

A full-page photograph with a yellowish tint. On the left, a soldier in full combat gear, including a helmet and tactical vest, walks a German Shepherd dog on a leash. He is looking towards the right. In the center, a young boy stands with his hands on his hips, looking at the soldier. On the right, a man in traditional patterned clothing stands with his hands on his hips, looking towards the soldier. The background shows a village with stone walls and a dirt path.

WORLD WIDE EFFORT

AUSTRALIA'S PEACEKEEPERS

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Cover image: An Australian engineer with one
of 3 Combat Engineer Regiment's three dogs
passes a Somali man and boy as he patrols
through a local village. (AWM P01735.288;
photographer George Gittoes)



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AUSTRALIA'S PEACEKEEPERS

FOREWORD

Australia's first peacekeepers deployed to the Netherlands East Indies (present day Indonesia) in 1947. They served as observers along a line between Dutch troops seeking to re-establish colonial control and republicans fighting for independence after centuries of imperial rule and the brutal years of Japanese occupation.

Of the value of their own presence and the prospects for a peaceful resolution, the Australians reported that the republicans' refusal to accept the Dutch-imposed frontier meant 'no umpire can function effectively'. Nor could 'an observer's safety ... be guaranteed by either side in any area ... it would be a simple matter for a determined agent to murder any observer'.¹ None of the 60 Australians who served in the Netherlands East Indies met this fate and all returned home safely before the republicans achieved independence in 1949. But as the following pages suggest, their experience foreshadowed much that has become familiar to generations of Australian peacekeepers.

INTRODUCTION

There has not been a year since 1947 when Australian peacekeepers were not in the field, yet this aspect of our country's military history is often overshadowed by Australia's strong interest in its wartime past.²

Only relatively recently has peacekeeping become the subject of serious historical enquiry and personal memoir. This essay relies on the words of peacekeeping veterans to suggest the breadth of Australia's deployments; the wide range of nationalities with whom Australian peacekeepers serve; and the circumstances that peacekeepers confront before they deploy, when they are on deployment, as they prepare to return home, and once they are home.

Some peacekeeping operations in which Australians have participated, like those in Kashmir, Cyprus, the Middle East, East Timor and Bougainville, have lasted years and even decades, while others have been far shorter. Australian peacekeepers have often deployed alone or in small groups, but since the 1990s in particular, Australia has committed substantial forces to a series of operations in Asia, Africa and the Pacific region.

Peacekeepers traditionally serve in countries destroyed by war. Among their many duties they treat casualties, help with or make possible the delivery of humanitarian aid, stand between hostile armies and report on ceasefire violations. They have overseen elections – sometimes in the most dangerous of circumstances – cleared and taught locals how to clear landmines, and provided medical, communications and movement control teams. Seven Australians have commanded international peacekeeping operations.

In *Other People's Wars*, historian Peter Londey described peacekeeping as 'an invention of the twentieth century'. One that, to quote him at length, is aimed at:

... preventing, or ending, or dealing with the effects of conflict ... It will include a substantial military element, which is there because of the special skills, both individual and organisational, which the military can bring to bear. The peacekeepers themselves have no vested interest in the conflict, other than to save people from it. Between the sides in the conflict they will be impartial, but they will also favour those who want to solve problems peaceably against those who prefer to use violence. In practice, peacekeeping operations are always multinational: this helps demonstrate their impartiality. They may or may not be organised under the umbrella of a body such as the United Nations. Finally and most importantly, force where it is applied will be used at a minimum level consistent with achieving the operation's aims. Killing is a last resort and never the object of the operation. Although killing is not usually the object of war, the destruction of enemy forces is: that more or less amounts to the same thing, and that is where peacekeeping is different.³

Paul Copeland offered a soldier's more succinct understanding: 'in a war it's a simple case of contacting an identified enemy and trying to win a battle. Whereas when it comes to peacekeeping you're constrained to a large degree by UN (United Nations) mandates, the charters, the ROEs (rules of engagement) and what you can and can't do. So there's a real big difference'.⁴

While the character of peacekeeping operations can vary greatly, for the individuals concerned all have elements in common. Every peacekeeper has experienced the moment when they learn of their deployment and, with the tragic exception of those who have lost their lives, they have all returned home. They have experienced war or conflict zones, and had interactions with local people and with peacekeepers from other countries. On some operations peacekeepers are confronted with the ugliest side of human nature and, often at great personal risk, witness the kind of violence and brutality usually only known to frontline infantry in major wars. Other missions play out more peacefully, sometimes against expectations, presenting different challenges. Whatever the circumstances of their deployment, many veterans take great pride in having served as peacekeepers.

GOING ON DEPLOYMENT

The chance to go on a peacekeeping mission can be the fulfilment of an individual's ambition and an occasion for excited anticipation.

Terry Pickard, who deployed to Rwanda in the mid-1990s, was very keen to serve as a peacekeeper and recalled 'I was excited at the prospect of going on a UN mission. This was the sort of thing I had spent my career training for'.⁵ Carol Vaughan-Evans, a doctor and army officer, had grown up in Africa to the age of fifteen and, offered the chance to go to Rwanda, 'loved the idea of going back (to Africa) ... I was terrified that the mission would be finished before I got to go'. Not long before, she had met a veteran of the Somalia operation on an officers' course and was 'really envious of him and his experiences'.⁶ John Perryman, a sailor on HMAS *Tobruk*, remembered that before departing for Somalia, 'I was quite excited actually, I wanted to get over there and get on with the job'.⁷

Don Barnby had served with the SAS in Vietnam before joining the Australian Federal Police. Always seeking adventure, when the chance arose to serve on his first peacekeeping operation, to the divided Mediterranean island of Cyprus, Barnby was keen to be on his way:

I always had this requirement for adrenaline ... I could not do office work, put me behind a computer and I'm like a caged animal, I just cannot sit down ... Cyprus came along and I said 'gotta be in it'.⁸

The common desire 'to be in it' is often nevertheless accompanied by apprehension. By its nature peacekeeping takes service personnel, police and sometimes civilians to some of the world's most dangerous places. To date sixteen Australian peacekeepers have lost their lives on operations, a mercifully low toll that is not necessarily a measure of the risks that peacekeepers face. That more have not been killed or wounded is testament to both the peacekeepers' professionalism, and also at times to good fortune.

No one departing on an operation can be certain of their return. Before leaving for East Timor, police officer David Savage wondered whether 'we would all make it back – although it wasn't a fear that was said out loud'.⁹ Flight Lieutenant David Eden considered his deployment to Somalia 'very much the unknown':

It was exciting because you were going to war ... and there was always a little bit in the background ... What's going to happen? Could I be the one that doesn't come home?¹⁰

Others recall the indestructible feeling common to the young. Shane Abdoo remembered, 'The standard 18-year-old feeling of being 10 feet tall and bullet proof', as he prepared to depart for Somalia. On his second deployment, this time to East Timor, Abdoo took a different view: 'You know what you're in for, you know the boredom and the routine, the things that are coming and it's less than pleasant'.¹¹

When Luke Carroll learned that he was going to the Iran–Iraq border as a member of the United Nations Iran–Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG), which, said the Official Historian, 'seemed more dangerous than any of the peacekeeping missions until that time', he experienced 'a mixture of feelings'.¹² The eight-year-long war between Iran and Iraq had been a merciless affair, enmities were still raw, the newly negotiated peace was fragile, and Carroll 'was pretty circumspect about it, I was definitely excited to go and I wanted to go, there was no question of that ... But I didn't have any illusions, I knew that it was going to be risky'.¹³

Justin Quinn considered being selected to go to Cambodia the 'culmination of (his) training ... It was a privilege ... going to another country to help them build up again and restore peace and at the same time hoping that things would be OK when you got over there'.¹⁴ Paul Copeland had heard from soldiers already in Cambodia before he left Australia and knew 'that there were things happening over there, that it was not safe ... the high incidence of mines injuring people ... people being shot at, road accidents ... So I knew we were going into a place that wasn't particularly friendly'.¹⁵

Bound for Rhodesia in December 1979, Darryl 'Doc' Brain remembered, 'There was trepidation ... when we went over, especially when we left Brisbane – Australians going to a deathly Christmas ... in God Forsaken Africa, that was the headlines ... going over to certain death if it all went wrong'.¹⁶

As she prepared to leave for East Timor in 1999 during the bloody days after a violence-plagued vote for independence from Indonesia, Bernadette Boss thought 'Wow, this is really exciting, this is it, I'm really going on operations' but at the same time wondered, 'Would I do well? Would I do my job?'¹⁷

Most peacekeepers deploy to unfamiliar places about which neither they, nor most Australians, know very much, if anything. Peter MacDonald remembered that although Somalia had been in the news for months, 'A lot of people didn't have a great idea of where Somalia was and a lot of people didn't fully understand what the problem was'.¹⁸ When Norma Hinchcliffe found she was going to Cambodia as a United Nations peacekeeper she thought 'You beauty, and ... went around telling everyone "I'm going overseas, going overseas" and then I thought I'd better look on a map and see exactly where Cambodia is'.¹⁹

Matthew Burke was similarly in the dark when he learned that he would be going to Western Sahara, 'Other than that it was in Northwest Africa I had no idea about Western Sahara or what were the issues they faced, what the issues were that we faced as Australians on that particular mission. So I had to do a bit of reading'.²⁰ Ross Mills happened to be on duty when the warning order for his own deployment came in. 'I thought "what the hell's this?"', he remembers. The news that he was to prepare 'for overseas duty to Namibia' took him by surprise.²¹

Terry Pickard had spent fifteen years as a medic in the Army when he 'heard talk of a UN medical mission to a country in Africa I knew nothing about. Rwanda.' The destination was far less important to Pickard than the opportunity – though once he knew he would be deploying, Pickard read material provided by his unit's intelligence section, attended presentations on overseas service and spoke to soldiers who had already been to Rwanda with the first contingent.²²

For some, the destination is already familiar. Michael O'Brien served in Cambodia in 1992. He had 'always been interested in the country. I'd had previous exposure to the art and culture there that I enjoyed. I kept an eye on it. I was conscious of what Pol Pot had done'.²³ Zac Zaharias had spent time on the sub-continent when he learned that he was going to become a United Nations observer along the line of control separating Indian and Pakistani troops in the disputed territory of Kashmir: 'It was exciting ... I was really looking forward to it ... the usual sights and smells of that part of the world'.²⁴ Carol Vaughan-Evans remembered, 'When we landed in Kenya, I was beside myself with excitement. I knew what to expect. Everyone else was tired and overwhelmed – it was a country with a different language, different people, and it smelled a bit. But I was walking around sniffing, thinking, "yes, this is Africa"'.²⁵

However people view an impending deployment, for the families they leave behind it can be an anxious time. David Savage knew that his wife, Sandra, was very concerned at the prospect of his deploying to East Timor in the lead-up to the 1999 independence referendum. 'With my other missions she had been a bit apprehensive', he wrote, 'but the publicity for this one had been so prominent there was no hiding the very real danger of it', particularly when the police forensic section came to his home to take blood samples. As the date of departure for final training in Darwin approached, Savage observed the policemen's children 'were starting to play up, and wives becoming withdrawn and insular, preparing themselves for the time we would be away'.²⁶

LEAVING AUSTRALIA

Tens of thousands of Australians have served as peacekeepers. Many would recognise the sentiments that led to John Perryman's wanting to 'get over there and get on with the job'.

As they passed through the airport gate, en route to Somalia, Shane Abdoos heard one infantryman say to another, 'thank God, let's just get into it'.²⁷ Leaving for Cambodia, Paul Copeland sensed a similar desire among his comrades: 'I think we were really just itching to get on the plane and get over there and do the job'.²⁸

Getting there can take a matter of hours, or it can take days or weeks. Lorraine Mulholland remembered that that the post-referendum East Timor operation 'happened so quickly we were pretty much on planes before we knew it'.²⁹ Sailing for Somalia as a member of HMAS *Tobruk's* Ship's Army Detachment, Peter MacDonald had far more time to ponder his immediate future:

... well clear of Australia, probably somewhere in the vicinity of the Cocos Islands before it started to sink in to anybody that this was a serious deployment ... The penny suddenly dropped. It suddenly dropped for me, really seriously, because I thought "I'm 46 and I'm too old for this".³⁰

Before the large deployments of the 1990s, peacekeeping could be, and sometimes still can be, an isolating experience, little understood even by close comrades. In the early years the concept was so foreign that the term was unfamiliar even to some participants. When army officer Douglas Aspinall was warned for deployment to Kashmir in 1957, he recalled:

I was the third to go ... It wasn't called peacekeeping then really, although that's what it's known as now ... it was just a job you had with the UN. I didn't hear the peacekeeping name really till later.³¹

Mark Hauber recalled of his arrival in Kashmir:

... the smells, the language, it was a bit hard to cope with at first and it leaves you with a sense of despair really because you can't speak to anybody, you can't understand what they're saying and the smells are completely different and off-putting in some instances.³²

After his deployment to Kashmir, Zac Zaharias remembered, 'you went over on your own, you came back on your own. Nobody gave a rat's arse what you'd done. Nobody could understand what you'd done'.³³

THE DEPLOYMENT BEGINS

‘Eyes like saucers’, said Mark Matthews of his first moments in Baghdad.

Matthews was a weapons inspector, serving in Iraq in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, part of a United Nations team overseeing the dismantling of the country’s weapons of mass destruction.

Matthews was fascinated by his first glimpse of a place widely shown and discussed in the media, particularly after its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and subsequent defeat at the hands of a United States led coalition, but which nevertheless remained a largely unknown quantity. Matthews remembered:

... soaking up the countryside, the people ... horse and cart(s), really old cars getting around the place, the occasional brand new Mercedes or BMW as just a total contrast to the normal place ... slaughtered cattle hanging on the side of the road ... people idly going about their day-to-day business ... soldiers standing about with their weapons slung, you know, it was all just part of the scenery really.³⁴

If Matthews’ introduction to Iraq was fascinating, it was also benign. Often, though, peacekeepers face the prospect of violence, as other weapons inspectors in Iraq did, or evidence of its very recent presence. Doc Brain remembered the descent into Salisbury, Rhodesia:

... what started to wake us up a bit was a spiral descent and I said “why are we doing this?” And they said “it’s in case somebody fires a missile at us.” And I said “OK switch on time, that’s the time when we found, it’s get focused”.³⁵

At the port in Mogadishu, Peter MacDonald watched groups of men walking around. He reckoned two-thirds ‘would be armed with some sort of concealed firearm and there was a sense of great tension about it’.³⁶ Standing on the aircraft’s stairs at Mogadishu’s airport, David Eden saw ‘where a rocket had gone through a building off on the other side of the airport. I remember the airfield and concrete housing which had certainly been bomb damaged’. Driving through the ruined town was ‘pretty much overwhelming’. First passing a corpse on the road, ‘just lying there’, he soon saw more dead whose graves were so shallow that the bodies had ‘popped up to the top’.³⁷

Australian peacekeepers often get their first impression of the country to which they are deploying at an airport. John Turner, who was in the second contingent to Rwanda, remembered:

When we landed and got into the airport the very first thing I saw was everything blown to hell. There were bullet holes in the walls ... The place just looked like it had been blown to hell really.³⁸

Andrew Miller was in the same contingent:

... the state of the actual airport itself – buildings were still shot up, bullet holes, glass had been swept into the corner and it was ... “wow, look at this place” ... That was a strangely tense, exciting sort of moment.³⁹

In June 1999 in East Timor, by contrast, police peacekeepers arriving to oversee the independence referendum had the unusual experience of finding, instead of a ruined airport, ‘a barrage of media trying to take shots of the new Australian CivPol (civilian police) coming in to help save Timur Timor, or Tim Tim, as the Indonesians call it’.⁴⁰ Don Barnby also remembered this surreal moment: ‘when we landed at Dili we were greeted by all the bloody press and I remember all the flash bulbs going off’.⁴¹

Barnby and Savage arrived before militias laid waste to Dili. Outside the airport, they found a territory 'shrouded in mystery'. Savage felt he 'was in the midst of something incredible, perhaps the birth of a new nation', he said, 'trying to take in everything, the temperature, the sights, smells and sounds, which were coming at me from every direction'.⁴²

The violence that accompanied the referendum in East Timor dominated radio and television news in Australia and convinced the international community that a major peacekeeping effort was required to restore order and oversee the transition from Indonesian rule to independence. Just three weeks after the vote, Australian peacekeepers were on the ground in Dili. Lorraine Mulholland, on her first overseas deployment, recalled:

*... pretty much all of my senses except my eyesight shut down, so I don't remember hearing anything, I don't really remember the smells, all I remembered was looking around me ... the destruction was just as far as the eye could see.*⁴³

Bernadette Boss was also struck by scenes of chaos and destruction, remembering 'a smell of burning in the air and then you see all these sort of, you know, destroyed buildings ... it was just ruin after ruin, everything was just smashed'.⁴⁴

A medic, Kristy Davies, first saw East Timor from the deck of a Royal Australian Navy ship: 'what we hadn't really guaranteed on was that the TNI had burnt all of the hills around Dili so that people couldn't hide in the shrubbery ... It was just a black and white kind of landscape with no green'.⁴⁵ In the Solomon Islands, Peter MacDonald, by now a peacekeeping veteran, confronted familiar scenes:

*We pulled up there and the place was an absolute shambles, absolute shambles ... It was as close to active service as possible. It was Somalia ... and East Timor all over again.*⁴⁶

IN THEATRES OF WAR

‘Your whole world becomes a lot narrower when you’re on operations ... everything is very intense’, said Bernadette Boss of East Timor, ‘I didn’t get to face somebody on a two-way shooting range, but the risks were all real ... we were there, we faced many of the risks that you would face in an active, hot, armed conflict’.⁴⁷

‘What, I suppose, got to me’, remembered Justin Quinn of his deployment to Cambodia, ‘was that every man and his dog had a bloody weapon over there, pistols, AKs, RPGs, the whole lot you know ... It was pretty common to see a lot of tracer flying through the sky at night, lots of shooting and explosions and bangs and stuff going on’. Sometimes Quinn saw the victims and at least once he was the target: ‘there were bodies ... there was shooting ... I got shot at up a tower ... barrels pointed at your chest, weapons going off everywhere’.⁴⁸

Gary Hunter remembered, of Uganda:

... close to us in Jinja every night there was gunfire. There were tracer bullets ... going over the roof of the building where we were stationed. You hear of rapes and murders and I believe a lot of it was the Ugandan soldiers themselves.

Hunter, a Vietnam veteran, was well qualified to judge the seriousness of the situation:

We didn’t hear gunfire every night back at base at Nui Dat, not as much as Kampala. And Kampala back in those days was called ... ‘Dodge City’, that’s how bad it was. It was very scary.’⁴⁹

Destruction and poverty are war’s legacy. Peacekeepers encounter their manifestations in many ways, from starving and traumatised people to crumbling infrastructure, ongoing violence, corruption and a dysfunctional polity. John Perryman’s first glimpse of Somalia revealed the state of anarchy into which that country had descended:

Most countries of the world that you visit, the shoreline is a sea of fairy lights when there’s infrastructure and electricity where people live. The African coastline was completely black.’⁵⁰

When he went ashore in Mogadishu, Perryman saw:

... some fairly disturbing scenes, there was a mass grave which we knew was coming up because the stench ... was absolutely overwhelming, you could smell it literally a mile off ... The surreal thing was that it was right next to this refugee camp ... right next to it ... with this overpowering stench of decaying people, it was a pretty poignant moment from our perspective and not something as a sailor you’d ordinarily see.’⁵¹

David Eden found it an unsettling and dangerous place:

We even had the head of Army come across to us ... he’d been to Vietnam, he said, “I’m very worried about you” ... you’re in some very heavy fighting, there’s no two ways about it ... I’m concerned about your well-being” ... Yes it was very much a war zone, we were being fired upon ... if not daily, then quite a lot.’⁵²

The tension that he felt watching what he supposed were armed gangs hanging around the port in Mogadishu never left Peter MacDonald: ‘It sort of went down a bit over the next few months, but it was still ... there and ... violence would break out every now and then’.⁵³

Most Australians who deployed to Somalia served in the southern region, centred on the town of Baidoa. Wayne Cooper thought:

... things were bad in Mogadishu, but we got to Baidoa and as far as the people, the state that the people were in it was a lot worse ... if there’s ever been a place where the term ‘hell on earth’ would fit it was Baidoa in 1993. I can’t imagine too many worse places.’⁵⁴

Baidoa was, said Shane Abdo:

... known as the city of death ... In the height of the famine tens of thousands of people had died there and everywhere you went there were graves (and) very rough streets with dubious names like Sniper Alley and Murder Alley ... certainly not a place where you could let your guard down at any time (it was) not infrequent that a bullet would fly over your head ... The value of human life is not what we would place on it in Australia.’⁵⁵

Some Australians were still in Somalia when another group deployed to Rwanda, a country in the throes of genocide. Few other operations have confronted Australian peacekeepers with such depths of violence and horror. Travis Standen remembered coming across a mass grave 'like a bulldozer had come and scooped up earth and put bodies into it and covered it with a bit of yellow sand.' When he went inside a church where people had sought refuge only to be murdered, Standen found:

*... all over the room, the walls, the roof, the floor, there was just blood stains ... I distinctly remember ... imagine dipping your hands in red paint, putting them up against a wall and dragging your fingers down ... you could see where someone covered in blood had hit the wall and gone, you know, finger trails going down*⁵⁶

In April 1995 members of the second contingent to Rwanda were caught up in a massacre at the Kibeho refugee camp in the country's south. The Rwandan Patriotic Army, having decided to close the camp down, tightened their cordon and caused stampedes by firing into the air and burning buildings. An Australian contingent comprising medical personnel and infantry were sent to the camp to support a Zambian infantry company and provide medical assistance to the refugees.

On the morning of 22 April, after a few days at Kibeho, Andrew Miller perceived:

*... a different tension in the air. It just had a different feel to it and we went to the sandbag wall that was usually manned as part of our perimeter and just on the other side of that was a dead body... That was the start of the day.*⁵⁷

Carol Vaughan-Evans remembered 'tensions were very high and signs were definitely there that terrible things were going to happen'.⁵⁸

When Rwandan troops began firing into the crowd, Miller saw:

*... a massive surge. The whole crowd just basically poured over the wire, swarmed the position ... we attempted to move back up to the high ground ... the crowd was swarming around. I turned around to the section and said, "fix your bayonets", there were only six of us ... the RPA were still targeting people. There was a massive amount of fire power going down into the valley where a lot of the crowd had surged into ... at the time it was exhilarating as well as a scary type place to be ... at one stage the firing was so bad the medics just moved and took cover, as we all did really. Once that had sort of died off ... we then started looking for casualties. The people identified out in the crowd, you know, gunshot wound, we'd go out with the stretcher and bring him back in.*⁵⁹

Carol Vaughan-Evans recalled having to render medical aid to wounded people in the midst of the violence and chaos:

*I felt very safe with the infantry around me ... They had a terrible job; they were constantly exposing themselves to danger when they would enter the compound to find casualties to bring back to me. There were occasions when they were actually being shot at, yet they kept going back out there.*⁶⁰

Artist George Gittoes saw the medical team working at Kibeho:

*We didn't have any APCs (armoured personnel carriers) to get us out, for us to take cover in, so when the actual fighting began there was no cover at all. So people like Carol Vaughan-Evans heroically stitched up the wounded, with bullets flying all around them – there was no safe position, they just worked in the open.*⁶¹

Four Australians, including Andrew Miller and Carol Vaughan-Evans, received the Medal for Gallantry for their courage at Kibeho, the first time Australian soldiers had received gallantry awards since the Vietnam War.⁶² Gittoes said that the Australians at Kibeho 'risked their lives every minute ... everyone paid a huge price psychologically'.⁶³ Geoff Reeves later said, 'I learnt in Rwanda that life was very cheap'.⁶⁴

LANDMINES

Kibeho remains perhaps the most terrible tragedy witnessed by Australian peacekeepers and one of the most hazardous situations to confront any group of Australians on deployment.

Yet on other missions, even where the risk of being killed at the hands of soldiers is remote, there are different threats to life and limb, none more ubiquitous or less discriminate than landmines.

Police officer Ian Ward lost his life and a member of a Cypriot family travelling with him was also killed, when Ward's Land Rover struck a landmine in the buffer zone west of Nicosia in November 1974.⁶⁵ Four Austrian peacekeepers lost their lives when their vehicle ran over a mine near Mt Hermon on the Syrian–Lebanese border and in 1988 an Australian Army officer, Captain Peter McCarthy, was killed when he ran over a landmine in southern Lebanon. The Canadian observer with him was seriously wounded.⁶⁶ Luke Carroll saw an Iranian soldier fatally wounded by a landmine when their patrol was led off an established path during an inspection of the line.⁶⁷

Vietnam veteran Geoff Hazel believed that there were 'two major hazards' in Mozambique:

*AK 47s were in just about every house ... (and) there was mines, nobody knew where the mines were, the mines were everywhere. Every day we heard of people killed or injured in mine explosions.*⁶⁸

Darren Rath saw the results:

*We were dealing with mine injuries, particularly the locals, on a weekly basis, medivacing those people out ... we did recover some bodies of people who were maimed by landmines and of course saw the results of that, they're an exceptionally cruel device.*⁶⁹

Hazel and Rath were in Mozambique as part of an Australian police contingent sent to monitor and train local police and to monitor the conduct of an election. They were followed, in 1994, by a series of two-man teams of Australian de-miners who, among other things, acted as technical advisers and trained local de-miners until 2002.⁷⁰

Cambodia, said Justin Quinn:

*... was full of amputees ... and there was millions and millions of mines and of course the monsoons ... sweep whole bunches of dirt down throughout an area and of course that might have been a minefield so it's unmarked now, don't know where it is.*⁷¹

It rarely rains in the Sinai, but when it did, said Paul Copeland:

*The wadis used to wash the landmines down and reposition them. The sandhills would move and the sand would go with them, so that's how it was ... If you went off into the sand dunes then you're risking it. That was something we wouldn't do.*⁷²

Matthew Burke feared the mines in Western Sahara, which were more likely to be moved by sandstorms than rain: 'I often thought when I went out on patrol 'I hope and pray that I get home safely'.⁷³ Ross Mills remembered mines being 'one of the great risks' in Namibia: 'everyone had to go through not only personal mine drills but vehicle mine drills as well'.⁷⁴

Mark Hauber once had to cross the ceasefire line in Kashmir:

*... through a minefield, being directed by my counterpart on the opposite side with a radio and I was carrying a radio and he was directing me through the minefield, bloody ridiculous*⁷⁵

Decades later, Zac Zaharias, serving on the Pakistani side of the line of control was 'conscious that there were minefields there and we were very careful to stay where we could see the formed tracks were'.⁷⁶ In the Middle East, Andrew Nikolic was in 'a mined area and there were a couple of OPs (observation posts) where at a particular part of the morning, when the sun was at a particular point, you could see the sun reflecting off the mines and there would be thousands of them'.⁷⁷

PROTECTING THE VOTE

Some of Australia's most high-profile peacekeeping operations, those in Cambodia and East Timor, and several less well-known missions, Mozambique and Namibia for example, have centred on facilitating and overseeing elections.

These exercises in democracy, particularly in countries that have long been denied meaningful ballots, are at once fraught with risk and uplifting expressions of people's determination to cast their vote.

Doc Brain was in Rhodesia during the February 1980 election: 'I've never seen so many people walk 20 miles, 30 miles, it didn't matter and the queues of people you know, 5–10 kms long waiting to vote'.⁷⁸ Almost a decade later, in neighbouring Namibia, Michael Maley, who worked for the Australian Electoral Mission and was Electoral Commissioner in Namibia during the October 1989 election, saw similar enthusiasm:

*It meant an enormous amount to the Namibians and the turn-out was so close to 100 per cent that it's not funny. The queues were huge ... you heard stories of people starting to queue the night before because they wanted to be the first person to vote in their village. There were queues that were 2 kms long, you could only photograph them from a helicopter ... It was great to see. The whole business is about empowering people and you really had a sense that you'd done it there.*⁷⁹

Maley, a civilian, saw the contribution Australian soldiers made during the election:

*... they were doing what engineers do. But they also gave a lot of help at election time ... they provided a lot of support to the monitors who were deployed in the north ... Most of my AEC colleagues who were there speak very highly of the support the Australian military gave them.*⁸⁰

After years of war that cost almost one million lives and left another three million displaced, and with the assistance of an international peacekeeping force that at its height numbered more than 6000 personnel, Mozambique held elections in October 1994. Geoff Hazel drove past one of the polling sites on the first morning:

*... there were thousands ... of people dressed up in their Sunday bests and it just amazed me and they stayed – some of them had to stay for three days before they actually got to vote – and they did ... it was just such an amazing time to be there ... such an amazing experience it was brilliant to be part of.*⁸¹

Each of these deployments around elections in African countries involved a relatively small Australian commitment. The operation in Cambodia was of an entirely different magnitude. Australia provided a contingent of more than 600 personnel and, for the second time, the military commander of a United Nations operation, Lieutenant General John Sanderson. The attempt to bring peace and establish a functioning government to this small, devastated country after years of war,

mass murder and Vietnamese occupation, was one of the largest peacekeeping operations ever undertaken.⁸²

An advance United Nations force, sent to establish a United Nations presence in Cambodia, liaise between the factions and begin the massive task of clearing millions of land mines, found a country still in chaos.⁸³ The Australian contingent commander, Lieutenant Colonel Russel Stuart, was wounded when the helicopter he was flying in was hit by ground fire, there were ceasefire violations, fighting between the Khmer Rouge and government forces in Kampong Thom province, and a general lawlessness throughout the country.⁸⁴

The United Nations' main operation in Cambodia, the United Nations Transition Authority Cambodia (UNTAC) operated on a far larger scale than the advance force, with the military being the largest of its multiple components. Still, the Khmer Rouge sought to obstruct peacekeeping operations, turning back a Dutch battalion when it attempted to move through an area they controlled and then turning back a convoy led by Sanderson and the Japanese head of the United Nations operation, Yasushi Akashi. It was into this chaotic, unpredictable environment that the main body of Australians arrived, between April and June 1992.

With the Khmer Rouge largely withdrawn from the peace agreement, still active and threatening to disrupt the ballot, the lead-up to the vote was a tense time. They were not the only entity making life difficult for UNTAC, and voter intimidation was widespread, but for many people the Khmer Rouge were the most recognisable and most threatening element in the complex Cambodian situation. 'There was a lot of worry about the Khmer Rouge and what they could do', said Paul Copeland.⁸⁵ Trenton Prince was working as a signaller with three military observers near the Thai border when they were caught up in a Khmer Rouge attack on a Cambodian position. Prince reported what was happening and then smashed his radio to keep it from the Khmer Rouge, who soon took his group hostage. They were released to Thai soldiers after eight hours.⁸⁶ Paul Copeland remembers being 'issued machine guns to strengthen our defensive position, we built bunkers, we had wire out and we were doing active patrols ... we honestly thought that attack was imminent'.⁸⁷

In East Timor the independence referendum was the catalyst for the kind of widespread violence which was feared, but which did not eventuate, in Cambodia. It had been happening on a smaller scale for years, but after the referendum was announced Indonesian-backed militias went on a rampage. Australian police officers serving with UNAMET (United Nations Mission in East Timor) received reports of 'murders, assaults, massacres, rapes, tortures, right down to the burning of villages'.⁸⁸

UNAMET personnel also became the targets of violence and intimidation. David Savage felt his 'freedom curtailed by the militia; it was pretty obvious we weren't about to have a smooth ride to the elections'.⁸⁹ In early July 1999 members of the militia attacked United Nations personnel in Liquicia.⁹⁰

As Don Barnby drove to a polling station before dawn on election day at Ermera, he was moved by the sight of thousands of people already waiting to cast their vote. They had camped overnight in groups to keep the militia from stopping them. Later in the day, Barnby and other United Nations personnel faced off with a truckload of militia and when the poll closed the UNAMET vehicles were chased back to their base:

*We went back to the office, then the siege situation literally started. Every time we went out ... we got shot at, rocketed, machetes were banged on the bloody windows, varying degrees of intimidation.*⁹¹

UNAMET personnel were besieged in their Dili headquarters. The world was shocked at the wave of violence, and within three weeks an Australian led peacekeeping mission, vast in its scale and commanded by an Australian General, Peter Cosgrove, was dispatched to restore peace and security, support UNAMET and facilitate humanitarian assistance.⁹²

East Timor is perhaps the best-known of all Australian peacekeeping missions, but its separate components are not widely understood. Don Barnby lamented that few would remember the work done by unarmed policemen like himself:

*According to the world ... everything started at INTERFET (International Force East Timor), but if we hadn't done our job... and the East Timorese hadn't had the courage to vote, INTERFET wouldn't have got a guernsey. INTERFET wouldn't have got off the ground if the election hadn't have taken place ... I think UNAMET is forgotten in the historical timeline of what did actually happen.*⁹³

Barnby's assessment is likely accurate. Few Australians are aware of the courageous contribution unarmed Australian policemen made to East Timor's 1999 election, and perhaps fewer still know how closely these officers worked with police from other countries on this deployment. Its strongly international character is often one of peacekeeping's great strengths, signalling the global community's commitment to ending particular conflicts but also sometimes bringing together cultures and ways of operating that can make cooperation difficult.

A MULTINATIONAL ENDEAVOUR

From the earliest days in the Netherlands East Indies to the present, Australians have served alongside peacekeepers of other nationalities.

Forty-six countries provided military personnel or police to the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia, for instance, and twenty-two to INTERFET. These relationships have not always been harmonious. In Cambodia, what Londey called the ‘complex juggling act between military necessity, the needs of political balance, and individual countries’ willingness and ability to contribute’ led to tensions between various national contingents.⁹⁴

Douglas Aspinall found in Kashmir in the 1950s that working with other cultures could be difficult: ‘it did get a bit tenuous at times, the relationship between you and the people you were working with in the mission’.⁹⁵ Decades later, Geoff Hazel found in Mozambique that ‘there was a lot of conflict within CivPol and it was purely because we didn’t understand each other’s cultures’, which is not especially surprising given that that there were police from 32 nations serving on this operation.

Hazel, with his extensive experience of overseas service as a soldier and as a police peacekeeper, found Mozambique to be an exception. Having worked closely with people from all over the world, he came to believe that ‘one of the greatest benefits to the individual of doing a UN mission, you get to meet all the people ... now I have an email list as long as two arms and I’ve stayed in touch with people from all over the world and it is from all the different peacekeeping missions’.⁹⁶

In Western Sahara, Matt Burke was surprised to find himself serving with Russians, never thinking that this was a possibility and finding that they ‘were fantastic people’, a view he held of everyone with whom he served: ‘all

of them were fantastic people and right now I could go anywhere in the world of those 27 nationality countries and be welcomed, just like if they came to Australia’.⁹⁷

Justin Quinn remembered that the different nationalities serving in Cambodia had specific roles:

*Indonesian ... infantry battalions who were looking after us. The Dutch, I think, were engineers. The Pakistanis were actually there as infantry as well and they were part of the defence. Canadians were providing transport, plus the air transport, I think. The French were there, the Foreign Legion was there, they were a pretty awesome mob and they were there for defence as well, just security protection. So there was a whole range of jobs on for the different parts of the UN.*⁹⁸

In East Timor Lorraine Mulholland found ‘there were 22 countries that were brought together just like that and who hadn’t operated together before and all operated together very well’.⁹⁹ Bernadette Boss worked with Egyptians, Nigerians, Filipinos, Irish, New Zealanders (‘always good value’), Fijians, and ‘always used to go over to visit the Thais at lunchtime’.¹⁰⁰ Kristy Davies and her Field Surgery Team had a map of the world:

*Every time somebody from overseas came through or from a different nationality we got them to sign ... where they came from. We saw French people, Brazilian people, lots of Poms, we had some Americans there as well, Kenyans ... a wide range of people.*¹⁰¹

Luke Carroll served on the Iran–Iraq border with ‘a mix, there was an Indian, and Italian, a

Finn, there was a Uruguayan ... an Argentinean and myself and subsequently we had a Nigerian guy turn up ... It was a pretty eclectic little group and it was good fun. It was sometimes very, very funny, very funny’.¹⁰² Andrew Nikolic thought the opportunity to spend a week at a time with someone from another country in observation posts on the Golan Heights or in Lebanon was ‘a wonderful opportunity to get to know another human being, learn about their country, learn a little bit about their family ... and what they’ve done in their military career’.¹⁰³

HMAS *Tobruk* served as a logistic support vessel to the peacekeeping operation in Somalia, transporting equipment and personnel, and sailing to and from Mombasa to replenish supplies.¹⁰⁴ ‘We ran backwards and forwards’, said Peter MacDonald, ‘took the force, built up all the force and we carried Canadians, we carried the New Zealanders, we carried the Irishmen and various other combat forces. We took them in there and we put them all ashore’.¹⁰⁵ Members of the ship’s company also visited ships from other navies that were sitting off the Somali coast. ‘We’d send some of our ... sailors ... to other ships’, said John Perryman, ‘so they could get a bit of a feel for what was going on aboard the *Tripoli* or the USS *Juno* or the USS *Rushmore*, we sent Australians to the Indian ship *Preserve*; there were all these many, many ships from different countries there’.¹⁰⁶

Adam Lawrence, an SAS officer, remembered:

*Before I went home (from East Timor) I was pretty tired. But I felt really good about the personal contribution I’d made there and I really enjoyed being part of a coalition. You know, I wasn’t there as part of an Australian unit, but a real mixed bag and they were a bloody good bunch of people, all of them.*¹⁰⁷

IN THE MIDST OF CIVILIANS

By definition, countries that require the presence of peacekeepers are home to people who have been traumatised by war and violence.

Even where peacekeepers are generally welcome, there are often elements of the population who oppose their presence, and friend can be difficult to distinguish from foe. In Iran, Luke Carroll found:

There were a couple of occasions where I had interactions with some Iranian people and it was a very positive experience and it was a social interaction ... The contrast to that was that on separate occasions I got abused in the street ... I was threatened with assassination and told that I could be reached ... basically they could get to me anytime, anywhere.¹⁰⁸

A few years later across the border in Iraq, United Nations weapons inspector Mark Matthews encountered no such hostility, but found people very guarded, cowed by years of war and dictatorship:

[We] ate in their restaurants ... got to meet the waiters and chefs and people like that. Wherever you went people were interested in you. They were happy to talk to you, only briefly usually, they certainly didn't want to get into any deep conversations because they didn't want to be seen to be onside. But I think they were just the same as people everywhere ... I think the people were fine. It's just that they were ... oppressed.¹⁰⁹

In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge – with their genocidal history and reckless provocation of Vietnam that led to their country being invaded – were still a feared presence long after they lost power and ceased to be the country's rulers. The Khmer people and peacekeepers alike were wary. Paul Copeland found as he went around the country that 'people would be happy to see you 'cause they'd just be terrified that Pol Pot was gonna come back'.¹¹⁰

Justin Quinn recalled:

There was a fair amount of interaction that went on with the civilians ... it was good to sit there and have a chat, have a laugh with some of them and try to crack a joke ... A lot of them could speak English, broken English, and so you'd spend time listening to what they had to say.¹¹¹

At the port in Mogadishu, John Perryman found a far less friendly, less welcoming local population. He watched HMAS *Tobruk's* cargo being unloaded in a dock area surrounded by shipping containers and patrolled by soldiers trying to keep thieves at bay:

Somali people congregated around the port ... that was a little unnerving ... because some of their behaviour, it became apparent, had perhaps been influenced by this drug. They would come up and, in a sort of cat and mouse sort of way, they would challenge the soldiers and see just how far they could push the boundary in so far as approaching them or getting to the port ... There were undertones that we weren't welcome there.¹¹²

Shane Abdo said 'Mogadishu's got millions of people in it, it was pretty busy, but it is not somewhere I'd look to buy real estate'.¹¹³ Baidoa was less crowded, but its people were in a desperate state. The town was crowded with refugees and about 100 people were dying every day.¹¹⁴ When the Australian contingent commander arrived, he found villages of refugees 'living basically under piles of rubbish, twigs with grass interlaced covered with plastic bags or plastic sheeting'.¹¹⁵ There were shootings and assaults every night, and aid workers had to hire gunmen for protection, but could not trust that they would not turn against their employers.¹¹⁶

Travis Standen, who spent time outside the Rwandan capital Kigali, remembered, 'where we were, there were cranky Africans with AKs (AK47 assault rifles) who didn't like us ... [it was] a dangerous place'.¹¹⁷ The danger seemed perhaps more acute for its source being an organised military force, the Rwandese Patriotic Army. The Australians found them a menacing presence: 'they were unpredictable and dangerous individuals and I would say that to include many of their field grade officers'.¹¹⁸ So much so, that to make the short walk from the Australian quarters to the Kigali Central Hospital, where most worked, required the protection of armed infantry. 'I didn't feel safe inside the compound, I didn't feel safe outside the compound', said one veteran.¹¹⁹

Sometimes in turn, the local population is wary of the peacekeepers in their midst. In East Timor, remembered Lorraine Mulholland, people were 'very apprehensive at first and at first our soldiers were all wearing dark sunglasses and helmets and had very forbidding looks on their faces ... The local population was taking them as being very aggressive and dangerous', until the Australians realised the effect they were having. Then, 'the sunglasses came off, smiles came on their faces and the local population started to trust us a little more'.¹²⁰ Dan Heldon, an AusAID officer, reached a similar conclusion on Bougainville: 'in Melanesia you can get a lot of places with a smile. Even the scariest looking fellas turn to sunshine if you smile and engage them'.¹²¹

Sometimes people are not even aware of the conflict that peacekeepers are there to help end. Kristy Davies said that on Bougainville, where people called her 'lik lik picanini' – a little person – that 'quite a few villagers in the highlands didn't even know there'd been a war on, so to go in and tell them we're bringing peace was a little bit strange for them 'cause they didn't know they needed it in the first place'.¹²²

In Timor, Shane Abdoos spent months with the Falantil Guerillas who had opposed Indonesian rule and fought a long campaign for independence. He considered himself very fortunate, establishing a rapport with people for whom he had great respect: 'I would say I had the pick of the bunch of experiences of a lot of people in Timor, because I spent exactly half my time with the Falantil guerrillas ... unbelievable people, good people ... even as

soldiers they looked up to us, but in a way I was looking up to them'. Of the East Timorese more generally, Abdoos 'learnt a real love and respect for the culture and the people themselves'.¹²³

Lorraine Mulholland helped form a choir on Bougainville, sung with local singers and also at the church.¹²⁴ Mulholland was in the army's media unit and knew well the value of developing good relations with the local people. Geoff Hazel, a Vietnam War and peacekeeping veteran, also understood the church's importance in island life: 'religion in the Solomon Islands is big, if you didn't get to church then you would not break down any barriers. That would be it, you had to go to church, it was just part of the system'.¹²⁵

In the Middle East, a place fraught with political, racial and religious enmity, Andrew Nikolic was everywhere met with warmth and hospitality. 'Both the Israelis that I confronted and the Arabs I confronted were extremely welcoming, on the military side when undertaking my duties, perhaps not as much, but certainly the civilian Arabs and the civilian Israelis that I confronted were extremely welcoming'.¹²⁶

Zac Zaharias found the Australian and Pakistani love of cricket was 'a real ice breaker' in Kashmir: 'it was very cordial, and not only cordial, it was very honest. It was genuine, that reception that we get. So you certainly walked away with a very positive feeling towards Pakistan and their people'.¹²⁷

THE DEPLOYMENT ENDS

Adam Lawrence, veteran of Afghanistan, East Timor and Bougainville, found that peacekeeping meant being 'under a lot of duress for a long period, it can wear you down and tire you out, so I was ready to go home'.

As the end of a deployment drew near, he got 'the normal end of time jitters, a lot of people get that, whereby the last week or so you become very wary'.¹²⁸ Kristy Davies remembered being 'very keen to get home', when her deployment to Bougainville ended: 'I'd been there long enough, it was time to leave'.¹²⁹

When he left Rwanda, Andrew Miller looked out the aircraft window at anti-aircraft positions below and thought, 'this is it, we're going home ... that was a pretty special moment and obviously there was mass whoops and cheers and clapping and carrying on'.¹³⁰ Matt Burke got off the plane in Australia

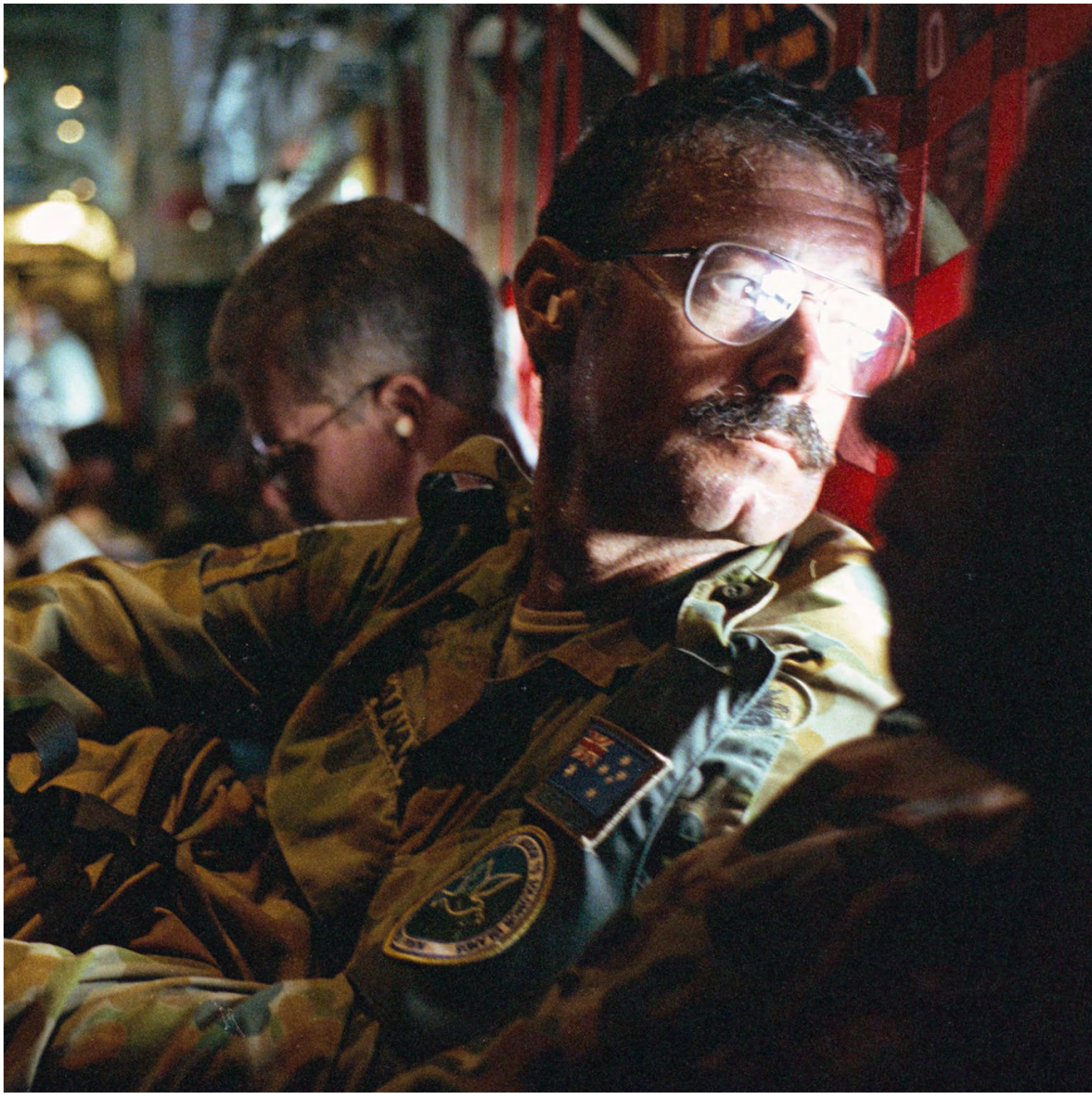
and was soon 'kissing the tarmac, probably about three times. They probably thought "this bloke's gone crazy, he's praying to the east." No, I wasn't – I was just so happy to be back in Australia thinking 'thank God I'm alive, thank God I'm back'.¹³¹

Once back, the often swift transition from war zone to home – 'one day you're in Mogadishu, next day you're sitting in your lounge room' – can be very unsettling.¹³² Norma Hinchcliffe remembered, 'twenty-four, forty-eight hours before, I was in Cambodia, I was carrying a weapon with live rounds and then forty-eight hours later I'm back in Canberra mowing the lawns, I mean it was not good'.¹³³

John Perryman went to England after serving in Somalia. The contrast between a thriving First World country and the Third World war zone that he had just left was striking:

*Being in this country where there was no infrastructure whatsoever, and ... people who were impoverished, starving, dying, warring, fighting, you know, within a day I was in London, and that was one hell of a reality check for me.*¹³⁴





LOOKING BACK

Geoff Hazel found that peacekeeping operations defied comparison: ‘some are more dangerous, some you can achieve more, some there are greater things at stake than others, and really, it is a matter of you work where you are and achieve what you can ... every one of them has been worth doing’.¹³⁵

It is a sentiment shared by many peacekeeping veterans for whom a deployment or deployments have been of great personal and professional benefit, but it is not universally held. For some, reflections on their service conjure dark memories and strong emotions. Others take pride in a job well done, but regret that the individual can only do so much and that success is not certain.

Zac Zaharias considered his service in Kashmir a ‘highlight of his life’, but recognised the limitations of peacekeeping, particularly any individual’s part in an operation that had already lasted several decades:

*You realise it’s an intractable dispute and you’re really only a small fry. So, while our contribution, I guess, is valuable, at times you feel that you really, perhaps, can’t do very much to solve it. So I guess there’s that sense of feeling that you’re really not able to do very much.*¹³⁶

Looking back on his deployment to Somalia, Wayne Cooper remembered:

*We were happy that we’d done good work, we’d seen a huge change in the town, in the people ... and I guess history’s shown that it might have all been for nothing in the end, but we certainly felt like we’d made a difference.*¹³⁷

Andrew Miller had similar feelings about Rwanda, ‘I’m extremely proud that I went ... I definitely don’t think that we made that much of a difference. But we made a difference while we were there’.¹³⁸

Paul Copeland found, having spoken to many peacekeeping veterans, that ‘the common thread ... is that a lot of these people are proud to have done what they’ve done. They’ve done their bit for world peace and security and they think they’ve done their bit for the country’. That’s how he regarded his own service in Cambodia: ‘I felt very proud because I think the unit itself really distinguished itself ... I think we did an exceptional job over there and I’m proud of being part of that’.¹³⁹

Justin Quinn took a very similar view: ‘It was a pretty good feeling to be part of a world wide effort ... It was good, I felt proud, proud to have done ... something for Australia I still carry the beret, I never threw it and it’s something that I’ll keep with me for the rest of my life’.¹⁴⁰

Looking back at his peacekeeping service, John Perryman said:

*I’m very proud of what HMAS Tobruk ... all the Australian commitment to UNITAF [Unified Task Force Somalia], I’m very proud of what we did. We went there to do a job and we did that job to the best of our ability and it succeeded ... Having served in Somalia and also Timor and Bougainville, Somalia to me stands out as being the highlight of my operational experience in the RAN.*¹⁴¹

‘I’m proud of having received my service medal ... and the UN medal. But that’s not what it’s about’, said Andrew Miller. ‘I’m prouder of being an Australian soldier on operations, I’m prouder of having served with the 2nd Battalion and these guys within my section, within my platoon and the rest of it, it’s just finery, that makes it the icing on the cake’.¹⁴² Norma Hinchcliffe was awarded the Conspicuous Service Medal for her work with street children and as a medic in Cambodia. She, like Miller and Carol Vaughan-Evans, was honoured, but also believed that ‘every person that went really could, should have received something like that. And sometimes it’s very humbling to be ... pointed out as somebody who should get something like that, I mean, I’m very proud’.¹⁴³

Lorraine Mulholland served on East Timor and Bougainville, and looks back on both deployments as ‘the opportunities of a lifetime [that] have made me the person that I am’.¹⁴⁴ ‘Both professionally and militarily and from a family perspective it was just an outstanding 12 months’, said Andrew Nikolic of his time in the Middle East. ‘It was a real milestone in my life, to be able to have that experience, and it is something that I reflect back on now as a special moment’.¹⁴⁵ Mark Matthews found peacekeeping to have ‘been the making of my military career, I guess you could say. I mean that is the piece of my military career that I actually went out and did a job for this country’.¹⁴⁶

Matthews' experience is not universally shared. Peacekeeping is not always a path to career advancement, and an individual's service is sometimes dismissed. Ross Mills came home from Namibia in 1990 to find that his peacekeeping service counted for little: 'The credibility at that stage, being a UN ... returned service person ... didn't mean anything'.¹⁴⁷ Zac Zaharias also found that his service in Kashmir did not count for very much:

*I found it a very difficult time actually returning from overseas ... from a career perspective. To go from something which in many respects was a highlight of my life and being in a pretty amazing part of the world doing something you've trained to do and then ending up in essentially a barracks job which was very boring, very mundane, which didn't really need anyone to do it, you know, it was really a bit of a non-job.*¹⁴⁸

When David Eden got back from Somalia, he found colleagues were oblivious to what he had done: 'I had people coming up to me, superiors of mine, coming up to me and said, "Did you enjoy your overseas holiday? Peacekeeping, you go there, you sit around you just do a bit of work, nothing much". No sorry'.¹⁴⁹ John Turner remembered that once he came home from Rwanda, 'a lot of people just (said) to me "Oh, wake up, get over it. It was only peacekeeping, what are you whinging about?"'¹⁵⁰

Few, if any, peacekeepers would recognise their own service, which often comes at a high personal cost, in the remarks directed at Eden or Turner when they returned. Don Barnby, whose career in the military and police has placed him in many testing situations, declared:

*The most satisfaction I have gotten from anything was East Timor ... But there is a price. There's always a price and you see things, you experience things that you really don't like ... East Timor was my straw and the last bucket out of the well ... it was for a really, really good cause.*¹⁵¹

Deployments to hostile, unfamiliar environments where one is stressed and tired can also have a physical effect, even on the most resilient characters, and Barnby ended his deployments to Bougainville and East Timor exhausted and in poor health. After Bougainville he was in a terrible state, having endured what he called 'incredibly hard living conditions' in a place where 'everything was mildew ... the humidity was just one hundred percent all the time'. He found the people to be very friendly, but missed the trappings of a more normal existence: 'no booze, no relief, no entertainment, no radio ... no leave, no release'. When his deployment ended, Barnby was 'quite glad to get out ... I'm not a masochist ... I was quite sick. I'd lost 12 kilos ... I was a bit of a sick puppy actually'. After Timor, he was just as unwell: 'I really hit the wall ... physically... I had typhoid and dengue. They were going to put me in quarantine there for a while and I did break down'.¹⁵²

Many peacekeepers have served at the cost – sometimes the long-term cost – of their physical or mental health. Travis Standen decided to end his army career when his deployment was over: 'I came back from Rwanda and washed my hands of the army'. He had nightmares and couldn't sleep, finding it 'somewhat difficult fitting back in with this type of society'.¹⁵³ Shane Abdo left the army too, at the end of his second deployment: 'my last day in uniform was in Timor and after that I never went back ... those types of experiences, they definitely focus you on what's important in life'. When it was over, said Abdo, 'you shut down emotionally and you black out just to justify it and make sense of it'. At the same time, though, he 'loved' having served as a peacekeeper, and the 'lessons in life that it's taught me'.¹⁵⁴

For better or worse, peacekeeping veterans, as Peter Matthey said, 'come back changed'.¹⁵⁵ Douglas Aspinall 'was glad to have done it and I think the experience was great and I probably got a better understanding of a few people and enjoyed what I was doing. So, I wouldn't have changed it'.¹⁵⁶ Decades later, Michael O'Brien found that service in Cambodia made him 'more accepting of people ... I'm more prepared to avoid confrontation ... than I was previously'.¹⁵⁷

When you first get back you're different', said Bernadette Boss, 'it's quite an isolating experience, but then weeks, months, you're fine'.¹⁵⁸ True for many, it is not the case for all. Long after his return from Somalia,

David Eden also felt the experience weighing upon him: 'I was quite fine ... but it comes to a point where it all starts to build and it just bubbles over and therefore you're psychologically scarred from then on'.¹⁵⁹

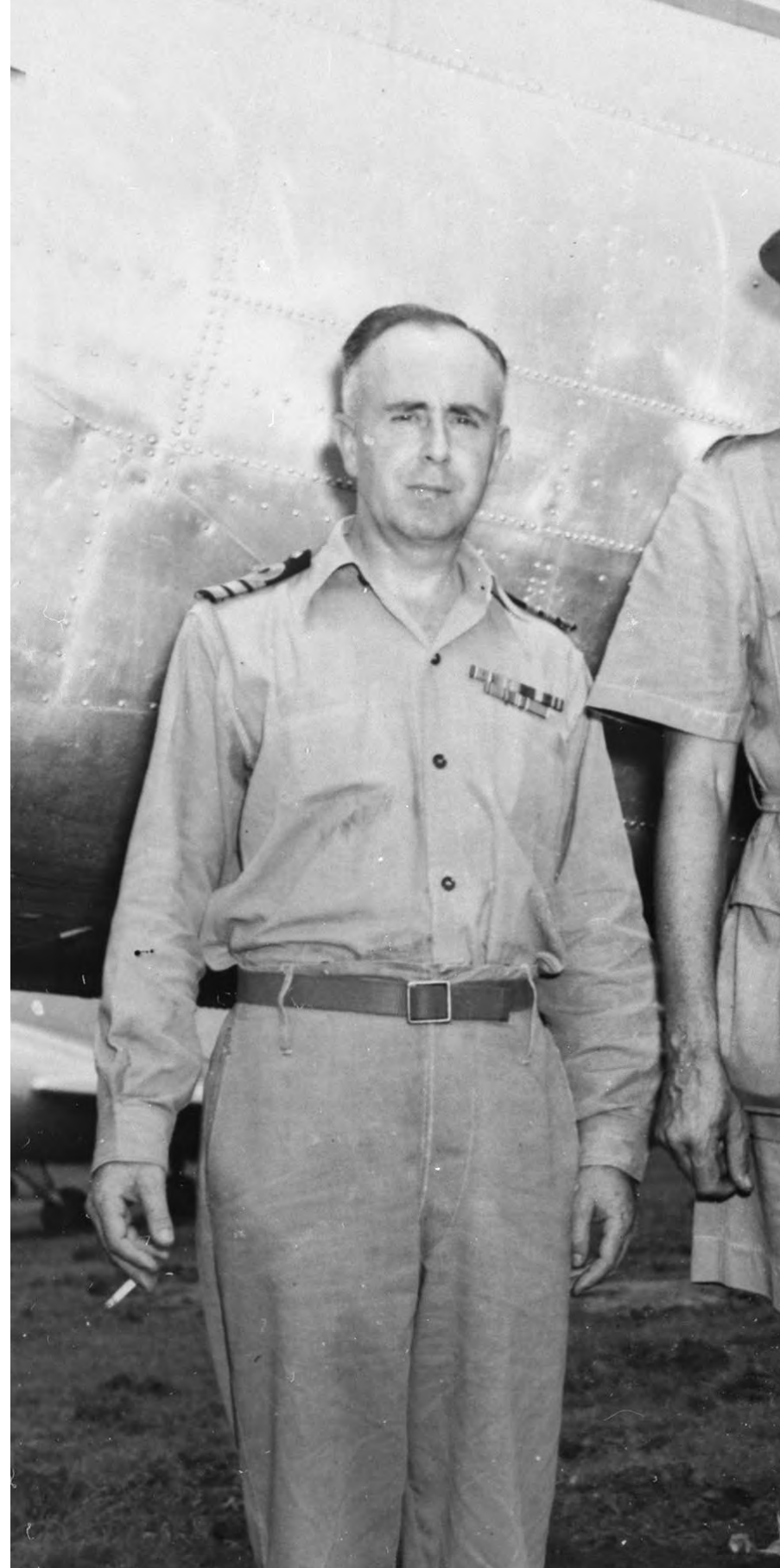
The impact of seeing terrible human suffering cannot be other than profound, but this does not always mean that veterans wish to forget. After East Timor, Geoff Hazel decided to 'hang on to these memories I don't want to lose. Sure they're going to affect me, right, happy with that as long as I keep those memories and remember what happened and what was done by everybody'.¹⁶⁰

Australian peacekeepers have served on many more deployments than the wars in which Australia has been a belligerent. Over the decades since the end of the Vietnam War in particular, peacekeeping has been an important, indeed sometimes the primary, concern of Australia's defence forces. Yet, few Australians are aware of the extent of our country's peacekeeping efforts, nor of the proud record that Australian peacekeepers have established. If people think of veterans, it is more likely than not that they have in mind those who have served in wartime. But tens of thousands of Australians have embarked on overseas service to play a part in ending conflict and helping create the conditions for peace. Just as we honour those who have served our country in wartime, we must also honour those who have, to borrow one historian's phrase, served our country as neutrals in the midst of 'other people's wars'.









Previous spread: Australian observers meet Republican officers at Jogjakarta in September 1947. From left to right: Major DL Campbell, Squadron Leader LT Spence, Brigadier LGH Dyke. These men, along with Commander H. Chesterman, who appears almost out of the frame on the right, were Australia's first peacekeepers. Spence was later killed on operations in the Korean War. (NLA an12941529-16)

Left top: Australian peacekeepers Captain Barrie Newman and Major James Hodgson, with Lieutenant Colonel Harold Sandvik of the Norwegian army, on the ceasefire line between India and Pakistan in June 1965. All three were members of the United Nations Military Observer Group India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). One of the Australians was posted on the Indian side of the India/Pakistan frontier and the other, with the Norwegian, on the Pakistani side. (AWM P05689.037)

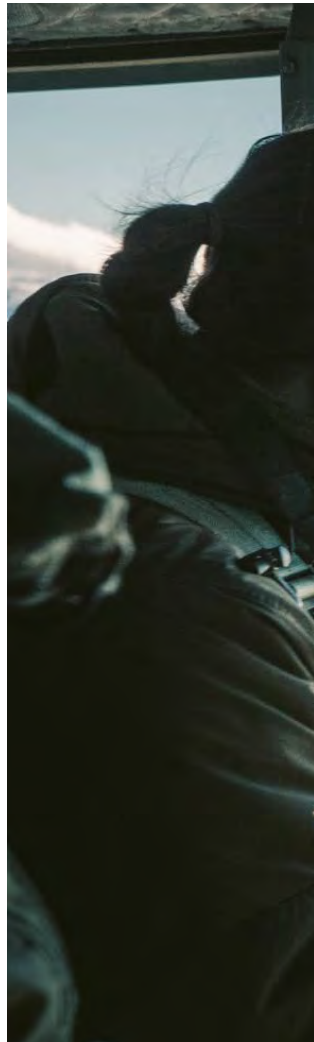
Left bottom: Captain Barrie Newman, an Australian member of UNMOGIP, with the officers of an Indian artillery regiment near Kargil, Kashmir, in July 1965. (AWM P05689.064)

Right: Australia's Acting Consul-General in Batavia (present-day Jakarta) Charles 'Moth' Eaton, pipe in mouth, stands with three of the first four Australian peacekeepers: Commander HS Chesterman (left), Brigadier LGH Dyke (second from right) and Major DL Campbell (right). Squadron Leader LT Spence made up the fourth member of the party, and perhaps took the photo; he was later killed in action in Korea. Eaton was Australia's representative on the international Consular Commission which initiated the first international peacekeeping operation, in the Netherlands East Indies in 1947. (AWM P03531.002)











Previous spread: Australian Lieutenant General Robert Nimmo (standing second from right), UNMOGIP's senior military officer, at the wedding of a New Zealand military observer's sister to a member of the UN administration. Among the guests in this photo, taken outside Rawalpindi's Anglican church on 10 April 1965, are peacekeepers from Australia, New Zealand, Belgium and Canada. (AWM P05689.022)

Left top: Two Australian helicopter pilots, one a naval officer the other an air force officer, kneel next to one of the helicopters that they are to fly to their base in the northern Sinai, March 1982. The helicopters, loaded with cargo for the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), were carried to the Israeli port of Ashdod by HMAS *Tobruk*. (AWM CANA/82/0065/07; photographer Malcolm Lancaster)

Left bottom: Two army officers – on the left an Australian, Captain John Robbs, and on the right a New Zealander, Captain Peter Cosgrove, pose beside a United Nations vehicle at the headquarters of the Observer Group Egypt, part of the UNTSO force that stood between Egyptian and Israeli forces in the Sinai. (AWM P01779.007)

Above: Captain An Australian officer flies over Lebanon's snow-covered peaks while serving with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation, one of the UN's oldest peacekeeping missions, which began operations in 1954. Australia's first UNTSO observers deployed in 1956. Two Australians have commanded UNTSO, and the operation continues to the present day. (Dept of Defence HPO-5798)



Above: An Australian instructor conducts mine awareness training for Kenyan military engineers in Namibia in June 1989. (AWM CANA/89/0313/04; photographer Pat Green)

Right: The commanding officers of HMA Ships *Darwin*, *Success* and *Adelaide*, all serving with the MIF in the Gulf of Oman in 1991. (AWM P01575.009; photographer Kym Degener)







Left top: The commanding officer of HMAS *Darwin* watches the interception and boarding of an Iraqi oil tanker, c. October 1990. A United States Navy vessel sailing in support of *Darwin* can be seen in the background. (AWM P01575.028)

Left bottom: In the waters of the Gulf of Oman an Australian officer stands before a Seahawk helicopter on the flight deck of HMAS *Adelaide*. The ship was in the Gulf of Oman as part of the Maritime Interception Force (MIF), enforcing sanctions against Iraq after that country's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. By the end of 1990, vessels serving with the MIF had intercepted almost 7000 merchant ships, and MIF personnel had boarded almost 500 of these ships. (AWM P01403.081)

Above: Medical officer Captain Tam Tran on Operation Habitat in northern Iraq during June 1991. Tran, herself a refugee, was part of an Australian contingent sent to the region to provide medical care to Kurdish refugees in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War. (AWM CANA/91/0104/09; photographer DJ Tyler)



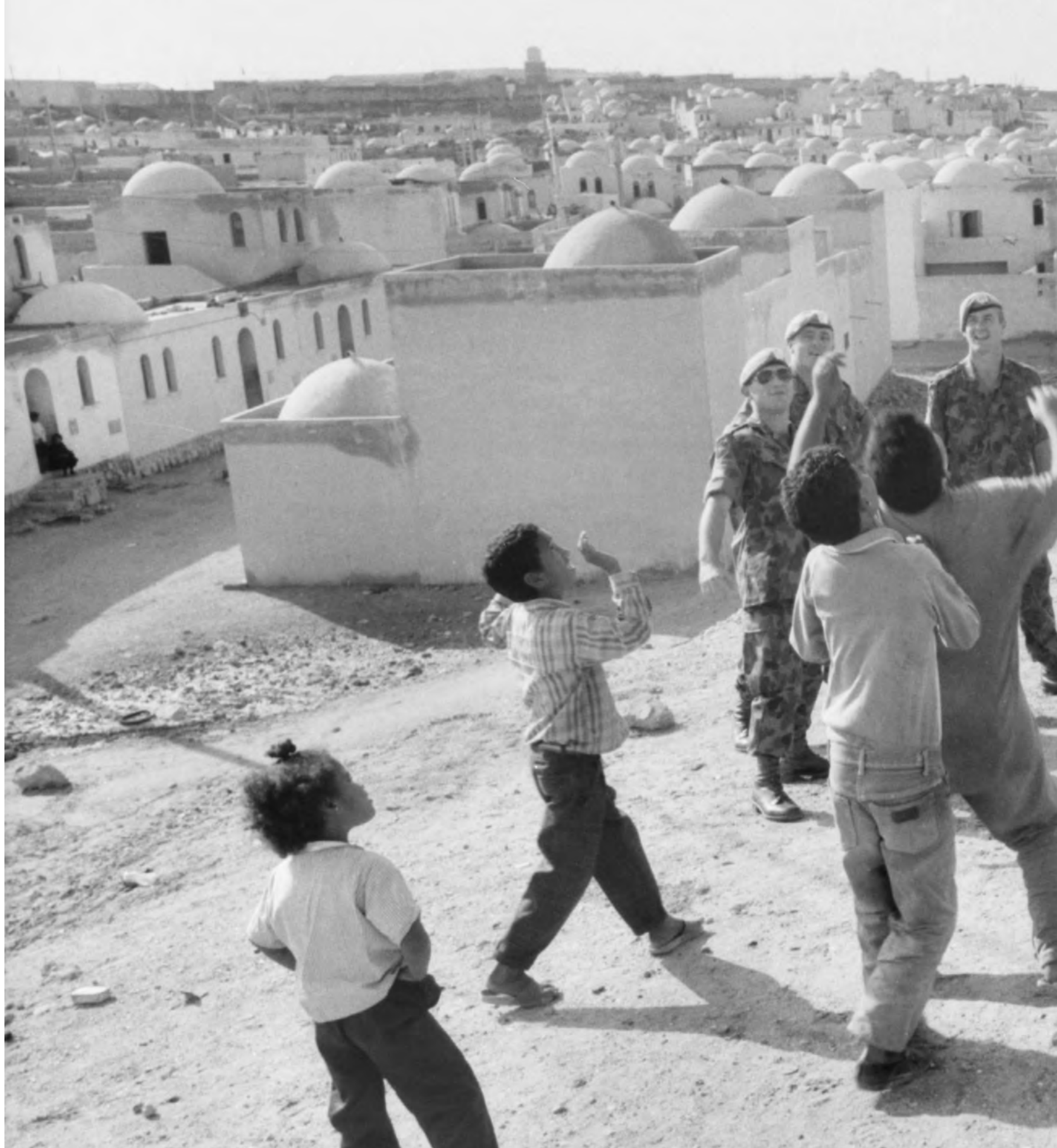
Left top: An Australian medical officer tends a Kurdish baby during Operation Habitat in June 1991. (AWM P01665.031)

Left bottom: Medical officers serve with the Australian Service Contingent on Operation Habitat in Northern Iraq. The Australian medical personnel had a roving commission to provide treatment to Kurdish refugees fleeing Iraqi forces after the 1991 Gulf War. (AWM P01762.014)

Below: In a market place in Western Sahara an Australian soldier haggles over a pair of sandals with a local man, December 1991. (AWM BRIA/91/0375/22; photographer TR Dex)

Next spread: Children play as Australian soldiers look on in a Western Saharan town in December 1991. (AWM BRIA/91/0375/30; photographer TR Rex)











Left top: Two children accept lollypops from an Australian signaller in Laayone, Western Sahara, December 1991. He was serving with the United Nations in that country, one of a 40-man army contingent providing communications for a large peacekeeping force there to organise a referendum on independence or integration with Morocco. (AWM BRIA/91/0380/07; photographer TR Dex)

Left bottom: Three peacekeepers pose for a photo in Western Sahara in December 1991. The soldier in the centre is an Australian signaller; with him on the left are a nurse serving with a Swiss medical unit and on the right a Canadian corporal. All three were on duty at an isolated desert outpost as part of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum (MINURSO) in Western Sahara. (AWM BRIA/91/0383/21; photographer TR Dex)

Above: Australian peacekeepers, wearing the blue berets of the United Nations, pose before the ruins of Angkor Wat, symbol of the Khmer people's rich and prosperous past. But in 1992 when this photograph was taken Cambodia was emerging from decades of war, civil conflict and the brutal years of Khmer Rouge rule, and had become the scene of one of the international community's most extensive peacekeeping operations. (AWM P01811.001; photographer Wayne Ryan)





Previous spread: Two Australian soldiers look for stolen goods in a Phnom Penh shop, August 1992. (AWM CAMUN/92/038/03; photographer Wayne Ryan)

Below: Two UN weapons inspectors, one Australian the other Canadian, pose with their Kurdish minders during a UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspection in Iraq during 1992. UNSCOM was mandated to locate and destroy Iraq's chemical and biological weapons, but its inspectors faced harassment and many other obstacles including the threat of violence while doing their work. (AWM P02000.038)

Right: Three UN weapons inspectors dressed in protective clothing follow decontamination procedures after taking part in the destruction of nerve agents at Muthanna, Iraq, in 1992. (AWM P02000.057; photographer Henry Arvidsson)









Left: Two Australian peacekeepers, one playing the role of Santa Claus, distribute gifts to Cambodian children a few weeks before Christmas 1992. The Australians were members of the Australian Signal Corps serving with the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, Australia's largest peacekeeping commitment to that time. (AWM CAMUN/92/077/22; photographer Wayne Ryan)

Above: An Australian sergeant serving with the Force Communications Unit sits on the steps of a Russian helicopter used by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) with a group of homeless Cambodian street children, 1993. Another peacekeeper is in the doorway. Australian soldiers raised funds to set up a school for street children in Battambang during their time with UNTAC. (AWM P03258.087; photographer Heidi Smith)





Left top: Australian peacekeepers squat alongside Cambodian children, one holding a plastic gun, in a Buddhist meditation cave used to dispose of bodies during the genocidal rule of the Khmer Rouge between 1975–1979. Behind them skulls and other skeletal remains are piled on a low shelf. Once a haven of rest and tranquillity, the cave next to a Buddhist temple had become one of countless testaments to human brutality spread across Cambodia's towns and countryside. (AWM P03258.281; photographer Heidi Smith)

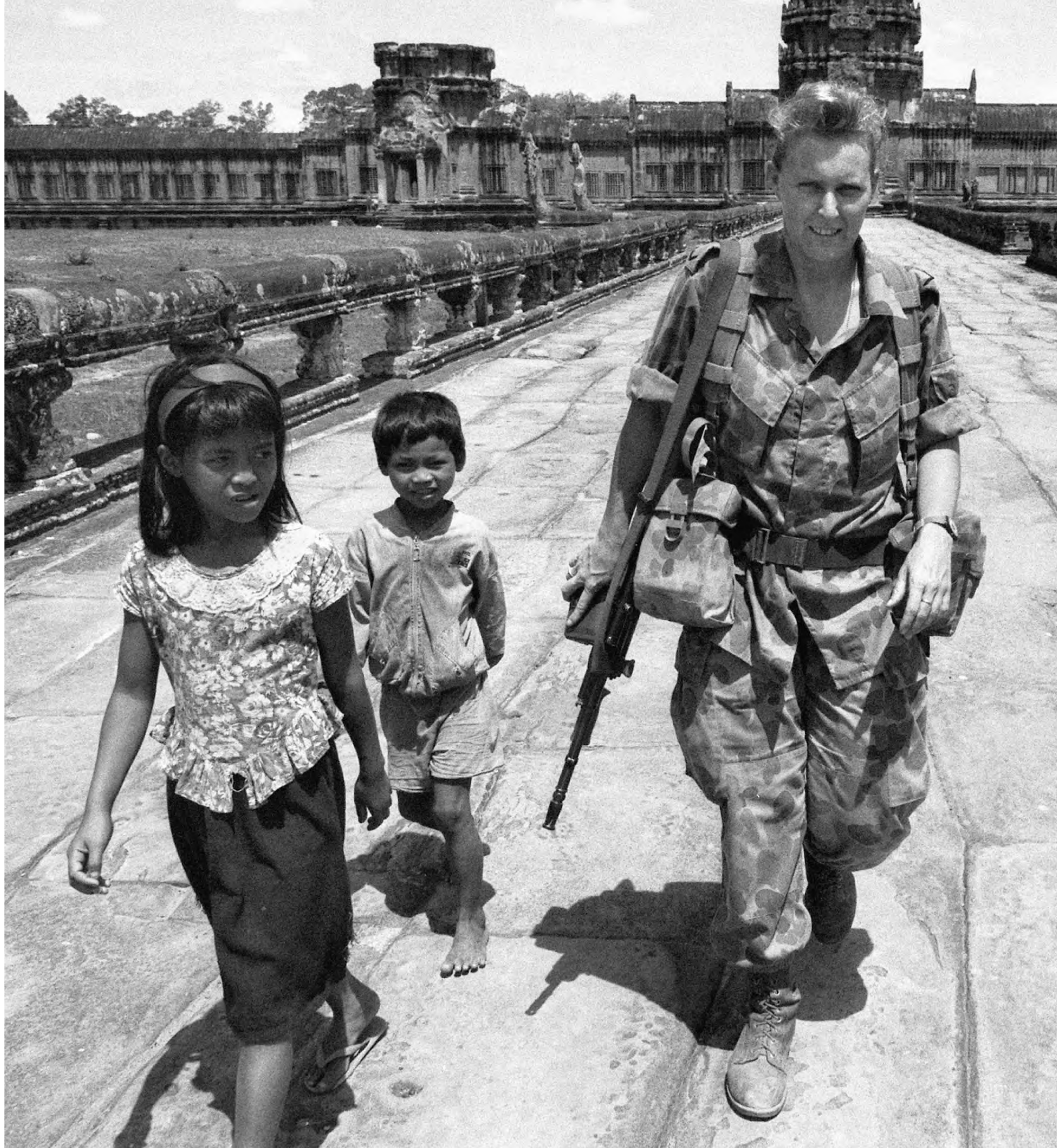
Left bottom: Wearing the blue of the United Nations, an Australian signaller pays her respects at the ANZAC memorial outside the headquarters of the Australian Force Communications Unit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 25 April 1992. (Dept of Defence CAMUN_92_005_04; photographer Wayne Ryan)

Above: Australian signallers, two of a 15,000-strong peacekeeping force in Cambodia, patrol through the market in a Cambodian village during February 1993. (AWM CAMUN/93/111/14; photographer Wayne Ryan)



Right: Peacekeepers erect razor wire outside their base in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh in May 1993. (AWM P01744.009; photographer George Gittoes)

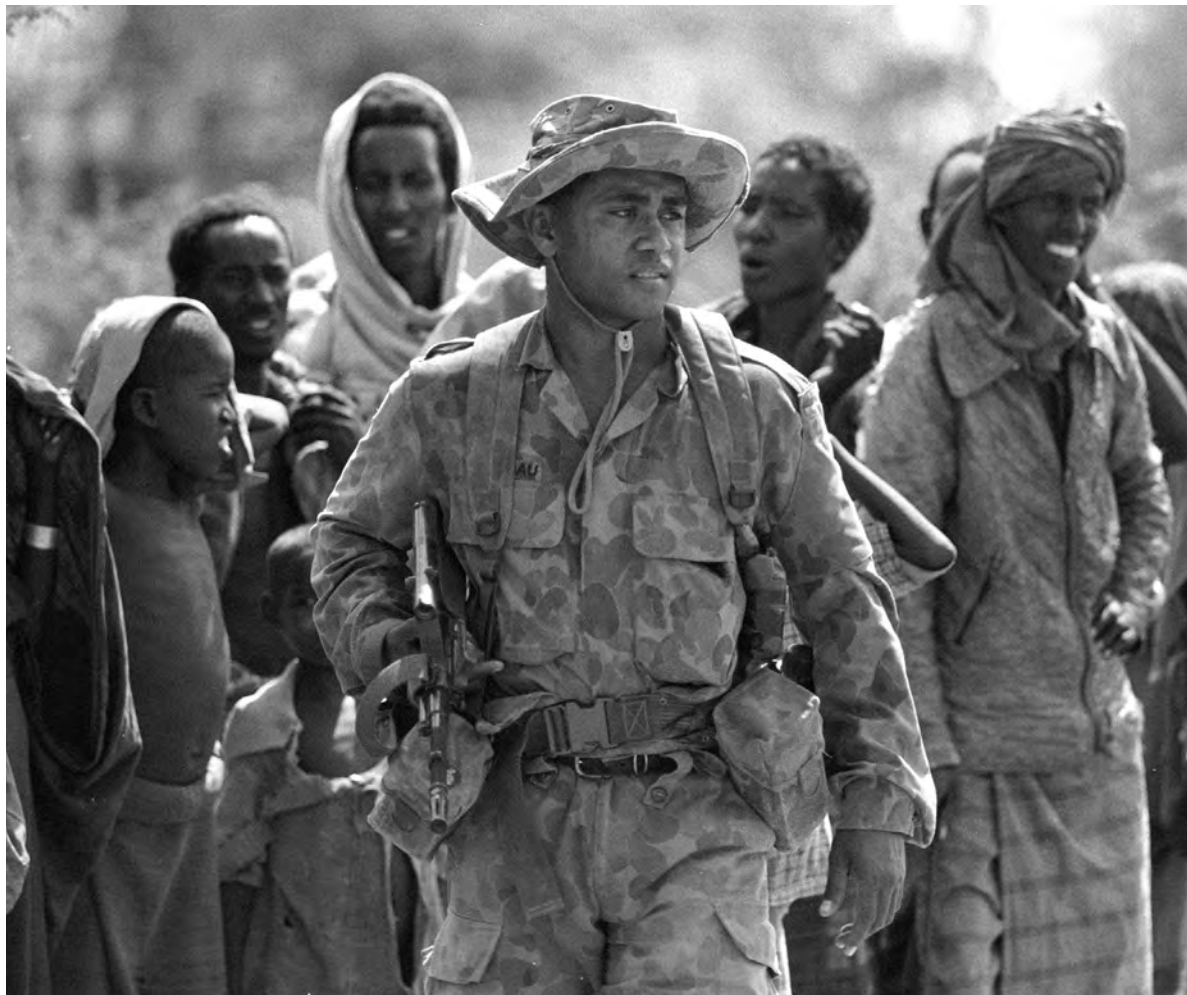
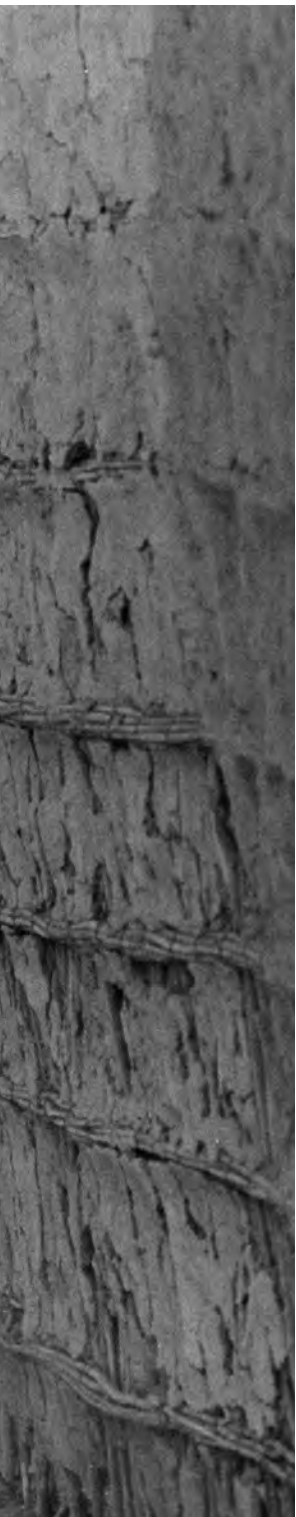






Left: An Australian soldier with Cambodian children at Angkor Wat in 1993. (AWM P01744.182; photographer George Gittoes)





Left: Australians on a foot patrol through the dusty streets of Buur Hakaba, Somalia, February 1993. (Dept of Defence MSU93_100_23; photographer Terry Dex)

Above: A weary looking Australian peacekeeper in the village of Qansaxdheere, Somalia, during a distribution of food. (Dept of Defence MSU93_091_32; photographer Terry Dex)

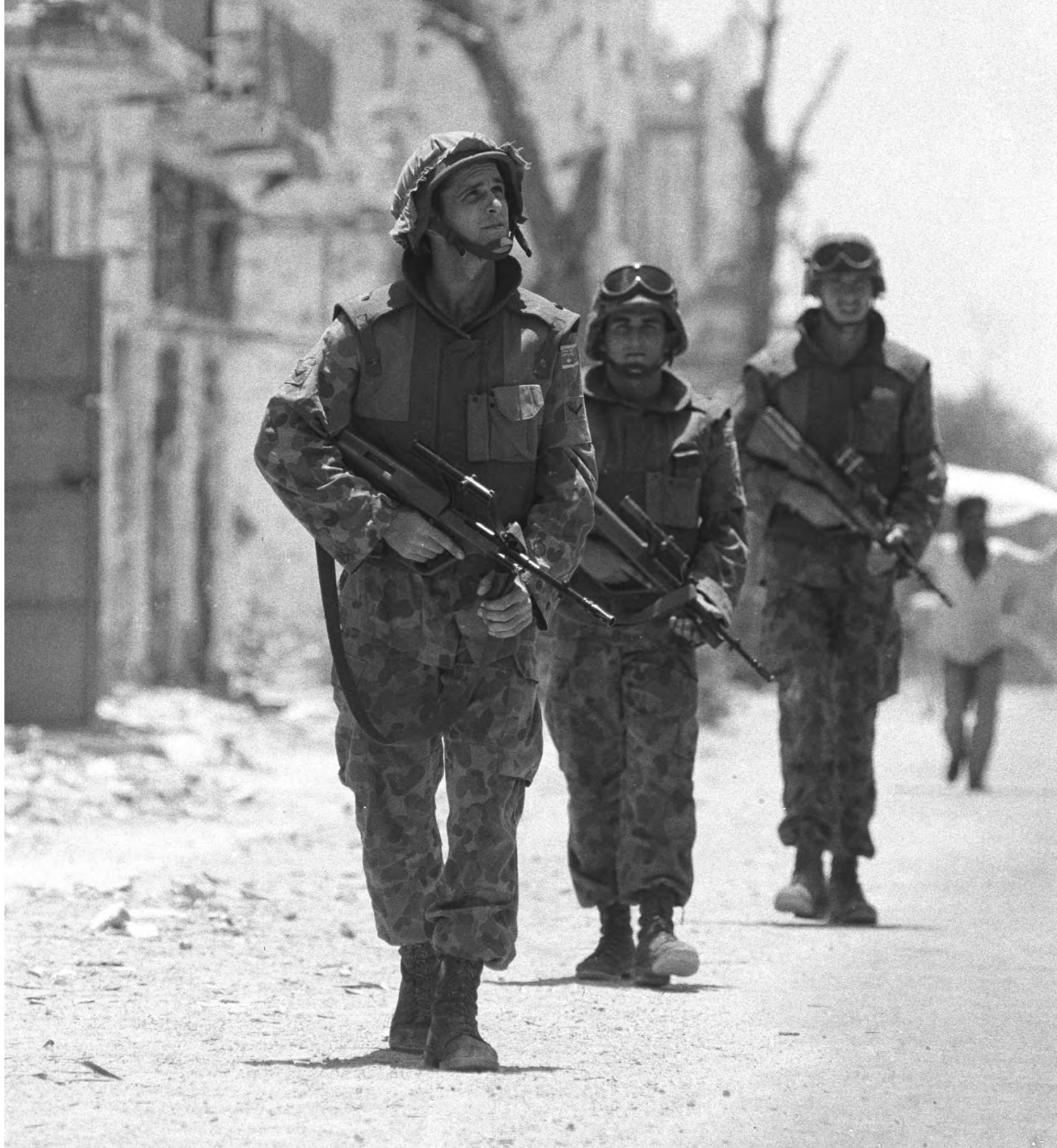




Left: A soldier of the 1st Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, assists a Somali woman at a food distribution centre in southern Somalia during Operation Solace, 1992–93. Operation Solace was the Australian main contribution to the UN Unified Task Force (UNITAF) in Somalia and Australia's largest peacekeeping commitment to that time. (AWM MSU93/0179/02; photographer Gary Ramage)

Right top: An Australian officer dispensing grain to a Somali woman during Operation Solace. Making possible the distribution of humanitarian assistance to a starving population was a key element in Australia's commitment to UNITAF. (AWM MSU93/1079/17; photographer Gary Ramage)

Right bottom: Australian peacekeepers stand amongst a crowd of civilians at a food distribution centre at Sahmandeera, Somalia, in January 1993. (Dept of Defence MSU_93_025_29; photographer Terry Dex)





Left: Members of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, patrol along a Mogadishu street in 1993. (AWM MSU/93/0191/13; photographer Gary Ramage)

Above left: An Australian flight lieutenant serving as a movement control officer with the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM 1) stands holding a Steyr rifle in Mogadishu. (AWM P01735.034, photographer George Gittoes)

Above right: The commander of Australian forces in Somalia and another officer take a moment to play with children on a Mogadishu street in March 1993. (AWM P01735.044; photographer George Gittoes)

Bottom right: Australian and United States military police search a car in Mogadishu, one gesturing to the driver to raise his hands as he gets out of the vehicle. They were serving with the United Task Force in Somalia (UNITAF). (AWM P01735.066; photographer George Gittoes)







Left top: A desperately malnourished child, a victim of war and famine in Somalia, in the arms of an Australian peacekeeper in March 1993. (Dept of Defence MSU_93_199_08; photographer Gary Ramage)

Left bottom: An Australian soldier, so much bigger than the civilians he is helping, his uniform and boots coated in dust, gives local women a hand at a Baidoa well. (Dept of Defence MSU93_147_16; photographer Gary Ramage)

Above: An Australian Military Police corporal speaks with local women in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, in March 1993. (Dept of Defence MSU_93_184_33; photographer Gary Ramage)



Above: Members of HMAS *Tobruk*'s crew man a small craft in Mogadishu harbour, with the city in the background, March 1993. (AWM P01735.127; photographer George Gittoes)

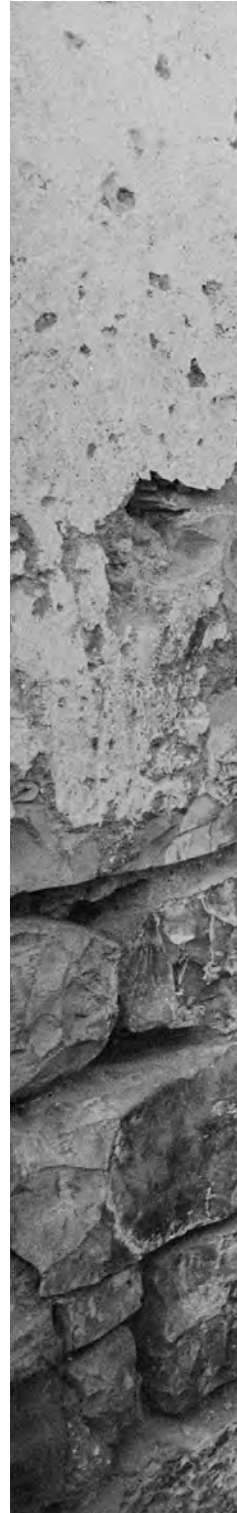
Right: HMAS *Tobruk* crewmen unload supplies at the wharf in Mogadishu while Somalis load sacks of flour and grain onto a truck for distribution to people still suffering from the famine that gripped the country in the early 1990s. (AWM P01735.106; photographer George Gittoes)



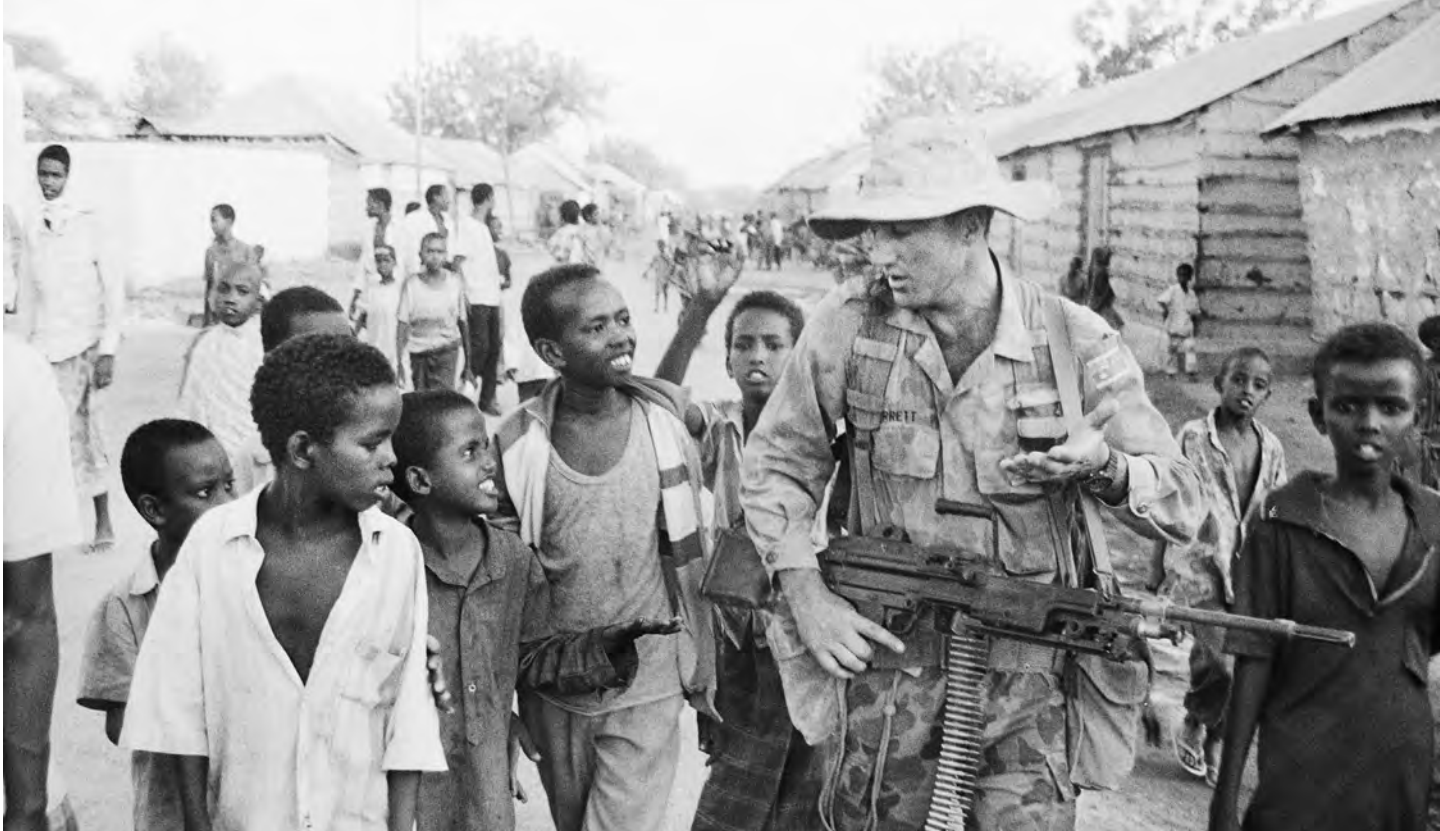


Below: One Australian records the details of confiscated weapons being inspected by two other members of his company as Somalia civilians look on. (AWM P01735.274; photographer George Gittoes)

Right: An Australian engineer with one of 3 Combat Engineer Regiment's three dogs passes a Somali man and boy as he patrols through a local village. (AWM P01735.288; photographer George Gittoes)









Left top: An Australian infantryman, flanked by Somali children, patrols through the town of Dinsor in March 1993. (AWM P01735.298; photographer George Gittoes)

Left bottom: Australian combat engineers serving with UNITAF in Somalia prepare to load unexploded ordnance onto a truck which will carry it to a dump for detonation. (P01735.314; photographer George Gittoes)

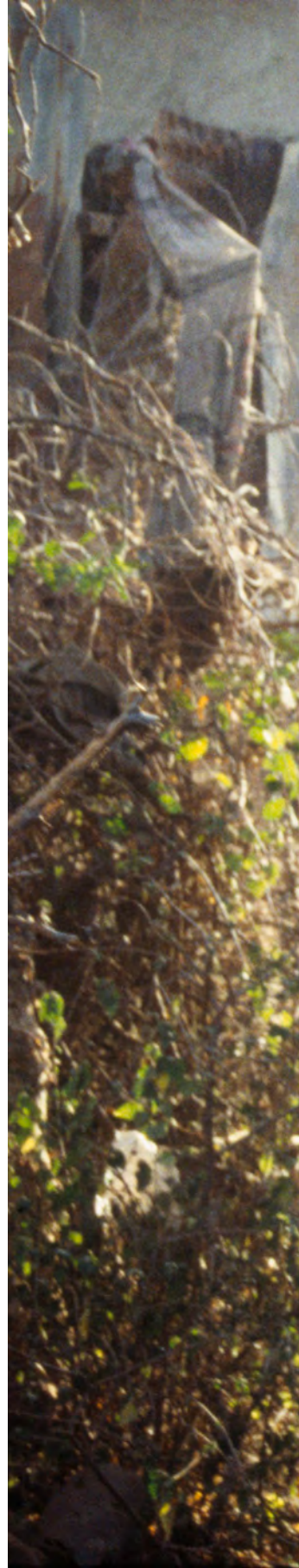
Above: An Australian soldier taking part in a foot patrol, or the person behind the camera taking his photo, attracts a group of Somali children on a Baidoa street. (AWM P01735.400; photographer George Gittoes)



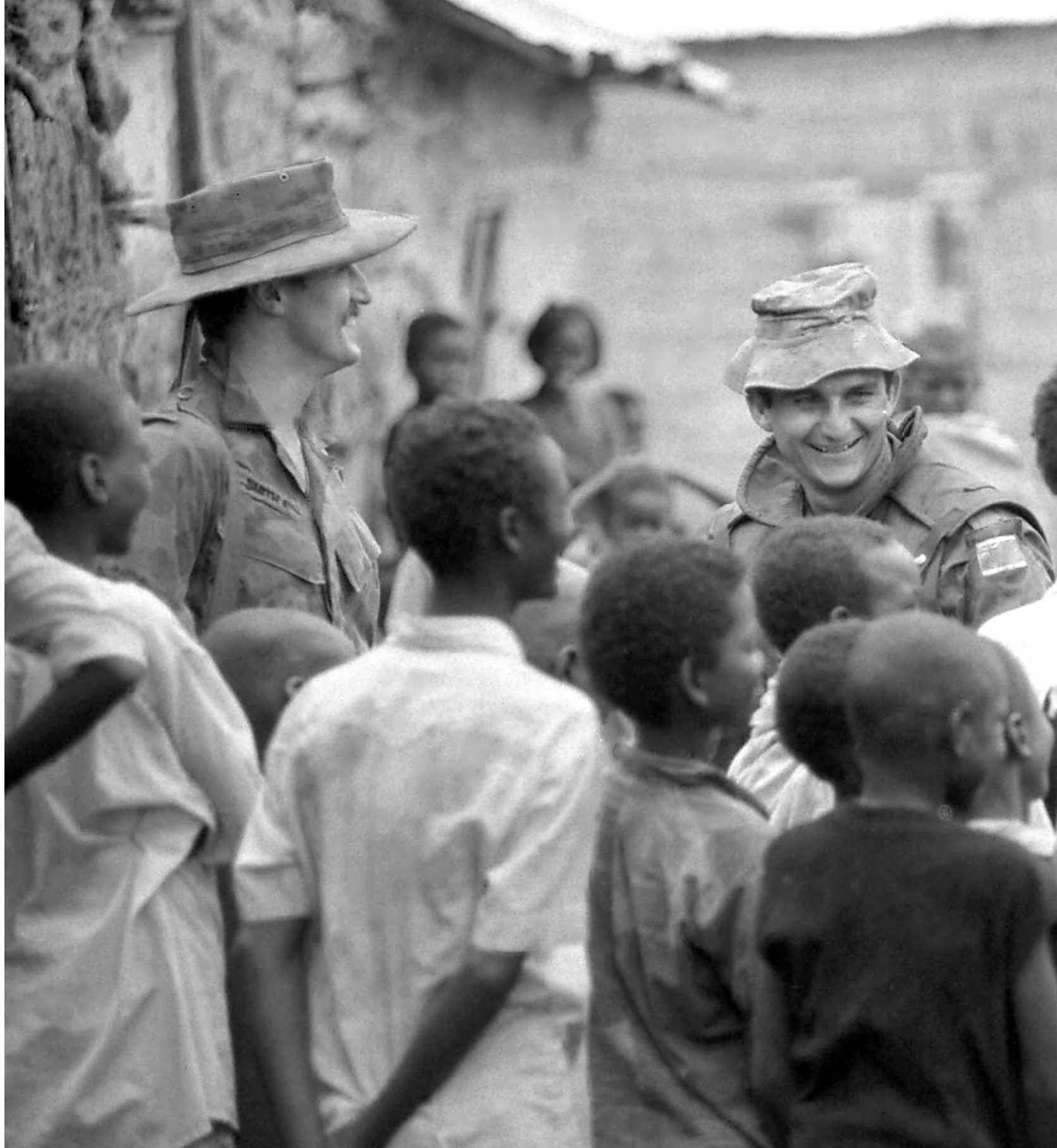
Above: Australians patrol through a Somali town in March 1993. (AWM P01735.483; photographer George Gittoes)

Right: Australian infantrymen serving with the Unified Task Force in Somalia conduct a foot patrol through a narrow lane in Baidoa. (AWM P01735.488; photographer George Gittoes)

Next spread: Australian peacekeepers in Mogadishu in November 1993. (Dept of Defence MSD933062_002; photographer Gary Ramage)















Previous spread: A crowd of Rwandan children paying far greater attention to the camera than to the Australian peacekeeper moving among them at Busoro, Rwanda, in late 1994. (AWM MSU/94/0009/27)

Top: An Australian peacekeeper serving in Rwanda during the mid-1990s. (Dept of Defence MSU9400910)

Right: Peacekeepers move through a crowded Butare market in Rwanda's south. (Dept of Defence MSU94_001_24; photographer Geoff Fox)

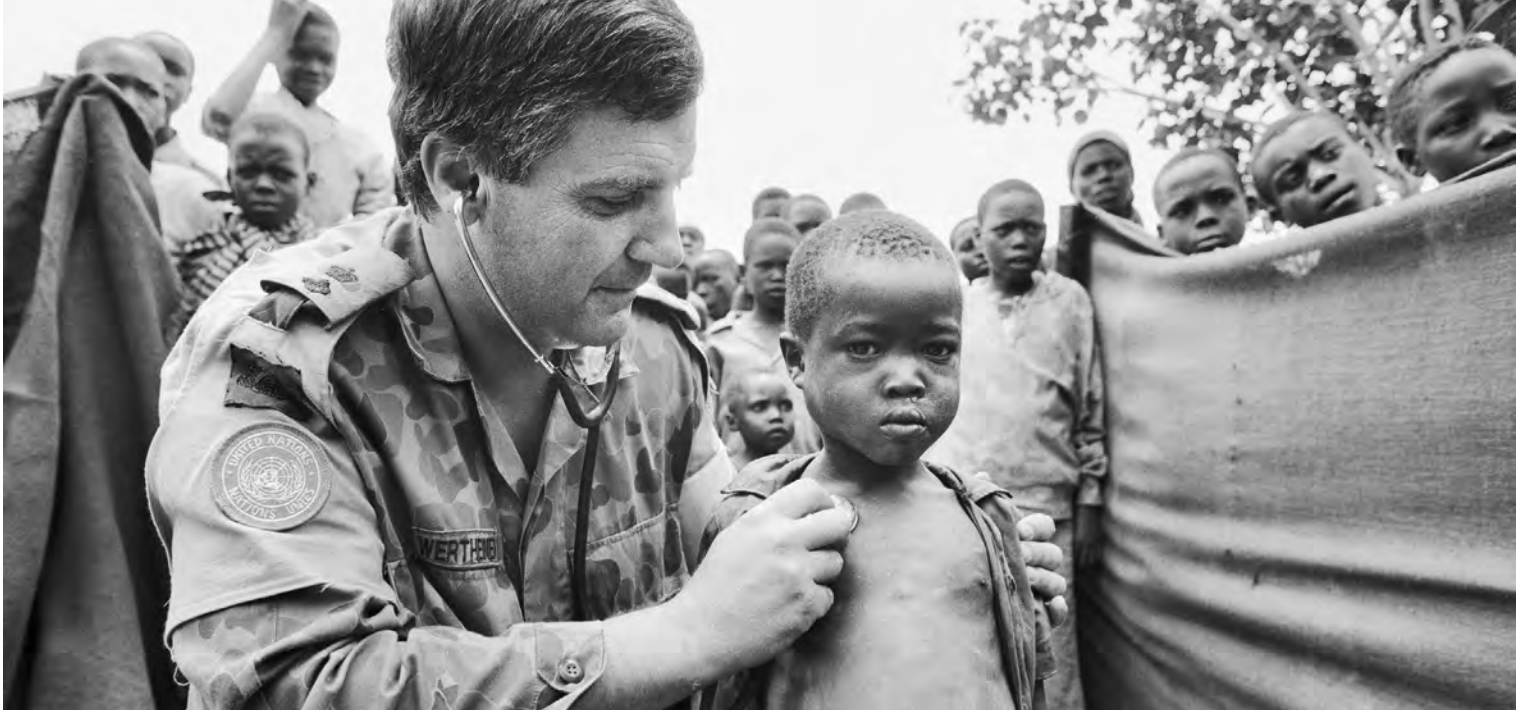


This page: An Australian medical administration officer with a young Rwandan burns patient at the Australian run wing of the Kigali Central Hospital, October 1994. Not long before, the hospital had been attacked; nurses, patients and doctors had been killed and the building looted. The first Australians to arrive had had to remove the dead, clean up blood and faeces, and remove smashed equipment and other wreckage before they could begin to treat the wounded, injured and ill. (AWM MSU/94/0042/12; photographer Geoffrey Fox)

Right top: An Australian lieutenant colonel serving with the Australian Medical Support Force in Rwanda examines a young boy in a displaced persons camp. This officer spent six weeks in Rwanda as part of a specialist surgical detachment to the Australian force, one of a number of medical specialists to deploy on these short but demanding rotations. (AWM MSU/94/0048/28; photographer Geoffrey Fox)

Right bottom: A medical officer wearing a blue UN cap and the red cross on her sleeve treats a refugee at the Kibeho displaced person's camp in Rwanda during April 1995. (Dept of Defence MSU95_078_06; photographer Robin White)









Left top: An Australian nursing officer bandages a Rwandan man's ankle while another member of the Australian Medical Support Force watches. The Australians were part of a deployment of medical personnel, with supporting elements including infantry for protection, to Rwanda, a country riven by genocidal violence in the early 1990s. The Australians were deployed to provide medical support to the UN peacekeeping force but in the event provided more care to Rwandan civilians. (AWM MSU/94/0009/03; photographer Geoffrey Fox)

Left bottom: Australian infantrymen prepare a defence amidst debris from three days of attacks by the Rwandan Patriotic Army on unarmed civilians at the Kibeho displaced persons camp. Australian and Zambian infantry were at Kibeho during the killing, risking their lives to bring in and treat wounded. (AWM P04111.005; photographer George Gittoes)

Above: Australians and a Zambian soldier, all wearing the blue helmet of the United Nations, peer from behind a sandbag barricade at Kibeho towards a crowd of refugees being fired on by soldiers of the Rwandan Patriotic Army. (AWM P04111.018; photographer George Gittoes)



Above: Four Australian soldiers carry a wounded Rwandan woman through the smoking ruins of the Kibeho refugee camp. (AWM P04111.026; photographer George Gittoes)

Right: One of Australia's infantry contingent to Kibeho watches a crowd of refugees in the camp on 21 April 1995. (Dept of Defence MSU95_078_23; photographer Robin White)





Left top: An Australian observer with Observer Group Golan, part of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), on the observation deck at a post on the Golan Heights between Israeli and Syrian territory, October 1997. Australians served in these posts with personnel from other peacekeeping nations. Though they deployed as individuals, which could make service with UNTSO a lonely experience, Australians were able to bring their families with them to the Middle East. (AWM P03530.005; photographer Peter Londey)

Left bottom: Three Australian Federal Police officers serving with the United Nations Force in Cyprus at a crossing point in Nicosia in 1997. The police are on the Greek Cypriot side of the buffer zone between the Greek and Turkish controlled areas of the island and were part of an Australian commitment to peacekeeping on Cyprus that dated to May 1964. (AWM P03530.002; photographer Peter Londey)

Below: The lead-up to the 1999 East Timorese independence referendum was characterised by widespread violence, as Indonesian backed militias sought to intimidate pro-independence supporters and disrupt the vote. In April up to 200 people were murdered in a Licquicia Catholic church. Many were buried away from the scene. Here, an international crime scene investigation team look on as the bodies of victims are exhumed. (AWM P03605.719; photographer John Immig)





Left top: Police peacekeepers and others about to load ballot boxes onto a UN helicopter at Maubisse, East Timor, in August 1999. The Australians were part of the UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), assembled to monitor and provide support for a referendum on the territory's independence from Indonesia. UNAMET personnel experienced considerable danger from violent pro-Indonesian militias determined to derail the election. (AWM P03364.016; photographer Sandra Hoffschildt)



Left bottom: Police officers from Australia, the United States and New Zealand at a Falantil camp in August 1999. Falantil were the military wing of East Timor's pro-independence Fretelin organisation; both played a key role in the lead up to the ballot. When the people of East Timor voted for independence the pro-Indonesian militia embarked on a murderous rampage. Soon after the violence began UNAMET was replaced by the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), a major peacekeeping operation involving more than twenty countries. (AWM P03393.024)

Right top: Soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, at Palmerston in the Northern Territory before embarking for East Timor on 20 September 1999. (AWM 200513; photographer Ray McJannett)

Right bottom: Soldiers load boxes of drinking water onto HMAS *Jervis Bay* before she sailed for East Timor. (AWM 200989; photographer Ray McJannett)







Left: Militia suspects are searched at an Australian checkpoint in the aftermath of the pro-independence vote in the East Timorese referendum. Pro-Indonesian militia went on a rampage of violence, arson and murder after the ballot. In response, the international community deployed a large peacekeeping force to the territory to oversee the transition to independence. (AWM P04315.003; photographer Stephen Dupont)

Right top: Australian soldiers operate a checkpoint in a Dili street; behind them are the charred remains of burnt buildings, evidence of the violent rampage that followed the 1999 referendum. (AWM P04315.017; photographer Stephen Dupont)

Right bottom: Australian infantrymen conduct a search for militia members in Dili in September 1999. The tension of the moment is clear on their faces. (AWM P04315.006; photographer Stephen Dupont)

Next spread: A militia suspect places a knife in a basket before being arrested in Dili. When they were found, militia members were sent to a temporary detention centre at the airport. (AWM P04315.036; photographer Stephen Dupont)









Left: The damage wrought upon Dili during the militia's post-referendum rampage is evident in this image of Australians soldiers patrolling shortly after their arrival in the territory. (Dept of Defence V99_319_22; photographer Darren Hilder)

Above: Eight days after the first international troops arrived in East Timor, these Australians wave farewell to Indonesian troops from the dock in Dili. (Dept of Defence V9900621; photographer Gary Ramage)





Left: A roadside works depot engulfed by flames. Thirteen bodies were found in this vicinity after the violence in Dili, but the fire destroyed any evidence linked to the killings. (Dept of Defence V9906614; photographer Gary Ramage)

Above: Smoke still rises from ruined buildings as a 2 Cav ASLAV (eight-wheeled light armoured vehicle) takes part in a cordon and search operation in Dili on 24 September 1999. (Dept of Defence V99306_01; photographer Darren Hilder)





Left: On 13 October 1999 at Suai, East Timor, Australians conduct their biggest beach landing since the Vietnam War. (Dept of Defence V99_100_21; photographer William Guthrie)

Below: Australians on the beach at Suai, 13 October 1999. They have just landed and are about to move into the town to establish INTERFET's southern command headquarters. (Dept of Defence V9910029)







Left: During the opening weeks of operations in East Timor, an Australian member of the RAAF's Air Load Team directs an aircraft around the flight line at Komoro Airport near Dili. At this time more than 30 flights were arriving in Dili each day, making this a very busy airport. (V9918214; photographer W Guthrie)

Above: In the opening weeks on East Timor INTERFET deployed across the territory to end the violence that followed a vote for independence. Here Australian soldiers land in Balibo on Operation Lavarack in October 1999. (Dept of Defence v9902130)

Top: A RAAF nurse and flight lieutenant after treating children while on a foot patrol of Suai. This officer was also serving as the INTERFET Air Medical Evacuation Coordinator in Suai, but that proved to be just one of her many tasks while serving with INTERFET. (Dept of Defence V9920104; photographer Gary Ramage)

Bottom: Filmed by a cameraman as Australian Military Police and Canadian police officers try to control the crowd, Australian soldiers arrest a local man outside the Dili gymnasium and basketball stadium in January 2000. A riot broke out when thousands of East Timorese came to register for 700 United Nations jobs and, after waiting in the heat of a small square outside the stadium, were told that only those with computer skills and who could speak good English and Portuguese could be considered. (AWM P03605.231; photographer John Immig)

Right: An Australian Army Black Hawk helicopter from the Fifth Aviation Regiment delivers supplies to troops in the field outside Oecussi, an East Timorese enclave in West Timor, during February 2000. (Dept of Defence V00_051_20; photographer Patrina Malone)







Above: An Australian peacekeeper with a colleague from Vanuatu, both members of the multinational Peace Monitoring Group, treats a child's machete injury on Bougainville, April 2000. (AWM P03518.002; photographer Poppy Wenham)

Right: Lance Corporal Poppy Wenham lies down to conduct radio checks while local children crowd around. Wenham was serving with the Multinational Peace Monitoring Group on Bougainville in April 2000. (AWM P03518-004)









Left: Two Australian members of the Peace Monitoring Group perform a dental operation in the village of Atamo on Bougainville in May 2000. (AWM P03518.030; photographer Poppy Wenham)

Next spread: More than a year after the independence referendum, militia still posed a threat. Here, men of the 4th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, prepare to go out on a night patrol in the hills outside Balibo on the eve of Anzac Day 2001. (Dept of Defence Timor2; photographer Gary Ramage)









Left: A mortar crew of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, fire an illumination mission on the East–West Timor border in support of patrols sent out by each of the battalion's four rifle companies. In one of several 'firsts' for peacekeeping operations in East Timor, this mission was the first time mortars were fired in support of the battalion since Vietnam. (Dept of Defence V0125806; photographer W Guthrie)

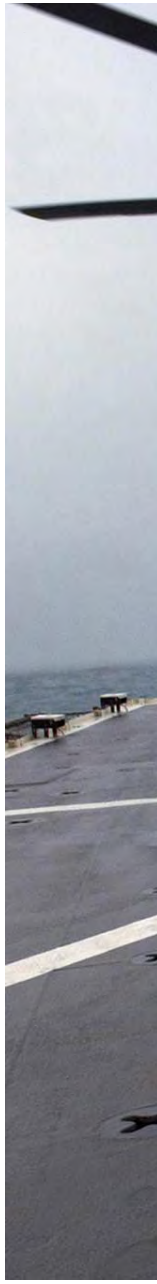
Above: On a Second World War battlefield, Australian peacekeepers come ashore from HMAS *Manoora* moored in Iron Bottom Sound, named for the large number of ships sunk in this body of water during the battle for Guadalcanal. They are landing at Red Beach, the site of United States amphibious landings in 1942 and now the location of landings on the first day of Australia's peacekeeping operations in the Solomon Islands. (AWM P04580.030; photographer Ben Bohane)





Left: In June 2003, two Australians serving with the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) look out from their vantage point in the Suai Cathedral. They were part of a team sent to prepare for the Australian Army Aviation detachment's departure from Timor after nearly four years of service. (Dept of Defence JPAU28JUN03SB005; photographer Sean Burton)

Right: Chief of the Australian Defence Force, Admiral Chris Barrie, speaks with members of the Australian Army Training Team, East Timor, in March 2001. The Australians were serving as part of the UN Transitional Administration East Timor (UNTAET) and received Barrie when he was visiting the border area between East and West Timor. (Dept of Defence V0102204_3; photographer Gary Ramage)





Left: A Sea King helicopter lifts an army Land Rover over impassable terrain in the Solomon Islands. (Dept of Defence JPAU04AUG03SBO1044a)

Above: The Flight Deck Controller on HMAS *Manoora* guides a Sea King helicopter in during Operation Helpem Fren, a military, police and civilian mission conducted as part of RAMSI. (Dept of Defence RAN8083167_030804_008a; photographer David Connolly)

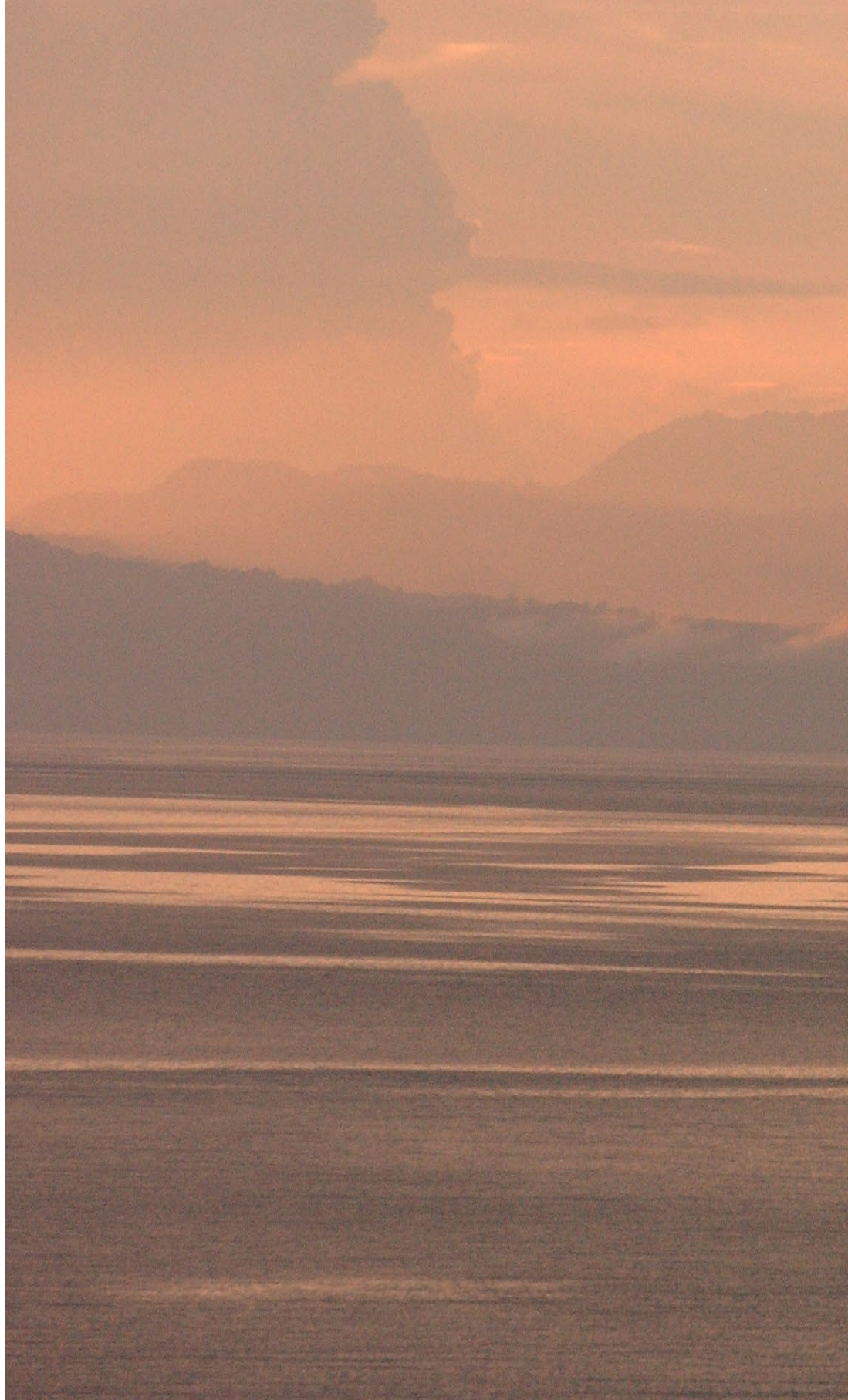




Left: Military photographer Warrant Officer Class 2 Gary Ramage photographs children waiting to enter the Lawson Tama Stadium in Honoria for a concert organised by the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) to celebrate the operations' one hundredth day. (AWM P04223.220; photographer Stephen Dupont)

Right: HMAS *Manoora* departs the Solomon Islands after her time as command ship for RAMSI's maritime element in October 2003. By then RAMSI had largely succeeded in restoring peace after a civil war between ethnic groups, in a demonstration of how effective regional cooperation could be in solving local conflict. (Dept of Defence JPAU28OCT03GR074; November 2003)

Next spread: An Australian looks out of an Iroquois helicopter as it flies along the southern coastline of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, November 2003. In the absence of road links to the area from the Solomons' capital access by members of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, personnel to this part of the country could only be gained by air or sea. (AWM P04223.811; photographer Stephen Dupont)









Below: Australian soldiers serving with the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands on board an Iroquois helicopter at Kolina on the island of Guadalcanal, November 2003. (AWM P04225.414; photographer Stephen Dupont)

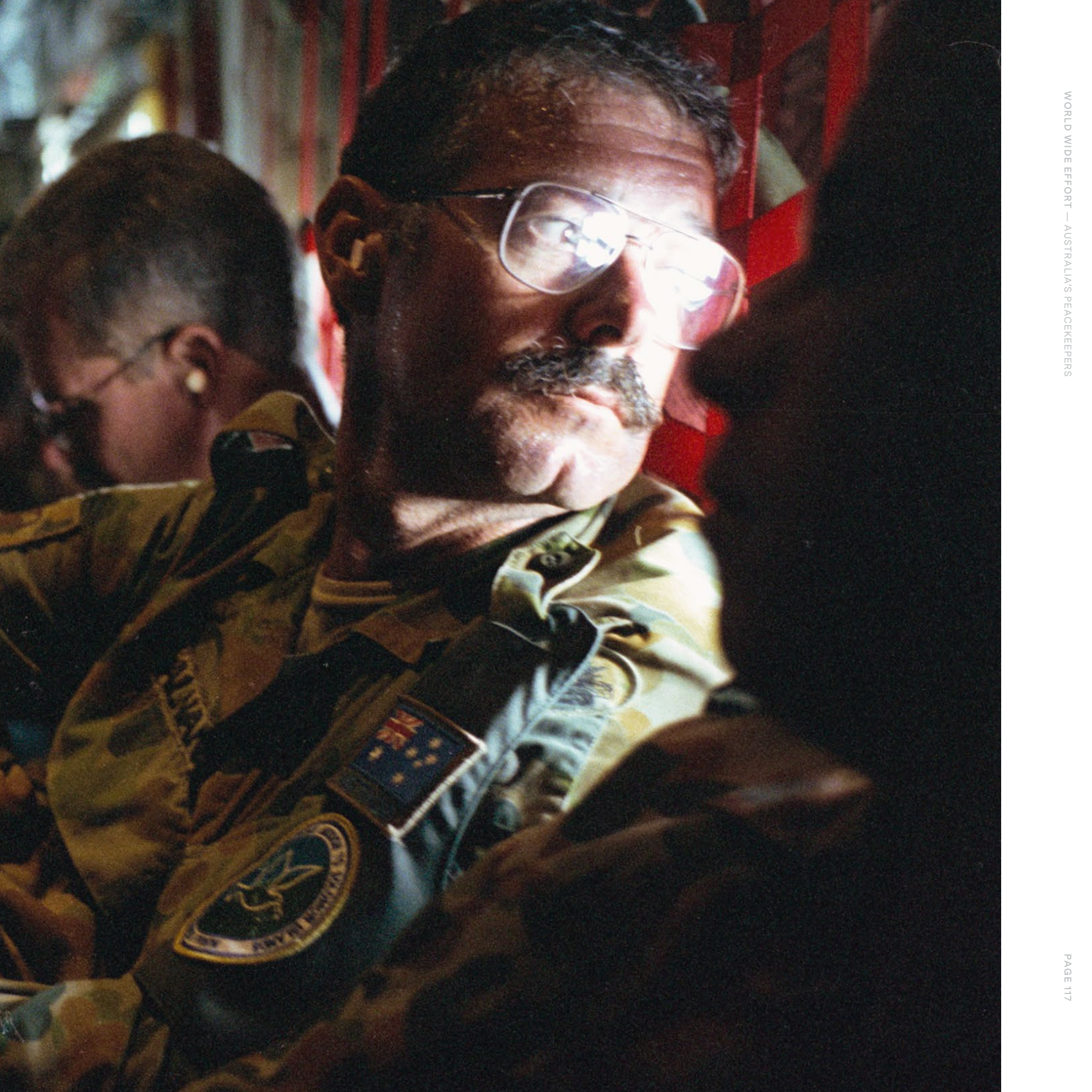
Right: A simulated casualty being moved by Australian medical personnel on the day that the First Aid Health Facility was opened at Camp RAMSI, November 2003. Located at a former Guadalcanal resort, Camp RAMSI was the main operational base for the police and military forces of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). (AWM P04225.517; photographer Stephen Dupont)

Next spread: Crowded into a Hercules transport aircraft, Australian soldiers make what must have been a much-anticipated flight to Australia from the Solomon Islands capital, Honiara, at the end of their deployment with the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, November 2003. (AWM P04225.747; photographer Stephen Dupont)







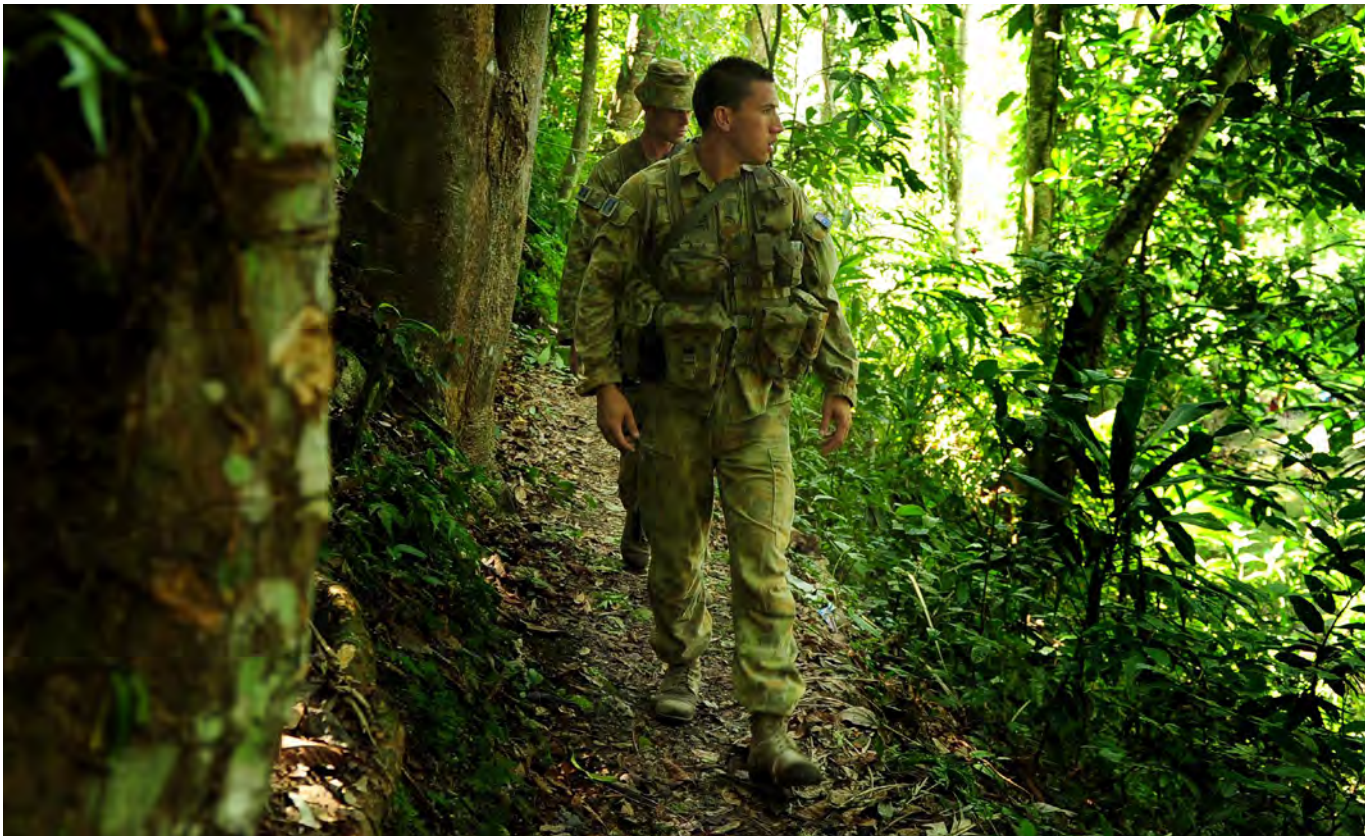




Above: An Australian medic, a reservist serving with the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), treats a child during a medical clinic at a remote village, one of many set up by peacekeepers to treat people in isolated jungle areas, July 2009. (Dept of Defence 20090703adf8208022_054)

Right top: A corporal receives the Australian Service Medal for his four month's service in the Solomon Islands with RAMSI from the lieutenant colonel commanding Combined Task Force 635, July 2011. (Dept of Defence 20110723ADF8528037_006; photographer N Stamatis)

Right bottom: Two Australians follow a track from an observation post on a routine patrol around the perimeter of a correctional centre in the Solomon Islands, July 2010. The post, set above the correctional centre, provided support to the Correctional Service of the Solomon Islands and is part of Australia's contribution to RAMSI. (Dept of Defence 20100721adf8114832_141; photographer Jo Dilorenzo)





Above: RAAF pilots fly their Globemaster transport aircraft into the sunset en route to Italy to pick up a load of UN humanitarian supplies for displaced person camps in South Sudan as part of Operation ASLAN in January 2014. (Dept of Defence 20140111adf817807_005; photographer W Guthrie)

Right: With a well-worn UN flag flapping in the wind, an Australian observer looks out from an observation post while assigned to Observer Group Lebanon in 2016. This officer is serving with UNTSO as part of Australia's Operation Paladin. Established in 1948, UNTSO is the oldest ongoing United Nations peacekeeping operation. (Dept of Defence 20160311adf8XXXX_001)







Left: Traditionally the preserve of those who have fought in wars and conflicts, Anzac Day is now also a day to honour veterans of peacekeeping operations. This man received a very warm greeting from a group of children at an Anzac Day march in Canberra. (Dept of Defence 20060425cpa74181_030)

Above: Members of Operation ASLAN deployed as part of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) commemorated the 101st Anniversary of Anzac Day at Australia House in Juba in 2016. The ADF has contributed personnel to UNMISS since 2011, to assist the UN to protect the people of the Republic of South Sudan by monitoring human rights and delivering humanitarian aid. (Dept of Defence 20160425adf000000_007)

ENDNOTES

- 1 P. Londey, *Wartime, No. 1, November 1997*, p. 55
- 2 P. Londey, *Other People's Wars: A History of Australian Peacekeeping*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2004, p. xxi.
- 3 P. Londey, *Other People's Wars*, p. xx.
- 4 Paul Copeland, oral history interview, AWM F08104.
- 5 T. Pickard, *Combat Medic: An Australian's Eyewitness Account of the Kibeho Massacre*, Big Sky Publishing, Brisbane, 2008, p. 21.
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Australian peacekeepers have served on many more deployments than the wars in which Australia has been a belligerent. Over the decades since the end of the Vietnam War in particular, peacekeeping has been an important, indeed sometimes the primary, concern of Australia's defence forces. Yet, few Australians are aware of the extent of our country's peacekeeping efforts, nor of the proud record that Australian peacekeepers have established. If people think of veterans, it is more likely than not that they have in mind those who have served in wartime. But tens of thousands of Australians have embarked on overseas service to play a part in ending conflict and helping create the conditions for peace. Just as we honour those who have served our country in wartime, we must also honour those who have, to borrow one historian's phrase, served our country as neutrals in the midst of 'other people's wars'.

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