

'Paludrine Parade'

Official Newsletter of the Royal Australian Army Service Corps
Vietnam Supply Platoons Association



Patron: MAJGEN David McLachlan AO (Rtd). Web Site: <http://raascsupply.asn.au/>

Highroad builds path for Afghan security

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Commander Task Group Afghanistan, Brigadier Michael Pricor, has returned to Afghanistan for the fifth time in his career this time with a different focus.

In 2006, Brigadier Pricor deployed to Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF 2001-2014) on Operation Slipper, commanding the CH-47 Chinook helicopter Task Group in Kandahar. The years 2009-2011 saw Brigadier Pricor deployed to country three more times, in planning roles and working with the Afghan Army and Police to recruit, train, equip and mentor a major expansion of the Afghan forces. He experienced Afghanistan when NATO and Afghan forces were fighting side by side, during the US surge when coalition troop numbers peaked at about 140,000 in 2011. Having had first-hand experience of



the country's insurgent struggle, he is acutely aware of the hard-won security and governance gains made since 2001. He said

Australia's continued commitment to Afghanistan is essential for both the Afghan people and Australia's national interests. Half-way through his fifth deployment to the country, Brigadier Pricor is continuing those efforts but in a different capacity. "While our troops are no longer fighting side by side with the Afghan security forces, they stand firm by their side in an advisory role," Brigadier Pricor said. Operation Slipper and the ISAF mission ended on 31 December 2014, and with it, the new non-combat NATO-led Resolute Support Mission commenced; the Australian mission was named Operation Highroad. From Kandahar to Kabul and Bagram, about 270 ADF

personnel are employed as advisors, embedded headquarters staff, force protection, and in various logistics, medical and intelligence roles. "Operation Highroad's mission, through training and mentoring, is to continue developing capable and resilient Afghanistan security institutions," Brigadier Pricor explained. "Our people work with their Afghan counterparts every day, advising them on how to improve their processes and providing training to assist them to perform their roles." With ADF advisors embedded across the country within NATO, Afghan

security institutions, security-related ministries and at national institutional levels, Task Group Afghanistan's mission is not so simple. Brigadier Pricor says Afghanistan is still a dangerous place but there is a stark difference in

Afghan capability compared to the Afghan security forces he knew previously. "Just last month, the Kabul Garrison General Command, with the assistance of our advisors, demonstrated the ability to plan and execute a multiagency response to resolve a high-profile complex attack in the city" he said. While the security forces continue to fight a brutal and relentless enemy, Brigadier Pricor said the train, advise, and assist effort is building Afghan capacity at every level. "From government departments down to the tactical proficiency of individual soldiers and policeman, we are building their capacity to do it themselves," he said. "I think everyone here in the Task Group feels they are making a difference." "They are working with Afghans who are determined to make a better future and end the wars that have plagued this country for 40 years."

NEWS FLASH from your President

Reunions are of course based on great comradeship, socialising and a chance to catch up and share past and current events. Our last reunion in Perth was well accepted and enjoyed by all, particularly the camaraderie enjoyed during the Tours and of course the Formal Dinner. The take up for our coming **HOBART REUNION** this November, just some four months away, has been quite good. However, to ensure its success, particularly with the Tours—we are now looking for more members to commit to attendance. I ask that if you have not yet advised of your attendance, please give our **HOBART REUNION** due consideration and complete the paperwork as attached on Page 6 of this Newsletter as soon as possible. We simply need more attendees. We welcome and encourage your participation.

Graeme Sherriff, President

Keeping the Troops in the Field. Part 1: Rations

Bob Hall and Andrew Ross. This article is reproduced from <https://vietnam.unsw.adfa.edu.au>. The site of 'Australia's Vietnam War.' Restriction on space has only allowed for half of the article to be printed in this edition, This is the second half of the article, the first published in Edition 46 (Autumn Edition 2017).

Field trial of the Australian Combat Ration (One Man) Lightweight

To meet a demand for a lighter ration, AFSE developed a freeze dried ration delivering 2,800 calories in 3 varieties and weighing 0.7 kg to 0.74 kg (excluding the 0.28 kg of water necessary to reconstitute the freeze dried food). The food was packaged in foil containers that could also be used to heat the meals on the issue hexamine stove. In May 1967 the AFSE sought a trial of the ration by a suitable unit in Vietnam. The trial instruction noted that meals could be prepared without mess tins or cutlery.

Although this may have been seen as a saving to the soldier's load, most infantrymen never carried mess tins and cutlery – apart from their steel mug and a spoon – on operations anyway. The unit selected to trial the new ration was 1 SAS Squadron. The SAS trials officer reported:

"Loads carried varied due to the duration of the patrol. The average weight was approximately thirty five to forty five pounds [15.88 to 20.41 kg]. The ration had no physical effect on the troops except that due to the lightness of their equipment they had the ability to move quickly when speed was essential and did not tire quickly in heavy going. Morale wise the ration assisted the troops in that when they stopped for a meal it could be prepared quickly, quietly and was quite palatable although some troops found the ration monotonous due to lack of variation."

Lack of acceptance by infantry battalions. The SAS trials report suggested that infantry battalions would also be interested in the lightweight, freeze dried ration. But when asked, the infantry battalions stated that they could not see a use for it. The lack of interest from the infantry battalions created a problem. The production of the lightweight ration could not be justified financially if it was to be consumed only by the relatively small SAS

Squadron. Only regular consumption by the much larger infantry battalions would result in the large orders that would bring down the unit price of the ration making its production financially viable.

Further attempts to stimulate some infantry battalion interest in the ration also failed. When in late August 1967, infantry battalions sought various ways of reducing the weight of rations, they were again offered the lightweight ration as a solution. Again they refused. 1ATF signalled HQ AFV that;

"The major user units 2RAR and 7RAR still have no requirement for this ration. 1ATF is not prepared to accept this ration."



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P05620.007

PTE Peter Sharp, D COY, 5 RAR having a meal from his ration pack while on patrol during the battalion's 1st tour of Vietnam.

It was not until August 1969 that the infantry battalions in Vietnam accepted the lightweight ration and began ordering it in large numbers. 5RAR and 9RAR ordered 1500 of the lightweight packs per month while 6RAR/NZ ordered 1800 per month. The battalions used the packs to supplement rather than replace the existing Combat Ration (One Man) and the US 'C' ration. Once in regular use the infantry battalions rapidly changed their opinion of the lightweight rations. The CO of 5RAR, LTCOL Colin Khan, wrote that;

"This ration is generally acceptable to most soldiers. The main use has been on Recce in Force and Ambush and Recce type operations where the appearance of resupply helicopters is not wanted."

It had taken two years for the infantry

battalions to identify the benefits of the new ration. However, from this point on, the consumption of the new ration grew steadily. The Deputy Assistant Director of Supply and Transport (DADST) monitored ration ordering by the Task Force. By mid-1970 he noted that the three infantry battalions in the Task Force consumed 8000 of the new Combat Rations (One Man) Lightweight per month compared with 9000 of the normal Combat Rations (One Man). But consumption of the lightweight rations was pegged at 8000 per month. He felt that if the Task Force could order what it wanted, the light-

weight ration consumption would go up to 10,000 per month and the normal rations would fall to 7000.

Ration accounting and its possible effect on ration weight.

Whereas the US 'C' ration was a single meal in a box (three boxes were issued per day), the Australian Combat Ration (One Man), both lightweight and 'normal', were '24 hour' packs designed to feed a soldier for a day. In some circumstances, for example at Fire Support

Bases, soldiers received an evening hot box meal cooked fresh in the kitchens at Nui Dat and delivered by helicopter to the Fire Support Base. If the soldiers had been issued with US 'C' rations they could be expected to carry over one of their 'C' ration meals to the next day, and no 'over-supply' of rations would occur. However, if the soldiers were issued with Australian Combat Rations (One Man), a meal could not be carried over, since the ration was not designed to permit this. This resulted in soldiers delivered one hot box meal in three developing a substantial 'over-drawal' of rations. This became a matter of surprising concern to supply officers who saw their rationing accounts begin to blow out. To solve what was essentially a simple admin-

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istrative problem (which could be dealt with simply by writing off the rations over-supplied), pressure was applied to have the Australian ration pack redesigned to three packs each containing a single meal. However, it was shown that the redesign of the ration into three separate meals would result in an increase of 0.23 kg in the weight of three meals over the then current 24 hour ration pack weight of 1.14 kg. The additional 0.23 kg represented a 20 per cent increase in weight.

The cost of the ration would rise from 126 cents per ration for the then current pack, to a new cost of 141 cents. The additional 15 cents represented a cost increase of 12%. Presumably there would also be an increase in the amount of discarded material arising out of the single meal packs because each would need to contain some core items such as a can opener, matches, plastic spoon, toilet paper, etc.

It was acknowledged that the 24 hour pack would need to be retained in service whether or not a new 'single meal' pack was created. Faced with the increased weight and cost penalties of the proposed 'single meal' pack, plus the need to retain the 24 hour pack and the free availability of the US 'C' ration, the issue quietly disappeared. But it stands as a reminder that logistic and administrative pressures, unless watched closely, can lead to increasing the load on the soldier.

‘Stretching’ rations. In addition to culling rations by discarding items before issue to troops in the field, rations were also ‘stretched’. Stretching occurred when soldiers issued with, for example, six day’s rations, were told that their next resupply would occur on day seven or eight. Sometimes this occurred when they were already well in to the ration period and had already consumed several days rations. ‘Stretching’ usually occurred when the unit commanding officer or the company commander, aware of changes to the tactical situation, sought to avoid vehicles entering his AO lest they alert the enemy to the presence of his patrols. Helicopters or other vehicles delivering resupplies could be observed by the enemy or his agents, and the location of 1ATF patrols deduced. The enemy could then either avoid the area or, if that was not possible, adopt more cautious patrolling methods.

the soldiers in the field who were unaware of the underpinning tactical situation that sometimes caused it. It tended to exacerbate the calorie deficit problems described above. There were few opportunities for infantrymen to get additional rations except through the resupply process. However, sometimes extra rations became available as a result of contacts with the enemy or by finding enemy food caches. Enemy soldiers killed or captured during a contact sometimes carried tinned food such as cans of condensed milk or tinned fish, that could supplement issued




rations. Another source of extra rations was 1ATF soldiers wounded in contact, sick, or returning to Nui Dat for other reasons. Recognising the plight of their mates on operations and knowing that they would soon be back at Nui Dat where they would receive fresh rations, they often bequeathed their remaining combat rations to their comrades before departure.

The daily meal Patrols generally stopped moving in the late afternoon and adopted a harbour or ambush position for the night. Preparing a meal had lower priority than preparing and securing the position. After siting machineguns and claymore mines, establishing a perimeter path, selecting individual 'pits' (or sleeping positions), preparing bedding, cleaning weapons, receiving briefings, etc., there was little time for meal preparation. Often, meals were prepared by placing an opened can of food on the hexamine stove to heat while other tasks were performed. But even a few minutes of savouring a hot meal and a cup of tea or coffee could do wonders for morale after a tense and tiring day's patrolling. Evening meal time was one of the few brief moments each day when soldiers could relax a little and perhaps enjoy a quiet conversation while they waited for dusk and the transition to night routine.

Platoon or patrol commanders often had more to do than most at the end of each day. In addition to checking the preparations of others including the siting of machineguns and claymores, they had reports to submit

to higher headquarters, radio conversations with their company commander about the next day's operations, reconnaissance patrols to points beyond the perimeter, planning the next day's navigation, encoding and sending the night location grid reference, briefings for their section commanders and, if possible, a quick walk around the perimeter to visit their soldiers.

All this had to be done before nightfall when there was to be no unnecessary movement, no lights and no cooking. Preparing their meal (and often, their sleeping space) was the job of their bat-



The role of the batman is often misconstrued as that of a servant. In fact, in many platoons the batman was the soldier 'next in line' for promotion to Lance Corporal. Bringing him into platoon headquarters gave him the chance to see how the platoon headquarters operated and gave the platoon commander and platoon sergeant the opportunity to get to know him and to assess his capabilities. Smart batmen (and most were), when given the responsibility of preparing evening meals for the platoon commander, sometimes fed both themselves and the platoon commander with rations out of their own field packs first. This quickly reduced their own ration load while leaving the platoon commander to carry a heavier load.

Implications for the soldier's load. Commanders saw an operational need to keep resupplies in the field to a minimum. Resupply visits by helicopters, APCs or other vehicles tended to compromise security so commanders sought to reduce, as far as possible, the frequency of resupply visits. This led to soldiers carrying heavy loads of rations. In an effort to cut their loads to the minimum, soldiers 'culled' their rations, in the process reducing their intake of calories and some vitamins and ascorbic acid to very low levels.

There is evidence of some cases of illness arising out of prolonged exposure to this 'calorie deficit'. Operating for long periods in 'calorie deficit' may have had other negative effects on individual soldier performance. The problems of 'culling' rations tended to be exacerbated by commanders who also 'stretched' rations, delaying resupply. In both Confron-

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tation and the Vietnam war, where operations in the jungle meant searching for the enemy without vehicle support, infantry patrol operations often lasted more than a month and required dismounted troops to carry heavy ration loads of up to 8 or 9 days.

Further Reading.

Dr C.F.A. Younger, 'The Design of Light Weight Patrol Rations' *Australian Army Journal: A Periodical Review of Military Literature*, no. 240,

Australia's Vietnam War website;
<https://vietnam.unsw.adfa.edu.au/>



Just for a giggle!

After my niece returned from her second tour in Iraq, I remarked how beautiful her complexion looked. "What do you use on your face to keep it so smooth?" I asked. "Nothing," she said. "I've just been sandblasted."

My 70 year-old dad was giving a talk at our local library about his Vietnam War experiences. During the question-and-answer period, he was asked, "How did you know the war was over?" He replied, "When they stopped shooting at me."

The steaming jungles of Vietnam were not my husband's first choice of places to spend his 21st birthday. However, the mood was brightened when he received a birthday cake from his sister. It was carefully encased in a Tupperware container and came with this note: "Dick, when you're finished, can you mail back my container please?"

Whilst on a TAOR patrol outside the wire from Nui Dat, our section became geographically embarrassed, forcing our section commander to radio for help. "Are you near any landmarks that might help us locate you?" the base operator asked him. "Yes," said the section commander, "We are directly under the moon."

Would you miss me if I left tomorrow? Would you miss me if I left in a week? Would you miss me if I left in a month? Would you miss me if I left in a year?

Knock Knock - who's there?
What—You've already forgotten me?

While in Kuwait, shortly before we deployed to Iraq, a senior officer told our meeting that we should expect to cross "into Iraq in less than 24 hours." He then opened the floor to questions. A lieutenant stood up and asked, "Is that 24 hours our time or 24 hours their time?"

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BOTTLING PLANT

HEY, SOLDIER. WHERE DID YOU GET THAT WATER?

MICHAEL JAMES PITCHER AND MARTIN GUNN

There's a bottling plant at Camp Liberty, Baghdad, which is one of six such plants around Iraq, wholly dedicated to producing handy 1-litre plastic bottles and filling them with pure, clean drinking water.

This plant, called the al-Morrell Development, owned by the Oasis International Waters company of Utah, USA, is managed by an Australian, Bruce Everson from Townsville.

The day I visited, Bruce was looking forward to leaving on a nice big block of R&R back in Australia after working this contract for nearly four years.

Anyway, the plant Bruce manages (just like the other five) makes its own plastic bottles. It has two monstrous Italian-made machines constantly stamping them out, 32 at a time, in a cycle that takes about 10 seconds.

Each bottle is made of about 40g of PET plastic, delivered to the factory in bags of 1.5 tonne each. The factory uses between 11 and 12 such bags per day – pumping out about 38,000 bottles per bag, or more than 400,000 bottles per day.

Since installation, the machine on the left has been running effectively for 13,707 hours and 15 minutes and has spat out 133,038,696 bottles – 107,824 of which were rejected by the automated quality-control checker, for various reasons.

After being formed by a combination of heat and pressure in a mould, the bottles drop from the Italian-made machines and are conveyed into a giant hopper. From there they go through an intriguing mechanical ballet to get filled, capped, sorted, wrapped and palletised before being fork-lifted into a giant holding area to await shipping.



The water that services this plant comes from the Tigris River, diverted by a system of canals to a lake nearby. From there it is pumped into the plant for purification before bottling, packaging and shipping out to the thousands of American, Australian and other coalition soldiers and contractors engaged in the greater Iraqi war effort.

Interestingly, however, you can't just pick a 'fresh' bottle off the production line and skull it – it needs to sit for at least four hours to allow ozone to dissipate first.

Being on Camp Liberty and being part of the war effort, the plant has also come under attack – a rocket directly hitting a stockpile of bottles in the yard one day. No one was hurt, of course, because the water was perfect at absorbing the blast and shrapnel – but half a day's production was splatted all over the car park! It made for some interesting photos, though – or so I'm told.



Thanks for that – but you could have just said you got it from the fridge!

Hobart Reunion 6th to 13th November, 2017

REUNION ITINERARY

Mon 6th November. Members start arriving in Hobart

Tuesday 7th November.

1100 hrs onwards at the Hotel SOHO situated at 124 Davey Street, Hobart for REGISTRATION and MELBOURNE CUP DAY Celebration. We'll even run our very own Cup Sweeps!

Wednesday 8th November.

TOUR 1 – PORT ARTHUR

Port Arthur is a former convict settlement and is one of Australia's most significant heritage areas and open-air museum. Port Arthur now represents the best surviving example of large-scale convict transportation and is officially Tasmania's top tourist attraction.

Thursday 9th November

AM - FREE TIME – Hobart City, Derwent River Cruise. Maybe a visit to Cascade Brewery. All good options.

1800 hrs for 1830 hrs
Hotel SOHO FORMAL DINNER (Suit/medals)

Friday 10th November.

TOUR 2 – HUON VALLEY

Tassie is known as the 'Apple Isle' and the majority of apples are grown in and around the valley. The area is picturesque and has easy access to the wilderness rainforest. There's breath-taking views of the forest canopy at Tahune Airwalk, on the edge of 1.6 million hectares of World Heritage Listed forest.

Saturday 11th November.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

10.30 am – 11.30 am. Service at Cenotaph.
12.00 noon. Arrive Glenorchy RSL & lunch
2.00 pm. Plaque Dedication.
2.30 pm Annual General Meeting at the RSL.
3.30 pm -5 pm. Fellowship

Sunday 12th November

TOUR 3 – COAL RIVER.

(Includes Mt. Wellington and historic Richmond)

Crowned by alpine vegetation and winter snow, Mt Wellington provides a glimpse of the unfolding panorama of river, fields and the aquatic setting of Hobart. Historic Richmond is in the heart of the Coal River Valley wine region that tells the story of an early Tasmanian colonial village. It has more than 50 Georgian buildings, beautifully restored and now operating as cafes, restaurants, galleries and accommodation. Also famous for the Richmond Bridge on the Coal River and built in the 1820s, it's the oldest bridge in Australia. Richmond also houses the oldest gaol in Australia. Then there's the model village highlighting life of settlers in Hobart in the 1820s. There's plenty of good food and wine from traditional bakeries and pubs in town serving up the best Tasmanian produce.

Monday 13th November.

Members depart

RECOMMENDED ACCOMMODATION VENUES



Woolmers Apartments. (4.5 Star venue)
Christine or Jeanette, (03) 6221 6999
123 – 127 Sandy Bay Road, Sandy Bay
Email: info@woolmersapartments.com.au

7 double studio apartment @ \$120 per night – (Double bed)
5 double executive studio apartment @ \$140 per night (Queen bed)
4 x 2 bedroom single level apartments. \$165 per night.
(Queen bed plus 2 singles)



St. Ives Motel. (4.4 Star venue) Kathryn: (03) 6221 5555
67 St. Georges Terrace, Battery Point.
(8 – 10 min walk to waterfront/city)

43 apartments/rooms. Internal kiosk & coin op laundry
Deluxe studio Double. 31 m2 @ \$168 per night.
One nights deposit on booking and balance on arrival).
FREE Parking & Wi-Fi. Kitchen, cable TV, lift,



Mayfair Plaza Motel. (4 Star Venue). (03) 6220 9900.
236 Sandy Bay Road, Sandy Bay.
Standard Queen, laundry room, no kitchenette,
free WIFI, 40 m2 @ \$133 per night.

Travelodge. (3.8 Star Venue). (03) 62207100
167 Macquarie Street. Standard Queen. Small kitchen
with m/wave, free WIFI, 22 m2 @ \$158 per night.

**Please note that when making a booking,
mention that Graeme Sherriff has organised
the cost for our 2017 Hobart Reunion at
the discounted rates shown above.**

2017 Hobart Reunion of the RAASC Vietnam Supply Platoons Association

REGISTRATION FORM Monday 6th November to Monday 13th November, 2017

_____ Veteran's Surname	_____ First Name	_____ Preferred Name
_____ Partner's Surname	_____ First Name	_____ Preferred Name

Vietnam Unit / Year _____

Postal Address: _____

City _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____

Phone: _____ Mobile: _____ Email _____

Expected Arrival Date: _____ Departure Date: _____

I /We are staying at _____

Special dietary or other requirements (eg. Wheelchair access)? _____

I will have a vehicle with me. **YES** **NO** I have..... spare seats for others.

PAYMENT DETAILS

Please return the completed Registration Form and Monies to
PO Box 207 Mitchell ACT 2911 NLT 30th April, 2017

There is only ONE fee for the reunion. The one off payment is for ALL tours and the Formal Dinner. We've had to book buses for the will of the majority. If you only wish to go on one or two tours—the registration fee is still only \$200 which is a significant deal less than your registration fees for Perth. Your registration costs cover the three (3) tours, bus transport to Glenorchy RSL and the Formal Dinner. You can pay by personal cheque, cash or by electronically (EFT) by direct credit. Please make cheques payable to: RAASC Vietnam Supply Platoons Association and post with the registration form.

If paying by EFT (include your name as the reference), our account details are:

Account Name: **RAASC Vietnam Supply Platoons Association**
Bank Name: **Westpac Bank BSB NO: 032 713**
Account Number: **434593**

If paying by Cash, deposit at any Westpac Bank BSB 032 713 083 Account 434 593

Please include your NAME as the Reference to assist in account reconciliation. Whichever payment is applicable, please provide Christina with the deposit details (**important**)

Yes, we're definitely going. Attached is my Registration Form together with the following means of payment being \$200.00 per person—a total of \$..... (Please tick box).

- ☐ Paid by Cheque (accompanying this form and sent by snail mail)
- ☐ Paid by EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer).
- ☐ Paid by Direct Deposit into a Westpac bank.



Membership Application/Renewal Form

New Application or Renewal (circle which ones) 2017/18 or 3 years

Surname:

Given Names:

Address:

State: Postcode: Date of Birth:

Phone No. (Home) (Mobile)

Email Address:

Vietnam Service Details:

Dates: From To

Spouse/Partner's Name:

Membership: 1-year membership (Vietnam Veterans and Associate/non-Vets) \$20
3-year membership (Vietnam Veterans and Associate/non-Vets) \$60
Association Badge \$10 – Free badge to new members

Payment details:

- By **cheque** payable to: RAASC Vietnam Supply Platoons Association, PO BOX 207 Mitchell ACT 2911.
(include this form).
- Or **Electronically** by direct credit to:
Westpac Bank, BSB 032 713 Account 434593.
(Provide name etc as reference and send this form by post or email)
- Or **Cash Deposit** at any Westpac Bank, BSB 032 713, Account 434 593.
(Provide 6 digit DOB as ddmmyy as reference and send this form by post or email).

Office Use Only: Member Number/Receipt:.....

Membership Card issued/date.....Database.....Banked.....

Scan/send to Area Reps.....Membership Mgr Notified.....