the sharing of knowledge was key to enhancing relationships between the two armies.

"These exercises that we've been on are vital for building relationships, particularly with a new attack helicopter, which has global reach with what it can deliver," he said. "I think we're aligned in our vision and where we want to be. It's been a wholeheartedly positive experience working with the Australian Defence Force."



Top left - An Australian Army pilot operates a US Army AH-64E Apache while on exchange with the 16th Combat Aviation Brigase in Washington

Top right - A British soldier from 3 Regiment Army Air Corps and soldiers from the 1st Aviation Regiment, Australian Army Aviation Command, observe as a AH-64E attack helicopter taxis down the pan during their learning experience at Wattisham Flying Station - this photo by Major Lily Charles

Above left - Australian Army pilot, Capt A, in a US Army AH-64E Apache while on exchange with the 16th Combat Aviation Brigase in Washington - this photo by Staff Sgt Cayce Watson

Above right - A British soldier from 3 Regiment Army Air Corps and his counterpart from the 1st Aviation Regiment, Australian Army Aviation Command, load mission planning data into the aircrafts software of a AH-64E attack helicopter - this photo by Cpl Aaron J Stone

Source - defence web; words and pictures by Warrant Officer Class 2 Max Bree unless stated otherwise

Russian spies and training Ukrainian military

Russian spies could be flying drones over UK military bases to gain information about Britain's secret training programme for Ukrainian soldiers, it has been revealed. Russian intelligence has shown 'significant' interest in Operation Interflex, the British-led multinational plan to train and support Ukraine's armed forces, according to a guide handed out to British soldiers. The Field Army Threat Handbook, published late last year, warns that Russian intelligence services 'routinely employ' reconnaissance capabilities to 'collect on UK land activities, including the training of armed forces of Ukraine personnel'. The handbook claims this involves the use of 'remotely piloted aircraft systems, mobile and foot surveillance, virtual and physical approaches to training providers and interest from investigative journalists'. **(see top 3 pictures below)**

'This government takes the security of our military establishments very seriously,' a Ministry of Defence spokesperson told The Times. 'There are a range of robust measures to protect our people and sites.' The Ministry of Defence has been working with Ukraine's military to train recruits in urban warfare, as part of its Operation Interflex, since July 2022. By June of last year, the Army reported it was on track to train 37,000 recruits, with the war effort desperately calling for battle-ready soldiers to replenish frontlines. Interflex, the successor to Operational Orbital - similar in function - is billed as a five-week course designed to turn ordinary Ukrainian citizens into highly skilled warriors

But with the Kremlin warning Ukraine's Western allies not to interfere, and threatening Britain over its materiel support, British soldiers have been told to be aware of potential Russian snooping. The handbook given to soldiers warns agents have already approached trainers to gain information on the programme, The Times reports. It also warns of 'vulnerable locations' including training areas and key logistical sites.



Left- An Army soldier builds a sandbag wall to contain the explosive blast; centre - A Navy student places an explosive ordnance disposal tool next to an unexploded RKG-3EM anti tank grenade; right - An airforce student measures the placement of his explosive ordnance disposal tool next to an unexploded sub munition - all pictures during realistic training with the Defence Explosive Ordnance Training School

Source - Murray Sanders for Daily Mail UK & Ministry of Defence:

Penrith's main retail strip could have just as easily been the battle-ravaged streets of Kharkiv or Kherson for 16 students at the Defence Explosive Ordnance Training School. Surrounded by pedestrians and businesses, they were planning how to safely dispose of hypothetical unexploded bombs as part of a revamped Conventional Munitions Disposal course. **(see 3 pictures below)**

It was the first course run under a new explosive ordnance disposal curriculum introduced this year. Senior explosive ordnance instructor Army Captain Scott Bowers said the tri-service school recently adopted a case-study approach to learning, after students called for training based on current events. As a result, instructors used threat reports from combat zones to develop scenarios mirroring what's happening in Ukraine. "Large aircraft bombs have been dropped near houses or communal areas and failed to detonate - we've mirrored the type of munition, where it was found and its orientation in our training," Captain Bowers said.

The students based their calculations on these factors before detonating munitions in a controlled environment. Leading Aircraftman Brandon Davies, a graduate of the 10-week course, said planning hypothetical munitions disposal in a built-up area, such as Penrith, added a level of complexity for his cohort. "When you add in the realism of people walking around the buildings, shopping centres and hospitals, you have to think about mitigating explosive-hazard risk and working with emergency services and police," Leading Aircraftman Davies said. "There's a whole risk-management side of things that's harder to deliver in the classroom." As well as introducing real-world scenarios, it was the first time the school incorporated mentoring. Instructors worked with specific groups for the length of the course. Instructor Leading Seaman Bradley Telford said trainees showed more initiative under this model. "We took our mentorship role personally and had significant buy-in - the students were self-motivated, doing additional training in their spare time," Leading Seaman Telford said.



British army tests laser beam weapon

British army tests laser beam which is able to destroy targets at the speed of light - and it costs less than the price of a cup of tea

British Army personnel yesterday test-fired for the first time a laser beam capable of destroying targets with 'pinpoint accuracy' - for less than the price of a cup of tea.

Troops carried out the test of Raytheon's anti-drone laser weapon from a military vehicle in the latest sign that drone warfare is a growing priority for Western armed forces.

The high-energy laser, which is designed to wipe out aerial drones, was fired aboard a British Army Wolfhound armoured vehicle in the Porton Down defence campus in Wiltshire.

It comes after scientists have been experimenting with lasers as a cheap alternative to traditional defence systems. The 15-kilowatt laser wiped out targets more than 1km away during the tests. Each shot uses up just 10p worth of energy - or cheaper than making a cup of tea.



Left – The high-energy laser, which is designed to wipe out aerial drones, was fired aboard a British Army Wolfhound armoured vehicle in the Porton Down defence campus



Right - The ground breaking test saw the laser weapon neutralise targets at distances in excess of 1km



Left - Government officials said the technology would help prepare the UK's armed forces for the future

Below - Russia has lost a lot of tanks since Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine and recent combat footage (pub July 24) showed one unit of Ukrainian troops using a special type of ammunition to destroy Moscow's best tank in Ukraine



Above - Mortar casing showing damage done by 'DragonFire' a British military laser weapon system



2024 - the 25th anniversary

This year we commemorate the 25th anniversary of Australian service in Timor-Leste. When East Timor experienced a humanitarian and security crisis in 1999, Australia led a multinational peacekeeping force in response. INTERFET and several UN-led missions helped the country as it achieved independence.

The majority of Australian service in Timor-Leste spanned between 1999 and 2013 and encompassed Australian Defence Force and Australian Federal Police personnel, as well as civilians. A number of Australians continued to serve after 2013, with ongoing efforts still in effect to this day.

The national commemorative service at the @Australian War Memorial will be broadcast by the ABC from 9:30am. This anniversary service is an opportunity to honour and remember the six Australians who lost their lives and all those who served and their families.

21 June 2024

A tender moment between an Australian soldier and a local East Timorese boy captured against the backdrop of brutality and destruction was immortalised in a photograph 25 years ago. The photograph (below), featuring former soldier Sergeant Martin Ryan, 4RAR (Commando), and a young boy named Leandro, has become an iconic symbol of Australia's contribution to the International Force East Timor (INTERFET).

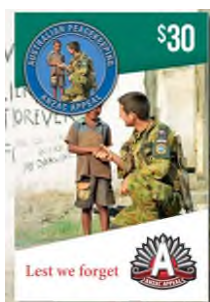
INTERFET began deploying in September 1999, with about 5000 of the 10,000-strong INTERFET Australian military personnel. As part of RSL Victoria's initiative to highlight the work of peacekeepers throughout Australia's history, the photo featured on this year's Australian Peacekeepers ANZAC Appeal badge. In an unusual twist, Martin contacted RSL Victoria to share his story.

As Martin and the Australian Defence Force photographer Sergeant Gary Ramic walked through the battered streets of Suai, southwest of the capital Dili, they stumbled across a graffitied wall with the words "We love you INTERFET". It set the perfect scene for the impromptu shot, as the little boy named Leandro was walking back down into Suai having taken shelter from the unfolding violence and lawlessness in the mountains. "Most of the photos you see, the kids are looking up at the soldiers. I don't know why, but I put my weapon behind me, knelt next to him and shook his hand."

All these years later, Martin has been able to locate Leandro with the help of a contact in East Timor. Thanks to veteran wellbeing program Timor Awakening, Martin will travel there later this year with his eldest son. "He's the one that was most aware when I was away...so this is a sort of a 'come on Nick, come over and see something that we did, something that we succeeded in.'"

The reunion with Leandro is expected to be understandably emotional. "It's been so much time," Martin said with his voice wavering. "I just didn't think about it. I didn't want to think about it. That was a good point of the tour, you know, meeting the kids..."

When he met Leandro all those years ago, it was a moment of lightness among the unfolding tragedy surrounding him. In the weeks and months after the Suai Church Massacre, which saw nearly 200 people killed inside the church, Martin witnessed confronting scenes.



Top Left - the photograph that inspired the badge, Sergeant Martin Ryan shakes hands with an East Timorese child -taken by ADF photographer Sergeant Gary Ramic
and below left - Australian Peacekeepers ANZAC Appeal badge
Right - Sergeant Martin Ryan

2024 - the 25th anniversary

“Obviously, we were coming across a lot of victims of the militia...bodies, finding children’s jewellery, bones. When the villagers came back, they searched the local swamps and brought the remains of family back up. At some point, Martin’s coping mechanism kicked in. “I have a hard time remembering detail because I basically blanked everything out so I could just keep operating.”

The effects of Martin’s deployments, including his multiple deployments to East Timor and Afghanistan, caused significant mental health struggles, which contributed to his decision to discharge.

“I was pretty messed up at that stage...I wasn’t sleeping. Signs and symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder began to show.”

After serving full-time for 32 years, Martin discharged and found himself in as a civilian working in the corporate world. More recently, he moved to Disaster Relief Australia as the National Training Manager.

“To be honest, even the worst day I had in the military I’d go back and do it all over again, but not sure my wife would appreciate it.”

He said he put his family through a lot of stress and sleepless nights. “They don’t know where we are, they don’t know what we’re doing. My wife had to give up her job on numerous occasions because of what I was doing.” He remembers coming home from his deployments, disrupting the routine and heading off again. “I owe my wife a lot.”

Through it all, Martin has not lost his sense of humour or his warmth. The photograph has popped up around and about over the years, often when Martin least expects it.

“I’m glad the photo is useful; it’s raising funds and awareness and I’m thankful you got the prettiest guy in INTERFET on there!”

The Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, salutes during the 25th anniversary commemoration of Australian service in East Timor



Background - East Timor, officially the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, is a country in Southeast Asia and Oceania. The country comprises the eastern half of the island of Timor and the nearby islands of Atauro and Jaco. The first inhabitants are thought to be descendant of Australoid and Melanesian peoples. The Portugese began to trade with Timor by the early 16th century and colonised it throughout the mid-century. Skirmishing with the Dutch in the region eventually resulted in an 1859 treaty for which Portugal ceded the western half of the island. Imperial Japan occupied East Timor during World War 2, but Portugal resumed colonial authority after the Japanese surrender. East Timor declared itself independent from Portugal in 1975, but was invaded by Indonesia. The country was later incorporated as a province of Indonesia. During the subsequent two-decade occupation, a campaign of pacification ensued. Although Indonesia did make substantial investment in infrastructures during its occupation in East Timor,¹ dissatisfaction remained widespread. From 1975 to 1999, there were an estimated 102,800 conflict-related deaths (approximately 18,600 killings and 84,200 'excess' deaths from hunger and illness), the majority of which occurred during the Indonesian occupation.

In 1999, in a UN-sponsored referendum, an overwhelming majority of East Timorese voted for independence from Indonesia. Immediately following the referendum, anti-independence Timorese militias – organised and supported by the Indonesian military – commenced a scorched earth campaign. The militias killed approximately 1,400 Timorese and forcibly pushed 300,000 people into West Timor as refugees. The majority of the country's infrastructure was destroyed during this attack. The International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) was deployed to the country and brought the violence to an end. Following a United nations-administered transition period, East Timor was internationally recognised as an independent nation in 2002. It is the poorest country in Southeast Asia with a 20% unemployment rate, and approximately one third of the population is illiterate.

Wikipedia

Sources - intro - Women Veterans Network Australia - WVNA; Main article -written by Aileen Phillips; rslvic.com.au; Wikipedia; defence web Army

CHUCKLE PAGES

CAUTION - GROWN UP LANGUAGE, MILITARY HUMOUR

THESE AREN'T BAD BITCHES



THESE ARE BAD BITCHES

HEY GUYS, KNOCKKNOCK

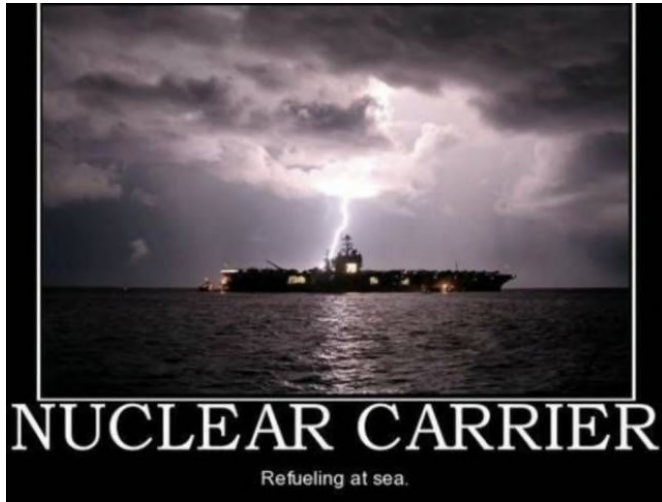


SHUT THE FUCK UP CARL

WHEN THE LT SAID GET YOUR GUN AND ASS TO THE FRONT LINE



CARL TOOK IT LITERALLY



NUCLEAR CARRIER

Refueling at sea.



THIS IS AWESOME. I CAN SEE MY HOUSE FROM HERE.

... THAT'S NOT MY TRUCK.



teuf-spjder.tumblr.com

"I'D CATCH A GRENADE FOR YA..."



"CARL, I REALLY WISH YOU WOULD."



ARMY AND AIR FORCE

SHOCKED AT WHAT THE REAL MILITARY LOOKS LIKE



HAS ANYONE SEEN MY LIFE JACKET?

SHUT THE FUCK UP CARL

Sources - pinterest military memes;

THIS ONE IS FOR DAVE ^

CHUCKLE PAGES

These pages contain jokes that have adult language, are sexist, ageist and also are really funny - enjoy a chuckle or just skip these pages. Ed

Cat hits the Christmas tree, tree moves

My grandpa who was in the Vietnam War :



"Ooooh that smell Can't you smell that smell Ooooh that smell"



YOU ARE ALL HERE ON YOUR WEEKEND OFF



OOD -Officer of the Day

Anyone know any good summer camp songs?



WHAT COUNTRY IS THAT?



We're F**kin' lost aren't we sir?



Never lost Sergeant...
only tactically misplaced

Sources - pinterest military memes; web military humour;

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association Inc.



**HASTINGS MANNING MACLEAY
SUB-BRANCH
VVPAA Inc, PO Box 5330
Port Macquarie 2444**

An affiliated Sub-Branch of the Vietnam
Veterans Federation of Australia

We are an independent, 100% volunteer Registered Charity Ex-Service Organisation providing a welfare, pension, advocacy, support and information service for veterans and ex-serving & serving members of the Australian Defence Forces, from all arms of the ADF and from all wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations in which Australia has been involved.

Phone: 6581 5230
E-mail: Vets614@gmail.com
website -
www.veteranssupport.org.au



Mural - Trevor Kay,



**Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial, Anzac Parade, Canberra
Source - Honesthistory.net**