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This edition of the *Australian Army Journal* appears amidst a challenging time for the Australian Army. We continue to provide forces for dispersed and complex operations. Since September 1999 the Army has sustained a very high operational tempo. There is no sign of this abating.

Since the last edition of this Journal a number of our soldiers have paid the supreme sacrifice while fighting an implacable and dangerous foe in Afghanistan. At the other end of the operational spectrum, Army made a significant contribution to the relief effort in the wake of the bushfire emergency in Victoria in February. And of course we continue to provide Army Force elements and individuals for operations in the Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Iraq, and various parts of Africa and the Middle East. Our soldiers continue to excel in each of these environments and to earn the respect of the nation and our allies.

The most significant development since the publication of the last edition of the *Army Journal* has been the release of the Defence White Paper—*Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*. In his Order of the Day marking the release of the White Paper, the Chief of the Army expressed his satisfaction with its key provisions. Lieutenant General Gillespie noted that all the key projects, which he considered to have constituted Army’s ‘vital ground’ during the development of the White Paper, had been endorsed. In particular, he referred to those projects which were designed to empower our people, especially through networking. Key enablers of Army’s close combat capability, such as enhanced protection for individual soldiers as well as improved mobility, survivability and lethality, also received approval. Above all, the Chief confirmed that the White Paper would set the conditions under which the Hardened and Networked Army, the Enhanced Land Force, and the Adaptive Army could all be successfully implemented.

The environment created by such long-term grand strategic planning and a demanding current operational tempo requires considerable institutional agility and flexibility from the Army. In particular, the most reliable measure of our adaptability and responsiveness is the speed and fluency of our ability to identify and integrate lessons from operations.
EDITORIAL

It is to meet those twin challenges—winning the current fight and ensuring the effectiveness of longer term force generation—that the Chief of Army has devised the *Adaptive Army*. The implementation of *Adaptive Army* is proceeding apace. Forces Command (FORCOMD) will be stood up on 1 July this year. In his most recent directive about the Adaptive Army the Chief of Army has described its purpose in these words:

The success of Army in the conduct of contemporary (and future) operations, force generation and preparation will be largely determined by our capacity to learn lessons and then adapt based on those lessons. The Army must continually review and adapt to ensure that it remains fit for the changing environment. Part of this review is a periodic re-assessment of the appropriateness of structures, processes and priorities for now and the future. The implementation activities for Adaptive Army in 2009 will ensure Army is explicitly linking our different temporal adaptation cycles, or learning loops, with our organisations and structures.

In this way *Adaptive Army* will improve Army’s performance on current operations, while maintaining its axis of advance on the process of continuous modernisation. As the Chief of Army has warned in a number of his public addresses, Army cannot afford to allow the demands of persistent irregular conflict to erode our conventional warfighting skills and higher formation manoeuvre competencies. This is likely to be even more important in the wake of the expected White Paper emphasis on the residual risk of state-on-state conflict.

In our last edition we described the *Adaptive Army* as the most significant restructuring of the Australian Army since the Hassett reforms of 1973. Moreover, the *Adaptive Army* represents profound cultural change. Army, like many large, hierarchical institutions, is grappling with the challenges presented by the revolution in information technology. How can we best preserve our powerful collective ethos, while empowering individuals to exploit the proliferation of information available to them?

The *Army Journal* aspires to play its part in the process of learning and disseminating lessons. We continue to offer a forum for officers and soldiers to reflect on their experience on operations, and to debate issues of professional concern. We encourage every member of the Army, regular and reserve alike, to consider submitting articles for the Journal. However, we do request that members only submit original articles that have not been published in other publications. There have been unfortunate instances of late where we have published articles that have appeared in other journals or blogs without the appropriate acknowledgment. This has the capacity to undermine the reputation of the Journal and the Australian Army.

In our last edition we incorrectly identified the author of the article ‘Flying a Plane While in the Process of Building it: Reflections on Iraq’ as the same Major
Michael Scott who had been awarded the 2007 Chauvel Essay Prize. This was an error. The author of that article was Major Michael Scott who graduated from the Royal Military College Duntroon to the Royal Australian Armoured Corps in 1997. He served in Iraq as a staff officer with Multi-National Security Command–Iraq between June and December 2007. The Major Michael Scott who was awarded the Chauvel Essay Prize is an officer of the Royal Australian Engineers. The *Army Journal* apologises to both Major Scotts for this misunderstanding.

We commend the contents of the Autumn 2009 edition to you. We continue to provide a forum for officers and soldiers to disseminate lessons from operations. In that regard we are grateful to the publishers of *Australian Infantry Magazine* for their permission to reprint the article of Major Mick Bassingthwaighte drawing lessons from his recent experience in Afghanistan.

In this edition we also publish a response from Bob Wurth to Peter Stanley’s article challenging the view that there was a Battle for Australia in the Second World War. The Journal expected that Peter Stanley’s article would spark controversy and invited responses. We publish Bob Wurth’s article in that spirit of fairness and balance. We consider this debate now closed.

Since the last edition the following soldiers of the Australian Army have been killed in action: Lieutenant Michael Fussell, Private Gregory Sher, Corporal Matthew Hopkins and Sergeant Brett Till. To their families and loved one we extend our sincere condolences and those of all their mates in the Australian Army.
Crossfire

Know Thy Enemy & Thyself

Understanding the Gravity of our Japanese Threat

Bob Wurth

The wording might have changed a little since Chinese general Sun Tzu brushed ‘The Art of War’ in circa sixth century BC, but the meaning today is clear enough:

Know thy enemy and know thyself, find naught in fear for 100 battles. Know thyself but not thy enemy, find level of loss and victory. Know thy enemy but not thyself, wallow in defeat every time.¹

If you argue that an enemy never harboured desires for your soil, one would think that, had you the opportunity, you would go to the sources of the former enemy to verify your contention. Regrettably some of our historians have not, nor indeed spent time in Japan engaging in research. In reality, many Australians even today know precious little of the behind-the-scenes motivations and machinations of our former enemy and the thinking of that country’s militaristic leaders towards us, especially in those heady and crucial days of early 1942, when Japan seemed unstoppable and Australia’s future was being actively debated.

That Australians promulgate and accept the theory that an invasion threat was minute or even that it did not exist, and thus a Battle for Australia commemoration has no validity, might well demonstrate that on Sun Tzu’s score, apart from our lack of knowledge about Japan’s intentions, we also know little of ourselves. Sun Tzu
might wince at the consequences for a nation wallowing in such ignorance. If our wartime history is to be reflected accurately, today’s Australians need to study the mind and motivation of the former enemy just as thoroughly as did the Australian generals in the war of 1941–45.

How different things are today in our relationship with Japan; with our close economic ties, Australia now has a strategic defence partnership with Japan based on high ideals, including democratic values, a commitment to human rights, freedom and the rule of law, and attributes such as mutual respect, trust and deep friendship, to quote the bilateral agreement.

In the defence partnership signed in March 2007 by the previous prime ministers of both countries and reinforced by the new governments of Japan and Australia, the two nations agree to ‘deepen and expand’ bilateral cooperation in the areas of security and defence cooperation. This includes cooperation on counterterrorism and seeks, for instance, a peaceful resolution of issues related to North Korea. But as Australia’s Minister for Defence, Joel Fitzgibbon, points out, the agreement ‘is not a treaty and does not create a mutual expectation of military support in times of strategic challenge or crisis’. Nevertheless, the Australia Defence Forum is working to deepen practical cooperation with the Japan Self Defense Force in areas including unit-to-unit exchanges and combined exercising and training, according to the minister.

While the defence of the two nations moves forward in positive, albeit cautious and limited collaboration, it is ironic that important aspects of our knowledge about the intentions of the former enemy between 1941 and 1945 and their full impact are blurred and misunderstood today. More alarmingly, this lack of reliable knowledge from our wartime past by those who should know better and the expression of questionable theories designed to fit snugly into a modern-day academic hypothesis, such as Australians today being indoctrinated by wartime and pre-war propaganda, means that our future generations are being taught inaccurate and subjective history.

This lack of knowledge is preventable and unnecessary, for there is abundant and compelling evidence on the gravity of Japan’s threat to Australia in 1942 and related subjects available for any researcher’s seeking, especially in Japan. Primary evidence includes Japan’s official war history series, Senshi Sosho, in its 102 volumes from the National Institute of Defense Studies (NIDS) in Tokyo, which is the main policy research arm of the Ministry of Defense. (The Australian War Memorial has translated one segment of one volume of Senshi Sosho in relation to Australia. The complete 102 volumes in Japanese sit on the shelves of the National Library of Australia in Canberra.)

Primary evidence on the Japanese threat also is available in Japan and elsewhere in recorded interviews and interrogations of surviving Imperial Army and Imperial
Navy officers, in their memoirs, diaries and books, and in the minutes of meetings actually discussing the invasion of Australia. One of Senshi Sosho’s senior contributors was Sadatoshi Tomioka, the former captain and later rear admiral, who as a war planner in the Imperial Navy’s General Staff, was one of the leading advocates of an invasion of Australia in 1942.

Tomioka also wrote on the Australia issue in his Kaisen to shusen: Hito to kiko to keikaku (The opening and closing of the Pacific war: the people, the mechanisms and the planning):

The enemy had to be beaten and victory won. In order to win, the enemy had to be denied the use of Australia as a base, no matter what. As long as the enemy had no foothold there, Australia could be taken.

But if within the next two years the United States concentrated rapidly on aircraft production and made full use of Australia, Japan would never be able to resist the material onslaught which would follow.  

Western countries, including the United States, have valuable resources on the subject too. Many interviews with Tomioka are available through the Papers of Gordon W Prange at the University of Maryland Libraries and other material is in the Prange Collection at the University of Pittsburgh.

The editorial in the Australian Army Journal, Winter 2007, correctly predicted that the oration/essay by Dr Peter Stanley, ‘Was there a Battle for Australia?’ would be controversial. Stanley’s submission was a republication of the Australian War Memorial’s Anniversary oration, delivered on the eve of Remembrance Day before an invited audience on 10 November 2006. Putting aside the appropriateness or otherwise of using a Remembrance Day eve oration to attack one’s critics, it should be noted that at the time of his address Stanley was the principal historian of the Australian War Memorial (AWM), a public employer which allowed him, to quote the AWM, ‘the intellectual freedom to research and publish his views, as you would expect by virtue of his position then at the Memorial.’

His words were controversial not so much because they challenged the contentious idea of combining various battles or campaigns into one composite ‘Battle for Australia’, and commemorating it on a set day, but more so because they promoted what Stanley described in his work as his ‘internationalist’ stance on Australia’s involvement in the Second World War. This is a contentious stance which since May 2002 has challenged thoughts about the very basis of Japan’s aims and motives in the war as that nation looked southward to the Australian continent.

Stanley argues in the Army Journal that proponents of the ‘Battle for Australia’ want to believe that Australia was under threat and it is this need that drives them to build an emotional saga around the Japanese menace and how Australian Servicemen prevented the cataclysm:
Those who advance this idea argue that from the outbreak of war with Japan Australia was the objective of the Japanese advance, and that 1942 saw a series of crucial campaigns that resulted in the defeat of this thrust. In some versions of the battle it is seen as continuing up to the Japanese surrender.

The point of the Pacific war, they imply, was that Australia was in danger of attack or conquest, and that the significance of the campaigns in the south-west Pacific was that they prevented such a calamity. 5

Stanley and other like-minded ‘internationalists’ have long preferred to see Australia’s Second World War contribution in the context of a global war, and ‘an international coalition against inter-continental enemies’ in an alliance in which Australia played as much a part as any and any other view is parochial. This idea was expounded rather forcefully by Stanley in the Griffith Review in 2005 when he wrote:

Why is it that stories of attack, invasion and incursion are so persistent? It seems to me that Australians want to believe that they were part of a war, that the war came close; that it mattered. Why can’t we as a nation accept that the war the Allies fought was decided far from Australia—in North Africa, north-west Europe and above all on the steppes of European Russia?

Why do we appear to want to believe that Australia really was threatened with invasion, that it was attacked; even that Japanese commandoes really did want to land on its shores? Set against the prosaic reality, the desire is poignant and rather pathetic.

He castigated with a broad brush those who might differ:

In the eyes of nationalist historians, such as David Day, and popular writers who follow them, such as journalists Paul Ham and Peter FitzSimons, Australia faced an actual threat of invasion, a danger dispelled by a combination of a resolute Curtin in Canberra and heroic diggers in Papua. 6

Even more colourful epitaphs, including ‘revisionist veterans’ and ‘nationalist partisans’ have been employed. Stanley sees the Battle for Australia movement and its supporters as an example of public emotionalism and nationalism, as he stated in the Australian Army Journal: ‘It promotes relatively unimportant events close to Australia over important events far away, purely on rather simplistic calculus of proximity. It has become the new orthodoxy in Australian military history. ’ 7

This is where feathers can become ruffled. Tell any old Digger, who fought for instance at Kokoda or Milne Bay, that their campaign was a ‘relatively unimportant event’ and watch the reaction. Having the author of such words bearing the title of the principal historian of the Australian War Memorial, as they have, and the words become even more acerbic.
Stanley has documented the sometimes vehement criticism he gets to some of his published views, including hate mail, some from Australians including ex-Servicemen or their families: ‘Some challenged my citizenship and patriotism. I was sorry to receive letters accusing me of denigrating the service and sacrifice of those who fought.’ But Stanley points out, as he did in his oration and in the *Australian Army Journal*, that he is ‘determined that the sacrifices and the achievements’ of the Second World War, and especially those of Australia, should never be forgotten. 8

From 2002 onwards, there have been four pillars to this ‘internationalist’ philosophy expounded by Stanley and a number of his supporting academics. These four pillars, as I call them, form the foundation for opposition to the concept of the Battle for Australia. As we shall see, the pillars over recent years began a seismic shift and at least one has all but collapsed. But essentially the tone of the debate has been: ‘If there was never a threat of invasion, how could there have been a Battle for Australia.’ Bob Reece, professor in history, Murdoch University, has encapsulated this theory:

In short, the [Imperial] navy did have an invasion plan, but it was rejected at the top command level.

The popular perception in Australia in early 1942 that an invasion was imminent served to end what had been widespread apathy towards the war and allowed General Douglas MacArthur (a consummate politician) to big-note himself. To enshrine this mistaken and manipulated perception in a Battle for Australia commemoration is to deny history and usher in a new kind of unthinking, populist nationalism. 9

The changing words to outline the theory have been expressed in a variety of hues. ‘No historian of standing believes the Japanese had a plan to invade Australia, there is not a skerrick of evidence’, Stanley lectured *The Australian* newspaper’s Higher Education section in an interview. 10

The four pillars to this academic hypothesis can thus be summarised:
1. Australia did not face an invasion threat from Japan.
2. Discussion of an invasion of Australia in Japan was an activity, quickly dismissed, by a few middle-ranking naval officers.
3. Australia’s defences in 1942 were not weak.
4. Australia’s wartime leader John Curtin, in an effort to motivate the Australian public’s war effort, resorted to lies about the threat of invasion and his deception skewed Australian thinking on the matter.

Stanley first delivered a controversial paper, ‘He’s coming south (not): the invasion that wasn’t’ when addressing the Australian War Memorial’s ‘Remembering 1942’ history conference on 31 May 2002. The media took to the comments with gusto. *The Age* the following day headlined the story ‘Japanese invasion a myth: historian’ and journalist Mark Forbes ventured that ‘… somebody forgot to tell the Japanese’ about the invasion of Australia.
PILLAR 1. NO INVASION THREAT FROM JAPAN

At the ‘Remembering 2002’ conference Stanley said it was common for Australians to assume that the invasion threat was real:

So the popular perception is that Japan planned to invade Australia, would have had not the battle for Papua been won, and that the man responsible was the great war leader John Curtin. This paper takes issue with that perception.

He declared that there was no invasion danger:

An actual danger of invasion had never existed and the likelihood diminished through 1942 as Allied victories eroded Japan’s offensive capability. 11

Few who have studied the subject would argue that orders for the invasion of Australia were ever issued. Simply, they were not. However, there is strong evidence to indicate that in the first three months of 1942, when Japan went from victory to victory, proposals to invade Australia were very actively considered by the Imperial Navy at a senior level. Indeed there were a variety of serious proposals coming from different naval sources. Both the Combined Fleet at Hashirajima and Naval General Staff in Tokyo had their invasion plans, which at the very least can be described as a real and significant threat. Further, an influential navy, which had the Pearl Harbor success under its belt, repeatedly and frequently pressured the Imperial Army, sometimes in heated debate, to become involved in its schemes for the invasion of Australia and in its early stages even had some army support.

Some of the Imperial Navy officers who supported or proposed the invasion of Australia at some stage in 1942 include: the commander in chief of the Combined Fleet, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto; his chief of staff, Admiral Matome Ugaki; the commander-in-chief of Japan’s second fleet who led the southern invasion operations including the invasion of Malaya, Admiral Nobutake Kondo; the commander of the Japanese fourth fleet, Admiral Shigeyoshi Inoue; the commander of the second carrier division, Admiral Tamon Yamaguchi; the head of the bureau of naval affairs within Naval General Staff, Admiral Takasumi Oka; and many powerful naval war planners, including the aforementioned chief of the operations section of Naval General Staff, Baron Captain (later Rear Admiral) Sadatoshi Tomioka.

Yamamoto told Ugaki, according to the Japanese war history series Senshi Sosho, that he had three targets in mind: India, Australia and Hawaii. 12 Of the three Yamamoto counted Hawaii as the most important, because of the strategic threat the Pacific base and its as yet untouched carrier fleet. Australia was included in Yamamoto’s initial invasion plans, according to John J Stephan, because the commander-in-chief wanted a bold strategy which he called ‘happo yabure’, or ‘strike on all sides’. 13
After much study Ugaki, in late January and early February, came down in favour of capturing Australia’s north, among other landings. Ugaki’s operational planners in Combined Fleet embraced invading northern Australia, along with other strategic points. They submitted to Navy General Staff a list of priorities which included the comment: ‘Port Darwin must be taken’.¹⁴

Naval General Staff soon agreed with Yamamoto’s Combined Fleet. Admiral Nobutake Kondo, commander of the attack force on Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, was a former chief of staff of the Combined Fleet. He prepared a proposal for Yamamoto. Kondo saw Japan as having two planning options: one was an operation to take India and the other, an operation to capture Australia: ‘The Australia operation … could be regarded as part of our main operation against America and also would have a rich chance of taking hold of American task forces’.¹⁵

Vice Admiral Shigeyoshi Inoue, a moderate, and his staff officers aboard the cruiser Kashima, called for Japanese expansion in the Solomon Islands–New Guinea area, as the necessary first steps required for landings on the Australian mainland. Historian Hedley Willmott recorded Admiral Inoue’s support for the invasion plans of Baron Sadatoshi Tomioka: ‘Inoue would dearly have loved it if Japan secured the eastern seaboard of Australia, since that would have removed the most serious threats to his position.’¹⁶

Another admiral’s plan came to light during table manoeuvres aboard Yamamoto’s flagship, the Yamato, anchored on the Inland Sea. It came from a close confidant of Yamamoto, Rear Admiral Tamon Yamaguchi. Between 20–23 February Yamaguchi distributed copies of a blueprint invasion plan proposing widespread invasions across the Indian and Pacific oceans starting from May 1942. There would be an invasion of Ceylon in May. During June and July 1942 landings would be made on Fiji, Samoa, New Caledonia, New Zealand and northern Australia.

But Yamamoto now was becoming interested in a new plan to take the atolls of Midway to draw out the US Pacific fleet for a decisive battle. Midway would be a precursor to an invasion of Hawaii and, if successful, would have meant follow-up invasions of Australia, New Zealand and adjacent islands.

General Tomoyuki Yamashita, who had captured Singapore, was imprisoned near Manila awaiting trial as a war criminal in 1945, when he spoke of his wartime plans for invading Australia. It was practically identical to his successful campaign in Malaya, according to author John Deane Potter who interviewed him. Yamashita said he intended to land on each side of the major Australian cities and cut them off, first making a series of dummy landings to draw off the ‘pitifully few’ Australian troops:

With even Sydney and Brisbane in my hands, it would have been comparatively simple to subdue Australia. I would never visualise occupying it entirely. It was too large. With its coastline, anyone can always land there exactly as he wants.”¹⁷
Major General Akira Muto, the chief of the military affairs bureau of the Army ministry, seemed to be out of step with many of his army colleagues when he agreed that decisive action was necessary: ‘National defense spheres ought to be clearly decided; once that is done, Australia and India ought to be strategic spheres; and we should make a move when necessary.’

David Horner, professor of Australian defence history, addressed the ‘Remembering 1942’ conference in 2002 organised by the Australian War Memorial. But his remarks, seemingly then at divergence with the more controversial comments of Stanley, received little media attention. He said that without help from the United States, Australia could have done little to prevent an invasion in those first few months of 1942:

Australia’s political and military leaders were fully justified in believing that the country was under a real threat of invasion. But, unknown to the Australians, Japanese Army and Navy leaders were deep in argument about whether to invade Australia.

Horner’s statement about the gravity of the invasion threat is just one from a bevy of eminent historians, both Japanese and Western, who acknowledge that Australia was seriously threatened. Official Australian war historian Gavin Long in *The Six Years War*, published in part by the Australian War Memorial, wrote:

And soon naval leaders were advocating two more ambitious ventures: invasion of Australia and a thrust towards Hawaii. Conquest of Australia would deprive America of a well-equipped base from which to mount a counter-offensive. The army staff maintained that the Australians would bitterly resist attack on their vast country, twice the size of China, and the invasion would demand ten more divisions and 1,500,000 tons of shipping.

Stanley has spoken of his reliance on the works of British historian Hedley Willmott. Writing online in 2008 about his Japanese research, Stanley said:

I don’t pretend that my Special Subject is ‘Impractical proposals to invade Australia made by Japanese admirals early in 1942.’ I’ve relied on the more expert work of historians such as Hedley Willmott and Henry Frei, and on the advice of various colleagues all more knowledgeable about imperial Japan than me. But you don’t have to read more impractical proposals to see the way events occurred.

So let us firstly look at what Hedley Willmott wrote in *The Barrier and the Javelin* to which Stanley has referred. Willmott said:

In studying the Australia operation the Japanese had to consider the occupation of either northern Australia or the whole continent. Both courses strongly recommended themselves to the Plans Division of the Naval General Staff. The Australia option was in many ways the brainchild of the division’s commanding officer, Captain Sadatoshi Tomioka … His was one of the finest brains in the Imperial Navy, and his idea of an attack
on Australia was not as incredible as it might first appear. Both in terms of inhabited area and population the country was (and is) extremely small. Tomioka’s designs on Australia enjoyed support from [Vice Admiral Shigeyoshi] Inoue, commander of the fourth fleet, and from his chief of staff, Rear Admiral Shikazo Yano.22

Willmott records that between January and early April 1942, the Japanese High Command faced a delicate and awkward time in deciding what to do next, but opposition from the Imperial Army killed off the navy’s invasion of Australia plan. But Willmott notes that the plan was not killed off quickly or entirely. He records that an invasion of Australia was even resurrected by the navy in July 1942, surprisingly after the Coral Sea and Midway battles. Willmott accurately records the determination of Naval General Staff, in particular, to demand an Australian invasion. The reader might be surprised at a navy that could still think about an invasion of Australia after those two epic battles; but that is a logical thought about a totally illogical navy.

Stanley on 3 September 2008 likewise named Henri Frei as one of the experts on whom he has relied concerning Australia. Frei, a Swiss scholar, was one of the first to write at length on the invasion issue, relying strongly on Japanese documentation, especially the war history Senshi Sosho. Frei’s work, Japan’s Southward Advance and Australia, is encapsulated by Stanley in his recent book:

Henry Frei summarised the debate, noting, ‘about the only thing all three [sic] services could agree to with regard to Australia was the destruction of Darwin—ironically, because it had nothing to do with an invasion’.

Stanley then quotes Frei as writing that by early March 1942, the Japanese had produced an ill-fitting compromise:

Invasion of Australia—and then only a ‘temporary invasion of Port Darwin’—was relegated to a ‘future option’. As Henry Frei wrote, ‘in reality, this meant little more than ‘never’.’ 23

In fact, it meant ‘never’ for the army, but certainly not the navy. The chances of an Australian invasion by the end of March 1942 indeed were rapidly diminishing. In relation to Australia and India, the army allowed inclusion in the text of a proposal on 13 March 1942 to Emperor Hirohito of a ‘temporary invasion of Darwin’ as ‘a future option to demonstrate positive warfare’. It was a significant concession, even if it implied the possibility of a very limited assault on a small part of Australia. Bitter debate had taken place about Australia between the two services. The navy eventually appeared to accept the army’s reasoning, but in reality the navy merely deferred its desire to invade Australia. As the head of the operations section of the Army Department, Colonel Takushiro Hattori noted in one of his memoirs: ‘… the Navy did not abandon its stand in subsequent war guidance, and attempted to maintain the offensives in its war operations.’ 24
The army's chief of staff General Hajime Sugiyama, who took minutes of planning meetings in March 1942, summarised the arguments:

Put simply, the Navy argued for an aggressive offensive that included attacking Australia, whereas the Army outright opposed attacking Australia, stating that the focus ought to be on firmly establishing the situation so that Japan will be unbeatable in the long-term. 25

General Sugiyama when referring to ‘attacking Australia’ was in fact speaking about invasion because at the time of writing, Darwin was already being bombed from the air.

In his book *Invading Australia*, Stanley contends: ‘Again, it is important for Australians not to imagine that imperial Headquarters argued for weeks just over Australia’s fate.’ Certainly, the record shows that other options also were being debated. But it is ill-advised to dismiss lightly the level, strength and length of the debate on Australia and the Imperial Navy’s determination to see the invasion happen. To suggest that at this time Australia was not seriously threatened is to deny the factual evidence.

Henry Frei rightly concludes that Imperial Army opposition was such as to effectively block the navy’s proposals to invade Australia. But he did not under-estimate the gravity of the threat. The northern Australian coast with its submarine and air bases was viewed as a strategic liability that could involve Japan in a war of exhaustion. Thus, Frei wrote, the Navy General Staff sought as early as early December to press for control over all of Australia as a major ‘stage two’ war objective:

This would be achieved by invading the strategically most important points on the northern and north eastern coasts of Australia. Japan would there annihilate the enemy’s maritime forces, cut the American-Australian line of communication, and thereby deal the entire Australian nation a thorough blow.

The Navy General Staff reckoned that this could be done with very little expenditure of men and war material. After all, Australia had only a small population and its bases on the north coast were isolated outposts facing the sea, with desert up to their backdoors.

At the same time denying the United States access to Australian bases was not the only objective. Isolating the vast continent from the British Commonwealth would also hasten Britain’s downfall. 26

Thus Frei, like Willmott, can hardly be quoted as a historian who dismissed a Japanese invasion threat.

Hiromi Tanaka is a professor of history at the National Defense Academy at Yokosuka, Tokyo Bay. The academy trains young men and women to become officers of the Self-Defense Forces. When I spoke with him in August 2007, Professor Tanaka had not a shadow of doubt about the gravity of the threat to Australia:
... there were so many high ranking officers, including those in the Navy General Staff, who were arguing about attacking Australia. Also in the Combined Fleet. Arguing about attacking and invading Australia. It wasn't just the initiative of junior officers involved in this talk.

It was official conversation because the Navy officially submitted it to the Army. The Navy military orders [planning] section officers visited the Army strategic section. They were always visiting the Army pushing this point of view between February and March 1942 about invading Australia.

Professor Tanaka, a fellow of the Japan–Australia Research Project at the Australian War Memorial, emphasised the illogicality of the Imperial Navy at a time when traditional naval thinking and strategies had been all but abandoned:

You must understand that the Imperial Japanese Navy was such an irresponsible organisation; they never wanted to take responsibility. Coming to Australia and occupying one small beach was considered a Navy responsibility, but after the takeover, they would have withdrawn, and left the rest to the Army, saying the rest was an Army responsibility …

Their attitude was, we would land the troops to take part in the invasion of Australia and then they would leave it all to the Army to do all the work. The reason they could think about this invasion was that they didn't have to think realistically.²⁷

There are numerous references in Senshi Sosho to the proposed invasion of Australia, including this summary in one volume:

The navy’s argument was that establishing a defensive posture was disadvantage to the execution of long-term strategies … The reasons for the army’s opposition to this policy were that the invasion of Australia was expected to require 12 army divisions, in addition to transport shipping requirements. Reflecting on the bitter experience of the China Incident, the chances were high that an invasion would extend over the whole of the Australia content.²⁸

Prime Minister Hideki Tojo is often quoted, in his last days, as saying Japan had no intention of invading Australia. Prince Naruhiko Higashikuni, an uncle to Empress Nagako, was commander of Defense Command and a member of the Supreme War Council.

In his diary, Higashikuni said he told Tojo after the initial successes that he should start peace overtures with Britain and the United States. According to Higashikuni, Tojo was defiant, replying: ‘I think we will have few problems occupying not only Java and Sumatra but also Australia if things go on like this. We shouldn’t think about peace at this time.’²⁹

Turning to the remaining three pillars of Stanley’s hypothesis:
PILLAR 2. INVASION OF AUSTRALIA: A FEW MIDDLE-RANKING OFFICERS

In his address at ‘Remembering 1942’, Stanley dismissed a Japanese invasion of Australia with the words:

In the euphoria of victory early in 1942 some visionary middle-ranking naval staff officers in Tokyo proposed that Japan should go further. In February and March they proposed that Australia should be invaded … The plans got no further than some acrimonious discussions.30

As we have seen, the proponents were neither restricted to middle-rankers nor naval staff officers in Tokyo. They included influential admirals, including those in Combined Fleet, and some generals. Stanley was following a flawed line expounded by the ‘magisterial’ Frei, who simply got it wrong, about the middle-rankers. Stanley, in his 2008 book, has dropped the dismissive ‘middle-ranking’ tag.31

PILLAR 3. AUSTRALIA’S DEFENCES WERE NOT WEAK IN 1942

As part of the process of downplaying the threat of invasion, while subscribing to Churchill’s view that Curtin had been ‘panicky’ about invasion, Stanley has maintained that Australia in 1942 could have defended herself:

There is an exaggerated perception these days that Australia’s defences were ‘weak’: ‘Australia stood utterly defenceless’, writes Brian McKinley. But even before the valorising of Kokoda began, the official historians thought the value of the Militia had been ‘written down’.32

The contention that Australia was not weak in 1942, especially at the outbreak of war, is unsustainable. Willmott is among dozens of experts who differ with Stanley: ‘Both dominions [Australia and New Zealand] were desperately weak, as their attempts to reinforce their various garrisons and islands showed only too well.’33

Stanley contends that Australia’s Army commander-in-chief, General Thomas Blamey, ‘remained confident’ of holding the Japanese. In fact, Blamey later wrote:

Had the Japanese wished to seize it, Western Australia, with its vast potential wealth, might have fallen an easy prey to them in 1942. While it would have extended their commitment to a tremendous degree, it would have given them great advantages. At that time it could probably have been captured and controlled by a force no greater than that used to capture Malaya.34

The cream of Australia’s armed forces was overseas in the first months of the war. Prime Minister John Curtin, on a trip home to Perth, was appalled to be told that
troops were drilling with broomsticks, as he wrote to Army minister Frank Forde: ‘In other words it was contended that a large proportion of the troops would not possess a weapon with which to fight or defend themselves.’

Forde responded that there was a national shortage of 18,000 rifles, but reconditioned First World War rifles would soon be available.35

**PILLAR 4. CURTIN DECEIVED AUSTRALIA ABOUT THE JAPANESE THREAT**

Stanley began his criticism of wartime Prime Minister John Curtin at the ‘Remembering 1942’ history conference in 2002. The criticism lasted until 2008, when it underwent a sea change. Stanley initially spoke of Curtin lying to the public:

… Curtin did not save Australia from any real threat. Instead, one of the lasting legacies of his whipping up of the fear of invasion has been a persistent heritage of bogus invasion stories.

He also spoke of Curtin’s alleged deception:

I’m arguing that there was in fact no invasion plan, that the Curtin Government exaggerated the threat, and that the enduring consequences of the reality of its deception was to skew our understanding of the reality of the invasion crisis of 1942.

Stanley at the same time castigated Australian historians who since the war had ‘misunderstood the crisis’ and/or ‘accepted Curtin’s exaggerations’.36

Indeed, it was Stanley, by his own frank admission, who got it wrong. In September 2008, Stanley ended this particular line of criticism of Curtin’s ‘bogus stories’ and ‘deception’ while speaking on ABC Radio:

I am at a disagreement with myself. In 2002 I was arguing that Curtin was motivating the people by gingering them up about a possibility that there was an invasion and that that was quite a deliberate manipulation. And I have to say that I have changed my mind on that.

In the research for this book over the last couple of years, I gained a deeper appreciation and a greater respect for John Curtin. And I now believe that he was absolutely sincere. Deluded perhaps, but sincere and he wasn’t manipulating at all.37

To borrow and twist an American nautical quote: Scratch one pillar!

Now that Australia and Japan are on perhaps the best defence terms since the end of the war, it would be timely if a major effort is made by Australia to devote resources to a thorough and detailed study of the extent and nature of the Japanese menace to Australia, especially in that key period of 1942. During four research
visits to Japan, using my own resources, I have been able to present a summary of
the strong evidence in my most recent book, *1942, Australia's Greatest Peril*, but
much more could be done.

The few historians insisting that the Japanese invasion threat to Australia in early
1942 was merely a ‘myth’ and the product of wartime Australian fears of Japan must
raise the debate by research, specifically into Japanese sources.

The Australian War Memorial has declined my suggestion that it sponsor a major
seminar on the invasion issue where historians and others, particularly Japanese,
could put a variety of viewpoints, contributing to a balanced and inclusive discus-
sion fostered by the AWM. The Memorial had not held a conference or seminar
on the broad issue since June 2002, and thus the view that had been emanating from
the AWM was primarily an expression of only one side of the issue. The teaching of
accurate Australian military history has taken a nasty beating that does not auger
well for the comprehension of future generations. At the very least this is an area of
ongoing study ripe for Australian Government assistance.

The director of the AWM, S N Gower, said in a letter:

> We of course encourage and foster research and debate on a wide range of issues in Australian
> military history. The issues you comment upon [the invasion threat to Australia] have been
> thoroughly canvassed in the Australian official histories and in numerous publications by
> specialist historians since the 1980s. There is no real controversy surrounding them, and
> indeed they aroused little public or media interest when they were discussed at previous
> conferences at the Memorial and the Australian National University.

So was there a Battle for Australia? Taken as a composite whole, the combined
events in the first half of 1942 indicate that there certainly was. But does it matter?
Surely Australians should feel free to commemorate the sacrifice in any way they
please without being labelled ‘parochial nationalists’ or with other slurs.

**ENDNOTES**

2 Japan–Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation signed in Tokyo on
13 March 2007 by Prime Ministers Shinzo Abe and John Howard, and statement to
B Wurth by the Minister for Defence, Joel Fitzgibbon, 7 November 2008.
3 Sadatoshi Tomioka, *Kaisen to shusen: Hito to kiko to keikaku*, (The opening and closing
of the war: the people, the mechanism, and the planning), Mainichi Shinbunsha, Tokyo,
4 ‘Intellectual freedom’, Letter from S N Gower, Director of the Australian War Memorial,
Stanley, ‘What is the Battle for Australia?’
Willmott, The Barrier and the Javelin, pp. 40–43.


27 Boei-cho (ed.), ‘Consequences of success in the early stages of the operation’ in *Senshi Sosho*, Pacific area army operations (1), Port Moresby–Guadalcanal first campaigns.

28 Ibid.

29 Naruhiko Higashikuni, *Ichi-kozoku no Senso Nikki (War Diary by an Imperial Family Member)*, Nihoa Shuhosha, Tokyo, 1957, p. 106.

30 Stanley address at ‘Remembering 1942’.


35 Curtin to Forde on rifles, 3 February 1942, NAA A367, M1416, 46.

36 Stanley at ‘Remembering 1942’.

37 Dr Peter Stanley on Richard Glover’s program, 702 ABC Sydney, 5 September 2008.

38 Director, Australian War Memorial, SN Gower to B Wurth, dated 23 October 2008, in reply to Wurth’s letter of 9 October 2008; and later Gower letter to Wurth dated 17 November 2008, in response to Wurth’s letter of 5 November 2008. Gower on 17 November 2008 said in part: ‘Notwithstanding, I must say that I am not persuaded to hold the conference that you seek, nor do I wish to respond to your comments as to my views, as my previous letter set out all I wish to say.’


**THE AUTHOR**

Bob Wurth is the author of three books relating to the Asia region, the latest being ‘1942, Australia’s greatest peril’, and will publish a fourth book on the region next year. He is the 2009 Visiting Scholar to the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, Perth, and a 2009 Fellow to the Australian Prime Ministers Centre, Canberra.
CURRENT OPERATIONS

TAKING TACTICS FROM THE TALIBAN

TACTICAL PRINCIPLES FOR COMMANDERS*

MAJOR MICHAEL BASSINGTHWAIGHTE

ABSTRACT

This article lays down the author's experiences commanding RTF-3's Security Task Group in Afghanistan during 2007 and 2008. From a significant study of the Mujahideen and Taliban prior to his deployment, the author was able to determine eleven tactical principles that guided the employment of his forces, and they are provided in this article for the benefit of future commanders. The author points out that his eleven principles, and his experience of employing them, clearly proved the enduring wisdom of the Australian Army’s doctrine and demonstrated that the collective wisdom it represents is an asset that all officers should draw upon when thinking about how to employ their own forces in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

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It is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperilled in a hundred battles; if you do not know your enemies but do know yourself, you will win one and lose one; if you do not know your enemies nor yourself, you will be imperilled in every single battle.

Sun Tsu (400–320 BC)

INTRODUCTION

In October 2007, Reconstruction Task Force 3 (RTF-3) deployed to southern Afghanistan; its mission was to conduct protected reconstruction operations in Uruzgan province as part of the ongoing struggle to assist local Afghans to achieve some degree of self reliance. RTF-3 was a versatile mix, comprising a conglomerate of elements from the 3rd Combat Engineer Regiment, the 2nd and 6th Battalions of The Royal Australian Regiment, the 2nd/14th Light Horse Regiment (QMI), the 4th Field Regiment, and other units from the broad spectrum of the Australian Defence Force.

Uruzgan is one of Afghanistan’s thirty-four provinces and lies in the heart of that rugged and strife-torn land. The province is culturally and tribally linked to Kandahar and thus often considered part of southern rather than central Afghanistan. Uruzgan is Taliban country, regarded, like the Helmand and Kandahar regions, as the birthplace of the insurgency. The Taliban fighters are overwhelmingly ethnic Pashtuns—predominantly Durrani Pashtuns. Their leader, Mullah Omar, was born in Singesar village in Uruzgan.

Uruzgan province lies at the edge of the fabled Hindu Kush and features three distinct types of terrain. Bare rocky peaks that tower over the valleys, known colloquially by the soldiers on the ground as the ‘mountains’, are inaccessible to most vehicles, but offer excellent vantage points for observation and fire by dismounted troops. The ‘dascht’ is an arid band of desert that lies between the rocky peaks and the area known as the ‘green zone’ and is ideally suited to mounted manoeuvre, boasting clear fields of fire. The ‘green zone’ is the irrigated agricultural area that sits astride the major permanent water courses where the vast majority of the population lives in compounds called ‘qualas’. This is highly complex urban and rural terrain characterised by close vegetation, similar, in some areas, to primary jungle. This is a terrain that offers little opportunity for mounted manoeuvre and promises only the prolonged agony of street fighting and torrid close country combat.

I was deployed as the Officer Commanding the Security Task Group which formed Combat Team (CT) Spear, part of RTF-3. In the lead-up to my deployment with its endless briefings and conferences, I snatched some valuable time to read into...
Taking Tactics From The Taliban

the lengthy and turgid history of conflict in Afghanistan. What drew my attention were the favoured tactics, techniques and procedures of the Afghan insurgents and resistance fighters: the Mujahideen and the Taliban. My underlying motive was to formulate a set of my own tactical principles—my version of their tactics, techniques and procedures—to guide my combat team in its fight against these bands of guerrillas. My objective was to use the Taliban’s own tactics to defeat them.

This article describes those general principles uncovered in my research that established the foundation for those tactical operating principles that I used during my deployment with CT Spear. My aim was twofold: to derive tactical principles based on this general—and proven—foundation and to develop a set of tactical principles to counter the primary Taliban tactics used to fight my combat team. I have not described my own principles in isolation, but have used supporting vignettes to explain their employment and to build an accurate picture of the campaign scenario as it unfolded. Perhaps my most significant discovery was that my principles, derived as they were from Coalition partners’ lessons learnt, historical and academic sources, consistently confirmed the principles expressed in the Australian Army’s own doctrine—the documented product of the experiences of my predecessors.

THE PRINCIPLES

I read extensively on the fighting tactics of the Mujahideen and Taliban prior to my deployment and made copious notes. I then refined my notes, listing what I considered to be the main principles in my notebook. I reviewed these principles constantly as my deployment progressed, matching them with available intelligence and my combat team’s experiences in an attempt to remain ahead of our opponent. The majority of these principles were proven time and again over the duration of the operation either through our experiences or those of other Coalition forces. The first set of principles relates specifically to the Mujahideen war of resistance against the Soviet invasion of 1979:4

- During the Soviet occupation, insurgents would wait for armoured columns to be strung out in single file and attack from the flanks.5 Another frequently used resistance tactic was to allow a Soviet column to enter a valley along a single track and then destroy the last vehicle thus trapping the whole column.
- Soviet motorised infantry were reluctant to leave their vehicles and were thus unable to dominate the little terrain suitable for mechanised forces on the high ground.6

My objective was to use the Taliban’s own tactics to defeat them.
Restricting Soviet forces to static bases provided resistance forces enormous freedom of movement, particularly through the winter months. The Khost and Urgun garrisons in Paktia province were besieged throughout the winter of 1982/83.

Resistance in Afghanistan was quite different to that of the Viet Cong in Vietnam. While the different Afghan factions pursued the same goal, there was very little central control, unlike in Vietnam where the North Vietnamese government controlled the campaign plan. The Mujahideen combined briefly on occasion to besiege and assault isolated forts.

The Mujahideen operated in groups of thirty to forty men with some semblance of order. Within their ranks were small, full-time hard core groups used consistently for both offensive and defensive duties. They favoured guerrilla tactics such as setting ambushes near bridges or defiles, disrupting roads and destroying bridges, and opening fire from higher ground to take advantage of the limited elevation of some Soviet weapons.

Troops in Soviet motorised formations conditioned to riding and fighting in their armoured vehicles were forced to leave their vehicles and fight on foot.

One particularly successful Mujahideen tactic involved the use of a bait box to cause a casualty. The helicopter landing zones in the immediate vicinity would then be mined, often with an improvised explosive device (IED), or ambushed to target the casualty evacuation helicopter.

The Mujahideen would use similar tactics and the same ambush sites months later, particularly if replacement units were repeating previous mistakes.

Mujahideen forces routinely used darkness to conceal their approach to and departure from the target area.

I drew a number of general principles from other sources, including the US Center for Army Lessons Learnt which documented many of the tough lessons learned by US forces in Afghanistan since the early days of the fight against the Taliban in 2001:

Anti-coalition militia (ACM) forces are adept at setting ambushes to intercept reaction forces responding to shelling attacks on bases and other fixed establishments.

ACM forces typically respond with immediate mortar fire, their primary fire support weapon.

Control of high elevations is key to ACM defensive positions.

My research then produced a number of general principles that had influenced previous campaigns and that I considered retained their currency in today’s fight against the Taliban:

The limited number of access roads and their appalling condition makes it difficult to concentrate conventional motorised/mechanised forces. Valleys are narrow and deprive mechanised forces of the ability to manoeuvre.
Taking Tactics From The Taliban

Afghans are well aware of psychological and information operations campaigns and are easily alienated if promised action is not delivered.16
Individual Afghans tend to change sides at whim.17
Most convoy ambushes occur on return trips.18
Helicopter (or, more recently, uninhabited aerial vehicle) support is crucial in preventing ambushes.19
The Afghanistan campaign is very much a platoon leaders’ war of finding and closing with small, indigenous forces which will only stand and fight when the terrain and circumstances are favourable.20

COUNTERING TALIBAN TACTICS: CT SPEAR TACTICAL OPERATING PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

From the general principles I noted during my research, I derived my own set of eleven tactical operating principles for use by CT Spear. Some of these were simply a matter of commonsense, but I believed that these needed to be reinforced during planning, orders groups and addresses to ensure that the combat team remained focused. These principles shaped the way that CT Spear responded to Taliban tactics during the period of our deployment.

My first—and perhaps primary—tactical operating principle involved the time-honoured practice of maintaining constant pressure through patrolling in depth.21 Australian forces have established a reputation for patrolling the ‘green zone’ in strength and reacting aggressively when attacked—a reputation built on the actions of the Special Operations Task Group and RTF-2 and reinforced by CT Spear. Discussions with local Afghans and intelligence sources supported the anecdotal evidence that Taliban fighters prefer not to engage Australians. This is not to say that the Taliban would not attack if they saw an opportunity; however, they are far more wary of Australians than of some of the other Coalition forces or the Afghan National Security Forces. On this basis I developed my second tactical principle: action on direct fire contact must involve ‘rapid aggressive offensive manoeuvre’.22 I used aggressive patrolling to force the Taliban to be constantly reactive and pressured by our very presence.

The Taliban employed three basic tactics during our deployment: the calculated or indiscriminate use of IEDs, the ‘fire pocket’ and the ‘swarm’.23 By far the most common tactic employed by the Taliban was the asymmetric threat of the IED. These devices can assume many forms and can be carried by suicide bombers or Anti-coalition militia (ACM) forces are adept at setting ambushes to intercept reaction forces …
planted in vehicles. Most of the IEDs in Uruzgan were activated by a pressure plate, while others we encountered were detonated by remote control or command wire. Suicide bombs were largely used against troop concentrations close to built-up areas. IEDs were laid principally in the vicinity of defiles both large and small, primarily near the edges of the ‘green zone’ but also on the dasht along the approaches to the ‘green zone’ and the dascht overwatch positions that covered the ‘green zone’.

The IED threat was real and omnipresent and CT Spear countered this threat through deliberate manoeuvre using the doctrinal advance as a baseline. I developed this tactic further in my third tactical principle: combined arms grouping should be employed at the lowest level possible (usually platoon teams). As a result, the advance guard was broken down into the vanguard—consisting of a combat engineer troop minus and an infantry platoon minus—and the main guard—comprising a cavalry patrol and the CT tactical headquarters.

The main body included the CT main headquarters, any engineer construction elements and the echelon. The rearguard comprised an infantry platoon and a cavalry patrol while an uninhabited aerial vehicle screened the front and flanks. The vanguard cleared the route conducting either an ‘on occurrence’ check (essentially an engineer route check) or a ‘deliberate’ search (route search), depending on the route classification, with the main and rearguards holding key points. The main body then moved from secured location to secured location until it reached its destination, a manoeuvre supported by my fourth tactical principle: cavalry and mounted elements must conduct dismounted clearance of all track and water course junctions. Clearing and securing each location was crucial to safe forward movement.

If CT Spear was hit by an IED, all vehicles would halt. Any vehicle in a tactically exposed position would then manoeuvre to a position of tactical advantage and conduct a ‘5 and 25’ check before dismounting. My fifth tactical principle was overarching and designed to cover this contingency: vehicles must not enter the ‘green zone’ without infantry support. The manoeuvre commander would conduct a clearance, setting up a hasty defence with his infantry; at the same time, the combat engineers would establish an incident control point and clear the incident site of secondary devices. Once this was completed casualty evacuation and recovery would occur.

Having reached the area of operations, the team would employ a deliberate deception plan, creating the impression that it was resting overnight and moving on the next day, in an attempt to deceive the Taliban. This deception was consistently feasible mainly because CT Spear and other Coalition forces would routinely

Suicide bombs were largely used against troop concentrations close to built-up areas.
transit similar routes due to the restrictive nature of the terrain. This deception succeeded on almost every occasion, surprising the local Afghans during the follow-on phase when the team would approach the ‘green zone’ in the pre-dawn darkness and conduct deliberate cordon and visit operations. These differed slightly, but significantly, from the established cordon and search practice—a necessary difference given the stigma and higher command focus on the term ‘search’. As a result, we did not always ‘search’ as, at times, there was insufficient information to support a search approval from the higher levels of ISAF command. Often we would simply establish a cordon and ‘visit’ specific compounds with the aim of flushing out persons of interest, conducting a ‘mini-shura’ (consultation) or finding evidence to support a search. This practice followed my sixth principle: a small force cannot be everywhere, but it can sow uncertainty in the mind of the enemy by creating the perception that it could be anywhere at any time. While these activities did not achieve the kinetic effect of taking detainees or locating caches, their non-kinetic effects—the uncertainty they sowed—proved immensely valuable.

Once these preliminary actions had been completed, the combat team would move into an area defence posture around the worksite, taking into account the principles of key point defence, and commence a defensive routine of digging in and patrolling while the construction engineers began their work. The combat engineers were always in high demand. Initially they would conduct deliberate searches of all positions prior to occupation, then establish observed cleared routes between battle positions and ‘support by fire’ locations to enable rapid mounted manoeuvre during defensive actions. They would then assist on the construction site and provide splinter teams to the infantry patrols for cache search and demolition.

The favourite Taliban defensive tactic is the ‘fire pocket’, used to protect either a command and control node or the location of a major cache. The fire pocket itself is an engagement area on the likely avenue of approach. Qualas on the perimeter of the fire pocket will contain a one or two-man Taliban piquet with small arms. Approaching patrols will receive little or no warning as qualas do not need initial coordination and will immediately engage any force entering the fire pocket from two to three sides. The fire pocket is sometimes mistaken for a Taliban swarm, but differs in that there are fewer fighters and few if any rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) or heavy weapons.

The ‘swarm’ is the Taliban offensive tactic, usually employed against dismounted elements in the ‘green zone’ that remain static for too long (two to three hours) and defensive positions such as overwatch and patrol bases. Some warning of a swarm is
often—but not always—provided by the exodus of local Afghans from the area some ten to twenty minutes prior to the attack and an increase in intelligence warning of an offensive. During a swarm, Taliban fighters will manoeuvre on two to four flanks using fire teams of three to six men armed with medium machine-guns and RPGs who attack simultaneously. This was a tactic with which CT Spear became very familiar and tactically equipped to confront. I developed my seventh tactical principle as a response to the Taliban fire pocket and swarm: dismounted patrols must always operate within mortar range.35

CT Spear countered the Taliban's major tactics with carefully planned tactics of its own. The team defeated the fire pocket by fighting into one side while suppressing the other firing points and then rolling them up from the flank. The Taliban fighters would occasionally withdraw to alternate firing points as the team advanced and the commander would then decide how far he wanted to pursue them given his existing boundaries and task.

The team used the same tactic to counter the swarm, although a platoon was unlikely to be able to handle a larger force on its own and such a confrontation would usually turn into a fully-fledged combat team engagement. The element in contact would go into, or remain in, all round defence and allow its JTAC or JFO to call in indirect fire and close air support to buy time for the combat team commander to manoeuvre his cavalry and infantry to support. My eighth and ninth principles supported this and carried the necessary corollaries: any force must contain at least three elements that can support one another while patrolling deep in the 'green zone'.36 Dismounted sections must operate within 500 metres of one another and platoons within 1000 metres of one another, particularly if they are operating away from the protection of overwatch. Use of this tactic facilitated rapid offensive manoeuvre in support of an element in contact.37 In essence, we aimed to 'swarm the swarm', in keeping with my tenth principle: fight the most likely course of action, but be postured for the most dangerous.38

The Taliban are masters of battlefield clearance and rarely leave their dead where they fall. Effective battlefield damage assessment can occur only through immediate follow-up or careful monitoring of hospitals, health clinics and local cemeteries over the ensuing days. The Afghans like to bury their dead quickly and sporadic funerals may occur over the week following a fight as more insurgents succumb to their wounds.

CT Spear’s patrol program not only performed the usual task of denying the enemy the ability to obstruct construction, but was also aimed at effective engagement with the locals to support the information operations plan. This activity
supported my eleventh and final principle: use a ‘firm, fair and friendly’ approach with the locals to build understanding and respect. Critical support was provided by an engagement team comprising a mix of specialists from information operations, intelligence and the Provincial Reconstruction Team. The engagement team was equipped to conduct key leadership engagement and ongoing human terrain and needs-based analysis in order to provide information and also as a base for future reconstruction operations.

CONCLUSION

The majority of the principles garnered through my research were clearly in evidence over the duration of CT Spear’s deployment. The tactical operating principles that I derived from these proved highly effective in guiding CT Spear in the conduct of its mission. As a situation changed, the team adapted these principles and tactics to maintain its momentum. The effectiveness of these principles was proven time and again in the determination of the Taliban forces to actively avoid fighting the Australians. Their perception that Australians patrolled the ‘green zone’ in strength and reacted aggressively when attacked was constantly vindicated. At the same time, CT Spear developed a good rapport with the local Afghans through a firm, fair and friendly approach and delivering on promises made in good faith.

For me, the time-honoured trio of doctrine coupled with knowledge and experience worked. The doctrinal wisdom that underpins our own tactics, techniques and procedures is developed from many years of operational experience such as mine and I suspect that this is too often forgotten. My experience in Afghanistan taught me that this operational wisdom retains its relevance and effectiveness in the ongoing fight against the enemy of the modern age. Commanders ignore it at their peril.

ENDNOTES

2 For more detail and other insights into Afghanistan, see the US Naval Postgraduate School’s Center for Cultural and Conflict Studies at <http://www.nps.edu/Programs/CCS/Uruzgan.html>.
4 I drew most of these principles from Edgar O’Ballance’s seminal work, Afghan Wars: Battles in a Hostile Land: 1839 to the Present, Brassey’s, London, 2002, pp. 103–43. Other sources are indicated as they occur.
5 See Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain*, p. 135, for a description of this particular Soviet weakness.
6 Grau provides an excellent vignette describing the consequences of Soviet reluctance to leave their vehicles. Ibid., p. 203.
7 For anecdotal evidence of what was an unusual tactic for the usually fractious Mujahideen, see, Ibid., p. 65.
8 Grau provides a fascinating insight into the way the Mujahideen shaped Soviet tactics. Ibid., p. 33.
9 See also US Center for Army Lessons Learnt (CALL), Handbook No. 05-6, *Operation Enduring Freedom III – Tactics, Techniques and Procedures*, Kansas, 2005, p. 15.
11 Ibid., p. 19.
13 Ibid., p. 16.
14 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 107.
17 Ibid., p. 124.
18 CALL, *Operation Enduring Freedom III*, p. 10. See also vignettes provided by Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain*, pp. 136, 147.
22 This is a concept strongly supported by the British. See British Army Doctrinal Note 05/13, p. 9.
23 IEDs were sometimes buried in the dascht where they would lie for months before striking civilians or Coalition forces.
24 The doctrinal advance is a unit and formation method of tactical manoeuvre and had to be adjusted for the smaller groupings within a combat team. The manoeuvre is clearly articulated in LWD 3-0-1 Formation Tactics, Department of Defence, Puckapunyal, 2003, p. 3–15 and LWP-G 3-9-3 *Operations in Desert Environments*, p. 4–1.
26 Described in LWP-CA (ENGRS) 2-6-1 *Engineer Search*, Department of Defence, Puckapunyal, 2006, p. 10–6.
Supported by British Army Doctrinal Note 06/04, *Convoy Operations*, Annexes E and F.

British Army Doctrinal Note 05/13, p. 13.

A visual and physical check conducted around a vehicle for signs of unexploded ordinance or IEDs.

British Army Doctrinal Note 05/13, p. 13.

Strongly supported by current doctrine, including: *LWD 3-3-4 Employment of Armour*, Department of Defence, Puckapunyal, 2005, pp. 5–21, 6–21; *LWP-G 3-3-6 Cavalry Regiment*, Department of Defence, Puckapunyal, 2005, pp. 7–23, 7–30; and *LWP-CA (MDT CBT) 3-3-3 Mounted Minor Tactics*, Department of Defence, Puckapunyal, 2006, pp. 3–9, 4–41.

For the efficacy of deception, see *LWP-G 3-2-2 Deception*, Department of Defence, Puckapunyal, p. 3–44.

British Army Doctrinal Note 05/13, p. 9.

According to the definition used in *LWD 3-0-2 Battlegroup Tactics*, key point defence involves doing as much as possible within the immediate vicinity of a key point so it cannot be captured or destroyed. These measures may include patrolling, surveillance and the construction of obstacles. See *LWD 3-0-2 Battlegroup Tactics*, p. 7–21, and British Army Doctrinal Note 05/13, p. 10.


Ibid., p. 7–2.

Ibid.


For further detail, see *Reconstruction Task Force 3*, p. 54.
THE AUTHOR

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Doctrine and Concepts

Defending the Indefensible

The Defence of Superior Orders for War Crimes

Warrant Officer Class Two Brad Copelin

Abstract

The laws of war have always been complex and open to interpretation due to their international nature. While the Rome Diplomatic Conference saw the creation of a single international criminal code that has since been adopted by 106 different states, there is still room for significant interpretation within even this legal regime. This article argues that, in the heat of battle, when powerful instincts for self-preservation cloud the soldier’s judgment, ADF personnel may simply be incapable of determining the legality or otherwise of an order and will resort to instinctive obedience—just as their training has prepared them to do. In this instance, if the orders they are instinctively following lead them to commit war crimes, they will most likely be found guilty of criminal acts. To avoid this situation, the author makes several practical recommendations for improving the ability of ADF personnel to judge the legality of orders in battle, while presenting a powerful historical case which demonstrates the imperative for such action.

The soldier is charged with the protection of the weak and unarmed. It is the very essence and reason for his being – a sacred trust.

General Douglas MacArthur, 1946
INTRODUCTION

On 17 July 1998, the impossibly titled ‘United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court’—known, fortunately, as the Rome Diplomatic Conference—finalised the draft Statute for the International Criminal Court. On 1 July 2002, once the requisite sixty states had become parties, the Statute became law and international war crimes law came of age. Today, 106 states have become parties to the Statute.

While the Rome Statute, like any document that deals in the convoluted course of international justice, is necessarily extensive, there are two articles in particular—Articles 28 and 33—that have direct military command and leadership implications for any armed force. It is crucial that every military force examine the ramifications of the Statute in general—and Articles 28 and 33 in particular—and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is no exception. This article will briefly consider the implications of both Article 28 and Article 33 for Australia’s military, necessarily focusing on the latter with its broader ramifications.

ARTICLE 28 OF THE ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Under the provisions of the Rome Statute’s Article 28:

In addition to other grounds of criminal responsibility under this Statute for crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court:

1. A military commander or person effectively acting as a military commander shall be criminally responsible for crimes within the jurisdiction of the court committed by forces under his or her effective command and control, or effective authority and control as the case may be, as a result of his or her failure to exercise control properly over such forces, where:
   (a) That military commander or person either knew or, owing to the circumstances at the time, should have known that the forces were committing or about to commit such crimes; and
   (b) That military commander or person failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures within his or her power to prevent or repress their commission or to submit the matter to the competent authorities for investigation and prosecution.

2. With respect to superior and subordinate relationships not described in paragraph 1, a superior shall be criminally responsible for crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court committed by subordinates under his or her effective authority and control, as a result of his or her failure to exercise control properly over such subordinates, where:
(a) The superior either knew, or consciously disregarded information which clearly indicated that the subordinates were committing or about to commit such crimes;
(b) The crimes concerned activities that were within the effective responsibility and control of the superior; and
(c) The superior failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures within his or her power to prevent or repress their commission or to submit the matter to the competent authorities for investigation and prosecution.

The term ‘military commander’ is used throughout this article and it is clear that Article 28 covers the responsibilities of all military commanders at all levels—from government and planning bodies to junior non-commissioned officers. Article 28 is a direct attempt to eliminate the ability of war crimes defendants to use the defence of ‘obedience to superior orders’ in the manner of the accused at both the Nuremburg and Tokyo Trials and, more recently, the American officers on trial in the notorious My Lai massacre case and the Canadian officers tried for abuses in Somalia. These cases will be analysed in more detail later in this article.

THE DILEMMA FOR TODAY’S MILITARY: THE LEGAL OBLIGATION TO OBEY

Under the ADF’s national military law, a soldier has a legal obligation to obey the orders of a superior soldier or officer. The Defence Force Discipline Act treats failure to obey as a breach of military law, particularly in the case of soldiers who disobey the commands of their superiors. Under Section 27, ‘Disobedience of a lawful command’, and Section 29, ‘Failing to comply with a lawful general order’, a defence member or defence civilian must follow all orders and commands. Yet there are exceptions and the ADF tacitly recognises this. In fact, the Army’s current recruit training regime conveys to recruits the clear understanding that they do not have to follow unlawful or illegal orders and that they have the right to disobey commands on these grounds. This appears to directly contradict the basic principles of military discipline. The aim and purpose of all forms of discipline, even the most basic foot drill, is ‘to instil instinctive obedience and reaction to words of command’. Essentially, soldiers are trained to do what they are told, when they are told, instinctively, without questioning the command. This raises the issue of differentiation: when is a soldier expected to consider the legality of the order—thus questioning it—and when is the soldier expected to act instinctively?
To a highly trained and disciplined soldier, obedience to the orders of a superior is second nature. It is pure, unthinking reaction. Under Article 28, however, the soldier must now discern the legality of the order prior to its enactment, and make a decision. The question remains: when does the soldier follow orders and when does he or she refuse? Where is the line drawn?

This is not a problem solely faced by Australia’s military. In the armed forces of the United States of America, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) mirrors the DFDA. The UCMJ reads like any other criminal justice code, except for its specific military offences including wilfully disobeying a superior commissioned officer and insubordinate conduct towards a warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or petty officer. Both these stipulations state that it is an offence to deliberately disobey a lawful command or order. Indeed, the latter (Article 91) still carries the option of the death penalty, as does murder, also an offence under the UCMJ. Nowhere in this 62-page document are there grounds for those subject to this code to refuse to obey an order. Yet the Department of the Army Field Manual, The Law of Land Warfare, rules that obeying the orders of a superior officer does not constitute a defence against war crimes. In some attempt at mitigation, it does, however, allow the court to take into consideration the fact that obedience to lawful military orders is the duty of every member of the armed forces, although this carries the caveat that members of the armed forces are bound only to obey lawful orders.

Is it reasonable to expect a soldier to fulfil both a duty to obey and a duty to disobey? Is there an achievable balance between duty to a superior under military law and the potential duty to disobey? According to the International Red Cross, everyone has a right—in fact, it is their duty—to refuse to obey an order to commit a violation of the Law of Armed Conflict. For the average civilian, this is an easy duty to follow, as it is a fundamental right under international humanitarian law, human rights law and domestic criminal law. For the soldier, however, this may well constitute the most difficult decision he or she ever has to make—the conscious decision to disobey an order.

**OBEEDIENCE TO SUPERIOR ORDERS IN HISTORY**

The profession of arms has long demanded—and long received—the unquestioning obedience of subordinates to their superiors. Disobedience was sufficiently rare in the annals of military history that, prior to the twentieth century, legal protection of disobedience and legal demands for independent thought by the basic soldier or
infantryman were barely addressed at all. But the duty to obey or disobey has emerged as society has evolved through the ages, although its interpretation often relies on its discrete national context. To this day, interpretations often vary so radically that subordinates in one country may be deemed never to have been responsible for actions committed under orders while, in a neighbouring country, the same soldier may have been considered always responsible for the same actions.

In 1621, King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden promulgated his ‘Articles of Military lawwes to be observed by the warres’. Article 46 stated that ‘No Colonel or Captain shall command his soldiers to do any unlawful thing which who so does, shall be punished according to the discretion of the judge’. Similarly, under a British code promulgated in 1749, obedience to superiors was deemed legal only when the orders given were also legal. This provision was not rescinded until an updated code was introduced in 1914. Interestingly, this later code reasserted superior orders as an absolute defence. In 1863 the United States promulgated the Instructions for the Government of the Armies of the United States in the Field which later became known as the ‘Lieber Code’. Article 71 of the Lieber Code states:

Whoever intentionally inflicts additional wounds on an enemy already wholly disabled, or kills such an enemy, or who orders or encourages soldiers to do so, shall suffer death, if duly convicted, whether he belongs to the Army of the United States, or is an enemy captured after having committed his misdeed.

In 1914, however, the Americans adopted a military code that was clearly modelled on the British system. This code asserted that violations of the laws of war would not be prosecuted if the actions were committed as a result of superior orders.

The first German military code, adopted in 1872, rejected superior orders as an absolute defence. The version under which the Germans fought in the Second World War stated:

If the execution of a military order in the course of duty violates the criminal law, then the superior officer giving the order will bear the sole responsibility therefore. However, the obeying subordinate will share the punishment of the participant:

1. if he has exceeded the order given to him, or
2. if it was within his knowledge that the order of his superior concerned an act by which it was intended to commit a civil or military crime or transgression.
During the Second World War, both the Americans and British amended their military and war crimes codes to minimise the defence of obedience to superior orders. This action was regarded by cynics as an attempt to prosecute the Germans and Japanese more effectively at Nuremberg and Tokyo with scant regard for those crimes committed by Allied forces under what was considered to be ‘victors’ justice’.

**ARTICLE 33 AND THE LEGALITY OF THE ACT**

An important consideration in any war crimes case is whether the perpetrator realised that the act was illegal. This is particularly pertinent to the soldier who, under the Rome Statute, is now tasked with deciding whether the superior’s orders are legal or otherwise. Soldiers are trained to follow orders and to react instinctively to words of command. On the battlefield amidst the chaos of war, unless an order is overtly illegal, they will obey instinctively, as lives may be at risk. Soldiers understand that their inaction or hesitation in combat can result in loss of life, and they will follow even dubious orders to prevent this, questioning later rather than in the heat of the moment. Article 33 makes some allowance for this:

1. The fact that a crime within the jurisdiction of the Court has been committed by a person pursuant to an order of a Government or of a superior, whether military or civilian, shall not relieve that person of criminal responsibility unless:
   (a) The person was under a legal obligation to obey orders of the Government or the superior in question;
   (b) The person did not know that the order was unlawful; and
   (c) The order was not manifestly unlawful.

Under the provisions of the Rome Statute, orders to commit genocide or crimes against humanity are manifestly unlawful. The five acts listed under the crime of genocide are obviously morally wrong, contravening as they do all the fundamentals of international human rights law. There are also eleven acts and nine definitions listed as crimes against humanity—a lengthy and grim list for rote-learning by the average soldier. Yet, for most soldiers, the sub-paragraph listed as ‘other inhumane acts’ presents the greatest dilemma. This particular section—and, in fact, the entire article—is so broad in its scope that any military tactic or method of waging war could be manipulated to fit its specifications.
The Rome Statute is extraordinarily complex, a reflection of the complex nature of war crimes law itself. It also contains apparent inconsistencies. The Statute describes genocide and crimes against humanity as ‘unlawful’. Yet the eight grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions; the twenty-six acts that violate the laws and customs of war; and the sixteen other acts listed as offences for conflicts not of an international character are treated separately. These are listed simply as ‘war crimes’. Thankfully, the matter of crime differentiation is not the soldier’s province—they are all ‘war crimes’ and any order to commit such acts must immediately sound a warning within the soldier’s subconscious. Yet, the devil, as the old adage insists, is in the detail. Orders issued in the heat of battle by a trusted superior will not necessarily be questioned by the soldier in the firing line.

How can soldiers make informed decisions as to what constitutes a legal order when their entire focus is on self-preservation? It begs a simpler solution than that offered by the Rome Statute, which is so complicated that arguments continue to this day over the interpretation of its articles. Combat soldiers cannot carry copies of the Statute, the Geneva Conventions, three additional protocols, the relevant Hague Laws and treaties, and his own military discipline code into battle. Soldiers have a sufficiently difficult mission without concerning themselves with the various stipulations of the laws of war. Simplicity is the answer and, for the ADF, teaching soldiers to become familiar with the International Red Cross handbook *Code of Conduct for Combatants* may present a neat solution. This pocket-sized booklet contains sufficient information on the laws of war to train recruits in battlefield conduct. Having completed their basic training, soldiers should then receive job-specific training in relation to the laws of war and their requirements and responsibilities under international humanitarian law. Such training could increase in scope and complexity as soldiers progress through the ranks or become more highly specialised.

**HOW DID IT HAPPEN? EXAMPLES FROM HISTORY**

‘There is only one sort of discipline—perfect discipline. If you do not enforce and maintain discipline, you are potential murderers.’ So declared US General George Patton to his assembled officers in 1946. Yet the history of the ancient profession of arms is rife with examples of the breakdown of this discipline and the resort to obedience to superior orders as a defence in later reckoning.

Accounts survive from medieval times which detail the trials of knights held accountable for the crimes of their foot soldiers. In the 1419 Trial of Hagenbach, a
knight was charged with responsibility for crimes committed by those under his command, including murder, rape, perjury and other heinous acts committed during the subjugation of the citizens of Breisach in the Upper Rhine on the orders of his master, Duke Charles of Burgundy. Before the *ad hoc* international tribunal, composed of twenty-eight judges, Hagenbach’s counsel pleaded that the knight had been merely following the orders of his superior, Duke Charles, and that he had no right to question or disobey those orders. The defence was rejected. Hagenbach was found guilty, stripped of his knighthood and condemned to death. 29

Another failed attempt to assert the defence of obedience to superior orders occurred in England in 1660 following the restoration of King Charles II. Colonel Axtell, commander of the guard that presided at the execution of Charles I, was tried for treason and murder. He claimed that he was obeying the orders of his superior; the court, however, rejected his claim on the basis that obedience to a treasonable order is itself treasonable. 30

During the Napoleonic Wars, a Scottish court rejected the plea of ‘obedience to superior orders’ by a soldier who shot and killed a French prisoner. In the case of Ensign Maxwell, the court ruled:

> If an officer were to command a soldier to go out to the street and to kill you or me, he would not be bound to obey. It must be a legal order given with reference to the circumstances in which he is placed; and thus every officer has a discretion to disobey orders against the known laws of the land. 31

On 27 February 1902, in the final year of the Boer War, two Australian officers were executed by firing squad following their conviction at a court martial for the murder of Boer prisoners. Another Australian officer also convicted had his death penalty commuted to life imprisonment. The three officers were all members of the Bushveldt Carbineers, a special force operating against guerrillas in the Northern Transvaal, and all justified their actions with the claim that they were obeying orders from a superior officer. Their defence was rejected by the court.

Under the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the First World War, the Allies demanded that Germany hand over some 901 people accused of breaches of the laws of war to be tried for their crimes. Germany resisted, and the Allies eventually agreed to trials conducted by German national courts, known as the Leipzig Trials. A substantially reduced number from the original 901 proposed were tried, some pleading obedience to superior orders, while others launched a defence based on command responsibility. The two most notable cases involving the defence of obedience to superior orders concerned the torpedoing of the British hospital ships...
Defending the Indefensible

Dover Castle and Llandovery Castle by German submarines. In the case of the Dover Castle, the defendant, Lieutenant Captain Karl Neuman, the commander of the German submarine, claimed that he was acting on superior orders which were issued by his naval superiors who believed that Allied hospital ships were being used for military purposes in violation of the laws of war. The court acquitted the commander, stating:

It is a military principle that the subordinate is bound to obey the orders of his superiors; when the execution of a service order involves an offence against the criminal law, the superior giving the order is alone responsible. This is in accordance with the terms of the German law, paragraph 1 of section 47, of the Military Penal Code which states that a subordinate who acts in conformity with orders is liable to punishment as an accomplice, when he knows that his superiors have ordered him to do acts which involve a civil or military crime or misdemeanour. There has been no case of this here. The memoranda of the German government about the misuse of enemy hospital ships were known to the accused. He was therefore of the opinion that measures taken by the German Admiralty against enemy hospital ships were not contrary to international law, but were legitimate reprisals. The accused cannot, therefore be punished for this conduct.32

In the ensuing Llandovery Castle case, the same court did not so readily grant the accused a defence of obedience to superior orders. In this case, the submarine commander ordered his subordinates to open fire on survivors of the torpedoed Llandovery Castle who had managed to clamber into lifeboats. The officers who carried out the order, First Lieutenants Dithmar and Boldt, were charged with the killings and pleaded that they had followed the orders of their commander, Helmut Patzik. The court, however, rejected this defence, arguing:

The firing on the boats was an offence against the law of nations. The rule of international law, which is here involved, is simple and is universally known. No possible applicability... the [commander’s] order does not free the accused from guilt. It is true that, according to paragraph 47 of the Military Penal Code, if the execution of an order in the ordinary course of duty involves such a violation the superior giving the order is alone responsible. However the subordinate obeying such an order is liable to punishment if it was known to him that the order of the superior involved the infringement of civil or military law. This applies in the case of the accused. It is certainly to be urged in favour of the military subordinates,
that they are under no obligation to question the order of their superior officer, and they can count upon its legality. But no such confidence can be held to exist, if such an order is universally known to everybody, including also the accused, to be without any doubt whatever against the law.\(^\text{33}\)

Attempts to extradite Kaiser Wilhelm and try him at Leipzig for war crimes failed, as the government of the Netherlands refused to extradite him.\(^\text{34}\) While the Leipzig Trials carried the full authority of the Treaty of Versailles, they were considered by both victor and vanquished to be ‘municipal trials’\(^\text{35}\). The tribunal which presided at Leipzig based its findings on a combination of international and German military law and was not even a party to Articles 228 and 229, the sentencing provisions of the Treaty of Versailles.\(^\text{36}\) Despite this, the tribunal produced a report entitled ‘The Responsibilities of the Authors of the War and on the Enforcement of Penalties’, which stated that:

Civil and military authorities cannot be relieved from responsibility by the mere fact that a higher authority might have been convicted of the same offence. It will be for the court to decide whether a plea of superior orders is sufficient to acquit the person charged from responsibility.\(^\text{37}\)

For a ‘municipal tribunal’, Leipzig produced a useful precedent for the later treatment of the defence of superior orders in war crimes trials. Yet, Leipzig also produced its disappointments. From a total of 901 cases brought before the court during the Leipzig Trials, 888 accused were acquitted or summarily dismissed, and only thirteen convicted. Many of the sentences handed down were manifestly inadequate, and most of those convicted did not actually serve their sentence.\(^\text{38}\) The Versailles model of war crimes prosecution proved a disappointing exercise.

The failure of the Leipzig Trials following the First World War hardened the resolve of the Allies at the end of the Second World War to ensure that Nazi war criminals would be brought to justice and that appropriate retribution would be exacted. The authority of the International Military Tribunal to conduct the Nuremberg Trials was based on the London Agreement of 8 August 1945. The London Agreement was a specific charter drawn up to try the leaders and organisations of Nazi Germany accused of war crimes, crimes against peace and crimes against humanity. Article 8 of the Nuremberg Charter specifically relates to the defence of superior orders. It states:

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**The failure of the Leipzig Trials following the First World War hardened the resolve of the Allies …**
The fact that the defendant acted pursuant to order of his Government or a superior shall not free him from responsibility, but may be considered in mitigation of punishment if the Tribunal determines that justice so requires. 39

The first trial began on 20 November 1945 in spectacular fashion, with the tribunal rejecting the claim by a number of defendants that they were not legally responsible for their actions because they were performed under the orders of superior authority. The tribunal stated that ‘the true test is not the existence of the order but whether moral choice [in executing it] was in fact possible’. 40 On 1 October 1946, the tribunal handed down its decisions on the original defendants. Twelve were sentenced to death by hanging, seven received sentences of detention ranging from ten years to life, and three were acquitted. 41 These decisions reinforced the point that obedience to superior orders does not constitute the ultimate defence for breaches of the laws and customs of war. The Nuremberg Trials produced their own disappointments for the various victims’ groups that sought revenge in the aftermath of the Nazi atrocities and those condemned German perpetrators who insisted that their actions were coerced. The trials were labelled ‘victors’ justice’ at the time—a moniker that remains. However, what these trials established with absolute clarity was that any soldier who violates the laws of war cannot obtain immunity based on a claim that he or she was acting blindly in accordance with the authority of the state, particularly when the state itself acts outside the tenets of international law.

Following the conclusion of the Nuremberg Trials, an additional twelve cases were tried under the authority of Control Council Law No. 10. This law closely resembled the London Agreement but provided a legal basis for the prosecution of war crimes trials in each of the four zones of occupied Germany. One hundred and eighty-five defendants (military and civilian) were indicted in twelve cases. These cases related to medical experiments in concentration and prisoner-of-war camps and policies and laws implemented in occupied states. Most of the defendants argued that they were simply following the orders of their superiors. Given the Nuremberg precedent, this defence failed completely. Thirty defendants were sentenced to death, including a number of doctors and SS leaders. Approximately 120 others were sentenced to custodial punishments while thirty-five were acquitted. 42

On 19 January 1946, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East was constituted under the authority of General Douglas MacArthur, with British Field Marshal Sir William Slim as the Tribunal President. Many of the provisions in the
tribunal’s charter were adapted from those of the London Agreement. Article 6 of the charter covered the ‘Responsibility of Accused’. This responsibility related to the defence of obedience to superior orders and stated:

Neither the official position, at any time, of an accused, nor the fact that an accused acted pursuant to order of his government or of a superior shall, of itself, be sufficient to free such accused from responsibility for any crime with which he is charged, but such circumstances may be considered in mitigation of punishment if the Tribunal determines that justice so requires.\(^{43}\)

Eleven nations were represented at the Tokyo Trials, which took over two years and produced results parallel to those of Nuremberg. Once again the superior orders defence failed. Of the twenty-five defendants, seven were executed, sixteen were given life sentences and two others lesser terms of imprisonment.\(^{44}\)

The Tokyo Trials, while achieving the highest profile, were not the only forum for the punishment of Japanese war criminals. In fact, the Asian countries victimised by the Japanese war machine tried a far greater number of Japanese military officials, some estimates placing the number around 5000, with up to 900 executions and more than half of those convicted receiving terms of life imprisonment.\(^{45}\) Many of the subsidiary trials of alleged war criminals from the Second World War were held by tribunals constituted by the governments of the countries that had been occupied in whole or part by Germany or Japan during the war. Additional military tribunals tried numerous Japanese officers in the Philippines and Australia. The defence of superior orders was used to a lesser degree in these trials.

Between 1965 and August 1973, the US Criminal Investigation Division investigated war crimes offences relating to the Vietnam War under the UCMJ. Thirty-six cases involving war crime allegations against army personnel were tried by court martial. Twenty of these resulted in convictions. The most notorious of these was the case of Lieutenant William Calley who was tried as a result of an incident at My Lai (Son My), a village in Vietnam.\(^{46}\)

What became known as the ‘My Lai massacre’ occurred on 16 March 1968, when seventy-five members of C Company entered the village of My Lai, their mission broadly defined as the destruction of the village. Hovering above the village were two helicopters, one containing the battalion commander and the other the brigade commander. Soon after entering the village, Calley ordered his troops to round up all civilians and move them to a drainage ditch on the eastern side of the village. He then ordered his dozen or so platoon members to push the seventy

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Some of the men refused, while others obeyed. Calley himself joined in the massacre.
or eighty villagers into the drainage ditch before directing his men to shoot into the
ditch. Some of the men refused, while others obeyed. Calley himself joined in the
massacre. By 11.00 am, four hours after entering My Lai, 500 villagers lay dead.47

Calley was court martialled on 12 November 1970. The core of his defence was
obedience to superior orders. During the trial Calley testified:

I was ordered to go in there and destroy the enemy. That was my job on that day. That
was the mission I was given. I did not sit down and think in terms of men, women, and
children. They were all classified the same, and that was the classification that we dealt
with, just as enemy soldiers.

The members of the jury, all veterans with combat experience, did not accept
Calley’s defence of superior orders and clearly did not share his interpretation of his
duty. The jury evidently reasoned that, even had Calley’s orders told him to destroy
everything in sight and to ‘waste the Vietnamese’, any reasonable person would have
realised that such orders were illegal and would have refused to carry them out. The
defence of superior orders under such conditions is inadmissible under international
and military law. The US Army’s *The Law of Land Warfare* states:

The fact that the law of war has been violated pursuant to an order of a superior authority,
whether military or civil, does not deprive the act in question of its character of a war
crime, nor does it constitute a defence in the trial of an accused individual, unless he did
not know or could not reasonably have been expected to know that the act was unlawful;
and that members of the armed forces are bound to obey only lawful orders.48

Calley was convicted of premeditated murder and initially sentenced to life
imprisonment. That sentence was later reduced to twenty years and then to ten. He
served three years before being released on a bond, having served his time under
house arrest in his apartment following the intervention of then US President
Richard Nixon. Calley was paroled on 10 September 1975.49

An investigation conducted by the Pentagon prior to the court martial of Calley
criticised the actions of both officers and enlisted men. The investigation report,
known as the Peers Report after its author, Major General William Peers, recom-
mended action against dozens of men for rape, murder, or participation in the
cover up. A total of twenty-five officers and soldiers—including General Koster,
Colonel Oran Henderson and Captain Medinaa, Calley’s brigade commander,
battalion commander and company commander respectively—were indicted for
prosecution. In the end, however, only a few men were tried and only Calley was
found guilty. General Koster, who failed to report known civilian casualties and
conducted a woefully inadequate investigation was, according to the Peers Report,
the beneficiary of a whitewash. His charges were dropped and he was censured,
reduced in rank and removed from his position as Commandant of West Point.
The court martial found Colonel Henderson not guilty on all counts. Major General Peers expressed his disapproval, writing, ‘I cannot agree with the verdict. If his actions are judged as acceptable standards for an officer in his position, the Army is indeed in deep trouble.’

It is interesting to note that some members of Calley’s platoon refused to obey his orders to kill the villagers during the incident at My Lai. Private First Class Dursi was among those who testified at the court martial. Dursi was asked if he had fired when ordered to. He replied:

No. I just stood there. Meadlo turned to me after a couple of minutes and said, ‘Shoot! Why don’t you shoot? Why don’t you fire?’ He was crying and yelling. I said, ‘I can’t! I won’t!’ And the people were screaming and crying and yelling. They kept firing for a couple of minutes, mostly automatic and semi-automatic.  

Specialist Grzesik had an even more direct confrontation with Calley. Calley ordered Grzesik to take a fire team back into the village and ‘finish them off’. Grzesik refused and walked off, leaving Calley standing beside the drainage ditch. Calley then ordered Specialist Maples to use his machine-gun on the Vietnamese in the ditch, but he refused. Private Carter shot himself in the foot to avoid taking any further part in the massacre.

Chief Warrant Officer Thompson was flying one of the helicopters hovering over the village. He was so incensed at Calley’s actions that he landed his helicopter between Calley’s troop and the civilians. Thompson ordered his men to train their guns on Calley’s troops and to open fire if they moved to fire on the villagers. Thompson evacuated nine Vietnamese and returned later for more. The soldiers under Calley’s command who refused to carry out his orders made the moral choice to disregard an order they knew to be unlawful. They have never been indicted for the offence of disobeying a command.

In 1982 Colonel Eli Geva, an armoured brigade commander in the Israeli army, asked to be relieved of his command during the war in Lebanon. He made his unusual request because of his moral objections to the campaign to take West Beirut. He was removed from his command, but was not disciplined.

In February 1992, two East German border guards were tried after one of the guards killed a person fleeing across the East German border into West Berlin in February 1989. The soldier was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to a period of detention. His defence was ‘obedience of superior orders’, given that the East German Government had enforced a ‘shoot to kill’ policy against people trying to
cross the East German border. The soldier’s defence was rejected, the judge declaring that ‘Not everything that is legal is right’.

On 21 January 1999, members of the Canadian Airborne Regiment Battle Group deployed to Somalia were observed mistreating Somali children they had caught in their area. In the worst incident, a Somali youth was captured, tortured and beaten to death. A Canadian court martial convicted the soldiers involved, all of whom had pleaded guilty. The soldiers’ defence was that they had been ordered to ‘make an example’ of the next Somali captured in their area. For the Canadians, the consequences of this incident were far-reaching and there have been a number of inquiries and courts martial, some involving command responsibility, while the unit itself has been disbanded.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia was established by United Nations Security Council Resolution 827 on 25 May 1993. Article 7 of the tribunal’s statute directly relates to individual criminal responsibility and paragraph 4 of that article specifically concerns the defence of superior orders. The paragraph reads:

The fact that an accused person acted pursuant to an order of a Government or of a superior shall not relieve him of criminal responsibility, but may be considered in mitigation of punishment if the International Tribunal determines that justice so requires.

There are currently forty-four people before the tribunal, at varying stages of proceedings. These proceedings relate to either individual criminal or superior responsibility. Drazen Erdemovic pleaded guilty to the indictment of one count of a crime against humanity and received a custodial sentence. The transcript of his trial proceedings records his attempts to use the ‘superior orders’ defence. Erdemovic stated that he followed the orders, which he knew were wrong, as he was under duress from his commander who had told him that he would be summarily executed if he did not join a firing squad tasked with executing a number of civilians. This form of extreme coercion appears to constitute the ultimate defence against the indictment. The judges, however, thought otherwise.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was created under United Nations Security Council Resolution 955 on 8 November 1994 and Resolution 977 on 22 February 1995. Article 6 of the tribunal’s statute relates to individual criminal responsibility and, like the Yugoslav Statute, paragraph 4 of that article specifically relates to the defence of ‘superior orders’. It rules:
The fact that an accused person acted pursuant to an order of a Government or of a superior shall not relieve him or her of criminal responsibility, but may be considered in mitigation of punishment if the International Tribunal for Rwanda determines that justice so requires.60

In the series of indictments that followed the civil conflict in the African nation of Rwanda, two soldiers, Clement Kayishema and Obed Ruzindana, were tried for the crime of genocide. Ruzindana attempted the defence of superior orders, but failed. On 21 May 1999, Kayishema was sentenced to life imprisonment and Ruzinda to a custodial term of twenty-five years following their conviction.61 There are currently twenty-four people before the tribunal, their trials ongoing.

Despite these recent attempts at even-handedness in war crimes trials in both Yugoslavia and Rwanda, examples of victors bringing war crimes prosecutions against their own soldiers as distinct from defeated foes are rare. This is certainly true in relation to the Allies in the Second World War and for other wars in Algeria, Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East and the Gulf War. Should they eventuate, the proposed war crimes trials in Cambodia will stand as a stark exception.62

BREAKING THE HABIT OF UNQUESTIONING OBEDIENCE

Daniel Masse, International Committee for the Red Cross Dissemination Delegate to Bosnia-Herzegovina, wrote in December 1992:

If, after months of discussion and great effort, I am able to change the attitude or behaviour of just one combatant, I [will] consider my work successful because maybe two, perhaps three, or even five innocent people will have been spared.63

Military training is both physically and psychologically demanding. It is a necessary part of a process designed to instil within a soldier habits of instinctive and instant obedience to command in the chaos of battle. An army functions successfully only if its soldiers exhibit that habitual, unquestioning obedience. It is a tough but effective process. As a Recruit Instructor, I have seen individuals disembark from a bus as raw recruits and, three months later, board the same bus as highly disciplined, motivated members of a team.

But is it really possible to train soldiers to obey orders only 99 per cent of the time? How can they be trained to discern the remaining 1 per cent? Is it sufficient
simply to instruct them in discerning that 1 per cent of the orders which are obviously wrong or unlawful? The laws of war are notoriously blurred—never black and white, but rather grey and indistinct, open to individual interpretation by every soldier. How is this balance to be achieved? The answer may lie in the Red Cross pocket book *Code of Conduct for Combatants* and its ability to simplify the complexities of war crimes law.

**CONCLUSION**

There is no doubt that the establishment of the International Criminal Court is a positive step towards the enforcement of International Humanitarian Law and the prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Given the debacle of Leipzig, the inadequacy of Nuremberg and Tokyo and the American shame that was the Calley trial, many would argue that it has come almost a century too late. Now that the Rome Statute has been ratified, the challenge lies in the education of combatants in relation to Articles 28 and 33 and their ramifications for soldiers in time of war. It is the responsibility of the United Nations and other international institutions, particularly the International Committee of the Red Cross, to disseminate the stipulations of Article 33, Article 28 and the Law of Armed Conflict in general. Australia and other like-minded states must exert pressure to ensure that all international armed and security forces observe these rules. All military forces must align the various codes of military discipline to allow soldiers the opportunity to exercise a conscious choice. Without this commonality of approach there will be myriad standards according to the various interpretations of different countries.

The Rome Statute—particularly Article 33—represents the final solution to the age-old defence of ‘superior orders’ against the indefensible. The International Criminal Court must accept that there are times when soldiers will simply fail to understand the illegality of an order or be caught with no choice but to blindly obey in an attempt at self-preservation under fire. Only then should the defence of obedience to superior orders be permitted. Any lack of understanding may also be a real consequence of the complexity of the laws of war rather than poor training, and may further reflect an absence of opportunity to make a conscious decision to refuse an order. While the United Nations shoulders its responsibility to international humanitarian law, the ADF must focus on the necessary education of its soldiers. Australian soldiers are participants in global conflict and are, like all others, also subject to international law. They must now learn when to obey and
when to disobey. The soldier in the line of fire may consider that this decision rests on the truism that ‘It is better to be tried by twelve good men than carried by six.’ The ADF owes its soldiers the ability to discern.

ENDNOTES

3 Article 33(1)(a), Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
4 Army Recruit Training Course Training Management Package, Module Learning Outcome 18.1.5, Department of Defence.
5 LWP-G 7-7-5 Drill, Land Warfare Development Centre, Puckapunyal, 2005.
7 UCMJ, Article 91.
8 UCMJ, Article 118.
10 Ibid., paragraph 509a.
11 Ibid., paragraph 509b.
15 Kelman and Hamilton, Crimes of Obedience, p. 72.
17 Kelman and Hamilton, Crimes of Obedience, p. 72.
18 Reichsgesetzblatt, 1926, Article 47. This statement was drawn from the opening speech of the chief prosecutor at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, 11 November 1945. See The International Military Tribunal for Germany, Contents of The Nuremberg Trials Collection <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/imt.asp>.
19 Kelman and Hamilton, Crimes of Obedience, p. 73.
20 Article 33(1)(b) Rome Statute.
21 Article 33(1)(c), Rome Statute.
Defending The Indefensible

22 Article 33(2), Rome Statute.
23 The five acts are: killing members of a national, ethnical, racial or religious group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. Article 6, Rome Statute.
24 Article 7, Rome Statute.
25 Article 7(1)(k), Rome Statute.
26 Article 8, Rome Statute.
30 Cherif Bassiouni, Crimes Against Humanity, p. 416.
31 Ibid., p. 417.
32 Cherif Bassiouni, Crimes Against Humanity, p. 420.
33 Ibid., p. 421.
35 This was the term applied to lower level trials.
36 The complete sentencing provisions of the Treaty of Versailles are detailed at: <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/partvii.asp>.
37 Cherif Bassiouni, Crimes Against Humanity, p. 422.
38 Sunga, Individual Responsibility in International Law, p. 23.
40 Microsoft Encarta98 Encyclopaedia, ‘War Crimes Trials’.
41 The International Military Tribunal for Germany: Charter of the International Military Tribunal.
42 Ibid.
DOCTRINE AND CONCEPTS  ~  WARRANT OFFICER CLASS TWO BRAD COPELIN

49 Ibid., pp. 10–12.
51 Specialist Paul Meadlo was a machine-gunner in Calley’s platoon. Meadlo ‘broke down’ after the massacre, crying and openly arguing with Calley.
53 Ibid., p. 8.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., p. 75.
56 Cherif Bassiouni, Crimes Against Humanity, p. 438.
59 Ibid.
60 For more detail, see the Internet site of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, <http://www.ictr.org>.
61 Ibid.

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THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY POLICE IN ENHANCING ADF-AFP INTEROPERABILITY ON PEACE AND STABILITY OPERATIONS

CAPTAIN DAMIAN EATON

ABSTRACT

This article examines the critical role that the Royal Australian Corps of Military Police (RACMP) can play in enacting multiple recommendations made within the government’s Interoperability Review Between the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Federal Police for Regional Stabilisation Operations. The author demonstrates the strong links already established between RACMP and AFP, and how their shared operational experiences and similar tactical approach can be harnessed to effect new organisations and procedures that will become increasingly important to ADF success in the complex battlespaces of today and tomorrow.
INTRODUCTION

The evolution of modern peace and stability operations has resulted in an increasing blend of military and police action within a complex environment shaped by humanitarian and diplomatic activity. As the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and Australian Federal Police (AFP) seek to complement their respective lines of operation, the versatility and suitability of the Military Police (MP) in enhancing ADF–AFP interoperability has not been fully recognised. Recent interoperability initiatives implemented by both the ADF and AFP have involved limited participation or contribution by the RACMP despite its proven history of operational and training cooperation with civilian police (CIVPOL).

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the fundamental role of the RACMP in enhancing ADF–AFP interoperability on peace and stability operations. This will be achieved by highlighting the evolution of complex peace and stability operations and the development of complementary ADF–AFP operations; illustrating the specialist support MP provide to the restoration of law and order on peace and stability operations through its commonality with CIVPOL; and finally, outlining the development of the AFP International Deployment Group (IDG) and the contribution of MP to ADF–AFP interoperability initiatives.

EVOLUTION OF COMPLEX PEACE AND STABILITY OPERATIONS

The changing nature of peace and stability operations, from the traditional disengagement and separation of forces (Cambodia 1991) to complex intrastate multidimensional operations (Timor Leste 2006), has resulted in greater interaction between the ADF and key law enforcement, humanitarian and diplomatic components. During an address to the International Peace Operations Seminar in 2007, Major General Michael Smith (Rtd) outlined several military lessons learnt from the ADF’s involvement in modern complex peace and stability operations characterised by a concentration of ‘grey’ areas in which military, humanitarian and other agencies overlap. Major General Smith, a former Deputy Force Commander of INTERFET, illustrated the evolution of peace and stability operations, and emergence of the ‘thin blue line’ that exists between the role of military and law enforcement, by identifying the need for more Civil–Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and constabulary capabilities, and improved police–military cooperation within the ADF.

The concept of humanitarian space seeks to replace the conventional notion of a ‘battlespace’…
Current operations in Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands highlight the blend of military-led ‘low-end warfighting’ and police-led ‘high-end policing’ operations, as part of a whole-of-government response, within a ‘humanitarian space’ filled with a significant number of diverse organisations and components (Figure 1). The European Commission’s Directorate for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) defines humanitarian space as ‘the access and freedom for humanitarian organizations to assess and meet humanitarian needs’.1

The concept of humanitarian space seeks to replace the conventional notion of a ‘battlespace’, as the complex physical, human and informational terrain of modern peace and stability operations is often engulfed by a humanitarian disaster that is perpetuated by the collapse of indigenous government, law enforcement, security, judicial and administrative frameworks. This presents a unique challenge for the ADF as it is now required to adopt the role of humanitarian, peacekeeper and warfighter ‘all in the same day, all within three city blocks’.2

**COMPLEMENTARY ADF–AFP OPERATIONS**

Recent peace and stability operations in Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands have involved the deployment of a large number of CIVPOL, including the AFP, in response to internal conflicts in which the rule of law and legal system is either

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![Figure 1. The Blend of Military and Police Operations within the Humanitarian Space of Complex Peace and Stability Operations](image-url)
weak or has collapsed. The ADF considers international CIVPOL as ‘the key secondary partner in peace operations’ and has identified the need for a civilian ‘police presence … alongside a military presence, directly helping communities to establish a stable environment’. Table 1 illustrates the complementary nature of the AFP operations continuum as part of peace and stability operations, and the ADF’s five interdependent and mutually reinforcing lines of operation as part of Adaptive Campaigning.

As outlined in the AFP submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into Australia’s Involvement in Peacekeeping Operations, the AFP recognises that the exit and entry points of all international participants in a peace and stability operation ‘will be determined by levels of security and the capabilities of the emerging or reshaped state’. Additionally, the primacy of response and operational leadership will rapidly shift as stability and security is established.

The high level of threat generally associated with the upsurge of intrastate conflict may require the conduct of Joint Land Combat operations by the ADF, albeit low-level, in order to remove belligerent parties and establish a secure environment that will facilitate the conduct of subsequent lines of operations by military and police components. The complex human terrain of contemporary peace and stability operations will often necessitate the conduct of Population Protection operations by the military in a ‘complex chaotic battlespace where so often the essence of it is the establishment or re-establishment of the rule of law’. This may occur in conjunction with the conduct of Joint Land Combat operations, or may be conducted as the initial response to intense civil unrest that does not involve known belligerent forces.

Recent peace and stability operations have shown that the collapse or weakening of indigenous policing, security and/or legal frameworks creates a law and order vacuum that often places the responsibility for imposing internal law and order on the ADF. In such circumstances, the military will most likely be mandated to perform executive police functions, and will be required to apply extant domestic law or International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to restore and maintain law and order until the transition of responsibility to an international CIVPOL component. The ADF is generally not structured or trained for the inherent challenges of restoring and maintaining law and order within a collapsed or failed state, therefore it must utilise the specialist skills of its MP in order to ensure mission success.
Table 1. Complementary ADF–AFP Operations

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<tr>
<td><strong>Peace Building (Preventative Diplomacy)</strong> – includes action to prevent disputes from developing between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflict and to limit the expansion of conflicts when they occur.</td>
<td>Limited / No capacity</td>
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<td><strong>Transition of Operational Leadership</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Joint Land Combat</strong> – includes actions to secure the environment, remove organised resistance and set conditions for the other lines of operations. May include close combat under contemporary conditions in complex and particularly urban terrain.</td>
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<td><strong>Peacemaking, Peace Enforcement, Stability</strong> – involving Formed Police and General Duty Police, Military Units and Humanitarian Actors from the threshold of armed conflict to the cessation of armed conflict and conflict resolution. <strong>Peace enforcement</strong> is the coercive use of legitimate civil and military action, including intervention, to maintain and restore international peace and security (Chapter VII of the UN Charter). <strong>Peacekeeping</strong> is a non-coercive response mechanism that involves legitimate international civil and military components with the consent of conflicting parties (Chapter VI of the UN Charter). <strong>Population Protection</strong> – includes actions to provide immediate security to threatened populations in order to control residence, identity, movement, assembly and the distribution of commodities, therefore setting the conditions for the re-establishment of law and order. <strong>Population Support</strong> – includes actions to provide essential services to affected communities in order to relieve immediate suffering and positively influence the population and their perceptions. Closely aligned to <strong>Public Information</strong> – actions to inform and shape the perceptions, attitudes, behaviour and understanding of target population groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Peace Building (Restoration Capacity Building)</strong> – includes stability, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts focused on societal and institutional rebuilding and capacity development.</td>
<td><strong>Indigenous Capacity Building</strong> – includes actions taken by the Land Force to assist in the development of effective indigenous government, security, police, legal, financial and administrative systems.</td>
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MILITARY POLICE CAPABILITIES IN PEACE AND STABILITY OPERATIONS

MP provide a comprehensive operational policing service to the ADF throughout the spectrum of conflict, and are trained and equipped to support the critical components of restoring and maintaining law and order as part of its four primary functions detailed in LWD 0-1-3 Military Policing. Table 2 illustrates the specialist support MP provides to the restoration and maintenance of law and order.

Support to the restoration and maintenance of law and order, as part of Population Protection operations, forms part of MP support to all lines of operation undertaken by the ADF. The restoration and maintenance of law and order enhances Public Support operations through the provision of an essential policing service to affected communities. Engagement with the local population during the execution of various policing functions promote MP as an essential mechanism for the dissemination and monitoring of key information messages as part of public information operations. The contribution of MP to the development of key indigenous policing, legal and security stakeholders as part of Indigenous Capacity Building initiatives facilitates the effective transition of responsibility, and contributes to the success of the Land Force exit strategy. Finally, MP are trained and individually equipped to provide Combat Policing support to units conducting Joint Land Combat operations. A distinct lack of protected mobility vehicles within MP operational units, however, significantly impedes the ability of collective MP elements to integrate within any Combat Team or Battle Group operating within a medium to high threat environment.

The deployment of Joint Task Force (JTF) 631 to Timor Leste in 2006 emphasised the fundamental role of MP in the military-led restoration and maintenance of law and order in a collapsed or failed state. The nature of tasks completed by the MP in Timor Leste (see Case Study – Timor Leste 2006) illustrates the constabulary capabilities and military–police cooperation that already exists within the ADF. Subsequently, the ADF does not need to ‘grow’ such capabilities for future peace and stability operations, as suggested by Major General Smith, for it already possesses an organisation with the training, cooperation and operational experiences necessary to enhance ADF–AFP interoperability.

COMMONALITY OF MILITARY AND CIVILIAN POLICE

The ability of the MP to perform tasks similar in nature to that of CIVPOL is attributed to the commonality of training undertaken. Training completed by MP at the Defence Police Training Centre, including specialist Investigative, Close Personal Protection (CPP) and MP Dog (MPD) training, corresponds with national policing competencies adopted by Australian state and federal law enforcement agencies. This
Table 2. MP Support to the Restoration and Maintenance of Law and Order

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<th>Restoring and Maintaining Law and Order (ADFP 3.8.1)</th>
<th>MP Support (LWD 0-1-3)</th>
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| Application of law                                  | • Interpretation of applicable domestic law/IHL/Status of Forces Agreement.  
  • Development of operational SOPs to align military actions with applicable laws.  
  • Pre-deployment/in-theatre training of ADF personnel. |
| Power of Arrest                                      | • Operational advice/guidance regarding the application of arrest procedures.  
  • Tactical support to apprehension tasks.  
  • Use of force (less lethal techniques). |
| Power of Detention                                   | • Development of operational SOPs regarding detention policy and guidelines.  
  • Classification of detained personnel.  
  • Management of ADF Detention Facilities in accordance with IHL and International Humanitarian Rights (IHR) standards.  
  • Transfer of detained personnel to host nation judicial and prison components. |
| Investigation of Offences                            | • Investigation of minor and major criminal offences in accordance with domestic law/IHL.  
  • Collection of evidence in relation to offences detected.  
  • Crime/incident scene preservation. |
| Judicial Capability                                  | • Correct storage and continuity of evidence to facilitate the successful prosecution of detained personnel.  
  • Support to the re-establishment of the host nation judicial system, or establishment of a military judicial mechanism. |
| Liaison                                              | • Development of agreed methods of operation involving combined/joint ADF/CIVPOL patrols, arrest and handover procedures etc.  
  • Synchronisation of civilian and military policing activity.  
  • Exchange of criminal intelligence and human intelligence to enhance situational awareness.  
  • Development of force protection policy/guidelines.  
  • Support to the transition of operational leadership and responsibility. |
commonality of training enables the MP to comprehend and adapt CIVPOL practices and procedures to the military environment, both domestically and offshore.

Commonality of training has been fostered into a 'sound working relationship at the operational and tactical level' through ongoing training, domestic liaison and operational cooperation between MP and CIVPOL. The establishment of various Memorandums of Understanding between the MP and state and federal CIVPOL has facilitated continuous military–police cooperation in relation to training and domestic general duties policing. This frequent interaction has established a mutual understanding of respective policies and procedures, and ability of MP to adapt to the changing role of deployed CIVPOL components.

The structure and capability of CIVPOL components deployed during recent complex peace and stability operations has varied from traditional monitoring roles to the provision of executive police powers, and the involvement of ready reaction units. The AFP has identified the need for a highly trained and well resourced organisation capable of providing a rapid law-enforcement response and long-term stability capacity to offshore internal conflicts. This has been achieved through the development of the AFP IDG.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFP IDG

As Australia’s major international law enforcement agency, the AFP understands that ‘policing is as much about diplomatic, security, cooperation and capacity building in the international arena as it is about the traditional values of community-based policing.’ The AFP IDG was established in February 2004 to manage the deployment of Australian and Pacific Island police deployed overseas and ‘provides an opportunity for Australian and Pacific Island police to operate in a collaborative environment as part of a whole-of-government response to challenging international issues.’

In August 2006, the Australian Government increased funding of the IDG with an additional $493 million to boost staffing levels to approximately 1200 personnel by 2008. The increased funding will provide the IDG with the opportunity to develop long-term international policing initiatives that will contribute to the maintenance of a stable and secure Pacific region. Such initiatives have been implemented within countries in which the ADF are currently deployed (Timor Leste, Solomon Islands and Tonga) and ‘fragile’ regional countries which may require the deployment of ADF elements in the future. The organisational structure of the IDG is depicted in Figure 2.
The increased funding will also enable the IDG to establish a 200-strong Operational Response Group (ORG), which ‘will be a tactical and highly skilled capability in crowd control and riot management with rapid deployment capability’ supported by a Specialist Operational Support Team. The structural and mandated growth of the IDG, particularly the ORG, demonstrates the emergence of the IDG as a leading International CIVPOL organisation, and an essential partner of the MP contribution to ADF–AFP interoperability initiatives.

**MP CONTRIBUTIONS TO ADF–AFP INTEROPERABILITY INITIATIVES**

Given the increasing complexity of modern peace and stability operations, both the ADF and AFP have identified the need for enhanced interoperability that supports a whole-of-government approach to offshore contingencies involving the military and police. The AFP aims to enhance ‘interdepartmental coordination and cooperation through improved interoperability between the AFP and ADF’ and has implemented several initiatives since the establishment of the IDG to provide AFP input into ADF joint doctrine, planning, education and training. Of particular interest is the recent appointment of one AFP officer to the ADFWC and two officers to HQ JOC.

ADF initiatives to enhance interoperability with the AFP have, to date, been primarily focused on AFP contributions to ADF-led planning, education and training. In light of the rapid growth of the IDG, and shared visions of enhanced interoperability, the ADF has been afforded an ideal opportunity to provide direct input into the development of AFP doctrine, planning and training.

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![IDG National Manager](image_url)

**Figure 2. Organisational Structure of the AFP IDG**
Contemporary definitions of the term ‘interoperability’ include ‘the ability … to operate in synergy in the execution of assigned tasks’, hence, the development of effective interoperability between military and law enforcement components is significantly enhanced by an organisation that understands the intrinsic nature of both entities and can adapt accordingly. The commonality of training, frequency of domestic CIVPOL liaison and operational experiences (in law enforcement and detention) of the MP is without comparison within the ADF, making it the most suitable organisation to significantly contribute to, and possibly lead, future ADF–AFP interoperability initiatives.

In 2006, the previous government identified a requirement for greater interoperability between the ADF and AFP for the conduct of stabilisation operations in the region. Eight working groups were established to review the interoperability between the two organisations in areas such as coordination, integrated planning and logistics at the strategic, operational and tactical level. The eight working groups identified a total of 120 recommendations, following ‘wide consultation with related areas within each organisation’, which were further reduced to 42 recommendations.

Of the 42 recommendations outlined within the Interoperability Review Between the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Federal Police for Regional Stabilisation Operations, 17 recommendations demonstrate an explicit nexus with the current roles and responsibilities of MP. It should be noted that despite the assertion of wide consultation with related areas within each organisation, MP were not represented, nor afforded the opportunity to contribute, during the conduct of the review.

Table 3 outlines the 17 recommendations that encompass the broad spectrum of the eight interoperability working groups, and highlights the various implementation mechanisms to address each recommendation identified. The implementation mechanisms include the enhancement of extant mechanisms, particularly in relation to training and doctrine development, and the development of operational and tactical interoperability frameworks.

**ENHANCING OPERATIONAL INTEROPERABILITY**

The ability to shape ADF planning at the earliest stages, and facilitate interoperability with the AFP at the operational level, is best achieved through formal MP representation within key organisations such as HQ JOC (Operations and Plans) and/or AHQ (Regional and Domestic Operations). Representation within HQ JOC, as shown in Figure 3, mirrors recent interoperability initiatives by the AFP and ensures that the development of interoperable capability, training and doctrine is fostered at the tactical level. Without appropriate representation during the planning stage of a peace and stability operation, the force structure of a Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) will often lack the necessary MP capabilities to facilitate tactical interoperability.
ENHANCING TACTICAL INTEROPERABILITY

The ability to expand ADF–AFP interoperability within an operational and/or domestic context to tactical interoperability within a theatre of operation will be best achieved through a structured framework that promotes cooperation and coordination between key law enforcement agencies. Full tactical interoperability is the end state of any initiative implemented at the operational or strategic level, for it is at the tactical level that success of any peace and stability operation will be achieved. The implementation of a Joint Interagency Policing Coordination Cell (JIPCC) and employment of Joint Interagency Policing Teams (JIPTs) are two such frameworks that will enhance tactical interoperability.

JOINT INTERAGENCY POLICING COORDINATION CELL (JIPCC)

The JIPCC, as depicted in Figure 3, is based on a doctrinal Joint Provost Marshal Cell enhanced by the embedding of military and civilian police Liaison Officers within key cell functions. The JIPCC is centralised at the highest appropriate level of command, generally within HQ JIATF, and provides the necessary planning, coordination and transition of Constabulary Operations or Actions within a joint interagency framework. The embedment of MP, AFP (international CIVPOL) and indigenous CIVPOL within the JIPCC facilitates the ‘development and implementation of protocols and procedures, at the tactical level, for combined tasking’ during the conduct of peace and stability operations. Additionally, it allows a ‘constant flow of information between each organisation and a clear communication of the responses required for different tasks and challenges’. More importantly, the JIPCC facilitates the ‘seamless transition from military control to police control, vice versa and/or indigenous authorities’ as key policing agencies contribute to the conduct of Constabulary Operations throughout the entire spectrum of peace and stability operations.

The JIPCC is primarily responsible for the provision of policing support by four task-organised building blocks that include general duties, investigations, detention and specialist capabilities. In addition to supporting these four task-organised building blocks, deployed MP assets remain postured to provide Combat Policing support to combat forces operating within a medium to high threat environment.
JOINT INTERAGENCY POLICING COORDINATION CELL TACTICAL (JIPCC TAC)

The JIPCC Tac is based on the functions of the JIPCC, however, is a temporary mechanism to provide the necessary liaison and coordination during the conduct of specific Constabulary Operations or Actions. The JIPCC Tac facilitates the establishment of a Tactical Combined Command Post and employment of common Combined Command Post procedures, and is located far enough forward to influence the conduct of Constabulary Operations or Actions.

Figure 3. Operational and Tactical Interoperability Frameworks
JOINT INTERAGENCY POLICING TEAM (JIPT)

A JIPT is an effects-based capability brick that is task-organised to provide specialist policing support within a complex and rapidly changing environment. The complementary nature of the each JIPT facilitates tactical interoperability between MP, AFP (international CIVPOL) and indigenous CIVPOL, and the seamless transition of command and control between each organisation. The versatile structure, training and equipment of the JIPT is fundamental to the application of precise, discriminate and tailored effects commensurate with the complex conflict environment.

CASE STUDY – TIMOR LESTE 2006

In May 2006, intense civil unrest erupted in Timor Leste following the sacking of 595 Timor Leste Defence Force (F-FDTL) soldiers by the Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri. Fighting between the F-FDTL and the Timor Leste National Police Force (PNTL) resulted in the collapse of law and order, security and judicial frameworks throughout the country. Subsequently, the Timor Leste Government requested international support to restore and maintain law and order, and provide humanitarian relief to displaced persons forced to flee the fighting.

The ADF response to the intrastate violence was the establishment of Joint Task Force (JTF) 631 and the deployment of approximately 2200 personnel supported by aviation and maritime components. Despite the collapse of law and order, domestic Timorese law (framed within the Timor Leste Criminal Procedure Code) remained extant. Additionally, ADF personnel were permitted to exercise the powers of the PNTL, under the Status of Forces Agreement, for the purpose of establishing security and stability.

The MP contingent deployed as part of JTF 631 comprised of a General Duties platoon with attached MPD, CPP and Investigator capabilities. Although significantly small in size, the MP contingent provided the following specialist support to JTF 631 efforts to restore and maintain law and order, in accordance with doctrinal functions detailed in LWD 0-1-3:

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Conduct of joint patrols with the AFP.
- Arrest and detention support to AFP and Battle Group cordon and search operations.
- MPD support to AFP General Duties operations.
• Support to the conduct of investigations by AFP and United Nations Police (UNPOL).
• Collection and preservation of evidence.

DETENTION OPERATIONS
• Establishment and maintenance of a Defence Detention Facility.
• Establishment of a Detention Management Team.
• Support to the re-establishment of the Timor Leste judicial system.
• Review and amendment of JTF 631 SOPs on Apprehension, Search, Disarmament and Detention in order to align with the Timor Leste Criminal Procedure Code.

SECURITY OPERATIONS
• Command and control support to Battle Group Population Protection and Control operations.
• Provision of CPP to key Timor Leste Government Ministers and other VIPs.
• Physical security of the Dili District Court in order to facilitate judicial proceedings.
• Provision of MP General Duties and MPD capabilities to the Commander’s Reserve Force.

The MP contingent maintained a key responsibility for the restoration and maintenance of law and order within the Dili region for a period of four months. During the period June–October 2006, the contingent processed in excess of 1000 criminal detainees, and was instrumental in the re-invigoration of the fledging Timor Leste judicial system. The ability of the MP contingent to provide a diverse range of specialist policing support, in conjunction with the AFP and UNPOL, enabled effective interim measures to be implemented until UNPOL was capable of assuming operational leadership. Additionally, the ability of the MP contingent to rapidly assimilate extant domestic laws and procedures, and foster strong operational cooperation with key international CIVPOL components, was attributed to its commonality of training and operational (domestic and offshore) experiences with CIVPOL.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of modern peace and stability operations has resulted in an increasing need for the ADF to perform a constabulary role in a medium to low threat environment, until the transition of responsibility to indigenous and/or international CIVPOL components. The military-led restoration and maintenance of law and order has been a key element of the ADF response to recent internal conflicts in which the rule of law and legal system is either weak or has collapsed. The ADF is generally not structured or trained for the inherent challenges of conducting
The role of the Military Police in enhancing ADF-AFP interoperability

Constabulary Operations, a concept previously undefined within Land doctrine. Subsequently, it must utilise the unique training, skills and experience of its MP to achieve precise, discriminate and tailored effects commensurate with the complex conflict environment, as demonstrated in Timor Leste in 2006.

As the AFP seeks to enhance its interoperability with the ADF, and establish the IDG as a leading international CIVPOL organisation, the commonality of training, cooperation and operational experiences of the RACMP makes it the most suitable organisation to contribute to, and lead, ADF–AFP interoperability initiatives. Extant MP–AFP training and domestic cooperation mechanisms, combined with the development of operational and tactical interoperability frameworks such as the JIPCC, will enable MP to address no less than 17 recommendations made by the eight ADF–AFP interoperability working groups. Through the implementation of extant and developmental concepts, and greater contribution to future interoperability initiatives, the MP will maintain a fundamental role in enhancing ADF-AFP interoperability on peace and stability operations.

**KEY ADF-AFP INTEROPERABILITY WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS**

**LEGAL WORKING GROUP**

004 - Map out existing legal arrangements between the ADF/AFP such as Memorandums of Understanding and establish the status of these arrangements.


**PLANNING WORKING GROUP**

017 - Identify and report on opportunities for the increased use of liaison embedded and exchange officers between elements of the ADF and AFP.

- Secondment or exchange of MP personnel to the Capability and Development Branch or ORG (Capability Development and Special Projects) of the AFP IDG in order to develop doctrine, SOPs, TTPs and training.
- Embedding a MP Liaison Officer within HQ JOC (Operations and/or Plans)
- Embedding MP personnel within a Joint Interagency Policing Coordination Cell (JIPCC) in theatre.
019 - Develop mechanisms and processes for interagency planning regarding intelligence sharing at the strategic and operational levels.
- Development of criminal intelligence mechanisms as part of the all-source intelligence cell.

065 - Investigate and make recommendations on the development of a combined ADF/AFP Weapons Technical Intelligence (WTI) and exploitation capability.
- Contribution to WTI development program.

OPERATIONS WORKING GROUP

036 - Develop protocols and procedures, at the tactical level, to allow effective tasking of combined interagency forces, and to support seamless transitions from military to police, and where necessary to indigenous authorities.
- Development of JIPCC protocols and procedures.
- Combined interagency training to examine, review and amend JIPCC protocols and procedures.

042 - Clarification and possible enhancement of the role of MP and the AFP in joint operations or at time of handover. The review is to address investigative capability, detainee management, forensics and prosecution.
- Development of the JIPCC and Joint Interagency Policing Teams (JIPTs), including the identification and conduct of training opportunities.

049 - Investigate operational command responsibility, relationships between ADF/AFP commanders at the tactical level.
- Contribution to the Operations Working Group.

051 - Investigation into the adoption of a Tactical Combined Command Post and the development of common Combined Command Post procedures.
- Development of the JIPCC Tactical (JIPCC Tac) concept.

052 - Investigation into how Military Personnel Support Detachments (PSDs)/AFP Close Personnel Protection (CPP) and Very Important Persons (VIPs) are to be handled and organised with regards to management of protection responsibilities.
- Review the RACMP CPP contribution to this issue considering the position of RACMP as the Training Adviser for CPP. Confirm PSD authorised training with Defence.
053 - Establish a mechanism, prior to deployment, the factors and level of threat that will determine whether a tactical situation requires a military or police response.
- Contribution to the Operations Working Group.

INTELLIGENCE WORKING GROUP

062 - Develop mechanisms and processes for interagency intelligence sharing at the tactical level.
- Development of criminal intelligence mechanisms as part of the all-source intelligence cell.

DOCTRINE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING (DET) WORKING GROUP

071 - Develop training regimes to inculcate a joint ADF and AFP approach to operations at the tactical level.
- Reciprocal attendance on ADF/AFP training, across the entire spectrum of interagency policing will inculcate a joint ADF/AFP approach.

075 - Examine and make recommendations on making terminology standard, where appropriate, between the ADF and AFP—including doctrine and acronyms.
- Examination of current terminology/language employed by MP.

077 - Identify ADF/AFP training that may be suitable for ADF/AFP attendance and develop a mechanism to encourage and expedite access to such training.
- AFP participation in MP-specific training (MRT, DPTC courses, 1 MP Bn exercises, etc).
- MP participation in AFP-specific training (ORG exercises, IDPD, etc).
- AFP participation in ADF training and planning exercises (MRE, VITAL series, etc).
- Identification and development of training required to address ADF/AFP capability gaps.
- Enhancement and/or development of the extant ADF/AFP MOU (Enhancing Policing Matters) to expedite access to such training.

079 - Investigate whether training can be made into a nationally recognised standard.
- Review (mapping) of current competency standards for MP training.
080 - Investigate incorporating ADF/AFP lecturing on each others’ capabilities at appropriate levels of Defence and the AFP training institutions.

- Identification of suitable ADF/AFP courses, seminars, training activities, etc, that will facilitate the exchange of organisational information.

CAPABILITY WORKING GROUP

120 - The development of less lethal capability needs to provide individual, joint ADF/AFP teams and combined arms teams with an enhanced graduated response capability. This needs to include close quarter and stand off less lethal capabilities.

- Contribution to the Joint Non-Lethal Capability program.

ENDNOTES

1 *Echo Security Review 2004*, European Commission’s Directorate for Humanitarian Aid, p. 71,


5 *Inquiry into Australia’s Involvement in Peacekeeping Operations*, The AFP Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, March 2007, p. 7.


9 Combat Policing involves the ability to operate and conduct policing functions in a medium to high threat environment.


13 Juani O'Reilly, ‘Policing the neighbourhood and keeping peace in the Pacific’, 

14 *Inquiry into Australia’s Involvement in Peacekeeping Operations*, p. 9.

15 ‘Interoperability Review Between the Australian Defence Force and the Australian 
Federal Police for Regional Stabilisation Operations’, Australian Federal Police, 2007, 
p. 7.

16 Ibid.

17 Constabulary Operations are operations in which law enforcement, security and/or 
military forces are required to police a population in accordance with indigenous or 
imposed rule of law processes. This definition encompasses operations that, by their 
nature, are conducted in a medium to low threat environment to restore and maintain 
law and order.

18 Constabulary Actions, as defined within *Adaptive Campaigning* (2009), are actions 
that provide policing capabilities appropriate to the environment, collection of 
criminal intelligence, evidence preservation, investigations, judicial support and 
detention management. Constabulary Actions is a sub-concept of the Population 
Protection line of operation.

19 ‘Interoperability Review Between the Australian Defence Force and the Australian 

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

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DOCTRINE AND CONCEPTS

CIVIL-MILITARY COOPERATION IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

SUSAN HUTCHINSON

ABSTRACT

Today’s operations represent complex, uncertain battles against enemies concealed among a population whose support is critical to victory. This article examines the importance of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) capabilities in the Australian Army, demonstrating its potentially vital role in the range of ADF operations. The author articulates the benefits that can accrue to ADF commanders when a properly integrated and coordinated CIMIC effort is undertaken. The author calls for the official establishment of a dedicated CIMIC sub-unit in 2 Division, and identifies the ways in which CIMIC units, and the ADF more broadly, stand to benefit from the recent establishment of the Asia Pacific Civil-Military Centre of Excellence.

INTRODUCTION

Civil–military cooperation (CIMIC) has become a vital component in the success of Australian Defence Force (ADF) disaster relief, urban, counter-insurgency and peacekeeping operations. Military activities in countries affected by complex emergencies that also necessitates a response from other government agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs) requires, at the
very least, some form of communication between the military and civilian elements. The ADF views CIMIC as ‘enabling military operations to make a more coherent contribution to the achievement of national and international objectives’.\(^1\) CIMIC capability and CIMIC doctrine in the ADF are, however, still developing.

Admiral Chris Barrie, former Chief of the Defence Force, said in 1999 that the ADF had a dual role: ‘we must actively work for peace, as well as prepare for war’.\(^2\) CIMIC activities help rebuild civil infrastructure, protect the civilian population from the negative impacts of warfare, ensure the ADF approach an operation with the greatest possible chance of success, and work holistically for international peace and security—all in accordance with our international obligations and the commander’s intent. As such, this article will explore the necessity of the CIMIC capability in disaster relief, humanitarian intervention, urban operations, counterinsurgency and peace support operations, and critically discuss some key issues of contention for CIMIC.

**DEFINING THE TERMS AND THE ACTORS**

The ADF defines CIMIC as:\(^3\)

> The coordination and cooperation, in support of the mission, between the Commander and civil actors, including the national population and local authorities as well as international, national and non government organisations and agencies.\(^4\)

The inclusion of ‘in support of the mission’ is what differentiates CIMIC from the term civil–military coordination (CMCoord), used by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which maintains a humanitarian imperative. CMCoord is defined as:

> The essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency, and when appropriate pursue common goals. Basic strategies range from coexistence to cooperation. Coordination is a shared responsibility facilitated by liaison and common training.\(^5\)

CIMIC may offer support to the civil community. However, this will generally only take place where and when it is necessary to create the conditions for a successful mission, or because civilian capabilities are unable to carry out the activity. It is important to note that, due to the connection with the civil community, any CIMIC activity that is poorly planned or mismanaged will potentially have severe, negative effects on the mission, the commander and the Task Force, and may seriously degrade relationships with the civilian community.

CIMIC allows the ADF to effectively interact with civil elements within the area of operations (AO). In so doing, ‘CIMIC provides the interface for cooperation,
coordination, mutual support, joint planning and information exchange at all levels. To achieve this, CIMIC operators and CIMIC specialists are currently deployed on all major ADF operations. The CIMIC element of the Australian Army is based in Brisbane, at Headquarters 1 Division. The CIMIC element of 2 Division currently consists of a squadron based in Sydney at 21 Construction Regiment. This squadron is still awaiting official unit establishment.

Civil actors in an AO may include: international organisations such as organs of the UN; the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; the Red Cross; national and international NGOs such as Oxfam, Care and Plan International; local and foreign government organisations; and local community organisations such as cooperatives and unions. NGOs may have short-term emergency relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction goals, a longer term development outlook, or a combination thereof, each with a different approach. The value of the diversity of these approaches should be a key consideration of CIMIC.

Many current ADF operations resemble the 'three block war' as outlined by General Krulak, former Commandant of the US Marine Corps, whereby forces provide assistance to the civil population, carry out peacekeeping tasks, and combat operations concurrently. This is reflective of other descriptions of the complexities of the modern battlespace, explaining that many of the tasks outlined here will overlap.

This 'three block war' most often occurs in complex emergencies. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee defines a complex emergency as a humanitarian crisis where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing UN country programme.

Complex emergencies or impending complex emergencies consist of the threat of humanitarian crisis, violent conflict and political instability. An effective response to a complex emergency must address each of these components. In an era of increased recognition of human security, CIMIC adds depth of both knowledge and capability to planning and operations in the complex emergencies in which the ADF operates.

The term humanitarian crisis refers to a lack of basic human needs including food, water and shelter in any given area. Due to the fundamental nature of these needs, humanitarian organisations deliver aid on an impartial basis, with positive discrimination toward those in the greatest need; they operate independently from any political policy, and some are neutral parties in any conflict. So long as these principles are
evident to protagonists, this offers humanitarian organisations a unique practical protection in the field as well as legal protection under international law. Military action is driven by political will. Therefore, it is very rarely textbook humanitarian action. As a result, any ADF action in support of the civilian dimension must not be referred to as humanitarian unless it expresses all recognised traits of humanitarian assistance.

In the 1990s, Rony Brauman, president of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), coined the term ‘espace humanitaire’, or humanitarian space. Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions states that relief ‘shall not be regarded as interference in the armed conflict or as unfriendly acts’, and that the parties to the conflict ‘shall allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of all relief consignments, equipment, and personnel’. Humanitarian space is now a term used commonly by humanitarian organisations to describe a space in which they ‘are free to evaluate needs, free to monitor the distribution and use of relief goods, and free to have a dialogue with the people’—and this often conflicts with boundaries of a military AO.

**DISASTER RELIEF**

In a purely disaster relief operation the military can respond with unmatched speed, deploying a mobile, skilled workforce trained to work in extremely arduous conditions with minimal notice. Such skills and ability amount to a wealth of resources. The impact that a disaster has on a population is affected by the level of risk reduction mechanisms that are in place within a community. In a conflict zone, the infrastructure and community resources that can be used to recover from a disaster will be greatly depleted.

A disaster will erode what very little a community has, and make them more vulnerable against future disasters and increasingly vulnerable to poverty and the consequences of conflict. As a result, the humanitarian community has indicated that disaster relief must include an element of risk reduction against future disasters. Any rebuilding must be completed to a standard able to withstand future disasters, actively reducing the vulnerability of victims and reducing potentially greater resources needed in response to a future disaster.

The ADF’s ability to respond to a disaster was exemplified by the disaster relief efforts in the aftermath of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunamis under Operation SUMATRA ASSIST. To ensure the effective and efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance, the commander combined the Joint Task Force (JTF) with the civil–military cooperation...
Civil-Military Cooperation in Complex Emergencies

(CIMIC) mission. The key theme of the operation was delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance. To engage the approximately 400 NGOs working in the area, the ADF established a CIMIC centre in Aceh. The centre acted as liaison between foreign military, Indonesian military and civil agencies offering disaster relief. Over 1300 tonnes of aid was delivered by air, aeromedical evacuations were carried out, medical treatment and air transport were provided, 4.7 million litres of water was purified, and 9 cubic kilometres of debris was cleared. Furthermore, CIMIC staff gained information and provided advice at specialist working groups, and provided key information to JTF and UN agencies on camps for internally displaced people (IDP).

Humanitarian Intervention

The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) was established to find some solutions to the contentious issues surrounding humanitarian intervention. The ICISS Report, The Responsibility to Protect (R2P), proposed that when a population is suffering serious harm and their government is unable or unwilling to avert the situation, the international responsibility to protect overrides the international legal principle of non-intervention. Humanitarian intervention is conditional on the right intentions: it must be a last resort, must be proportional, and must have a reasonable chance of success. Intervention when conducted then entails three responsibilities, the responsibility to prevent, react and rebuild.

Despite the fact that each of these responsibilities has a civil component, the responsibilities fall on the intervening government or the intervening defence force to implement. It is the reasonable chance of success and the responsibility to rebuild which affects CIMIC activity. The ICISS Report is not a legally binding document; however, many organisations support the principles outlined in the document. Oxfam Australia has requested that all Australian peacekeeping operations should be framed by the principles of R2P because they provide a ‘humane and practical policy framework … and … take into account non-security and post-conflict aspects of the mission which are critical in complex conflict environments’. R2P requires that the international community is asked to intervene in a conflict by the UN Security Council. This was the case for the NATO intervention in Kosovo. If the international community is not asked to intervene by the UN Security Council, but does so anyway, as occurred in Iraq, there is no quietus on the responsibilities to the civilian population.
R2P amplifies the necessity for military forces to be able to undertake mandated protection tasks. There have been seven UN operations since 1999 where protection of civilians is an explicitly mandated task. Protection requires military and police forces to operate in conjunction with humanitarians to enhance the safety of civilians. The responsibility to protect non-combatants from conflict is enshrined in the Geneva Conventions, yet no guidance exists for how this is to be done.

Furthermore, Australia’s responsibility to ‘maintain peace and security’ is articulated in the UN Charter; and the Fourth Geneva Convention states that an invading army has the responsibility to restore basic services prior to withdrawal, rebuild damaged infrastructure, and has a number of other responsibilities to the civilian population ‘under occupation’.

**URBAN WARFARE**

A recent study sponsored by the United States Joint Forces Command noted that the modern battlespace is a complex urban environment which is fundamentally human and is shared by various civilian actors. The resulting report observed that successful urban operations require a clear understanding of the conflict, the enemy, the battlefield, the local population and their culture. It also stated that friendly forces must shape the strategic environment, local population and physical environment; effectively engage the hostile force; consolidate and protect what has been gained; and carry out an effective transition to civilian control. ‘Shaping campaigns should incorporate the capabilities of entire commands in support of civil affairs and related efforts to win the indigenous population’s trust and confidence.’ CIMIC staff provide the critical coordination mechanism on the ground that is fundamental to the commander’s ability to understand and shape the conflict, the battlespace and the local population.

The hardship of conflict can push individuals and communities to turn to strategies that perpetuate conflict and instability, such as joining a militia or insurgency group, growing opium poppies or trading weapons. Local community groups and NGOs are likely to have been working to combat these negative livelihood strategies and address the root causes of conflict for decades. As a result, they have a great insight into the local needs and grievances of the communities inside an AO, and, with a correct approach, provide a good potential source of information to CIMIC, the commander and the ADF. They work to reduce the negative political, economic, social, ideological and cross-cutting factors which cause frustration in the civilian population that can be considered the precursors to and perpetuators of conflict. Often NGOs also work to counteract the negative effects of conflict in local populations. Such activities are vital to the achievement of sustainable peace and security.
COUNTERINSURGENCIES

‘Contemporary insurgencies flow from systemic failures in political, economic and social realms.’ For a successful counterinsurgency operation, there must be a simultaneous reduction in the causes of frustration that swell the ranks of insurgent or terrorist groups, and a successful engagement of the enemy. Lieutenant Colonel John Blaxland describes the best approach to counterinsurgency as one that ‘is culturally attuned, responsive to local nuances that motivate insurgents and terrorists, and designed to generate lasting effects.’ CIMIC is crucial in achieving this.

Increasingly, today’s strategic environment involves a convergence of military and civilian tasks. While the Reconstruction Task Force (RTF) in Afghanistan is equipped with specific heavy military equipment, modern military technology and combat troops, they are tasked with the reconstruction of infrastructure including schools, hospitals, bridges, and the improvement of community based projects to achieve a safe and sustainable future for Afghans.

In the international context, insurgents may be rebelling out of ideological, economic, political or social frustrations, or most likely a combination thereof. Causes of conflict are cross-cutting; effective peace building measures must therefore be equally multi-faceted. Frustration at their economic situation may be brought on by the unfulfilled promises of structural adjustment policies, neglect from the benefits of national or international economic growth, or exclusion from market opportunities. Their political situation may infuriate them because they are excluded from or under-represented in governance, an existing government may be corrupt, they may be seeking meaningful autonomy or independence for cultural or other reasons, they may be exploited by already warring factions or warlords, or they may be entirely ideologically opposed to the existing policies or government. Furthermore, their social or livelihood situation may be a source of conflict: their human rights may be abused; they may lack political freedom, access to healthcare and educational opportunities; there may be a lack of other social services and infrastructure; or their lives or security may be threatened. NGOs are in a unique position, having been working to address these issues for decades. CIMIC Personnel are ideally placed to engage them, interact with these issues and inform the commander’s response.

An insurgency ‘provides a source of identity and empowerment for those members with few sources for such things. Without a gun, most insurgent soldiers
are simply poor, uneducated, disempowered people with no prospects and little hope." Development organisations work to address issues of poverty, education and empowerment. Community groups and NGOs often have an understanding of these social, political, economic and cross-cutting grievances. CIMIC personnel are often uniquely qualified to liaise with these organisations, and coordinate and guide the post conflict reconstruction and development that is required to generate the lasting effects of sustainable peace and security. Only through effective liaison with civil actors in the AO can we win the peace as well as the war.

**PEACEKEEPING**

History is littered with examples of peacekeeping operations that have been unsuccessful because there has been no peace to keep or unaddressed tensions run so high that eventually one side breaks the peace. Thus, effective liaison between the military and the civil population is necessary for a successful peace operation. Peace operations occur in a range of scenarios from peace building to the enforcement and maintenance of peace. The various scenarios involve differing levels of conventional warlike activities. In each, ADF troops protect and defend nation builders who will be either rebuilding a nation after the devastation of conflict, or building a new independent nation. Nation building is a transitional process primarily carried out by civilian groups, both governmental and non-governmental.

Groups involved in nation building may include new and old political leaders, human rights organisations, peace and justice groups, organisations working for refugee repatriation, social service and welfare providers as well as freedom fighters. In post-conflict societies, all civilians play a role in the rebuilding of a democratic nation, because each individual plays a role in the greater community, whether they be a parent, school teacher, justice worker or politician. A peacekeeping mission will not be successful if the peacekeeping force cannot learn from these parties, understand their concerns and address or appropriately redirect them.

Successful peace support operations are dependent on addressing the concerns of belligerents and the general populous as well as directly addressing violent conflict. ‘Peacekeeping forces themselves have to learn how to behave and operate in a way that generates acceptance rather than antagonism.’ It is necessary that freedom fighters witness and experience a smooth and effective transfer of political power to civilian structures. Militaries and militia that have helped the government
come to power or perceive themselves as ‘guardians of the state’ are more likely to retain an interest in politics and return to violent approaches to addressing grievances. In order to avoid continued threats to government institutions and actual or threats of violence, it is of great importance that the transition to civilian control and nation building processes address the concerns and grievances of all concerned parties.

A HEALTHY DOSE OF PESSIMISM

There are some primary concerns with the military effectively carrying out tasks in support of the civil dimension. They include: sustainability; the driving values of CIMIC activities; compliance with humanitarian and development codes of conduct; risks posed to humanitarian actors by military involvement in civil tasks; the willingness of NGOs to coordinate their activities with the ADF; the Army’s knowledge base for civilian needs assessment; and the organisation’s capacity to manage participatory development and humanitarian projects in accordance with needs identified through participation.

The sustainability of any civil–military relationship is questionable due to the fact that from the outset, the military must plan to withdraw. Many of the issues that the local population face will be present indefinitely, and international organisations and NGOs may plan to stay for the long term. While many actors in the AO will be working toward sustainable peace and development, the military and civil organisations will not always be working to the same goals.

Many critics will take issue with CIMIC activities if they are based on winning hearts and minds and not directed at addressing the causes of frustration in a population or offering a holistic approach to achieving and maintaining peace and security. The information gathering role of the ADF and CIMIC operators will greatly concern many civil actors. Another concern for many civil actors will be how being seen to work in cooperation with the military will affect the external perceptions of their organisation. This is particularly the case for Médecins sans Frontières, who define their independence from political, economic and religious powers very strictly.

The military is a hierarchical institution not accustomed to managing anything in a participatory manner …
it is important to note the difference in cultures in humanitarian organisations and defence forces. Whereas defence forces work in a strict hierarchy with typically a clear command and control structure, humanitarian organisations work in a more fluid environment with flatter structures and attempt to include the people we serve in decision making processes.  

Military structure is designed to facilitate quick decision-making in an emergency. But for infrastructure developments that aim to have a long-term, positive impact on the civil community, reduce insecurity and address the causes of conflict, greater consultation with the civil population is required. Michael Pugh, from the University of Plymouth, has stated that ‘military personnel are clearly capable of performing humanitarian tasks, not least in civil emergencies’. But the question is ‘whether military establishments can do it well—or according to need rather than political interests and strategic calculation—at the same time as enforcing a peace or fighting wars’.  

CIMIC doctrine is relatively new in the ADF, there are few CIMIC qualified personnel, and CIMIC squadrons are very few and far between. This may be interpreted as showing a lack of skills, expertise and theoretical knowledge base for carrying out well guided civil development activities. However, the core staff who are currently establishing CIMIC squadrons and testing CIMIC doctrine are well aware of the development issues of dependency and the necessity for NGOs to be seen as independent from the military, and often from the government. Furthermore, CIMIC developing doctrine was written in consultation with specialists from the other services and representatives from humanitarian and aid agencies. The issues raised here must continue to be addressed.

**A CONFLICT OF INTEREST?… A CODE OF CONDUCT**

The military offers a source of skills, personnel and equipment that are always at the ready to operate in arduous, often extreme and insecure conditions. Their mission and style, however, is very different, for instance, from that of the Red Cross, who maintain a strict code of neutrality, or of local groups who will have a complex understanding of the local needs and culture.

Various agencies who are already equipped to work in conflict or disaster situations have established codes of conduct that differ from the culture of, and legislative framework governing, differences between other civilian actors and the ADF do not intrinsically prevent them supporting each other …
Civil-Military Cooperation in Complex Emergencies

the ADF. NGOs have their own points of accountability to donors, staff and volunteers that may be guided by many factors including religious belief, or a mission to protect a particular group of people; for example, children. If the military commander has needs that clash with those of NGOs and development organisations, the mission will, understandably, always have primacy. However, the differences between other civilian actors and the ADF do not intrinsically prevent them supporting each other and offering mutual guidance on specific and general points of interest.

There are many codes of conduct that various NGOs and international organisations have agreed to abide by to provide the best possible response and maintain accountability for effective, efficient and collaborative responses to disaster relief and complex emergencies. The Sphere Project’s Code of Conduct identifies ten key points, some of which overlap with the Red Cross principles of humanity, impartiality and independence. They are:

- that humanitarian imperative is a priority;
- aid is given on the basis of needs alone, without discrimination of any kind;
- aid will be independent from political, religious or government standpoints;
- local culture and custom will be respected;
- sponsors will build disaster response capacities and reduce vulnerabilities as well as meet basic needs;
- sponsors will include beneficiaries in program management;
- sponsors will be accountable to both donors and beneficiaries; and
- in advertising and publicity, sponsors will portray victims as dignified beings not hopeless objects.

The additional Red Cross principle of neutrality is not shared by all humanitarian agencies.

While the basic ADF CIMIC course includes awareness training in the Sphere Project, points of contention between civil and military actors will naturally remain. Humanitarianism is rarely the mission focus of the ADF; however, the driving values behind CIMIC reflect a holistic approach to security (including conflict resolution and peace building) which can be of overall benefit to that mission. CIMIC activities can and should be able to incorporate disaster risk reduction into project planning, and aim projects at reducing vulnerabilities as well as addressing basic needs. It is a truism that ADF deployments and CIMIC activities are dependent on the changing standpoint of the commander and Australian Government policy. While peacekeeping operations often require the military to take a neutral stance, this does not mean that they are necessarily acting in a humanitarian nature because their stance will vary before, during and after a mission, whereas a humanitarian one would not.
DIVIDING THE TASKS … IDENTIFYING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In all civil–military tasks, there must be a clear division of military and civilian roles and responsibilities. Shared or common goals between actors in an AO must be identified and mutually exclusive or different goals must be acknowledged and respected. These must be made clear to all parties and, importantly, also to the civilian population at large.

With the convergence of civil and military tasks, the boundaries of humanitarian and military roles have also been blurred. Many NGOs have stated that the preservation of the ‘humanitarian space’ is vital. In Afghanistan, troops have dressed as aid workers and military reconstruction teams drive around in the same white vehicles as aid workers, leading insurgents to link NGOs to military operations. This has proven to damage the perceived and actual neutrality and independence of humanitarian and development workers and greatly impinged on their safety.

While there is an increasing overlap of civil and military tasks, it is still important that each is clearly identified and their role is known to the public. If military members engage in projects in support of the civil community it is vital that they do so in uniform so they can be clearly identified. Should conflict erupt it would be increasingly difficult for humanitarian workers to negotiate access across military lines to those in need, as is their role. According to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Humanitarian Affairs:

> It is important to maintain a clear separation between the roles of the military and humanitarian actors, by distinguishing their respective spheres of competence and responsibility…The need for the humanitarians to maintain an actual and perceived distance from the military is especially important with regard to belligerent forces or representatives of an occupying power.²⁸

These issues may mean that some NGOs are not willing to collaborate with the military; however, if all efforts are made to address their concerns, there is no reason that many NGOs will not be prepared to work collaboratively and communicate with the ADF. The principle of neutrality of the Red Cross superficially appears to exclude working with the military; however, the Red Cross will and does work alongside defence forces from around the world while maintaining their integrity and code of conduct. Civil–military operations centres are established ‘outside the wire’ so
that members from the civilian community or NGO representatives do not need to enter a military compound, hence compromising their neutrality. Furthermore, CIMIC training incorporates work with various NGOs and international organisations including UNHCR, the Red Cross, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Oxfam, as well as training in codes of conduct for humanitarian assistance.

**THE WAY FORWARD FOR CIMIC**

The future of CIMIC will likely be influenced by the forthcoming Defence White Paper. Regardless, a CIMIC specialisation must be nurtured within the Army. This necessitates a unit establishment for the CIMIC Squadron in 2 Division, and greater consideration of CIMIC issues in planning at all levels. Further consideration should also be made regarding the location of CIMIC assets in the brigades, as independent division assets, and possibly at Joint Operations Command.

CIMIC specialists need to expand their understanding and appreciation of the techniques and approaches of NGOs and other non-defence actors in the field while continuing to separate and highlight the differences between military and civil actors. Understanding of the requirements of IDPs, non-combatants and other civil actors can be expanded by completing the suite of courses conducted by the RedR national training and registration body of disaster and humanitarian workers, or a similar organisation. Some lessons could also be learned from both the content and delivery of training conducted at Germany’s Centre for International Peace Operations, which recruits and trains European personnel for peace operations.

CIMIC activities in support of the civil dimension must act as peace building projects. They should put into practice the accepted connection between peace and development. Thus, they should express many of the same characteristics as development projects and seek to address the root causes of conflict. CIMIC can identify and manage contracts for or redirect projects, which may include infrastructure development such as roads and sewage, or education and training initiatives to increase human and social capital.

Military planning considerations must include the utilisation of local knowledge and the approaches of humanitarian and development organisations. Projects should:

- be participatory in nature to ensure they accurately reflect the needs of the local population;
have a degree of local ownership to ensure there is the will to maintain and sustain the project post-withdrawal;

• be low cost and use appropriate technologies to avoid unnecessary use of scarce resources, avoid the risk of looting, and artificial inflation of the economy or resource base;

• increase the capacity of civil organisations and authorities; and

• reduce further vulnerabilities to disaster or conflict.

Many of the CIMIC activities in Iraq filled several of these criteria. The security situation there meant that very few NGOs were able to operate. CIMIC managed many projects in support of the civil dimension, often on request from civilian actors. These included infrastructure projects carried out by local contractors such as the construction of 11 Kilovolt-Ampere power lines to connect villages just a few kilometres from the power grid in the Al-Askavi quarter and electrical repairs to the village of Rywawsha. Renovations to the Al Salmon community centre showed an investment in local social capital. Construction of veterinary facilities in Al Darraj and veterinary storage in As Samawah are investments in sustainable livelihood strategies, increasing the capacity for animal husbandry through capacity for improved health of livestock, and the slaughterhouse and animal waste disposal project will ensure that slaughtering occurs in a safe and sanitary environment. Renovations to a grain silo laboratory in As Samawah were an investment in the long-term food security of Iraqis. Construction of an ambulance station and support to a mobile health clinic were also long term projects in the health of Iraqis. However, post deployment assessment would be required to verify the long-term effectiveness of these projects and learn from any required improvements. Such an assessment would prove beneficial as the Rudd Government pursues a more holistic response to security challenges.

In accordance with a Labor pre-election promise, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd opened the new Asia Pacific Civil–Military Centre of Excellence in November 2008. “The Centre’s mission is to support the development of national civil–military capabilities to prevent, prepare for and respond more effectively to conflicts and disasters overseas.” This is to be achieved through research, capturing lessons learned, developing doctrine and facilitating training. The centre will work with relevant government and UN agencies, as well as tertiary and international peacekeeping institutions, NGOs and the commercial sector. It will function as an advisory body which will work to develop a strategy for peace and stabilisation operations …
The centre should aim to create a ‘space’ for civil and military actors to express ideas, come to respectfully understand different goals and approaches, and then build on common ground between both government and non-government agencies. The centre is a civilian organisation, responsible to the Chief of the Defence Force and the Secretary of the Department of Defence. From the ADF, there are positions for a Military Affairs Advisor, a Liaison Officer to the ADF Peacekeeping Centre, and four ADF reservists. The centre also has positions for an NGO advisor from the Australian Council for International Development, a UN and International Advisor from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, two secondees from the AFP, and one each from the Attorney General’s Department, Emergency Management Australia, and AusAID. The inclusion of all these actors in an open environment should ensure there is a clearer understanding of the exclusive goals of various actors, and subsequently allow all actors to build on the shared goals while respecting the differences between actors required for successful civil–military interactions.

CONCLUSION

In 2004, Kofi Anan poignantly expressed that ‘development and security are inextricably linked.’ In the current operational environment CIMIC is necessary for the successful completion of ADF disaster relief, humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping, urban warfare, and counterinsurgency operations. CIMIC activities should be carried out in accordance with government policy, commander’s intent, fulfilling the obligation to rebuild under the Geneva Conventions and the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, and the responsibility to maintain peace and security under the United Nations Charter. The new Defence White Paper, new CIMIC doctrine, the new Asia Pacific Civil–Military Centre of Excellence, establishment of CIMIC units, allocation of CIMIC resources, and the application of CIMIC capabilities should reflect this.

ENDNOTES

2 Ibid.
3 This is the same definition used by NATO
7 Private military companies are another of the civil actors in the area of operation, further complicating the area of operation. However, they will not be discussed here.
12 LWP-G 3-8-1, p.5–3, para 5.9.
13 IDPs are present in any emergency situation drastic enough to warrant people leaving their homes in search of safety, including humanitarian and natural disasters as well as conflict. As a result of the increasingly internal nature of conflicts across the globe, those fleeing conflict become IDPs. Refugees start as IDPs, gaining refugee status only once they cross an international border. IDPs either do not have the choice or do not wish to take the risk of crossing a national border. IDPs are one of a number of conflict affected groups that are extremely vulnerable. CIMIC personnel are trained to assist in the recognition of potential IDP camp sites, if required, using internationally recognised standards to assess associated infrastructure and coordinate the provision of the required services. CIMIC use measures of effectiveness and normality indicators to ensure that the provision of services and protection of IDPs does not lead to dependency. Being attune to activities in refugee camps and IDP camps will also provide a source of information on movements of IDPs and the inferred movements of conflicting parties.
16 The military intervention in Iraq broke the precedence of escalating measures to restore peace and security that has been set by previous UN sanctioned military interventions such as those in Kosovo and the Iraq–Kuwait conflict. The last Security Council Resolution issued prior to the Iraq war was *Security Council Resolution 1441*, 8 November 2002. It gave Iraq a ‘final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations’. The briefing delivered by Dr Hans Blix to the Security Council 14 February 2003 showed that opportunity had not been exhausted. This precedence also correlates with the R2P principle of the responsibility to prevent.
Civil-Military Cooperation in Complex Emergencies


19. Ibid., p. xix.


22. This is not meant to be a definitive identification on the causes of conflict internationally, but addresses many of those pertinent to current and foreseeable ADF operations. It is recognised that opportunistic crime often greatly increase violence during periods of conflict, and that many conflicts are over less ideological purposes, such as control of valuable resources including oil, water, diamonds and gold. However, these issues are beyond the capabilities of CIMIC and, indeed, most civil organisations.


27. Ibid.


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HUMINT-CENTRIC OPERATIONS

THE WAY FORWARD FOR AUSTRALIAN LAND FORCES IN COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTS

MAJOR BRETT MOUSLEY

ABSTRACT

This article discusses Human Intelligence (HUMINT) as a potential solution to the problem of gathering intelligence on highly agile and adaptive threat networks in complex environments. The article examines why HUMINT is effective in supporting the new forms of small team, semi-autonomous operations proposed by the Australian Army in the future as well as the cultural and historical qualities of its soldiers. The author proposes the adoption of a HUMINT-centric approach to land force operations based on a more holistic view of the HUMINT capability than is currently the case.

The evolution to a future network-centric, knowledge-based force will require the pursuit of pervasive and persistent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities to improve the protection and survivability of future lighter and mobile platforms and engage enemies at the earliest opportunity in complex operational terrains, e.g., urban operations.

Daniel Chia, 2005

The Australian Army Journal • Volume VI, Number 1 • Page 95
INTRODUCTION

Diverse, adaptive and agile networks of non-state actors are now pursuing a long-term strategy of asymmetrical attacks against coalition forces in Iraq and elsewhere as part of a global insurgency in the name of fundamentalist Islam. Western conventional militaries have been much slower to adapt to this conflict environment as a result of constraints imposed by unwieldy structures and bureaucracies; ethical concerns; and budgetary, legal and political processes. The very nature of these threat networks, and the complex environments they operate in, have made them difficult to detect and deal with. But why is this the case given the technological advantage Western militaries possess in the intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) domain?

Human Intelligence (HUMINT) provides one such solution to the problem of gathering intelligence on highly agile and adaptive threats, and does so by focusing more on the human-centric nature of this new and complex environment. But is HUMINT the panacea that it has been heralded as? Answering this question is particularly important for the Australian Army, which has identified in its Future Land Operating Concept Complex Warfighting that land forces will need to operate in complex and highly lethal areas where they may not be capable of detecting the threat before they are attacked.

THE HUMINT SPECTRUM

HUMINT, or the gaining of intelligence from human sources, lays at the very heart of all intelligence activities. Outside of natural phenomena, a human is behind every activity or decision in a conflict. HUMINT encompasses a spectrum of activities designed to maximise the information gained from human sources. This includes the basic framework activities of a deployed force such as passive low-level information gained through face-to-face interaction between soldiers and the population, as well as tactical questioning of selected individuals. It also includes information gained from debriefing and interviewing activities with consensual participants as well as non-consensual participants—interrogation. Finally there are source operations—where a specifically cultivated individual, or group of individuals, is tasked with gaining specific information—run by trained HUMINT operators.

WHY IS HUMINT EFFECTIVE IN COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTS?

Complex Warfighting identifies that many operations occur below the ISTAR discrimination threshold in complex environments where land force must still be prepared to fight. This threshold is currently based upon the limitations of current ISTAR technologies and capabilities available to the force. The majority of these
Legacy sensor technologies have been designed for conventional symmetrical warfare in open terrain and adapted, where possible, to suit the new complex environments in which they now find themselves employed. Recognising this shortcoming, investment is now being placed into new ISTAR technologies which will continue to push the threshold down.

To operate effectively in any environment, a force strives to achieve information superiority, and by doing so it can shape the battlespace to best achieve the desired effects. This is the central aim of network-centric warfare (NCW). But achieving information superiority in such a densely built and diversely populated environment will be difficult due to the sheer volume of information that needs to be collected and analysed. For ISTAR sensors to be effective and persistent in such an environment, they need to be ‘cued’ by a pervasive capability to ‘burrow’ into complex terrain. Otherwise, searching for the threat would be like looking for a needle in a haystack. Reducing complexity in these environments means developing a detailed understanding of the terrain and identifying where, when, how and against who ISTAR is to target its effort. Any proposed solution needs to remain cognisant of the fact that all threats still originate from a human source.

HUMINT by its very nature is designed for penetrating threat networks in the complex terrain of urban operations. By establishing its own networks it adapts to the threat’s method of operations. It provides critical targeting information that can be used to cripple a network at the key nodes rather than a more conventional decapitation which will allow networks to regenerate and reorganise. When supported by effective processing or analysis, HUMINT has achieved significant results. The capture of Saddam Hussein was based on a link-pattern analysis of information gained from human sources with linkages to the former Iraqi leader and those helping to harbour him.

HUMINT is a pervasive ISTAR capability. It can burrow into complex terrain and penetrate threat networks. Once inside, HUMINT can continue to exploit information from that network, in combination with other sensors, to provide more persistent coverage and precision awareness of a potential target. It is this burrowing function that makes it extremely useful in complex environments where other sources are initially limited.

HUMINT is designed for determining the intent side of the threat equation. It may not always produce actionable intelligence immediately, but given time will give a unique insight into the human mind that most technologies will never be able to achieve. HUMINT is an ideal capability for the determination, prediction and analysis
of both the secondary and tertiary effects of military operations due to the level of intimacy it achieves with the local population. Its grounding in understanding cultural and social networks helps to determine the motivations and aims of threat networks. It can also expose potential fault-lines or conflicts within an organisation for further exploitation through information operations and viral targeting such as that proposed by Swanson in his article on countering improvised explosive device (IED) networks. When coupled with the ability to map out the complex interactions and relationships that exist in threat networks, HUMINT allows for the identification of key nodes for monitoring, further exploitation or targeting. This is an area where the Australian Army has already demonstrated operational success:

Appreciating the human dimension of the Iraqi battlespace, by placing a priority on HUMINT rather than technological assets, has been of advantage to OBG-W [Overwatch Battlegroup – West] when dealing with complex adaptive human systems.

The versatility of HUMINT also means that, for example, if the threat adapts to ISTAR operations by moving into the cyber domain to escape detection, a HUMINT source can then be given an email account and access to the Internet to maintain coverage. HUMINT is geared for the anonymity that cyberspace provides and is not geographically tied to a theatre of operations. Providing the right level of local situational awareness is achieved, threat networks can be penetrated from anywhere on the globe. By posing as an insurgent or terrorist in an Internet chat room, a gifted individual could monitor and infiltrate the outer layers of an organisation. Such access would give a unique insight into the individuals involved, their methods, recruitment, organisation and motivations. Importantly, once trusted this individual could then exploit other sources within the network and assist in the critical determination of intent. This merging of technical intelligence gathering and HUMINT is an excellent adaptation to changing societal trends and means of communication and will also help set the foundations for future prevention of cyber-terrorism and cyber-attacks.

HUMINT also plays to the cultural and historical strengths of the Australian Army’s soldiers. Australian soldiers are well known for being culturally attuned, inquisitive and having an ability to gain the empathy of the population they are trying to support in complex conflicts. Ample evidence of this exists from Australia’s campaigns in the Pacific during the Second World War right through to recent operations in East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq. This empathy is engendered by continually making personal contact with the population through patrols and humanitarian assistance projects. This not only enables Australian forces to move
Humint-Centric Operations

freely amongst the population but also creates an environment where soldiers can establish a mutual trust. This provides soldiers with the ability to observe their surroundings, give insights into local attitudes and emotions, and ask questions to establish further information. By talking to locals about how many people are normally present at a mosque or market on any given day, soldiers may provide an indicator that, if a significant number of locals are avoiding the market on that day, an incident may be likely. It is their ability to contextualise and pass on this information that will make each soldier a critical node in a seamless network of sensors and shooters.

HUMINT has a significant advantage over other more technical sources of intelligence in that it does not have a huge reliance on technology to operate. It is therefore not as vulnerable to power outages, communications difficulties, network outages and cyber-attacks. The provision of HUMINT, however, can be enhanced in the future through the provision of GPS devices, mobile phones, digital cameras, and the provision of email accounts to its sources.

By achieving the penetration of a threat network, a HUMINT source will also be capable of leaving tracking devices and other miniaturised, remotely-operated sensors behind in the target’s location to maintain persistent coverage. The continued development of automatic language translators will also make HUMINT more accessible to normal soldiers who do not have interpreters or sufficient language skills to communicate and gain information from the population. Identifying the right people with which to initiate contact may also become easier with biometric recognition systems. General Sir Rupert Smith, in his book *The Utility of Force*, reinforces the value of technology in support of HUMINT-centric operations:

> Our enemies have now gone amongst the people to negate the advantages that advanced sensor technologies bring. Yet these enemies still need to be engaged amongst the people. So in these circumstances, technological advantage can only be achieved when technology is in direct support of those engaged in collecting information amongst the people.  

A Potential Solution for Australian Land Forces?

If Australian land forces are to capitalise on the potential benefits of adopting a HUMINT-centric approach to operations in complex environments, then a more holistic view of the HUMINT capability needs to be considered than is currently the

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This empathy is engendered by continually making personal contact with the population through patrols and humanitarian assistance projects.
Doctrine and Concepts

Major Brett Mousley

A holistic view of HUMINT capability would encompass all deployed elements contributing to the establishment of a clear, complete and coherent picture of the human environment in which they are operating. Currently the approach is for specialists only to conduct HUMINT at the tactical level. This approach potentially limits the amount of information available to a commander and also fails to utilise the potential of the soldiers to observe, contextualise and report on their operating environment.

Complex Warfighting has already argued the case for devolved situational awareness through the provision of ISTAR capabilities right down to the battlegroup and combat team level. HUMINT, through its basic framework activities, needs to follow this trend as well. Having only a finite amount of HUMINT teams held at higher levels will mean a great deal of valuable information available at battlegroup level and below will not be made available to the entire force until a HUMINT team is available.

This article is not advocating the case for a vast increase in the number of HUMINT teams within the Australian Army. A HUMINT-centric approach at the combat team level and below does not involve complex source handling operations but places a greater emphasis on language and cultural training and awareness to assist in soldiers’ capacity to observe, interact and report all low-level information around them. Essentially this is about achieving the vision of making ‘every soldier a sensor’.

Such an approach would also require a small, select group of soldiers in each combat team to be trained in the basics of conducting interviews and patrol debriefs as well as the initial tactical questioning of detainees. They should also have a basic understanding of the overall intelligence cycle. This will enable them to process the information coming in from HUMINT framework activities—as well as an increasingly vast array of other sources—and to provide actionable intelligence for the decision-maker at that level. Essentially this requires the formation of small intelligence cells within existing combat teams. The benefits to the combat team commander in having such a cell at this level are significant. It will afford him with a significantly enhanced degree of situational awareness and thus facilitate a more considered, decisive and rapid response. This is an approach the United States Marine Corps is already considering following feedback from recent operations:

Few would argue that having a Marine able to speak the language of the indigenous population and enemy (or both should they differ) is highly desirable. The benefits in obtaining valuable, highly perishable intelligence through field interviews of enemy prisoners or indigenous civilian population are readily apparent.
A modest expansion in the specialist capability to conduct interrogation and other source operations at the tactical level is also required as part of this holistic capability solution. While the core of this capability already exists within the Australian Army, the exigencies of the complex operating environment will place an even greater burden on the capability to provide HUMINT resources than ever before. A significantly enhanced processing element also needs to be established at all levels to support intelligence staffs in fusing the HUMINT products into the common relevant operating picture (CROP). This enhancement requires both personnel and software to support the analytical methods undertaken.

At the operational level, as part of the holistic HUMINT capability solution, the requirement to undertake source operations against high profile, difficult to access or technically sophisticated targets exists. There is also the requirement to process and provide an overview of entire adversary networks operating against Australian land forces—with a view to determining key nodes and vulnerabilities for targeting. The ability for such an organisation to extend military operations into the domain of cyberspace will also exist in the future. Such an organisation would leverage heavily off other Defence intelligence agencies and be capable of inter-agency and multinational operations. Individuals in this organisation would require extremely specialised training and would possess a select set of skills which may inhibit their wider employability. Currently no such organisation exists.

The costs of a holistic HUMINT capability solution are significant but not insurmountable. Most of the investment would be required in the areas of recruitment and training, incorporating foreign languages and culture. But compared to the level of investment that is currently placed in the Defence Capability Plan for ISTAR projects, this investment is minimal. As Ralph Peters argues, for a tenth of the cost spent on developing an advanced technical intelligence collection system, the United States could ‘buy off most of the enemies our satellites cannot find’. If decision-makers are serious about addressing the threat posed by operating in complex environments, then the investment would be a sensible and sound one.

To enhance the HUMINT capability there is no significant requirement to trade-off any other capabilities …
capability to operate and manoeuvre in a more informed manner amongst target populations. This type of organisational change is likely to meet significant cultural resistance within the Australian Army but is fundamental to changing to a more intelligence-focused approach to operations in complex environments.

Technology-based ISTAR sensors will still be needed to maintain support to high intensity warfighting tasks, however unlikely this scenario might be. ISTAR sensors are still capable of being adapted to support operations in complex environments and by doing so offer persistent coverage once a pervasive asset has uncovered the threat. They can be used to confirm single source intelligence feeds, as well as the classification and identification of potential targets, before destruction by fires. This will assist to avoid collateral damage or accusations of improper targeting.

HUMINT is not without its limitations. It takes time to establish a source network in any environment. Sources may not provide useful information until a certain level of trust exists. Those that do provide information immediately generally have some motivation for doing so and as a result that individual and their information needs to be rigorously confirmed before it is acted upon. Sources require assurances of significant protection or they will not divulge their information. Driving into an insurgent stronghold in an Australian Army Bushmaster vehicle to pick up a source in broad daylight will vastly reduce the source’s life expectancy. As a result, new methods of discrete operations need to be developed to allow HUMINT to operate freely in highly lethal, non-permissive environments. Commanders also need to be educated fully about the capability to employ it effectively and without unnecessary restrictions in support of their operation.

Adopting a HUMINT-centric approach to operations involves a degree of cultural change in the way in which commanders conduct operations in complex environments. Many commanders are now becoming aware of the capabilities of HUMINT and the disproportionate value it provides in terms of situational awareness and the associated safety and security of the force. Appropriately they are now designing their operations to support HUMINT and enhance activities. Further education and exposure to the capabilities will continue to drive this change.

HUMINT is but one source of intelligence. The dangers of acting on single source intelligence have been well documented throughout history. HUMINT has often been referred to as the least reliable form of intelligence. HUMINT operatives therefore carefully cultivate human information sources and seek to obtain verification of the information they provide. Effective actionable intelligence should always be confirmed by multiple sources before it is acted upon.
confirmed by multiple sources before it is acted upon. Significant vetting of any locally employed civilians who act as interpreters will also take time and significant effort.

All of which amounts to HUMINT not being a panacea but nor is any other form of intelligence—especially in complex environments. But adopting a HUMINT-centric approach to operations provides a means of efficiently and effectively harnessing other available ISTAR sensor technologies to negate the advantages agile and adaptive adversaries gain by operating in complex terrain.

**CONCLUSION**

A full spectrum HUMINT capability provides an affordable solution to the Australian Army that is designed for supporting operations in complex land environments. It is a pervasive ISTAR capability which can also burrow into complex terrain and penetrate threat networks to gain vital information regarding intent and capabilities. HUMINT’s predominantly human-oriented focus ensures the Army able to comprehend the complex human interactions and responses which can assist to predict and detect the effects of military operations. It is a capability perfectly suited to the cultural and historical strengths of the Australian Army’s soldiers, allowing them to truly become part of the network of sensors in an NCW force.

A holistic HUMINT capability, able to support land force operations down to the lowest tactical level, is required to meet the evolving response to operations in complex environments. Here it can act as a combat multiplier by significantly enhancing situational awareness and enabling manoeuvres amongst the population. The costs involved in developing such a capability are significant—particularly in terms of personnel and training—but not when compared to the capital being invested in high-technology ISTAR projects.

HUMINT is not without its limitations, particularly in highly lethal, non-permissive environments. It takes time to establish source networks in any environment and the information provided is often unreliable until a mutual trust has been gained. Effective actionable intelligence should never be formulated on the basis of a single source of information and thus all ISTAR capabilities should contribute to its production.

So while not a panacea, HUMINT is the ISTAR capability most suited to achieving pervasiveness beneath the technology-driven threshold by penetrating threat networks in complex environments. It then allows for the harnessing of the traditional ISTAR sensors to maintain a more persistent coverage of the threat. HUMINT, if correctly resourced and coordinated, is also best suited to supporting the new forms of small team, semi-autonomous operations proposed by the Australian Army in the future as well as the cultural and historical qualities of its soldiers. The fact remains that to combat a problem of predominantly human complexity, you require a predominantly human solution.
ENDNOTES


THE AUTHOR

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Doctrine and Concepts

Present Deficiencies in the Australian Army’s Combat Engineering Equipment*

Antony Trentini

Abstract

The Australian Army is a fighting force that depends upon the combined arms approach to generate operational effectiveness. This approach works only when each part of the team can contribute appropriate effects in the face of opposition. The author argues that the Australian Army’s combat engineers are incapable of providing mobility assurance in the face of opposition because of shortcomings with their equipment. The author demonstrates the negative effect this will have on future operational effectiveness and makes several suggestions for improvement.

Introduction

‘Conventional war fighting skills provide the essential foundation for all other types of operations we may undertake.’1 So said the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, when he publicly launched the Adaptive Army initiative in August of

* This article has been peer reviewed
2008. The Chief of Army’s (CA) statement makes it clear that the Army’s direction into the future will be based on doing whatever is required to develop and retain the people, skills and equipment necessary to fight the armies of other states. Critical to this, and any other, type of warfighting is the combined arms approach. This theoretically simple but practically complex concept represents one of the few ways that a numerically inferior army—such as Australia’s—can prevail over an opponent with as much firepower, mass and depth as another state-based land force. Indeed, combined arms warfare against another state opponent arguably represents one of the most formidable challenges that the Australian Army can expect to face.

Every corps has its part to play in this proven approach to military operations. However, as the institutional memories of conventional battlefield operations fade, the Australian Army has allowed the delicate balance of its combined arms forces to deteriorate. While the Infantry, Armour, Artillery and Aviation Corps have all received new capabilities, the Army has neglected one corps—the Corps of the Royal Australian Engineers (RAE). Cognisant of the CA’s stated focus, and the renewed focus on conventional warfighting within the new Defence White Paper, it is certainly timely to examine the lamentable state of the RAE’s major equipment. Without the appropriate kit, the RAE cannot carry out its critical roles of providing mobility and countermobility support to Army and thereby enabling combined arms operations. In fact, it can be argued that the RAE’s equipment today is so deficient that its members are now incapable of performing the battlefield tasks expected of them. This shortage of suitable equipment is a fundamental flaw in the Army’s force structure, and must be quickly addressed if the Army is to achieve the CA’s vision of conducting effective combined arms operations against conventional enemies.

This article will be divided into several sections, each of which will provide evidence to establish the RAE’s inability to effectively contribute to combined arms warfare. First, the necessity of engineers to the conduct of manoeuvre operations will be demonstrated. Having thus identified where the work of engineers is critical to manoeuvre operations, the specific tasks that engineers must carry out to meet these essential requirements will be explained. The demands of these specific tasks will be examined against the capability provided by the available equipment; this comparison will prove the inadequacy of the RAE’s current equipment. Several broad recommendations will then be made as to how the Army may improve the situation. To conclude, the ongoing relevance of combat engineering will be defended to establish the need to redress the proven capability shortfall.
COMBAT ENGINEERING AND MANOEUVRE OPERATIONS

The RAE exists to provide, among other things, mobility and countermobility support to the Australian Army. This section will explain where these tasks sit in the Australian ‘philosophy’ of land warfare and thereby explain how they are critical to Australia’s conduct of land warfare. This will be achieved by first identifying the importance of physical terrain within Army doctrine, and establishing the importance of physically moving across this terrain to manoeuvre theory. Thus proven, it logically follows that the corps designed to assure friendly movement (and deny enemy movement) is equally critical.

The Australian Army’s capstone doctrinal publication, The Fundamentals of Land Warfare (LWD-1), describes the nature of conflict as ‘dynamic, unpredictable, difficult to control and, therefore, chaotic’. It stresses that war ‘is strongly influenced by … physical terrain’ and that ‘Success requires comprehension and exploitation of these enduring and variable features.’ From the very beginning of this foundational exposition of the Australian approach to land warfare, it is clear that the physical terrain on which land forces operate is central to the Australian conduct of land warfare.

Building out of this characterisation of land warfare, LWD-1 goes on to define the Australian approach to operations in such an environment, proclaiming the Australian Army’s guiding philosophy as being ‘manoeuvre theory’. According to LWD-1, manoeuvre theory’s essence lies in defeating the enemy’s will to fight by ‘destroying’ the enemy’s plan rather than destroying tactical forces. Manoeuvre theory seeks to shatter the enemy’s moral and physical cohesion … creating a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope. … It relies on changing physical and non-physical circumstances more rapidly than the enemy’s ability to adapt.

Similar to Australia’s characterisation of the nature of land warfare, physical terrain is similarly central to manoeuvre theory: the Army’s approach to land warfare. While the theory is applicable at all levels of military effort—the strategic, operational and tactical—it is manoeuvre at the tactical level which underpins the success of manoeuvre-based operations as a whole. This is because it is at the tactical level that close combat—‘the core business of the Army’—is conducted.

The object of such tactical manoeuvre is explained within LWD-1:

Tactical manoeuvre aims to win engagements and battles by placing forces in a position of relative advantage to the enemy, thereby contributing to the achievement of campaign objectives.

It is apparent from the phrase ‘placing forces in a position of relative advantage’ that the physical movement of forces across the terrain is central to the successful
application of manoeuvre theory at the tactical level, and thus to the successful application of the theory as a whole.

Accordingly, it is reasonable to conclude that it is the physical actions that a manoeuvre force takes that are the most important. It is, therefore, equally reasonable to conclude that the physical movement of a force into a position of advantage relative to the enemy from which it successfully engages in close combat—otherwise known as tactical manoeuvre—is the key to a successful manoeuvre operation, as these physical actions are what generate the moral and intellectual effects that manoeuvre theory ultimately seeks to impose on the enemy.

‘Positions of relative advantage’ are also largely defined in terms of physical terrain. This point is most clearly illustrated by briefly revisiting the Australian conception of the nature of war.

Despite the influence of technology, terrain will continue to dominate the battlespace. It will be exploited by both sides for offensive and defensive purposes and will largely define the effectiveness of organisations, weapons and tactics.\(^7\)

It is clear that the manoeuvre force’s ‘positions of relative advantage’ from which successful close combat will be joined will largely be defined by the terrain.

Engineers do not provide the physical mobility necessary to move over and exploit terrain—that is of course the responsibility of each unit, sub-unit and, ultimately, each soldier. What the RAE does is assure that the force’s mobility can be put to effect when it seeks to move through the physical battlespace into advantageous terrain. In a ‘dynamic, unpredictable, difficult to control and, therefore, chaotic’ environment, the RAE is thus critical to the conduct of land warfare because it ensures a commander that, when physical mobility is sought, it is delivered, regardless of the difficulties that such a chaotic situation will inevitably generate. Given the central importance of mobility to manoeuvre operations, it stands to reason that the RAE is equally critical to manoeuvre operations and the Army as a whole. Precisely how the RAE makes this vital contribution is the focus of the next section.

**THE PRIMARY TASKS OF THE RAE**

The RAE ensures the mobility of friendly forces through two main tasks, which this article will refer to as ‘combat breaching’ and ‘combat bridging’.

Combat breaching encompasses a great variety of different activities—clearing mines and booby traps, cutting wire and demolishing berms are but a few examples. These all involve reducing some form of obstacle by its destruction.
Combat bridging, on the other hand, generally requires some form of construction, usually of a bridge, to overcome the obstacle. However, while the nature of the obstacles may differ, the one threat to the engineers attempting to clear them is constant—the enemy.

Obstacles only pose a difficulty when they are covered by enemy fire or when there is limited time to breach them. If the obstacles are not covered with fire and there is ample time to breach them, then they may be breached at leisure and are therefore not a serious hindrance to the commander’s freedom of manoeuvre. Accordingly, they are not considered to be obstacles for the purposes of this article. However, when covered by fire, the RAE will find that even simple obstacles quickly become difficult or impossible to breach without suffering heavy casualties.

**COMBAT BREACHING**

Of the many obstacles that the Australian Army could face in the future, the most difficult single obstacle to breach is a minefield, as it poses a lethal hazard itself in addition to the enemy fire covering it.

Consider then modest minefields positioned on the avenues of approach to an objective that an Australian force has been tasked with clearing. The minefields have been designed to ‘canalise’ the manoeuvre forces into an engagement area in which the entirety of the enemy’s firepower can be brought to bear. In order for the manoeuvre forces to reach their objective without being forced into this engagement area, the minefields must be breached at multiple points. Current breaching doctrine calls for the RAE to apply the five fundamentals of breaching—suppress, obscure, secure, reduce and assault (SOSRA)—in order to clear lanes through an enemy minefield.

The engineer’s task is to advance and clear a lane through the minefield. To assist, the manoeuvre and offensive support forces provide suppressive fire and obscuration while the engineers move into position using cover and concealment. However, when they reach the obstacle, the sappers face a dilemma: they must either remain in cover and therefore fail to breach the minefield, or they must break cover and expose themselves to enemy direct (and possibly indirect) fire for the time it takes them to breach the enemy minefield. If a breaching site can be found that is not covered by enemy fire, then the minefield would not constitute an obstacle as defined above. Apart from accepting mission failure, the engineers therefore have but one choice: to expose themselves to enemy fire.
While exposure to lethal danger is the lot of the soldier, an infantryman for example does so only fleetingly in order to move from cover to cover, and only while the enemy is being engaged with suppressive fire. Upon reaching their position, they can then engage the enemy with their own fire. The sappers, however, must expose themselves to enemy fire for lengthy periods with little scope to return fire as they locate and disable mines. This is because the only tools for breaching a minefield that the RAE currently possesses are non-metallic mine prodders, bangalore torpedoes and the recently acquired Small Projected Line Charge (SAPLIC). All of these require dismounted personnel to enter or approach close to the edge of a minefield to be effective.

While the bangalore torpedo may be able to destroy or detonate simple pressure-activated anti-personnel mines, these simple weapons are not effective against many other types of APMs and anti-tank mines. The SAPLIC, on the other hand, is effective against more types of mines than a bangalore torpedo, but is only capable of destroying anti-personnel mines, and is easily defeated by simple obstructions like bushes and fences which suspend the line-charge above the ground. Accordingly, the sappers must still advance into the minefield and use their mine-prods if they are to clear minefields containing such obstacles or any type of anti-tank mine. Once found, the sappers must either place explosives on these mines which, when detonated, destroy them, or they must fix them for ‘pulling’—activation of the mines from a safe location. This must all be done exposed, in the open and under fire.

At present, RAE officers planning to manually clear a lane one hundred metres long and eight metres wide through a minefield are advised to allow a standard breaching party of seventeen personnel approximately twenty hours of daylight or thirty hours of moonlight to accomplish the task—assuming the enemy does not interfere. Even the feeblest enemy, under heavy suppressive fire and targeting an obscured engineer party, will eventually cause enough casualties to render the engineer party ineffective if that party must be exposed for at least twenty hours. Even if one assumes the minefield is particularly shallow, the party must still be exposed for an unacceptable length of time. Even if the engineer party is exposed for only one hour, it is still far too long a time for dismounted personnel to be exposed to enemy fire. It is clear from even this simple analysis that manually reducing a minefield covered by enemy fire is an absurd proposition. Indeed, the defence commentator Ian Curtis writes, ‘Trying to work on foot in a pre-registered fire zone is fairly suicidal’.8

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Even the feeblest enemy, under heavy suppressive fire and targeting an obscured engineer party, will eventually cause enough casualties …
Present Deficiencies in the Australian Army’s Combat Engineering Equipment

The Australian Army’s historical experience proves this point, with the experiences of the 2/13th Field Company being particularly illustrative. RAE actions at Tobruk in 1941 demonstrate the difficulty of breaching a minefield by hand. General Erwin Rommel’s initial attack on 30 April 1941 succeeded in creating a salient in Allied lines that provided observation of most of the Tobruk defences. Accordingly, Australian forces were directed to conduct a hasty counterattack on the night of 3 – 4 May to dislodge Axis forces and deny them the high ground. Australian engineers were detailed to conduct hand-breaches of the minefields in front of the Axis salient. Among the exposed engineers of the 2/13th Field Company, McNicoll writes, ‘There were many casualties’. The counterattack failed. After several more unsuccessful attacks, the Australians settled on gradually clearing the Axis positions through limited night attacks. During the months of June and July, the 2/13th Field Company assisted these efforts by attempting to clear lanes through Axis minefields, suffering further heavy casualties while exposed to German fire. During operations the following year, the 2/13th Field Company again suffered heavy casualties while manually breaching minefields. On one particular breaching operation, while trying to open gaps through a minefield for the 2/15th Battalion, one mine-clearing party suffered 100 per cent casualties, while another was substantially delayed in clearing its lane because of similarly heavy casualties.

Even when minefields are not covered by heavy direct fire, the laboriousness of hand clearing means that minefields denser or larger than expected can cause significant delays that can adversely affect a commander’s plan. Again, the 2/13th Field Company’s experience is illustrative. On the night of 23 – 24 October 1942, the sappers of the 2/13th Field Company advanced into enemy defences to clear mines for Allied tanks and infantry at the beginning of the Battle of El Alamein. However, despite a two-month engineer reconnaissance, the engineers were surprised to encounter mixed fields of indefinite type and composition forming an almost continuous field 1600 yards deep. This differed substantially from the 250-yard deep field they had expected. Consequently,

The lanes could not be made ready for the tanks despite Herculean efforts by Major Gehrmann’s 2/13th Field Company, so the [2/13th] battalion attacked on time but without the tanks… Without tanks the infantry were unable to reach their final objective, so that in this sector the first night’s hard fighting was not completely successful.

This delay ensued despite the commitment of engineer reserves equivalent to the entire force already assigned to clear the field. The 20th Brigade eventually secured all of its objectives, but it was delayed by an entire day.

In today’s operational environment, the speed and tempo of operations has increased considerably due to advances in information and communications technology and mechanisation. Yet today’s engineers are being called upon to breach
increasingly lethal minefields with essentially the same tools and TTPs they used over sixty years ago. The historical experiences of the 20th Brigade and the 2/13th Field Company show that manual breaching is costly in both time and lives. While the losses suffered by the 2/13th Field Company may have been acceptable in the Second World War, having units suffer such heavy casualties today would be considered disastrous. Moreover, casualties would almost certainly be higher in the contemporary operational environment given the increased accuracy and lethality of modern weapons, the widespread availability of night-vision devices, and the increasing sophistication of anti-handling devices and mine fuses. Few commanders would be prepared to place any of their dismounted soldiers in exposed positions covered by enemy direct fire for hours on end.

If called upon to breach even a small minefield, it is clear that the RAE would most likely fail—and lose many sappers in the attempt. Even if faced with a minefield not vigorously covered by the enemy’s fire, the RAE is unlikely to be able to accommodate even modest changes to their plans without incurring significant delays.

Of course, minefields do not represent the only obstacles that the RAE are likely to be called on to breach in combat—wire, berms, abatis or even rubble that obstructs vehicle manoeuvre all represent obstacles likely to be faced in future. While not lethal to the RAE in and of themselves like mines, they still represent obstacles which are time consuming to clear and which will require the prolonged exposure of sappers to enemy fire. Accordingly, the minefield example used here represents only an illustration of a broader RAE problem—the inability to breach almost any obstacles quickly and safely.

COMBAT BRIDGING

Building a bridge is difficult in even the calmest circumstances; however, when an enemy force is actively trying to kill the construction team, building a bridge becomes a particularly problematic task. Indeed, as Frederick the Great once said, “The passage of great rivers in the presence of the enemy is one of the most delicate operations in war.”

Combat bridging can be conducted over dry gaps, such as ravines or large anti-tank ditches, or over wet gaps, such as large streams and rivers. Similar to a minefield, crossing a river poses one of the more demanding obstacle for engineers to negotiate because the obstacle itself is dangerous—soldiers with heavy burdens are liable to drowning, fast-flowing currents can flood or even overturn armoured vehicles, and muddy river beds can exhaust troops and bog vehicles. In particularly extreme climes, cold waters can induce hypothermia. In all, a river poses a
considerable environmental hazard that can quickly become a major impediment to Australian commanders if covered by even desultory enemy fire.

RAE doctrine for river-crossing is similar to that for breaching minefields. Here again the RAE is called upon to apply the SOSRA fundamentals. Here again the RAE’s chances for success are poor. Here again, the problem is with the Corps’ equipment. To establish this argument, and prove the unsuitability of the RAE’s bridging equipment, several criteria must be defined against which the equipment’s capabilities can be compared.

First, the matter of what a bridge should carry must be settled. LWP-CA (ENGRS) 2-1-2 River Crossing—the RAE’s doctrine for combat bridging—states that any successful river crossing is heavily dependent on crossing as many tanks and AFVs to the far bank of the river as quickly as possible. Accordingly, any useful bridge must be capable of carrying Australia’s current MBT, the M1A1 AIM Abrams. This would require a bridge with a Military Load Classification (MLC) of at least 70.

Second, the distance the bridge must extend should also be considered. This is a more difficult question to answer. Many bridges can be constructed in varying lengths, so there is no single figure identifying their length. Accordingly, for the purposes of this article, bridges will be considered based on the time taken to construct a span of a given length—for this article, twenty metres.

Of the five bridges currently available to Australia’s engineers, three are ‘line of communications’ bridges which are not intended for use in opposed crossing operations because of the time and effort required to erect them. The remaining two bridges are designated for use in potentially opposed crossings. These are the Floating Support Bridge (FSB) and the Medium Girder Bridge (MGB). However, as will soon become evident, both the FSB and MGB are largely unsuited for use in opposed river crossing operations.

In an opposed river crossing operation, the FSB is the ‘preferred initial bridge since it is faster to assemble and easier to move than other types’. It consists of two ramp bays placed on the banks of the obstacle and a number of interior bays floating between. To manoeuvre the interior bays into position, the engineers are equipped with the Bridge Erection Propulsion Boat, or BEPB. This small, snub-nosed, waterjet-powered boat can manoeuvre effectively in constricted and shallow waters. The BEPB is made of aluminium, and provides protection only from the weather for its crew. The vulnerability of the engineers building the FSB is considerable—it would be trivial for an enemy to damage one of these boats (of which each combat engineer regiment possesses only five) or to kill their crew. Considering that approximately ten minutes is required to construct a span of twenty metres, it is reasonable to
conclude that an enemy would be able to muster enough firepower in this time to damage or destroy these boats, or to suppress or kill their crews. This is all the more likely when one considers that the engineers and boats operating on the water have no cover, are vulnerable to even light indirect weapons like mortars, and must operate in these exposed positions to construct the bridge. This illustration does not take into account the time necessary to launch the boats and modules from the soft-skinned vehicles that transport them overland, which adds yet more risk and delay to the operation.

Where construction of a bridge is deemed inappropriate, any two of the interior modules of the FSB can be connected to a BEPB to form a ferry. This would serve to improve the survivability of this crossing method given that a moving target (the ferry) would arguably be harder to hit. However, considering that each CER could field only five such ferries, this would limit the commander to a painfully slow build-up of forces on the enemy bank. The Australian Army only possesses twenty-four BEPBs in total. As such, and combined with the vulnerability of the BEPB to enemy fire, the application of the FSB elements as a ferry is not appropriate when crossing a river in the presence of the enemy.

The MGB is equally unsuited for use during opposed river crossing operations for similar reasons. It requires dismounted engineers to operate in view of the enemy and in exposed positions during construction. During the critical launching phase, engineers must routinely expose themselves to enemy fire while close to the river bank. To construct twenty metres of bridge capable of crossing an Abrams MBT, twenty-five engineers are required to work in exposed positions for at least thirty minutes. This also does not include the time necessary to deliver components to the river bank, nor prepare the site (where necessary)—tasks that require the positioning of vulnerable soft-skinned vehicles close to or on the river bank. Again, even when facing an enemy subject to obscuration and suppressive fire, it is highly likely that engineers will suffer casualties as they operate dismounted and in exposed positions.

Clearly, the risk to engineers while constructing one of these bridges is too high. Engineers must operate dismounted while in full view of the enemy for extended periods with little or no cover. Furthermore, the Army’s preferred bridge for river crossing—the FSB—requires engineers to operate in unarmoured boats on the river, thereby denying them any semblance of cover or concealment if called upon to build a bridge. Heavy casualties are likely to ensue. Indeed, the US Army VII Corps’ experience during the famous Roer River crossing operations amply demonstrates the

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During the critical launching phase, engineers must routinely expose themselves to enemy fire …
risks inherent to operating light boats on a river covered by enemy fire. Of the 190 boats employed by the US 9th Division, 70 per cent became casualties—some 136 boats destroyed or damaged with roughly commensurate losses in personnel. The US 8th Division suffered even greater losses in troops and boats. These appalling losses were suffered despite the fact that almost every weapon in the entire VII Corps larger than a .30 calibre machine gun was employed for suppressive fire.

No contemporary commander would be willing to countenance such heavy losses. To lose almost all of one’s engineer capacity in a single operation would entail the surrender of the initiative in any subsequent manoeuvres and thus almost guarantee defeat. Given the limitations of current RAE bridging equipment, it is clear that the likelihood of a bridging or ferrying operation succeeding before prohibitive casualties are suffered is minimal.

Again, this is only a single example which illustrates a larger point—that the RAE is unlikely to be able to cross any ‘wet’ obstacles present on the battlefield. This does not have to mean crossing a mighty river opposed by some later-day Red Army—it can mean crossing an irrigation channel in rural areas to outsmart insurgent IED-planters, or rapidly pushing across monsoon-affected terrain to surprise a guerrilla band hiding in the hills. The common requirement in these situations is wet-gap crossing, and the common result, if attempted today, is likely to be failure.

POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

If the engineers fail to breach an obstacle or cross a river when and where necessary, the commander’s only alternative is to adhere to the enemy’s obstacle plan, brave their killing grounds and thus cede the initiative. For any force practising the manoeuvre philosophy, this would spell disaster. Without the ability to move at will into positions of advantage from which to engage the enemy in close combat, manoeuvre operations quickly become impossible. Without the ability to achieve physical effects at the time and place of the commander’s choosing, the resultant psychological and moral effects critical to the manoeuvre philosophy become extremely difficult to achieve. In these circumstances, attrition by firepower is one of the few feasible options remaining, and for a small force like the Australian Army, this approach is not likely to succeed. The result of engineer mission failure is therefore heavy losses and defeat. Accordingly, some improvement to the RAE’s current equipment must be made.

The main risk inherent to the RAE’s current equipment is that it must be operated in exposed positions for extended periods by dismounted personnel while close to the enemy. It has been shown that this is highly likely to result in unacceptably heavy casualties among the engineers. Home-front casualty sensitivity aside, this will result in mission failure due to attrition of irreplaceable personnel and a commensurate
degradation of battlefield mobility. Accordingly, any equipment that is to improve the RAE’s capabilities must reduce the likelihood of heavy engineer casualties. The easiest way to achieve this goal is by providing the sappers with extra protection while simultaneously reducing the time they are exposed to fire.

Any useful equipment for combat breaching or bridging must therefore be armoured to survive the enemy’s direct and indirect fire, and it must reduce obstacles rapidly. Moreover, it must be capable of operation from under armour at all times. Plans are in place for the RAE to acquire a new ‘Protected Hazard Reduction Capability’ under Project Land 144. This system will provide engineers with ‘Mechanical mine clearance vehicles capable of reducing the threat of landmines whilst reducing an operator’s exposure to the risk of mine detonation.’ While this is a step in the right direction, this new platform will not protect engineers from enemy fire. Indeed, the Defence Materiel Organisation is quick to point out that ‘This capability is not a combat capability.’ Accordingly, other equipment is necessary in light of the deficiencies of this (and current) equipment. Fortunately, several types of equipment exist which meet these criteria and which are currently available ‘off-the-shelf’.

For combat breaching, there are a wide variety of armoured engineering vehicles that protect engineers by allowing rapid minefield reduction while under armour. For the Australian Army, the most suitable vehicle would be the US Marine Corps’ Assault Breacher Vehicle (ABV). This vehicle, which is built on the chassis of the M1A1 Abrams, possesses explosive line charges for destroying mines, as well as a plough, roller and other equipment for proofing lanes through minefields. While still vulnerable to some sophisticated mine fuses, and subject to the inherent weaknesses of explosive line charges, the heavy passive armour and extensive sensor suite of the ABV ensures that the engineers will have a far greater chance of breaching fire-swept minefields and other obstacles successfully and with minimal casualties.

This type of vehicle is also applicable to many other engineering tasks, further enhancing the effect it can achieve on the battlefield:

The armoured engineering vehicle serves as a work room, bunker, power tool and fighting platform for the combat engineer as part of [a] combined arms team … They can rapidly be converted from a mine-clearing vehicle into a dozer, assist in the reduction of obstacles or be used to support detection and neutralisation of IEDs … Armoured engineering vehicles provide battlefield flexibility.
For combat bridging, US and UK armoured vehicle launched bridges (AVLBs) would also be suitable for the RAE. Based on an Abrams chassis, the US Army’s M104 Wolverine can erect an MLC 70 bridge with a span of twenty-four metres in less than five minutes. The crew remains under armour the entire time, ensuring a high probability of success and low probability of excessive casualties.33

These platforms are only suggestions—they are mentioned purely to illustrate the fact that suitable equipment does already exist. What is important to note is that, if battlefield success is to be achieved, it is vital that the RAE soon acquire new equipment similar to that mentioned which meets the critical requirement of rapid operation while under armour.

The British Army for one has identified that this need remains critical and despite a drive towards lighter forces, it is still procuring Titan, Trojan and Terrier vehicles to give their engineers the protection they require.

THE ONGOING RELEVANCE OF COMBAT ENGINEERING

To many, pointing out the importance and relevance of combat engineering would seem to be an easy and self-evident task. However, the author has learned that Australian sappers believe they are ‘treated as second-class citizens’ within the Army as, while there is broad understanding within Army of the importance of the RAE, little is being done to properly equip them for their tasks.34 A lack of centralised corps advocacy further hampers the RAE’s ability to ‘make the case’ for suitable equipment.35 One officer in the RAE has argued that ‘significant risk has been taken over an extended period of time in … engineer … major systems’ and that, as a result of the lack of suitable major equipment, ‘The situation is approaching where force engineer-elements can become an impediment to decisive manoeuvre and as such border on irrelevance.’36 For a force that espouses combined-arms and manoeuvre warfare, the approaching irrelevance of its mobility assurance element should be troubling. However, for whatever reason, this situation has been allowed to arise and engineer forces cannot today achieve their primary roles in the face of the enemy without excessive risk. Accordingly, defending the ongoing relevance of combat engineering is perhaps a more important task than many would first think.

From the preceding analysis, it is obvious that combat engineering remains relevant for commanders who wish to conduct manoeuvre-based operations. However, sappers continue to express concern that their colleagues in the Infantry, Armour, and Artillery Corps believe that such tasks are a relic of the Cold War:
‘These aren’t the plains of Europe’ and ‘we are never going to fight that kind of conventional battle’ are admonishments commonly heard by officers of the RAE.\textsuperscript{37} But mechanised mine-clearance, bridging and other tasks normally associated with high-intensity conventional warfighting are present on the modern counterinsurgency battlefield. The Canadian experience in Afghanistan is particularly illustrative of this point. Here they have deployed armoured engineering assets to provide their forces with the mobility necessary for profitable manoeuvre operations. The commander of the 1st Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment (1RCR) Battlegroup (BG), Lieutenant-Colonel Lavoie, stated that:

If you’d asked me five months ago, ‘do you need tanks to fight insurgents?’ I would have said, ‘No, you’re nuts.’ … Because [the Taliban] are acting conventionally, then conventional assets like tanks, armoured engineering vehicles, and armoured bridging vehicles certainly have their place here.\textsuperscript{38}

Colonel Lavoie initially made use of civilian bulldozers equipped with improvised armour to clear many improvised and/or locally prevalent obstacles. However, after the arrival of a troop of armoured engineers from the Canadian 1st Combat Engineer Regiment, 1RCR BG’s capability for manoeuvre increased exponentially. Convoys could move much faster along more unpredictable routes as tank-mounted mine rollers and ploughs could quickly and safely clear routes of IEDs. This kept the Taliban off balance, allowed for greater operational tempo and increased friendly security. In one instance, an armoured advance stalled as it stumbled into an old Soviet minefield. Armoured engineering equipment was put to work and Canadian forces were extracted quickly and safely from the hazardous field.\textsuperscript{39} The OC of one tank squadron that deployed, Major Trevor Cadieu, noted that, given the ‘mine/IED threat in Afghanistan is extremely high, … the ploughs are life savers.’ He also noted that the Canadian’s Badger Armoured Engineering Vehicle often led the way in armoured operations due to the unpredictable nature of the mine/IED threat, the complexity of enemy obstacles and the difficulty of the terrain.\textsuperscript{40} The Canadian experience proves that Rapid bridging systems such as AVLB, and earth-moving equipment that can keep up with the manoeuvre force allows commanders to select more varied and unpredictable routes. This ability to be unpredictable is a key factor in countering IEDs, and allowed the 1RCR BG commander to defeat the Taliban with minimal risk by achieving surprise.

Indeed, it is likely that minefields such as these will pose a more prominent threat to future operations than they did in the past. The United Nations Mine
Present Deficiencies in the Australian Army’s Combat Engineering Equipment

Action Service’s 2007 Annual Report shows that countries that are often described as ‘failed states’ are the focus of its de-mining activities—countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and, of course, Afghanistan. Given that failed states are likely to be the venues for future Australian deployments, as well as featuring prominently in current deployments, it stands to reason that it is highly likely that Australian forces will again encounter minefields.

It is also probable that Australian forces will need to breach—and not just clear—these minefields, too. Complex Warfighting and Adaptive Campaigning, read together, paint a picture of the future where the battlespace is ‘empty’ and disaggregated, requiring the wide deployment of small units and their rapid concentration to achieve tactical and strategic effects. In order for such small units to succeed in combat against an increasingly lethal opponent, the doctrine calls for units to ‘swarm’, converging on the enemy from multiple directions. This approach to operations will place an even greater demand on the RAE than it currently faces today, as it will fall to the sappers to provide the many bridges and breaches necessary for swarming units to converge on the one location from multiple avenues. Furthermore, due to the increasing lethality of the enemy, the need for the RAE to perform these breaching and bridging tasks while under armour will also rise commensurately.

The Canadian experience in Afghanistan confirms this reasoning, and demonstrates that the ADF’s current operational environment can and does demand armoured engineering capability. As the situation presently stands, the Australian Army would not be able to rise to such a challenge; it would need to ask coalition allies to do the job for them.

Conclusion

Lieutenant General Gillespie has stated that he intends to create ‘an Army that thinks that the status quo is never, ever good enough and is continually seeking to adapt and improve its performance—at all levels, on operations and in the force generation and preparation realms—while at the same time retaining important lessons from the past’. If the Army is to live up to this worthy goal, then it must soon acquire new equipment for the RAE. Without such augmentation, it is clear that the RAE will not be able to provide commanders with mobility assurance, battlefield mobility will break down, and the commander’s options will quickly be diminished. Casualties and failure are likely to follow.
ENDNOTES

3 Ibid, p. 45.
5 Ibid, p. 45.
7 Ibid, pp. 12–13 (author’s emphasis).
10 Ibid, p. 86.
11 Ibid, p. 108.
16 Ibid, pp. 3-4–3-11.
17 Ibid, pp. 2E-1–2E-10.
18 Ibid, p. 6-29.
19 Ibid, p. 2E-1.
20 Ibid.
22 ‘Bridge Erection Propulsion Boat (BEPB)’
24 LWP-CA (ENGRS) 2-1-2, p. 2E-1.
25 ‘Bridge Erection Propulsion Boat (BEPB)’. 
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28 Wong, Battle Bridges, p. 239.
30 'Land 144 – Countermine Capability'.
34 RAE Officer, Interview with the author, 30 January 2009.
35 Ibid.
37 RAE Officer, Interview.
39 Ibid, pp. 7–9.
42 See: Complex Warfighting, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2006; and Adaptive Campaigning: The Land Force Response to Complex Warfighting, Department of Defence, Canberra, December 2007.
44 Gillespie, 'Chief of Army Speech ASPI 27 August 2008'.
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OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

OVERCOMING FRICTION
A MODEL FOR POPULATION-CENTRIC OPERATIONS

KATHERINE PHILLIPS AND ORIANA SCHERR

ABSTRACT
Simply being aware of cultural ‘dos and don’ts’ is insufficient to ensure truly gainful cooperation with a host populace, especially when the Army is waging counterinsurgency campaigns in complex, urban battlespaces. Taking cultural awareness ‘to the next level’ is the subject of this article, which details lessons from the Army’s arguably expert force regarding this topic: the Regional Force Surveillance Units (RFSUs). The authors examine the major aspects of the RFSUs community engagement strategies to highlight how the hierarchically-based Army has adapted itself to better integrate with the unique mix of traditional social groups resident in the north of Australia. In so doing, the authors reveal the many inroads to mission success that can be made by working with—rather than around—local civilian populations.

INTRODUCTION
Modern demographics suggest that conflict will increasingly occur in populated centres rather than uninhabited fields. As a result, people in contested areas—both combatants and civilians—will increasingly shape future battlespaces. Whether acting as an outside intervention force or as an
integrated ally and partner, modern militaries must improve their capability to work with, and within, populations. The need for this has never been more clear than it is today in conflicts such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Despite the increasing need for interaction with local populations, security planners and military forces may underestimate or dismiss community engagement as a task more appropriate for civilian agencies. This article seeks to articulate the value of engaging rather than circumventing communities, and suggests ways to navigate cultural complexities and inter-communal sectarianism. In doing so, it draws lessons from the Australian Army’s security partnership with its own indigenous communities.

Three units in the Australian Army, known as Regional Force Surveillance Units (RFSUs), are responsible for the surveillance of the country’s northern approaches and identification of border incursions by smugglers, illegal fishing vessels, and other potential threats. This mission, known as Operation RESOLUTE, relies heavily on the participation of indigenous reservists recruited from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These reservists contribute extensive knowledge of the remote, difficult terrain of northern Australia, and they can facilitate Army operations in traditional lands from which outsiders are otherwise restricted.

The RFSU model is a useful case study for militaries who seek to engage better with populations that are culturally centred on community, family, tribe or clan relationships. This article reflects observations made during a one-month period spent with the 51st Far North Queensland Regiment (51 FNQR), which operates in the north-eastern Cape York and Torres Strait regions. In the course of extensive interviews with both indigenous and non-indigenous soldiers, we observed the methods by which 51 FNQR interacted in a mutually beneficial way with its indigenous population.

This article will discuss six key areas in which modern military units can learn from the RFSU experience. These include: identifying common security interests between populations and security units; developing positive relationships between indigenous communities and the Army unit; basing operations on cultural awareness; and, finally, the baseline assessment of 51 FNQR’s experience in mitigating tribal/clan tensions to instruct broader methods for navigating sectarianism in population-centric environments.

COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURE

The Australian Army has long recognised the concept that domestic stability requires a shared commitment between the national and local security forces and local populations; as most recently shown by reporting of Australian operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Whether a national security force or a local community organised along
tribal lines, both systems are organised by unique power structures. In order to support a common national security agenda, both systems must work together, although this goal is often difficult to implement due to conventional civil–military frictions and can be further complicated by cultural and language barriers. The ways in which 51 FNQR soldiers engage local communities by coordinating with municipal and tribal leaders is instructive for any military facing the challenge of operating in a foreign environment and where local support or concurrence is critical to the success of a national security mission.

A security force operating in close proximity to civilian communities must identify, respect, and reinforce existing power structures in order to achieve a unity of effort, rather than struggling to achieve a unity of command. By recognising the complex layers of leadership and authority that can exist in an indigenous community, the officers operating in local areas come to appreciate that authority may not lie exclusively in official office bearers. 51 FNQR understands the importance of gaining the support of existing community power structures in order to support their missions of recruiting, tactical patrolling, and regional stability. This is particularly imperative in indigenous communities, where traditional power structures have much more influence over a society than a term-elected municipal leader.

A significant challenge of any military operating within the general population is the extent to which security forces can engage the communities. A highly regimented organisation itself by tradition, it is often challenging for a military unit to relate to a friendly foreign force on a truly bilateral basis. More difficult, and less understood, is how a military unit can operate in a tribal society, where the local power structure may not follow a more regimented or formal Western model outlining authority; tribal elders may not keep regular business hours from a professional office; leadership and authority may be expressed in unfamiliar ways; and, similarly, an outsider’s authority may not be immediately accepted. A military unit commander’s rank may hold no value for a tribal community, thereby complicating the protocol with which that unit may gain support or coordination from a local community. Therefore, it is essential for those in uniform to understand how locals perceive security forces, how locals understand authority, and the degree to which the military’s authority can work in cooperation or in conflict with local power structures.

The 51 FNQR area of responsibility encompasses dozens of indigenous communities, each with its own distinct customs, dialects and authority figures. We observed that community leaders appreciated being consulted by 51 FNQR company
commanders for their coordination, rather than having the soldiers being overly focused on a specific operation and therein dismissing the local population. Furthermore, traditional elders valued RFSU recruiting efforts in the community. Although this support was not always manifest in high volunteer rates, the elders’ long-term view on partnering with the Army acknowledged that components of regimental service can benefit the communities; traditional leaders’ status was reinforced as Army liaison and local enlisted soldiers return to their communities more confident, better organised, and ready to assume greater local leadership positions. At a time where traditional leaders are concerned about the erosion of their communities from external modern influences, the RFSUs have presented timely and relevant opportunities that benefit the communities far beyond local recruitment or security operations.

Perhaps the most important way 51 FNQR shows its willingness to work with the needs of the local community is that reserve service allows locals to take ownership for putting on and taking off the uniform; part-time, professional military service requirements do not create cognitive problems for indigenous soldiers by subjugating local identities to a broader national identity. Through voluntary enlistment and reserve service, indigenous soldiers have the opportunity to regularly return to community life and resume traditional identities. As the RFSU reserve commitment is twenty days of service per year (although most elect to serve an average of 100–180 days each year), indigenous soldiers have a great deal of flexibility in being able to balance their national service and community commitments. Community leaders appreciate that the Army is not trying to rival or usurp traditional leadership structures. Furthermore, by including a role for indigenous civilian ‘liaison’ to work with RFSU companies, 51 FNQR leverages a variety of creative tools to secure linkages with the local authorities and guarantee concurrent support for the national security objective of denying sanctuary to those conducting illegal activity in remote areas.

Ideally, a military commander would have institutional knowledge of a community. This could include cultural awareness training, familiarity with local residents, or unit members from the local area who can serve as important liaison for civil–military relations. More likely, the unit leader will be the first point of contact with a community, and lack the requisite anthropological skills and long-term outlook to cultivate a relationship once the crisis that mobilised the military unit occurs.

RFSUs have presented timely and relevant opportunities that benefit the communities far beyond local recruitment or security operations.
COMMUNITY RELATIONS

In addition to the leaders’ knowledge and attitudes, it is essential that rank and file soldiers also appreciate their relationship to both local power centres and the broader community in order to coordinate a common response to security threats. As RFSU units are small and have a relatively flat chain of command, the role of the ‘strategic corporal’ is highly relevant to regular interactions with local communities. For the RFSUs, positive relationships with the local communities in their areas of responsibility (ARs) enforce common security priorities, such as reporting illegal fishing, trafficking, smuggling and immigration activities. With a small force and limited resources, the RFSU soldiers cannot possibly provide a constant patrolling presence throughout the remote northern territories of Australia. Instead, they rely on partnerships with local communities to provide critical intelligence and reporting on area activity.

As US Army General Charles Krulak observes, it is increasingly likely that soldiers will have to react to and interact with local populations at low-levels of command and organisation. Balancing the desire to cultivate or maintain community support for military operations while avoiding political situations that could complicate a mission is challenging. The fundamental task of engaging a community can be further complicated when a military and local population cannot readily relate to one another. Krulak suggests that each military unit’s leader must possess agility to navigate these complex scenarios. How that leader understands a community that is often inextricable from the battlespace is vital, and it is in this knowledge area that 51 FNQR excels.

To develop these relationships, 51 FNQR company commanders draw on their professional agility to overcome common challenges to developing relationships in traditional or tribal communities. As described in previous sections, cultural differences between the Army and traditional community styles can create friction in the establishment of operational authority, as company commanders must reconcile their responsibility for executing 51 FNQR’s area mission in conjunction with local community leaders’ concurrence.

In a broader sense, positive community relations can support the RFSU’s missions more effectively than an increase in number and frequency of unit patrol operations. Army soldiers sceptical of the RFSU’s value as something more than ‘political window-dressing’ suggested that the remote surveillance and reconnaissance missions could easily be conducted by small units of regular soldiers, without the...
need for engaging local communities and modifying enlistment criteria to allow for
greater indigenous participation. Dismissing this claim, one 51 FNQR company
commander explained that while soldiers might be attracted to the notion of covert
patrols through the bush, with full camouflage face paint and full kit, 90 per cent of
his most valuable surveillance information came from the communities. More than
the surveillance patrols, community engagement missions that included local
recruiting and public relations components were highly valuable and yielded even
more important results. He explained that as community engagement could not be
easily evaluated by conventional metrics, it was difficult for some of his colleagues
to understand the value of civil ‘missions’, but that they were just as critical to the
broader goal of regional security and stability as were the bush patrols. With limited
resources, the company leadership can dedicate most material assets to conducting
remote patrols while community engagement requires little more than the commit-
ment of several RFSU soldiers to spend several days in a community for recruiting
and leadership engagement events. In that way, community engagement could be
undervalued by decision-makers as it does not require a significant dedication of
conventional resources for successful execution, but it is for this very reason that
community engagement serves as a critical force multiplier, as is evidenced by the
increasing role of human terrain and
provincial reconstruction teams working
to secure local support in the Iraq and
Afghan theatres.

Looking beyond annual metrics and
requirements, the company commander
(a major) understood that community
engagement requires both legitimacy and
credibility to work over the long-run;
soldiers cannot simply roll into town and
expect results. For reconnaissance and surveillance missions, patrol and community
engagement operations focus on identifying change in the security landscape over
time, rather than absolute change. This is to say that the missions require a regional
sensitivity that cannot be statically conveyed in a pre-deployment briefing, but rather
developed by operating in the field and engaging with local residents over time.
For this reason, several junior and senior company leaders stated that community
engagement requires a ‘365-day a year’ approach. Rather than suggesting that
the Army could or should be physically present at all times in every community,
it means that the military should ensure that the many means of engaging local
communities are being properly employed.

Cultivating a civil–military relationship requires a great deal of personal engage-
ment, but it is critical that general community engagement remain broad in focus to
withstand personnel changes in the long run. The challenge of this task is reconciling the long-term roles of community leaders with the more transient two-year assignments for RFSU company commanders in the field. These officers in charge face the task of cultivating, or stewarding, a relationship with community leaders, but—as discussed above—cannot always rely on their rank as a means of entry into the community’s leadership circle. Faced with the challenge of having to establish a bond with civilian leaders, an officer may be tempted to present himself as a friend.

However, doing so compromises the integrity of the RFSU’s mission. Some indigenous enlisted soldiers in the RFSUs (who are assigned to RFSUs for their entire careers), complained that an incoming officer in charge would sometimes try to present himself as the company soldiers’ best friends—an approach interpreted as not taking the indigenous soldiers as ‘seriously’ as non-indigenous Australian soldiers, who were held to different standards. Critical to achieving a long-term framework for cooperation and collaboration against foreign exploitation and infiltration of remote areas is appreciating that community engagement, at all levels, must be something greater than a series of interpersonal networks. In this way, community engagement cannot be limited to leadership partnerships or liaison billets, but involve a broader, community-based support for interaction and collaboration—in the military, political and local communities.

A key challenge to maintaining steady community relationships is that of turnover. In any military setting, including operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, units and leadership will invariably change every few years or less. However, there must be an effective way to maintain continuity in relationships with community leaders, the soldiers, and the community itself. As difficult as it may be logistically, a period of overlap between company leadership would permit more stable relationships with local leaders. Detailed changeover documents and introductions to community leaders would facilitate this process, but are not enough. Cultural adjustment is required for the leaders, and having overlap between leadership changes would save a significant amount of time that would otherwise be spent in adjustment.

Community engagement is not about completing a checklist of office calls and photo opportunities, but rather constantly building and reinforcing a framework to support the larger security mission. As with many introductions, the military and the community likely have preconceptions about one another, some of which may be inaccurate. This is particularly true when the two groups seldom associate with each other. 51 FNQR soldiers and officers acknowledge that there are misperceptions… there are misperceptions among outsiders of what life is like in indigenous communities.
among outsiders of what life is like in indigenous communities. Infrequent media coverage tends to highlight the extreme stories of abuse and malfunction, and 51 FNQR soldiers are quick to demonstrate their interest in taking the time to get to know the locals and understand the needs of the community rather than assume that they understand the particulars of a community based on its public reputation. For over two decades the Australian Army has worked to establish relationships in remote indigenous communities, but the work in this area is far from complete.

**IDENTIFYING COMMON INTERESTS**

One of the key reasons for the RFSU’s success is its focus on an issue of mutual interest between indigenous communities and the Australian Army: border security. Like many indigenous societies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities deeply value their ties to traditional lands, and their rights to the resources within them. In many cases, Aboriginal landowners have the power to grant or deny outsiders the right to enter traditional land, and to hunt or fish on those lands.

Federal agencies seek to defend the Australian homeland against illegal immigration, strict quarantine regulations, natural resource exploitation, and illicit smuggling activities. Given the situation of indigenous control over many of Australia’s most remote and vulnerable areas, it is critical that those responsible for national security have the capability to leverage all defensive measures necessary in a way that remains in concert with its citizens’ traditional ways of life. This mutual security interest—protection of Australian lands, borders, and resources—provides an opening for 51 FNQR to collaborate with local indigenous communities on immediate, practical issue areas. In any population-centric environment, military planners should prioritise the task of identifying common areas of interest between local groups and security forces. By doing so, the security forces (including the military) are able to secure a strong baseline on which they can execute more complex operations.

It is also useful to note that trained, skilled soldiers are also trained, skilled community members. 51 FNQR trains its reserve soldiers in communications, remote area driving, boating, patrolling and more. RFSU service provides opportunities for indigenous reservists to develop both professional skills, such as welding or carpentry, and important leadership skills. The RFSUs do so because the commanding officers and senior community leaders recognise that such skills will enhance economic and civic opportunities for the communities involved. These skills raise the confidence and status of reservists within their communities and, as a result, the communities often view the Army as a venue for skills development and as a means to enhance their capabilities as individuals and communities.

Therefore, military commanders in population-centric military operations should carefully consider how to align a military unit’s goals with those of a target
community. They should develop and utilise sound cultural knowledge and listen to the needs of community members. By identifying answers to key preliminary questions about local security problems and socio-economic priorities, a unit can fine-tune its approach to local communities, thereby being able to move beyond burdensome and often shallow ‘hearts and minds’ public affairs campaigns.

**DRAW ON LOCAL RESOURCES**

The first instinct of militaries operating in population-centric settings may be to underestimate the resources that can be provided by the community. This would be a grave mistake. With thought and creative implementation, community resources can be mobilised effectively to complete almost any mission. In the 51 FNQR AR, we observed three key resources that the community itself provided: valuable recruits with skills unavailable elsewhere; operational intelligence; and local civilian liaison to mitigate the friction that naturally arises between the Army and local communities.

51 FNQR was particularly effective at tailoring its recruiting practices to the concerns and needs of potential indigenous soldiers, to draw on the pool of recruits in the ARs. The Army enforces rigorous literacy, numeracy, and health standards in its recruiting efforts, but the RFSUs acknowledge that these standards may disqualify many indigenous recruits with great potential to contribute to the RFSU mission. The Army’s RFSL, therefore, allows commanding officers to waive specific enlistment criteria in order to employ indigenous reservists in a regional capacity in Cape York and the Torres Strait.

Recruiters were aware that potential recruits may have developed misperceptions of army life based on media portrayals. Only through awareness of this problem can recruiters mitigate this area of concern, demonstrating that RFSU operational tempo was more closely related to indigenous hunting excursions than what is displayed in Hollywood films such as *Full Metal Jacket*. Another issue that RFSUs could respond to was from their indigenous recruits’ worries that they would be required to travel far from their home communities, that training officers would treat them harshly, or that their reservist status would have a negative impact on their unemployment compensation. Well aware of the image of the stereotypical soldier, recruits also feared the embarrassment of failing to meet basic qualification standards. Recruiters received useful cultural training that helped them understand these worries—many of which are culturally-based—and these recruiters built on this preliminary
knowledge by working with indigenous community leaders and indigenous soldiers to find creative solutions to temper these potential points of friction.

Once strong relationships existed between the Army and the communities, the encouragement of family members, friends, community elders and council members strongly influenced recruitment. When arranging recruiting or outreach missions, officers in charge tended to select those indigenous reservists with strong ties to the targeted community. After arriving in the community, officers instructed these reservists to take the lead in reconnecting with family, friends and other contacts in the communities. This approach provided many benefits, including a better perception of the Army, enhanced trust-building and increased likelihood that potential recruits would indulge their curiosity and approach recruiters. Furthermore, a strong emphasis on interaction with community elders helped gain the support of influential community members who guide community youth toward the Army.

Another key to the RFSU’s success is its emphasis on intelligence and information gathering by local communities. Valuable intelligence can be extracted from an avenue other than the formal border security and surveillance missions of the unit. This local intelligence helps prevent military planners from falling into the trap of mirror-imaging, in which planners may miscalculate assumptions and thereby compromise the ability to meet a mission successfully. In population-centric operational environments, situational awareness and cultural awareness are not mutually exclusive, and by drawing on critical information passed from indigenous sources, planners are in a better position to develop a robust picture of their area of responsibility.

A major challenge to community-centric engagements is effective communication with local populations. In response, RFSUs often draw a third critical resource from local communities: mentors and liaisons that can enhance communication between indigenous officers and non-indigenous soldiers. In places like Iraq and Afghanistan, where indigenous populations serve as the backbone for police and military forces, communication in support of training efforts becomes especially important and difficult.

Mentors were particularly helpful during the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program (AACAP)—an annual effort to provide improved housing/infrastructure, promote health, and train select community members in valuable skills that can be applied in local industry. The training program was structured in small
four-person teams, including a regular Army trainer, two community members, and one indigenous reservist (often a more experienced non-commissioned officer). The indigenous reservists were identified as ‘mentors’ because previous experience working with non-indigenous officers enhanced their ability to facilitate communication within the group, approach the Army trainer to address issues that might otherwise go unnoticed, act as a role model for community members, and provide valuable advice from the perspective of a successful reservist.

Using local resources to support communication, intelligence, and force skill development is not only a cost-effective solution to overcoming familiar operational obstacles, but it also serves to create a substantive bond between the military and indigenous groups sharing a common operational area. Using local resources—rather than importing skills and services from special teams or contractors—has a significant force multiplier effect at the strategic, operational and tactical levels.

**NAVIGATING SECTARIANISM**

The challenges facing multinational forces in Iraq and Afghanistan highlight the negative impacts civil sectarianism can have on implementing a common security policy. Without a nation-wide consensus on and support of a security agenda, regional or inter-communal enmity can derail any attempt to implement a common program. Establishing and guaranteeing homeland security is particularly challenging in these scenarios, as inter-communal rivalries can create incentives for profiting from cross-border illicit activity, territorial competition, and general blockades to state-supported commercial traffic and security patrols.

Not only does sectarianism threaten security on a national level, but it can also undermine the effectiveness of security organisations themselves. Sectarianism can undermine authority, cooperation, and the mission of a security strategy by stoking divisions and competitions among communities or against the larger state. Tribal societies are more likely to display sectarian tendencies, as their traditional structure does not always readily conform to modern social conventions, such as pluralistic nationalism. As we continue to observe in Iraq and Afghanistan, traditional communities may not prioritise central government programs for border security, which may exclude certain customary interactions with neighbouring communities from different states. For this reason, it is especially important that national security forces identify and implement creative solutions to engage border area communities in a cooperative security framework. Although Australia does not have internal conflicts to the degree that exist in Iraq and Afghanistan, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities throughout northern Australia maintain unique traditions and objectives which, at times, clash with national law enforcement and other government services.
As already discussed, 51 FNQR companies work to gain the trust of and coordination with indigenous community leadership to coordinate operations. Equally important to achieving this objective is the way that 51 FNQR soldiers navigate sectarianism within the unit itself. Not dissimilar to the challenge of recruiting a national force from across tribal societies in Iraq and Afghanistan, the RFSUs must confront and overcome potentially divisive issues when working in the indigenous communities whose tribal affiliations are far from homogenous.

Recruiting from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the Australian Army acknowledges the unique environment it is creating for its soldiers. The 51 FNQR draws individuals from remote, heterogeneous, tribal communities and trains them to perform as a soldier, with all the expectations and requirements placed on Army reserve enlistees. However, the RFSUs recognise that the indigenous enlistee faces greater obstacles to fully integrating into the reservist program. Coming from cultures in which staying away from home for prolonged periods of time is a rarity, indigenous soldiers can find it difficult to complete training courses or remote reconnaissance operations. Additionally, certain indigenous soldiers are confronted with tasks that challenge their traditional taboos, such as crossing certain terrain, interacting with ‘poison’ members from other tribes, or taking command over other soldiers whose tribal social status might be higher than that of the commanding officer by Army standards. As a soldier and member of the unit, tribal differences, traditional taboos, and other sectarian behaviour will not be tolerated within the ranks. To emphasise this point, the RFSUs have developed a ‘One Skin’ policy, by declaring that the green uniform is a common ‘skin’ for all soldiers. All those who choose to put on the uniform also choose to put aside racial, tribal or other differences. The single army-green ‘skin’ covers any differences between indigenous and non-indigenous soldiers.

The important One Skin policy not only works to resolve intra-service sectarian issues, but intra-communal differences as well. While semi-autonomous indigenous communities may compete with one another for resources, it is important that the Australian Army soldiers operating in these communities maintain a neutral reputation. Whereas local leaders described certain social service and law enforcement agencies as acting autonomously of the communities to which they are assigned, they characterised 51 FNQR as being exceptionally willing to work with local communities in ways that respect local customs and balances of power. This professional neutrality extends to inter-community relations, in that local communities

RFSUs must confront and overcome potentially divisive issues when working in the indigenous communities …
did not feel as though certain tribes were favoured by or received disproportionate benefits from the local Army companies.

Furthermore, 51 FNQR leadership demands that their soldiers respect the One Skin policy with reference to civil–military affairs to prevent the companies from being ‘ethnicised’ or otherwise distinguished by a certain tribal affinity. While the current RFSU soldier roster does not represent every indigenous community in the 51 FNQR AR in Far North Queensland, the Army and community leadership acknowledge that this is a long term project. Even if this representative diversity was achieved, the One Skin policy is applied in a civil affairs context as promoting an exclusive Army ‘profile’ that supercedes any other tribal affiliations. Not wanting a certain tribal group to assume that their relatives will demonstrate preferential treatment to their needs or similarly perpetuate sectarian aversions to taboo communities, the public version of One Skin provides a mitigating, neutral cover for moving among divided communities.

The Australian Army seeks to navigate the potential operational trip-wires of civil sectarianism by training their soldiers for cultural agility and reinforcing both unit cohesion and professionalism through the One Skin policy. This model addresses not only the battle to secure hearts and minds, but also the cultivation of common security priorities to bring soldiers from communities rife with sectarian divisions and cultural barriers together in a single unit tasked with implementing regional security priorities.

CONCLUSION

The multifaceted mission of the RFSU is perhaps best summed up by a set of concentric circles (Figure 1) described by one of the 51 FNQR officers.² One circle represents the tactical patrolling mission (Operation RESOLUTE), another represents the community engagement and assistance activities run by the unit, and a third represents the broader effort to maintain a positive regional presence. Only by using all three of these tactics can the RFSU achieve true situational awareness—a fundamental requirement for any successful operation.

Critics of the RFSUs suggest that Operation RESOLUTE can be accomplished without indigenous reserve units; that is, by regular full-time soldiers trained for remote surveillance and reconnaissance. Indeed, Army regulars could likely maintain patrol mission tempo. But this approach ignores two of the three ‘circles’; simple tactical patrolling is not sufficient for long-term success, as we observed
in our time with 51 FNQR. It is critical that the value of community engagement should no longer be dismissed by defence forces as the realm of civilian agencies, but rather incorporated as a key tool to accomplish military missions. Additionally, maintaining a regional presence provides a greater ability to deduce nuanced changes over time rather than simply identifying absolute changes that vary between patrol operations in the theatre.

Current war planners in Iraq and Afghanistan are beginning to consider the force multiplier effect that supportive local populations can have on their operations, and the RFSU experience highlights the impact of such a multiplier. This effect may manifest in a reduced need to employ personnel to counter opposing forces, or it may become apparent in an increased pool of resources arising from contributions from a willing community. When military units develop persistent relationships in a community, they are more likely to benefit from on-the-ground intelligence. Locals may be more inclined to facilitate operations, or at least to refrain from impeding them. Using the metaphor of a three-legged stool for 51 FNQR’s tactical components, while reconnaissance and surveillance patrols prop up the most apparent or measurable part of the overall security mission, these patrols alone could not withstand environmental pressures or unforeseen crises that could tip the balance and negate previous tactical successes. All of these factors allow troops to focus on fighting foreign enemies, preventing enemy infiltration, provide security that supports infrastructural and economic development, and promote conditions that encourage opportunities to develop a robust corps of indigenous soldiers.

Figure 1. The multifaceted mission of the RFSU
Military planners must recognise that, for better or worse, situational awareness requires a longer-term approach, for community engagement and regional presence cannot occur in a week or, perhaps, even during a two-year tour. The RFSU model allows commanders to expend the needed effort to build situational awareness, understand a community’s power structure and priorities, and identify common security goals. It allows units to develop culturally-based practices in a setting where cultural ‘sensitivity training’ is simply not enough, even when supported by the best cultural anthropologist or area specialist. Furthermore, it increases the likelihood that security planners can develop appropriate metrics for success and appreciate nuanced, less tangible changes that may otherwise go unnoticed.

Given an emphasis on relationships and the importance of a longer-term approach, leadership transitions must be carefully executed. RFSUs struggled with continuity during transition of commanders, who rarely overlapped with their predecessor long enough to be introduced to community leaders. Any exiting commander should be provided opportunities to pass information, make introductions, and ‘be seen’ with his or her successor. And new commanders will need to temper their enthusiasm for change with recognition that continuity also can be valuable.

The flexible nature of RFSUs allows commanders to gain the trust of indigenous populations and find creative, culturally-based solutions when needed. Military planners should recognise the value of this flexibility when working with communities, and the inherent need for multiple options and approaches to improving regional security. Although this is changing, default tactical plans may rely on conventional military manoeuvres, leaving unit commanders with few options to meet the emerging operational challenge of engaging civilian populations. This needs to change, and recent changes in how coalition forces are approaching challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate the ways in which senior policy-makers and military planners are rethinking the tools available to their combat elements facing operational challenges. With this trend, it is important to acknowledge successful models, such as that of the Australian Army RFSUs, in developing dynamic and comprehensive approaches to operational challenges in population-centric theatres.

We found that 51 FNQR recognised, and acted upon, the inherent connection between strong community relationships, perceptive cultural engagement, and achievement of the national security mission. In part because of this approach,
51 FNQR enjoys a status as a positive, respected force in the communities it engages. Downstream benefits—including enhanced situational awareness and threat reduction—makes the unit far better able to meet its security goals.

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the US Government.

ENDNOTES

2 Ibid.
3 For a variety of reasons, most indigenous recruits select to enter the Australian Army through the Regional Force Surveillance List (RFSL) program, which restricts service options to within the three RFSUs in northern Australia. This restriction is often insignificant to most RFSL soldiers, as they generally prefer to serve in their local communities.
4 Major Doyle, Officer Commanding A Company 51 FNQR provided this description, crediting Lieutenant Colonel Chris Goldson with having provided the original illustration.

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OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

BANG ON TARGET?

INFANTRY MARKSMANSHIP AND COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS IN VIETNAM*

DR BOB HALL AND DR ANDREW ROSS

ABSTRACT

Infantry have long aspired to the ideal of ‘one shot, one kill’ in marksmanship training, but this article proves that, especially in complex terrain, infantry are better served by employing the ‘volume of fire’ approach to psychologically dominate the enemy. Only then can the significant challenges of poor visibility and fleeting engagement opportunities be successfully overcome and manoeuvre restored to the light infantryman.

In the matter-of-fact terms of Australian Army doctrine the role of the infantry is to seek out and close with the enemy, to kill or capture him, to seize and hold ground and to repel attack, by day or night, regardless of season, weather or terrain. To perform this role the infantry relies on its capacity to produce effective fire using its own weapons, and where possible, indirect and direct fire support. It is often thought that the individual soldier’s marksmanship—the soldier’s ability, using his personal weapon, to hit an observed target—is the basis of the infantry’s

* This article has been peer reviewed
capacity to produce effective fire. It is well accepted that the infantry (and SAS) of 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) in Vietnam displayed high tactical skill and dominated fire fights. Yet the standard of marksmanship within the infantry was, and continues to be, called into question.

Many Vietnam Combat Operations After Action Reports drew attention to the perceived poor standard of shooting.⁴ Some published personal accounts and unit histories are also critical of shooting standards. For example, Major C F Thomson, a rifle company commander in 7RAR, colourfully expressed the dismay of many infantry officers when he wrote that

> It’s a tragic fact, and one that we should not conceal; that on average we couldn’t hit the side of a barn at ten metres with a shotgun. The only sure result comes from placing the muzzle against the enemy navel and firing.³

The CO of 2RAR/NZ (ANZAC), Lieutenant Colonel John Church, noted in his battalion’s tour (May 1970–May 1971) that:

> there had been a high expenditure of small arms’ ammunition for a relatively small return of enemy casualties … In the heat of battle many soldiers pointed their weapon in the general direction of the enemy without having identified a specific target, and pulled the trigger, often over and over again.³

Criticisms of the standard of 1ATF marksmanship have continued to the present. At the 2002 Chief of Army’s Military History Conference, two contributors, Major General Mike O’Brien and Brigadier Noel Charlesworth, claimed 1ATF marksmanship had been poor.⁴

Numerous reasons for the ‘poor’ state of infantry marksmanship were given. They included the lack of suitable ranges near unit barracks leading to insufficient shooting practice, poor fire control by NCOs and junior officers, soldiers deliberately aiming off because training with blank ammunition encouraged them to do so, carriage of excessive amounts of ammunition encouraging profligacy, failure of instructors to instil the desire to shoot to kill, and other reasons. Few of the complainants mentioned the difficulties of acquiring a target in the combat conditions that prevailed in Vietnam.

The numerous criticisms of infantry marksmanship had one thing in common: despite the critics alluding to the existence of a poor ratio of shots fired to enemy casualties inflicted, none cited any empirical data to support their claims. In this article⁵ we are able to revisit the question of infantry combat marksmanship in Vietnam.

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Few of the complainants mentioned the difficulties of acquiring a target in the combat conditions that prevailed in Vietnam.
to assess the truth behind the claims. We can do so using empirical data derived from a database of 4100 1ATF contacts in Vietnam. In the process we are able to provide some insights into the nature of combat shooting that have implications for training and future combat operations in the complex terrain of Australia’s region.

But before considering the marksmanship of 1ATF soldiers it is necessary to consider the operational context of combat shooting in Vietnam.

**(STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES)**

The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army (VC/NVA) enjoyed a major strategic advantage in fighting an insurgency. By adjusting their level of commitment to the war the VC/NVA could wage war virtually indefinitely. For the US and its allies, on the other hand, domestic political support would not be sustained unless there were clear signs that the struggle would end in victory and that that end would not be too distant or too costly. It followed that the US and its allies were under pressure to win the war, but for the VC/NVA it was acceptable to simply avoid losing.

These strategic imperatives had an impact on the conduct of operations including on the issue of marksmanship. The VC/NVA generally sought to avoid contact with 1ATF patrols unless under circumstances favourable to themselves. Their main force units withdrew into the jungle where they used wide dispersal, a marked preference to break contact and withdraw if confronted by a 1ATF patrol and the construction of bunker systems providing good protection against indirect fire as their main force protection measures. They would occasionally leave the security of their bases to raid South Vietnamese government forces or civil infrastructure and, less frequently, to conduct deliberate operations against elements of 1ATF. Except for these relatively rare occasions, the burden of manoeuvre to get into contact fell upon 1ATF.

**CONTACTS BY TYPE**

Table 1 shows the 1ATF contacts by type, as a percentage of total contacts. To bring the enemy to battle, 1ATF conducted an intensive patrolling and ambushing effort and, when enemy camps or bunker systems were located these were attacked. This emphasis on patrolling and ambushing is reflected in the table. Together, patrol encounters and ambushes represented 70 per cent of all 1ATF contacts. Attacks on enemy camps and bunker systems and occasionally against enemy in urban terrain,
amounted to a further 8 per cent of contacts. Those forms of contact initiated by the enemy—attacks or probes on positions and ambushes by the enemy—amounted to less than a quarter of all 1ATF contacts.

Table 1. 1ATF contacts by type as a percentage of all contacts.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of contact</th>
<th>1ATF contacts %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambush (by enemy)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambush (of enemy)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attack on enemy position</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security contacts</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Hot' landing zone</td>
<td>insignificant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrol encounter</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that the majority of 1ATF combat shooting was done in patrol encounters and ambushes, in attacks on enemy positions, and in what we have termed ‘security contacts’. Most of this shooting took place in thick jungle or other heavy vegetation, or at night.

**RANGE OF ENGAGEMENT**

Range of engagement is a key factor differentiating combat in a jungle environment from other types of combat. In the Vietnam jungle ranges of engagement tended to be uniformly short. Table 2 shows the ranges of engagement for the forms of contact most frequently encountered by 1ATF.

Table 2. Range of engagement by contact type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of engagement (metres)</th>
<th>Contact type</th>
<th>Ambush (of enemy) %</th>
<th>Patrol encounter %</th>
<th>Bunker system attack %</th>
<th>Security %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–15</td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–30</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–50</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 50</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The key point is that the close battle in Vietnam was very close. Overwhelmingly, ranges of engagement were less than 50 metres across each form of contact. More than half of all ambushes were at ranges of just 15 metres or less. Nearly 80 per cent of all contacts were at ranges of 30 metres or less. There was a sharp decline in the number of contacts at ranges in excess of 30 metres but this was less marked in attacks against bunker systems.

The reasons for these short ranges of engagement were twofold. First, the enemy sought to reduce his vulnerability to 1ATF heavy weapons, especially indirect fire support and close air support, by using the concealment provided by dense jungle or night. Range of engagement in the jungle was determined by the range of visibility which was often as short as three to five metres. In more open areas such as paddy fields the range of visibility was much longer but the enemy avoided these areas in daylight. Second, once in contact, VC/NVA troops used the tactic of ‘hugging’—getting up, very close to the Australians—so that heavy indirect fire support could not be brought against them without also causing Australian casualties. Both factors resulted in a large percentage of contacts at short range, limited use of heavy indirect fire support and consequently, high reliance on infantry small arms fire for killing effect at the point of contact.

DURATION OF ENGAGEMENT

Duration of engagement influenced the infantry’s ability to apply fire over time and to use fire and movement to close with the enemy. Table 3 shows the duration of engagement according to type of contact.

The table shows that the close battle in Vietnam was also very brief. While some battles fought by 1ATF lasted several hours, these tended to be infrequent. Over 75 per cent of all ambushes, patrol encounters and security contacts (forming the bulk of all contacts with the enemy) were completed inside 20 minutes. About half of these contacts lasted five minutes or less. However, bunker system attacks show a marked tendency to last longer with more than 50 per cent lasting more than 30 minutes.

If caught in an ambush or a patrol encounter the enemy usually sought to break contact quickly and escape into the jungle. They were very skilled at doing this and—using high volumes of fire and fragmentation effect from AK47s, RPD light machine-guns and RPGs—often broke contact before the 1ATF patrol could
organise effective indirect fire support. Artillery responding to an infantry call for fire support usually took about 10 minutes to get effective fire onto a target. Air support could take even longer. But Table 3 shows that in more than 60 per cent of cases, the enemy had already broken contact and escaped in less than 10 minutes.

In bunker system attacks the enemy had chosen the ground and prepared field defences. They enjoyed the benefits of mutual support between bunkers, depth, prepared fire lanes, carefully sited command detonated mines and UXB and other defensive advantages. However, the crucial difference was that the bunkers provided overhead protection against 1ATF heavy indirect fire support. They could therefore loiter in contact. Bunker system attacks also took 1ATF units longer to prepare. These were dangerous operations, often requiring the coordination of several infantry sub-units, armour, helicopter gunships, FGA and artillery and mortar support. Assembling and coordinating these assets took time.

The above shows that 1ATF combat shooting in Vietnam often took place at very short range against a fleeting enemy in dense jungle or when visibility was otherwise limited. More sustained combat tended to take place when the enemy held well-prepared positions with overhead protection. 1ATF infantry patrols relied upon their small arms to defeat the enemy. Indirect fire support could not be applied in the short range engagements or its effects were largely nullified by the enemy’s bunkers. Infantrymen were under pressure to shoot quickly and accurately.

... in more than 60 per cent of cases, the enemy had already broken contact and escaped in less than 10 minutes.
OPPOSING ARGUMENTS

It can be seen that the context of infantry combat in Vietnam was not conducive to the calm application of carefully aimed small arms fire that the critics of 1ATF marksmanship seemed to endorse. In fact, two opposing schools of thought developed. The first, as we have seen, was critical of the standards of marksmanship and believed the apotheosis of the marksman’s skill was the achievement of ‘one shot, one kill’. This group could be characterised as the ‘one shot, one kill’ school.14

Others took the opposite view—that in Vietnam, most targets were engaged under conditions of very poor visibility, either at night or in heavy jungle. Targets were very close and very fleeting, requiring a reflex response—the antithesis of the carefully aimed shot. The enemy produced high volumes of fire and to establish dominance in the fire fight 1ATF patrols should do the same. Soldiers needed to fire at targets if they could see them, but if not, they should vigorously engage those areas where they thought the enemy might be. This approach required that they carry large amounts of ammunition. This group could be characterised as the ‘volume of fire’ school.15

THE REALITIES OF CONTACT IN VIETNAM

The ‘one shot, one kill’ idea tended to presuppose the existence of a clearly visible target and one that remained visible while the soldier aimed and fired. However, the reality of combat in Vietnam (as during the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation), was that such targets were rare.16 Thick jungle or night usually obscured the target. If an enemy was seen, it was usually for such a brief moment that the soldier had too little time to react with a carefully aimed shot. In most contacts soldiers did not fire at ‘targets’ at all; they fired at the noise of enemy movement or at the source of the enemy’s shouted orders, at muzzle flashes or RPG back-blasts or at moving vegetation. Many fired at where the enemy had last been seen, where they thought they might be moving, or where they might be taking cover. Much of this shooting was done without using the sights. Both eyes were kept open to keep a wide field of view and to quickly pick up any signs of enemy movement around the flanks.

However, in the first few seconds of some contacts—particularly daytime ambushes (which represented slightly more than half of all ambushes)—the enemy was clearly seen and the initial shots at least, could be aimed with precision. These initial shots may have approached the ‘one shot, one kill’ ideal. But after this initial burst of fire—perhaps the first one or two rounds—all those near the point of contact were under pressure to shoot quickly and accurately.
took cover and ‘disappeared’ from view. In ambushes (by both day and night) it was common to open fire by initiating one or more banks of claymore mines. These produced a heavy volume of shrapnel into the killing ground but also a large cloud of dust and smoke which obscured targets for subsequent engagement by small arms fire. Whether in an ambush or a patrol encounter, targets quickly vanished. Opportunities for carefully aimed fire—even for using the sights—were very fleeting.

Under these circumstances, most small arms fire used the ‘volume-of-fire’ technique. Its purpose was not necessarily to kill or wound the enemy, although that would be a desirable outcome. Instead it was intended to establish psychological dominance in the fire fight, to pin the enemy and prevent his manoeuvre (especially his withdrawal).

The need to get heavy volumes of fire into the target area quickly led to changes in the contact drill. For example, Lieutenant Colonel F P Scott, CO 3RAR (1971 tour) noted that:

Platoon commanders who had been in heavy firefights commented that the contact drill laid down in [infantry doctrine] was just not possible particularly in heavy jungle. Personnel got to ground immediately and then crawled to a fire position. The platoon produced the maximum return of fire from the broadest possible base. The platoon commander then fought the battle.\[17\]

Doctrine also decreed that on contact the machine-gun should be deployed to the high ground or, if the ground was flat, to the right flank. This was also modified. In practice, most rifle sections in contact deployed their machine-guns a very short distance to a pre-determined flank where it was well positioned to bring immediate fire to bear to the front and, if necessary, to support the withdrawal of the forward scout. Again, Scott noted the difficulties of applying doctrine in the terrain of Vietnam. He observed that ‘in many cases the thickness of the vegetation absolutely precludes any attempt at “gun to the high ground”’.\[18\] These modifications to doctrine were aimed at quickly producing a large volume of fire.

Writing of SAS patrol contacts Captain A W Freemantle observed that:

When contact is initiated by the enemy the immediate retaliation with a heavy volume of automatic fire, even if only in the general direction of the enemy, serves not only to keep his head down but to create an illusion of a far larger force. Also the immediate operation of as many weapons as possible efficiently breaks the ‘spell’ that occurs momentarily on contact: it’s also good for morale.\[19\]
Bang on target

Freemantle's observations were equally applicable to infantry contacts. He continued:

It should not be supposed that this firing is entirely indiscriminate or completely uncontrolled, but rather that when contact is initiated by the enemy in close country, one probably won't see anything and will only have a fairly rough idea of where the enemy is; therefore it is vital that an immediate heavy volume of suppressive fire is laid down by anybody who can possibly direct his weapon into the general area.20

A particular problem facing 1ATF patrols (both infantry and SAS) was that seeing an enemy soldier fleetingly at about 15 metres range, through the jungle, told one very little about the enemy's strength, location and intentions. The enemy soldier might be alone and therefore dealt with easily by a rifle section. But he might also be the forward scout of a platoon-strength patrol, a much more dangerous target and beyond the capability of a rifle section. Even worse, he could be a sentry for an occupied company-sized bunker system that is, as yet unseen, 10 metres on the patrol's flank. The enemy was highly skilled at camouflage and concealment and possessed a very high level of fire discipline. For example, in bunker system contacts the enemy soldier often held fire until 1ATF patrols had entered concealed fire lanes. These enemy techniques and skills, usually enhanced by thick, enveloping jungle, produced a high level of uncertainty about enemy strength and location. The effect of this on 1ATF patrols was to cause them to exercise caution and use high volumes of fire and observation of the target area, as Freemantle describes, before attempting to manoeuvre.

The lessons Freemantle identified were also supported by others. While some infantry battalion COs criticised the apparent high expenditure of ammunition for a seemingly small number of enemy casualties,21 many others recognised the value of 'volume of fire'. One early advocate of the 'volume of fire' approach was the CO of 7RAR on its first tour (1967–68), Lieutenant Colonel E H Smith. He wrote:

In many contacts … the concept of one shot one kill has not been applicable as there has been no visible and identifiable target for the rifleman to fire at. In the majority of contacts it has been noted that area shooting rather than pinpoint shooting has been required. This necessitates a heavy volume of fire preferably from automatic weapons. In night ambushes it is rare for anyone to have a definite target although all members of the ambush must fire into the area of the killing ground. A rule of thumb for night
Operational Analysis

Dr Bob Hall and Dr Andrew Ross

Ambushes is 200 rounds per MG and 4 magazines from every other weapon – regardless of whether a target is identified. 22

So convinced of the efficacy of volume fire was the prolific ‘lessons’ author that he argued for a suite of small arms better able to deliver volume fire. According to McNeill and Ekins, Smith said the infantry

needed the ability to saturate a small area with a heavy volume of fire from automatic weapons, and they needed to carry such portable firepower on their backs. [He] pointed to the inadequacies of many of the infantry weapons in use. The Australian soldier’s standard weapon, the 7.62 mm SLR, needed an automatic-fire capability, a shorter barrel and a 30-round magazine to match the firepower of the enemy’s AK47, especially for jungle contacts. The American M16 was lighter and easier to handle but its 5.56 mm round lacked the ‘stopping power’ of the Australian weapon. 23

Another advocate of ‘volume fire’ was the CO of 3RAR (1971 tour), Lieutenant Colonel FP Scott. He wrote a lengthy ‘lessons learned’ paper covering numerous operational issues including marksmanship. Scott’s comments are worth noting at some length:

Without detracting from the need for better shooting … the concept of ‘one shot one kill’ and the swift, single, accurate, standing shot by the forward scout drilled into us all at [Jungle Training Centre, Canungra, now the Land Warfare Centre] and by training publications requires comment.

Unfortunately it has little relevance to the reality of the battlefield. Economy in the use of small arms ammunition seems a strange concept given the enormous cost in money, sweat, material and effort to gain contact with one enemy, particularly during this [latter] stage of the war. In training on mechanical ranges and the sneaker course we stress snap shooting: on the battle field, particularly in civil access areas the forward scout must run through his list of ‘rules of engagement’ and positively identify the enemy before firing a shot. It must be accepted that some enemy will escape because of this factor. Once the enemy is identified, the platoon must produce the maximum volume of accurate fire—often it will be at movement, or in the direction of flight. Again, there is a radical difference between a snap shot on a range and the reality of the battle field with the forward scout, three weeks on operation, standing slumped over with fatigue and the weight of his 90 lbs [40.8 kg] pack,

Many soldiers were quick to learn the value of ‘volume fire’ from the contacts they experienced.
ammunition and water, bound by the rules of engagement, being confronted with a fleeting moving man at 50 metres. Some of the vigorous comments made in this area must be tempered by the hard reality of operations. Notwithstanding this, the importance of accurate shooting and continuous training in shooting … is hard to over-emphasize but the training must be relevant to the battlefield.\textsuperscript{24}

Many soldiers were quick to learn the value of ‘volume fire’ from the contacts they experienced. Some agreed that there was a need for a fully automatic SLR and illegally modified their own.\textsuperscript{25} In the SAS conversion of SLRs to fire fully automatic was sanctioned and these weapons were sometimes fitted with forward ‘pistol’ grips and 30-round magazines as well. Those carrying the modified SLRs carried a larger ammunition load, sufficient to use the ‘volume fire’ technique.\textsuperscript{26}

**EVALUATION OF 1ATF SHOOTING PERFORMANCE**

An accepted indicator of combat shooting performance is the ratio of shots fired per enemy casualty inflicted. But this ratio varies considerably according to the combat mission being undertaken. Accordingly, Table 4 shows the amount of ammunition fired per enemy casualty for the main combat tasks performed by 1ATF.

Table 4. Average shots fired by 1ATF infantry per enemy casualty by combat type and weapon type.\textsuperscript{27}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weapon</th>
<th>Patrol encounter</th>
<th>Ambush (of enemy)</th>
<th>Bunker system attack</th>
<th>Security or defence of position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.62mm GPMG M60</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>1310</td>
<td>761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.56mm M16</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.62mm SLR\textsuperscript{28}</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several points emerge from this table. First, the shots fired per casualty inflicted figures for 1ATF are substantially better than those claimed for some other armies. The most frequently quoted ‘shots per casualty’ ratio for the Vietnam War is the US Army’s figure of 50,000 rounds of small arms ammunition per enemy casualty.\textsuperscript{29} We are sceptical of this figure and suspect that it is a gross overestimate and does not reflect individual soldier marksmanship.\textsuperscript{30} The 1ATF ‘shots per casualty’ figures provided in Table 4 are several orders of magnitude less than this US figure but they
are derived from shots fired by infantrymen in contact with the enemy and are an accurate reflection of 1ATF soldier marksmanship.

Another, and possibly the best basis for comparison with 1ATF marksmanship, is the standard of marksmanship achieved by British Commonwealth Forces in North Borneo during Confrontation. The context of these British Commonwealth contacts with Indonesian forces was, in many ways, similar to that of 1ATF in Vietnam. In this environment British Commonwealth security forces achieved a ‘shots per casualty’ ratio of about 750:1. 31 This had been regarded as far too high with the problem attributed to a range of causes, some of which were similar to those claimed to be causing low shooting standards, later, in Vietnam. 32

It can be seen that in comparison with the figures for the US Army in Vietnam and Commonwealth Forces in North Borneo, the 1ATF figures shown in Table 4 represent remarkably effective shooting under the difficult combat conditions found in Vietnam.

Table 4 also shows that the three weapons vary considerably in terms of shots fired to achieve an enemy casualty. A generic ‘shots per casualty’ figure does not tell us the whole story about marksmanship in combat shooting. The role of the GPMG M60 was to lay down dominating fire to suppress the enemy and permit manoeuvre, which is why the table shows it expending large numbers of rounds to produce an enemy casualty. The M16 and the SLR on the other hand were more ‘surgical’ in the type of fire they produced requiring fewer rounds per enemy casualty. The M16, being capable of fully automatic fire, shows a slightly higher ‘shots per casualty’ ratio than the semi-automatic 7.62mm SLR. The quality of marksmanship, as measured by ‘shots per casualty’ ratio, therefore depends heavily on weapon type, capability and function in the fire fight. This also reminds us that when producing fire in contact, the section functions as a team. It is because the M60 lays down suppressive fire—at the cost of high ammunition expenditure for low casualties—that the M16 and SLR can achieve more surgical killing effect.

The third point to note about the table is that marksmanship as measured by ‘shots per casualty’ varies considerably according to the combat task being performed. It can be seen in Table 4 that while the average number of shots fired by the M60 to inflict a casualty is 495 for an ambush, it jumps dramatically to 1310 for an attack on a bunker system. These changes reflect the tactical advantage or disadvantage deriving from each combat task. The patrol encounter represents a convenient ‘neutral’ contact: neither side derives an advantage from having selected and prepared the ground. The ambush and security contact reveal the extent to which
the ‘shots per casualty’ ratio can be improved when the 1ATF patrol has selected and prepared the ground. The bunker system attack shows the disadvantage to 1ATF patrols in terms of the ‘shots per casualty’ ratio when the enemy selects and prepares the ground. The ‘shots per casualty’ ratio for bunker system attacks shows that the 1ATF patrol must fire three to four times more ammunition per casualty to overcome the enemy’s defensive advantage.

Marksmanship remains an important skill for a small percentage of contacts where a target is seen for sufficient time to take careful aim. It is also important for the first one or two seconds of a contact before potential targets have taken cover and disappeared from view. But in the complex terrain of Vietnam, combat shooting was mainly a contest of volume of fire. It was not primarily about highly skilled soldiers hitting observed targets with a few well-aimed shots. Instead it was about applying small arms fire to achieve an effect or series of effects. Those effects include establishing psychological dominance in the fire fight, forcing the enemy to reduce their fire output, forcing them to keep heads down while manoeuvre takes place, pinning them and preventing their manoeuvre, and preventing them from breaking contact and withdrawing. These effects are much harder to achieve when the enemy has chosen and prepared the ground as in a bunker system. Thus, larger volumes of ammunition must be expended to achieve them. Of course, achieving killing or wounding effect is desirable, but only a small portion of total shots fired should reasonably be expected to achieve this.

The ‘shots per casualty’ figures for the ambush seem to run counter to this argument since both the M16 and the SLR expend more rounds per casualty in ambush than they do in the ‘neutral’ patrol encounter. Why so? The answer to this question is twofold. First, many ambushes occurred at night, whereas all patrol encounters and bunker system attacks occurred during the day. As one might expect, poor visibility at night tended to result in a higher ‘shots per casualty’ ratio. Second, most ambushes by both day and night were initiated by claymore mines. These produced a cloud of dust and smoke that obscured any remaining targets in the killing ground leading, once again, to poor visibility and therefore a higher ‘shots per casualty’ ratio.

It is important to note that the statistical data presented in Table 4 shows average shots per casualty inflicted. There were many contacts in
which far fewer (and, for that matter, far more) than the average number of rounds were fired to inflict an enemy casualty. For example, in about 22 per cent of all 1ATF contacts, thirty shots or less resulted in an enemy casualty. This is a low ‘shots per casualty’ figure and demonstrates that, under some conditions, 1ATF infantry were often capable of high marksmanship.

CONCLUSIONS

1ATF shooting performance was far better than many critics allowed. Despite very difficult conditions Australian infantry achieved a much lower ‘shots per casualty’ ratio than the US Army and a significant improvement on the British Commonwealth forces in North Borneo. ‘One shot, one kill’ was an ideal that could be approached but never practically achieved except in a few isolated cases. Most combat shooting was ‘volume of fire’ and was conducted by the rifle section as a team.

Though the techniques of ‘one shot, one kill’ comprised only a small portion of total combat shooting, they remained a critical component and soldiers needed thorough training in their skills. However, an equal, if not larger, training effort needed to be put into the skills of ‘volume of fire’ techniques—the effective engagement of the enemy when there are no visible targets. This form of shooting was also important and happened to comprise the bulk of all combat shooting yet received almost no attention in training.

This research has established a ‘shots per casualty’ baseline using Vietnam War data to reveal patterns in the effectiveness of Australian combat shooting. It would be instructive to compare these with similar data drawn from current Australian operations in Afghanistan. Such a comparison might reveal the extent of improvement in soldier lethality and lead to better understanding of the way the combat environment affects soldier lethality. Ongoing monitoring of ‘shots per casualty’ could also provide Army with a tool to assess the standard of shooting and might help to identify any particular training needed to improve it.

This research also suggests some implications for military technology. It shows that under some circumstances, improving target acquisition systems may result in only a marginal improvement in soldier lethality. Greater benefits may be derived from developing improvements in the volume of fire output, reducing ammunition weight and through providing devices that might aid the coordination of fire within the team.

Finally, in training the infantry for combat shooting it will be important to gather accurate and detailed information about the context in which combat shooting takes place. From the moment troops are deployed into a combat zone they should begin the systematic collection and dissemination of information back to those training
to take their place in subsequent rotations. Perhaps a future family of small arms will assist this process by capturing electronically the date, time, location, number of rounds fired and sight picture every time the trigger is squeezed. Once analysed, this data might inform subsequent training and tactics leading to improved combat performance.

ENDNOTES

5 The Australian Research Council and the Defence Science and Technology Organisation both provided funding to support the research for this article.
6 A ‘contact’ is defined as the engagement of an enemy force using direct fire weapons, usually small arms.
7 A T Ross built a database called the Vietnam Combat Database. It contains 4100 contacts which we estimate to be over 95 per cent of all 1ATF contacts in Vietnam. For each contact the database contains up to thirty bits of information including the date, time and place of the incident, the unit involved, friendly strength, enemy strength, range of visibility, range of engagement, and other details. The data is derived from numerous Combat Operations After Action Reports held by the Australian War Memorial (AWM). The database is a research tool and is regularly upgraded with new information.
8 Examples are the battle of Long Tan (18 August 1966), Operation BRIBIE (17–18 February 1967) and the battle of Binh Ba (6–8 June 1969).
9 This and all other tabulated data in this paper is derived from a database created by A T Ross called the Vietnam Contact Database (see note 7).
10 ‘Defence’ implies resistance to an assault whereas many of the contacts in this category are minor clashes by sentries or clearing patrols etc., with enemy probes. Hence we use the term ‘security contacts’ to describe them.
11 By contrast, ranges of engagement in urban operations tend to be very short inside buildings but long outside buildings. See Bing West, No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah, Bantam Dell, New York, 2005, pp. 144–46, 174, where West describes small arms fire at ranges of 500 metres or more.

12 The AK47, RPD light machinegun and RPG7 were the principal weapons of enemy Local Force units such as D445 and D440 battalions as well as units of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), such as 33 NVA Regiment. By contrast, local and village guerrilla units were sometimes armed with AK47s but often carried weapons of Second World War vintage.

13 See, for example, AWM95, item 3/5/43, Commander’s Diary, 105 Fd Bty RAA. FCC Arty Sig Log Book for the period 20 June 1966 to 19 August 1966 which records the receipt of requests for fire and the subsequent fire mission. Main causes of delay were the requirement to obtain clearances to fire and to adjust fire onto the target.

14 Lieutenant Colonels J M Church and R F Stuart could be counted as proponents of this school (see fn. 4), but other examples of this school of thought can be seen at Infantry Lessons from Vietnam, p. A-2.

15 Among the proponents of this school was Lieutenant Colonel E H Smith, CO of 7RAR during its first tour in 1967–68.

16 The problems of infantry marksmanship in a jungle environment were raised during both the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation. During Confrontation in particular, a large training effort was made to improve marksmanship through range practices. Soldiers were also exhorted by senior commanders to strive for ‘one shot, one kill’. But both campaigns lacked the operational scale and tempo of Vietnam (which tended to emphasise the importance of infantry combat lethality) and the ready availability of helicopter ammunition re-supply in that theatre.


18 Ibid.


20 Ibid., p. 49.


22 8RAR R798/1/8, ‘Lessons Learnt in South Vietnam’, (précis prepared by 7RAR), Enclosure 4: Infantry weapons (in the possession of the authors), 14 August 1969, emphasis added.

Bang on target

25 The current infantry rifle, the Steyr, is, of course, capable of fully automatic fire.
26 Freemantle, ‘Patrol Lessons’, p. 49.
27 This and the following tables in this article refer to averages. However, averages can be misleading. Accordingly, we are able to provide cumulative frequency graphs showing the distribution of cases around the average, for any of the tables in this article.
28 The formal title of this weapon was Rifle Equipment 7.62mm L1A1. It was a semi-automatic or ‘self-loading’ rifle, hence SLR.
29 This figure is cited in numerous publications including Dave Grossman, On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society, Little Brown, New York, 1995 where it is cited several times. However, the most authoritative source appears to be Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Anti-Personnel Weapons, London, 1978, p. 91, which, citing studies by the Office of Operations Research at Johns Hopkins University, states that ‘10,000–50,000 bullets are fired for every man hit’. This figure was made public shortly after the end of the Vietnam War and we suspect that it helped to promote the impression of poor marksmanship in Vietnam by the US Army and its allies. It should be noted that some US sources put the shots to kills ratio for the US Army as high as 100,000:1. See W Scott Thompson and Donaldson D Frizzell, The Lessons of Vietnam, Macdonald and Jane’s, London, 1977, p. 174.
30 Grossman, On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society, p. 334, n. 2, attributes this high figure to the widespread use of automatic weapons, various tactical techniques favoured by the US Army such as ‘reconnaissance by fire’ and other factors not connected to infantry marksmanship.
32 Ibid.
33 The Vietnam Combat Database records a total of 980 identified ambushes of which 414 occurred ‘at night’.
34 Analysis of the Vietnam Combat Database shows that for the claymore mine, when used in ambushes, the ‘detonations’ per casualties ratio was 2.9:1. The Vietnam Combat Database also reveals much of interest about the lethality of other fragmentation weapons and their capacity, relative to small arms, to cause casualties, but these insights do not belong in this article.
35 Figures derived from analysis of the Vietnam Combat Database.
36 Infantry Training Vol. 1, Infantry Platoon Weapons, Pamphlet No. 12, Theory of Small Arms Fire and Training the Battle Shot (All Arms), 1967, Army Headquarters, Canberra, 1968. This pamphlet referred only briefly to the conduct of rifle section firing practice. The overwhelming thrust of the training it described was based on the individual attaining various performance objectives. See p. 19.
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Both are working on Australian Research Council funded studies of the Australian Army's combat effectiveness in the Vietnam War and the relationship between morale, discipline and combat performance.
THE BURDEN OF BONUSES

LIEUTENANT COLONEL PHILLIP HOGLIN

ABSTRACT

This article examines the use and effectiveness of retention bonuses in the Australian Army. These bonuses have been implemented at considerable expense despite the absence of a solid basis of empirical research regarding either their effectiveness or the potentially unintended consequences that can arise from their payment. The author examines each of these issues in turn and concludes that retention bonuses, despite their questionable logic and rationale, are still useful as a temporary measure to ‘buy time’ for the longer-term root causes of separation to be addressed.

INTRODUCTION

The payment of a retention bonus is often seen as a panacea to manning deficiencies in Army. Whether these deficiencies are caused by separation rates, low recruitment, poor force structure, or some other external factor, the view exists that applying a bonus will overcome some or all of the problems that have caused the deficiency to develop. Unlike other retention initiatives, bonuses are also thought to have an almost instantaneous effect, the results of which can be seen shortly after implementation.

Unfortunately, there is little documented evidence to show that a bonus has any long-term effect beyond the payment period of the bonus. More dramatically, there
is no empirical evidence that bonuses in Army (or indeed the Australian Defence Force) work at all. This is not to say they do not work; it is just an observation that there has been no statistical validation of past bonus initiatives to examine whether there has been an increase in retention that can be attributed to the bonus.\footnote{1}

Even with no evidence that the payment of a bonus will achieve its intended outcome, the continued application of bonuses suggest that there is little doubt with policy developers that they increase retention—to suggest otherwise would seem counter-intuitive. Therefore, bonuses are applied even without empirical evidence of their effectiveness under the broad assumption that retention is directly linked to remuneration, and the higher the remuneration the higher the retention.\footnote{2} However, there are costs and risks in applying a bonus which are not immediately evident and which may not surface until well after the bonus has come and gone.

This article will examine the potential second-order effects arising from the application of retention bonuses from a policy and force structure perspective. In order to place this article in context, the conventional rationale behind a bonus is discussed briefly, prior to detailing some of the possible second-order effects. Finally, considerations for implementing a bonus are outlined in order to provide some insight into why bonus initiatives to decrease separation are not as straightforward as a problem versus solution dichotomy in the usual systems analysis construct.

**SELECTED LITERATURE REVIEW**

**NUNN REVIEW**

The *Review of Australian Defence Force Remuneration 2001*\footnote{3} provided many recommendations, some of which were in the area of bonuses. Significantly, in discussion of the relevance of bonuses the review found that there has been ‘payment of bonuses, and in some cases multiple bonuses, to individuals who either had no intention of leaving the ADF, or who did not possess the skill sets being sought by the external market’. The review indicated that payment of bonuses can be inefficient and may not achieve the intended effect of improving retention.\footnote{4}

Nunn also stated that bonuses should ‘be devices of last resort used to counter unexpected external targeting of high value employees’ and when they are used ‘they should be specifically targeted and monitored for performance’.\footnote{5} The review also discounts the concepts of remuneration equity and instead proposes that financial incentives could be offered on an individual basis rather than across cohorts.
The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) has presented two reports on the retention of military personnel: the first in 2001, followed by a follow-up audit in 2003. The initial report indicated that ‘Expenditure on retention has the potential to be much more cost-effective than expenditure on recruitment and training’. However, the research also indicated a perception that some retention and completion schemes (including bonuses) ‘did not necessarily have a great impact upon retention rates … because they did not address the reasons personnel were separating, but merely raised the price of someone who was in the market for other reasons’.

The ANAO research provided some qualitative evidence that bonus schemes may not be cost effective because they were paid to personnel who were not intending to separate, and were often applied after a problem had become apparent. ‘The ANAO also found that Defence has not conducted an overall assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of retention schemes for use in the development of subsequent retention schemes.’ It outlined that Defence needed to develop a much better knowledge of the incentives that work and the reasons for their success. The report concluded its discussion on retention by stating ‘There is no clear evidence that specific retention schemes are cost effective’ and that Defence should collect evidence on the effectiveness of these schemes.

The follow-up ANAO audit leveraged heavily from the findings of the Nunn review. In its discussion on the costs of recruiting and training compared with retaining already trained personnel, the report surmises that ‘substantial investment in retaining these personnel could be cost-effective’. However, the difficulties in attributing the cost of recruiting and training in order to inform an assessment of how much should be expended to retain an individual, combined with the intangible cost of experience, was acknowledged.

The literature from Nunn and ANAO highlighted three key points:
- Army does not know whether retention bonuses are effective in increasing retention;
- Army does not know whether retention bonuses represent a cost effective method in retaining personnel; and
- underpinning the previous two points, no measurement of the effectiveness of bonuses has been undertaken to inform decisions on the viability of these schemes to reduce retention, or achieve the desired outcome.

**THE RATIONALE AND THEORY OF A BONUS**

The commonly accepted first-order effect of a retention bonus is that it will reduce the likelihood that individuals in a particular target group—whether it be rank, trade or experience level—will choose to resign. This will obviously reduce the separation
rate and result in higher cohort numbers of the target group in current and later years, thereby enhancing or maintaining defence capability and enabling enough time to correct the deficiency in force structure.

The base assumption, therefore, is that members who would otherwise have resigned had a bonus not been offered will change (or at least defer) their decision by accepting the bonus and a subsequent undertaking for further service (UFS). Simplistically, by offering a bonus, individuals are compelled to compare how much worse off they would be if they resigned and entered non-military employment compared with accepting a bonus and remaining in Army.\textsuperscript{14} If that difference is significant and can be rationalised within their own personal circumstances then an individual will choose to stay. In micro-economic terms, a bonus effectively places a cost on other reasons for leaving and elevates remuneration to a higher consideration for separation than would otherwise have been the case (and may also eliminate low remuneration as a potential reason for leaving).\textsuperscript{15}

The amount of bonus required for an individual to be retained may vary. Some personnel may require a very large bonus so that other considerations for separation—such as family reasons, posting stability and career progression—are no longer significant when compared with the benefits a bonus can provide. Other personnel may require almost no bonus at all, indicating they are satisfied with their own personal circumstance and level of remuneration. A challenge, therefore, is to identify how much bonus needs to be paid to negate other reasons for separation for most of the target personnel.\textsuperscript{16}

Unfortunately there is no formula for determining the monetary amount of a bonus. The amounts of recent bonuses seem to be arbitrary and based on a combination of subjective assessments and the funding available in the retention budget rather than how much is actually required. To achieve the specified intent, bonus amounts cannot be set so low as to not achieve any increase in retention, but can also not be set so high that they present an unreasonable financial liability to Army. The irreversible nature of the introduction of bonus schemes also represents a risk in setting the correct amount as Army cannot easily increase or decrease the amount of bonus post-implementation.\textsuperscript{17}

Of course an individual can choose to both not accept the bonus and stay in Army, having made the conscious decision that flexibility to leave at a time of their choosing was ‘worth more’ than the bonus provided. To them, the bonus actually represents a ‘cost of staying’ if they make it to the same length of service as their
cohort counterparts who accepted the bonus. In other words, it is money they have missed out on because they finished up serving just as long as personnel who accepted the bonus. This notion may of itself induce the separation of individuals who may consider that their remuneration is not equitable, even though they are primarily responsible for the decision that resulted in the inequity. 18

**FALSE AND MISLEADING ASSUMPTIONS IN THE NEED FOR A BONUS**

One criticism of the rationale behind applying a bonus is a seemingly automatic assumption that retention is the root problem in a trade which suffers from a high proportion of vacancies. A high number of vacancies in a particular trade does not necessarily mean that separation rates are high; in fact, high vacancies are more likely to be a symptom of a poor structure. Although it is true that some trades and ranks suffer from high separation rates at particular points, those most frequently listed on the critical trades and ranks lists also suffer from a poor force structure where the career progression systems are not sufficient to provide the necessary numbers at the appropriate ranks and cohorts. 19

A second misleading assumption is that separation is a bad or undesirable characteristic. Separation is actually a necessity in order to allow promotion of personnel and the discharge of personnel no longer suited to the military. Reducing separation rates too far will slow the promotion rates, with the potential side effects of increasing average age, increasing time-in-rank, and potentially inducing separations due to a lack of promotion opportunity in the long term. Defining ‘good’ separation and ‘bad’ separation rate can be broadly determined using workforce modelling and is likely to vary between trades.

A further misleading assumption is that separation rates within Army are high in general. Although Army strives to reduce separation rates when compared with other similar armies, the national labour market and similar occupations, the separation rates within Army are comparable. 20 Importantly, worker mobility in the Australian labour market peaks between the ages of 20 and 34, which also represents the key demographic for experience and rank within Army. 21 Therefore, although Army experiences relatively high separation between the ages of 20 and 34, this could be reasonably expected given the mobility of the key demographic in the remainder of the labour market. 22 The ability of Army to significantly influence this demographic characteristic is unknown, however, would most likely require significant resources to achieve.

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A second misleading assumption is that separation is a bad or undesirable characteristic.
Even an assumption that present levels of remuneration are not high enough to retain the right personnel might not be valid. Recent exit surveys and Defence Attitude Surveys have not placed remuneration as a top ten reason for leaving.\textsuperscript{23} It seems incongruent then, that Army would consider a bonus knowing that there are other significant areas affecting retention which might be more specifically addressed. The answer may be that it is easier to design and implement a bonus scheme to target a specific critical group compared with the cost associated with addressing some of the other reasons cited for leaving.

The need for a bonus should therefore not be based purely on high vacancies, high separation, or a perception of needing to improve remuneration. Instead they should be structured around enabling sufficient time in which the structural inadequacies of the trade can be addressed and corrected. Retaining personnel of a particular rank and trade, although useful, is only a short-term solution. If utilising the time bought (by paying the bonus) to recruit and train personnel at subordinate ranks such that they can be promoted into the inevitable vacancies is wasted, then the bonus has only been effective in maintaining the capability for a very short period and has not fixed the inherent problems within the trade.

**MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF A BONUS**

Conventional wisdom suggests the measurement of an intended outcome should be a routine aspect of the introduction of a bonus initiative. Measurement represents a part of the feedback loop and allows assessment of the scheme in order to inform future initiatives.\textsuperscript{24} However, as highlighted earlier, Army has not conducted any statistically robust analysis of the short or long term success of bonus schemes.

In measuring the success or otherwise of a bonus, it is important to appreciate that retention figures can be extremely sensitive to variation. An entire cohort of captains, for example, comprises about 270 officers and any policy which alters the decisions of just a handful of captains represents an effect of several percentage points.\textsuperscript{25} Therefore policy-makers need to be aware that any negative second-order effect resulting from introducing a bonus which induces resignation of just two or three officers effectively reduces the effectiveness of a bonus. A culmination of these effects could completely reverse the intended effect of a bonus and may even result in a worsening situation in the mid-long term.

Overall, measures of the success of a bonus should examine both the immediate effectiveness and the long-term benefits to force structure and capability. This suggests
continual analysis in not only the short term, but also well into the future and the ’life’ of the cohort. Confounding events such as the simultaneous introduction of policies, retention initiatives and increases in wages could make the attribution of reduced separation to the bonus scheme non-trivial and requiring analytical support to interpret. Such support also requires a large amount of data to facilitate the comparison of what might have been expected to occur should a bonus not have been applied.

THE BURDEN OF BONUSES

As with many policies, particularly in the field of personnel policy, there can be numerous second-order effects, some of which enhance the intended effect of the policy and others that may compromise the intended outcome. With the implementation of bonus schemes, most of the second-order effects relate to cost, force structure and career impacts. The collection of these effects represents the burden, positive or negative, of bonus scheme implementation.

PREMIUM ON A BONUS (ECONOMIC RENT)

To be effective, a bonus must be appealing to personnel who were otherwise going to resign. Payment of a bonus to personnel who would otherwise have stayed is effectively the premium paid to retain the few who would not have stayed. For example, if a cohort consists of one hundred personnel, and it is anticipated that ten per cent (ten personnel) will resign during the year, then to attempt to retain those ten personnel the bonus will need to be offered to the entire cohort. In other words, the bonus will also need to be offered to the ninety personnel who were going to stay anyway, and not just the ten target personnel. Hence the premium is likely to be a significant amount.

This premium, even if it is a large amount, may well be cost effective. Attributable costs of recruiting, training, and ensuring a force structure is in place to sustain experience at the right level could exceed the costs of applying a bonus and would therefore represent value for money. However, if the bonus is not well accepted, then its payment may be nothing more than extra money in the pockets of people who were prepared to stay in any case and thus may not have captured the target audience at all. The chance of this occurring represents the fiscal risk of committing funds before the results are known. Simplistically, therefore, the take-up rate must exceed the normal retention rate over the life of the bonus, and the cost of the bonus must be less than the cost of recruiting and training the additional personnel in order to be considered a short-term success.

CAREER DECISION POINTS

There is tacit acknowledgment that personnel make their retention decisions during certain discrete periods of time. In general, personnel do not continually scan employment pages or submit resumes to external organisations (public or
private). However, during certain periods individuals may have a greater propensity to consider employment options outside the military. These periods are generally referred to as career decision points (CDP) and are historically represented through an increased propensity to leave at certain points in their career.30

Career decision points often coincide with certain events throughout the career of personnel. They may be associated with courses, promotions, postings, lapse of a return of service obligation (ROSO), notification of competitiveness, or a personal situation, and typically involve a comparison of where an individual may view themselves in a future military appointment with where the career management agency may see that individual. The greater the discrepancy between the individuals’ thoughts on postings, promotions, lifestyle, and career progression from that of the career management agency, the greater the propensity to leave is likely to be.

Figure 1 shows an example of the possible CDPs for a General Service Officer (GSO) who has graduated from the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). Other ranks and types of officers have similar CDPs throughout their career. Every time a career decision point is encountered, an individual will assess their future in the military and make a decision to stay or leave, with the latter decision contributing to separation rates. The deliberate application of a well-timed bonus can potentially contribute to a decrease in the number of CDPs, which would result in fewer periods where a member considers discharge, thereby marginally improving retention. Conversely, a poorly timed bonus scheme may introduce an additional CDP.

As shown in Figure 1, there is likely to be up to four CDPs between the lapse of ADFA ROSO and the Promotions Advisory Committee (PAC) decision on selection for Command and Staff College (CSC). The introduction of a bonus just prior to the lapse of ROSO, which has a UFS likely to take them up to CSC PAC, could reduce the CDPs from four to just one. However, in designing the bonus, the timing of the lapse of the UFS should be planned such that it does not introduce its own career decision point (in addition to those already in existence). If the end of the UFS can be timed to occur at an existing career decision point—such as promotion, selection for CSC, a subject course, or a posting—then the individual is still only confronted with one career decision point, even though the magnitude of the decision may have increased. Unfortunately, current bonus schemes appear not to have considered CDPs and in some instances may have inadvertently introduced an additional decision point.

There is tacit acknowledgment that personnel make their retention decisions during certain discrete periods of time.


DELAYING THE INEVITABLE?

Bonuses, in effect, buy personnel for a period of time. Once that time elapses, the characteristics defining the structure of the trade may simply return to pre-bonus conditions provided there have been no further bonus schemes or other confounding retention initiatives. Unfortunately, as detailed earlier, there is little empirical evidence by which to examine whether structures have indeed returned to their pre-bonus status or not.

It is therefore unclear whether the structure of a trade completely returns to normal or whether there is some post-bonus residual benefit. Figure 2 shows an indicative normal year-of-service profile in line $a$ and the intended post-bonus profile in line $b$. At the completion of the UFS/ROSO period at point $x$ it is unknown whether the profile continues to follow $b$, follows a new profile in line $c$, whether numbers drop...

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Figure 1. Possible career decision points for GSO ADFA graduates.
to point $y$ and then follow line $d$, completely return to point $z$, or assumes some other profile. It is also unclear whether the residual effect, whatever it is, is beneficial to force structure or whether the increased retention will create a flow-on of effects including blocking the promotion of more junior cohorts.

Still, it is reasonable to suggest that at the completion of the UFS, there will be an increase in separation in the target cohort as the figures undergo a form of correction. Without analysis and understanding that this is a side effect of applying a bonus in the first place, personnel planners might perceive the sudden increased separation as a worsening situation and it may induce them to recommend a subsequent retention bonus which would lead to a risk of applying continually rolling bonuses.

Provided Army personnel planners are conscious that a purpose of the bonus is to use the ‘bought time’ to correct any systemic structural problems within the trade, and not to use the bonus in its own right to correct the problem, then when the post-bonus correction in separation rate occurs, Army will hopefully have fixed those systemic force structure problems. Should Army fail to correct the force structure during this grace period then the bonus will only have been successful in the short term, the trade will continue to experience force structure problems (perhaps even exacerbated by the bonus), and there will be pressure for a rolling requirement for more bonuses.

Figure 2. Example profile of the number of personnel by completed years of service.
FORCE STRUCTURE

Notwithstanding the possibility of a bonus simply delaying the inevitable, there are also several other force structure implications in introducing a bonus. Notably, within a particular cohort or trade, a bonus could create larger numbers in the targeted cohort compared to other more senior or junior cohorts. As this cohort passes through its career it distorts the normal profile (years of service profile) of a trade and can appear as a cohort bubble which has ramifications for both career management and force structure.

Figure 3 shows where several of these bubbles already exist in the completed years of service profile in the ARA. Each profile line shows the number of people in the ARA by the completed number of years they have served. There are three profile lines, one each for 2002, 2004 and 2006. These profiles clearly show at least three bubbles at A, B and C which can be tracked two years apart. Unfortunately, the number of bubbles makes it difficult to determine what the normal profile should look like...

...fluctuations in separation rates and vacancies could simply be a result of the bonus implementation and not a crisis in retention.
Personnel Issues  

Lieutenant Colonel Phillip Hoglin

(although the Directorate of Workforce Modelling, Forecasting and Analysis (Army) DWMFA-A has calculated the ideal profile).

While a bubble may not appear to be a problem at the aggregated level, as it passes through ranks and career decision points it creates surges and periods of variation in many personnel statistics. Where this variation occurs, planners and policy-makers should identify and acknowledge that fluctuations in separation rates and vacancies could simply be a result of the bonus implementation and not a crisis in retention. It is therefore important that active steps are taken not to make counterproductive policies resulting from nervousness created by any false statistics. Regardless, a bubble will always cause fluctuations in each rank simply as a consequence of large numbers entering and leaving each rank at the time when that cohort becomes eligible for promotion.

Comparatively larger cohort sizes, aside from causing variation, also have several likely effects on the workforce. Assuming that personnel are promoted into a vacancy and not based on time-in-rank, then an increase in a cohort size may increase the number of personnel competing to be promoted. As only a finite number can be promoted, a promotion backlog is likely which then increases the practical time in rank. Similarly, a large cohort at the same rank and experience level will also increase competition for particular postings. Notably, posting related issues are regularly cited in the top ten reasons for discharge and a reduced opportunity for promotion is rated only one less than remuneration as a reason for discharge.32

Any increase in competition for promotion, or desirable postings, has a series of likely unintended consequences. Personnel who were not in the targeted cohort, who now perceive themselves as no longer competitive given the size of the senior cohorts (or not willing to compete even if they are competitive), may initiate discharge earlier than they otherwise would have. Increase in demand for desirable postings may also result in earlier discharge in those who are unable to secure a posting to their preferred locality. The emergence of either of these unintended consequences diminishes the effectiveness of the bonus and may even perpetuate a retention problem in junior cohorts.

Personnel reporting systems also suffer from an increase in cohort size and competition for promotion and postings. Reporting officers not willing to disadvantage their subordinates for promotion may inflate reports which, if conducted across the board, will reduce the discriminating aspects of identifying good performers. Career management agencies would then be
forced into utilising non-objective measures of performance, such as career profile, word pictures and personal knowledge, to decide on future postings and promotion.

A larger cohort size resulting from a bonus, as they continue through their UFS, also has the potential to increase the average age of Army. While this is not necessarily a problem in the first instance, an increase in age may result in a change in key demographic information such as members who are married and have children. This may subsequently decrease individual mobility and increase the need for retention incentives to be directed toward the family unit rather than the individual. In most instances, the personal characteristics of individuals at the commencement of the UFS period will not be the same at the end.

Workforce modelling can show the increased pressures on time-in-rank, promotion backlog and increase in age resulting from larger than normal cohorts. Combined with competition for postings and inflated reporting, there is an increased risk of both a sizeable separation at the end of the UFS period for the targeted cohort, and increased separation in more junior cohorts. These effects can conspire to reduce or negate the effectiveness of a bonus and confound attempts at correcting inadequacies in force structure.

**EQUITY**

Remuneration equity essentially requires that individuals doing the same or similar work at a similar standard should get paid, on balance, the same. Equity, and the impact of perceived inequity, appears largely ignored in consideration of bonuses and discussion does not appear in any policy document. Statements such as ‘nobody will be worse off (though some may be better off)’ do little to reduce the impact of inequity in remuneration, although these statements perhaps provide some principled comfort to policy-makers themselves.\(^3\(^3\)

Equity theory has a firm basis in research and, in its simplest form, can be stated as requiring a ‘fair balance to be struck between an employee’s inputs and an employee’s outputs’.\(^3\(^4\) Employees generally feel that where the inputs to an organisation are the same between two people, they should be treated and rewarded the same, including in the area of remuneration.\(^3\(^5\) The theory also proposes that at the extreme, a ‘person can always quit a job if it is perceived as too inequitable’.\(^3\(^6\) It is this extreme outcome that could affect the effectiveness of a bonus.

In general, bonuses paid for any reason other than performance appear to breach the concept of equity and can potentially induce separation within Army. Aside from
the extreme case of separation, there are also other potential effects as individuals attempt to reconcile the perceived (or real) inequity to better balance their own remuneration and rewards. These can include reductions in commitment, tolerance and enthusiasm, compared with those on higher levels of remuneration. Relying on the professionalism of the Army individual not to exhibit these effects of inequality is likely to be hopeful at best, misguided and incorrect at worst.

The effect of inequitable remuneration in the workplace is, however, difficult to estimate within Army. Whether an individual is inclined to make a decision to stay or leave Army on the basis of their comparable remuneration with another member performing a similar function but on a different level of remuneration is unknown, as is their functional work output when they are earning a different amount. However, it still remains possible that a bonus awarded to one cohort but not another, when the work value is similar, may actually induce separation. At the very least a changed self-perception of their work value and personal value to the organisation should perhaps be expected despite the expectation of professionalism.

REVERSIBILITY

Regardless of the success or otherwise of a bonus, once offered they are generally not reversible and cannot be easily retracted. Even if the bonus does not address the perceived retention problem, there is little Army can do once the initial offer is made, and Army therefore carries a high risk of failure, if not a high financial risk. Additionally, ‘the ongoing use of retention bonuses can create a culture of expectation that, if not met, may result in a concentrated period of separations from a particular employment group’ in its own right. Ironically, therefore, the application of a bonus may induce separations if the expectation of a bonus is not met.

Typically, bonuses are non-binding and still offer opportunities for individuals to discharge during the UFS period and simply pay a pro-rata amount of the bonus back. Unfortunately, historical figures are not available on the frequency of this occurrence; however, noting the continued ability of an individual to separate at a time of their own choosing, then accepting the bonus may simply provide nothing more than another administrative hurdle for discharge.

Paradoxically, the acceptance of a bonus by an entire cohort can actually result in reduced remuneration for many members of that cohort in the medium–long term. If almost an entire cohort accepts a bonus, and a significant reduction in promotion opportunity and increased practical time-in-rank ensues, then some personnel will experience delays in a salary increase commensurate with promotion (or may never get promoted). Depending on the size of the bonus offered, if promotion either does not occur (when previously it would), or is delayed by more than three years due to increased time-in-rank, then these personnel could have been financially better off had a bonus scheme not have been introduced. Those who received the bonus
and get promoted within a normal career profile would benefit substantially from the bonus scheme, as would those who received the bonus but would not have been promotable anyway.

With the likelihood that negative second-order effects will reduce the effectiveness of bonuses, consideration should be given to better defining a set of circumstances under which bonus should or should not be implemented. Any assumption that bonus initiatives will achieve the desired retention or force structure outcomes should be challenged during deliberate consideration of expenditure on such schemes. This process is neither new nor foreign to Army as all other purchases and contracts follow strict procurement guidelines; the fact that bonuses seem quarantined from these guidelines is curious in that we do not view retention as the procurement of personnel.

DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF A BONUS

Bonuses should not routinely be considered a panacea to retention or force structure problems. Having acknowledged the potential second-order effects, retention bonuses may still provide a valid solution to retention and force structure deficiencies. However, several questions should be asked to determine whether a bonus is appropriate. Figure 4 provides a suggested flow of considerations in determining the appropriateness of a bonus.

If an assessment of bonus initiative considered for implementation results from using Figure 4, then a bonus should be seriously considered. Any other result from using Figure 4 indicates a reduced likelihood of success in the use of a bonus scheme, and subsequent increased likelihood of adverse effects on the force structure. Note, during suggested considerations that even having determined that a bonus may rectify the problem in the short term, consideration should still be given to the cost effectiveness, or whether these funds can be used in other areas known to affect retention.

CONCLUSION

This article is not intended to downplay the existence of the force structure and personnel deficiencies that have a real effect on the present capability of Army. It does, however, explain that bonuses could be an expensive method to attempt to improve retention where a proven historical precedent does not exist for their
Figure 4. Suggested flow of considerations for determining appropriateness of a bonus.
The Burden of Bonuses

success. Furthermore, if remedial action is not taken to correct the underlying deficiencies in force structure during the period of the bonus then the problems will simply resurface after the associated undertaking for further service period has been completed. In this instance, it is possible that funds allocated for use in bonus schemes may be better targeted in areas that are known to affect retention other than remuneration.

It is always difficult to begrudge any officer or soldier any increase in remuneration whether it be through a pay rise or bonus. Any initiative that results in more money in the pockets of personnel can easily be justified as a good thing. This is almost always true for the individual in the short term; however, over the medium and long term a sudden increase in remuneration through the application of a bonus has effects that may compromise the short-term gain for individuals. Reduced opportunity for promotion, trade structure disruptions, and increased competition for postings are all significant effects of a bonus that confront the individual in the aftermath of the scheme.

The simplistic view of the positive relationship between remuneration bolstered by bonuses and retention rates remains largely ignorant of the possible negative second-order effects and should therefore be challenged. The creation of an inequitable work value remuneration structure, ambiguity in long term effectiveness, introduction of variation in cohort sizes, disruptions to force structure, increases in time-in-rank, increased competitiveness for promotion and postings, and the development of bonus expectations are all reasons not to introduce a bonus. These are all possible negative consequences of the introduction of bonuses, and may all contribute in differing ways to neutralising or reversing the positive effects of a bonus in the medium to long term.

However, notwithstanding the potential negative second order effects of the introduction of a bonus, there may be occasions where there are very few viable alternatives to improve retention. If, for example, there is an immediate and pressing capability deficiency for an existing or pending operational requirement, then the application of a bonus might rectify the deficiency in the immediate short term. On the other hand, if the deficiency is not urgent and there is no existing operational requirement, then bonuses should probably not be entertained as a viable and fiscally responsible solution to capability deficiencies.

Unfortunately, Army will not be able to identify the true long-term benefit of recent retention bonus initiatives for some time. The introduction of other policy changes that are likely to affect the same target demographic as the retention bonus—including
the Graded Officer Pay Scale, Graded Other Ranks Pay Scale and Defence Home Owner Assistance Scheme—are likely to confound data analysis. Subsequent analyses may experience difficulty in attributing increased retention to the bonus schemes when it may also have resulted from these other concurrent initiatives.

ENDNOTES

1 Although the ADF has a long history of bonus schemes, there are no published reports on their effectiveness (or otherwise). The ADF response to Senate Notice Paper Question No. 976 of 14 May 2003 indicates that some bonus schemes have ‘been for short-term specific periods to alleviate operational needs. The continued viability of these schemes past the completion date was not warranted.’

2 In the ADF we do not know the elasticity of wage/retention, that is, we do not know the increase in retention resulting from an increase in salary. This would seem key in understanding the effectiveness of a bonus scheme, and how much needs to paid or budgeted to achieve a particular outcome.


4 Ibid., p. 126.

5 Ibid.


7 Ibid., p. 38.

8 Ibid., p. 39.

9 Ibid., p. 58.

10 Ibid., p. 59.

11 Ibid., p. 41.


13 Ibid., p. 32.

14 ADF currently promotes a comparison calculator as a means by which individuals can compare their comparative salary, taking into account some of the benefits of service.

15 By offering a bonus, Army is effectively trying to buy any other reasons for leaving from an individual.

16 Attempting to apply large enough bonuses to retain all target personnel is likely to be cost prohibitive. Some personnel will desire to separate from Army regardless of remuneration, unless an unreasonable amount or unreasonable conditions are offered. Approaches to align bonuses with remuneration for equivalent civilian employment are also likely to be problematic where no equivalence exists.
The seemingly arbitrary nature of setting bonus amounts does not seem congruent with the fiscal processes of other Defence spending.

There may exist an unquantifiable human factor of individuals not wanting the private indignity of both rejecting an offer and still serving for the same duration as those who accepted the bonus. These individuals may perceive that they have ripped themselves off and will actively avoid this feeling by seeking discharge.

Army Personnel Working Group details the current critical trades. DWMFA-A provides data on the separation rates for each employment category number (ECN). Of the trades listed on the critical trade list most are either small trades, rely on internal transfers for manning, or have a poor force structure. Only a small group suffer from separation rates significantly higher than the Army-wide separation rates.


As at February 2006 there were 3,564,100 people between the ages of 20–34 who worked at some stage during the year. Of these, 2,311,100 had more than one year with their current employer. The remainder either had less than one year (580,300), or were not currently employed as at the census date. This represents a mobility of somewhere between 16.4% and 35.2% which exceeds Army separation rates; 6209.0 – Labour Mobility, (Reissue), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2006, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/6B390377F3B21381CA257241000EA77F/$File/62090_Feb%202006%20(Reissue).pdf>, accessed 4 June 2008.

Emily Jacka, 2006 Australian Defence Force Exit Survey Report – Reasons for Leaving, DSPPR, Canberra, 2007, p.135 indicates that the response ‘To make a career change while still young enough’ is rated as number two on the list of reasons for discharge in 2006.

Exit surveys do not place remuneration in the top ten reason for leaving with exception to the response ‘Little financial reward for what would be considered overtime in the civilian community’ rated at 10/10 for ARA; Ibid., p.18. The response ‘More attractive salary package available in civilian employment’ was rated at 26/115; Ibid., p.136.
Application of a bonus occurs as part of a personnel system and as such can be analysed using models such as Hill/McCaskey. Linda Hill, A Note for Analyzing Work Groups, Harvard Business School Publishing, Boston, Revision 1998, p. 16.

The average cohort size of 267 also includes SSO and other non-GSO specialists. Hence three officers effectively represents more than one per cent. Directorate of Workforce Modelling, Forecasting and Analysis - Army, 'Status Reports, April 08', Department of Defence, Canberra, 2008. A similar principle applies to corporals and sergeants where cohorts consist of 680 and 350 personnel respectively.

Unfortunately, cohorts in Army are sometimes so small that statistically significant evidence would be unlikely.

Labour economics describes the occurrence where someone is paid more than he/she would be willing to work for as the ‘economic rent’.

Lieutenant Colonel Paul Robards, ‘Analysis of Retention in the First 12 Months of the Army Expansion and Rank Retention Bonus’, DWMFA-A, Canberra, 2002, para 18. Initial indication from the AER and RRB show that the premium may have been as high as $285k per additional person retained under the assumption that the bonus and not other factors were responsible for retention.

DRB49 and Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines explain in detail the principle of ‘value for money’ although the context of procurement in human resources is slightly different, the concepts remain valid. Corporate Services and Infrastructure Group, Defence Reference Book 49 Practical Procurement and Prompt Payment P4 Manual, Version 1.1, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2005, p. 11.

DWMFA-A data on ‘propensity to leave’ indicates that CDPs for officers occur at year 4, 6, 10 and 13/14. These coincide with lapses in ROSO for RMC direct entrants, ROSO for ADFA graduates, promotion to major, and selection for CSC respectively. Lieutenant Colonel Paul Robards, ‘Propensity to Leave and Workforce Forecasts’, DWMFA-A, Canberra, August 2006.

Ibid., Figure 3, p. 3.


Military and political leadership, in discussion of remuneration, often use the ‘nobody will be worse off’ in defence of policy, including General Peter Cosgrove in his address to the Media Watch Lunch at the National Press Club, Canberra, 30 July 2002; <http://www.defence.gov.au/media/2002/300702.doc> accessed 4 June 2008.
THE BURDEN OF BONUSES

37 It is also not cultural to ‘complain’ openly about someone else receiving a higher level of remuneration. The question of salary or remuneration inequity is not formalised in exit or attitude surveys. Many personnel would most likely not begrudge another person a benefit in any case.
38 If even 1–2 per cent of a trade are induced toward separation as a result of remuneration inequity then it will compromise the effectiveness of a bonus.
40 Retention of Military Personnel, p. 59 provides some anecdotal evidence of this occurring in the US military.
41 Robards, ‘Analysis of Retention in the First 12 Months of the Army Expansion and Rank Retention Bonus’, para 11, indicates that there were twenty-eight resignations in first twelve months of the AEB and RRB from personnel who had accepted the bonus.
42 If a fully qualified corporal, with two years or more time-in-rank, is delayed from promotion to sergeant by three years, then he/she would have missed a total salary increase of around $21,000 notwithstanding present-value-of-money, indexing, or any other adjustment. A fourth year without promotion would increase the lost salary to almost $29,000 indicating that a four-year delay in promotion for a bonus less than $30,000 could actually disadvantage members after taking into account NPV calculations.
THE AUTHOR

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‘A LITTLE BIT PREGNANT’

ISRAEL AND PARTIAL DETERRENCE

DR RODGER SHANAHAN

ABSTRACT

This article examines Israel’s capacity for deterrence. Unlike classical deterrence, where the use of force constitutes failure, the differing cost-benefit calculus of irregular enemies means that Israel must occasionally exercise its military power to demonstrate that it retains the will to act when not existentially threatened. While Israel’s ability to deter conventional and nuclear attacks from its state-based neighbours remains strong, the author finds that its capability to deter non-state actors has decreased in recent years. To restore a credible deterrent to irregular foes, Israel must achieve an undeniable victory—a far more difficult task than the insurgent’s simple need to stay alive.

The recent Operation CAST LEAD, Israel’s response to Hamas rocket attacks from Gaza, has once again re-opened the debate regarding the degree to which Israel’s military is still capable of deterring attacks from its enemies. That the Gaza action was at least in part motivated by the desire of Israel’s political and military leadership to recapture its military edge, which many believed had declined as a consequence of the 2006 Israeli war, was evident from the comments of the Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who claimed that the offensive had ‘restored Israel’s
Livni’s remarks followed less than a year on from the final report into the 2006 Lebanon War. Retired Justice Eliyahu Winograd, author of the Winograd Committee report into the war, made the telling remark that:

Israel initiated a long war, which ended without its clear military victory. A semi-military organization of a few thousand men resisted, for a few weeks, the strongest army in the Middle East, which enjoyed full air superiority and size and technology advantages… This offensive did not result in military gains and was not completed. These facts had far-reaching implications for us, as well as for our enemies, our neighbors, and our friends in the region and around the world. ²

The Winograd Commission outlined the shortcomings in the planning and execution of the 2006 war, but for many it also served to highlight the fact that the Israeli military no longer acted as a true deterrent force. This paper argues that Israel faces a requirement to provide a deterrent capability on two levels: classical deterrence against conventional, often existential, threats and deterrence against non-state (and in some cases semi-state) actors. And while it has effectively maintained its conventional deterrence capability, its deterrence against non-existential threats was on the wane well prior to the 2006 war and is unlikely to be restored because of one military operation. The reasons for this decline are numerous, but three in particular are worthy of further examination: the changing nature of the operations that the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) has had to conduct, the adaptability of the enemy, and the loss of information dominance previously enjoyed by Israel.

THE NATURE OF CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

Entire books have been written about the nature and definition of deterrence (Lawrence Freedman’s Deterrence and Patrick Morgan’s Deterrence Now being two of the best theoretical works on the matter) and this article does not seek to add to theoretical discussions on the subject. Suffice to say that the definition of deterrence itself is a relatively imprecise term, with Morgan seeing it as ‘the use of threats of harm to prevent someone from doing something you do not want him to’, while the Israeli academic Zeev Maoz takes a more absolutist view in describing it as a

policy through which one attempts to scare off a would-be attacker by holding out a drawn sword. It works as long as the sword is not being used. When the sword becomes covered with blood, deterrence is said to have failed. ³

These definitions are really a product of the so-called classical deterrence theory involving inter-state conflict, where any offensive action against a country represents a complete failure of deterrence. As Freedman noted, effective deterrence assumes that the threat of force is sufficient to contain the hostile behaviour of others, ⁴ and
the failure to do so represents an absolute failure of deterrence. This concept reached its apogee during the Cold War when the mutual possession of nuclear arsenals by the West and the Soviet Union ensured that mutually assured destruction provided decades of inter-state peace, as any failure of deterrence threatened to result in the destruction of the state.

The strategic vulnerability of the state of Israel since its inception has meant that nothing has been closer to the heart of Israel’s national defence strategy than the notion of deterrence. The day after David Ben-Gurion declared the independence of the state of Israel on 14 May 1948, its existence came under threat from an invasion of forces from the Arab League. The fact that Israel faced existential threats from state actors for the first thirty years of its life, combined with its lack of strategic depth, meant that the issue of deterrence has for many years been at the forefront of Israeli strategic planning. During the mid-1960s, then Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin made the concept of deterrence such a key element of Israeli defence planning that it became the most commonly used term in strategic studies jargon. Simply put, the state of Israel could not afford to cede ground to an invading force and was thus required to defend itself at its borders. The more that could be done to deter its enemies from contemplating such a move, the more likely it was that the state of Israel would survive.

Deterrence (and particularly conventional deterrence) though, can rarely if ever be permanent because the calculations regarding the utility of using armed force against an opponent are never static. These calculations can alter depending on the political considerations of governments in power, the state of national economies, the preparedness and reputation of military forces (both aggressor and defender) and a range of other factors. While in one sense the fact that Israel had to regularly fight against the same enemies over the space of three decades represents a failure of deterrence, somewhat paradoxically the continual victories reinforced a notion of cumulative deterrence, where the repeated successful applications of force eventually serve as a deterrent effect. The peace treaties that Israel signed with Egypt and Jordan came about through a realisation that neither country could defeat Israel militarily; peace offered more benefits than did continued conflict. But reputation is never enough in and of itself to constitute an effective deterrent capability. Given its strategic situation Israel has long known this and was consequently keen to develop an undeclared nuclear weapons capability at the earliest stage. The ‘strategic ambiguity’ that Israel has subsequently practiced has ensured that it has long possessed the ultimate regional deterrent capability, and through its attack against
Iraq’s Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981 and Syria’s alleged nascent nuclear capability in 2007, it has ensured that it has no regional nuclear competitor.

Even with its undeclared nuclear capability, Israel’s conventional military deterrence was also continually reinforced through its ability to adapt to changing threats. The IDF achieved remarkable success against conventional Arab armies but was also able when required to launch extremely effective operations against non-state actors. The 1976 rescue operation at Entebbe airport became synonymous with the daring and élan of the Israeli military, was testimony to good and flexible planning, and reinforced the notion that when required Israel could plan and execute operations well offshore to protect its citizens. Even after the signing of a peace treaty with Egypt and despite the increased militancy of Palestinian groups on its northern border, Israeli military planners continued to view their deterrence capability largely through a conventional prism, with a focus on technological and materiel superiority. This was a rational way to look at the regional situation, as it had always been states that had posed existential threats to Israel in the past. This thinking appeared vindicated again in 1982 when the IDF was able to expel the PLO from its southern Lebanese bases, forcing its humiliating evacuation from Beirut, and during the operation famously destroying eighty-six Syrian aircraft in one week with no losses of its own.

**DETERRENCE AND NON-EXISTENTIAL THREATS**

But not all security threats are the same, and even though the cumulative effects of military deterrence led some Arab states to the negotiating table, other security threats were emerging. Among these were a restive Palestinian population chafing under Israeli military rule following the annexation of the West Bank and Gaza after the 1967 war, as well as the emergence the nascent Lebanese Shi’a militia Hizbullah which would eventually fill the void left by the PLO after their departure from south Lebanon. As the threat of land invasion by hostile Arab states receded, former Chief of Staff and future prime minister Yitzhak Rabin threw some light on the new security paradigm that faced Israel by detailing what he considered to be the two types of security threats facing Israel: the existential threat imperilling the existence of the state of Israel and the ‘current security’ threat involving challenges to the daily life of Israelis. Implicit in this distinction is a belief that there are degrees of deterrence, because ‘current security’ threats ‘have never been, are not, and never will constitute an existential threat to the State of Israel.”

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Israel’s conventional military deterrence was also continually reinforced through its ability to adapt to changing threats.
Rabin’s view of what essentially represents a hierarchy of threats raises interesting questions about the relativity of Israeli deterrence. Whereas classical deterrence theory deals in absolutes where a failure to deter results in inter-state conflict of significant severity with concomitant casualties and infrastructure damage, the issue of non-state (or semi-state actors in the case of Hamas at least) non-existential threats raises interesting questions. These non-state actors have a different calculus of cost/benefit from states, in many cases needing only to survive an armed conflict as an organisation to succeed. As a consequence they are much harder to deter than state actors, but at the same time they can inflict much less damage than states. If it is accepted that complete deterrence against these groups is virtually impossible, is it possible to place a ‘limit’ on events such as rocket firings before Israel needs to intervene to reassert its deterrence? In democratic societies like Israel, however, the state’s contract with its population means that deterrence against non-existential threats needs to be pursued with the same seriousness as for existential threats.

Israel’s security planners have been faced with the need to provide deterrence against the widest range of possible threats: from potential nuclear threats from Iran, through Syrian conventional forces and possible chemical weapons, to indirect fire and low-level insurgent attacks from the likes of Hizbullah and Hamas. Notwithstanding the current impasse over Iranian nuclear aspirations, Israel’s deterrence against existential threats has been extremely effective for the past thirty years. The same cannot be said for Israel’s deterrence against what Rabin described as ‘current security’ threats. The issue is not whether Israeli deterrence has failed on occasion against these threats, as a deterrent capability can actually be reinforced if, once conflict breaks out, one side achieves a decisive victory. Israel’s string of victories against Arab states is testimony to this, culminating in the 1973 war, when the failure to deter Egyptian forces would nevertheless lead to a long period of peace.

In order to achieve the same degree of deterrence against non-state actors, it is necessary to achieve a similarly decisive victory. But the nature of modern warfare and the security threats that Israel faces makes the definition of a decisive victory a difficult one. It is Israel’s inability to achieve a decisive victory, in either military or political terms, against these forces that has led to a deterioration in Israel’s deterrent capability against non-state actors. The first Palestinian intifada, the unconditional withdrawal in 2000 from southern Lebanon and the 2006 war with Hizbullah have all contributed to a graduated deterioration in Israel’s deterrence capability. The word deterioration is used advisedly, as there is little case to be made
for the disappearance of Israeli deterrence. The fact that Israel’s northern border has remained quiet since the 2006 war, and the significant reduction in Hamas rocket attacks since the Gaza operation illustrate that Israel’s military capability still ensures a degree of deterrence. The reasons for its decline are many, but three are worthy of further examination: the stifling of the IDF’s expertise in offensive manoeuvre, the loss of information dominance, and the emergence of adaptive enemies.

THE STIFLING OF OFFENSIVE MANOEUVRE

Israel’s military reputation was largely forged through a series of hard-fought manoeuvre battles on multiple fronts against superior enemy forces. Such impressive achievements required decisive action on the part of military commanders who needed to re-task units and formations in direct defence of the country, often while under fire. These same characteristics that helped to develop aggressive manoeuvre commanders have to some degree hindered the IDF’s ability to respond effectively to non-manoeuvre warfare. At the same time, the limited opportunities for offensive manoeuvre and the changing nature of the opposition they have faced have constrained their ability to achieve a decisive victory, as static defensive or stability operations rarely provide such clear-cut results.

This became evident during the first intifada (1987–93). What began as a series of disorganised protests by stone-throwing youths against the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory turned into a long-term, low intensity conflict that would eventually lead to the signing of the Oslo Accords. This conflict placed strains on the operational capability of the IDF because it was so foreign to that which it had experienced (and trained for) in the past. The IDF was to find that ‘many conscripts were not prepared for the strain of dealing with civilian riots, protestors, and the grinding tensions of hostile populations and guerrilla warfare’. While at the same time many ‘did not want to become … involved in a struggle that they did not see as a major threat to Israel, or where many did not feel Israel’s position was fully justified’.

While few if any military forces do well as occupying armies, the Israeli military’s reliance on conscript soldiers and long-term static occupation duties in both the Palestinian territories and southern Lebanon where the enemy was part of the population robbed the IDF of much of the operational vigour that it had prided itself on. This became most evident near the end of the Lebanon occupation when intelligence failures exposed both elite units and senior officers to danger. Events such as the 1997 ambush of Israeli naval commandos that killed eleven sailors, and the 1999
death of the Israeli chief liaison officer Brigadier Erez Gerstein in a roadside bomb attack, showed that the initiative had been ceded to Hizbullah as the IDF eschewed its traditional manoeuvrist approach for one of largely static posts bolstered by its proxy South Lebanese Army militia.

While the IDF’s time in the Palestinian territories had allowed it to build up a degree of professional expertise in low-intensity conflict, by the time that the IDF had to execute a manoeuvre operation in 2006 against Hizbullah, its performance reflected that of a military whose training and execution in this form of operational art had atrophied over the years. An over-reliance on air power and a reduction in training standards for conscript soldiers meant that ground manoeuvre operations were conducted poorly and in an uncoordinated fashion. The promotion of an air force officer to Chief of Staff for the first time, illustrated the dangers inherent in ignoring the need to train for higher-end warfighting in the land environment. The subsequent resignation of Lieutenant General Dan Halutz following criticism in the Winograd Commission confirmed the belief held in some circles that operational planners had lost focus on, and contributed to the decline of, the IDF’s ground warfare capabilities.

THE LOSS OF INFORMATION DOMINANCE

An essential part of effective deterrence is the ability to sell the message to would-be opponents that military action against your own forces is ultimately futile. During the 1973 war, long lines of Egyptian prisoners made for dramatic footage and were a psychological boost to Israel’s military deterrent capability. A similar result emerged from the trapped remnants of Yasser Arafat’s PLO being dispersed around the Arab world following their negotiated evacuation from Beirut in 1982. Arab realisation that information operations could be utilised to reduce Israel’s military reputation and national will was slow to emerge, but when it did it was to prove a significant element in modifying Arab views concerning the capability and vulnerability of the IDF with a consequential impact on its ability to deter its potential enemies.

Part of this turnaround occurred quite by accident, as the first intifada captured headlines around the world with its images of Palestinian youths confronting Israeli soldiers in armoured vehicles. The mismatch in capabilities and the relatively high Palestinian death toll engendered widespread international support for the Palestinians …
IDF as an occupying force. By contrast the second *intifada* with its more centralised direction, use of suicide bombers, and high Israeli civilian death toll came to be seen both within and outside Israel as a genuine security threat to the state.

The emergence of *al-Jazeera* television in 1996 gave the Arab world a non-state regulated media service that was able to be viewed in most of the Arab world, and provided a high quality service that in many ways served to strengthen Arab identity. Hizbullah also understood the power of media even before the emergence of the Qatar-based *al-Jazeera*, and often took cameramen on its operations against Israeli or South Lebanese Army forces in southern Lebanon, and broadcast direct footage on its own television station *al-Manar*, which was first launched in 1991. In terms of countering perceptions of Israeli invincibility this approach meant that:

For the first time since the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948, Arabs and Muslims have seen Israeli soldiers inflicted with deaths and injuries at the hands of Hizbullah’s Islamic Resistance. Hizbullah’s success in turning the picture in the Arab-Muslim society upside down from a widespread feeling of defeat into a victory against Israel has earned al-Manar an enthusiastic following in countries across the region. 10

Hizbullah knows its target audience very well and modifies its message accordingly—military resistance to Israel is possible, so the sacrifices made in so doing are worth it. The same media tactics have subsequently been copied elsewhere, most obviously by Sunni Islamist groups in Iraq. As Hizbullah’s senior military commander in the south was to observe, “The use of media as a weapon had an effect parallel to a battle.” 11 But information warfare is not only about showing images of military successes on the battlefield to prove to the audience the vulnerability of the IDF. It is also about using Israel’s technological superiority against it, by claiming that its military firepower is used indiscriminately against both Arab and international targets. This approach has been aided by Israeli battlefield targeting errors that are used to provide evidence that the Israeli military is careless in its application of fire. The shelling of the Fijian UN compound at Qana in 1996 resulting in over one hundred civilian deaths; the 2006 bombing of a house near Qana that killed twenty-eight members of two families; the July 2006 bombing of a UN observation post at Khiam in southern Lebanon that killed four observers; and the shelling of a UN compound in Gaza in January this year have all been used to create an image of a military that cares little about collateral damage. In some, but not all cases Arab fighters have launched… when Israeli military operations are directed towards another country, this loss of information dominance is hard to counteract.
rockets in proximity to these targets, but in all cases the IDF’s response has allowed Arab media to construct an effective anti-Israeli narrative to which a broader international audience will be receptive.

Of course, when Israeli military operations are directed towards another country, this loss of information dominance is hard to counteract. In Lebanon, Hizbullah media and other domestic media outlets are able to influence the domestic Lebanese audience, while *al-Jazeera* is on hand to present Israeli military setbacks to a regional audience further diluting the aura of the IDF. Where Israel is in greater control of the operational environment, it is always keen to control the media message, firstly for its domestic constituency but also through its numerous native English speaking military media personnel to the international audience. Having learned the media lessons from the first *intifada* as well as its Lebanese experience, Israeli operations against Hamas in Gaza were notable for how tightly the IDF controlled the media in an effort to reduce the ability of a competing message to be conveyed.

**AN ADAPTIVE ENEMY**

All military planners understand the need to study the lessons of previous failures and to understand the nature of the enemy in order to exploit weaknesses in his makeup. In the West, intelligence agencies and military centres of excellence are established with the mandate to do exactly that. In the same way, Israel’s enemies have adapted their approach to fighting the IDF and exhibit the lessons they have learned in each subsequent conflict. The Egyptian crossing of the Suez in 1973 on *Yom Kippur* and their early success against the IDF armoured forces was the first significant example of this. Since the virtual disappearance of inter-state conventional threats, the IDF has been guilty of taking their opponent lightly on occasion and believing that Israel’s technological superiority and supremacy in the air and at sea will be largely uncontested.

The attack on the Israeli Naval Ship (*INS* *Hanit*) off the coast of Beirut on 21 July 2006 provides a case in point. While ground forces had inevitably experienced casualties as a consequence of the nature of their conflict environment, Israel’s technological superiority had always ensured that naval and air assets had reigned supreme when supporting IDF operations. The Hizbullah missile strike on the *INS Hanit* provided a reminder to the IDF that taking its enemies lightly through lack of intelligence and an acceptance of malfunctioning early warning systems had deadly consequences. Similarly the downing of an Israeli helicopter by Hizbullah during the war (the first IDF aircraft lost to enemy fire since 1984) provided another example of the ability of enemy forces to combat a high-technology adversary such as Israel.

An advantage well trained militia forces have over conventional forces is their ability to switch between high and low-technology approaches. Hence, while able
to fire anti-ship or anti-aircraft missiles to good effect, at the height of the 2006 conflict Hizbullah was able to continue to fire significant numbers of low-technology Katyusha rockets into northern Israel, even after the IDF had destroyed their more potent Iranian-supplied Zilzal rockets. The continued utility of these low-technology weapons is evident from the opinion offered ten years before, during Israel’s ‘Operation ACCOUNTABILITY’ when the Jerusalem Post was moved to observe that ‘Despite all its … state-of-the-art weapons systems, the IDF’s attempts to stop Hizbullah from firing Katyushas into northern Israel is like a tiger trying to catch a mosquito in his teeth.’

In the Palestinian case, rock throwers gave way to suicide bombers and, as Israeli security procedures tightened and the separation wall was built the adaptation towards indirect fire weapons took hold as the only viable means of attack. As a consequence, the number of firings on Israel increased from 417 in 2005 to over 3000 in 2008. At the same time, Hamas (like Hizbullah before it) also sought to secure the release of prisoners held by Israel through the kidnapping of Corporal Gilad Shalit in 2006. Operation CAST LEAD has certainly led to a vast reduction in attacks but did not result in the return of Gilad Shalit. The inability to return Shalit to Israel or to entirely guarantee security against low-technology Qassam rockets means that similar low-technology firings are likely to continue to feature as the main weapon in the Palestinian’s arsenal, while they will seek to negotiate a prisoner release before returning Shalit in order to justify their kidnapping.

**THE FUTURE FOR ISRAELI DETERRENCE – RESTORATION OR DECLINE?**

Despite the disappearance of the Israeli army’s reputation as an invincible fighting force over the last twenty years, it is incorrect to say that Israel’s deterrence capability has disappeared along with it. The IDF retains a significant technological advantage over its regional neighbours, and the fact that it has not faced an existential land-based threat since the 1973 war is testimony to the fact that it still retains a significant military deterrence capability against inter-state threats. Its undeclared possession of nuclear weapons has provided it with the ultimate regional deterrent capability and it has been aggressive in ensuring that it remains the sole regional nuclear power. Iran’s apparent rush to develop a nuclear capability will pose significant challenges...
for Israel, but the latter’s technological edge and Western support will ensure that its extant nuclear capability remains a major deterrent to rivals.

A much stronger case can be argued that Israeli deterrence against security threats from non-state actors has declined. Moreover, the failure of the IDF to achieve decisive victories during the first intifada and the 2006 war in Lebanon, as well as its unconditional withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000, has reinforced the sense of the Israeli military’s vulnerability amongst its enemies. The successful prosecution of a limited operation against Hamas in Gaza has demonstrated that the IDF has learned some lessons from its previous operations against security threats, but this operation alone is not sufficient to restore the IDF’s deterrence capability. The level of training and combat experience of, and technology available to Hamas differs markedly to that of Hizbullah, while the topography of coastal Gaza is much less conducive to defence and offers far less cover for rocket firings than southern Lebanon.

This then is the dilemma facing Israeli security planners. Unlike classical deterrence theory where a resort to conflict is an absolute failure of deterrence, the nature of Israel’s security environment dictates that its policy of deterrence ‘requires the periodic reinforcement of that message lest the enemy come to the conclusion that one is no longer capable of maintaining a posture of overwhelming strength or … the commitment to use that military power when necessary’.¹⁵ The difficulty as far as Israel is concerned is that, given the nature of Hamas and Hizbullah, Israel’s deterrence capability can only be truly restored if the use of military force achieves a decisive victory against its enemies, while its opponents may be able to claim success if they survive as an organisation. In practical terms, and based on events in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories, this is an eminently easier proposition for Hizbullah and Hamas than Israel’s need to achieve a decisive victory.

ENDNOTES


Freedman, *Deterrence*, p. 38.

7 Address by Lieutenant General Yitzhak Rabin at the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies Bar Ilan University, 10 June 1991, <http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/books/25/after.html>

8 Ibid.


15 ‘Israel must show its military strength in order to deter terrorist attacks’, *Christian Science Monitor*, 20 July 2006.

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A CASE STUDY OF INDIGENOUS BROTHERS IN ARMS DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR*

CAPTAIN TIMOTHY C WINEGARD

ABSTRACT

This article examines the enlistment of indigenous people into the Australian Imperial Force during the First World War. Despite official prohibitions, the author estimates that close to a thousand Indigenous men eventually enlisted. The author demonstrates how their attempts were made easier as racial prejudices gave way in the face of the authorities' purely pragmatic concern with replacing the AIF's appalling losses of 1916 and 1917. Three of these Indigenous enlistees—the Blackman brothers—form the author's case study for this article, and their experiences show that, despite being discriminated against for most of their lives, they—like most other Indigenous soldiers—still served with all of the courage, determination and good humour of their white comrades.

* This article contains references to Indigenous soldiers who are now deceased, and may cause distress to some Indigenous Peoples.
INTRODUCTION

The Roll of Honour in the Commemorative Courtyard at the Australian War Memorial records the names of over 102,000 Australian Service personnel who have died in service of their country. Above the dark bronze panels bearing the names are a series of stone busts and replicas depicting a selection of unique Australian flora and fauna. The last of these are the heads of an Indigenous man and woman. Chapter VII, Section 127 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act (1900) decreed that, ‘In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted.’ They were excluded the rights of Australian citizenship and remained wards of the state until Section 127 was repealed in a 1967 referendum which also granted Indigenes status as citizens under the Australian Constitution (Section 51, Paragraph 26).

Yet, below the stone busts in the courtyard are recorded the names of Indigenous men who died in the service of Australia during the Great War, despite strict governmental guidelines excluding them from service in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) until March 1917. Due to these regulations, it is impossible to know the exact number of Indigenes who circumvented official policy to serve and fight during the First World War. Race was not recorded on military documents, most had to hide their heritage in order to be accepted for service, and all would have used English names. Currently, it is known that some 545 men of Indigenous descent served in the AIF during the Great War. This number is still being added to and it is likely that the actual number is higher, possibly upwards of 1000. Three such Indigenous diggers were brothers Lance Corporal Charles Tednee Blackman, Private Thomas Blackman and Private Alfred John Blackman of Gayndah, Queensland.

With Australian Federation on 1 January 1901, jurisdiction for Aboriginal affairs was not transferred to the federal government, similar to other Dominions, and remained the responsibility of the individual states as outlined in Chapter 1, Part V, Section XXVI of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act (1900):

The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have the power to make peace, order and good government with respect to:--
(XXVI) the people of any race, other than the Aboriginal race in each State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws.

In 1909, to rectify existing inadequacies Australia (like all Dominions) introduced an amendment to the Defence Act 1903 mandating that all males aged 12–25 receive military training, while men older than 25 would form the reserve. Given this amendment, a more relevant clause with regard to Indigenous service was promulgated. Section 61 (h) stated that:
The following shall be exempt from service in time of war, so long as the employment, condition, or status on which the exemption is based continues:--

(h) Persons who are not substantially of European origin or descent, of which the medical authorities appointed under the Regulations shall be the judges. . . .

Provided that, as regards the persons described in paragraphs (h) and (i) [Conscientious Objectors] of this section, the exemption shall not extend to duties of a non-combat nature.  

Given that Indigenous Australians were not of European descent they were exempt from military service under this article. The ambiguity, however, was whether by being exempt, were they also unable to volunteer. Given that the federal government had the power to ‘make peace, order and good government with respect to … the people of any race, other than the Aboriginal race in each State’, the Defence Act seemed to contradict this clause.

Although these discrepancies could be used to argue in favour of the voluntary enlistment of Indigenes, the contemporary realisation was that they were neither of European descent nor citizens under the Australian Constitution; therefore, they would not have been considered relevant in the formation of defence or other federal policies, unless precisely mentioned.  

However, in saying this, the sub-section referring to non-exemption from non-combat duties for ‘Persons who are not substantially of European origin or descent’ raises the question as to whether this clause was inserted with the realisation that Indigenes and other non-combatants could be used as a labour force both within and outside of Australia during times of war. 

BACKGROUND

Of the 4.92 million Australians in 1914 (excluding an estimated 75,000 to 80,000 Indigenes) 13.3 per cent were British born and roughly 84 per cent were born in Australia. Men of British birth composed 27 per cent of the first contingent of the AIF totalling 29,509 men. By the closing of 1914, Australian enlistment totalled 52,561—a per capita ratio comparable to that of Canada.  

After the declaration of war on 4 August 1914, recruiting stations in the Dominions, possessing little contingency planning for mass mobilisation, were overwhelmed with volunteers during the first months of the war and attesting officers had the ability to be highly
selective. Positions within initial Australian formations were quickly filled by men of European, primarily British, stock. The participation of Indigenes remained dependent on the existing defence act, or in the absence of any clear policy, to the whims of state governments.

Prior to 1917, the general policy of Australia, in relation to Indigenous service, adhered to contemporary racial assumptions, past policy and practice and remained one of exclusion. Throughout 1914, and into 1915, in the absence of vast deployments to European theatres accompanied by inevitable casualties, white manpower was sufficient to meet the demands of Australian commitments, still in relative infancy, within the context of a war that was believed to be short-lived. No Dominion soldiers were active on the Western Front or the Gallipoli Peninsula (save for those men who enlisted directly into British forces to avoid sitting out a short war) until the independently raised Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) Battalion arrived in France on 21 December 1914 and entered trenches in the Ypres Salient on 6 January 1915. 1

Although no Dominion directly recruited Indigenes for combatant service in 1914 and the first half of 1915 (including the Maori of New Zealand), the precedent for the employment of Indigenous men as combatants was set by both Britain and France during the opening battles of the war, as the Dominions hastened to form expeditionary forces. In the years preceding the war, only France had produced contingency plans to mobilise Indigenous colonial soldiers for a European war. French colonial soldiers, therefore, were quickly mobilised and despatched to the Western Front. Four battalions of Moroccans, dubbed les Bataillons de Chasseurs Indigenes, were incorporated into the Sixth French Army on 20 August 1914 and suffered horrific casualties during the (First) Battle of the Marne (5–12 September 1914). 12 Two battalions of colonial Algerians arrived in France on 1 October. Four battalions of Senegalese (Tirailleurs Senegalais) suffered a casualty rate of nearly 75 per cent when successfully holding their portion of the line at Dixmude (Diksmuide) at the Yser River action (16–31 October) during the ‘race to the sea.’ 13

Britain, in need of manpower, as the Dominions were scrambling to recruit and train expeditionary forces, deployed a British Indian contingent consisting of the 3rd (Lahore) Division, the 7th (Meerut) Division, and the 4th (Secunderbad) Cavalry Brigade (in addition to supporting elements), which arrived at Marseilles on 26 September 1914. On 25 October, the Indian sepoy received their combat
initiation with the British Expeditionary Force at Wytschaete in the Ypres Salient. By the closing of 1914, over 2000 sepoys had been killed on the Western Front.\textsuperscript{14}

In Australia, given the overwhelming numbers of white volunteers throughout 1914 and 1915, no thought was given to allowing Indigenes to enlist. Furthermore, the 1909 amendment to the Defence Act forbade them from entering military service. Absolute exclusion of Indigenes, as was customary in the past save for scouts when dictated by pragmatism to fill desideratum, was the policy of the Australian Government until March 1917. Recruiting officers adhered to this principle, which had been outlined in their Recruiting Regulations Booklet: ‘Aborigines and half-castes are not to be enlisted. This restriction is to be interpreted as applying to all coloured men.’\textsuperscript{15} However, Australian recruiters had the ability to enlist within locally raised battalions at their personal discretion and a minority of ‘half-castes’ were able to enlist in the first contingent of the AIF (this process was mirrored in Canada). Most were dismissed in Australia during the medical evaluation for being ‘too dark’. It is known, however, that at least two men of Indigenous descent proceeded overseas with the first contingent.\textsuperscript{16} According to James Walker, at the onset of war the participation of Dominion Indigenes was guided ‘by a set of presumptions about their abilities which dictated the role they were to play [or not play] and which limited the rewards they were to derive.’\textsuperscript{17} As the war progressed, however, and Dominion forces expanded and accrued the horrific casualty rates of trench warfare on the Western Front and Gallipoli, Dominion policies regarding Indigenous service were substantially altered to provide for greater inclusion into expeditionary forces.

In 1915, Australia conducted a war census with a view to ascertaining national resources, available manpower, and financial capabilities as an assessment and cover for Prime Minister William Hughes’ conscription agenda. Although Indigenous Australians were excluded from military service, only Indigenous men of military age were included in the survey. In a memorandum, John William Bleakley, Chief Protector of Aborigines for Queensland, urged his subordinates to:

\begin{quote}
Please compile for war census purposes the following information regarding Aborigines and half-castes in your districts … List of civilised male Aborigines between 18–45 years showing name—town—occupation—wages. List all Aborigines and half-castes with money to credit in bank or other property showing name—sex—adult or child—amount to credit and estimated value of other property known.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}
By February 1916, enquiries were being submitted by the Chief Aboriginal Protectorates of various states as to whether Indigenes could be accepted into AIF units. The reply, ‘with reference to applications for the enlistment of Aborigines, full-blood, or half-caste, please note that it is not considered advisable that such should be enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces.’ Nevertheless, Indigenous men still managed to evade policy and gain admittance into the AIF, including the three Blackman brothers; however, the overall number was relatively low.

Following the Battle of the Somme (July–November 1916) and the rejection of conscription in October 1916, Australia was facing a shortage of manpower despite vigorous recruiting campaigns. From July 1916 to June 1917, Australian forces suffered almost 50,000 casualties, in addition to another 38,000 during the Passchendaele offensive (July–November 1917). Given these casualty rates, regulations were relaxed concerning the enlistment of ‘half-castes’, although no alterations were made to the Defence Act.

In March 1917, a military memorandum was sent to all recruiting depots stating, ‘Half-castes may be enlisted in the AIF provided that the examining medical authorities are satisfied that one of the parents is of European descent.’ In addition, height requirements for all volunteers had progressively been lowered from 165cm at the outbreak of war to 155cm by 1917. Although all Indigenous recruits were judged on their complexion and physical stature, they were also given merit for their ability to read, write and the quality of their penmanship, which was evidence of both an education and assimilation. (All three Blackman brothers could write at varying levels, although their mother could not and simply made an ‘X’ for her signature on Charles’ AIF application). On 11 May 1917, Chief Protectors of Aborigines for each State announced Military Order 200(2):

Advice has been received from the recruiting committee that half-castes will now be accepted for service in the Australian Expeditionary Forces provided that they satisfy the medical authorities that one parent was of European origin. As the enlistment of full-blood Aborigines is also being advocated, will you [local protectors] as soon as possible ascertain and advise the probable number of full-bloods and half-castes, separately, under 45 years who would be prepared to enlist within the next three months.

Judging by enlistment dates and archival records, there was a significant increase in Indigenous enlistment after May 1917, including at least three ‘full-bloods’. According to John William Bleakley, Chief Protector of Aborigines for Queensland:
Large numbers immediately volunteered, all claiming to come within that category [half-caste]. The recruiting officers scratched their heads, as one of them said, ‘some of these are the blackest half-castes I’ve ever seen.’ It seems a shame to disappoint them, but most, if not all, wormed themselves in at other centres and got into uniform eventually. 24

Many claimed to be part-[East] Indian. Others, including Richard Martin, who falsely listed his place of birth as Dunedin, New Zealand, claimed to be Maori. Albert Tripcony, explained his dark complexion by telling recruiters that he came from Italy. 25 In contrast, the three Blackman brothers were all attested into the AIF prior to the change of policy in March and May 1917.

THE BLACKMAN BROTHERS AT WAR

Throughout 1915 and 1916 some Indigenous men managed to evade official government policy to successfully enlist in the AIF. They volunteered for various reasons; one being that wartime service might give them full citizenship rights, akin to those enjoyed by white Australians. Others, like 16-year-olds Mike Flick and Harry Manson from Collarenebri, enlisted for adventure and to escape the boredom of mandatory rural or pastoral work, while others joined to see the world. 26 Lastly, the average wage for an Indigenous male in 1914 was seven shillings and six pence per week as compared with a private’s pay in the Australian Army of six shillings a day. 27 Charles, Thomas and Alfred Blackman were examples of Indigenous men who evaded official policy to join the AIF between 1915 and early 1917.

All three brothers were born in (or around) Gayndah, Queensland, to mother Emily Deshong—who as of 1914 resided in Childers, Queensland, as identified as next of kin by all three brothers. Their father Thomas (Tom) Blackman died prior to the war, although the exact date cannot be discerned. When war was declared, 18-year-old Charles was working as a labourer in the charge of JH Salter of Biggenden, Queensland. Thomas, 22, was a stockman at Boompa, Queensland, while Alfred, 24, was a labourer in Tiaro, Queensland. None were married and none had children. Charles, the youngest, enlisted in Brisbane on 18 August 1915 into the 6th Reinforcements/25th Battalion at the age of 19 years. Charles is one of the earliest known Indigenous recruits to be attested into the AIF. On 21 October, he embarked from Australia on the Saxonia for overseas training in Egypt. On 27 February 1916, in Cairo, he was taken on strength by the 9th Battalion, which had been the first unit raised in Queensland, and together with the 10th, 11th and 12th Battalions formed
the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division. On 3 April 1916, the 9th Battalion disembarked at Marseilles, France, bound for the Western Front.28

The battalion’s first major action in France came during actions at Pozieres (23 July–7 August 1916) during the Battle of the Somme. Australian casualties totalled 23,000 between 23 July and 5 September 1916. Private Blackman recalled this period in a letter of 13 January 1917 to his former employer JH Salter of Biggenden:

I had 10 month with the Battalion. I have been very lucky cording to what I have been through. Poziers was terrible but Ill return.29

While Charles was fighting in France, his older brothers enlisted: Thomas, at 24 years old, on 11 December 1916, followed roughly a month later by Alfred, 26, on 6 January 1917—both into the 7th Reinforcements/41st Battalion. (It should be noted that the enlistment papers for all three brothers read identical: ‘Complexion-Dark, Eyes-Brown, Hair-Black and Religious Denomination-Church of England’.) They left Sydney together onboard the Wiltshire on 7 February 1917 and landed at Davenport, England, on 11 April 1917.30 Following training, Privates Thomas and Alfred Blackman joined the 41st Battalion (11th Brigade, 3rd Division) near Messines, Belgium, on 18 July 1917, while Charles was on leave in England:

I suppose you will be glad to hear that I have been on leave to England for ten days. I had a glorious time there, one can’t help having a good time because the people in England think the world of yer and they take yer all over the place and show you everything you wish to see and look after you well…I am putting in time with my new mates because the last time in we had some stiff fighting [Battles of Bullecourt/Arras Offensive], my cabbers are away wounded. I were nearly going away to wounded but I am very lucky I am wonderfully lucky.31

All three brothers participated in the Battle of Passchendaele (Third Ypres) between 31 July and 10 November 1917. Private Alfred John Blackman was wounded in the head and neck by shell fragments on 4 October 1917 while advancing on Passchendaele Ridge. He died of these wounds on 8 October at the 7th Canadian General Hospital in Etaples, France. He is buried at the Etaples Military Cemetery along with 10,773 other Commonwealth soldiers, including 463 Australians.32

In an unpleasant misunderstanding his mother, Emily, received a letter from the Base Records Office in Melbourne on 27 November 1917, informing her that Alfred had died in action and that ‘his brother No. 3174 [Thomas] of the same unit was buried at Messines and removed to hospital suffering from shell shock’. In reality,
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Thomas did not participate in the Battle of Messines (7–14 June 1917) as he was still training in England. On 6 December she received another letter clarifying the mistake: ‘therefore assumed he is well and with his unit’.33 Following the Battle of Passchendaele, Charles wrote a series of candid letters to Salter about his life and thoughts as a soldier:

15 October 1917: It is nice to get a few letters now and then as I always been a lonely soldier till I went on leave in England… There are quite a few Biggenden lads in the ninth Battalion with me but it matter who we meet so long as a few of us can get together we can always be found laughs or with the big fresh smile up and don’t worry so long as we get home someday.

29 October 1917: I expect you know what we feel like over here or you have a good idear its terrible painful and serious but yet it can’t make us lad down harted. All my cobber are in Blighty having a spell with slight wound they are coming back geragly. My best cobber will soon be going back to Australia shortly … I think me and he was nearly takin Presnors once. He + I was staying in the same dugout croch up like sardines and the Prussian guard made a big attack and when they came over what do you think happen. Well the first dug out was the one me and Frank was sleeping in but luck happen we were releaved about an hour before they came over … and if we weren’t releaved we would have been Presnors of war in germany. this is not half of what I could tell you about the Battle in France. What a soldier don’t know it not worth known we seen some sites of all kind … after the war we are going to have a look all over England Scotland + Ireland so we will see some sights yet. so far we haven’t seen any better places than Australia. France is a beautiful but it rains to mutch why you never see the sun here one thing is the clouds here never need to thunder the guns do all the thundering + the splashes they make is just like lightning they make more noise than those thunderstorms you have in Australia. I would rather be in a thunderstorm than a Battle. Well dear friend remember me to all at home … from your sincerely friends lonely soldier.

23 November 1917: I don’t think this winter will be as bad as last winter…the last time up in the line I killed five german I did it because they held up thir hand till we got about ten yards off them and then the dirty bruits threw bombs at us so that’s why I killed them. If they hadnent thrown bombs at us we would have taken them Presnors and they would have been alright. This totes ten for me since I been in France that all good hall for one man isn’t it I have done my bit I think the next time up Ill get some more and Ill kill all I can.34

On 15 November 1917, Charles was promoted to lance corporal and posted to the Brigade School in France for further training. While on leave in France in February he was admitted to hospital with gonorrhoea, a regular occurrence in
Dominion forces—most notably among Canadian soldiers, who accounted for the highest VD percentage of any nationality in the Great War. During his time in hospital in both France and England for treatment for VD, and also for gas poisoning symptoms from Passchendaele, Charles continued to write letters to Salter in Biggenden:

15 June 1918: I have been in England since February 25th/18 I got sick for seven weeks and now I am in Convalesent Camp … England getting teeth fixt up. I suppose I shall be going back to France soon … I don't wish to go to back for awhile yet I am not well yet I am suffering from a very sore throat. I think its cause by gas when I was in action at Yprus in Belguim.

22 June 1918: I am suffering from sore throat still … I still be in England because I am not fit yet to return to France. I don't wish to go back yet while this big stunt is on. I have see quite enough of it before.

6 July 1918: soon will be going back to France in three week time … I wish I was returning to Australia today I think this war is a nuisense it keeping us away to long … I havent seen any place like Aussie yet in this world everyday you can hear dozens of fellows saying I wish I was in Aussie now. The reply is youve got a lot of mates Digger.

During his convalescence Charles was demoted to private for overstaying hospital leave. He rejoined his battalion on 3 August 1918 in time for the brilliant Canadian and Australian spearhead operation during the Battle of Amiens beginning 8 August. Thomas Blackman received a gun shot wound to his right foot on the 8th and Charles was gassed on the 11th. For Thomas, the war was over. After time in hospital in both France and England, he was invalided home to Australia leaving England on 14 December 1918, the war having been over for roughly one month. Charles rejoined his battalion on 31 August. He was reinstated to lance corporal on 11 September and then to acting-corporal on 12 October and posted to the Brigade Supply Depot. On 25 January 1919, he was again admitted to hospital in Belgium with VD (this time syphilis). He was repatriated home, leaving England on 12 April 1919, arriving in Australia on 5 June 1919, and was formally discharged on 30 July.

Charles applied for repatriation aid in June 1921 with the assistance of his employer Mr Salter. He was denied all benefits of the Soldier Settlement Act and
repatriation programs, on account that ‘he did not make application within the stipulated period of twelve months after discharge’.\(^3^8\) However, the Ministry of Defence also stated that:

The fact of an Aboriginal having served with the A.I.F. does not remove him from the care or supervision exercisable by the Board appointed for the protection of Aborigines under the Aborigines Act, 1909, neither does it relieve that Board of its duties towards the Aboriginal.\(^3^9\)

Only one Indigenous veteran is known to have been allocated land under the Soldier Settlement Act. Warrant Officer 2 George Kennedy of the 6th Light Horse was granted 17,000 acres at Yelt, seven miles from Ivanhoe, NSW. George’s final resting place was recently rediscovered in a cemetery in Condobolin as simply a numbered peg. Indigenous veterans and their families did not receive military burial services or funeral compensation akin to non-Indigenous veterans.\(^4^0\)

**CONCLUSION**

It is known that 545 men of Indigenous descent served in the AIF during the First World War, despite the fact that they did not enjoy the benefits of citizenship. Furthermore, until March 1917, governmental and military authorities restricted Indigenes from enlistment. Nevertheless, a select number of Indigenous Australians evaded this exclusionist policy and enlisted prior to the lifting of restrictions (for half-castes only), including the three Blackman brothers from Queensland. Indigenous Australian soldiers came from all geographical areas of the country, including at least one Torres Strait Islander. Of the thirty known Tasmanians, the majority came from the Cape Barren and Flinders Islands families of Brown, Mansell and Maynard, children of Aborigines and European whalers.\(^4^1\)

Given that ‘half-castes’ made up the majority of servicemen, with policy eventually allowing their inclusion, it is not surprising that the majority of Indigenous soldiers came from states, such as NSW and Queensland, with a higher percentage of assimilated ‘half-castes’. In relation, the Western Australia Recruiting Committee never deviated from pre-war policy, forbidding Indigenous enlistment; hence, the relatively small number of recruits given its high Indigenous population.\(^4^2\)

Of these known soldiers, 83 were killed, 123 wounded and another 17 became prisoners of war. Including the POWs, the casualty rate is 41 per cent as compared to 65 per cent across the entire AIF.\(^4^3\) This can be attributed to the fact that Indigenous
enlistment regulations were relaxed in March 1917, after the Australian bloodletting of 1916 and early 1917 at Pozieres and the Somme, and that the majority served in mounted units with lesser casualty rates than their infantry counterparts.

This case study of the service of the Blackman brothers reveals the commonality of service and sacrifice made by all Australian soldiers during the Great War. Alfred was killed and lies in France among his peers; Thomas was wounded and invalided back home to Australia; Charles, the youngest and longest serving brother, was gassed but survived two and a half years of war. His letters reveal the sense of duty, fears of battle, pleasures of leave, camaraderie and esprit de corps among mates, and loneliness of being so far from home—common to all soldiers.

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ENDNOTES

1 Note: The term Indigenous (and its derivatives such as Indigenes) has been used in substitution of Aboriginal as is now customary. The terms ‘Aboriginal’, ‘half-caste’ and ‘full-blood’ have been used where they appear in direct quotations or are relevant to specific laws and policies, where distinction is paramount to the arguments made.


3 Australian War Memorial (AWM), CN R940.4030994 A938—List of Australian Indigenous Servicemen who Served in World War One (Work in Progress), January 2007; Margaret Beadman (AWM)—Private Collection.

4 British North America was officially designated the Dominion of Canada with Confederation in 1867. The first collective use of the title Dominion was conferred upon Canada and Australia at the Colonial Conference of April to May 1907. New Zealand and Newfoundland were given the designation of Dominion in September of that same year, followed by South Africa in 1910 and the Irish Free State in 1922. India and Pakistan were given short-lived Dominion status in 1947, although India was officially recognised as the Union of India. The Union of India became the Republic of India in 1950, while the Dominion of Pakistan became the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1956. Therefore, during the focal period of the First World War, there existed five self-governing British Dominions: Canada, Australia, Newfoundland, New Zealand and South Africa.

5 Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act (1900).


7 Defence Act 1903, Act No. 26 of 1903 as Amended, Office of Legislative Drafting and Publishing, Canberra, 2005.


9 Interestingly, the Union of South Africa Defence Act of 1912, in provisions echoing those of the Australian 1909 Defence Act, officially denied Natives armed service in the South African Defence Force. Mitigating any armed service of Blacks was Chapter 1, Article 7 which stated that the liability to render combatant service in wartime or any obligation to train under proscribed military arrangements, ‘shall not be enforced against persons not of European descent, unless and until Parliament shall by resolution determine the extent to which any such liability shall be enforced against such persons: but nothing in this section contained shall be deemed to prevent the voluntary engagement at any time of such persons for service in any portion of the Defence Forces in such capacities and under such conditions as are prescribed.’
10 E M Andrews, The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations during World War I, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 43–44; Ross, The Myth of the Digger: The Australian Soldier in Two World Wars, pp. 16, 40; J G Fuller, Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914–1918, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990, p. 171; L L Robson, The First A.I.F.: A Study of its Recruitment 1914–1918, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1970, pp. 49–54. In 1914, the population of Canada was 7.88 million, excluding 103,774 Indians and 3447 Eskimos. Of the total population, 54 per cent were of British ancestry, with 10.89 per cent born in Britain itself. Of the 36,267 soldiers of the first CEF contingent: 9635 (27 per cent) were English-speaking born Canadians, 1245 (3.4 per cent) French-speaking born Canadians and 23,211 (64 per cent) were British by birth. However, nearly 70 per cent of the officers were Canadian born. By the end of 1914, Canada had enlisted 59,144 soldiers for overseas service.

11 Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG9 III-D-3 Vol. 4911 Rell T-10703—War Diaries: Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry, 1914–1915. The PPCLI was independently raised and funded by Montreal millionaire Captain Andrew Hamilton Gault. The PPCLI was absorbed by the 3rd Canadian Division on 22 December 1915.


16 Australian War Memorial, CN R940.4030994 A938—List of Australian Indigenous Servicemen who Served in World War One (Work in Progress), January 2007; Margaret Beadman (AWM)—Private Collection.


19 As quoted in Ibid, p. 16.

20 NAA, A11803 1918/89/137—Voting in Conscription Referendum; AWM38 3DRL 6673/866—C E W Bean Collection—War Service Papers.
As quoted in Pratt, 'Queensland’s Aborigines in the First AIF', p. 17.


AWM, CN R940.4030994A938—List of Australian Indigenous Servicemen who Served in World War One (Work in Progress), January 2007; AWM27 533/1—Returns Showing Particulars of men of Aboriginal Percentage who Enlisted and Served abroad with the AIF; AWM41 914—Figures for the Australian Aborigines who Served in the War of 1914–1918 in AIF; Margaret Beadman (AWM)—Private Collection.


Lindsay Watson, 'Barambah or Cherbourg: It’s All the Same', Kurbingui Star, No Date, p. 10.

Huggonson, 'The Dark Diggers of the AIF', p. 354.


AWM PR01679—Letters, Papers and Postcards from Charles Blackman to Mr J H Salter, Biggenden, Queensland. Letter dated 13 January 1917. Note: All quotations from the letters of Charles Blackman have been referenced with original spelling and punctuation to retain authenticity

NAA B2455/1—3088591; 3088621; 3088646.

AWM PR01679—Letters dated 1, 27 July 1917.

Thomas, however, was absent without leave (AWL) for six days between 23 August and 29 August. He was given fourteen days of Field Punishment No. 2 (hard labour, although unlike No. 1 was not shackled or otherwise secured) and forfeited seven days’ pay. Thomas would be punished for the same offence (AWL from 15 June to 20 June 1918) and given twenty-one days’ of forfeited pay. In actuality, Alfred had been charged for overstaying leave while in Australia during training in January 1917 and Charles was reprimanded for overstaying leave in July 1918.

NAA B2455/1—3088621.

AWM PR01679—Letters dated 15, 29 October, 23 November 1917.

NAA B2455/1—3088591.

AWM PR01679—Letters dated 15, 22 June, 6 July 1918.

NAA B2455/1—3088591; 3088646.

NAA, A2487/1 217220—Repatriation of Corporal Charles Blackman, 1921.
39 NAA, A2487 1919/3202—Position of the Australian Aboriginal Soldier. Memorandum from Ministry of Defence, Melbourne to Department of Repatriation, NSW, 12 April 1919. At some point between 1922 and 1958 Charles Tednee Blackman changed his name to Charles Thomas Graham for unknown reasons. Charles went on to work for the Cardwell Shire Council in Tully, Queensland, as a labourer and bush scout.


41 AWM, CN R940.4030994 A938—List of Australian Indigenous Servicemen who Served in World War One (Work in Progress), January 2007; AWM27 533/1—Returns Showing Particulars of men of Aboriginal Percentage who Enlisted and Served abroad with the A.I.F.

42 Huggonson, 'The Dark Diggers of the AIF', p. 353.

43 AWM41 914—Figures for the Australian Aborigines who Served in the War of 1914–1918 in AIF and were killed, wounded, not wounded; Andrews, The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations during World War I, p. 216; Margaret Beadman (AWM), Private Collection.

44 The composition of Indigenous population is an estimate based on figures from 1926, as Indigenes were never included in any federal or state censuses. However, most scholarship gives the Indigenous population during the war between 70,000–80,000; therefore, the 1926 figure of 74,398 is a reasonable estimate. Torres Strait Islands is not a state, rather a distinct geographical area. Although one is known to have enlisted, there are possibly ten others who are as of yet unconfirmed.

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China’s Rise

Major Imogen Serfontein


‘China’s rise’ is an increasingly prevalent term used by academics, politicians, political commentators and economists alike to describe China’s rapid emergence in recent decades as an economic, political and military power and as a significant presence in both regional and global affairs. In an attempt to assuage international fears of the potential consequences of this rise and mask any expansionist tendencies and regional leadership ambitions, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime has successively coined and promoted the phrases ‘heping jueqi’ (‘peaceful rise’), ‘heping fazhan’ (‘peaceful development’) and ‘hexie shijie’ (‘harmonious world’) to describe its seemingly benign grand strategy of integrating itself into the world order instead of challenging it. In order to achieve such a strategy, the regime’s self-professed immediate goals are to raise its people out of poverty by embracing economic globalisation and pursuing mutually beneficial relations with other states.

Two recently published books seek to examine the true nature of China’s rise and the likely future impact this ascension to power will have within the Asia-Pacific region. China’s Rise and the Balance of Influence in Asia is a collection of
multidisciplinary analytical essays which provide a multifaceted examination of the impact of China’s rise on Asia’s shifting strategic and economic landscape, while *America and China* is one academic’s appraisal of the current transition of balance-of-power relations within the Asia-Pacific region.

*China’s Rise and the Balance of Influence in Asia* is divided into two parts which examine elements of China’s upward trajectory and the nature of regional responses to this phenomenon respectively. While the overall focus of this book is undoubtedly its in-depth analysis of China as an economic juggernaut, it explores this issue with the broader intent of examining whether such economic power has translated into a commensurate level of diplomatic or political influence within the Asia-Pacific region.

Of particular interest is Robert S Ross’s examination of the current status of Asian balance of power politics in Chapter Six, wherein he contends that regional ties building and economic integration with China has been the generic focus of Asian nations. Such efforts are rightly identified as part of a conscious geopolitical and security strategy aimed at embedding China in a web of interdependence and as part of a practical effort to ride China’s economic coattails in line with an old Chinese idiom, which roughly translates as ‘a rising tide lifts all boats’.

Robert S Ross also highlights a disparity in regional accommodation of Chinese interests. He argues that in those areas of the Asia-Pacific where the relative rise of Chinese economic and military power correspond and China is altering America–China balance of power, secondary states such as South Korea and Taiwan are accommodating Chinese interests. In those other areas where the rise of Chinese power is limited to relative economic gains, and where China’s military power holds less significance and potential impact, secondary states are balancing the rise of Chinese power and offsetting their growing economic dependence on the Chinese economy by strengthening and consolidating security cooperation with America, as evidenced particularly in South-East Asian nations such as Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

China’s present and future economic prosperity depend heavily on her continued and expanded access to overseas markets, particularly markets for raw materials and natural resources. The authors of this volume of work collectively argue that China intends to maintain and protect this access through a variety of tools such as commercial or ‘chequebook’ diplomacy. This particular tool has enabled China to open up and exploit new opportunities for influencing and contributing to the management of political, economic, social and security issues throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Of particular note for Australia are the significant inroads China has made into our immediate area of interest, the South Pacific region, through its utilisation of this form of diplomacy.

In recent years China has also actively sought to constructively engage Asia-Pacific nations and regain some of its lost prestige and influence through such
measures as its founding of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2001, its signing of a Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN in 2004 and its participation in the first East Asian summit in 2005. These and other diplomatic efforts to advance multilateralism are a distinct departure from China's historical isolationism and are therefore evidence of a shift to a more proactive foreign policy.

The issue of whether China remains a status quo power in Asia, concerned with engaging in multilateral diplomacy, or whether it pursues a different course as a revisionist power concerned with establishing itself as a regional hegemony, is currently an issue of much debate and scholarly discussion. The contributing authors to this book do not dismiss the contention that China's current level of interaction and engagement with Asia are part of a 'charm offensive' designed to buy time for her to become economically and militarily powerful enough to exert regional hegemony; however, they collectively see no cause for immediate international action or alarm. They refer to the current enormity of China's domestic concerns and challenges as motivation enough to sideline any such hegemonic ambitions and place the creation of a stable international environment necessary to address these internal development issues as the primary goal of its current foreign policy. The authors do note, however, that China's other prominent goals of security, prestige and maintenance of national honour and unity are unlikely to be subordinate to the objective of economic growth and that any kind of legitimacy crisis, such as Taiwan declaring independence, therefore has the potential to derail the mainly status quo orientation of this foreign policy.

While the authors deem the international system to be sufficiently flexible and adaptive to support a peaceful accommodation of China's rise, the choices and actions of America are assessed to be decisive in leading the international response to this phenomenon. The authors share a collective concern about America's seeming indifference and disengagement from Asia at a time when the balance of influence between China and America in the region appears to be shifting in China's favour, with China actively pursuing a variety of Asian centric economic and trade initiatives, backed by an expanding array of diplomatic, educational, technological and security links. This collective concern relates to the policies, actions and sentiments of the Bush administration—as both books predate the inauguration of President Barack Obama—and his declared intent to initiate stronger ties and greater engagement with Asia. The new Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, signalled this intent in her inaugural overseas visit to North Asia and Indonesia in February 2009.

Of particular note for military scholars is this book's examination of China's military modernisation and the consequences of this reformation. China's economic growth is undoubtedly funding the development of national military power, with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) now recognised as capable of waging a high-intensity and modern high-tech conflict near its territory. The authors contend,
however, that Chinese military ambitions are limited in scope and largely target local objectives such as protecting its borders, supporting its claim to great power status and strengthening its leverage over Taiwan’s political future, rather than global force projection. The uneven scope and domain of the rise of Chinese military power is evidenced by its apparent balancing act with the American military in distinct theatres rather than throughout the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. In the case of Taiwan, the authors contend that the continued rise of Chinese economic power and its growing stranglehold over Taiwan’s economy has established an irreversible trend of Taiwanese accommodation of Chinese power due to the far greater and unacceptable costs it is likely to suffer in a future war.

Another issue explored within this volume of work is the role of the CCP in China’s rise. The current regime’s ability to successfully maintain its ruling position and ideological control of the party-state while determinedly pursuing economic growth is largely attributed to its willingness to compromise, reform and adjust its traditional communist ideals. The likely future of the regime remains largely unexplored, however, leaving the reader to make up his or her own mind about whether Chinese communism is likely to survive these turbulent years of growth and change. A greater analysis of this issue would have served this volume of work well, as it is somewhat crucial to understanding the likely future domestic impact of China’s current forward trajectory of economic growth, reform and openness.

The contributing authors of this book ultimately reach the conclusion that this trajectory will continue, and that China’s economic, diplomatic and technological transformation is proceeding hand in hand with a major upgrading of Chinese military capabilities. They collectively view China’s peaceful rise as a plausible outcome and more than wishful thinking, although they also implore America to rethink its approach to the region and adopt a comprehensive, integrated and long-term policy towards Asia in order to avoid marginalisation in the face of China’s apparently inevitable continued expansion. It certainly already appears as if the Obama administration is reviving and attempting to redefine America’s relations in the region to this effect.

This overall positive view of China’s rise is not uniformly shared across academic circles, which widely debate the potential of this ascent to unleash global economic dislocation and considerable instability on the international system. The economic analysis which this book offers readers is hard to dispute; such is the level of statistical detail and evidence provided. The same level of detail is not afforded to an analysis of China’s long-term ambitions, however, both regionally and globally, which leaves some doubt as to whether China’s rise will continue to be peaceful once it passes this initial term of growth and consolidation of power.

Randall Doyle’s *America and China* is similarly divided into two parts. The first part examines the historical background of America’s key post-war Asia-Pacific
alliances with Australia, Japan and South Korea and, while interesting and informative, it mainly serves to provide a context for the book’s subsequent exploration of contemporary issues affecting relations between Asia-Pacific nations. The second part examines the new Asia-Pacific regional order post 11 September 2001 and amidst China’s meteoric rise to potential superpower status. It offers some valid and interesting insights into the hegemonic power politics playing out in the Asia-Pacific and attempts to seriously tackle the issue of the possible regional and global consequences of China’s rise. As one would expect for any study completed by an academic (Professor Randall Doyle is visiting assistant professor of history at Central Michigan University), competing theories and opinions are examined in order to contextualise the author’s own stance on the prevailing issues. Doyle conducts a comparative analysis of balance of power theory and realism in order to assess the likelihood of China’s ascension to power, resulting in either a balance of power equilibrium or a real-politik conflict—explained as an inevitable conflict between an established hegemonic power and an aspiring power that possess the same regional or global expansionist agenda and is rising to hegemonic status.

Doyle ultimately seeks to answer whether China’s future relationship with America will take the form of geopolitical adversaries, strategic competitors, or regional partners. With China now recognised as the third largest economy in the world, Doyle identifies China’s aggressive economic behaviour as the means through which it is currently becoming established as a regional and global power, and highlights China’s growing economic interdependence with the outside world. Interestingly, his examination of China’s serious domestic challenges such as unemployment, pollution, corruption, and ever-widening economic disparities concludes that such issues have the potential to cause a domestic implosion that could possibly derail the economic juggernaut and that pose a threat to the long-term leadership of the CCP. Doyle also highlights that these institutional and structural weaknesses give realists reason to believe that China’s stunning growth levels are vulnerable to being seriously undermined and plunged into chaos, thereby creating a significant degree of instability throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

Doyle argues that China’s massive military modernisation has given her the confidence and the potential means to compete for hegemonic leadership in the Asia-Pacific region and oust America as the established hegemonic power. This assertion is supported by evidence provided in the July 2005 US Department of Defense Annual Report to US Congress titled *The Military Power of the People’s Republic of China* and the Pentagon’s 2006 *Quadrennial Defence Review*, which identifies China as the greatest threat to America’s military supremacy throughout the world. Doyle contends that as China has not directly challenged American leadership or any of its key alliances yet, the ultimate future for the region therefore greatly depends on how America responds to China’s economic and military rise. Doyle asserts that America and China have
very similar and yet increasingly conflicting agendas and vital interests within the Asia-Pacific region. He argues that although it is possible for the two countries to recognise their mutual interests and find new common ground, the creation of such a new and powerful dynamism will require visionary leadership and groundbreaking diplomacy. Doyle subsequently laments America’s seeming lack of a functional, proper and perhaps visionary framework for the region. Again, such commentary and analysis predates the inauguration of the Obama administration and the declared shift to greater engagement with the region and an overall foreign policy strategy of ‘smart power’. It therefore remains to be seen whether, in the coming months and years, and as the world financial crisis continues to unfold, further inroads can be made in the relationship.

Doyle also acknowledges that America’s footprint or hegemonic capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region will diminish. He identifies, with some foresight given the publication date of his work, the threat of a looming domestic financial crisis which could compromise America’s capacity to project global power and influence global events. Doyle also highlights America’s attempts to implement ‘soft’ containment upon China through the active creation of a new web of acknowledgments, alliances, agreements, and understandings with countries throughout the Pacific Rim and Central Asia in an attempt to achieve the hard objective of minimising China’s future influence in East Asia. He contends, however, that neither war nor this implementation of soft containment is the right remedy for America to confront the present geostrategic challenges concerning China’s rise in the Asia-Pacific. He advocates instead for visionary leadership in order to harness the golden opportunity which currently exists for America and China to redirect history and pave a new path of peaceful and prosperous coexistence.

A more ominous observation is made in the chapter Doyle devotes to Australia’s relations with both America and China, wherein he posits that a real-politik drama is evolving for Australia due to the recent period of both economic prosperity and relative national security. He deems Australia to be dancing with two different and very powerful partners by our simultaneous courting of America as our principal ally and China as our most promising regional market and biggest trade partner. He forecasts that the ultimate endgame of this situation of ‘serving two masters’ is an unexpected regional crisis that forces Australia to definitively choose in which direction our future lies—America or Asia. He predicts that this choice will subsequently affect Australiа’s future relations with regional nations and will forever alter the future path and history of this country. Doyle argues that Australia will ultimately continue to side with America but will be economically punished by China and its supporters as a result.

China’s rise, whether peaceful or otherwise, has significant implications for the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region and therefore is of immediate interest
and concern for Australia. Before he was elected to the office of Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd asserted in a speech to Washington's Brookings Institution in July 2007 that there is currently no clear articulation of how China will use its wealth and power, once obtained, to shape the future international order. He rightly identified this point in time as a critical historical juncture for both Australia and America in our relations with China and other Asia-Pacific nations and stated that the subsequent actions taken, or not taken, will shape the history of this century.

In another more recent speech to the Brookings Institution, Prime Minister Rudd identified the long term management of the America–China relationship as the crucial determinant of whether this century will be a truly ‘Pacific Century’ and called for continued American strategic presence, strategic engagement, and regional military alliance structures in the region. He also advocated for a synthesis between the Chinese regime’s stated goal of building a ‘harmonious world’ with the concept of China as a responsible global stakeholder. This concept was first outlined in 2005 by the then US Deputy Secretary of State, Bob Zoellick (now the chief of the World Bank). At the time Zoellick argued that China should work actively to sustain the stability of the regional and global rules-based order that has enabled its growth and accommodated its development requirements.

Both of the aforementioned books highlight the plausibility of a peaceful rise of China, although they also highlight numerous challenges and potential obstacles to this eventual outcome. In analysing this issue of whether China will be satisfied to remain a status quo power within the Asia-Pacific or whether it will seek regional hegemony as a revisionist power, Western scholars, political commentators and politicians alike would do well to consider the deep-rooted sense of history of the Chinese people which enables them to plan and aspire with the long term in mind. Professor Ross Terrill, author of The New Chinese Empire, is quoted within America and China for his ominous identification of the emergence of a savvy, ambitious and dangerous Chinese empire which 'is a construct both of domestic repression and of international aspiration. Its arsenal of weapons includes … a sense of history that enables it to take a long view of China's interests and ambitions.' The humiliating defeats to both colonial and Asian powers endured by China last century, combined with a deep-rooted pride in their ancient civilisation, have served to shape the aspirations of China's rulers and embed in them a profound sense of nationalism and a desire to reclaim China's rightful place in the international system. It may therefore take more than a generation to reveal the true nature of China's aspirations.
BOOK REVIEW


Jointly reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) Alan Howes, Lieutenant Colonel Ian Hampson, Chaplain David Jackson CSM, Dr Stephen Coleman, Chaplain Clyde Appleby RAN, and Flight Lieutenant Alyssa Badgery

There are many who will agree that *Ethics Education in the Military* is long overdue as required reading for those who deliver ethics training and education programs in democracies worldwide, and for all those interested in the ethics and ethos of the Profession of Arms. This is an invaluable volume for military academies, staff colleges and all ranks training establishments—including recruit training—to enhance understanding of a matter which requires much further thought, and which is becoming a vital force in influencing outcomes on the battlefields of the twenty-first century, including peacekeeping and peacemaking.

*Ethics Education in the Military* offers updated papers from a conference held at the University of Hull in England in 2006. There are twelve chapters covering ten democratic countries—a thorough and enlightening survey of ethics programs and their underlying philosophies, with analyses and evaluations from Britain, America, Canada, Australia (by Jamie Cullens, Director of the Centre for Leadership Studies at the Australian Defence College, Canberra), France, Germany, Japan, Norway, Israel and the Netherlands. Three perceptive responses (Chapters 14–16) to the preceding Chapters 2–13, question whether military commanders give sufficient thought to the purpose of ethics education, whether the methods chosen for instruction are optimal and evaluated, and how much emphasis should be placed on Servicemen and women thinking for themselves about ethical issues.

Until recently, formal ethics education and training programs were a rarity in most countries’ armed forces. Now there is a growing recognition of the importance of Servicemen and women from all arms of Defence developing their individual character and corporate ethos through undergoing additional military ethics education and training. But how do we ensure all ranks are learning the right
lessons? Can we, and should we, endeavour to achieve some uniformity, given the fact of military coalitions? The current lack of uniformity about what constitutes ethical behaviour, and how military members should be educated and trained, is a cause for concern. To recognise what we need demands an understanding of what we have. The reviewers agree with this book’s conclusion (p. 200) ’that before further progress can be made in the field of ethics education in the military, we may need to some extent to return to basics, and examine in more detail what we consider the moral purpose of armed forces to be, and what therefore the purpose of ethics training should be also’.

Why should this book be reviewed by two serving ADF officers, two chaplains, an academic and a retired soldier, especially when only the academic amongst them has any formal qualifications in philosophy? The reasoning and justification is simple; because military laypeople are at the ‘coalface’ of responsibility for ethics instruction and leadership, we should encourage all ranks to read more widely and so become involved in discussions about ethics in general and military ethics in particular. *Ethics Education in the Military* advances knowledge and understanding of the issues associated with this subject of ethics teaching and instruction, by bringing together experts from around the world to analyse the content, mode of instruction, theoretical underpinnings, and the effect of cultural and national differences within current ethics programs. It explores whether such programs are best run by military officers, chaplains or academic philosophers, and it asks whether it is feasible to develop common principles and approaches for the military in democracies.

_Ethics Education in the Military_ mentions ethics training to a lesser extent than ethics education and does not attempt to address the implications on pedagogy arising from these distinctions. As Dr Jessica Wolfendale well points out in her response in Chapter 14, those engaged or intending to become engaged in ethics programs in the military must first ask themselves ‘why teach military ethics at all?’, since any answer to this question will have implications on the ‘who, what, when, why and how?’, and whether the resulting program will be primarily an educative process, having developmental goals, or a training process with learning outcomes.

The reader will not find in this book the content for a program of ethics education or training in the military. Neither does the book intend to give answers on the appropriate pedagogy. Nevertheless it does prompt the questions to ask, which in turn give direction on implementing an ethics program. This presents a challenge for those involved in ethics education and training programs in the ADF. We can no longer simply do as we have always done; the nature of military operations is changing, the outlook of the young people entering the ADF today is different and, as _Ethics Education in the Military_ well indicates, the philosophical and ethical views around the world are changing. For these reasons alone, _Ethics Education in the Military_ is essential reading for those involved in ethics education and training in
the ADF. The reviewers believe it can be put to good use by military officers and all others involved in ethics education and training in the military such as chaplains and academic lecturers; as well as being of use to politicians and other students of military affairs. This book provides a very valuable survey of a growth subject, and we six reviewers thoroughly recommend it.
In the days following the end of the Second World War three new Australian infantry battalions were raised. The 65th Battalion opened its headquarters at Balikpapan, on Borneo’s east coast, in the Netherlands East Indies, on 11 October 1945. Two weeks later, on 26 October, the 66th Battalion was formed on Labuan in northern Borneo, while in New Guinea and on Bougainville personnel were being selected to form the 67th Battalion. These battalions, whose initial members were veterans of the campaigns in the Middle East and Pacific, were raised as part of Australia’s contribution to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force for Japan. They were also to become the genesis of the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR).

With the formation of the Australian Regular Army, on 23 November 1948 the 65th, 66th and 67th Battalions became the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the Australian Regiment. Four months later, on 10 March 1949, it was announced that the regiment had been granted the title ‘Royal’ by His Majesty King George VI. The regiment has loyally served Australia in war and peace for six decades. During this time it has won battle honours for the Korean and Vietnam wars, and its battalions have seen active service in other parts of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The regiment’s history is so closely associated with the history of the post-war Australian Army that at times it would seem that they are interchangeable.

This long and distinguished history is skilfully and succinctly told here in *Duty First*—the regiment’s official history. Edited by David Horner and Jean Bou, the book features contributions from some of the Army’s most prominent soldier-scholars, including Bob Breen, Peter Pedersen and Craig Stockings, almost all of whom have served with the regiment. The book also contains reminiscences from the late Sir Frank Hassett and other distinguished officers. *Duty First* is an authoritative history that clearly narrates the regiment’s service at home and abroad. It is an invaluable reference.
This current edition is an updated version of the earlier 1990 edition, with two new chapters on the regiment’s participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions and current conflicts. In order to accommodate the new chapters, the older chapters were reduced in length, as the publisher demanded that the new edition could be no longer than the original. This is unfortunate. John Blaxland’s chapter covering the period from 1999 to 2006, easily the regiment’s most taxing time since Vietnam, with multiple deployments to East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Solomon Islands, should have extended over two chapters, to allow for a more detailed discussion. Nor is there the space or scope to assess the challenges that confront the regiment, such as, for example, the criticisms of the current operations where it has been recently argued that the Special Forces have superseded the infantry’s traditional role.\(^1\)

There is also little room for ‘colour’ in this new edition. An anecdote by Harry Smith of a comical parade in front of the battalion’s new commander officer in Malaya during the late 1950s provides a tantalising taste of the lighter side of regimental life, while Pederson’s description of young regular officers who joined the regiment in the 1970s, too late for service in Vietnam, is telling of the frustrations experienced by many during those ‘silent years’ when there was little chance of overseas deployment. Moments such as these hint at the regiment’s rich social history, but they are few and far between. Duty First is a top down history, written from the level of the battalion commander and the regimental sergeant major.

Unit and corps histories are often written for former members, and usually hold little interest to general readers. This is not the case with Duty First, however. This book will appeal to those interested in Australian military history. Members of the regiment, both past and present, will likewise feel proud of their achievements. The bravery, skill and versatility of those officers and soldiers who have served in the regiment are repeatedly highlighted throughout the book. They have always met the challenge of their motto and put ‘duty first’.

ENDNOTE


Reviewed by Dr Douglas V Johnson II

Ed Lengel has gathered together a large collection of first person accounts of this campaign and has woven them together with just enough context to produce a ‘nice’ piece of fabric. I say ‘nice’ because this fabric is basically gray in background, but splotched from top to bottom with battlefield detritus, and the offal of human remains. If the intent is to convey the horror of combat, well done! If the intent is to convey a larger lesson it is somewhat obscured by the miasma of combat in the Meuse-Argonne.

I developed mixed feelings as I began reading this book. At first I was taken by the observations that this battle is largely unknown to the American public—as is the First World War—but then I reflected that it was very far from true for the interested reading public thanks in large measure to Robert H Ferrell. Ferrell wrote America’s Deadliest Battle: Meuse-Argonne, 1918 in 2007; Collapse at Meuse-Argonne: The Failure of the Missouri-Kansas Division in 2004; as editor, he treated us to William S Triplet’s spectacular memoir, A Youth in the Meuse-Argonne: A Memoir, 1917–1918 in 2000; and to Major General William M Wright’s diary, Meuse-Argonne Diary: A Division Commander in World War I in 2004. Then there is Alan Gaff’s Blood in the Argonne: The ‘Lost Battalion’ of World War I in 2005. And of course the late Paul F Braim’s The Test of Battle: The American Expeditionary Forces in the Meuse-Argonne Campaign from 1989. All that said, the general public is as ignorant of the existence of the First World War as they are of many things in history. In my own experience, editors insist that writers on the subject must first introduce readers to that war and how we came to be involved in it. In the process of fulfilling this mandatory requirement one must skim lightly over a great deal of material to get on with the primary task, then fulfill the intermediate task of explaining what this American army looked like and how it came to be. Lengel has done both in nicely readable style. At page 85 we arrive at Part III, 26 September 1918.
As a field artilleryman I choked on what I considered the glib description of the opening barrage; then I had the opportunity to once again curse the publisher who placed a V Corps map in the middle of a description of III Corps action and did so without a meaningful label or dates. None of the maps have dates.

Next I stumbled over phrases like this: 'Colonel John H Parker … had never seen a stronger line nor one more stubbornly held,' followed immediately by 'His … men swept forward with hardly a delay … driving the Prussian Guards in front of them like a flock of sheep ….' I am confused. How tough was it? Again, poor editing.

By the time we arrive at the 35th Division things begin to jell and the picture painted of that division is nicely done as Lengel portrays the progressive collapse of the chain of command. The National Guard officers of that division had been damned in several Inspector General Reports before the division ever left the United States, but the substitution of Regulars for the ineffective National Guard officers on the eve of entering combat seems to have done a lot more harm than good. Triplet has some interesting observations on that subject. Lengel's portrayal of the process of the division's collapse is compelling.

Thereafter one is remorselessly subjected to one wretched portrayal after another of the miserable life of an infantry soldier—the particular battle or even war matters little.

Almost every unit action description falls into the same pattern: the soldiers are exhausted by the preceding day's events; in response to ill-conceived demands of their ignorant superiors, they move forward through the morning fog until either the fog lifts or the Germans detect them; they are then set upon from front and both flanks by masses of machine guns artillery in direct fire as well as barrage fire—every advance seems to be into a fire-trap, and always snipers. It seems that every German soldier must be a sniper because that is all one reads about. There is seldom any supporting artillery fire and that part of the story is essentially correct. So too is the debunking of Billy Mitchell's boasting of his support to the troops—American aircraft do not appear over this battlefield anymore than they did over Soissons save for the first few hours of the first day.

At this point I had to pause to reflect on Dave Glantz's rejoinder to criticism of several recent works on Stalingrad for becoming too mired in detail after detail. Glantz's position is that 'accurate detail is the only basis for sound judgment in all other matters … Lack of this detail renders all such judgments unfounded and of dubious validity.' I understand that, but have to wonder how much detail is required to make a point? What keeps me moving on is Lengel's delightful interjection of vignettes, of moments of heroics, moments of inspiration. In fact, toward the latter third of the book he begins to demonstrate a key theme in Mark Grotelueschen's fine analysis of The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I. Grotelueschen posits innovation and imagination growing
out of the frightful stupidities and inexperience of the early days of combat. Lengel illustrates this development with cases in which lower unit leaders simply chose novel ways to interpret the command. ‘Continue the attack!’

I would like to have seen some of the German soldier’s-eye view. The German Army level command speaks, but not the German soldier.

To Lengel’s credit, he has placed a thin veneer of larger context atop this tale of blood, gore and destruction. Periodically, like the tired infantrymen whose story he is telling, he pauses to pull the disparate threads together, enough to let the reader see a bit more of the picture. But here I must pause again to curse the editors for failing miserably to support a very complex story with adequate maps. Ground combat is about maps. The stories make little or no sense without them. They are plentiful and they are free.

The definitive book on this campaign is yet to be written, but this one will help whoever undertakes that task.

ENDNOTE

Book Review


Reviewed by Lieutenant Commander Glenn Kerr

The Australian Government has been committed to military involvement in Afghanistan since the aftermath of the al-Qaeda attacks on the continental United States on 11 September 2001. Despite our strong military presence, Afghanistan is a country largely unknown to most Australians, peopled by Mujahideen freedom fighters, Taliban religious zealots, and heavily veiled women. By portraying the events unfolding in Kandahar province from November 2001 to June 2005, Chayes provides insights into the post-Taliban Afghanistan and its people.

As a correspondent for America’s National Public Radio, Chayes entered Kandahar in December 2001, after its liberation from the Taliban, remaining until January 2002. In April that year she took up a position, at the urging of Aziz Karzai (uncle of President Hamid Karzai), as field director of the non-government organisation Afghans for Civil Society. This fundraising organisation was founded by members of the Karzai family in Baltimore in 1998, and Chayes was instrumental in setting up field operations in Afghanistan to utilise the accumulated funds. Kandahar was selected as the base for operations due to its symbolic value as the former capital of Afghanistan, and its key location, controlling one of two strategic roads linking Iran with India and Central Asia. Chayes remained until late 2004, taking a break for health reasons, before returning to Kandahar in May 2005 to set up a local agribusiness.

This is not a dry, scholarly history of modern Afghanistan. Chayes writes in an easy conversational style, from her personal viewpoint as a participant in events of the time, and as a confidant of powerful men in the Afghanistan national and provincial governments. She is a keen observer of life, and a great strength of the book is the sympathetic portrayal of the ordinary people of Kandahar and their daily challenges. The book is laid out in a mostly chronological fashion. In a fascinating
excursus, Chayes provides a brief history of Afghanistan, from its Persian creation myth, through the invasions starting with Alexander the Great and continuing to the present day. While sometimes difficult to disentangle ethnic branches, tribes and other divisions (a glossary would have been helpful), the reader gains an insight into why Afghanistan is such an intractable problem to foreign powers.

In particular, Chayes refers to the principle of *yaghestan*, a Persian term referring to a land of rebellious, incorrigibly ungovernable people. From ancient times, the Afghans have gathered into a semi-cohesive confederation, but with tribal ties to ancestral territory and clanship remaining stronger than loyalty to any national government. When invaded, the confederation dissolves and the tribal groups slip away from the enemy, engaging in *yaghestan*, until exhaustion eventually leads the invader to withdraw. Control of the capital, therefore, does not mean control of the nation, as the tribes pull back into the inhospitable hills to resist the invader, engaging in guerrilla warfare and various forms of banditry and extortion to generate income.

The centrality of tribalism comes through strongly in Chayes’ book, and the difficulty this poses for modern peace operations. It is vital when planning for operations to understand the difficulties inherent in this social and cultural construct, and that simplistic solutions are unlikely to be successful. It is not sufficient to topple a warlord and expect that a transplanted democratic capitalism based on a homogenous liberal society will thrive, where ancient loyalties take precedence over recent agreements by externally imposed national governments. Perceived favouritism toward one tribal group can easily undermine the entire peace effort, resulting in growing opposition to foreign forces, where at the outset local people welcomed liberation from an oppressive internal regime. Chayes also points to the need to engage the local people, rather than remaining aloof in fortified bases, to develop credibility and ground level support.

Much of the book is a panegyric to the Kandahar police chief Muhammed Akrem Khakrezwai, a professional soldier and veteran of fighting against the Soviets and the Taliban. Chayes depicts him as an honest and dedicated advocate of the rule of law; in counterpoint to the corrupt Gul Agha Shirzai who, with the purported connivance of American military and CIA representatives, pushed aside Mullah Naqib, selected by President Karzai to be the governor of Kandahar. When Shirzai took the governorship, President Karzai gave control of the province’s security to Mullah Naqib’s Alokozai tribe to preserve the balance of power, with Akrem receiving the police department. Such is her regard for Akrem that Chayes considered him the most sophisticated political thinker in Afghanistan, the only person who could unite the country, and a potential future president of Afghanistan. Akrem was killed in a Kandahar mosque bombing in 2005.

Although Chayes displays a passionate dedication to Afghanistan, the reader should exercise caution in accepting all of her claims at face value. At several points
Chayes refers to the disastrous British withdrawal from Kabul in 1842 during the First Afghan War, stating that only one survivor of the retreat returned to India. While Dr Brydon was the only survivor to return directly, the majority of at least 100 other British prisoners returned after peace was declared.1 This is not to understate the magnitude of the disaster, for 18,000 British and Indian soldiers and camp followers were killed or died of exposure, but popular British military history highlights the survival of Captain Souter of the 44th Regiment, who preserved the regimental colour following his capture, eventually returning it to the regiment. This does point to a tendency to journalistic licence and narrow research. For this reason some claims in the book, such as Pakistani fostering of border strife to destabilise Afghanistan, the assassination of Akrem by Pakistani intelligence, and Shirzai working for Pakistan, should be considered critically by the reader. Likewise, the reader might ponder whether Akrem was as righteous, or Shirzai as villainous, as Chayes claims.

The book is recommended to those wishing to gain a broader understanding of the culture and history of Afghanistan, within the limitations of a relatively narrow personal perspective and geographic focus.

ENDNOTE

1 Twenty-two officers (including the Commander in Chief Major General Elphinstone who died in captivity), thirty-seven other ranks, nineteen wives and twenty-two children. Statistics on surviving Indian troops and families were not readily available. According to ‘Reminiscences of the 44th in 1842’ in Notes and Queries, Second Series, Vol. 4, July–December 1857, when General Pollock reached Kabul in September 1842, three officers, three sergeants, two corporals, two drummers, twenty-eight privates and two boys of the 44th Regiment were still living.

Reviewed by John Moremon

In any war, and within any nation remembering war, there will be some actions over-commemorated and others under-acknowledged. In the latter group rests the Battle for Wau, in the mountainous hinterland of south-eastern Papua–New Guinea. The guerrilla campaign in 1942 might have gone unnoticed by the public but for cameraman Damien Parer venturing up to forward area; and the main battle in early 1943 occurred after the closely followed Papuan campaign. Accordingly, the battle was tacked onto the official history volume covering Kokoda–Milne Bay–Buna; and one gets the impression that, much like New Guinea Force, its author was pushing on valiantly to get the job done but showing signs of weariness. Australians who later read Jo Gullett’s *Not as a Duty Only* or watched the television drama *The Sullivans* encountered the battle, but nowadays what interest there is in the 1942–43 campaigns is directed elsewhere. Phillip Bradley has identified a neglected battle and done his utmost to ensure it will be remembered.

On reading the subtitle, one is struck by an attempt to talk up the importance of this battle (to pique potential buyers’ interest?). Surely the area around Wau was not New Guinea’s *frontline* in 1942–43 but rather a *sideline*. Geographically, this area was the Allies’ northernmost possession, in which case one could make a tenuous argument in support of ‘frontline’, however, it was of secondary concern. Incidentally, a definite inaccuracy on the cover is a photograph of 17th Brigade troops taken in July 1943, whereas Bradley makes it clear that the scope of his book is ‘the period from 8 March 1942, when the Japanese landed at Salamaua, to 26 February 1943, when the Japanese had withdrawn from Wau back to Mubo’.

These quibbles should not deter potential readers. Bradley possesses an engaging writing style. He has conducted some impressive research and pulled together a story previously scattered between a chapter of the official history, unit histories and memoirs. One of Bradley’s strengths is that he walks the ground and possesses
The book will be especially welcomed by the few living survivors and their families, who have felt the lack of a decent history of their battle. For some readers, the fact there was a guerrilla war and then a last defensive battle in New Guinea in early 1943 will be enlightening. Those more familiar with the campaign could be less satisfied. While well researched and nicely written, Bradley does not offer significant advances in knowledge. He merely pulls together better known stories and adds local flavour; some stories, such as that relating to the recovery of lost airmen’s remains years after the war, are just a nice touch. He does expand on some events, and occasionally produces insight; especially welcomed is a plain-speaking assessment of the uninspiring Kanga Force commander, Lieutenant Colonel Norman Fleay. Fortunately, there is little of the jingoism that has marred some other battle ‘histories’ of recent years, and it is refreshing to see Americans (in this case, mostly airmen) given the credit deserved.

While a gifted writer, Bradley lacks the method and discipline of a historian. He provides too much detail, which more judicious editing might have countered; For example, he feels compelled to explain that the Japanese convoy that never reached Port Moresby because of the Coral Sea battle ‘contained the 114th [presumably he means 144th] Infantry Regiment and the marines of the Kure 3rd Naval Landing Force’. He frequently offers precise military timings, when rarely is this necessary; for example, with the airlift of the 2/5th Independent Company from Port Moresby to Wau on 22 May 1942 he mentions that the first aircraft touched down at 0755 and all had departed by 0806—fear of strafing or interception made quick turnaround necessary—after which a second flight ‘touched down from 1155, and five of them came back on a third flight at 1622’. Some uncorroborated statements also appear, such as: ‘The deployment by air of the 2/5th and an attached mortar detachment was the first such deployment of an entire Allied unit during the war’. Admittedly, it was the first in New Guinea, but the first such deployment in the theatre was of the US Army’s 102nd Coastal Artillery (Anti-Aircraft) Battalion from Brisbane to Darwin in March–April 1942. This challenging operation convinced senior officers a similar movement might be attempted in New Guinea.

Like many writers, Bradley is mostly fixated on battle incidents, and he misses key elements. He describes terrain well, but never really delivers a sense of the physical and mental toll (for both sides) of fighting in this environment. While he mentions the use of New Guineans and of aircraft for transportation, assessment of logistics remains poor. There is no rigorous appraisal of ground or air tactics either. In his conclusion, Bradley offers ‘important lessons’ without having tested or proven
them. He claims that the guerrilla warfare phase showed ‘how a small force can have a major impact at the strategic level’, which overstates the role and achievements of Kanga Force. He claims the 17th Brigade ‘had adapted’ to jungle warfare and ‘became a potent force’ by the end of the battle, when it was still learning ‘on the job’ (as subsequent advances showed), and its victory was as much the result of Japanese malnourishment and exhaustion. Critically, he never tests whether the staunch defence of Wau in January–February 1943 was even necessary, but there is a fair argument to be made that it reflected a lack of appreciation for the difficulties of any subsequent overland advance and of the possibilities of air and sea landings to take Salamaua and Lae.

Despite a few misgivings, this book is recommended. While it does not offer the advances in knowledge one might ordinarily expect of an academic publisher, this is a much-needed, engaging and mostly accurate single-volume account of a noteworthy campaign.

Reviewed by Wing Commander Terence O’Connor

I approached the review of this book with a deep sense of foreboding having read Geoffrey Robertson QC’s reference to ‘institutionalised dickheadery’ in the publicity release. I had expectations of yet another ‘public flogging’ of the integrity and competency of the ADF. Having regard to what occurred during and after the repatriation of Private Jake Kovco, who could really blame any author who succumbed to the temptation to indulge in a little sensationalism.

I was therefore most pleasantly surprised to find that this book assiduously avoids that temptation and, instead, embarks upon a compassionate examination of the human dimension of the Kovco story. Box reveals the Kovco story in a compartmentalised fashion. Firstly, with a lengthy exploration of Kovco’s early life in rural Victoria and his early years in the Australian Regular Army. Kovco is revealed as a typical Australian male with a touch of the larrikin but always his own man. He was a good soldier who had found a second home in the Army.

The second part deals with Kovco’s death in Iraq and its immediate aftermath. The final part deals with the Military Board of Inquiry and the subsequent Civil Coronial Hearing.

Box has interviewed all of the key players in the Kovco story and presents their individual roles in the overall saga in a narrative with little comment or embellishment. He thereby provides to the reader the perspective of the individual decision-makers along the way and brings an appreciation of the dilemmas facing the individuals who had to make decisions in unfamiliar circumstances. The decision to clean Kovco’s room after the incident; the performance of the Military Police sent from Australia to investigate the incident; the decision to repatriate Kovco’s body by private carrier; the failure of Kovco’s escort to properly identify his body before its final dispatch to Australia; the response of the politicians, especially the Minister for Defence, to the delivery of the wrong body; and the misplaced Cosson report are
dealt with in a direct and dispassionate manner, allowing the reader to form their own view as to whether these incidents were the results of individual or systemic incompetence or understandable human failure.

Box’s treatment of the ADF Board of Inquiry (BOI) and the subsequent civilian Inquest occupied a relatively small portion of the book. It is in his treatment of the BOI that Box sometimes drifts into ill-informed comment. In particular, his suggestion that Kovco’s parents had little confidence in the outcome of the BOI from the outset believing that it would be a ‘white-wash’, a perception exacerbated by the innuendo that the BOI was vulnerable to Command influence, unfairly demeans the integrity of the legal personnel involved.

Fortunately, Box kept such comments to the margins and concentrated, as he should have, on the development of the complex issues before the BOI; that is, was Kovco’s fatal wound self-inflicted and, if so, was it by intent or by accident? Some of the evidence before the BOI emerged in quite sensational fashion. It was not only the military police who were baffled by the circumstances of Kovco’s death, also mystified were the hard men of the New South Wales Police Force who were called in to investigate it. The BOI was faced with some extraordinary factual hypotheses in a highly emotionally charged atmosphere.

It was Judy Kovco’s dissatisfaction with the findings of the BOI which led to the subsequent civilian Coronial Inquiry. Although this second hearing brought out additional sensational evidence not canvassed at the BOI, it came to a similar conclusion to that of the BOI. From a legal perspective, both outcomes could perhaps be criticised for containing too much speculation. However, there was considerable pressure on both the BOI and the New South Wales Coroner to make specific findings rather than an open finding (which may have been more appropriate).

One intriguing aspect of both hearings was that there was no medical evidence adduced in connection with Kovco’s mental state. In particular, there was no reference in the evidence that Kovco had been sexually molested as a child nor any evidence of the incident with the rifle (evidence which Box gave great prominence in his prologue). I can only assume that this information was not provided to either Counsel Assisting the respective Inquiries.

Box concludes the Kovco saga in the best possible way: by reference to his name being inscribed in the courtyard walls of the Australian War Museum alongside the many others who have lost their lives in the service of their country. That fact should never be forgotten.
TITLES TO NOTE

Listed below is a selection from the review copies that have arrived at the *Australian Army Journal*. Reviews for many of these books can be found online in the relevant edition of the *Australian Army Journal* at: http://www.defence.gov.au/army/lwsc/Australian_Army_Journal.asp


TITLES TO NOTE


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All sources cited as evidence should be fully and accurately referenced in endnotes (not footnotes). Books cited should contain the author’s name, the title, the publisher, the place of publication, the year and the page reference. This issue of the journal contains examples of the appropriate style for referencing.

When using quotations, the punctuation, capitalisation and spelling of the source document should be followed. Single quotation marks should be used, with double quotation marks only for quotations within quotations. Quotations of thirty words or more should be indented as a separate block of text without quotation marks. Quotations should be cited in support of an argument, not as authoritative statements.
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Numbers should be spelt out up to ninety-nine, except in the case of percentages, where arabic numerals should be used (and per cent should always be spelt out). All manuscripts should be paginated, and the use of abbreviations, acronyms and jargon kept to a minimum.

BIOGRAPHIES

Authors submitting articles for inclusion in the journal should also attach a current biography. This should be a brief, concise paragraph, whose length should not exceed eight lines. The biography is to include the contributor’s full name and title, a brief summary of current or previous service history (if applicable) and details of educational qualifications. Contributors outside the services should identify the institution they represent. Any other information considered relevant—for example, source documentation for those articles reprinted from another publication—should also be included.