

Veterans Voice

Northern Suburbs Veterans
Support Centre Inc.

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ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST

They say that 24 hrs is a long time in Politics and never a truer word was spoken.

It has been less than a 100 days since Malcolm Turnbull became our new Prime Minister and we are already on to our 2nd Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

On 13 February 2016 it was announced that Mr Tehan would be appointed the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Minister for Defence Materiel, and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC following a rearrangement in the Turnbull Ministry. Quite a handful for a Minister that has never donned a uniform and who undoubtedly has little knowledge of what our service men and women go through on a day to day basis.

So who is our new Minister for Veterans' Affairs? The truth is up until now no one has probably even heard of him so here is a short intro.



Daniel Thomas "Dan" Tehan born 27 January 1968 is an Australian politician. He is the member for the electorate of Wannon in the

Australian House of Representatives, elected in the 2010 election for the Liberal Party.

He studied at the University of Melbourne completing a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Political Science. He has also gained master's degrees in International Relations and Foreign Affairs & Trade from the University of Kent and Monash University respectively.

As it appears, Mr Tehan's career has always involved achieving outcomes for rural and regional communities, not much connection to the Military though.

On his appointment Mr Tehan said:

It is a great honour to be appointed Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Materiel by the Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP.

I am humbled by this appointment, but excited to be asked to serve in Prime Minister Turnbull's Ministry.

As Minister for Veterans' Affairs, it is vital that we never forget the service and sacrifice of the men and women who served our country.

As Minister for Defence Materiel, I look forward to assisting the Minister for Defence in overseeing defence procurement, project and sustainment management, materiel engineering and logistics.

Does Mr Tehan have a Military background? The answer is no but does that mean he will be an ineffective Minister for Veterans' Affairs? Only time will tell.

As Veterans we need a strong Minister who will protect the rights of those that have gone before and those that will follow and hopefully Mr Tehan will do the right thing by the Veteran Community!

If, as a Veteran, you have an issue with the Department of Veterans' Affairs it is highly recommended that you contact the Minister direct to vent your anger at the delays experienced at the hands of Delegates within DVA.

Mr Tehan can be contacted at the following address:

Federal Member for Wannon

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Hamilton VIC 3300

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**ROYAL COMMISSION INTO
THE DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS' AFFAIRS**



For some time now those involved with the Department as either Pension Officers or Advocates have become increasingly frustrated with the Decisions made by Delegates as well as the delays and obstacles that the Department has placed in front of Veterans seeking compensation for injuries received during their operational and/or peacekeeping service.

Practitioners across the country have assisted 1000's of clients with welfare, pensions and advocacy services on a shoestring budget which makes their dedication all the more impressive. The Department has been reducing this budget every year in the hope that ESO's will either close down or cease to carry out this much required work. The RSL here in Perth has recently called for Expressions of Interest from ESO's to carry on its Pensions work and it appears that a decision has been made to channel this away from Perth to the Sub Branches..

Despite numerous letters the Minister and Departmental Heads nothing seems to be improving within DVA. Some of the issues raised have been;

- The discrimination that exists between the 3 legislations; the offsetting provisions under all 3 legislations and ComSuper;
- the fact that the department triple dips to stop veterans under 2 or 3 legislations perceivably double dipping;
- the department has failed to acceptably reduce claims processing times;
- the fact that DVA now process different areas of veterans claims in different states and only one paper file exists meaning that a veteran could have a liability claim in Melbourne, a Permanente Impairment claim in Brisbane, a VRB in Sydney and a Rehabilitation delegate in Townsville and live in Melbourne;
- one in 3 MRCA, SRCA (Incapacity payments) and ISS clients in some way incur a debt to the Commonwealth by way of overpayment or departmental error many of

these debts are in excess of \$50,000; and

- the Repatriation Health System is now being exposed because the DVA have linked it to Medicare and many Specialists are opting out because of the bureaucratic nightmare of paper work and slow (below AMA rates) remuneration;
- the numerous veiled threats by Delegates to Claimants that if they do not attend Medical Appointments at DVA selected medico practitioners then all entitlements will cease;
- the overturning of eminent medical practitioners such as psychiatrists by Delegates in favour of medico legal reports that have been compiled after only a 30 or 45-minute consultation with the Claimant; and
- reliance on reports from medico legal practitioners that have been proven to be false, misleading and containing information that is not particular to the Claimant, in other words relates to another person all together!

These issues affecting our Veteran and Defence Force family have been largely ignored, waved off by some pathetic excuse and the promise that it will not happen again, buried in bureaucratic incompetence and a myriad of other excuses that if used by the private sector would result in criminal charges being laid.

To say that there is inconsistency in decision making between Delegates within DVA would be an understatement which points to the lack of decisive leadership within the Department.

As a Pension and Advocacy Service this organization has been stunned by some of the

questions asked and comments made by Delegates who have no or very little knowledge of what it is like in the Military. Some of these have been:

- "Whilst on operational deployment what hours did the claimant work?"
- "Just because a soldier has contact with the enemy this doesn't mean that he has PTSD. I have contact with people I don't like and I don't have PTSD."
- "I am sorry that the Veteran is unable to work and carry out normal household chores around the home but unfortunately the VEA does not extend to gardening services any more. Perhaps the Veteran should buy a goat to keep the lawn trimmed."
- "Why can't the Veterans 6-year-old son mow the lawn and whipper snip the weeds?"

The behaviour of DVA over the last 12 months can be likened to an Insurance Company. That is it is committed to protecting the company's (read Government) bottom line at all costs. As an example, this organization was informed by a former Delegate that another Delegate walked into a lunch room and shouted at the top of his voice that he had saved the Department over \$400,000.00 by rejecting a claim on a minor technicality that could have been sorted by a simple telephone call in favour of the Veteran. Instead it went to the VRB and was overturned there.

Politicians, Departmental Heads and senior Public Servants often roll out the old adage of: ***"we owe our veterans a debt of gratitude and that the role of the Military is unique etc."*** particularly election time or responding to questions on Veterans matters but nothing ever changes.

In actual fact DVA direction is driven by the number of claimants that die.

Since 1999 46 Soldiers have died in combat and yet over 240 have committed suicide because they could not get the support that they needed from DVA, the Department that has a duty of care to look after those Veterans.

The Government (and this means DVA) are intent on reducing the avenues open to ESO's to represent legislative issues to the Department at the highest levels by disbanding many of the forums and working parties focused solely on legislation such as the:

- Operational Working Party;
- Emerging Issues; and
- Mental Health.

These forums were supposed to be open and accountable forums whereby ESO's could have a voice but unfortunately the Repatriation Commissioner saw this as an opportunity to control these forums and stifle any negative comments. They are now considered by the majority of ESO's as Departmental Propaganda Sessions with little or no constructive outcomes being achieved.

A clear example of this inability is the recent schedule 2 amendments to the MRCA "Single Pathway" blocked twice in Senate due to the fact that the DVA do not see the necessity to engage with the ESO's who oppose this measure and gain some understanding as to why it is being opposed.

The matter was the subject of a Senate Enquiry in which the RSL seriously dented its already damaged credibility and ADSO bumbled around with no understanding of the issues at

hand, both supporting the amendment which was again voted down in the senate.

If the DVA and the Minister had asked they would have been properly briefed as to why the legislative amendment would not be supported and part of that is clearly outlined in section 18 of the Capability Audit as well as a historical distrust of the DVA stemming from the SRCA White Card debacle where all the ESO's agreed to the implantation of a white card for SRCA clients. However, DVA took this a step further removing the "above the scheduled fee treatment" without consultation thus further alienating an already discriminated against group of veterans, those being solely dependent on the SRCA for benefits.

The SRCA nightmare does not finish there, as the APS who are also covered by the SRCA still enjoy above the scheduled fee treatment and Comcare KPI's maintain a 30-day turn around period for claims (while DVA state that 180 days is acceptable for veterans).

Remembering those who have only SRCA service are currently not eligible for a Gold Card and need to lodge sequella claims for deterioration or complication of accepted conditions to be eligible for treatment which would be readily available to MRCA or VEA clients through the Gold Card.

This ties up delegates and compounds the ever increasing claims processing time frames. It also has an adverse effect on the health and wellbeing of the client and in a number of cases the current health problems of the veteran have solely been attributed to delays in treatment

due to the adversarial and belligerent actions of the DVA.

DVA Staff are constantly complaining about caseloads (not individual Veterans), have little understanding or respect for the nature of military service, don't actually understand the legislations, how and what effect their decisions may have on the veteran and lastly that Beneficial Provisions apply under all legislations. Sadly, this is compounded by Defence's inability to keep adequate records or their unwillingness to promptly supply answers or documentation to questions posed by DVA in regard to alleged incidents.

It is actually amazing how much information Defence have when issued with a subpoena from the AAT or Federal Court so why was this not able to be provided in the first place?

DVA have spent tens of millions of tax payer dollars on reports, studies and research into a myriad of veterans issues including the Gulf War Veterans' Health Study, the Timor Leste Families Mental Health Study, Children of Vietnam Veterans' Health Study, The Dunt and Clarke Reviews to name just a few and little or none of the recommendations have been properly implemented (that is if DVA actually asked for recommendations in the case of the Timor study DVA specifically requested no recommendations).

DVA rewrote the Gulf War Veterans' Health Study prior to releasing it and when the unedited version was requested under FOI both DVA and the author Monash University refused to release the unedited document raising suspicion over the original content. The Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA) added a new

Statement of Principle (SOP) based on the findings of this study and other independent peer reviewed medical research. The DVA by way of another senior staffer Shane Carmody has been pressuring the RMA to revoke this SOP, the question that needs to be asked is Why?

This leads us to ask about the accountability of the DVA to the taxpayer.

DVA spend billions on outsourced assistance from Contract Staff, Rehabilitation Providers, Medico-Legal, Military Historical Reports, Occupational Therapists, Legal Advice, Legal Representation and many others that ESO's are not aware of. Experience Medico-legal, Rehabilitation Providers, Military Historical Reports and Contract Staff are simply a waste of money and in 50% of cases have been either non-existent, factually flawed and do not withstand review, producing invoices for services that have not been provided and in some cases damaged the veteran far more than the original stressor or injury, all of this coming at a considerable emotional cost to the veteran and significant financial cost the tax payer. Almost all of the cases involving the above mentioned services are overturned at review, also coming at a considerable cost to both the veteran and the taxpayer. Again this comes down to poor leadership and a complete lack of oversight for DVA's contracted entities.

The DVA went to extraordinary lengths to cover up a serious criminal matter (forgery of a DSD letter) by one of its contractors by engaging a Law firm Clayton Utz to clean up their mess, just like they did for British American Tobacco. The Sydney Morning Herald April 24th 2009 stated;

"Further, he found that the company's law firm, Clayton Utz, was the principal architect of the advice to destroy the documents and that this was done under the guise of a "document retention policy". Damages of \$700,000 were assessed."

All that can be said is that you get what you pay for and this is what DVA consider accountability.

Furthermore, DVA claim that they do not have a "duty of care"; now that is a phrase that DVA love to throw around under MRCA and SRCA and is part of the reason DVA say that they push veterans during the rehabilitation process toward vocational rehabilitation as they have a ***"duty of care"*** to ensure the veteran has every chance of returning to the work force ***"we just don't want to throw them on the scrap heap and have them sitting on a pension"***. Sadly, duty of care is a disposable commodity and is only relevant when it can save DVA money.

Any logical person would think that DVA, after being aware of all the problems raised above would commit to being consultative and start addressing the serious flaws in both the legislation and service delivery but unfortunately not, DVA has become paranoid and now monitors veterans and client's social media under the guise of an employer as MRCA and SRCA incapacity payments are considered wages and are generated through the Defence pay system.

Not surprisingly the Privacy Commissioner did not see it that way when an overzealous review delegate started stalking a veteran on social media and even used extracts (out of context) from her FB posts to reject one of her

claims. DVA have fallen foul of the privacy commissioner a significant number of times in the last few years for their unethical behavior.

Under the VEA Veterans are very well looked after comparatively to those under MRCA and SRCA (which does not have a TPI, it ceases at 65 with no Gold Card).

The DVA have failed to fairly administer 3 separate legislations none of which are mutually co-operative and many veterans now fall under 2 if not 3 legislations and these long serving members are the most legislatively discriminated against of all.

So as you can see these comments represents one year or a little more of consistent failures by the DVA, the previous year was the same, as was the year before that for about the last 10 years with no improvement and reduced staff levels the DVA has reached critical mass and is not capable of fixing itself the only option is a Royal Commission.

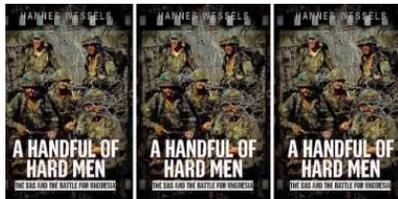
ESO's have talked, consulted with, lobbied, workshopped, forumed, conferenced, committed and even begged for the last 10 years for changes to improve the lot of Veterans and we have achieved nothing but a broken department and a process that is driving veterans to take their own lives.

So there is no more talk, now is the time for a Royal Commission and we ask that all Veterans support this request by contacting your own Federal Member and demand that this occur.

So please support a Royal Commission into DVA that can look independently at all aspects of the Department and the legislations it administers as it only took 4 deaths to get a Royal Commission into Pink Bats Scandal but we now have over

250 veterans' suicides so this must count for something.

**BOOK REVIEW –
“FORGOTTEN WAR: THE SAS
AND THE BATTLE FOR
RHODESIA”**



In his most recent book,

'A Handful of Hard Men: The SAS and the Battle for Rhodesia';

Hannes Wessels recounts the engaging history of an elite force of fighting men waging war on behalf of a seemingly---doomed cause.

The history of the Special Air Service (SAS) provides Wessels an opportunity to provide a human face to what many Americans and Europeans ignored at the time as a struggle for a distant corner of the globe.

The battle for Rhodesia and for South Africa was inextricable from the larger context of the struggle between the Soviet bloc and the West.

While the Marxists never forgot the larger context for each regional conflict, the United States and its European allies made a regular practice of abandoning their friends and betraying their allies in Asia and Africa.

As Wessels explains, the battle for southern Africa was a crucial aspect of the overall conflict: The proxy war for the world was on and southern Africa, particularly South Africa, possessing enormous mineral and strategic value, was firmly in Sino-Soviet sights. But a primary obstacle

was Rhodesia, so it should come as no surprise that Moscow and Beijing supported the 'liberation' movements energetically and generously.

It was into this vortex that the Rhodesian soldier was thrown and so it begs the question: what if they had chosen not to fight and capitulated in the mid-1960s as the world demanded they do? Stalinist-type rule would almost certainly have followed and powerful direct economic, political and military

pressure would have immediately been applied to South Africa.

Just how this would have affected world history is impossible

to deduce but the ramifications would have been enormous. Simply put, this did not happen because the Rhodesians chose to fight and this is the story of some of the stalwarts of that struggle.

While the political classes in Western Europe and the United States regularly assented to, and often supported, "wars for liberation" throughout the Third World (especially if the rebels were "agrarian reformers" AKA Marxists), from the moment Rhodesia declared independence in November 1965, the fury of the United Kingdom and the United States was unleashed; in Wessels' words: To the best of my knowledge, history offers no record of a nation more isolated, ostracized and bereft of allies and no soldiers who fought against greater odds with fewer men or resources as paltry, than those of what was known as Rhodesia.

Nor does history tell us of any polity that developed as fast: from tribal primitivism to First World civility and sophistication in sixty years, only to be destroyed with even greater rapidity in little more than two decades.

The Rhodesian government contended with Marxist rebels infiltrating from neighboring Mozambique and Zambia; Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) found ready allies in Mozambique when Samora Machel's Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) established a one---party Marxist dictatorship, and Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia) became a Soviet client state at the time of its independence in October 1964.

The realities of having two---thirds of Rhodesia's borders adjoining countries that overtly provided aid and comfort to tens of thousands of terrorist forces dedicated to the destruction of a free Rhodesia elicited an astounding bravery among the soldiers fighting for their newborn nation. In short, time and again, the Rhodesian armed forces took their fight to an enemy that imagined it could scurry back across the borders to safety.

The Rhodesian SAS demonstrated time and again that this aspect of the Marxists' strategy was very much in error.

Wessels documents time and again a record of small units of the SAS penetrating far behind enemy lines to undermine the capacity of the terrorists to operate inside Rhodesia with impunity: The sum of it all was that a handful of hard, dedicated soldiers were making life miserable for ZANLA and their Frelimo allies in their very heartland, and at the same time severely curtailing their ability to cross into Rhodesia. A land mass the size of England had been infiltrated by no more than sixty SAS operators at any given time and they had gunned, mined and ambushed it into a state of confused disorder.

Their aggression created a situation where the enemy had to be ever vigilant and defensive in territory it would have like to call home.

One particularly striking example of the bravery exhibited by the Rhodesians was seen in "Operation Dingo," when approximately 185 Rhodesian paratroopers and other forces attacked a force of 10,000 ZANLA terrorists. "Operation Dingo," Wessels explains, was undertaken out of desperation: the massive ZANLA force threatened to overwhelm Rhodesia's military forces if Mugabe's forces were allowed to pick the time and place of their conflict.

Choosing neither despair nor a defensive action (which was almost certainly doomed to defeat), the Rhodesians took the offensive.

After a moving recounting of the conflict, Wessels' summarizes the conclusion of the first portion of "Operation Dingo": Radio intercepts indicated 3,500 dead and approximately the same number wounded.

The Rhodesians had lost one soldier and one pilot. It was a feat of epic military proportion, possibly unequalled in history.

Never before had so few battled so many.

On the ground, less than 200 had taken on 10,000, and scored a decisive victory. When news of the routing of Chimoio reached Mugabe, he reportedly came close to throwing in the towel. Commiserating with his close confidant Edgar Tekere, he confessed he was "beginning to wonder if this armed struggle is worth pursuing."

The second part of the operation — an attack two days later on

Tembue — although smaller in scale, was similarly lethal to the Marxist forces.

A Handful of Hard Men is, first and foremost, an account of the actions of Rhodesian SAS throughout the brief life of that republic; Wessels has a talent for bringing the lengthy list of battles and skirmishes to life. However, his account regularly connects the events in southern Africa to the larger context, and the perceptive reader understands that the war was not lost on the battlefield: It's end was the result of treachery in Washington, D.C. and London, as well as in New York at the United Nations and even within the halls of government in Salisbury, Rhodesia, where (it is alleged) agents of influence played a role in undermining the nation.

The account of the SAS ends with a fading away; deprived of the opportunity to assassinate Robert Mugabe before he could assume control of the nation and transform it into the horrific slaughterhouse called Zimbabwe, the brave men of the SAS stood down.

They did their duty.

The loss of Rhodesia was a tragedy willed by forces beyond their control.

Wessels' book is a worthy tribute to their sacrifice, and will be of benefit to all readers who desire a better comprehension of this aspect of the worldwide war against the forces of Marxism---Leninism.

Hannes Wessels, *A Handful of Hard Men: The SAS and the Battle for Rhodesia* (Philadelphia & Oxford: Casemate, 2015). Hardcover. 277 pages.

**SPECIAL OPERATIONS –
BRITAIN RETURNS TO
SPECIAL FORCES**

January 11, 2016

Britain has decided to form their own version of the U.S. Army Special Forces. This would be a special operations organization with several hundred troops trained to organize, train and assist locals needing help to deal with Islamic terrorists or any other group of fanatics trying to impose their will with violence.

The initial use would be to help people defend themselves from Islamic terrorists but long--term this "Tier 2" force would be prepared to go anywhere in the world and help just about anyone.

There is a certain irony in this because the model for this tier 2 force is the American Special Forces which had its origins during World War II when Britain invented the modern commandos and taught Americans how to use this new type of highly skilled soldier for a wide variety of difficult assignments. Instead of commandos, after World War II the United States developed the Special Forces. This was a unique organization in military, and intelligence, history.

No other nation had anything like the Special Forces during peacetime. The idea of training thousands of troops to very high standards, then having them study foreign languages and cultures, and specialize in working with people of a specific culture, was unique to the Special Forces. But the original idea behind the Special Forces began with the World War II efforts to train and organize resistance fighters during the war.

It was the British who first noted that their newly invented SAS troops were turning into something other than commandos. In fact, the highly skilled and talented SAS (Special

Air Service commandos) were also the sort of specialists capable of helping the espionage agencies that were working with the French resistance. Thus, as part of the preparations for the 1944 invasion of Europe, hundreds of British (SOE or Special Operations Executive) and American (OSS, Office of Strategic Services) agents were landed (by boat and aircraft) in France (and other occupied countries) to assist the guerilla organizations that had developed there to fight the Germans.

Many of these guerillas were poorly armed, trained, and led and often hard pressed by German secret police, soldiers and local collaborators.

This guerilla assistance effort consisted of several different types of agents. For example, 25 three---agent (mostly men but some women) Jedburgh teams were parachuted into France to work with the guerilla organizations before the June 1944 D---Day invasion.

These teams concentrated on establishing regular radio contact between the guerillas and SOE and OSS headquarters in Britain.

The OSS also had seven thirty---four man OGs (Operational Groups) that were sent in after the invasion to work with the guerillas.

The OGs were doing pretty much what the U.S. Army Special Forces do today, train the locals and fight as needed.

All this made it easier to get the guerillas weapons, equipment, and instructions for their part in supporting the D---Day invasion and the months of heavy fighting after the landings.

The modern day equivalent of the Jedburgh and OG teams were, for example, the CIA and U.S. Army Special Forces teams sent to

Afghanistan in late 2001, to help the Northern Alliance fighters who were still fighting the Taliban (which did not yet control much of the north). Within two months the Taliban government was overthrown and most Taliban fighters dead, captured, deserting, or fleeing to Pakistan.

World War II was notable for the extent of “unconventional warfare” operations. During this war most of the unconventional war action were guerillas fighting to free their nations from occupying German or Japanese troops.

While previous wars had their share of raiders, commandos, and spies, the guerilla aspect of warfare was a major element in World War II.

This was particularly true for the Allies (mainly Britain and America).

To support dozens of separate guerilla wars America set up the OSS (Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the CIA and Special Forces), while the British had the SOE (Special Operations Executive). Many OSS operatives were from the U.S. Army and returned to the army after World War II.

By the 1950s these OSS veterans had persuaded the army to create the Special Forces with the idea of repeating the OSS guerilla support missions in any future war with the Soviet Union and to help deal with all the insurrections the Soviets were instigating and supporting around the globe.

The Special Forces have, for over half a century, done exactly what they originally set out to do.

Thus it should have been no surprise when, in late 2001, the CIA was discovered to have formed a special operations force, composed of Afghans, to operate

across the border in Pakistan to collect intelligence and kill Taliban and al Qaeda leaders.

This force of about 3,000 was never a secret to the enemy, or anyone spending time on the Afghan side of the border. But the CIA carried out an effective deception program, based on the fact that Western journalists rarely go to such dangerous areas as the Afghan/Pakistani border.

Afghan journalists could be kept out, or any reports they published got lost in the numerous wildly improbable stories they normally publish. The full details of this Afghan force are still shrouded in secrecy, but it was similar to earlier CIA/Special Forces efforts in this area and the sort of thing the CIA and Special Forces had done in other parts of the world since the 1950s.

The Afghan “secret army” was similar but much smaller than the one the CIA and Special Forces set up in Vietnam during the 1960s.

This one was also based on tribal warriors, who often crossed borders to carry out reconnaissance missions in North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

The United States went on to help Afghanistan create its own Special Forces. These were a huge success. Many Afghans were familiar with American Special Forces, but while these foreign troops spoke the language and knew the culture, they weren’t Afghan.

Despite that, the American Special Forces often established rapport with the Afghan villagers, and were often very successful.

The new Afghan Special Forces took that rapport to a new level.

Afghan villagers admired the skills of the American Special Forces,

both as warriors and experts in many other areas. But now they could see Afghans doing the same things. This makes a big impression, and the Afghan Special Forces got even more cooperation and trust.

The U.S. Special Forces assisted the Afghans in creating Special Forces units similar to the American ones, where each unit specializes in working with specific ethnic groups, or tribal coalitions. The goal was a force of four Afghan Special Forces battalions, each with 18 A---Teams.

Given the success of American Special Forces, that are trained to understand Afghan culture and speak the language, it was believed that Afghans doing the same thing, would perform even better, and more than double the number of Special Forces troops, specialized in dealing with Afghanistan, available.

Moreover, this means that Afghanistan will still have a Special Forces capability once U.S. forces depart.

Afghanistan is the kind of country (four major ethnic groups, hundreds of tribes and clans) that needs Special Forces long term.

There were some unique problems in training the Afghan Special Forces candidates. Unlike the United States, there is a much wider social gulf between officers and NCOs in Afghanistan. But for Special Forces to work, there has to be very close cooperation between officers and NCOs.

The Special Forces training appears to have solved this, even if it was done by convincing the Afghan officers that this kind of closeness was a special technique unique to Special Forces operations, and essential

for A---Teams to succeed. But ten officer candidates dropped out because this kind of relationship with NCOs was too much for them to handle.

There were ethnic problems as well. Most of the Afghan Special Forces will be needed in the south, where the Taliban come from and where Pushtuns (40 percent of the population and historically the dominant group) are the majority.

Many of the minorities in Afghanistan (Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara and Turkmen) have long been united in their opposition to Pushtun domination.

The Tajik are 25 percent of the population and the Hazara (Mongols, a reminder of the medieval Mongolian invasions) 19 percent.

The remainder are mostly various Turkic groups (Uzbeks and Turkmen).

All of these groups are wary of the Pushtuns, but will work with them if they do not feel threatened.

Because of the war with the Taliban, fewer Pushtuns joined the army, and many more Hazara (who have long been persecuted by the other groups) did. Thus there were twice as many Hazara as Pushtuns in the first Afghan A---Teams.

But the Hazara are much better educated than the Pushtuns, and make better soldiers.

They made superior Special Forces operators (as Special Forces troops are called) as well, and were able to work well with Pushtuns.

Britain has a lot of experience to draw from, both their own during World War II and more recent examples during The Vietnam War and operations in Afghanistan after 2001.

This idea has been bouncing around in Britain for several decades. But massive post---cold War budget cuts and reluctance to get too involved fighting Islamic terrorists got in the way. But now, as it is obvious that the Islamic terrorists are going to keep trying to come after Britain, British special operations finally got the cash needed to form the long sought Tier 2 force.

ARMY CHAPLAINS TO REMOVE 'CONQUER' FROM 102-YEAR-OLD MOTTO BECAUSE IT IS OFFENSIVE TO MUSLIMS



THE Australian Army is removing the motto "In this sign conquer" from the 102-year-old hat badges of army chaplains because it is offensive to Muslims.

The move comes after an imam approved by the Grand Mufti was appointed to join the -Religious Advisory Committee to the Services in June.

Australian Army chaplains have had the motto on their hat badges since 1913.

A Defence spokeswoman last night denied the motto was being changed because it was associated with the Crusades, when Christian armies fought Muslims in the Holy Land during the Middle Ages.

"The motto of the Australian Army Chaplains is being changed to better reflect the diversity of religion throughout the Australian Army," she said. "The new wording on the Australian Army Chaplaincy badge is under consideration and no decision has been made at this time."

Former army major Bernard Gaynor, whose commission was terminated last year due to his outspoken views, said: "This is political correctness destroying our military heritage."

Mr Gaynor, who is standing as the Australian Liberty Alliance senate candidate for Queensland, said political correctness in the military was highlighted by the appointment of an imam.

"The government must stop the political correctness. It must dismiss the Defence Imam for his views. And it must put Australia first," he said.

Military historian Professor Peter Stanley from UNSW Canberra said: **"The motto was acceptable 100 years ago but today has crusader connotations."**

Despite the perceived crusader links, he said the motto actually comes from Emperor Constantine's vision before he won the battle of Milvian Bridge in 312AD and converted to Christianity: **"Jewish chaplains already have a separate badge with a Star of David, so Muslim chaplains would not be expected to wear the current badge. They would have one with a crescent."**

Army chaplains are understood to have pushed for the change. Former principal chaplain to the army Monsignor Greg Flynn said: **"We have been aware of this coming down the track and most chaplains would agree with the change. It is a reality."**

Professor Tom Frane, former Bishop to the Defence Force, said: **"It seems like a crusading motto — triumphal. It is not the first time it has been misinterpreted. If times have changed it is worth another look."**



Sheikh
Mohamadu
Nawas Saleem

The army imam, Sheik Mohamadu Nawas Saleem, has previously called for sharia law to be introduced into Australia. He signed a petition supporting radical Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir, which has argued in favour of honour killings and said Muslim students should not be forced to honour Anzac Day.

Sheik Saleem works about 40 days a year for the Army and is paid \$717 for each one: almost \$30,000 a year.

The sheik did not respond to requests for comment.



Grand Mufti
of Australia
Dr Ibrahim
Abu
Mohammed

Sheik Saleem was supported for the role by Grand Mufti Ibrahim Abu Mohammed, who this week sparked controversy by failing to come straight out and condemn the Paris terror attacks.

The Defence spokeswoman said: **"There are 102 ADF permanent members who self-identify as Muslim. In addition, there are 40 Active Reservists who have declared as Muslim."**

COMINGS AND GOINGS!

Since the last Edition we have lost one Executive Committee Member namely Phil Murrin who has decided to spend more time with his family and we wish him well in his new endeavours.

We would also like to extend a warm welcome to two new Committee Members.

Dos Newton has come on board and has taken over the duties of Treasurer to our little organisation (much to the pleasure of Peter Donaldson).

Also joining us as a Pensions Officer is John Newton. John is an ex-SASR Soldier who brings a

wealth of knowledge with him in relation to what the SASR has done.

He will be predominantly operating out of SAS House on behalf of the NSVSC and we welcome him with open arms.

NATIONAL SERVICEMEN DIDN'T FIGHT ONLY IN VIETNAM



When John Cross received his call up, he expected to be

sent to Vietnam. Instead, he spent nine months on a covert mission in Borneo, the existence of which was only revealed 30 years after.

When the Menzies government re-introduced conscription in 1964, most people assumed that the Vietnam war was the trigger.

However, tensions between Malaya and Indonesia were also simmering in the post-colonial unrest of the era.

"I was 19 when I got a letter from the Federal Government to submit myself for a medical," Mr Cross said.

Far from feeling dismay that his birth date had come up in the conscription ballot, he was relieved.

"National Service was my escape out of Dad's clutches," he explained. "I'd been working with my Dad since I was 13. Dad came out of an English orphanage and he was very strict."

Mr Cross joined the stream of young men heading for the Karrakatta Army barracks.

"Some blokes brought their dogs, surf boards; I don't know what the hell they thought they were doing." The regular army sergeants chivvied the recruits into order.

"We were his little babies and we were to do exactly as he told us as

we were now in the army," Mr Cross said.

The army introduction didn't faze John Cross, who took after his father in his attitude to the impending service.

"Nothing could be worse than my Dad as far as discipline went," he said. "Dad fought in the Second World War. It was a job we had to do."

The WA boys were to continue their training at Puckapunyal, and Mr Cross remembers the shouting and tedious repetition.

"Left right, left right, left right, double double, double double, all day long. We were pretty fit," he said.

"We had one bloke who refused to get out of bed. He was a conscientious objector and he wasn't going anywhere. "We got him out of bed, still in his pyjamas. We marched him across the parade ground." The recalcitrant recruit was not seen again.

I signed up for the signal corps like Dad did but Mr Cross was posted to the School of Military Engineering Sydney.

"We learned trip wires, land mines removal, bridge building, and the location of hidden obstacles," he said. "I'm 70 now and I haven't forgotten anything I learned."

After three months at the SME, the recruits were sent home for leave and were told to make out their wills. The 22nd Construction Squadron expected to relieve the 1st Field in Vietnam.

Mr Cross said it was a sobering time. "You would have gone anywhere with your mates. Our officers and sergeants and lieutenants were blokes you really respected," he said. "If they were smiling and happy, I was smiling and happy."

Not until the unit landed in Singapore were the men told that they were to be sent to Borneo.



"We caught this little tiny train from [what was then] Jesselton to follow this river through pristine jungle to Keningau," he said.

"We were never told of a plan."

The 22nd joined other Australian units whose mission was to build a road close to the Indonesian border.

Equipped with heavy machinery, the engineering crew had the task of sealing the road as it was pushed through inhospitable jungle.

Looking back, Mr Cross believes that their camps could have been taken out with ease. Just the same, he slept well at night. SAS soldiers were stationed south in Kuching and Sarawak, and the gurkhas were also patrolling.

"The only problem we had, someone shot an orangutan in the cookhouse. That was enough to upset everybody," he said. We were told we didn't exist

In later years, Mr Cross sought a disability pension for injuries he'd received in Borneo. He was told there was no record of his service.

Others in his unit likewise didn't exist. "We were never Australian troops; we were attached to the British," he said. "It was all to do with Malaya getting its independence from England. All hell broke loose. "Indonesia thought that Sabah and Sarawak and Brunei were part of the Indonesian islands of Borneo. Britain was adamant that it would stay part of Malaya.

"The British asked for troops to stabilise the area and that's where we came in."

Mr Cross assumes that the reason for the clandestine nature of the mission was that Australia didn't want to offend its close neighbour Indonesia.

Today, John Cross runs a heavy machinery business in Bunbury. Discharged in November 1966, he still wears his dogtags with pride. "They gave us a medal and \$60 and said, 'We'll see you later'," he said.

Mr Cross says that he has only happy memories of his National Service.

"We weren't under direct fire. That could have been totally different," he said. "You were doing what Anzacs do. Doing your bit. I had no problem leaving home. I had no problem — worst case scenario — dying."

The ethos of mateship was still strong in the 60s, according to Mr Cross. "You would have gone anywhere with those boys. You used to sleep with one another, you'd shower with one another, you'd die with one another," he said.

Mr Cross says army life changed him for the better. At one time shy and reluctant to offer an opinion, after the army he had no qualms about speaking his mind.

"I felt that I had contributed and that I was entitled: 'I'm a returned soldier'," he said.

March marks 50 years since the first conscripts were sent to Vietnam. Mr Cross says he has no doubt that national service should be reintroduced, and he says governments need to have the courage to make unpopular decisions.

He says many young people would benefit from the discipline, guidance and leadership. "All I can say, I had two wonderful years," he said.

Mr Cross's only regret is that the road he helped build is now used for jungle clearing.

About 15 years ago, he returned with some of his unit and was shocked by the amount of logging in Borneo, with the orangutans and gibbons robbed of their habitat. "The pristine rivers were rivers of mud," he said. "The road was built as a military strategic road and the Malayan government turned it into a logging road."

Mr Cross allows that he is an outsider trying to make sense of the environmental damage he saw. "I felt as though we were tricked into building a road for the Malayan government. I felt as though we might have been used," he said.

Mr Cross joined the RSL about 10 years after his discharge. He says many of the members are ex-infantry. "They put their lives on the line. I admire them for that," he said.

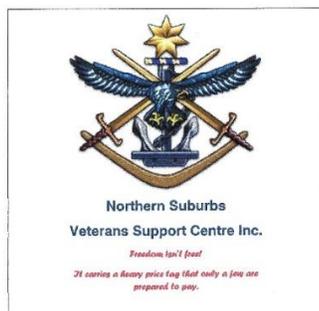
He also was in accord with the political stance of the organisation and its aim to maintain strong ties with the US.

Fifty years on, some memories remain very strong for John Cross.

NSVSC CAR STICKERS

NSVSC Car stickers are now available from the Office – Cost is \$2.00 per sticker.

Please support the NSVSC.



Other items, including mugs, baseball caps, polo tops, pens and assorted stuff will be available shortly.

LONG-TERM VIETNAM VETERANS STUDY REVEALS THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL TOLL OF WAR.

ABC Illawarra By Justin Huntsdale

Updated Tue 1 Mar 2016, 8:58am



The first Australian study to take a long-term look at the health effects on soldiers who served in Vietnam has debunked perceptions of widespread cancer and death rates among veterans, while confirming the war's impact on mental health.

Associate Professor Peter Siminski does not have a family connection to the Vietnam War, but he is fascinated by the data that conscription delivers.

The University of Wollongong researcher has just finished analyzing health records of men who did and did not serve in the Vietnam War to create a snapshot of its effects on physical and mental health.

"There is a lot of evidence that army deployment to Vietnam did cause a range of health problems, most particularly mental health issues and hearing loss, as well as self-reported general health issues and life satisfaction," Associate Professor Siminski said.

"The data supports things people already know, but on the other hand and perhaps more interesting are the effects on

mortality and cancer are not statistically significant.

"A lot of us have their view that having served in Vietnam was associated with major effects on people's probability of dying and being diagnosed with cancer but this work doesn't suggest that's the case."

He said it did not mean some men did not suffer from early death or cancer, but perhaps not to the extent people believed.

How the conscription lottery helps research?

It's clear the effects of serving in Vietnam are lifelong and there's work suggesting it goes into the next generations as well.
Associate Professor Peter Siminski

Often the main topic around conscription is whether it is a fair and equitable way to get people into the army.

For Associate Professor Siminski, it is the perfect formula to compare how the war experience affected servicemen.

"In this work, the conscription lotteries are incredibly useful for research perspectives," he said. "They're very similar to randomised controlled trials."

The research looked at data on deaths, cancer diagnoses and hospital presentations, as well as physical and mental health data from a large population health and wellbeing survey.

"There are a number of ways the research is useful — first of all for the historical record, it's important to study past conflicts and get an accurate perspective of the effects of our decisions to conscript people and send them into war and have an understanding of what the full costs are," he said.

"It's clear the effects of serving in Vietnam are lifelong and there's work suggesting it goes into the next generations as well."

Associate Professor Siminski said the research was also helpful for guiding which areas of health support need to be tailored to Vietnam Veterans.

It could also provide useful information for veterans' compensation.

"There's been a large negative employment effect associated with Vietnam veterans and a large part of that is to do

with what I feel is a poorly designed compensation system," he said.

SOME FUN!



DVA signed me up for an exercise class and I was told to wear loose fitting clothing.

If I had any loose fitting clothing, I wouldn't have needed to be signed up in the first place!

A woman awakes during the night to find that her husband is not in bed. She puts on her robe and goes downstairs to look for him. She finds him sitting at the kitchen

table with a hot cup of coffee in front of him.

He appears to be in deep thought, just staring at the wall. She watches as he wipes a tear from his eye and takes a sip of his coffee.

'What's the matter, dear?' she whispers as she steps into the room. 'Why are you down here at this time of night?'

The husband looks up from his coffee, 'It's the 20th Anniversary of the day we met.'

She can't believe he has remembered and starts to tear up.

The husband continues, 'Do you remember 20 years ago when we started dating? I was 18 and you were only 16,' he says solemnly.

Once again, the wife is touched to tears. 'Yes, I do,' she replies.

The husband pauses. The words were not coming easily. 'Do you remember when your father caught us in the back seat of my car?'

'Yes, I remember,' said the wife, lowering herself into the chair beside him.

The husband continued. 'Do you remember when he shoved the shotgun in my face and said, "Either you marry my daughter or I will send you to prison for 20 years?'

'I remember that too,' she replied softly.

He wiped another tear from his cheek and said, 'I would have gotten out today.'



PROPOSED COFFEE MORNINGS AT GUMBLOSSOM COMMUNITY CENTRE

The NSVSC is considering holding a weekly "Coffee Morning and Chat Session" at Gumblossom Community Centre on Thursdays between 10:00 am and 11:30 am commencing in April 2016.

Veterans and Partners of Veterans who would like to attend are welcome to join us free of charge for a cuppa and some bikkies and to chew the fat over what is and what is not bothering you.

We will use this a measure of the services that are needed in the Northern Suburbs to assist Veterans and their Families so please come along and meet other Veterans because only another Veteran knows what you are going through.

For more detail either ring us on 9305 9015 or email us at admin@nsvsc.org.au.

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED!

Due to the influx of Veterans seeking assistance with claims from deployments in East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan (as well as other deployments) the NSVSC is in desperate need of Volunteers to learn how to become Pension Officers and later Advocates.

This is an opportunity to give something back to the Veteran Community so if you have an interest in this area please let us know as we could definitely use your help.

Training is provided at no cost as is a uniform etc.

WHO WE ARE

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