

TAC NEWS

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A RECAP OF AUSTRALIA IN THE 20TH CENTURY

You may be surprised to find that Australia didn't start out as a British colony. It was the Dutch who first landed there in 1616, naming the place "New Holland". The British didn't arrive until 1688 under William Dampier. Even then, it wasn't until James Cook's historic voyage of 1770 that Britain claimed Australia. Their first formal settlement, Port Jackson, was established in 1788 around Sidney Cove. The first shiploads of transported convict labor arrived in 1788 as well. By the time this practice ended, late in the nineteenth century, 160,000 unwilling immigrant transportees had been dumped in the colony. By 1827 there were settlements on both the east and west coasts, and by 1859, the foundations were laid for all six future Australian states. On New Year's Day, 1901, the island became a Commonwealth and Canberra was chosen as the federal capital in 1908.

The World Wars

The Dardanelles Campaign of 1915, designed to split the Ottoman Turks off from their allies and open a supply route to Russia, was a debacle. The performance of the Australian troops who fought there, however, was first class! Their courage and professionalism through nine months of the most appalling conditions imaginable were nothing less than epic. The charge of their "Light Horsemen" at Beersheba in Palestine must stand both as an act of lunatic courage and an example of unbelievable luck. Instead of going down in a welter of broken men and horses, this desperate mounted attack against dug-in Turkish infantry, machineguns, and artillery—across hundreds of yards of open ground—succeeded beyond all expectation. The Turks were routed, and their line turned. The Australian charge had broken the deadlock on that front wide open.

Australia declared war on the Axis the same day as Britain and France did, on September 3rd, 1939. Australian troops, as part of the Allied "Eighth Army", distinguished themselves in the North African theater; the siege of Tobruk in 1941 being a particular example of their remarkable fighting qualities. Australian performance was exemplary in the fetid jungles of New Guinea and elsewhere in the Pacific

Theater as well, and Australian "Coast Watchers" provided vital information on Japanese movements to Allied naval command. As Britain realized its inability to defend Australia from possible Japanese invasion, it was the US that took up the slack, thereby laying the foundations for the subsequent long period of good relations between Australia and the United States.

Foul-Weather Friends

After WWII, the Australian government took a sizable part in founding the United Nations, specifically working to secure recognition of the rights of smaller nations within the organization. An Australian even served as president of the General Assembly in 1948 and 1949. As the United Kingdom pulled back further and further from international prominence, the alliance between Australia and the US became increasingly concrete. Although there were disagreements between the US, the UK, and Australia on various issues, Australia has been a staunch "foul-weather friend" to its allies for the last five decades, coming to their assistance whenever called upon.

When North Korea invaded the South in 1950, Australia was quick to send a force led by the 3rd Royal Australian Regiment (RAR). That September Australians fought their first action near Pyongyang. In November when the Chinese intervened, Australians were called on to halt their drive south at the battle of the Kapyong Valley, where they earned a US "Presidential Unit Citation". They also were instrumental in the five-day battle known as "Operation Commando" in 1951. In all, the toll of Australian losses in the Korean War was 1,263 dead and nearly 5,000 wounded.

Australia made a significant contribution to the "Malayan Emergency" as well. This communist insurgency, mainly among Malay Chinese, first erupted in 1949. The Australian government, working with Britain and New Zealand, supplied Malayan government forces with arms, ammunition, drugs, and food. Initially the terrorists had great success, scoring many victories. In October 1951, they ambushed and killed the British high commissioner in

In March 1955, Australia agreed to send the 2nd Battalion / 3rd RAR to Malaya. This veteran unit was undergoing jungle warfare training in north Queensland when the deployment was announced. The men were shipped out of Brisbane in October along with the 105th Field Artillery Battery. Australian troops from all three services—some 7,000 in all—were deployed in and around Malaya from 1955 to 1960. By the time the “emergency” was declared over, fifty-one Australians had died, fifteen as a direct result of military action.

Australian participation in the Vietnam War included a “Brigade Task Force”. This unit, part of which arrived in country in 1965, exhibited considerable courage and reliability under the most difficult conditions. The US command always welcomed the appearance of its Australian allies on any battlefield. At its largest, the Australian contingent numbered some 8,600 men and women; the total number of Australians sent to Vietnam came to approximately 46,582—of which 508 were killed and 2,400 wounded. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, 1,800 Australians joined the Gulf War “Coalition” force. Fortunately, there were no Australian fatalities in this short but bloody war.

The East Timor Crisis

East Timor’s separation from Indonesia, and the way it occurred, ended a twenty-five-year campaign by that country to integrate East Timor—along with other outlying islands—into a centrally controlled state. In January of 1999, Indonesian President Habibie made a fatal miscalculation, deciding to hold a referendum on autonomy or independence for East Timor. Habibie took a calculated risk that this referendum would remove the East Timor issue as an irritant in Indonesia’s international relations and that the pro-integrationist side would win.

The outcome of that referendum—a demand for complete independence—was a major intelligence failure. Neither the government nor the military understood the depth of the discontent with Indonesian rule that had simmered below the surface for decades. A violent rampage by pro-integrationist militia followed the referendum, virtually destroying East Timor’s infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands were forced to flee to the mountains or to move to the relative safety of West Timorese refugee camps. Many thousands died and Indonesia’s international reputation was severely damaged.

In the summer of 1999, the Australian cabinet decided that the human suffering and loss of life in East Timor had gone far enough. Such an explosive situation could not be allowed to continue so close to Australian territory. An expeditionary force was sent to East Timor under UN sponsorship.

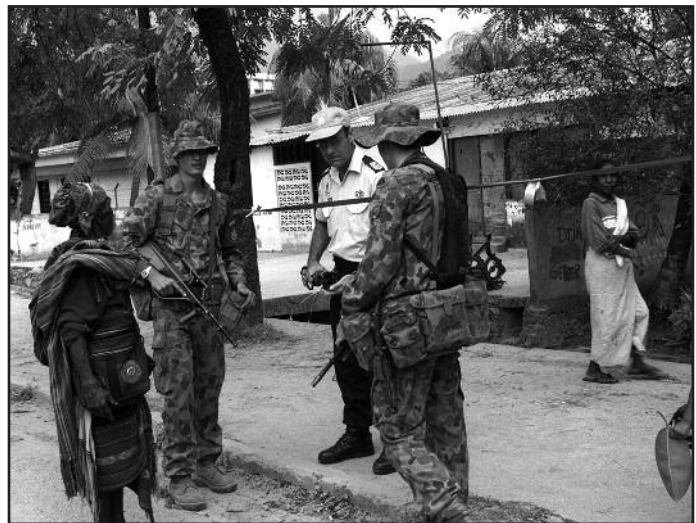
Intervention

The “International Force in East Timor” (INTERFET) initially consisted of the Australian Army’s 1st Brigade, an Australian naval task force, and Australian air-support in the form of twelve C-130H “Hercules” transports and twelve S70A-9 “Blackhawk” helicopters, for a total of 4,500 personnel. More than 20 other nations, among them New Zealand, the U.S., and Portugal, contributed personnel, equipment, and ships to the effort.

On September 21st, the 3rd Royal Australian Regiment (RAR) went ashore at Dili (the East Timorese capital) and established itself along the Indonesian (West Timor) border. Starting in November, Australian forces were inserted by helicopter and landing craft into the East Timorese enclave at Oecussi, deep inside West Timor. The idea was to protect the local rural population and use them as guides to intercept pro-Indonesian militia units raiding across the border.

These militias consisted of various Indonesian-backed groups armed primarily with bolt action rifles, shotguns, pistols, and machetes, with a sprinkling of Indonesian Army FNs, M16s, and grenades. They possessed little in the way of cohesive command structure, firepower, or discipline. Their sense of timing, however, was quite good. They would schedule raids based on the ability of defensive patrols and “quick response” forces to get to the threatened area and would not hang around longer than necessary. Therefore, they seldom penetrated more than a kilometer or two beyond the border.

In the words of Colonel Singh / 3rd RAR, “The biggest challenge to the intervention forces appeared to be the “shoot and scoot” nature of their tactics. They would come



INTERFET, February 12, 2000

across the border, but we couldn't be everywhere all the time. The operational challenge was to block where they could come across and then intercept them when they did. On occasion they would infiltrate a village or town, set fire to a dwelling, fire shots in the air, then hide their weapons and other tell-tale items and act like natives. We wouldn't have been able to catch them except for the locals, who would denounce them to us."

Lessons Learned

Combat in East Timor showed the Australians capable of quick reactions and skillful counterattacks. It was quickly realized that this success was due primarily to the quality of their platoon level officers and NCO corps. Tactics remained simple and clear-cut. There was a strict observance of the "rules of engagement" and discipline (especially "fire" discipline) remained strong. The result was an ability to act effectively with few casualties either among the Australians themselves or innocent civilian non-combatants.

Australian armor provided their infantry with heavy mobile firepower for use in escort, search, and "force presence" operations, as well as providing security at vehicle

checkpoints. The principal weaknesses concerning the use of armor were their limited numbers early on due to the limitations of C-130 transport aircraft, and the lack of repair facilities, replacement vehicles, and parts. Two months after D-Day, less than four percent of armored supply requirements had been met! The use of M113s also brought criticism because of their age. Power trains, brakes, and steering mechanisms required constant maintenance. Communications equipment was not homogenous. Old and new gear was often incompatible. The M113's one-man turret possessed no effective wide-angle night-vision equipment and there was no provision for shading the vehicles from the sun during stifling tropical weather.

The most important difficulties, however, emerged as the mission wore on. Operating a single brigade only a few hundred miles from Australia itself stretched the country's resources almost to the breaking point. Australian military officials admitted that if they were forced to mount a second operation anywhere at all at the same time, it would have been completely beyond their capacity. Therefore, the operation in East Timor came as a wake-up call to the country's military and political leadership. The time had

Australia's Peacekeeping Record

Since 1945 Australia has made valuable contributions to United Nations Peacekeeping endeavors. From military observation, through medical assistance; election and police supervision; training, engineering and communications; humanitarian aid and mine-clearance; Australian troops have successfully fulfilled many of the duties set out in the United Nations Charter.

1947–1951 Indonesia	1963 West Irian/New Guinea	1978 Lebanon
1989 Cambodia	1991–1994 Western Sahara	1994–1995 Mozambique
1949–2001 Korea	1964–2001 Yemen	1979–1980 Zimbabwe
1989–1990 Namibia	1991–1999 Iraq	1994–1995 Haiti
1950–1985 India/Pakistan	1965–1966 Cyprus	1982–1984 Uganda
1989–1993 Afghanistan/Pakistan	1992–1993 Cambodia	1994–2001 Rwanda
1956–2001 Israel/Mid-East	1974–2001 India/Pakistan	1982–1986 Sinai
1990–1993 Persian Gulf/Red Sea	1992–1993 Balkans	1994–2001 Bougainville/ Solomon Is.
1960–1964 Israel & the Mid-East	1976–1979 Syria	1988–1990 Iraq - Iran
1991 Kurdistan	1992–1995 Somalia	1999–2001 East Timor
1962 Congo	1978 Sinai	
1991–1992 Cambodia	1993–2001 Sinai	

FOREIGN WEAPONS: Germany—Leopard MBT; UK—105mm "Light Gun", Centurion MBT; US—90mm M67 RcR, 106mm M40 RcR, 105mm M101, 155mm M198, FIM43A "Redeye", M113, M125, M577, UH-1/1B "Huey"

Tables of Organization & Equipment
AUSTRALIAN BRIGADE TASK FORCE: 1965–1970 (VIETNAM)
Generation: II, Air Superiority Rating: 60, Class: Professionals, Base Determination Factor: 30%

<p>Infantry Company: 3x TL2 Infantry(A)</p> <p>Support Company: 1x 81mm L16 Mortar(3), 1x 106mm M40 RcR/Jeep</p> <p>Engineer Squadron: 3x TL2 Engineer Infantry/Truck</p> <p>SAS Squadron: 3x TL2 Infantry(S)</p> <p>Air Assault Squadron: 2x UH-1B “Huey”</p> <p>Infantry Battalion: 1x TL2 Infantry(A) HQ, 4x Inf. Co., 1x Support Company, 2x 90mm M67 RcR/Jeep, 2x TL2 Infantry Support, 1x TL2 Engineer Infantry, 1x TL2 Infantry(R)</p> <p>Armored Transport Squadron: 1x M-577, 9x M-113, 1x 81mm M125(3), 1x M113/FSV, 1x M113A1[R]</p>	<p>Artillery Regiment: 3x 105mm M101(3)/Truck</p> <p>Tank Squadron: 4x Centurion Mk13, 1x Centurion AVLB</p> <p>Brigade: 1x TL2 Infantry (GHQ)/M-577, 3x Infantry Bttn., 1x SAS Squadron, 1x Tank Squadron, 1x Artillery Regt., 1x Armored Transport Squadron, 1x Air Assault Squadron, 1x Engineer Squadron, 1x SAS Squadron</p>
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Notes:

1. Two infantry companies and one 105mm battery in this brigade were manned by New Zealand Army troops.
2. The use of AVLBs is explained in rule 10.07.06 on page 23 of *Micro Armour: The Game—Modern*.

AUSTRALIAN FORCES: 1980+
Generation: III, Air Superiority Rating: 50, Class: Professionals, Base Determination Factor: 30%

<p>Cavalry Squadron: 1x TL3 Infantry(R)/M113/FSV, 3x TL3 Infantry(R)/M113A1, 1x TL3 Infantry(B)/M113A1, 1x 81mm M125(1)</p> <p>Mechanized Infantry Co: 3x TL3 Infantry(B)/M113A1, 1x 81mm M125(1), 1x Land Rover/Milan</p> <p>Tank Squadron: 5x Leopard IA3</p> <p>Artillery Battery: 1x 105mm “Light Gun”/Truck or 1x 155mm M198(3)/Truck</p> <p>Cavalry Regiment: 1x TL3 Infantry (B) HQ/M577, 3x Cavalry Squadron, 0–1x Mechanized Infantry Co., 0–1x Tank Squadron, 1–3x Artillery Battery</p>	<p>Tank Regiment: 1x Leopard IA3 (HQ), 3x Tank Co., 1x Leopard AVLB, 1x Leopard ARV</p> <p>Artillery Battalion: 2x 105mm “Light Gun”/Truck, 1x 155mm M198(3)/Truck</p>
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Notes:

1. One stand per cavalry regiment may contain an attached FIM43A “Redeye” (MP).
2. Individual tank squadrons and artillery batteries are generally attached to (reinforced) cavalry regiments as needed.
3. No tanks were included in the Australian “INTERFET” force.
4. The use of AVLBs is explained in rule 10.07.06 (*Micro Armour: The Game—Modern*, page 23.)

TACTICAL NOTES

The Australian “Vietnam Task Force” may be used either independently or in conjunction with US forces. The Australians performed all types of operations in Vietnam but were especially good at long-duration security missions. Australian troops usually arrived “in country” already acclimated to the sweltering heat and dense tropical forests of Vietnam due to intensive training at their Queensland “jungle warfare” facility. This, combined with high professional standards and considerable esprit-de-corps, made them formidable opponents for the Vietcong. The role of the Australian “INTERFET” force in East Timor was similar in many ways to that of their Vietnam forces, the main difference being the quality (or lack of it!) of the opposition.

Scenarios depicting Australian combat operations in any post-WWII conflict should stress light infantry tactics and not be dependent on large amounts of heavy armor, artillery, or airpower. Australian cohesion should generally be high and individual initiative by small unit leaders should be fairly commonplace. Australia’s current modernization programs are aimed primarily at maintaining and amplifying these qualities. As new weapons, vehicles, and other equipment come on-line, the main effort will be to integrate them into the country’s long-successful combat philosophy.