

AIR FORCE NEWS

Hut
relocation
by air

Last hurrah
for flight
NZ4203

Dramatic
flood
rescues

#239

SEP | 21



From
Afghanistan to
Aotearoa

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OUR MISSION

The RNZAF will provide New Zealand with relevant, responsive and effective Air Power to meet its security interests.

OUR VISION

An agile and adaptive Air Force with the versatility essential for NZDF operations.

COVER:

From Afghanistan to Aotearoa

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- photos provided separate from the text – at least 300dpi.

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New Zealand Government



NZAirForce



NZDefenceForce

First Word



B | WARRANT OFFICER OF THE AIR FORCE
Y | WARRANT OFFICER TONI TATE

“Your collective efforts remind me of a line from our Air Force Haka “Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini!”
“My successes are not of my own doing, but of the efforts of many!”
This couldn’t be truer, your collective efforts have contributed to our mission success.”

Kia ora mai tātou katoa.

This September there are many things to reflect on. This month we acknowledge the 81st anniversary of the Battle of Britain and also the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States of America. Both events are sober reminders of why we contribute as a nation to maintain international security and prosperity, a reminder of our purpose and why we serve.

The short notice Afghanistan mission to evacuate New Zealand citizens and Afghan Nationals from Kabul was a coalition success and I am very pleased to have everyone home safely. Working together not only as a Defence Force but as an international coalition makes us stronger together. The coalition mission was not without casualties and my thoughts are with the US Forces and families who lost 13 brave men and women as a result of the Kabul airport bomb attack. I would also like to acknowledge our own Afghanistan veterans and families who may have mixed emotions about the Afghanistan withdrawal.

New Zealand’s response to the Covid-19 Delta variant community case has seen us return to national lockdown, a familiar experience yet concerning as “Delta” finally breached our borders. We know that it is our government’s priority to protect our borders and reduce cases of Covid-19 in the community.

To do this, our NZDF contribution to NZ Managed Isolation and Quarantine Facilities and border security is outstanding. Your ongoing commitment to these critical national tasks is recognised. The professionalism, respect and dignity you display is a credit to your unwavering commitment and dedication.

The common denominator in mission success is you, our people. New Zealand will come out of this stronger by everyone doing their part. We have much to be grateful for and great things to look forward to. Next year the first Boeing P-8A Poseidon aircraft will arrive in New Zealand, a symbol of our future platforms yet to be introduced. Effort is continuing to navigate towards the integration and transition to the new aircraft.

Thank you for your service to New Zealand. While we can’t be sure how this international pandemic will evolve, we do know that by being ready, including being vaccinated, we will be prepared for what comes next. What I do know for sure is that I am proud of each and every one of you for playing your part and I am proud to be a Royal New Zealand Air Force aviator serving alongside you.

You are Te Tauaarangi o Aotearoa – New Zealand Warriors of the Sky.

From Afghanistan to Aotearoa – a Herculean task

WORDS
REBECCA QUILLIAM

PHOTOGRAPHY
SERGEANT MARIA EVES

A C-130 Hercules crew has returned home after completing three rescue flights into Afghanistan's conflict-ridden capital, flying out evacuees from Hamid Karzi International Airport. Their final flight left for the United Arab Emirates just hours before a terrorist attack at Kabul's airport, killing scores of civilians and more than two dozen members of the United States forces.





Over the course of the mission, the Hercules successfully brought out evacuees destined for both New Zealand and Australia, and New Zealand nationals, their families and other visa holders were also evacuated on the military aircraft of partner nations.

Senior National Officer for the operation, Group Captain (GPCAPT) Nick Olney, said the scenes were confronting for personnel to deal with.

Coordinated efforts from the interagency response, which included officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, meant they were able to locate people they needed to help, he said.

“We were assisting people through sewage ditches, over barbed wire fences, I can’t describe enough the bravery on both sides.

“With the evacuees, the desperation, they would do anything to get into the airport. And on our side, our team pushed themselves to every physical and psychological limit to get these people out and inside the wire and make them safe.”

The New Zealand troops “put their lives on the line” by going into crowded areas knowing there were credible threats of attack that later came to tragic fruition for US forces, GPCAPT Olney said.

The team was tormented by reflecting on situations where they could physically reach out and touch people who they wanted to help, but they couldn’t get through, he said.

“I can’t stress enough how difficult it was to bring those people through the wire. It was best endeavours to make miracles happen in the timeframe we had available.”

“We were looking for needles in haystacks. And there were a lot of haystacks out there to start with and we had no idea what the needle we were looking for looked like.”

- Group Captain Nick Olney

MAIN

Evacuees lining up to be processed after leaving Afghanistan

TOP RIGHT

Evacuees being processed after leaving Afghanistan

BOTTOM LEFT AND RIGHT

Evacuees at the evacuation handling centre





About 80 Defence Force personnel involved in the mission arrived back in New Zealand earlier this month where they completed the 14 day isolation period.

Commander Joint Forces New Zealand Rear Admiral (RADM) Jim Gilmour has praised the team's efforts in evacuating New Zealand nationals, their families and other visa holders from Kabul following the swift takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban.

As part of the Defence Force's Operation Kōkako, New Zealand Army soldiers were on the ground at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul where they used code words and instructions sent on messenger apps to help evacuees navigate chaotic and dangerous scenes to reach the soldiers, where they could be taken to safety within the airport perimeter, he said.

Extraordinary efforts were made by government agencies and partner nations to get people out, RADM Gilmour said.

"Our NZDF personnel on the ground at the airport contacted evacuees, advised them which gate at the airport to go to, checked they met the eligibility criteria, negotiated with security forces, and guided evacuees through the airport and then on to a military aircraft, whether that was our aircraft or the aircraft of one of our partner nations."

The C-130 Hercules had two more flights scheduled before being forced to pull out due to an imminent security threat that was realised just hours later with an attack claimed by ISIS-K that left 170 civilians and 13 United States military dead, with many more injured.

Squadron Leader Matt Rieper said that while it wasn't the first time the Air Force had operated in Afghanistan, this deployment was more dynamic.



Given the situation in Afghanistan there wasn't formal control of the airspace and the ground situation was probably one of the more dangerous places to be during the activity.

Air Loadmaster Corporal (CPL) Toni Thompson's job was to seat all the evacuees and strap them in so they were secure in the aircraft for flying.

"It was pretty cramped. Evacuees were seated on the floor of the aircraft to fit more people in. It was hot and sweaty and we all had masks on. It was pretty tough, but we got it done."

"The evacuees were awesome and super grateful for everything we could do for them. They all sat quietly and listened to what we had to say and I think they were all just grateful to be getting out of Afghanistan," CPL Thompson said.



PHOTOS:
Evacuees leave on the first flight into Kabul



C-130 Hercules pilot Flight Lieutenant (FLTLT) Max Longdill said it took only seven days from hearing he was being deployed to flying the first flight into Kabul to bring out evacuees.

“It was pretty cool really, seeing the relief and the gratitude on their faces. There were a lot of kids and parents who were pretty relieved to see the New Zealand aircraft come in and help out.

“You get to see them walk off the plane at the end of the day – it’s a pretty cool feeling,” FLTLT Longdill said.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the operation was conducted at short notice and under difficult conditions, which showed the value of the armed forces.

“I want to thank our Defence Force personnel who have worked hard to bring those in need home, by establishing a presence on the ground both at the airport in Kabul, and in the United Arab Emirates alongside other government agencies.”

Minister of Defence Peeni Henare also thanked the Defence Force personnel for their hard work and speed with which the operation was put together.

“The value of the deployment was not just in the aircraft but in the presence at the airport itself of NZDF personnel facilitating evacuees under extraordinarily difficult conditions, and the presence of support personnel in UAE aiding the evacuees upon arrival.”

“I think New Zealand should welcome these inspirational people with open arms, they are amazing. From all the stuff they’ve been through to getting home, it must have been such a long journey but they’ve stayed resilient the whole way.”

- Corporal Toni Thompson

Hut relocation by air

B | EDITOR
Y | REBECCA QUILLIAM

No. 3 Squadron crew recently helped fly materials to build a hut in remote bush in Hawke's Bay as part of a conservation and cultural development effort by a local trust, as well as a giving a hand to a high school project.





The four-person hut, built on Te Matai Trust land near the Upper Makeikei Stream, was first constructed by Taradale High School students working towards their Level 3 BCATS (Building, Construction and Allied Trade Skills) programme. It was then dismantled to be reconstructed at the site.

The high school and the trust brought the loads out to a farm airstrip at the base of the hills, where the Army's 5 Movements Company packed it all up and got it ready for an NH90 to fly it to the site in underslung loads.

NH90 pilot Flight Lieutenant (FLTLT) Kieran Moratti said they moved the loads in eight flights over two days, with the heaviest load weighing 1200kg.

The conditions were ideal, but chilly, with a recent snowfall delaying the flight by a day, he said.

"There were beautiful scenes flying up there as it was all snow-covered."

The mission itself, flying underslung items, was good training for the crew as it meant they could practise flying in mountainous regions with loads attached under the helicopter – a skill often needed in both battlefield support and humanitarian aid and disaster relief operations, FLTLT Moratti said.

"The biggest challenge for me as a captain was time management of how long trips were taking and having the right amount of fuel so that when we were lifting the heavy loads, we still had enough power to get over the hills.

The 14 pupils helped to direct where the loads needed to be and were then winched down to the site, "which was a bit of a blast for them", he said.

Te Matai Trust will use the hut to provide a base to undertake mahi in the remote location to support pest control, matauranga wānanga (knowledge forum), cultural wānanga, biodiversity management and education and training.

“It was a cool job and great to work with the students from Taradale High School, who put in quite a bit of mahi on the day.”

-Flight Lieutenant Kieran Moratti

MAIN & BOTTOM RIGHT
Dropping loads of the deconstructed hut to the site

TOP RIGHT
Flying the loads and equipment to the site

BOTTOM LEFT
Loads put together by 5 Company ready to be flown to the building site



Illegal forestry fight takes off

The Ministry for Primary Industry's Indigenous Forestry team was recently given operational support from the Air Force to search for evidence of illegal logging and sawmilling on privately owned indigenous forest land.

Two patrols were conducted; one over the Taranaki region and a second over the West Coast of the South Island.

The Indigenous Forestry team regulates the Forests Act, which requires that the harvesting of indigenous timber is only undertaken on a sustainable basis through controls on the milling and export of indigenous timber, A Ministry for Primary Industry's (MPI) spokesperson said.

Indigenous Forestry operations are often exceedingly difficult to monitor as the commercially viable stands of native timber tend to occur on remote and inaccessible forested hill country, with the timber being milled onsite with portable sawmills.

Routine monitoring by forestry officers by foot, or by using four-wheel drives, light utility vehicles and drones can only get the team so far. Having Air Force's support enabled Te Uru Rākau – New Zealand Forest Service to check areas that just couldn't be monitored otherwise, the spokesperson said.

The air patrols were hosted by No. 3 Squadron, which provided an A109 helicopter, with a crew of two pilots and a loadmaster.

“This rare opportunity to undertake such extensive monitoring has given Te Uru Rākau - New Zealand Forest Service assurance that most are following the rules, whilst providing additional incentive for practitioners to comply.”

- MPI spokesperson

The aircrew and forestry officers had a busy time first locating potential activity, followed by triaging whether it was linked to an indigenous forestry operation. Photographs and GPS locations were then collected for later analysis and ground-based follow-up, the spokesperson said.

Both patrols found several sites of interest which are now being followed up to determine compliance with the Forests Act.



Senior leaders show the way

B | SERGEANT
Y | JD HINES

After months of planning, the inaugural RNZAF Senior Non-Commissioned Officer (SNCO) Leadership Forum was held at the Tūrangawaewae at Base Ohakea recently, bringing together SNCOs from all over the country, both in person and (thanks to an awesome IT crew from Avionics Ohakea) virtually.

The theme of the forum was 'Hono, Ako, Ārahi' (Connect, Learn, Influence). It was an opportunity for SNCOs to spend three days interacting with various presenters and their peers, discuss common problems, solutions, share experiences and continue to build networks.

"We have some amazing people in our organisation. For three days, most of them were in the one place at the same time and I think that was just awesome," Corporal Doug Watt said.

The forum was lucky enough to have presenters from areas all around the NZDF. These included the Chief of Air Force Air Vice-Marshal Andrew Clark, Deputy Chief of Air Force Air Commodore Ian Mower, Operation Stand leads Squadron Leader George Magdalinos and Nadene Maraku, Operation Respect lead (and incoming Warrant Officer of the Air Force) Warrant Officer Kerry Williams, the Head of RNZAF Psychology Major Samuel

Williams, and several Group Captains who manage a wide variety of portfolios.

Over the three days SNCOs had an open forum to ask questions and discuss thought provoking topics directly with those who had the answers. It was refreshing to see the honesty and candour with which each presenter engaged with the forum.

Flight Sergeant Jo Beaven said her biggest takeaway was the fact that so many senior leaders invested their time to come and be scrutinised by the SNCOs.

"I came away feeling like they were all more approachable even though their roles involve so much. I really appreciated the personal stories that were told especially from the Warrant Officer of Defence Force."

A real highlight for a lot of attendees was a panel session that had Warrant Officer of Defence Force, Warrant Officer Joint Forces NZ, Warrant Officer Navy, Sergeant Major of the Army and Warrant

Officer Air Force all in the same place at the same time. With an open forum to ask any question, this enabled SNCOs to hear the thoughts from the top, each able to provide a unique insight from their varying experiences.

Although this was a busy time with a lot of personnel away on Op Protect, the feedback from attendees is that it was a highly worthwhile and beneficial experience.

"As a new SNCO it was a great environment to learn from experienced SNCOs, but also to start conversations on topics that don't normally get discussed at a base or workplace level with SNCOs other than your peers," Sergeant Joshua White said.

A return to international training

For the first time in three years, No. 40 Squadron crews have recently taken part in a major international readiness training exercise in the United States.







The two C-130 crews and personnel from maintenance, intelligence and air movements were deployed to Alexandria in Louisiana for the two-week deployment.

The exercise, designed to provide realistic training in a simulated combat environment, provides operational preparedness training, aimed at providing tactical air transport based on 24-hour operations from an under threat, bare base environment.

The air transport support is a combination of real time logistical support and training airdrop designed to exercise deployed operational capability. This year the exercise participation consisted of two United States Air Force (USAF) C-130Js, an Italian Air Force C-130J as well as our own C-130H.

Detachment Commander Wing Commander Lisa D'Oliveira said the exercise was an opportunity to provide tactical air-land and airdrop training for two aircrews.

“This was the first international training activity No. 40 Squadron has achieved since 2018 for various reasons, including Covid. It demonstrated that with appropriate risk mitigation we can deploy and operate in the current Covid environment safely and effectively,” she said.

“A damaging bird strike on the second day could have impacted the squadron’s ability to participate in the exercise, however with some fantastic co-operation with the USAF we were able to be back in action within three days. Testing interoperability both in the air and on the ground is what makes these exercises so valuable.”

C-130 captains Flight Lieutenant (FLTLT) Max Longdill and FLTLT Tristan Nysse said the training provided an opportunity to integrate with USAF teams for loading and unloading the aircraft.

“It also allowed us to practise landings to a short, dirt covered strip that we don’t have available to practice on back in New Zealand.



“We were operating in 35 degree heat and running 24/7 shifts with the graveyard shift working through the night to get the aircraft ready for the morning flight the next day.”

- Flight Lieutenant George Hercus

“The crew were able to conduct some training normally not achievable in New Zealand, including contending with dynamic simulated threats and amendments to hard timings requiring effective crew coordination and accurate re-planning.”

The intelligence officer said aircrew and planners were supported by an intelligence team comprised of two Kiwis and two Americans.

“The main effort of the intelligence team was to provide on-going situational awareness, pre-mission threat overviews, and conduct post-mission debriefs. The intelligence team would continuously liaise with planners to ensure that they had the most updated threat picture, which enabled planners to have confidence in their mission planning.

“Overall, the intelligence team was robust and delivered exceptional tactical mission support throughout the exercise,” he said.

Air Movements officer FLTLT Pete Kohut said the air load team integrated into a USAF Aerial Port detachment for the duration of the exercise.

“Outputs of the Aerial Port included load planning, preparing loads and loading the Italian, USAF and RNZAF C-130s with equipment such as armoured Humvees, 105mm light guns, palletised and air dropped loads.

“This exercise challenged us but also provided a valuable exposure to the functions, procedures and way partner nations operate. Overall the air load team integrated well and performed to a high standard with their USAF counterparts,” he said.

“This type of training can only be developed through opportunities like this and will pay dividends when operating in New Zealand and abroad.”

For engineering officer FLTLT George Hercus, the exercise tested the ability of his team.

“The aircraft itself presented numerous challenges, including a bird flying through a leading edge on the wing. Given the curve balls the aircraft threw at us, the testing environmental conditions and the hours worked, the maintenance team did a fantastic job to achieve as many missions as we did,” he said.

“Experiences like this are critical in preparing the team for future high tempo deployments where there is more on the line.”



Last hurrah for flight NZ4203

After 55 years and 26,581 flying hours, the first P-3K2 Orion, NZ4203 will be making its final flight this month before retiring at Base Woodbourne. It is the first of the fleet to rest during the transition to the new maritime surveillance aircraft the P-8A Poseidon into the Air Force whānau.

The Air Force took delivery of the first five of the six-aircraft fleet in 1966. The final aircraft, NZ4206, was purchased in 1985. The third Orion, NZ4203, arrived from the United States on December 11, 1966, captained by Squadron Leader Tom Enright.

During its career, the fleet has undergone major upgrades, including the re-winged project, which extended their service life to beyond 2020. The latest upgrade programme modernised navigation, mission and communications.

NZ4203 has had a stunning career and has circumnavigated the globe. It has taken part in fisheries, piracy and search and rescue missions. Some current and former personnel who have flown in the aircraft have given her a hat tip and told us some excellent yarns of their time with her.

In March 2014 the aircraft was the first Air Force plane to take part in the international search for the downed Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 – later swapped for NZ4204.

They supported Australian Maritime Safety Authority-led search in an area covering more than 2,000 kilometres from Perth, Western Australia.

Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Marcus Hogan said Kiwi Rescue 795 was tasked on the morning of Monday, March 10 and were deployed to Malaysia via Darwin later that afternoon.

“We commenced searching inbound to Malaysia on the 11th and we operated hard for many days straight on minimum rest.

“Every day we were anticipating that we would find that missing aeroplane. Well, it wasn’t to be, and after a week or so we moved the search down to the Southern Indian Ocean (operating out of Perth).”

SQNLDR Hogan flew around the world in NZ4203, including across the equator, where he received his certificate from King Neptune, and over the North Pole.

In mid-2008, the aircraft suffered a serious malfunction, while SQNLDR Hogan was piloting it in an exercise in Malaysia.

“I still remember the exact moment the propeller pump light came on, we were hot contact (tracking the submarine), 60 degree bank turn in the middle of an active sonobuoy pattern about to gain attack approval.

“My heart skipped a beat, we rolled out and turned for home. We just started the checklist when the other propeller pump light illuminated. We had one of the most serious single technical malfunctions you can have in a P-3 – the pitch-lock propeller. But we did our job (and NZ4203 did hers) and we landed safely in Kuantan Air Base on the other side of Malaysia.”

“We laid our pattern to once again gain contact with the target and again, we held contact until our task was finished.”

- Graeme Pleasants

The aircraft took part in numerous search and rescue missions, including when the MV Princess Ashika ferry sunk in 2009 in the sea off Tonga. It was a mission SQNLDR Hogan said he would never forget. The crew spent more than 13 hours searching for survivors, with 54 found and sadly 74 believed lost at sea.

Graeme Pleasants worked in the P-3K2s as an Air Ordnanceman and Air Electronics Operator between 1969 and 1982 and flew for 1894.15 hours in NZ4203.

He fondly recalled Operation Naromi, a mission with the United States Navy at its air station in the Hawaiian Islands, during the Cold War.

“We would go up to Barbers Point and after settling in we would be briefed as to what our task would be.

LEFT

NZ4203 at Moffett Field, California, during exercise Valiant Heritage, March 29, 1976

MIDDLE LEFT

The crew who first went to look for missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, March, 2014

MIDDLE RIGHT

Air to air view of NZ4203 in flight over the sea, May 13, 1986

RIGHT

NZ4203 at the Pegasus ice runway on the outskirts of Scott Base, January 17, 2006



“It was on our first flight that we landed a sonobuoy pattern. After only two minutes from it activating, I had a reading on the JEZ Chart and I identified it as a Russian Echo 2 nuclear submarine. We held the target for the remainder of our task time.”

The JEZ Chart, or Jezebel chart was the early name for passive acoustics, such as hydrophones dropped into the water ‘listening’ for the noise a submarine makes. The sounds were converted to a signal which was displayed on a chart.

When the crew returned to base they were told how pleased the US Navy was with their find, because their own crew had lost it. The following day, they had the same task because again the US Navy had lost track of the submarine.

In 1990, NZ4203 was deployed to the Shearwater airfield in Halifax, Canada, to be on display at the Shearwater airshow.

“It was a fantastic experience for us all, we also had our technical team with us. This was special as my son, Richie, was in our tech team and we were the first father and son to be on a Fincastle competition,” Mr Pleasants said.

Fincastle is the annual anti-submarine warfare competition between the Royal Air Force, Royal Canadian Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force and the Royal New Zealand Air Force.

A few days later, the crew was flying the aircraft north along the west coast, past New Foundland towards the Labrador Sea.

“The scenery was incredible, with icebergs and sea life,” he said.

Les Billcliff was a No. 5 Squadron avionics maintainer and historian. He said alongside the important missions the aircraft flew, it also left an impact at the 1989 International Air Tattoo in the United Kingdom.

“The 1989 International Air Tattoo has to be a case of “almost”. P-3K Orion NZ4203 came in second, behind by a

Lockheed nose by a fellow Anzac crew in a RAAF C-130E for the prestigious Concours d’Elegance.

“However all was not lost, the No. 5 Squadron Orion carried away two awards and the 20 unit members left behind a well received display of friendship, goodwill and national pride throughout the two day international event,” he said.

Mr Billcliff also pointed to the moment in history where tensions were high between Iraq and Iraq, in 1998. An Air Force Boeing, a C-130 Hercules and two P-3K2s, including NZ4203, were deployed to the region as part of a multinational coalition.

“In a flurry of activity, the two Orions were readied for the Gulf deployment in record time. This included an additional ‘black box’ called LINK II-a special communications device which allows a battlefield commander to send electronic pictures to his deployed forces, showing where the friendly and enemy units are located.”



In that same year, the Air Force created history from Christchurch when NZ4203 landed at Pegasus Field, Antarctica, for an overnight stay. The flight was the first step in a plan to base an Orion at McMurdo Sound for short periods each summer to monitor fishing vessels in the region. Up until then, flights had been carried out, with limited time on station, from New Zealand.

And in 2006 the Orions landed at Pegasus Airfield as part of a trial to see if regular Orion missions south are feasible.

"Monday 16 January dawned with perfect weather conditions in Antarctica and the P-3K NZ4203 commenced the 6.2-hour transit south," Mr Billcliff said.

After an overnight stay at Scott Base, the aircraft was prepared for departure using slightly modified procedures, such as the pre-heating of certain systems.

NZ4203 was also one of the first Orions to be fitted with an electro-optical camera capability, Mr Billcliff said.

A final word from SQNLDR Hogan who wrote a tribute to NZ4203.

"You are the first P-3K2 Orion to retire and over the next year or two your siblings will follow. This will end a legacy that will be hard to match. There are hundreds of stories like these, many can't be told and many are long forgotten, in the memories of old Orion aircrew.

"You and I have spent just 764.8 Hrs in the sky together but your log book (F700) says that since 1966 you have flown around 26,581 Hrs. Ultimately, I guess none of us really quite know exactly what the future holds. Who knows what might happen, perhaps we will fly again but probably not. There is one thing I can say for certain – when you finally complete that last landing and we run the secure checklist one last time, you will have served NZ with distinction and truly earned a rest!"



“The electro-optical camera system is seen as an essential tool for prosecution and enforcement of vessels transgressing the Exclusive Economic Zone and represents a dramatic improvement over the limited infrared system previously fitted.”

- Les Billcliff

MIDDLE
(L-R) PTE David Arahanga, SGT Callum Hill,
Mike Chambers



Awards for flood rescues

B | EDITOR
Y | REBECCA QUILLIAM

Three personnel based at Woodbourne during major flooding in Marlborough recently, have been awarded a base commendation after rescuing dozens of stranded motorists in rising flood waters and evacuating two people in need of serious medical help from a medical centre.

Almost 1000 people were evacuated from their homes and dozens were trapped in their vehicles during the July event.

Experienced Unimog drivers Mike Chambers, Sergeant (SGT) Callum Hill and Army Private (PTE) David Arahanga were called to help during the worst flooding ever recorded in the region.

The Wairau River had swollen to the bottom of the Wairau river bridge, connecting Blenheim and Picton. Large tracts of State Highway 1 were submerged under a metre and a half of flood water, which reached over the Unimogs' lights, leaving the drivers to steer by torchlight.

Mr Chambers left Blenheim in the evening with Emergency Operations Centre staff and equipment for a medical evacuation mission from Picton's medical facility. One was a pregnant woman suffering complications and the other was a man who had a broken femur.

"We were driving along State Highway 1 and the water was getting deeper and deeper and deeper. Then the lights started to flicker, which I thought was unusual, but then I realised that the water was so deep, it had come over the headlights. A split second later, we lost all our lights."

It was raining, pitch black and with no lights Mr Chambers' passenger had to shine a torch to see the roadside markers.

"We couldn't stop because if we did, the truck would drown. I knew to keep the revs up over the 2500 in a low gear and keep the bow waves ahead of us. To make the situation worse, we were finding floating logs – so as we were going along I was trying to hit the logs with the front of the bumper, so they wouldn't get caught under the vehicle."



“When we got to the bridge, the river was running at over 6 million litres per second. I’m driving a 7 tonne truck over it very carefully and could see the water splash over the top.”

- Mike Chambers

Further along the highway, Mr Chambers spotted two people stranded in their vehicle, and was able to offer them a lift to Picton.

After arriving at Picton’s medical centre, the patients were secured on stretchers in the back of the vehicle and wrapped up to keep warm and dry from water that was coming into the back of the cab.

“Once they were all loaded on, with the medical equipment, it was about 10pm and we started the slow trip back.”

On the return journey, the water levels had dropped slightly, but floating logs were still a danger, Mr Chambers said.

“We still drove back by torchlight, but at least this time we knew what we were getting into and we were able to predict the road a bit better and keep an eye out for markers and trees and once we reached Tuamarina, about 10km north of Blenheim, there was no more flooding, so it was just a slow, steady trip to Wairau Hospital.”

Earlier in the day, PTE Arahanga and SGT Hill were deployed to rescue about 30 stranded drivers from the Para Wetlands, north of Blenheim.

“There were quite a few places along the State Highway between Blenheim and Picton where the water was about 1.5m high. We couldn’t see the headlights and so we also had to travel by torchlight,” PTE Arahanga said.

“Once we picked up the people we conveyed back to a supermarket at Spring Creek, about 10 minutes north of Blenheim. The second trip we drove further along the road we bumped into a farmer who had been able to evacuate a number of people from the area and took them to Picton. So our second trip we only needed to pick up four people and brought them back to Blenheim.

“Getting through the water was okay, because I had plenty of training at Waiouru. But it was the first time driving in flooded conditions in a real emergency.”

SGT Hill carried about 17 people in his Unimog, who were stranded in their vehicles. It was the first time he had driven in such deep water, but he was able to gauge the depth by keeping an eye on roadside markers, he said.

“It was a little bit nerve wracking to start with, but once I was able to work out the depth from the markers it was okay – it was just a matter of trying to keep to the shallowest parts.

“I’ve never seen flooding like it.”

Base Ohakea teams up with medical centre

B | EDITOR
Y | REBECCA QUILLIAM

Base Ohakea is working with nearby Bulls Medical Centre to ensure people with Covid symptoms can still be seen safely, by erecting a military tent at the practice.

The Delta variant of Covid-19 emerged in the community in August, prompting a country-wide Alert Level 4 lockdown, with dozens of cases emerging around the country.

One of the centre's doctors, Dave Baldwin, was formerly an Air Force doctor at Ohakea and has maintained a strong connection with the base since leaving 30 years ago.

The centre had previously concreted a large area out the back of the property, but included areas so military tents could be erected if necessary, he said.

"We then approached Base Ohakea's Commanding Officer, Group Captain Rob Shearer to ask if we could do an exercise to check that the tents fit. That went really well and we were given the reassurance that if we needed help to ring the base's operations unit.



"Within an hour, we had a tent up. Everyday someone's come down to check it. What it boils down to, from my point of view, is the positive aspect of the situation. Everyone is pulling together and dealing with this as a community."

Now, if a patient calls the centre with any respiratory or Covid symptoms, they are triaged by the medical team, wearing personal protective equipment, inside the tent, Dr Baldwin said.

"What it's done is added a room separate to the medical centre. It's a very valued asset. This is a fluid scenario and if we get active Covid cases in the community, we may need another tent to cope with it.

"It's great that we know we've got help just up the road."

"Then out of the blue about a week later comes this Covid Level 4 again. So I called Rob Shearer and said we really needed a tent. When you run a medical centre you need to keep anyone with any potential to have Covid separate from the rest of the patients."

- Dr Dave Baldwin



Outstanding medic wins top award

The 2021 Medic of the Year trophy has been awarded to Corporal Georgia Reynard.

ABOVE
CPL Georgia Reynard, front right of the stretcher

The Auckland-based medic, stood out from the strong nominations put forward for the award.

In addition to her outstanding support to her unit Corporal (CPL) Reynard has proven herself to be a high-performing medic who not only possesses great skills, but also great character. The reason for her nomination was down to her unrelenting and selfless commitment to her patients, her team, and the wider Defence Force.

She managed several significant casualties during supported activities, achieving meaningfully positive outcomes for her patients; ranging from patients suffering head injuries and subsequent unconsciousness, to blast injuries.

Moreover, during the Covid-19 Alert Levels 4 and 3 national quarantines, CPL Reynard stood up a respiratory clinic to enable her unit to maintain full operational capability at all times.

Through her efforts, her units' patients were able to be seen medically whenever required, while maintaining the amount of infectious illness transmission within the population-at-risk well under nominal expected levels.

CPL Reynard also organised her team to conduct 360 Feedback as part of team development, which proved to be an extremely valuable activity for her team. Additionally, she continuously enabled training medics to safely gain a high level of experience, by safely mentoring them through night survival training opportunities during her survival, evasion, resistance and escape cover and wherever possible.

Not only did CPL Reynard support domestic activities for her unit, she has also supported the delivery of other external activities in New Zealand and abroad.

She continues to be a highly trusted and valued instructor regardless of the topic of instruction, and through her commitment and professionalism she presents her trade to other units and nations in the best possible way.

Te Whare Toroa

B | ASMP PROJECT INTERFACE MANAGER
Y | SQUADRON LEADER OLLY OLIVER



When the New Zealand government approved the purchase of the P-8A Poseidon aircraft, it paved the way for a bespoke No. 5 Squadron facility to be built at Base Ohakea.

The Ministry of Defence's Air Surveillance Maritime Patrol (ASMP) Integrated Project Team (IPT) was tasked with purchasing, integrating and sustaining this new platform, and preparing it for operations. It also gave the team the opportunity to build a state of the art, fully integrated facility, built to withstand high seismic events.

This new build would ensure the Defence Force could operate the new platform for at least the next 30 years, while providing a building capable of performing the functions of a post disaster centre.

To assist the IPT with the facility design and construction management, they engaged with Aurecon New Zealand Ltd, which would deliver these functions under the name Team Tangaroa (TT).

From the outset TT knew that they had to engage with No. 5 Squadron personnel to establish the key elements of their identity and culture. This allowed them to explore opportunities within the building design, to incorporate references to that identity and bring a sense of belonging, ownership and continuity.

When the P-8A facility design was being discussed with the Directorate of Defence Security, it became apparent that an appropriate project name had to be determined so as to effectively label documents, diagrams and photographs.

To ensure a suitable name was selected, the history of No. 5 Squadron had to be considered and the following Māori name was selected; 'Te Whare Toroa', translated into English as 'Home of the Albatross'.

The albatross holds a special place in No. 5 Squadron. For Māori, it is the most noble toroa, biggest of all seabirds. It flies as far as 190,000km in a year, spending 85% of its time at sea. No. 5 Squadron, like the albatross spends a considerable time away from home, on solitary missions over the sea. The albatross, perhaps more than any other bird characterises the role of airborne maritime surveillance.

The designer, who had designed the Royal Australian Air Force's P-8A facility, was required to facilitate the needs of all users of the building.

**LEFT**

Former Minister of Defence Ron Mark breaking ground at the Te Whare Toroa site

MIDDLE

Impression of the building façade, designed in the shape of an albatross wing

RIGHT

Construction site, July 2021



One of the key factors was for full integration of all aspects of capability, including housing, operations, headquarters, training and simulation. The state of the art suite of Flight Simulation and Training Devices also includes a virtual maintenance trainer which will change the way Air Force maintenance training will be delivered.

The IPT split the build into two separate, but joined elements – horizontal and vertical works – with contracts awarded to Fulton Hogan for the horizontal work and Hawkins for the vertical. Before any work could be started the site needed to be blessed by local Iwi and the first sods were turned.

Recent visits to the site have seen both construction teams working in partnership towards achieving a successful build.

The aircraft apron will be completed in the third quarter of next year, giving the future No. 5 Squadron access to three aircraft parking spots including a wash pad and bird bath. The current estimated date for practical completion of the facility is the third quarter of 2023.

ASMP Infrastructure director Robin Scott said they were excited to be constructing this capability for the Air Force.

“Great efforts have been made in getting the right design for the building and airside facilities. Now we are concentrating on the construction and delivery of No. 5 Squadron’s new permanent home.

“It’s been a real team effort from all parties including Ministry of Defence, the Air Force, the Defence Estate and Infrastructure, and the civilian designers and contractors.”

The ASMP IPT would like to thank all personnel that have assisted them with this project and look forward to continuing their relationships with all stakeholders to create a new chapter in the history of the Air Force.

“This emblem of the albatross would become a major factor in the design of the building, with the shape of its wing a strong motif.”

- Squadron Leader Olly Oliver

Period products to make their way into NZDF bathrooms

The Defence Force is to join a number of other Government departments and New Zealand businesses in the provision of period products for its employees.

This one year pilot of routine provision, will see period products being made available across all women's, unisex and disabled/accessible toilets in the Defence Force. Period products are an essential necessity item for at least a third of the Defence Force workforce and unplanned menstruation without access to these products can cause unnecessary distress.

Provision of period products in bathrooms is no different to provision of toilet paper.

Throughout the one year pilot, Directorate of Diversity and Inclusion's Wāhine Toa Programme Lead, will canvass feedback and experiences of those who use these products and will undertake structured research on the impact it has on our people.

The pilot will provide an indication of the costs and benefits associated with this activity and will inform future decision making.

Want to have your say?

Any feedback, questions or input you would like to have, please scan the QR code or go to <https://forms.gle/fvBZpYmyJozjsHEm7>

You can also contact wahine.toa@nzdf.mil.nz for more information.



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Notices

VOLUNTARY EDUCATION STUDY ASSISTANCE (VESA)

Semester 3, 2021 applications are now being accepted

You may submit your request for funding within 90 days of your study start date. Apply online at NZDC, Defence Learning Toolkit VESA Application (e-form)

Applicants should be aware of their responsibilities prior to making an application IAW DFO 3/2016.

Prior to starting the application process, applicants are to:

- Confirm the level of study is right for them with NZDC DLearn
- Advise their 1-UP of their study intentions
- Provide supporting paperwork including study documentation from the official learning provider website (ready to attach to your e-form application)

Contact your local DLearn Adult Learning Tutor who can assist you with your application. If you have any further queries, please email our Tertiary Services & Support Advisor at nzdclearnvesa@nzdf.mil.nz

- POLICY (terms and conditions) SADFO 3/2016 VESA Policy SADFO 3/2016 VESA Policy (terms and conditions)

RNZAF PROVOST/ RNZAF POLICE REUNION

3–6 March 2022, Blenheim

Any ex or serving member of the above trades welcome. Also a general enquiry; are you aware of anyone who served in the Provost trade from the 1950s through to the mid 1960s, please make contact with us. There is a gap in the RNZAF Provost history that we're interested in finding out about.

Expressions of interest to Colin Waite elephant-tracker@xtra.co.nz



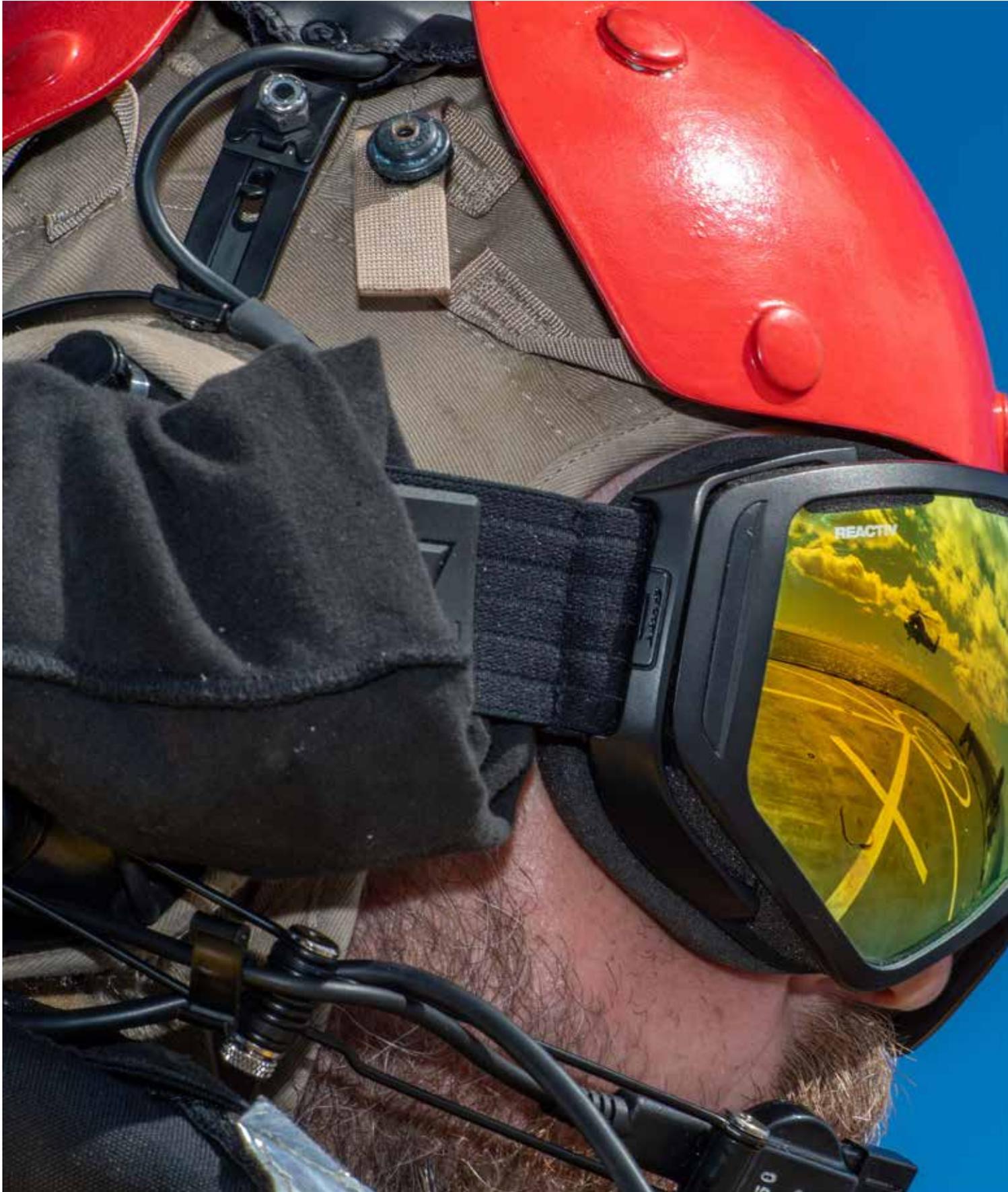
Report serious wrongdoing



- Fraud**
- Corruption**
- Intimidation**
- Breach of safety and hazardous material regulations**
- Drug use**



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B | PETTY OFFICER
Y | CHRIS WEISSENBORN

During Op Pacific Vaccinate on board HMNZS Wellington a reflection in the visor of the Flight Deck Officer caught my eye. I used a wide angle lens to get the shot of the hovering Seasprite helicopter. I remember having to get quite close to get the shot of Chief Petty Officer Tug Wilson, whose main role is the Whole Ship Coordinator but also has the job of Flight Deck Officer.

ROYAL AERONAUTICAL SOCIETY SYMPOSIUM 2021

NEW ZEALAND AEROSPACE

IN A POST-COVID WORLD

DIVERSIFICATION - ENVIRONMENT - INNOVATION



NOVOTEL CATHEDRAL SQUARE
52 CATHEDRAL SQUARE, CHRISTCHURCH

9.00AM TO 4.55PM
FRIDAY 29 OCTOBER 2021

FOLLOWED BY THE ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER AT 7PM
AIR FORCE MUSEUM, 45 HARVARD AVENUE, CHRISTCHURCH



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