

# G'day from hellhole left by that bloke Rudd

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**TOM HYLAND**  
INTERNATIONAL EDITOR

THE *Sunday Age* has obtained the following email from an anonymous source. It could be authentic. Stranger things have happened.

**TO:** PM's Media Office, Canberra

**FROM:** Headquarters, Mentoring and Reconstruction Taskforce, Tarin Kowt, Oruzgan, Afghanistan

**SUBJECT:** Operation Kevin

**CLASSIFICATION:** Unclassifiable

G'day Lachie, Pardon the informality, but the PM's style rubbed off during his visit to the troops. The brigadier has asked me to send you a post-operation report.

He apologises if he veers into your area of operations — spin, media manipulation, creating public perceptions, all that — but reckons if the PM can stomp all over his turf, he can do likewise.

## **MEDIA**

We hope the PM found the media run satisfactory. The pics looked good, what with the diggers and guns and all. From our perspective, everything spun out well, with the troops staying on message. Those journo's may be hard-bitten, but give them a fast chopper ride and put them next to some well-armed bronzed Anzacs and they go flaccid and tumescent at the same time.

## **MILITARY NOMENCLATURE**

The PM did a good job in speak-

ing to the troops in almost fluent Bloke, but he needs tutoring to avoid inflaming inter-service rivalry.

He should never refer to diggers (who are in the army) as "you buggers". Buggery is the preserve of the navy, and the sailors guard their traditions closely. If he insists on speaking in Bloke, he may want to refer to soldiers as "you poor bastards" or, if he wants to be particularly familiar, as "you pack of c—s". Diggers love that sort of stuff.

## **OUR EXPERTISE**

The brigadier gives him 10 out of 10 for trying, but perhaps it's best if the PM doesn't tell the troops that foreign leaders often tell him, "You really know your shit". There's a potential problem with his scatological turn of phrase.

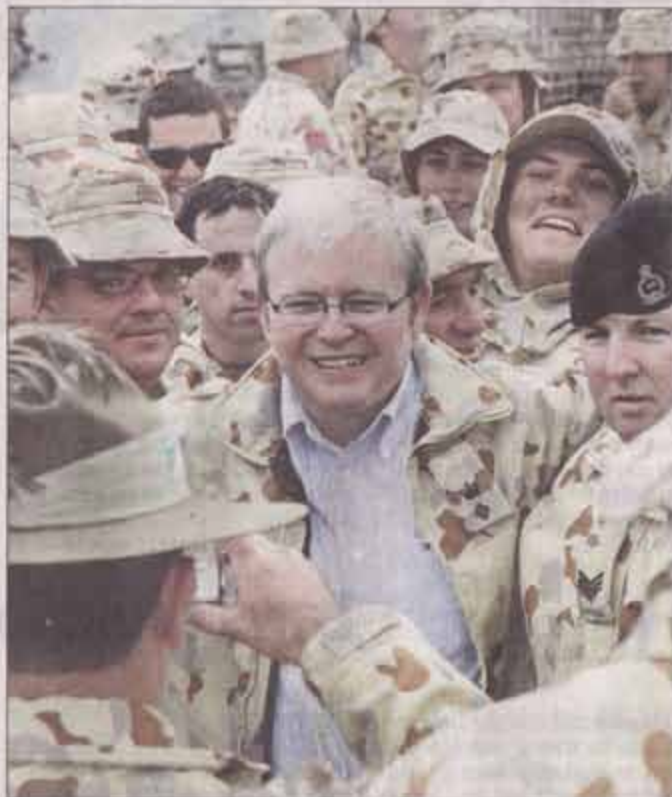
Some journo might ask him to name one world leader who has said Australian service personnel "really know their shit".

Best to stick to the standard line about being highly skilled, well-trained, a reputation forged in the heat of countless battlefields, etc.

## **COLLATERAL DAMAGE**

The PM meant well, but the stuff the PM says the diggers really know has really hit the fan since the PM's comments hit the news wires — about Afghanistan being a godforsaken hellhole with shitty weather. Hamid Karzai (you know, the Afghan President, our brave ally) has been on the blower ever since. He's roeable.

The PM might think it's a god-forsaken hellhole, but 30 million



War is hell: Bloke-in-chief Rudd with the troops in Afghanistan.

Afghans have different words for it. They call it "home" and "our country".

And the godforsaken bit is a bit, well, *sensitive*, over here. You see, far from being a godless place, the locals call their country the *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*. Perhaps the PM forgot to read the "Afghanistan at a glance" briefing DEAT gave him. Still, we've all done that.

While I'm on the subject, best

if the PM doesn't muse about "How is it that for hundreds of years, people have fought over this place?" If the PM doesn't know why we're fighting over it now, well, it plants doubts in people's minds. It's always best to at least *sound* as if we know why we're doing what we're doing.

## **REGIONAL RAMIFICATIONS**

The other problem with the PM's Bloke turn of phrase is that the

press in what we call the Middle East Area of Operations have all picked it up, and there it is, in the Pakistan media, on the Iranian TV website, in Afghan Online: "Aussie PM's Xmas message: Afghanistan is a godforsaken hellhole, etc". Not a good look. Doesn't help the battle for hearts and minds.

## **MORALE**

It was good of the PM to bring over a Christmas gift — the cricket set. Trouble is, there's one present and 800 troops. So we've got a couple of dozen happy blokes and 776 who are saying: "Where's my present?" If you've got young tackers, Lachie, you'll know what it's like if, on Christmas morning, one of them reckons he's been duded. Tricky.

## **ANOTHER PROBLEM**

Have you seen what the weather's like over here at this time of year? Cold, rainy, snow setting in, dust underfoot turning to sludge. Not cricket weather.

There's some bloke here reckons the PM's office got the idea of the cricket set from an episode of *The Hollowmen* on ABC TV, where the PM's staff think up a photogenic media stunt for the PM over the silly season and decide to send him off to Antarctica to give the boffins there a cricket set. Say it isn't so, Lachie.

One of the diggers says it is so, and he's whinging, stirring up discontent, and the Sergeant Major has had a stern word to him, threatened to put him on a charge for insubordination. To which the digger replied in fluent

Rudd: "Couldn't give a stuff. What can ya do to me, send me to Afghanistan?" But I digress.

## **INFORMATION OPERATIONS**

The good news is the PM's visit seems to have the Taliban propaganda department in a bit of a flap. They can't make head nor tail of it. Our intel blokes picked up some Taliban signals chatter where one Talib says to another: "The leader of the Australian crusader mercenaries has accused his own men of being sodomites with a detailed knowledge of their own faeces. Is this infidel trickery or just onanism?" (I'm sure you know what it means, Lachie, but we had to get the padre to help us translate that last bit.)

## **STRIKING THE RIGHT NOTE**

More good news. The brigadier reckons the PM really struck a nerve here when he told the blokes: "I'm going to go home and spend Christmas with my wife and three kids and you're not."

All over camp since the PM left, that's all you hear. Blokes are cleaning the latrines or loading up the Bushmasters to head out of the wire, and you mention the PM and they all say: "Yeah, he's gone home to spend Christmas with the wife and kids and we're not."

So Merry Christmas, Lachie, you enjoy yourself, don't worry about us, we'll be just fine. The blokes can't wait to try out the new cricket gear.

Regards,

The Colonel