



LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID MORRISON, AO CHIEF OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY

**INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS: BATTLE HONOUR EASTERN
SHAH WALI KOT, CANBERRA, 9 MAY 2013.**

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Welcome to all of the journalists who have attended today and thank you for your interest in the operations of our people.

We are here today to recognise the outstanding performance of members of the Australian Army's Special Operations Task Group in Afghanistan. It is my great privilege to announce that two of these units, the Special Air Service Regiment and the 2nd Commando Regiment, have been awarded a Battle Honour for their outstanding performance in the Shah Wali Kot Offensive of May to June 2010.

Tomorrow, I will have the privilege of presenting the 2nd Special Air Service Squadron with the Battle Honour Eastern Shah Wali Kot and, subsequently, on 19 June the same honour to the 2nd Commando Regiment. Let me now tell you about the significance of the award itself.

A Battle Honour is the public recognition and commemoration of an outstanding achievement on the battlefield by a unit or formation of the Australian Army. This is the first Army Battle Honour to be awarded since the end of the Vietnam War. Customarily, the honour links the unit's performance to a specific geographical location, hence the name Eastern Shah Wali Kot.

It is important to emphasise that while this award recognises the exemplary courage and professionalism of a particular group of soldiers in the most extreme circumstances, it also pays an enduring tribute to the entire Australian Defence Force (ADF) commitment to this long and complex conflict. Australian soldiers, sailors and air force members who have served in Afghanistan have upheld the reputation of the ADF. More importantly, they have given some of the best years of their young lives to improving the lot of some of the poorest, most disadvantaged people on earth.

The reason it has taken a number of decades since the last Battle Honour is because the nature of warfare has changed. I asked Army's Battle Honours Committee to review the process for awarding honours. The guidelines now accommodate the current warfighting environment.

The Battle Honours Committee has begun analysing all deployments of Australian units or sub-units that have occurred since the end of the Vietnam War. Through this process, the Shah Wali Kot Offensive was identified for

consideration. It is entirely appropriate that this is the first Army Battle Honour since the Vietnam and I was pleased to provide my endorsement.

Congratulations to all of the members involved in the Shah Wali Kot Offensive, including the supporting elements, our talented engineers, signallers and headquarters staff. It was a job well done and the outcome was decisive. Apart from the large number of insurgent casualties inflicted, a significant quantity of insurgent weaponry was captured. Also, a major insurgent supply line from Pakistan into Kandahar was and remains disrupted and the insurgency in the region was rendered ineffective for the 2010 fighting season. These outcomes allowed ISAF to progress security and stability operations in and around Kandahar City.

This wider security operation was the main effort in Regional Command South during the 2010 fighting season and Australia's Special Forces' contribution was highly regarded. The SOTG success in Shah Wali Kot, when added to the successful April 2010 Offensive in Gizab, significantly degraded insurgent threats to the South and North-East of Uruzgan. This reduction in insurgent threats allowed the Mentoring Task Force to focus on effectively partnering with the ANA's 4th Brigade personnel in the Mirabad and Chora Valley regions.

I would now like to introduce the SOTG members here today who will tell you the story of the Shah Wali Kot Offensive, which led to the Special Air Service Regiment and the 2nd Commando Regiment being awarded this Battle Honour.

Lieutenant Colonel Paul Burns, the Commanding Officer of the Special Operations Task Group at the time of the offensive will now brief you on the conduct of the operation. After this presentation, Lieutenant Colonel Burns, together with Major M and Sergeant Garry Robinson, both members of the 2nd Commando Regiment and present at the Shah Wali Kot Offensive, will be available to answer your questions.

Lieutenant Colonel Burns...